

Parashat Ki Tisa, Rabbi James Proops

As we go through life we all face challenges, trials and moments of despair at certain points along the way. It is likely that we have all asked at one time or another, where our hope will come from. How can we find consolation amid the tragedy we face or reassurance to counter the distress that we feel? For many, these questions have been recurring themes throughout this past year with very few satisfactory answers given. However from this week's *Parasha* of *Ki Tisa*, Chief Rabbi Efraim Mirvis, points out an insight into where we can turn to find that comfort.

The *Parasha* informs us that Hashem intended to destroy the Jewish people in the aftermath of the episode of the *Chet HaEgel*. Upon Moshe's descent from *Har Sinai*, he found great numbers of *Bnei Yisrael* seemingly worshipping the golden calf and he subsequently smashed the *Luchot* in rage. Following this, Moshe prayed to Hashem for the lives of *Bnei Yisrael* saying, “שוב מִתְרוֹן אֲפֹד – Please God, relent from Your wrath, וְהִנָּחֵם עַל־הַרְעָה לְעַמֶּךָ – And reconsider the bad that you are going to be bringing to Your people.” Moshe's *Tefillah* was of course successful as the Torah tells us “וַיִּנָּחֵם ה' עַל־הַרְעָה – God indeed reconsidered the punishment.”

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word used, to urge God to ‘reconsider’, is ‘וְהִנָּחֵם’, which comes from the same root as the word ‘נְחָמָה’ meaning comfort. We can therefore suggest that ‘comfort’ is directly linked to the idea of ‘reconsideration’. Reassurance is related to a change of attitude, a change of mindset and a change of action. That is to say, through Hashem's ‘reconsidering’, Moshe was comforted.

When we experience times of tragedy or despair, there must be time for one to grieve or lament in an appropriate way, however if we wait for others to bring us out of our distress, if we overly engage in self-pity, then there can be no lasting comfort. Rather, in order to grow, to develop and to move forward, it is imperative that there is change within us. In order to truly find solace we must *reconsider* our situation. When one can effect a change of attitude, a change of mind-set and a change of approach, then we are more likely to achieve *Nechama*.

Shabbat Parashat Ki Tisa marks exactly one year from when we closed down the shul and our first 'Shabbat At Home' email went out. We never dreamt that a year on we would still not be back in the shul building, many having not even set foot in the shul's premises. Much has changed in all of our lives. We have suffered emotionally, psychologically, financially and spiritually. We have all lost in some way or another and we have all had to learn how to adapt. From the observation of the connection between **וְהִנַּחֲתֶם** and **נִחְמָה**, reconsidering and comfort, it becomes clear that the key ingredient to being able to adapt, move forward and grow from these difficult experiences, comes from within ourselves. There has not been and will never be an easy answer when faced with turmoil but it is clear that we can not rely on others to bring us Nechama. We must turn inward and *reconsider*, finding within *our* hearts, within *our* minds and within *our* power the strength to move onward and upward. With this lesson in mind we can understand the strength of Moshe who did not give up on his people or his mission and we too have the ability to find that strength.

Shabbat Shalom