

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO TOCHACHAS

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Netzavim

The Difference Between The Two Tochachas

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 869, Mitzvas Chinuch - Father or Mother? Good Shabbos!

There are two portions in the Torah known as "Tochachas" [chastisements]. There is the Tochacha at the end of Sefer Vayikra in Parshas Bechukosai and there is the Tochacha we read last week in Parshas Ki Savo. There is a stark difference between these two sections of chastisement in that the Tochacha at the end of Parshas Bechukosai ends with words of consolation.

After hearing all the terrible things which would befall the Jewish people if they did not keep the commandments, they were at least given the comforting message: "And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly and to break My covenant with them; for I am the L-rd their G-d. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their G-d: I am the L-rd." [Vayikra 26:44-45].

The longer and perhaps scarier words of chastisement that we read in Parshas Ki Savo do not end on a positive note. The Torah merely ends with more of the same: "And the L-rd shall bring you back into Egypt in ships; by the way whereof I said to you: 'You will see it no more'; and there you will sell yourselves to your enemies for bondmen and for bondwomen, and no man shall buy you." [Devorim 28:68].

Rav Yosha Baer Soloveitchik, z"l, asks: Why the difference? Rav Yosha Baer answers that in fact the Tochacha in Ki Savo also ends with consolation... except the consolation only appears in Parshas Netzavim: "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon you, the blessing and the curse, that I have presented before you - then you will take it to your heart among all the nations where Hashem, your G-d, has dispersed you. And you will return unto Hashem, your G-d, and listen to His voice, according to everything that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and all your soul. [Devorim 30:1-2] The consolation is that at the end of all the punishment and

suffering, the Jewish people will do Teshuva [repent] and return to G-d.

But the question can still be asked: Why is it that in the Tochacha in Devorim, there is a pause and we have to "wait for the consolation", so to speak, while in the Tochacha in Bechukosai, the consolation comes immediately? Rav Soloveitchik answers this question by explaining that there is a fundamental difference between the two Tochachas. The Rambam says that the Tochacha in Bechukosai foretells and refers to the period of the destruction of the First Bais HaMikdash and the exile from the Land of Israel at that time. The Tochacha foretold in Ki Savo refers to the destruction of the Second Bais HaMikdash and the exile that occurred at that time. The Destruction of the First Bais HaMikdash and the Babylonian exile which followed it had a prophesized finite end to it. The prophets foretold that the people would be in exile for 70 years and indeed following this 70 year period, the Jews were given permission to return to the Land of Israel (where they eventually rebuilt the Bais HaMikdash). Therefore, it makes sense that the Tochacha which foretells the Babylonian Exile features the consolation in close proximity to the end of the pasukim of chastisement.

As we now know, we do not know of a specified date for the redemption from the Destruction of the Second Bais HaMikdash. We have now been in this exile for close to 2000 years! However, there will be an end to this exile. As the Rambam writes in the Laws of Repentance: "Israel will only be redeemed through repentance. The prophets have already promised that the Jews will repent at the end of their exile and immediately thereafter they will be redeemed, as it is written..." (and then the Rambam quotes the pasuk in this week's parsha) "...And it will be that when all these things come upon you... you will return unto Hashem your G-d."

When will that occur? We do not know, but it will come. This is precisely why the consolation does not immediately follow the Tochacha here in Devorim. We need to wait. We need to wait until we return to the L-rd our G-d. We are going to be in the mess in which we find ourselves until we do Teshuva.

This is the difference between the two Tochachas. In the first, we just had to wait a (relatively) short time. When the clock struck 70, we were able to go home. The current exile is not like that. Eventually, we will get out of it because "in the end Israel will repent and immediately thereafter they will be redeemed" but we do not know when that is going to happen.

I received an e-mail last May in which someone told me a story of an true story. I filed it away saving it for this parsha.

Rav Yisrael Dovid Grossman, the Rav of Kiryat Migdal haEmek in Northern Israel was visited by a fellow named Moti Dotan, who is the head of the Lower Galilee regional council. Moti Dotan was in Germany to celebrate a "Sister City" arrangement with Hanover, Germany. While there, he was approached by a German who related the following story. The German had a father who was quite old. On his death bed, he confessed his own part in the Holocaust to his son. He explained that since there are many holocaust deniers, he wanted his son to know that it was true and to tell him some of

what happened. The father told the son that he had been an officer in the German Air Force in World War II and handed him an envelope that contained a wallet made out of parchment which contained within it the officer's military ID certificate. The father explained that while destroying a synagogue, he had found a scroll made of parchment. He cut out a piece of the parchment from the Sefer Torah to make the wallet. He later discovered that such scrolls were very holy to the Jews. He told his son to give it to the first Jew he meets and to have it brought to Israel to determine the significance of the particular words that were written on the parchment.

Moti Dotan took the wallet and brought it to Migdal haEmek where he showed it to Rabbi Yisrael Dovid Grossman. When Rabbi Grossman looked at the piece of Torah parchment that was made into a wallet, he was literally shaken to his core. The pasukim on the parchment were from Parshas Ki Savo [Devorim 28:58-62]: "If you will not be careful to perform all the words of this Torah that are written in this Book, to fear this honored and awesome Name: Hashem your G-d, then Hashem will make extraordinary your blows and the blows of your offspring - great and faithful blows, and evil and faithful illnesses. He will bring back upon you all the sufferings of Egypt, before which you were terrified, and they will cleave to you. Even any illness and any blow that is not written in the Book of this Torah, Hashem will bring them upon you, until you are destroyed. You will be left few in number, instead of having been like the stars of heaven in abundance, for you will not have listened to the voice of Hashem your G-d."

Out of all the places that could have been cut out from the Sefer Torah, this wallet was cut out and made from the pasukim in the Tochacha! When Rabbi Grossman saw that, he was reminded of a similar incident in Tanach: The story in Melachim II of the young King Yoshiyahu. King Yoshiyahu was a righteous king, but his father and grandfather had done all they could to wipe out any vestige of Torah from the Jewish people.

When Yoshiyahu became king, he tried to refurbish the Bais HaMikdash and reinstitute the normal functioning of traditional ritual amongst the Jewish people. When they entered the Beis HaMikdash, which was in disrepair, they found a Sefer Torah, which had been hidden away in an attic so that the wicked King Achaz would not burn it as he did with other Sifrei Torah.

The King's scribe, Shafan ben Atzalya, read to Yoshiyahu from the the pasukim in the Sefer Torah that appeared exactly at the point to which the Sefer Torah had been rolled when it was hidden away many years earlier: When the King heard those words, he cried and tore his garments in mourning. The commentaries explain - what did he hear that caused him to react in this way? He heard the pasukim from the Tochacha in Devorim: "Hashem will lead you and your king whom you will set up over yourself to a nation you never knew - neither you nor your forefathers - and there you will work for the gods of others - of wood and of stone. [Devorim 28:36]. Yoshiyahu saw this as a Divine omen - that of all the places that the Sefer Torah could be open to, these were the first pasukim that were read to him. Thereafter, he began a mass Teshuva movement to return the people to Hashem. Yoshiyahu was promised by the prophet that since he cried and repented, he

would not personally witness the terrible fate that would ultimately befall the Jewish people.

Rabbi Grossman made the point that these two incidents were not mere coincidences. He saw such "coincidences" as a clear call from Heaven to do Teshhuva.

We see many events that are unfolding around us that bring us to the conclusion that nothing will save us other than the promise of ultimate redemption via the prophecy of "In the future the Jewish people will repent". Only the Master of the Universe can save us from the mess we are in. Our only hope is "You shall return to the L-rd your G-d."

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