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*Haftarat Ekev:
Yeshayahu's Approach
to Consolation -
Ancient Wisdom
and Modern
Psychological Views on
Loss and Recovery*

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Yeshayahu 40:1 - נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עַמִּי אֵמַר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
Comfort ye, comfort ye My people Saith your God.

Yeshayahu 49: 14 - וַתֹּאמֶר צִיּוֹן עֲזַבְנִי ה' וְאֵלֶּשֶׁם שְׂכַחְנִי -
But Zion said: “The Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me.”

Psychological Ingredient: *Normalize/Validate the response*

Rabbi Maurice Lamm, in his classic work *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning* Two purposes of the eulogy, *hesped* – or praising of the deceased and *bechi* – expressing grief and loss¹.

The Gemara in Berachos (6b) : “The merit of eulogy lies in the *dilevai*”, which Rashi explains as “to raise one’s voice in lamentation and anguish, so that the listeners will weep”.²

They are “no longer dumbfounded . . . the exile which serves as the backdrop of the dialogue presented in our *haftara* is not the initial blow and the sharp pain, but rather the fact that the exile has continued for so many years”³. Lichtenstein, M. Ekev: The Difference Between “Nachamu” and the Haftara for Parashat Ekev. Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash

“ . . . meaning of life can seem to disappear with loss of home, culture, family and status. This can lead to a sense of confusion and purposeless, in which inner resources become dislocated or seem lost.” Alcock, 2003 *Refugee Trauma – The Assault on Meaning. Psychodynamic Practice*, Vol. 9, pp 291-306.

כִּי תִרְבִּיתֶיךָ וְשִׁמְמִיתֶיךָ וְאֶרֶץ הַרְסִיתָּהּ כִּי עָתָה תִּצְרִי מִיּוֹשֵׁב וְרִחֲקוּ מִבְּלַעֲיֶיךָ
For your ruins and your desolate places and your land that has been destroyed, for now you shall be crowded by the inhabitants. - *Yeshayahu* 49:19

The song of Divine inspiration cannot spring forth from pagan soil, and the heart of Jewish men is not receptive to any other joy. Their spirit and their words remain sanctified to Jerusalem and Zion, which, contrary to the assumption of the gloating foe, had by no means come to an end with their physical downfall. Indeed, Zion and Jerusalem live on in spiritual survival and significance in the hearts of the men who had dwelt there. Their hearts that are closed to every other delight, their mouths which no longer open in song, their harps which are silent on alien soil, all attest to this in eternal mute eloquence. Hirsch, S. R. *The Hirsch Psalms*, 1978, p.426.

Psychological Ingredient: Address basic needs, provide safety and material comforts

Mitzvah of neighbors providing the *seudat havra'ah*, the meal of condolence that mourners eat upon return from the burial.

“A curse will come upon the neighbors (of a mourner) if they put him in the situation of having to eat his own food” – *Talmud Yerushalmi*

Part of the process of consolation, showing the mourner that people are concerned for him. In seeing to the physical needs of victims and mourners, the bereaved are free to invest psychic energy in the grieving process, and move towards recovery. -*Ateres Zekenim*

הַתְּשַׁכַּח אִשָּׁה עוֹלָהּ
Yeshayahu 49: 15
Shall a woman forget her sucking child?

“The master-servant and lover-beloved relationships are very powerful, but they lack the multi-level complexity of the relationship between children and parents.”

The identity of parents and children are intertwined, the child serving as the parent's future in this world and the parent being the child's connection to his past and to his roots. In this light, the significance of Yeshayahu's comparison is not just that God has compassion upon Israel, but that His identity – in the framework of His revelation in this world – is connected to His being the God of Israel, just as part of a parent's identity is that he is child's father. –Lichtenstein

Psychological Ingredient: Re-establish routine and control

The cocoon of shiva vs. return to routine.

כֹּה-אָמַר אֲדוֹשֶׁם ה' הִנֵּה אֲשָׂא אֱלֹגִים יְדֵי וְאֶל־עַמִּים אַרְיִים נָסִי וְהִבִּיאוּ בְנֵיךָ בְּחֻצְוֹן וּבְגִתְיֶךָ עַל־כַּתְּפֵי תַנְשֵׂאנָה
So said the Lord G-d, Behold I will raise My hand to the nations, and to the peoples will I raise My standard, and they shall bring your sons in their armpits, and your daughters shall be borne on their shoulders.

And kings shall be your nursing fathers and their princesses your wet nurses; they shall prostrate themselves to you with their face on the ground, and they shall lick the dust of

your feet, and you shall know that I am the Lord, for those who wait for Me shall not be ashamed. *Yeshayahu 49, 22:23*

Psychological Ingredient: *Maintain/create social connection and sense of belonging*

“The sum effect of the visitation of many friends and relatives . . . is the softening of loneliness, the relief of the heavy burden of internalized despair . . .” – Lamm, *Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*.

Shiva visitors, “may go to the home of the mourner to comfort even during the first three days (*after the burial*) . . . but should limit his conversation.” (*Gesher Hachaim 20:5*)

Psychological Ingredient: *Finding purpose/meaning*

שמעו אלי רדפי צדק מבקשי ה' הביטו אל-צור הוצבתם ואל-מקבת בור גקרתם
הביטו אל-אברהם-אביכם ואל-שרה תחוללכם כי אחד קראתיו ואברהם וארבהו

Hearken to Me, you pursuers of righteousness, you seekers of the Lord; look at the rock whence you were hewn and at the hole of the pit whence you were dug.

Look at Abraham your father and at Sarah who bore you, for when he was but one I called him and I blessed him and made him many. *Yeshayahu 51, 1:2*

As we know, from time to time, Israel uses God's covenant with the patriarchs as an argument that God should show compassion to Israel and redeem them. The people view themselves as being connected to the patriarchs and all that they must do is argue before God that He should take this factor into consideration. Here, *Yeshayahu* argues the very opposite, and demands of the people that they should remember God's covenant with the patriarchs and thereby they will believe in their redemption. There is no question that God remembers the covenant; here it is the people of whom the demand is made . . . and in that way they will be redeemed. Lichtenstein

כי-נחם ה' ציון נחם כל-תרבותיה וישם מדברה בעדן וערבתה כגן ה' ששון ושמחה ימצא בה תודה וקול זמרה

For the Lord shall console Zion, He shall console all its ruins, and He shall make its desert like a paradise and its wasteland like the garden of the Lord; joy and happiness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and a voice of song. *Yeshayahu 51: 3-4*.