

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of the New West End United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam

PARSHAT VA'ETCHANAN

DVAR TORAH: CALL OUT TO YERUSHALAYIM

In the second verse of our Haftarah Hashem tells the prophet: “דברו על לב ירושלים – try to console Yerushalayim with words that will reach its heart, וקראו אליה – and call out to her” (Yishayahu 40:2). But what would have been missing from this verse if Hashem just told Yishayahu to speak to the heart of Yerushalayim? What is added by calling out to Yerushalayim?

The Shem Mishmuel (Harav Shmuel Bornshtein, זצ"ל, the Sochotchover Rebbe, in his essays on Vaetchanan 5677) learns about the connotation of the word ויקרא from the beginning of the book of Vayikra (see Rashi on Vayikra 1:1). G d calls out to Moshe – "ויקרא אל משה" – but, in sharp contrast, He chances upon Bilam – "ויקר אל בלעם" (Bamidbar 23:4). When Hashem wants to reveal Himself to Moshe He calls out, saying, ‘Lift yourself up. Come close to Me,’ and Moshe is elevated. But Hashem meets Bilam where he is, in his moral filth, as the Zohar’s analogy goes – the same as one would relate to a leper knocking at the door, leaving him outside but passing alms out to him.

Israel isn’t always primed to hear consolation. Our hearts are sometimes stopped up, like Bnei Yisrael in Egypt who weren’t responsive to Moshe’s talk about the redemption while they were in the midst of their toils and suffering. Sometimes a person is suffering so much that every second hurts and the promise of future good – as wondrous as it may be – is not consoling at all (see the Ramban’s comment on Shemot 6:9).

Hashem gives Yishayahu a mission, to call out to Yerushalayim to lift herself out of her present situation. She should elevate herself to become responsive to consolation. Otherwise, Yishayahu’s words of consolation will fall on deaf ears and a closed heart.

This is the meaning of the double expression our Haftarah opens with, נהמו נהמו עמי – “Console, console My People” Yishayahu 40:1). “The prophet must say the words of consolation with such power that they penetrate deep into the hearts of Israel; then Israel will be aroused to come close and elevate themselves to the Divine Word” (Shem Mishmuel Vaetchanan 5677). This is also what the Midrash (Eichah Rabbah Chapter 1) means when it says that Israel was “doubly consoled.” One "נהמו" refers to the consolation itself, but the other "נהמו" refers to preparing Israel to receive the consolation.

In order for Moshe to be open to prophecy and Yerushalayim to be open to consolation, says the Shem Mishmuel, Hashem first calls them and they must first respond to the Divine call. They need to break out of their present state, and elevate themselves to a level where they’ll be responsive to prophecy or consolation.

Moshe and Yerushalayim might serve as models for us. How can we properly relate to the messages we receive from Hashem through His Torah and His Hashgachah? Moshe and Yerushalayim teach us about the step that precedes being able to receive communication from Hashem. We first must break out of our present state and responding to Hashem’s call to elevate ourselves. Then we are more open to hear His Words.

SOURCE GUIDE: CHAZAK VE'EMATZ

Yehoshua will lead the People of Israel into the Land of Israel, not Moshe. But Hashem tells Moshe to strengthen Yehoshua, using the double expression, חזקה ואמץ. This foreshadows the oft-repeated compound expression חזק ואמץ. חזק means “be strong,” but what does אמץ add? It seems like a synonym for strong.

This source guide looks at three approaches to this question, one found in the works of the Vilna Gaon, one in the Malbim, and a third in a work by Harav Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer, זצ"ל (1866-1935, born in Hungary, he made aliyah with his family as a young boy and was one of the great talmidei chachamim of Yerushalayim). The focus of his work באור שמות הנרדפים שבתנ"ך (Explanation of Synonyms in Tanach) is to describe the subtle differences in meaning between words in Tanach that seem to be synonyms.

A. Our Verse and Others Like It

Here is our pair of words, here, later in Devarim, and in the book of Yehoshua (the root אמץ is untranslated):

<p>1. Devarim 3:28 Command Yehoshua and (Rashi – verbally) strengthen him ואמצהו, for he will go before this people and he will cause them to inherit the land that you see.</p> <p>Devarim 31:7 Moshe called Yehoshua and said to him before all of Israel: Be strong ואמץ for you will go with this nation to the land that Hashem promised to their forefathers to give them and you will cause them to inherit it.</p> <p>Yehoshua 1:6 (6) Be strong ואמץ for you will cause this nation to inherit the land that I promised to their forefathers to give them.</p>	<p>דברים ג:כח וְצוּ אֶת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וְחִזְקֵהוּ וְאַמְצֵהוּ כִּי הוּא יַעֲבֹר לִפְנֵי הָעָם הַזֶּה וְהוּא יַנְחִיל אוֹתָם אֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶה.</p> <p>דברים לא:ז וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לַיהוֹשֻׁעַ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו לְעֵינַי כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל חִזֵּק וְאַמְצֵן כִּי אַתָּה תָּבוֹא אֶת הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְדֹוֹד לְאַבְרָם לְמַת לָהֶם וְאַתָּה תַּנְחִילָנָה אוֹתָם.</p> <p>יהושע א:ו (1) חִזֵּק וְאַמְצֵן כִּי אַתָּה תַּנְחִיל אֶת הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָם לְמַת לָהֶם.</p>
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B. Harav Wertheimer

Look at how the roots חזק and אמץ are used differently in this verse:

<p>2. Sanhedrin 98a Strengthen weak hands, and אמצו stumbling knees.</p>	<p>ישעיה לה:ג חִזְקוּ יְדַיִם רַפּוֹת וּבְרַכְיִים כְּשָׁלוֹת אַמְצוּ.</p>
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Hands that are weak need a normal level of strengthening; but knees that stumble need extraordinary strengthening. This verse, Harav Wertheimer explains, teaches us the difference between חזק and אמץ. חזק is normal strengthening and אמץ is extraordinary strengthening. This explains why in the many times this pair appears אמץ follows חזק.

Ruth is a good example of extraordinary effort, going beyond the norm:

<p>3. Ruth 1:18 She (Naomi) saw that she (Ruth) was extraordinarily determined to go with her, so she stopped speaking to her.</p>	<p>רות א:יח וַתֵּרָא כִּי מִתְאַמְצֶת הִיא לְלַכֵּת אִתָּהּ וַתִּתְחַדַּל לְדַבֵּר אֵלֶיהָ.</p>
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C. The Vilna Gaon

In his commentary on Yehoshua, the Vilna Gaon explains the difference between חזק and אמץ:

<p>4. Biur Ha-Gr" a Yehoshua 1:6 Chizuk refers to strengthening the body and imutz to strengthening the heart, as it is written (with regards to Sichon's intent to fight against Israel), "He (G-d) strengthened his heart" (Devarim 2:30), that his heart shouldn't soften.</p>	<p>ביאור הגר"א על יהושע א:ו חִזּוּק הוּא בְּגוֹף וְאַיּוּמוֹן הוּא בַּלֵּב, כְּמוֹ שְׂכֻתוֹב, "וְאַיּוּמוֹן אֶת לִבּוֹ" (דברים ב:ל). והוא, שלא ירך לבבו.</p>
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The same contrast appears in the Gra's commentary on Mishlei (24:5), where another verse uses both roots חזק and אמצ. The expression "ואמיץ לבו בגיבורים", "one who is courageous among the mighty" (Amos 2:16), might also bolster the Gra's approach. The following verse also follows suit:

<p>5. Tehillim 27:14 Hope to Hashem. Strengthen and be courageous and hope to Hashem.</p>	<p>תהילים כז:יד קוה אל ה' חזק ויאמץ לבך וקוה אל ה'.</p>
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D. The Malbim

The Malbim builds on the Gra's commentary but adds a new element. See his comment on Yehoshua:

<p>6. Malbim on Yehoshua 1:6 The beginning of arousing might is referred to as chizuk, but what gives it endurance and constancy, strength of the heart, is referred to as ometz. These are their definitions everywhere they are used.</p>	<p>פירוש המלבי"ם על יהושע א:ו התחלת התעוררות הגבורה תקרא בלשון חזוק, וקיומה והתמדתה שהוא אומץ הלב תקרא בלשון אמוץ, וזה גדרם בכ"מ.</p>
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Brute physical strength is deficient if it doesn't have staying power. A burst of energy might die down and a mighty warrior might not have the inner strength to keep going. Inner strength includes courage, the ability to take on challenges fearlessly, and it also includes persistence and endurance, the ability to keep going. חזוק needs אומץ in order to be effective.

E. Plugging It In

We now have three helpful commentaries to help us understand the double expression, חזק ואמץ:

Harav Wertheimer says it means to not just be strong, but extraordinarily so, to go beyond the natural and normal. The Gra says it means to not just to have physical strength, but also inner strength, to be strong both in body and in heart. The Malbim builds on this and adds that whereas חזק can be fleeting, when it is coupled with אומץ, the internal strength the Gra speaks of, it has staying power and will last.

Now, plug this in to our verse.

- Why is Yehoshua the subject of all this strengthening? Why need he be strengthened by Moshe and by Hashem Himself? And why does this appear at this juncture in the parshah?

Based on the above, take a close look at the following aggadta:

<p>7. Berachot 32b Our Rabbis learned: Four things need strengthening and they are – Torah and good deeds, prayer and derech erez (literally, the way of the world, Rashi explains that it refers to professional life – “if he is a craftsman for his craft, if he is a merchant for his business, and if he is a warrior for his war”). What is the source that Torah and good deeds [need strengthening]? For it is written, “Only חזק ואמץ (plug in the various approaches above) very much to keep and do the entire Torah” (Yehoshua 1:7). Be חזק with Torah and אמצ with good deeds. What is the source that prayer needs strengthening? For it is written, “Hope to Hashem. חזק ויאמץ your heart and hope to Hashem” (Tehillim 27:14). What is the source that derech erez needs strengthening? For it is written, “Let us be strong and strengthen ourselves for the sake of our nation ...” (Shmuel II 10:12).</p>	<p>ברכות לב: תנו רבנן: ארבעה צריכין חזוק ואלו הן – תורה ומעשים טובים תפלה ודרך ארץ. תורה ומעשים טובים מניין? שנאמר, "רק חזק ואמץ מאד לשמור ולעשות ככל התורה" (יהושע א:ז) חזק בתורה, ואמץ במעשים טובים. תפלה מניין? שנאמר, "קוה אל ה' חזק ויאמץ לבך וקוה אל ה'" (תהילים כז:יד). דרך ארץ מניין? שנאמר "חזק ונתחזק בעד עמנו וגו'" (שמואל ב' י"ב):</p>
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- Why does חזק refer to Torah and ואמץ to good deeds? Why do the first 3 add ואמץ and not the last?
- How would each of the three approaches explain this aggadta?

CHILDREN AS STUDENTS, STUDENTS AS CHILDREN BY RABBI YEHOASHUA SEIDENFELD

The first paragraph of Kriyat Shema, found in this week's parshah, includes the mitzvah of "ושננתם לבניך", "You shall teach them to your children" (Devarim 6:7). Rashi makes two curious comments: 1. ושננתם, though it certainly means you shall teach, is related to the root שגג (see Yishayahu 5:28) that indicates חידוד, sharpness. Rashi explains (based on Kiddushin 30a) that the Torah is here telling us that one should know Torah with such clarity and sharpness that if asked any question he will not need to hesitate before answering; and 2. לבניך does not specifically refer to children but also to students.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Sefer Hachinuch lists "ושננתם לבניך" as the source of the general mitzvah to learn and teach the wisdom of Torah, rather than of the obligation to transmit to our offspring. So this verse that seems to discuss teaching our children is, in fact, instructing us to become so well versed in all aspects of the Torah that we can answer any question a student may ask. Even for those of us involved in teaching Torah, this is an unattainable goal.

Rav Yitzchak Menachem Weinberg, שליט"א, the Tolner Rebbe, raises these questions in his sefer Heimah Yenachamuni. He explains that indeed this verse is addressing teachers. And although no one can be expected to have the answer to every question, teachers should have prepared their lesson well enough that they can answer questions unhesitatingly. This shows students the importance of gaining a complete understanding and instills their confidence in the teacher.

A second lesson was emphasized by the Tolner Rebbe when he spoke to our faculty a number of years ago. Every rebbe must see himself as a parent. If he cares and expresses the love of a parent to a child, the student will be a willing receptacle for the Torah being transmitted. He said that this is not simply good advice, but an absolute requirement in every situation. The response of the Tolner Rebbe to many practical questions asked by the faculty, was: What would you do if it was your child?

Since many of us are not involved in professionally teaching Torah, let's add one more thought on the equivalency between students and children. We need to remember that our children are our most important students. They learn from everything we say and do. Let's make sure that we are confident that the words we use and the actions we take, especially in the presence of our children, are unhesitatingly correct in accordance with the Torah.

Dedicated in memory of
David ben Avraham, ז"ל

*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at www.darchenoam.org +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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