



HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

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Never Forgotten

HAFTORAH KI TEITZEI

We usually think of forgetting as a failure — something important that has escaped our attention. Yet in Parashat Ki Teitzei, the Torah introduces a mitzvah that can be fulfilled only through forgetting: **כִּי תִקְצֹר קְצִירְךָ בְשָׂדְךָ וְשִׁכַּחְתָּ עֹמֶר בְּשָׂדֶךָ לֹא תָשׁוּב לִקְהָתוֹ לְגֵר לִיתוֹם וְלְאַלְמָנָה יְהִיָּה לְמַעַן יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל מַעֲשֶׂה יְדֶיךָ** - *When you reap the harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not return to retrieve it; it shall be for the stranger, the orphan and the widow, so that Hashem your God will bless you in all the work of your hands.* (Devarim 24:19)

The language contains a striking irony: the sheaf may be forgotten, but the person in need must not be. What the landowner leaves behind becomes the means through which the stranger, orphan and widow are remembered. The Torah transforms an ordinary lapse of awareness into an act of care.

Perhaps **shikhechah** addresses not only the sheaf that has been forgotten, but also those whom society is in danger of forgetting. The stranger, orphan and widow lack the security and influence to ensure that their needs will be noticed. The Torah therefore builds their remembrance into the very structure of the harvest. The forgotten part of the field becomes a place in which another person is seen.

In our Haftorah, Yeshayahu portrays Yerushalayim as a city left behind, abandoned in the field of history. She has watched other nations grow while she remains desolate. To the outside world, she appears to have been passed over and forgotten. But she has never disappeared from Hashem's sight. He turns toward her in her desolation and promises: **בְּרַגַע קָטָן עֲזַבְתִּיךָ וּבְרַחֲמִים גָּדֹלִים אֶקְבָּצֶךָ: בְּשָׂפָךְ קִצְרְךָ הִסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי רַגַע מִמֶּךָ וּבְחֶסֶד עוֹלָם רַחֲמֶיךָ אֶמַר גְּאֻלְךָ ה'** - *For a brief moment I left you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In a surge of anger, I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion upon you, says Hashem, your Redeemer.* (Yeshayahu 54:7-8)

The parashah and the Haftorah speak to one another through the language of forgetting. In the parashah, the forgotten sheaf ensures that vulnerable people will be remembered. In the Haftorah, a seemingly forgotten Yerushalayim is assured that Hashem has never lost sight of her. Both the sheaf and the city appear to have been left behind, yet neither is without purpose or future. The sheaf becomes a source of sustenance and

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blessing; the desolate city will expand beyond its borders and once again overflow with children. What appears neglected becomes the setting for renewal.

There are moments when a person—and even an entire nation—may feel left at the edge of the field, unnoticed and uncertain of what comes next. The Haftorah reminds us that being left behind is not the same as being lost. Even when she feels forgotten, Yerushalayim remains held within Hashem's everlasting compassion. And just as Hashem remembers Yerushalayim in her desolation, He will ultimately remember us, gather us and bring us home. ■

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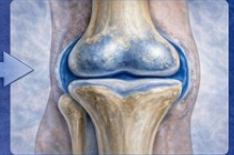
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