

Hope



with
**Nechama
Goldman Barash**

Wednesday, September 11

Hope In Times of Uncertainty

This Resource is for Supplementary Program Educators

Group Discussion Questions:

1

Over this past year, who or what has given you a sense of hope?

2

In a previous time in your life when you have been afraid or disconsolate, what was it, if anything, that gave you hope?

3

Do you think that hope should be a focus now, a year after October 7? Why or why not?

One Year On

Join our 3-Part Webinar to Prepare for the Upcoming Holiday Season and October 7 Anniversary



תהילים פרק כ"ז

לְדָוִד

יְהוָה אֹרֵי וַיִּשְׁעֵי מִמִּי אִירָא יְהוָה מֵעוֹדֵי חַיִּי
מִמִּי אֶפְחָד:

בְּקִרְבִּי עָלַי מְרַעִים לֶאֱכֹל אֶת־בְּשָׂרִי צָרִי
וְאִיבֵי לִי הֵמָּה כְּשִׁלּוֹ וְנִפְלוּ:

אִם־תִּחַנְנֵה עָלַי מִחַנְנֵה לֹא־יִירָא לְבִי

אִם־תִּקְוֹם עָלַי מִלְחָמָה בְּזֹאת אָנִי בּוֹטָח:

אֶחָת שְׂאֵלְתִי מֵאֵת־יְהוָה אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ

שְׁבַתִּי בְּבֵית־יְהוָה כָּל־יְמֵי חַיִּי לְחַזוֹת

בְּנַעַם־יְהוָה וּלְבַקֵּר בְּהִיכָלוֹ:

כִּי יִצְפְּנֵנִי בְּסֶכֶה בְּיוֹם רָעָה יִסְתַּרְנִי בְּסֵתֶר

אֶהְלֹו בְּצוּר יְרוּמָמַנִּי:

וְעֵתָה יְרוֹם רֹאשִׁי עַל אִיבֵי סְבִיבוֹתִי

וְאֲזַבְּחָהּ בְּאֶהְלֹו זִבְחֵי תְרוּעָה אֲשִׁירָה

וְאֲזַמְרָה לַיהוָה:

שָׁמַע־יְהוָה קוֹלִי אֶקְרָא וְחַנּוּנִי וְעֲנִנִי:

לֵךְ אָמַר לְבִי בְקִשׁוּ פְנֵי אֶת־פְּנֵיךָ יְהוָה

אֲבַקֵּשׁ:

אֶל־תִּסְתֵּר פְּנֵיךָ מִמֶּנִּי אֵל תִּטְבֹּאֵף עַבְדְּךָ

עֲזַרְתִּי הֵייתָ אֶל־תִּטְשֵׁנִי וְאֶל־תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי

יִשְׁעֵי:

כִּי־אָבִי וְאִמִּי עֲזָבוּנִי וַיְהוָה יֹאסֶפְנִי:

הוֹרְנֵנִי יְהוָה דֶּרֶכְךָ וְנַחֲנִי בְּאֶרֶחַ מִישׁוֹר

לְמַעַן שׁוֹרְרֵי:

אֶל־תִּתְּנֵנִי בְּנַפְשׁ צָרִי כִּי קִמּוּ־בִי עֲדֵי־שִׁקֵּר

וַיִּפַּח חָמָס:

לֹאֵל אֶהְמַנְתִּי לְרֹאוֹת בְּטוֹב־יְהוָה בְּאֶרֶץ

חַיִּים:

קוּהָ אֶל־יְהוָה חֲזֹק וַיֵּאֱמַץ לְבָבְךָ וְקוּהָ

אֶל־יְהוָה:

Psalms chapter 27

Of David.

The LORD is my light and my help;
whom should I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life,
whom should I dread?

When evil men assail me to devour my flesh
it is they, my foes and my enemies,
who stumble and fall.

Should an army besiege me, my heart would have no
fear;

should war beset me, still would I be confident.

One thing I ask of the LORD, only that do I seek: to
live in the house of the LORD

all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the
LORD, to frequent His temple.

He will shelter me in His pavilion on an evil day, grant
me the protection of His tent,
raise me high upon a rock.

Now is my head high over my enemies round about;
sacrifice in His tent with shouts of joy,
singing and chanting a hymn to the LORD.

Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud; have mercy on me,
answer me.

You! my heart says: "Seek My face!"

O LORD, I seek Your face.

Do not hide Your face from me; do not thrust aside
Your servant in anger;

You have ever been my help.

Do not forsake me, do not abandon me,

O God, my deliverer.

Though my father and mother abandon me,
the LORD will take me in.

Show me Your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level
path because of my watchful foes.

Do not subject me to the will of my foes,
for false witnesses and unjust accusers
have appeared against me.

Had I not the assurance that I would enjoy the
goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living...

Hope in the LORD;

be strong and of good courage!

O Hope in the LORD!

Think of a time in your life when you were afraid. In that situation, where did you find hope?

תלמוד בבלי ברכות לב:

אמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא: אם ראה אדם שהתפלל ולא נענה — יחזור ויתפלל. שנאמר: "קנה אל ה' חזק ויאמץ לבך וקנה אל ה'".

Babylonian Talmud Brachot 32b

On a similar note, Rabbi Ḥama, son of Rabbi Ḥanina, said: A person who prayed and saw that he was not answered, should pray again, as it is stated: "Hope in the LORD; be strong and of good courage! and hope in the LORD!" (Psalms 27:14).

What do you think of Rabbi Ḥama ben Ḥanina's idea? Do you agree with his assertion? Why or why not?

ספר העקרים, מאמר ד מ"ט

וראו שישאל שואל ויאמר כי התקוה והתוחלת אינו דבר נאות לטבע האדם, כי הם יטרידו המחשבה ויתישו הכח ויחליאו הנפש חולי גדול עד אשר ישימוה סכלה, וזה כי בסבת התקוה והתוחלת לדבר מה תהיה הנפש טרודה לחשוב מחשבות להשיג הדבר ההוא המקווה, ולא תחדל מלחשוב תמיד בזה עד אשר יכבה אור השכל מעליה ותשאר הנפש עמומה, על זה אמר הכתוב תוחלת ממושכה מחלה לב, ועל כן ראוי לכל חכם לב להסיר מנפשו התקוה והתוחלת, וזה כי כשתחדל הנפש מלקוות דבר קשה ההשגה ותסתפק במה שתשיג, לא תהיה הנפש טרודה בדבר ותחשוב בדברי מדע והשכל וענינים מרבים אור השכל ומזהירים אותו, ואם כן איך נאמר כי התקוה והתוחלת אל המאמין טוב, עד שנמצא הנביא מזהיר על התקוה יותר מכל הדברים כלם, אמר ואתה באלהיך תשוב חסד ומשפט שמור וקוה אל אלהיך תמיד, שיראה שהתקוה דבר הכרחי אל המאמין כשמירת חסד ומשפט או יותר.

והתשובה בזה, כי התקוה לדבר שהמקוה מסופק בו אם יגיע אם לאו תטריד הנפש לחשוב מחשבות כדי להשיגו, אבל התקוה לדבר שהאדם מובטח בו שיבא כמו שיקוה לאור הבקר, לא יטריד הנפש אבל ישמחנה, בהיותה משערת הטוב ההוא המבוקש והיותה בוטחת שיגיע, ועל זה הדרך ראוי שתהיה התקוה לשם כשיהיה בוטח בו בטחון שלם שישלים תקותו בלי ספק, אחר שיש יכולת בידו ואין מי שיעכב על ידו, לא כמי שמקוה דבר שמסופק בו אם יגיע אם לא יגיע, והתקוה הזאת תחזק הלב ותשמחהו, אמר הכתוב חזקו ויאמץ לבבכם כל המיחלים לה, כי התקוה אליו לא די שלא תחליש הלב אלא שתחזק אותו, כי המקוה אל השם יתברך בהיות לבו סמוך ונשען על ה' קדוש ישראל באמת שימלא שאלתו יוסיף אומץ ויתחזק כחו, הוא שאמר הכתוב וייעפו נערים וגו', וקוי ה' יחליפו כח, רוצה לומר אפילו הנערים שאין מדרכם ליעף וליגע והבחורים שדרכם להחליף כח כשול יכשלו וייעפו וייגעו, ואולם קוי ה' יחליפו כח וירבו עצמה, ומצד שירבו עצמה יוכל לקוות, ומצד היות התקוה אל השם יתברך שהוא דבר

Sefer Halkkarim, Maamar 4 49

And it is worthy that the one who asks will ask and say that hope and expectation are not good for man, because they disturb the power of thought, weaken one's strength and make the mind sick and stupid. For as a result of hoping and expecting a thing, the mind is busy thinking of obtaining the thing hoped for, and this continual preoccupation with the object desired quenches at length the light of the intellect and the mind remains dimmed, as we read: "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." Hence every intelligent person should remove from his mind hope and expectation. If one ceases to hope for something that is hard to get and contents himself with what he can get, his mind is not preoccupied with the thing and he can think of things of knowledge and understanding and of subjects which develop the intellect and illumine it. How then can we say that hope and expectation are good for a believer so much so that the prophet urges hope above all things? Thus we read: "Therefore turn thou to thy God; keep mercy and justice, and wait for thy God continually," from which it seems that hope is as essential to a believer as mercy and justice or even more so.

The answer to the question is this: Hope for something about which one is in doubt whether it will come or not, does disturb the soul, preoccupying it with thoughts of how to obtain it, but hope for a thing which one is sure will come as, for example, the hope for the light of the morning, does not disturb the soul but makes it glad, because it conceives the good which is sought and is confident that it will come. This is the kind of hope one must have in God. One must trust implicitly that God will fulfil one's hope without doubt, since He has the power and there is no one to prevent Him. But one must not have the kind of hope in which one doubts whether the thing will come or not. Such hope as we have described strengthens the heart and makes it glad, as we read: "Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all ye that wait for the Lord." Hope in God, far from weakening the heart, strengthens it, for if one hopes in God and his heart truly relies upon the Holy One of Israel, trusting that He will grant his request, he gets stronger and more courageous, as we read: "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, ... But they that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength." That is, even the youths, who do not usually become faint and weary, and the young men, who usually renew their strength, will all stumble and faint and be weary, but those that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, and the more strength they have the more they will be able to hope, and the hope in turn which has God for its object, who is a permanent

קיים יתחזק יותר, עד שהדברים הללו הם כמתגמלים, התקוה סבת החוזק והחוזק סבת התקוה.

ואל זה רמז המשורר באסרו קוה אל ה' חזק ויאמץ לבך וגו', הנה באר שהתקוה סבת החוזק והחוזק סבה לקוות יותר, ועל התקוה הזאת היה מזהיר הנביא באמרו חסד ומשפט שמור וקוה אל אלהיך תמיד, כי התקוה והתוחלת אל השם יתברך הוא דבר יותר מעולה מכל התהלות שאפשר שישבח האדם להשם יתברך, אמר המשורר ואני תמיד איחל והוספתי על כל תהלתך.

being, will further increase their strength, the two mutually reacting upon each other, hope causing strength and strength in turn causing hope.

The Psalmist alludes to this when he says: "Hope in the Lord; be strong, and let thy heart take courage; yea, hope in the Lord." This shows that hope is the cause of strength, and that strength in turn is a cause for more hope. The prophet had this hope in mind in his admonition: "Therefore turn thou to thy God; keep mercy and justice, and wait for thy God continually." For hope and waiting for God are better than all the praises that one can give Him, as the Psalmist says: "But as for me, I will hope continually, and will add to all Thy praises."

Hope at a Time of Lamentation

4

איכה ג:ז-לב

יִתְזַנַּח מְשָׁלוֹם נַפְשִׁי נְשִׁיתִי טוֹבָה:

יֹאמֶר אֲבָד נַפְחִי וְתוֹחֲלָתִי מִיְהוָה:

זְכַרְעֲנִי וּמְרוּדֵי לַעֲנָה וְרֹאשׁ:

זְכוֹר תִּזְכּוֹר (וּתְשִׁיחַ) [וְתִשׁוּחַ] עָלַי נַפְשִׁי:

זֹאת אֲשִׁיב אֶל־לְבִי עַל־כֵּן אֹחִיל:

חֶסֶד־יְהוָה כִּי לֹא־תִמְנוּ כִּי לֹא־כָלוּ רַחֲמָיו:

חֲדָשִׁים לְבִקְרִים רַבָּה אֲמוּנָתְךָ:

חֶלְקִי יְהוָה אֲמַרְהָ נַפְשִׁי עַל־כֵּן אֹחִיל לוֹ:

טוֹב יְהוָה לִקְוֹ לְנַפֵּשׁ תִּדְרָשׁנוּ:

טוֹב יְחִיל וְדוּמָם לְתִשׁוּעַת יְהוָה:

טוֹב לְגֹבֵר כִּי־יִשָּׂא עַל בְּנֵעוּרָיו:

יֵשֵׁב בְּדָד וַיִּדָּם כִּי נָטַל עָלָיו:

יִתֵּן בְּעַפְר פִּיהוּ אוֹלֵי יֵשׁ תִּקְוָה:

יִתֵּן לְמַכְהוּ לְחִי יִשְׁבַּע בְּחָרְפָה:

כִּי לֹא יִזְנַח לְעוֹלָם אֲדָנִי:

כִּי אִם־הוֹגָה וְרַחַם כָּרַב חֶסֶד־יוֹ:

Lamentations 3:17-32

My life was bereft of peace,
I forgot what happiness was.

I thought my strength and **hope**
Had perished before the LORD.

To recall my distress and my misery
Was wormwood and poison;
Whenever I thought of them,
I was bowed low.

But this do I call to mind,
Therefore I have **hope**:

The kindness of the LORD has not ended,
His mercies are not spent.

They are renewed every morning—
Ample is Your grace!

"The LORD is my portion," I say with full heart;
Therefore will I **hope** in Him.

The LORD is good to those who **trust** in Him,
To the one who seeks Him;

It is good to wait patiently
Till rescue comes from the LORD.

It is good for a man, when young,
To bear a yoke;

Let him sit alone and be patient,
When He has laid it upon him.

**Let him put his mouth to the dust—
There may yet be hope.**

Let him offer his cheek to the smiter;
Let him be surfeited with mockery.

For the Lord does not
Reject forever,
But first afflicts, then pardons
In His abundant kindness.

תלמוד בבלי חגיגה ד:

רבי אמי כי מטי להאי קרא, בכי: "יתן בעפר פיהו אולי יש תקוה", אמר: כולי האי ו"אולי"? רבי אמי כי מטי להאי קרא, בכי: "בקשו צדק בקשו ענה אולי תסרתו ביום אף ה", אמר: כולי האי ו"אולי"? רבי אסי כי מטי להאי קרא, בכי: "שנאו רע ואהבו טוב והציגו בשער משפט אולי יחנן ה' [אלהי] צבאות", כולי האי ו"אולי"?

Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 4b

When Rabbi Ami reached this verse, he cried: "Let him put his mouth in the dust, perhaps there may be hope" (Lamentations 3:29). He said: A sinner suffers through all this punishment and only perhaps there may be hope? When Rabbi Ami reached this verse, he cried: "Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you shall be hidden on the day of the Lord's anger" (Zephaniah 2:3). He said: All of this is expected of each individual, and only perhaps God's anger may be hidden? Likewise, when Rabbi Asi reached this verse, he cried: "Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate; perhaps the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious" (Amos 5:15). He said: All of this, and only perhaps?

Do you think it's good to have hope even if the chances are very low of a positive outcome?

איכה רבה פרשה ג

"זאת אשוב אל לבי על כן אוחיל" -
 רבי אבא בר כהנא בשם רבי יוחנן אמר משל למה הדבר דומה, למלך שנשא מטרונה וכתב לה כתבה מרבה, ואמר לה כך וכך חפוזת אני עושה לך, כך וכך ארגונות טובות אני נותן לך. הניחה המלך והלך לו למדינת הים ואחר לשם. נכנסו שכנותיה אצלה והיו מקניטות אותה ואמרות לה הניחך המלך והלך לו למדינת הים, ושוב אינו חוזר עליך, והיתה בוכה ומתאנחת, וכיון שנכנסה לתוך ביתה פותחת ומוציאה כתבתה וקוראת, ורואה בכתבתה כך וכך חפוזת אני עושה, כך וכך ארגונות טובות אני נותן לך, מיד היתה מתנחמת. לימים בא המלך, אמר לה בתי אני תמה איך המתנת לי כל אותן השנים, אמרה לו אדוני המלך אלמלא כתבה מרבה שכתבת ונתת לי כבר אבדוני שכנותי. כך עובדי כוכבים מונין את ישראל ואומרים להם, אלהיכם הסתיר פניו מכם וסלק שכינתו מכם, עוד אינו חוזר עליכם, והן בוכין ומתאנחין, וכיון שנכנסין לבתי כנסיות ולבתי מדרשות וקורין בתורה ומוציאין שכתוב (ויקרא כו, ט): ופניתי אליכם והפירתי אתכם ונתתי משכני בתוכם והתהלכתי בתוכם, והן מתנחמין. למחר כשיבוא קץ הגאולה ואמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא לישראל בני אני תמה מכם היאך המתנתם לי כל אותן השנים, והן אומרים לפניו רבוננו של עולם אולי תורתך שנתת לנו כבר אבדנו האמות. לך נאמר: זאת אשוב אל לבי, ואין זאת אלא תורה, שנאמר (דברים ד, מד): וזאת התורה. וכן דוד אמר (תהלים קיט, צב): לולי תורתך שעשעי אז אבדתי בעניי. על כן אוחיל לו, ומיחדים שמו שתי פעמים ביום, ואומרים (דברים ו, ד): שמע ישראל ה' אלהינו ה' אחד.

Eichah Rabbah Parsha 3

"This I will reply to my heart; therefore I have hope" (Lamentations 3:21).

Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said in the name of Rabbi Yohanan: To what is this matter analogous? To a king who married a noblewoman and wrote for her a very substantial marriage contract, saying to her: 'I will prepare for you such and such number of wedding canopies, and I am giving you such and such number of gowns of purple wool.'

The king left her and went to a country overseas, and he was delayed there. Her neighbors came to her and were teasing her and saying to her: 'The king left you, went to a country overseas, and he is not going to return to you.'

She was crying and sighing. When she would enter her house, she would take her marriage contract and read it. She would see in her marriage contract: I will prepare such and such number of wedding canopies, and I am giving you such and such number of gowns of purple wool, and she would be immediately comforted.

Ultimately, the king came. He said to her: 'My daughter, I am astonished, how did you wait for me all those years?' She said to him: 'My lord, the king, were it not for the substantial marriage contract that you wrote and gave to me, my neighbors would have caused my demise.'

So too, idolaters provoke Israel and say to them: 'Your God has concealed His face from You and caused His Divine Presence to depart from you. He will never return to you.' They cry and sigh. When they enter the synagogues and study halls, read the Torah, and find that it is written: "I will turn to you, and make you fruitful.... I will place My Sanctuary in your midst.... I will walk in your midst" (Leviticus 26:9, 11-12), they are comforted.

Tomorrow, when the end of the redemption comes, the Holy One blessed be He will say to Israel:

'My children, I am astonished over you, how did you wait for Me all those years?' They will say before Him: 'Master of the universe, were it not for Your Torah that You gave us, the nations would have caused our demise.' That is why it is stated: "This (zot) I will reply to my heart," and zot is nothing other than Torah, as it is stated: "And this [vezot] is the Torah" (Deuteronomy 4:44). Likewise, David said: "Had Your Torah not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction" (Psalms 119:92). "Therefore I have hope" in Him, and we proclaim the unity of His name twice daily and say: "Hear Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

What has given you hope over this very difficult past year?

7

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Celebrating Life, pg 175; The Dignity of Difference p. 206

"One of the most important distinctions I have learned in the course of reflection on Jewish history is the difference between optimism and hope. Optimism is the belief that things will get better. Hope is the belief that, together, we can make things better. Optimism is a passive virtue, hope an active one. It takes no courage to be an optimist, but it takes a great deal of courage to have hope. Knowing what we do of our past, no Jew can be an optimist. But Jews have never – despite a history of sometimes awesome suffering – given up hope" To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope in a world serially threatened by despair. Every ritual, every mitzvah, every syllable of the Jewish story, every element of Jewish law, is a protest against escapism, resignation or the blind acceptance of fate. Judaism is a sustained struggle, the greatest ever known, against the world that is, in the name of the world that could be, should be, but is not yet. There is no more challenging vocation. Throughout history, when human beings have sought hope they have found it in the Jewish story. Judaism is the religion, and Israel is the home, of hope."

What do you agree or disagree with in this text?

8

Natan Sharansky, Fear No Evil, pages 370-371

During these years I have met people who have been weakened from constant disappointments. They continually create new hopes for themselves, and as a result they betray themselves. Others live in the world of illusions, hastily and incessantly building and rebuilding their world in order to prevent real life from ultimately destroying it. What, then, is the solution? The only answer is to find the meaning of your current life. It's best if you are left with only one hope – the hope of remaining yourself no matter what happens. Don't fear, don't believe, and don't hope. Don't believe words from the outside; believe in your own heart. Believe in that meaning which was revealed to you in this life, and hope that you will succeed in guarding it.

What do you agree or disagree with in this text?

9

Elie Wiesel

"One must wager on the future. I believe it is possible, in spite of everything, to believe in friendship in a world without friendship, and even to believe in God in a world where there has been an eclipse of God's face...we must not give in to cynicism. To save the life of a single child, no effort is too much. To make a tired old man smile is to perform an essential task. To defeat injustice and misfortune, if only for one instant, for a single victim, is to invent a new reason to hope."

What do you agree or disagree with in this text?

10

Anne Frank, Diary of a Young Girl

"In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery, and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness, I hear the ever approaching thunder, which will destroy us too, I can feel the sufferings of millions and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end, and that peace and tranquility will return again."

What do you agree or disagree with in this text?

11

The Possibility of Disappointment by Rabbi Aaron Potek (Senior Executive Rabbi, Direct of Jewish Life at Sixth and I in Washington D.C.)

God offers no silver linings here. This isn't a "there is no promised land" or "the promised land was inside of you all along" Lifetime movie moment. There are no second tablets at the top of this mountain. Instead, God says: "Yes, there's a promised land. You can even see it. And you won't get there." On the surface, it feels almost cruel.

But I'd like to think God is helping to broaden Moses's perspective. The Promised Land is only one direction. Look West, East, North and South. A life, your life, can never be reduced to or defined by the disappointments, painful as they may be. There are always wonderful moments, too.

I wish I could tell you that you will reach your promised land. Perhaps you will. But the hard truth that our Torah teaches us through the example of Moses is that not everyone does.

Accepting that our dream might never be realized is painful... but it's also liberating. It allows us to hold on to a more realistic form of hope - an uncertain hope. That uncertainty makes disappointments less devastating and compels us - when the time is right - to climb back up the mountain. What waits for us there? Maybe a new set of tablets, a new opportunity. Or maybe just a broader perspective that lets us see beyond the disappointment.

What do you agree or disagree with in this text?

12

Rebecca Solnit, Hope in the Dark

Hope locates itself in the premises that we don't know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act. When you recognize uncertainty, you recognize that you may be able to influence the outcomes—you alone or you in concert with a few dozen or several million others. Hope is an embrace of the unknown and knowable, an alternative to the certainty of both optimists and pessimists. Optimists think it will all be fine without our involvement; pessimists take the opposite position; both excuse themselves from acting. It's the belief that what we do matters even though how and when it may matter, who and what is may impact, are not things we can know beforehand...Or perhaps studying the record more carefully leads us to expect miracles - not when and where we expect them, but to expect to be astonished, to expect that we don't know. And this is grounds to act.

What do you agree or disagree with in this text?

13

שמות לח:ח

וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת הַכִּיּוֹר נְחֹשֶׁת, וְאֵת כַּנּוֹ נְחֹשֶׁת--בְּמִרְאֵת
הַצְּבָאוֹת אֲשֶׁר צָבְאוּ פֶתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד.

Exodus 38:8

And he made the laver of brass, and the base thereof of brass, of the mirrors of the thronging women that did service at the door of the tent of meeting.

Continue below...

אתה מוצא, בשעה שהיו ישראל בעבודת פרך במצרים, גזר עליהם פרעה שלא יהיו ישנים בבתיהן, שלא יהיו משמשין מטותיהן. אמר רבי שמעון בר חלפתא, מה היו בנות ישראל עושות. יורדות לשאב מים מן היאור, והקדוש ברוך הוא היה מזמין להם דגים קטנים בתוך כדיהן, והן מוכרות ומבשלות מהן ולוקחות מהן יין והולכות לשדה ומאכילות את בעליהן שם, שנאמר: ובכל עבדה בשדה (שמות א, יד). משהיו אוכלין ושותין, נוטלות המראות ומביטות בהן עם בעליהן, זאת אומרת אני נאה ממך, וזה אומר אני נאה ממך, ומתוך כך היו מרגילין עצמן לידי תאוה ופרין ורבין, והקדוש ברוך הוא פוקדן לאלתר.

כיון שאמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה לעשות את המשכן, עמדו כל ישראל ונתנדבו, מי שהביא כסף ומי שהביא זהב או נחשת ואבני שהם ואבני מלואים, הביאו בזריזות הכל. אמרו הנשים, מה יש לנו לתן בנדבת המשכן. עמדו והביאו את המראות והלכו להן אצל משה. כשראה משה אותן המראות, זעף בהן. אמר להם לישראל, טלו מקלות ושברו שוקיהן של אלו. המראות למה הן צריכין. אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה, משה, על אלו אתה מבזה. המראות האלו הן העמידו כל הצבאות הללו במצרים. טל מהן ועשה מהן כיור נחשת וכנו לכהנים, שממנו יהיו מתקדשין הכהנים, שנאמר: ועש את הכיור נחשת ואת כנו נחשת במראת הצבאת אשר צבאו (שמות לח, ח), באותן המראות שהעמידו את כל הצבאות האלה.

You find that when the Israelites suffered hard labor in Egypt that Pharaoh decreed that they should not sleep at home nor have relations with their wives. Said R. Simeon ben Halafta: What did the daughters of Israel do? They would go down to draw water from the river. Whereupon the Holy One Blessed be He prepared small fishes for them inside their jars. They would cook some, sell some and buy with the proceeds wine and go out into the fields and give their husbands to eat there. After they had eaten they took their mirrors and looked into them together with their husbands. She said: I am more comely than you. He said: I am more comely than you. In the course of this tete-a-tete their sexual desire was aroused and they became fruitful and multiplied, the Holy One Blessed be He forthwith remembering them (i.e. blessed them with issue)...

As soon as the Holy One Blessed be He told Moses to make the Tabernacle, all Israel came along to contribute. Some brought silver, some gold or brass, onyx and stones to be set. They readily brought everything. Whereupon the women said: What have we to contribute to the offerings of the Tabernacle? They came along and brought the mirrors and presented themselves to Moses. When Moses saw the mirrors he was furious with them. He said to Israel: Take sticks and break their thighs of those who brought them. What use are such mirrors? Said the Holy One Blessed be He to Moses: Moses! You look down on them! It was these mirrors which raised up all those hosts in Egypt! Take them and make out of them the basin and its stand for the priests in which they can purify themselves, as it is stated And he made the basin....

What is your personal takeaway from this text?

Suggested Activities

1

The simanim - symbolic foods that some Jews eat on Rosh HaShana eve - are actually culinary manifestations of our hopes and prayers for the upcoming new year. Using [*this beautiful resource*](#) from our friends at Kol HaOt as inspiration, have your students craft a customized Rosh HaShana seder for 5785, full of foods that symbolize their specific hopes (alongside newly crafted blessings) after such a painful 5784.

2

Help your students plant a "Hope Garden" in which they literally plant their hopes in soil and watch them grow: 1) Using [*these instructions*](#), make paper embedded with flower or lettuce seeds. 2) Then, give each student a piece of the seed paper, and write on it their greatest hope for this upcoming year. 3) Plant the papers in soil, and watch their hopes bloom over the coming weeks.

Closing Intention

I Believe In The Sun, found on the wall of a cellar, by a Jew in the Cologne concentration camp

I believe in the sun even when it is not shining . And I believe in love, even when there's no one there. And I believe in God, even when he is silent. I believe through any trial, there is always a way. But sometimes in this suffering and hopeless despair, My heart cries for shelter, to know someone's there But a voice rises within me, saying hold on my child, I'll give you strength, I'll give you hope. Just stay a little while.

May there someday be sunshine May there someday be happiness

May there someday be love May there someday be peace....

- Unknown author

