



## PROBING

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## THE PROPHETS

Our early Chachamim brilliantly positioned the haftarah of Parashat Shofetim, which is taken from the 51<sup>st</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> chapters of Sefer Yishayahu, to follow that of Re'eh, which is found three prakim later (54<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup>). By doing so, they have left a subtle-or not so subtle-message for us to ponder and understand. In the opening words of last week's haftarah, the navi cries: "Aniya so'ara lo nuchama," the afflicted, tempest-tossed nation is not comforted. Despite the words of consolation and encouragement of Yishayahu it would seem that the comfort that nation sought was not realized. For this reason, our Rabbis saw fit to juxtapose this week's reading from the 51<sup>st</sup> perek, that opens with the words "Anochi, Anochi Hu m'nachemchem," "It is I (Hashem) Who comforts you." You may doubt the words of encouragement given to you by the navi, you might question how such a glorious future could ever come to be, given the condition of the Jewish

nation, but you must understand: "Anochi, Anochi Hu menachemchem," that "It is I (Hashem) Who comforts you." so this message should not be regarded as empty words spoken by the prophet but a guarantee from the One Who will console you and bring these promises into fruition.

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**Chazal were aiming to comfort future generations of oppressed Jews and not only reflect the situation of Yishayahu's era**

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Tenderly, the prophet urges a despondent nation to awaken from their despair and reinvigorate themselves by believing that G-d's promised redemption is at hand. In a most touching manner, Yish'ayahu explains that Hashem, as it were, suffered in exile together with His nation ("V'ata ma li fo") and he proceeds to depict the arrival of the harbinger of redemption, whose very footsteps could be heard on the Judean mountains. Calling upon the people to rejoice over the news, Yish'ayahu explains that the redemptive process is a gradual one. As opposed to their exodus from Egypt, this redemption, Israel is told, will not

May the Torah learned from this issue be **לעילוי נשמת**

our beloved husband, father, grandfather and greatgrandfather

**Rabbi I. Fred Hollander z"l**

on his eighth yahrzeit  
Rosh Chodesh Elul

to be rushed or hurried. It will be, rather a gradual process, conducted by G-d Himself, who will gather the nation back to their land.

And yet, as timely as those words were to the people of Judea, we can almost sense that, in "reordering" the biblical chronology, Chazal were aiming to comfort future generations of oppressed Jews and not only reflect the situation of Yishayahu's era. Hashem's soothing words that He would comfort them, that their punishments will cease and that the Holy City should awaken and don her garments of strength and glory, delivered a powerful message to the suffering Jew in the Diaspora. The prophet's call for the people to arise from the ashes of destruction and to listen intently to hear the footsteps of their redeemer echoing upon the mountains of Yerushalaim rejuvenated the grief-laden generation of the churban as well the millions of our people who mourned throughout two millennia of history.

For most nations, these words would have little impact. But to the eternal nation who remained faithful to the Eternal One, these words, spoken to their ancestors thousands of years earlier, remained fresh and relevant throughout the ages. And it served as comfort and inspiration for a people whose ears were attentive to those footsteps that echo upon Jerusalem's mountains.

Can you not hear them? ■

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