



PROBING

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THE PROPHETS

In analyzing the seven haftarot of comfort (the “sh’va d’n’chemta”) that follow Tish’a B’Av, we have shared with you, over the past years, the view of Tosafot (Megillah 32b) that this series of comforting visions of Yishayahu was placed in an order of increasing consolation, each succeeding prophecy delivering a message of greater solace than the previous one. We have often attempted to highlight what made any specific haftarah more comforting than the last. As we reach the sixth of these haftaroth this week it behooves us to review the earlier messages of the navi to the grieving nation and perhaps, uncover yet another reason why this week’s reading offers Israel a greater source of comfort than the five previous prophecies.

The first in the series of seven opens with the cry “Nachamu, Nachamu”, a call to the prophet(s) to console the despondent nation. In it, Yishayahu promises that G-d had completed punishing their sins and that the All-Powerful is more than capable of realizing His promised redemption of Israel.

The second haftarah clearly expresses the people’s disbelief with the words they use to respond to the prophet: “Vatomer Tziyon-azavani Hashem”, Hashem has abandoned and forgotten

His people. Expressing the reason why the navi’s words were not comforting, Israel tells Yishayahu that, after His destruction of His Beit Mikdash and His exile of His people- Hashem has clearly proven that He has rejected us. To this claim Yishayahu responds with the reassurance that G-d could never forget of abandon His nation.

The third selection opens by expressing Israel’s continued grief-despite the prophet’s reassurances. “Aniya so’ara lo nuchama”, Israel continues to be disconsolate, to be “LO NUCHAMA”, not believing in the prophet’s promises of a glorious future. And so, Hashem responds to the people in the opening words of the next haftarah....

“Anochi, Anochi Hu M’enachemchem”, it is not the prophet who makes these promises nor he who is comforting you, says G-d, but I Myself Who comforts you! The magnificent picture of Israel’s future depicted by Hashem in this fourth haftarah appears to move Israel and console her. For this reason, Yishayahu calls to the nation in the following reading...

“Rani akara, lo yalada”, “Rejoice O barren woman...” It is now time to celebrate your promised redemption and return. But the “barren woman” cannot fully rejoice. Not

yet. There is still something that prevents any celebration. There is still a worry that has not yet been addressed-even in this fifth of the series of haftarot. And it is a concern that prevents complete joy. And so, the navi addresses that concern in the sixth nevuah-the haftarah we read this week.

“Kumi Ori ki va orech”, Israel, arise and shine, for Hashem’s light, His glory, shines upon you. What is it in Yishayahu’s message that would convince Israel to “glow” and rejoice? What new promise does he give to our people that would convince them of the truth of Hashem’s promises?

I believe that, besides the additional reassurances of what the future would bring Yishayahu also addresses the true concern of Israel-a concern not addressed in the previous haftarot. The disbelief in G-d’s promises that the nation expressed was not a lack of faith in Hashem or in His abilities. Not at all. Their lack of faith in the fruition of the prophecies was based upon themselves! Israel herself, seeing her sinfulness and HER abandonment of Hashem couldn’t believe that SHE deserved such promises.

In effect she was saying “I know you can do all of this, Hashem. We know that you have the power to fulfill all of these promises-but WHAT HAVE WE DONE TO DESERVE THIS???

And the navi responds “Ki hineh hachoshech y’chaseh eretz’-darkness covers the world, all of humanity is corrupt and immoral. The Beit Halevi explains that G-d will “shine” upon Israel BECAUSE darkness fill the earth. Your redemption is not based on your perfection. It is not because you are so superior to your enemies, or more righteous than your oppressors-but because of your spiritual potential that is being wasted, potential that is needed in this world.

When the nation learns that, though they may not be deserving, Hashem has reason to redeem them, only then, are they comforted. Geula need wait until our nation is perfect-but only when Hashem decides that it is the perfect time for it!

And only then can they finally cry out the first words of the seventh haftarah “Sos asis baShem”, now I can truly rejoice in Hashem.

And we certainly should. ■

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