



PROBING

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THE PROPHETS

The special maftir reading established by the Tana'im of the Mishna was meant to remind the nation living during the era of the Bet HaMikdash, that the time to offer the Korban Pesach, the paschal sacrifice, was quickly approaching. It is for this reason that they chose the selection from Parashat Bo in which we read Hashem's unique instructions fulfilling the mitzvah of the very first Korban Pesach, that which was offered in Egypt itself. For the same reason, the selection for the haftarah also speaks of the unique laws that would apply to the future paschal offerings that would take place in the third Temple during the Messianic era. Many of the laws quoted do not coincide with the laws of the Torah, causing some consternation among the rabbinic scholars. Yet, as the commentator, Radak, suggests, the new era heralded by the Mashiach would bring with it new, more demanding laws that would guarantee a higher level of spirituality and purity.

Fittingly, the opening verses of the haftarah, tell of the special sacrifice that would be offered on "the first day of the first month", Rosh Chodesh, and whose blood would be spread on the doorposts of the Sanctuary, a clear echo of the blood spread upon the doorposts of the Israelite homes in Egypt the evening before their exodus. Similarly, as the haftarah continues, it speaks of the

seven day holiday upon which matzot would be eaten, a fact included in the Maftir reading as well. This interesting contrast and comparison between the past and future sacrifices reminds us that the holiday of Pesach is meant to mark both the historical and the yet-to-be redemption.

Many of us (and of past generations) might wonder why we still read this selection some 1,950 years after the destruction of the Second Bet Hamikdash, and therefore, 1,950 years during which no Korban Pesach was offered nor was its ritual followed!! Additionally, the majority of the Rabbis who lived during the Mishnaic period, those referred to as the "Tana'im", those who established this haftarah reading, also lived after Churban Bayit. For them as well, therefore, this reading was not particularly germane. So why did they insist on including its reading on this Shabbat HaChodesh?

They had a very logical reason.

As we have pointed out more than once, the prophecies of geula, of the return to our land, of a glorious future, were a source of hope and a glimmer of light to the Jew suffering in the seemingly endless galut. To survive 1,950 years with no hope and no belief in a brighter tomorrow would have been nearly impossible. Without the emunah that there would be another Bet

HaMikdash and that the Korban Pesach would be sacrificed in Yerushalayim yet again, there would have been little chance of survival as a unique nation in the Diaspora. If for no other reason than this – its reading would have been understandably instituted for this Shabbat. “Let us learn the laws of Korban Pesach in the rebuilt Bet HaMikdash because we might need to know them this Pesach...or next,” hopeful Jews would say.

But that was not the only reason.

Woven throughout the navi's words is a most subtle, yet crucial, lesson. In the verses preceding the haftarah, Yechezkel admonishes the leaders by telling them that no longer would they use their power to enrich themselves at the expense of the common person. Rather, they will fulfill what their true purpose as leaders is: to remove lawlessness and pursue justice and righteousness, to have “honest scales and honest ephah” and to guarantee that the coinage be equal and true.

Ultimately, the future redemption brought by Mashiach ben David would not be one of sacrifices, religious rites and ritual purity alone. We must also realize and prepare for a purity of action and of deed as well. This is what will be the essence of the Messianic Era. And that was something the past generations had to prepare for. And, certainly, our generation must as well. ■

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