



PROBING

THE PROPHETS

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HaRav Simcha Assaf writes in his book “Tkufat HaGeonim V’sifrutah” that, upon the passing of the great Rav Sherira Gaon, the community decided to recite a special Maftir, one that tells of Hashem’s choice of Yehoshua to succeed Moshe Rabbeinu (B’Midbar 27; 16) and a matching haftarah that describes David’s choice of Shlomo to succeed him upon the throne. And, although the prophetic text ends with the words “And Shlomo sat on the throne of his father, David”, the people read “And Hai sat on the throne of his father, Sherira.”

This Shabbat, we read the double parshiyot of Tazria and Metzora, with the haftarah from Sefer Melachim that tells the story of the Metzora’im, the lepers who saved the residents of Shomron from starvation with their report of the flight of the mighty Aramean army. But this Shabbat is also the fifth of Iyar, the exact date of the establishment of the State of Israel. And, although Yom Ha’Atzma’ut was celebrated this past Thursday, I feel, as did the community of eleven hundred years ago, that the day is momentous enough to put aside my usual elucidation of the weekly haftarah and focus, instead, upon the reading we heard on Thursday, the haftarah that was to be read on the fifth of Iyar.

That selection from the 10th, 11th and 12th prakim of Sefer Yishayahu are among the most famous-and perhaps the most import-

ant chapters in the entire book. In them, the navi describes the Y’mot HaMashiach in clear detail. Laying out before us the picture of an idyllic world, a world of peace, where even the natural enemies will dwell together, a time when violence would disappear and an era when our knowledge of Hashem and an understanding of His ways would spread throughout the world.

In 1949, the Chief Rabbinate declared the establishment of the State as “Reisheet Tz’michat Geulateinu, the first flowering of our redemption. Their decision to read Yishayahu’s depiction of the “perfect” world was not simply so that we recognize the world-changing event of the resurrection of the Jewish State after 2,000 years but also to give us a vision of what yet awaits us. Perhaps the Rabbanim of 1948 were leaving a message for the future that our work is not yet complete. Perhaps the haftarah was meant as a reminder that we do not yet live in the idyllic world that the navi describes and we should not be satisfied with being only “REISHEET tzmichat geulateinu”, the FIRST flowering of the redemption.

And, given that truth, perhaps they were also trying to teach us not to expect perfection in our new medina but, rather, to work TOWARD perfection.

And perhaps, if we do so, Hashem might see to it that it will become exactly what the navi described to us. ■