PROBING THE PROPHETS

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The message that the navi Yirmiyahu imparts to us in this week's haftarah is a difficult one. It is difficult to read, difficult to hear and difficult to understand. Like the Tochacha read this Shabbat in Parashat B'chukotai, the prophet's message is one of warning, admonition and rebuke. But unlike the Torah's reprimand that is prefaced by the many blessings that await the righteous and is followed by Hashem's comforting promise never to abandon His nation, we find no such blessings and no such words of comfort in the admonishment delivered by Yirmiyahu. In fact, were we to read through the earlier messages that precede the haftarah, we would find equally powerful condemnations of Israel.

The very opening of the 16th perek tells of G-d's command to the navi not to marry or have children because, Hashem promises, all those in this land, young and old, will be destroyed, never to be eulogized or mourned, and the bereft would never be comforted. He continues to guarantee that all joy and celebration would be gone from the land and never again would the sound of joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride ("Kol sasson v'kol simcha, kol chatan v'kol kalah"), be heard. And these frightening promises are merely a continuation of the theme from the earlier perek (15) that opens with G-d's guarantee that, even if Moshe Rabbeinu and Shmuel HaNavi were to plead the case for Israel-Hashem would not heed their prayers.

> Hashem dwells on both Har HaBayit, the Temple Mount, as well as upon His heavenly throne

Given these chapters of prophetic warnings of the dire consequences of Israel's sins against Man and G-d, warnings that include the eventual destruction of both the Holy Land and the Holy Temple, it is clear that the absence of kedushah, sanctity, would lead to churban, destruction. Indeed, Rav Soloveitchik posits that kedushah and churban would seem to be two extremes that negate one another. He writes: "The

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remnants of anything elevated and holy would appear to evaporate in the face of ruin and destruction."

But the Rav continues to argue that this is not necessarily so. Rather, he adds, kedushah 'tolerates' churban, for Hashem dwells on both Har HaBayit, the Temple Mount, as well as upon His heavenly throne. And when He finds it necessary to destroy the Temple below, he retains its sanctity in the Temple on high. This approach, he argues, is based upon Chazal's interpretation of the phrase (Vayikra 26: 31) "Vahashimoti et Mikd'shechem" as meaning that, even when desolate, the sacred places retain their holiness. Churban does not remove Kedushah.

But upon what source do the Rabbis in Masechet Megillah (25a) base their claim? Rav Soloveitchik says that it is the verse found in our haftarah: "Kisei Kavod marom merishon, m'kom Mikdasheinu, "As the Throne of Glory-exalted from the very beginning-so is the place of our Sanctuary." As the heavenly throne of G-d remains sacrosanct, so too is our Sanctuary on a hill in Jerusalem.

Even in the midst of the words of rebuke and admonition we find promise and hope. That is the way of the navi.

And that, too, is the story of our nation. ■

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