



PROBING

THE PROPHETS

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER

Faculty, OU Israel Center

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Amos, a contemporary of the prophets Yish'ayahu, Micha and Hoshe'a, was a simple shepherd by trade who was called upon by G-d to deliver words of admonition and warning to the wayward nation of Israel. He begins his words by taking an overview of the sins of Israel's neighbors, explaining that Hashem's mercies would allow one, two and three transgressions to go unpunished but, by the fourth offense, He will bring retribution upon that nation. And so, the opening chapters review the wrongdoings of Aram, Philistia, Phoenicia, Amon, Moav and even Yehuda. Our *haftarah*, however, begins with the navi's focus upon the sins of Yisra'el, the target of his prophecies. Amos decries the moral corruption of the people, both in matters regarding the treatment of their fellow men and those regarding their relationship with G-d. Most important for our purposes is his opening accusation of the nation's judges who were "selling the innocent for money,"

decrying the widespread bribery that filled the land. Our Rabbis saw in the words "al michram bakesef tzaddik," literally "selling a righteous man for money", an allusion to the sale of Yosef Hatzaddik found in today's parasha.

But that is not the only echo of the events in our parasha. The navi goes on depicting examples of the sinful behavior of Israel including "v'ish v'aviv yelchu el hana'arah," both child and father defile G-d's name by going to the same maiden. And, although not considered a sin in the parasha, we do read of the incident when Yehuda, the father, is intimate with his sons' wife, unaware of who she was. Likewise, the tale of Yosef and his brothers found in the parasha marks the beginning of the story of Israel's eventual settlement and enslavement in Egypt, while the *haftarah* reminds the nation that the G-d they've abandoned had taken them out of Egyptian slavery.

Most interesting, I believe, is the final section of the prophetic reading in which

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the prophet declares that there are no coincidences; that all takes place by the will of G-d. The story of Yosef is one that underscores that very theme. Here we have a seemingly simple story of human emotions: love, pride, jealousy and anger which lead to foreseeable consequences. Yet when seen in a wider view, as Rashi indicates, it all led to the fulfilment of Hashem's promise to Avraham that his generations would be enslaved in a strange land.

It is significant to point out that we will be lighting the first Chanukah light in but a few days. When marking the events of "Chag HaUrim" we often look at the supernatural, the miraculous lights of the menorah in the Beit Hamikdash that remained burning for eight full days. But the story of Chanukah is, like the story of Yosef, a seemingly simple tale of human emotions and human efforts, but, in the end, it fulfilled the will of Hashem.

G-d's promises are eternal and unchanging. G-d's will – will be done. Sometimes through Divine miracles, and sometimes through Human efforts. But always, Hashem's will is done.

And we are charged with recognizing these "coincidences" as a revelation of G-d's hand - even when it is hidden. ■

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