



PROBING

THE PROPHETS

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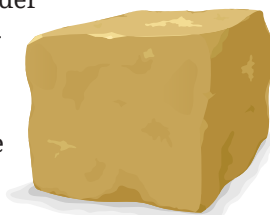
Over the past seven plus years I've been granted the privilege of sharing with you varied textual methodologies, diverse philosophical approaches and different moral lessons found in the words of the prophets. And, although it truly is a privilege to introduce to you new ideas from each weekly haftarah, it is also a challenge.

You see, each week I wonder whether I will be able to discover a fresh idea – one I hadn't shared before – in the haftarah reading, especially when these readings are somewhat limited and do not include the many ideas that can be found in an entire parasha. Over the years, therefore, I “discovered” a simple “trick” to uncover some subtle meaning, even, perhaps, a revelation, to shed light on the text and the navi's message. What I do is read the preface or the “postscript” to the haftarah selection, i.e., the section preceding and/or following the haftarah itself, a “trick” which often allows me to gain a deeper insight to the words of the prophet. And, given the fact that this week's selection is always read on Shabbat Chanuka as well, I turned to the postscript of the haftarah in the hope of uncovering a fresh new idea.

And it worked!

The closing pasuk of the haftarah speaks

of someone who will “bring out the stone to the cheers [calling] of: ‘Chen, Chen’ [‘Grace, Grace’]”. The verse is difficult to understand and many have offered various translations. To what stone is the reference? And who will bring it? Rashi explains that Zecharya is referring to the cornerstone of the Second Temple that would be brought by the Kohen Gadol,



Yehoshua, while the Metzudot believes that the stone referred to the foundation stone that would be laid for the Third Temple.

Both the Radak and the Ibn Ezra suggest that the “stone” is the weight used for the plumb line that would be used to measure and insure that the walls of the Beit HaMikdash would stand upright and strong.

But if we look back on the earlier nevuah told to Zecharya [1; 16-17] of how a plumb line would be stretched over Yerushalayim as a sign to the people that “Od t'futzena arai mitov”, that Hashem's cities will spread with bounty and Yerushalayim would grow and expand in the future, we might better understand this closing pasuk of our haftarah.



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Consider...have you ever toured through the Old City and seen the markings of the Second Temple walls? Do you remember them containing a much larger area than that encompassed by the First Temple walls? The truth is that Yerushalayim did not grow significantly during the Second Temple era – and certainly not during the subsequent centuries of exile! The Holy City remained a small, “backwater” village, often poverty-stricken and certainly not “spread with bounty”.

But 100 years ago, that began to change. Today, when we Jerusalemites gaze out of our windows, we are gazing at the prophecies of Zecharya as understood by the parshanim who saw the navi’s words as pertaining to the future messianic era – OUR era!

When we study the promises of the nevi'im and see them coming alive before our eyes it is important to realize that, often, those words were never realized in any of the past centuries. Because those promises were NEVER aimed for then! Only today do we see them coming true! Only today do the plumb lines spread the borders of our Holy City and our Holy Land.

Just as G-d promised.

And just as Zecharya said. ■

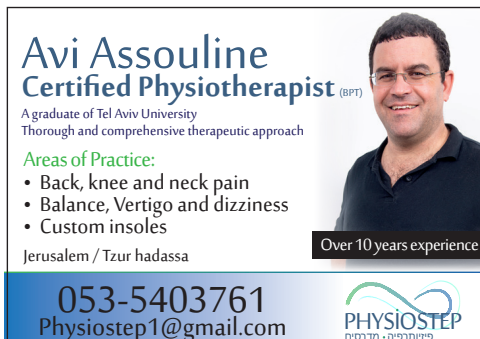


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