



# PROBING

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER

Faculty, OU Israel Center

# THE PROPHETS

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In his classic eighteenth century commentary on the Tanach, the Malbim enlightens our understanding of the opening words of this week's haftarah. In the past, we have focused upon these words as the source of comfort for the nation. G-d calls out that HE and only HE ("Anochi, Anochi") can-and will-comfort His people. Certainly, a stirring beginning to the navi's message. The Malbim, however, turns our attention to those psukim that precede Hashem's powerful declaration and are found earlier in this same perek (51).

In those verses, Israel calls out to G-d "Uri, Uri", to "awaken" His strength and power that He revealed to them in the past so that He could bring redemption to His people in their own time. The words that begin this haftarah, are, the Malbim declares, Hashem's response to the people. "Anochi, Anochi", "It is I, I," He says, "for I am the same as I was in the past! I need not 'reawaken' My power," He tells them, "for I have not changed at all". And then G-d

continues: "Mi Aht???" He asks, "But who are YOU??? What happened to YOU??? YOU are the ones who have changed – not I!!" And, as the haftarah continues, Hashem reasserts the truth of His unchanging nature, explaining to Israel that their fear of the enemy – a fear they did not have in their glorious past - was only due to their loss of faith in G-d.

The Malbim's understanding of our haftarah offers us a fresh look into what the navi hopes to explain to the mournful and frightened nation: Stop looking at your Creator as the source of your failures. Do not plead with G-d to become your "hero" once again! Start looking at yourselves and, perhaps then, you will realize that the tragedies you have suffered are not based upon G-d's "inaction" – but upon your actions!

Often the common reaction one has when suffering defeat, loss, or even when facing simple difficulties, is to find someone (or something) else to blame. And probably, one's least common reaction is to turn inward and ask "Where have I gone wrong?" "What did I do?...or NOT do?" It is, after all, merely simple human nature to look beyond the self as the source of our problem. Yes, it is natural. But it is wrong and destructive. For this reason, it should not surprise us when Hashem "turns the tables" on Israel by repeating the very words Israel addressed to G-d and now telling them: (51;17): "Hit'oreri,

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Hit'oreri"–"Awaken!" and then adding (52; 1): "Uri! Uri" "Rise up Tziyon!" and saying (ibid 2) "Hitna'ari...Kumi!", "Shake off your dust and Get up!!!"

It is certainly true that this selection is replete with comforting prophecies and reassuring words. The message from Yishayahu that G-d's punishment had been completed and that Israel's suffering would cease is certainly a comforting one. But more essential to the ability of the people to accept the words of consolation is their knowledge that they themselves caused the tragedies, so they themselves can repair their mistakes and reverse their sad condition.

The navi's lesson to his people that THEY can avert tragedies and mitigate the pain is the crucial ingredient to a successful recovery from loss and repair of our relationship with G-d. ■

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