



PROBING

THE PROPHETS

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER

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Rabbi Winkler's popular Jewish History lectures can be viewed by visiting the OU Israel Video archive: <https://www.ouisrael.org/video-library>

The selection of prakim 54-55 in Sefer Yishayahu as this week's haftarah seems to be rather obvious. These chapters are found in the latter part of the sefer, in the section that includes the navi's visions of comfort, (which explains why they are read as part of the haftarot of consolation following Tish'a B'av). The connection to our parsha is found in the prophet's words "ki mei Noach zot li," "this oath of G-d (not to pour His wrath out against Israel) is like the oath I made regarding the waters of Noah (never again to flood the earth)," an oath of which we read in the parsha.

Many point out that the connection of the haftarah to our parsha can also be seen in the beginning of chapter 54 where the navi calls for the barren woman to rejoice, a hint to the closing of Parshat Noach where we read that Avram's wife, Sarai, was barren - but would soon rejoice. Others suggest that the haftarah's expression "B'shetef Ketzef" - "with but a slight (short-termed) anger have I hidden My presence from you," reminds us of the

quick, relatively short-termed flood that inundated the earth when G-d, seemingly, hid His presence from mankind.

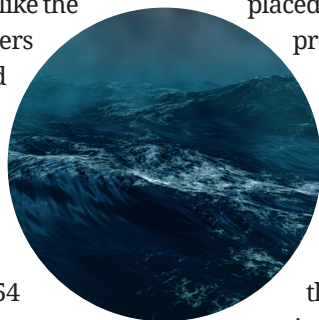
As is true so often, however, there is yet another, perhaps deeper, connection to this week's Torah reading. The flood was not simply a punishment for an immoral and corrupt generation, or a method to erase the sinful society. Rather, it was also meant to be the beginning of a new epoch, a new world, for humanity. It was a "second chance". G-d

placed the first couple in Gan Aiden,

prohibiting them from eating the fruit of the forbidden trees and blessing them with the charge to increase and "fill the earth". Similarly, He placed Noah and his family on Mt. Ararat, imposing upon them the seven Noahide laws (sheva mitzvot b'nai Noach) - a basic moral

code for humanity, while also blessing them to "increase and fill the earth". It was, in effect, a "re-genesis."

The navi Yishayahu uses the flood and its results as a lesson to his errant generation. He does not comfort them with the promise that Hashem would retract His judgment and remove His punishments. Rather, he tells the nation that the punishments that



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would befall them as a result of their sins must be used to be as a new beginning, an opportunity to repent, to rebuild faith in G-d and to recreate a moral and just society. The suffering should bring a “recreation”.

I imagine that Yishayahu's lesson should be learned by our generation as well. No. Not as a “sinful” generation but as one that has experienced indescribable suffering. We, the “next” generation, the redeemed generation who returned home after the destruction of the Holocaust, face a challenge similar to the post-flood survivors: to rebuild our faith, to re-establish our State, to reinvigorate our land and to create the just and moral society that Hashem demands of us.

We, too, must “re-create”. We are a generation that must “re-generate”! And, by doing so, we will also bring a “re-genesis”. ■



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