



PROBING THE PROPHETS

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A Journey to Joy

In his introduction to the “Haftarot of the Summer”, those prophetic messages that are read from before “the Three Weeks” until Rosh Hashanah, Rav Moshe Lichtenstein points to their “uniqueness” for being ten readings that were not chosen on the basis of their connection to the parasha of that week, but, rather, to the overriding theme of the season itself.

The *P’sikta* reflects on this long-observed minhag that was established in Eretz Yisrael, (according to the Tosafists) by dividing these haftarah readings into two sections, familiar to most: “*T’lat d’poranuta*” – the three haftarot that precede Tish’a B’Av, warning Israel of the punishments that she would suffer for her sins, and “*Shev d’n’chemta*” – the seven haftarah readings following Tish’a B’Av, that comfort the mourning nation

grieving over her loss. However, the *P’sikta* adds a third section – “*Tartei d’tiyuvta*” – two haftarot of Teshuva that follow Rosh Hashanah, calling the people to return to Hashem, as we find in the readings of Shabbat Shuva and Tzom Gedaliah.

It is clear that our ancients regarded this season of mourning, comfort and repentance as being of such import that they chose to disregard the well-established tradition of selecting haftarot that reflect the events or themes found in the Torah reading. Instead, they favored including those meaningful prophecies that would impact the Jewish world with the significance of this season of repentance.

The division of the haftarot echoes the process of Teshuva, as illuminated by the Rambam:

- **Recognition** of sin:
Where Israel is made to realize her iniquity through the prophets’ censures in the first three haftarot – which lead to...
- **Regret** for the commission of the sin:
As Israel’s remorse is reflected in Yishayahu’s comforting words directed to the mourning nation in the seven subsequent haftarot - which bring on...
- **Return** to Hashem:
The cry to Israel for Teshuva, repentance and eventual atonement.

It is quite fitting, therefore, that the first of these haftarot are taken from the opening nevuot of Yirmiyahu, who, himself, struggled through difficult years. He had no children

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and he never married. As a kohen whose life was dedicated both to G-d and to his people, he was sadly required to serve Hashem through His divine charge to condemn his nation. His early years of prophecy were, seemingly, good years for Israel, as they were freed from the grip of the Assyrian Empire and, under the righteous reign of King Yoshi-yahu, had entered into an era of repentance (after the discovery of the Sefer Torah in the Beit HaMikdash) that followed with a campaign to uproot the existing idolatry.

And yet.....it was during this very time that Yirmiyahu received his first prophecy from G-d, a divine mission of which we read this Shabbat. In it, Hashem commands the navi to warn Judea of the coming invasion from the surrounding enemies, a punishment for their sinful ways! It must have been a more than surprising revelation to Yirmiyahu who, assuming that the people had been shown remorse and return, was reluctant to accept such a mission. And understandably, the population itself could not accept such prophecies and, as a result, saw Yirmiyahu as a false prophet and, indeed, a traitor to his people.

Among the messages we learn from our haftarah is that recognizing sin requires objective discernment of our behavior, that divine retribution should also be a tool leading to sincere remorse which, in turn, should bring us to repentance that brings us hope!

A proper comprehension of the messages of these haftarot will ultimately bring us to the hope and joy of Succot, Z'man Simchateinu. ■

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