



## PROBING THE PROPHETS

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER  
FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

# “Banim Atem” – We Are G-d’s Children

The very first time that B’nei Yisra’el, the children of Israel, are referred to as “**Am** Yisrael”, the **Nation** of Israel, is found in the beginning of Sefer Shmot, when Pharaoh feared that Israel was becoming more numerous and powerful and, therefore, a threat to his own people. In response to the Egyptian regent’s enslavement of Israel, Hashem demands that Par’oh allow B’nei Yisrael to serve Hashem in the desert and explains: “B’ni Bechori Yisra’el”, that Israel is **His** eldest [read “precious”] child. I would submit that this powerful statement was not directed to the King of Egypt alone but to the suffering Israelites as well, those who, for the first time, would hear G-d proclaim that they were **HIS** children.

The very idea that Hashem regards Am Yisrael as His children is a truth found throughout the Tanach - no clearer than Moshe’s statement in Sefer D’varim:

“**Banim atem LaShem Elokeichem**”, “You are children to Hashem, your G-d”. And this truth allows us to better to understand the underlying impact of Yishayahu’s message in this week’s haftarah.

When our prophets call to Israel for her repentance and return to G-d, they often reach out to convince the nation of Hashem’s overwhelming love for them and His desire for their atonement. At times, they also find it necessary to remind the people of their sinful ways in an effort to impress upon them their need for regret and repentance. Unfortunately, upon realizing how their immoral behavior had corrupted their societies and betrayed the very relationship they were meant to build with G-d, they often fell into despair and hopelessness.”

Hence, our haftara.

Here, we find – for the first time- cries of remorse and regret from people and, sadly, feelings of despondency and, therefore, futility. “**Vatomer Tziyon ‘Azavani Hashem’...**” they cry, words of a mournful nation who believe that G-d had abandoned them, even forgotten them. After hearing G-d’s resounding call to His prophets that opened last week’s haftarah: “Nachamu, Nachamu Ami” – to comfort the nation after

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her loss - Israel reacts to those words with the hopeless sigh that opens our haftarah, believing that, given the evils we have committed, G-d has certainly “given up” on us!

It is in response to that desperate cry that Yishayahu reminds the nation of Hashem’s promise “**BANIM ATEM**”!!! **YOU ARE MY CHILDREN!!!!** and, given that promise, how could He ever “forget” or abandon them? With searing words, the navi asks the people “**Hatishkach Ishah Ulah??** - could a mother ever forget her suckling child??? YOU, Israel, are that suckling infant!!! You could NEVER be forgotten-certainly not by your ‘Mother’ –G-d - Who NEVER forgets!!!!

The heartfelt cry of Yishayahu is more than an answer or a comforting response to Israel who felt that they lost their Father. It is an essential lesson to generations. Know well, that before expecting remorse from those who have disappointed, failed or angered you, you must ensure that they know that, like a parent, you still love and would never abandon those who yearn to return.

Generations who have drifted away from the Mesorah cannot be expected to return through study, lecture or reward alone. Return from exile, physical or emotional, must first be preceded by being reminded “**Banim Atem!!**” You are children of G-d who loves you, cares for you and waits for your return.

Remember **Hatishkach Ishah Ulah??**

After all, **Banim Atem!!** ■

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