



PROBING THE PROPHETS

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Yesterday's Prophecies; Today's Realities

Throughout the seven haftarat of consolation that follow Tish'a B'Av, the navi Yishayahu presents us with descriptions of the final redemption and return to our land. It is difficult for we who live through today's events to ignore the powerful parallels between the prophet's visions and today's realities. Predictions of a once-barren land that will generously give forth her fruit, of ruined cities that would be rebuilt and of empty streets that would be filled with sounds of rejoicing throngs, are all actualities that we now perceive each and every day.

Yesterday's prophecies; today's realities.

However, the promise that we find in this week's haftarah, a short selection taken from the 54th and 55th prakim of Sefer Yishayahu, is rather unique. The navi tells us: "V'chol

banayich limudei Hashem," "All of your children will be students of Hashem." It is a nevu'ah predicting that the geula will not only mean a physical return to the land, including repopulating of the land, an economic resurgence after years of poverty and the rebirth of the desert-like condition that characterized Eretz Yisrael for almost two-thousand years. Not at all. The geulah would include a spiritual return too, a revival marked not by the reinstitution of ritual Temple service alone but by a resurgence of Torah study. "Limudei Hashem"- "Students of Hashem", refers to those who would be knowledgeable of G-d and His laws.

But the prophecy continues. This revival in Torah study would bring with it another blessing: "V'rav sh'lom banayich", "there will be abundant peace to your children." Torah knowledge, an understanding of what Hashem expects of us, must bring us peace. True study of G-d's words should necessarily bring with it "ahavat chinam", a love of one another and a respectful unity that would prevail between all segments of Jewish society.

This prediction of Yishayahu has also come true in our time. But only partially. There has never been such widespread study of Torah

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in our history as we have now. There are more yeshivot, more Torah students, more Torah teachers, more Torah books and publications than ever before. “Ki mitziyon tetze Torah”, the words, spoken by Yishayahu and echoed by the prophet Micha, declared that Zion would be the source of Torah study, and, indeed, has been fulfilled in our day. However, it is clear that today we still await “v’rav shlom banayich” - that the study of Torah brings us the blessing of peace.

True scholars and students of our Holy Torah understand that it must be a tool for spreading peace and harmony, not controversy and discord. It is for this very reason that the navi explains why peace would reign during the Messianic era, saying (11;9): “Ki mal’ah ha’aretz de’ah et Hashem”, the world will be filled with knowledge of G-d.

As we bask in the joy of “atchalta d’geula,” - the blossoming of our redemption - we pray for the realization of all the prophecies of geula, with the blessing of true peace- peace from the threats of surrounding enemies and peace spreading from within our people. ■

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