



PROBING THE PROPHETS

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“What Was and What Will Be”

This Shabbat, we are privileged and, indeed blessed, to read one of the most uplifting and heartening prophecies of Yishayahu HaNavi, one that opens with the cry: “Kumi Ori!”. But it would be a mistake to ignore the navi’s earlier message from the 59th chapter (preceding our haftarah from the 60th perek), for, by doing so, we would fail to absorb the significance and impact of Yishayahu’s words that we will hear this Shabbat (iy”H).

Like the five earlier haftarot, this reading is one of consolation but, unlike most of the former prophecies, this haftarah does not make mention of any of the nation’s past sins. By doing so, this nevuah directly conflicts with Yishayahu’s previous message.. In fact, Rav Ariel lists over ten examples of prophetic

promises in our haftarah that contrast widely with the message we find in the last perek:

In the 59th chapter, Yishayahu calls out the nation, telling them G-d **had hidden His presence from them** (v. 2) while in the 60th perek we read how **Hashem’s glory will shine upon them** (v. 2).

In the previous perek, the navi cries that **“there was no justice”** [v. 4] while our haftarah promises that the nation will be “completely just (“kulam tzadikim”) [v. 21].

In the last chapter, the navi bemoans that **“they knew no path toward peace”** [v. 8] yet our haftarah predicts **“I will designate your leaders for peace”** [v. 17]

And, while the previous prophecy quotes the nation’s lament **“we pray for light but have only darkness”** [9], Yishayahu opens this nevuah with the clarion call: **“Arise and Shine for your light has arrived!”** [v. 1].

These juxtaposed prophecies do not **contradict** each other but, rather, are meant to **contrast** that which **HAD BEEN** in the past with that which **WILL BE** in Israel’s future - thereby comforting the grieving population. And, subtle as the message might seem, it is extremely impactful.

Consider: How can the purely Moral and Ethical G-d, One Whose very existence is defined by both righteous and merciful attributes, find a just way to both punish the corrupt generations, while, at the same time, to arouse His infinite mercies in order to bring comfort to those who suffered the consequences of His necessary justice?



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This is the challenge that faced the prophets both before and after the Churban – and a struggle that all later generations had to undergo. I would humbly submit that the contrast we've uncovered between these two p'rakim might help us understand the message of Hashem's "nechama" promised by Yishayahu throughout these weeks of "shiva d'nechemta".

The differences between these juxtaposing prophetic messages should not be seen only as a depiction of **WHAT ONCE WAS** versus **WHAT WILL YET BE**, but as a message that consolation from national tragedy does not arrive immediately. Clearly, both of these contrasting prophecies would not come about within a short time and must be understood, therefore, as a subtle message explaining that these diametrically different views would be realized only over many years. Just as the corruption of a culture spreads over many years, so full consolation will slowly grow over many years.

And yet, if this lesson is truly grasped, we wonder how any generation could accept comfort from a promise they are likely never to see??? Only when they also accept that they are an undying nation!!

The guarantee of eternal salvation consoles *only* the eternal nation.

The words of our prophets will comfort a nation confident in the truth that, no matter what we suffer today, **we**, i.e., our nation, will survive and realize Divine redemption. To put it simply, we should remember that....

The extent of our consolation lies in the depth of our Emunah! ■

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