



PROBING THE PROPHETS

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

לעילוי נשמת אבא היקר

מאיר ניסים בן מכלוף וסמי ז"ל

On my dear father's 3rd yartzeit.
I miss you daily. Its amazing that since
arriving to ארץ ישראל, I feel your
presence, guiding my Aliyah journey

Faith in Times of Challenge

“Sifrei Nevi'im Acharonim”, the books of the later prophets, do not often recount events of the earlier patriarchs, those found in Sefer Breishit. This is quite understandable as these books record the words of those nevi'im, from Yishayahu to Malachi, that were addressed to generations living at least one thousand years after the era of the forefathers. Their prophecies, admonitions and consolations were crafted to be timely lessons for those living at that time and place.

Given that truth, it is curious to find the opening words of our haftarah, those spoken by the navi Hoshe'a, to be those recalling

Ya'akov's flight to Aram, where he was constrained to work in order to win the hand of his wife. This first verse grants us an obvious connection to the weekly parasha – but, ostensibly, has little connection to the very community which the navi hopes to impact with his message.

In order to understand the significance of the haftarah's introductory words and why Hoshe'a evokes the experience of Ya'akov for his own generation, we must first recognize the haftarah's first words are not the opening of the prophet's message! Indeed, the preliminary p'sukim are taken from the *final* three verses of the perek and, therefore, are linked to the navi's message, found in the earlier p'sukim.

When we look back to the opening of the prophet's message, we read Hoshe'a's words censuring Israel for their deceitful ways and foretelling the inevitable punishments that Hashem would bring down upon them. He especially underscores the perfidious behavior of Israel toward their Heavenly Father, reminding Israel of how their Heavenly Father had remained **faithful to Ya'akov and saved him from harm**.

This mention of G-d's encounters with Ya'akov introduces the prophet's portrayal of the suffering that Israel would undergo, but is meant to ensure the nation of Hashem's ongoing protection and eventual salvation. And it is this theme that opens our haftarah. **Consider: the verses that open our haftarah with the description of Ya'akov's [Israel's]**

Mazal Tov to
Daniel & Gabriella Sopher
and family on the engagement
of their son, Aharon

difficult years of slavery in Aram, close with the depiction Israel's [Ya'akov's] release from difficult years of slavery in Egypt – all due to G-d's salvation!!

Through understanding the opening of the haftarah and its connection to the earlier p'sukim, we can better reveal the overall theme of the message of Hoshe'a and, consequently, the lesson to be learned. The bulk of this reading is taken from the thirteenth perek of Hoshe'a and its focus is one of contempt and censure of Israel. Hoshe'a addresses the northern kingdom of Israel, a realm that, since the rule of their first king, Yerov'am, had been guilty of improper worship of Hashem, outright idolatry and the adoption of abominable pagan practices from the cultures that surrounded them. And yet, the idolatry was less an act of rebellion against G-d as much

as a reflection of their fear of conquest, a fear brought upon by their lack of confidence in G-d's abilities and His faithfulness to them.

It is for this reason that the navi tells of the struggles of Israel, the man, and Israel, the nation. Despite the seemingly impossible challenges that faced them and despite the improbability of resolving them, they believed and trusted in Hashem's power and His promises to His nation. And, as a result, remained faithful to Him.

It was a crucial message to send to Israel of Hoshe'a's time....and, given the overwhelming challenges we have been facing over these many months, it is a welcome message for our generation, as well. ■

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