



HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

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Listening Between the Questions

Why does Amos choose to speak not in answers, but in questions? In this week's Haftorah (Amos 3), the Navi doesn't open with accusation or warning. Instead, he presents a cascade of rhetorical questions — each one too obvious to answer, yet impossible to ignore. If two people are walking together, isn't it because they agreed to meet? Does a lion roar when there is no prey? Does a young lion cry out before a successful catch? Does a bird fall into a trap without bait? Does a trap spring up for no reason? When the shofar sounds in a city — can anyone remain calm?

Every question points to the same truth: effects have causes; reality isn't random. A roar means prey. A shaking net means something is caught. A shofar blast means alarm. So too, when the Jewish people experience suffering, it is not arbitrary. There is meaning. There is a message. "Could evil come to a city and Hashem not be behind it?" (3:6) Yet these images are not only about consequence — they are warnings. A roar alerts us to move. A rattling trap signals us to be careful. A shofar awakens us to pay attention.

Amos teaches that Hashem never acts without first calling out to us. He sends

prophets before punishment; signals before consequences; wake-up calls before change. He asks the final question that transforms the listener into a participant: אֲרִיָּה שָׁאֵג מִי לֹא יִרָא אֲרִיָּה שָׁאֵג מִי לֹא יִנְבֵּא אֲדֹ-יָהּ הַדְּבָר מִי לֹא יִנְבֵּא A lion has roared, who can but fear? My Sovereign G-d has spoken, who can but prophesy? If Hashem's voice is in the moment, how can one remain silent? If the world is shaking, how can we remain unmoved?

Amos turns the questions toward us. Hashem's rhetorical questions are meant to awaken our questions. What are the rumblings in our lives? What shofar blasts are demanding our attention? Which disruptions are not accidents, but invitations? Perhaps that is the deeper message of this chapter: G-d's questions prompt us to question ourselves. Instead of asking, "Why is this happening?" we might ask, "What is Hashem asking of me through this?" This Haftorah reminds us that Hashem's voice is not only in comfort. Sometimes His love arrives as a roar — not to terrify, but to awaken; not to condemn, but to guide us home. ■

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