



PROBING THE PROPHETS

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“B’chayil or B’ruach... or Both?”

This Shabbat we are granted the privilege to read from three separate sifrei Torah, including Shabbat reading (from Parashat Miketz), Rosh Chodesh aliya (from Parashat Pinchas) and Chanukah maftir (from Parashat Naso). Ordinarily, when Shabbat coincides with Rosh Chodesh, we read the haftarah that focuses on Rosh Chodesh and not that of the weekly parasha, as Chazal established that the haftarah must connect to the maftir that is read. For this reason, on this Shabbat we read the haftarah that concentrates on Chanukat HaMishkan, reflecting the theme of the maftir and the chag.

In his work, “Prophecy in an Age of Uncertainty”, Rabbi Hayyim Angel explains that Chazal’s choice for Chanukah haftarah (found in chapters 3 and 4 in Sefer Zecharya) reflects

the view of the ancient scholars that focuses upon the miracle of the oil and downplays the Maccabean military victory. They base their opinion on the second to last verse in the haftarah, that states: “Lo v’chayil, v’lo v’kho’ach”-“your success will not come through army nor through strength”, “ki im b’ruchi” - “but, rather, through My spirit!” This approach toward the Chanukah miracle is the one most widely accepted within the traditional world.

Nonetheless, Rabbi Angel points to the *Pesikta Rabbati*, a midrashic collection, which contains two other suggestions, alternative choices, for the haftarah of Chanukah, that offer different understandings of the essence of the holiday.

- The first submission [*Pesikta Rabbati 4*] prefers to read the dramatic narrative of Eliyahu Hanavi at Har Carmel [M’lachim A 18] where the prophet challenged the followers of the pagan idol, Ba’al. It was then that the navi triumphed over the pagan worshippers, when Hashem sent a fire from heaven to consume Eliyahu’s sacrifice – that which did not happen to the idolatrous offering. The saga ended with the people’s recognition of the power of the true G-d with the destruction of the idolaters. Rabbi Angel submits that this haftarah choice supports those who saw the Maccabean victory as **THE** “nes Chanukah”, since it tells of a Kohen (Eliyahu - who was regarded as a descendant of Pinchas, grandson of Aharon) who removed those who worshipped a foreign deity [see

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B'Midbar 25: 7-9]. The similarity to the victorious struggle of the priestly clan of Chashmona'im to remove the Hellenistic, idolatrous culture, was a powerfully fitting reading for Chanukah. It underscores the holiday's miracle of "**Ko'ach**".

- The second submission [*Pesikta Rabbati* 8] suggests that the reading of the first perek of Sefer Tzephanya is more fitting for the holiday. It is there that the navi shares Hashem's promise to "search Yerushayim" to find those non-believers - those who claim that G-d does not reward or punish. Tzephanya quotes Hashem's statement: "Achappes et Yerushalayim **baneiroi**" – "I will search Jerusalem **with candles**", and Rabbi Angel submits that the prophecy's connection to Chanukah through the mention of searching with candles, intimates that Chanukah is a time of introspection and repentance – to **rededicate** and purify our souls. In effect, the Chanukah miracle of the Menorah lighting in the Beit HaMikdash, should be seen as a subtle message to future generations that the "Holiday of Lights" is our deadline for Teshuva before G-d seals everyone's judgment. This reading underscores the holiday's miracle of "**Ru'ach**".

I would humbly suggest that both approaches are correct...but only when they merge into one; when there is the Ru'ach working with the Ko'ach.

Indeed, only through the heavenly hand can miracles occur....but only when the faithful lend their hand, as well. ■

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