



PROBING THE PROPHETS

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“Kohanim” AND “B’nai Aharon”

Chazal’s haftarah selection for this parasha is taken from Sefer Yechezkel [44: 15-31] which is part of the closing section of the sefer. That section includes nine p’rakim [40-48] of visions that describe the future of the Bet HaMikdash, Yerushalayim and Eretz Yisra’el. Many of the past articles regarding this haftarah have focused upon the contrasts-even conflicts- between the rituals that, as Yechezkel promises, would be followed by the kohanim in the future Bet HaMikdash and those well-known practices that are instituted in the Torah itself.

And yet, we would have a better understanding of the entire nevu’ah were we to comprehend the introduction of the haftarah itself. The opening expression “V’haKohanim haL’viyim” presents us with a number of



queries:

Does Yechezkel refer to the Kohanim **or** the Leviyim?

Or does he speak of **both**?

And, if he **IS** referring to the Kohanim alone-why call them “HaKohanim HaL’viyim”?

Are not ALL Kohanim also L’viyim – being part of Shevet Levi??

Indeed, the earlier part of navi’s message does speak of the Levites alone...and not positively at all. And, upon hearing Yechezkel’s message to them, we will realize why our haftarah begins as it does. The navi tells the L’viyim that:

They are idolators – “asher ta’u me’Alai acharei gilulehem” [v. 10]

Nonetheless, they will guard the Temple, tend gates of the Mikdash and serve the Israelites offerings. [v. 11]

But they will not be allowed to serve Hashem directly nor have any role in the sanctuary itself. [v.13]

Having condemned the Levites for their past sins – including idolatry – and, as a result, had them prohibited from fully returning to serving G-d, Yechezkel then turns to the Kohanim. The prophet would now call them “V’HaKohanim HaL’viyim” -those Kohanim who were **also** L’viyim - who would be considered as an exception from the other Levitical families.

Indeed, we note carefully how the honors to be bequeathed upon these Kohanim would **not** be given to all of the priestly families, but to the most faithful alone, “B’nei Tzadok”,

the descendants of Tzadok. It is they who the navi depicts as remaining loyal to G-d when the majority of the nation - both Israelites and Levites - strayed away from Hashem [see v.15].

And so, what connection does this have to our Torah reading, a parasha that delineates the responsibilities and services that the Kohanim must fulfill in the Mikdash?

I submit that the underlying message of Yechezkel HaNavi is one that rings true in his era and in future generations as well and is subtly intimated in Parashat Emor.

In delineating the multiple mitzvot incumbent upon the Kohanim, i.e. avoiding defilement to the dead, choosing proper marriage mates or limiting certain kohanim from sacrificial worship, the Torah opens our parasha by referring to the Kohanim as “B’nai Aharon”. This additional designation seems to be quite unnecessary, as ALL kohanim must be “B’nai Aharon”! But, perhaps, Hashem is directing Moshe to remind the descendants of Aharon must always carry on the name of their holy forefather. Their biological connection to the priestly family would not always guarantee their sanctified position or service alone. As kohanim, they must constantly be aware that they are “B’nai Aharon” and, therefore, are expected to reflect his sanctity and greatness. If not....well, just read the warnings of Yechezkel!

“Z’cut Avot”, the righteousness of our holy patriarchs does not guarantee that we will receive Hashem’s benevolence and compassionunless we remember WHO we come from and whom, therefore, we must emulate. ■

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