



PROBING THE PROPHETS

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“Am K’lavi Yakum”

Does the opening phrase of this week’s haftarah trouble you? It never bothered me - until I began to consider the seemingly innocent words: V’hayah Sh’eirit Ya’akov”- “The remnant of Jacob shall be, in the midst of the many peoples, like dew from G-d...” Certainly, I was unsure of what that meant, exactly, but it was Michah’s words “**Sh’eirit Ya’akov**” that disturbed me. “The **remnant of Jacob**”?? To

what ‘remnant’ is the navi referring? And why would it be addressed **only** to a remnant?

I was again reminded how important it is to ascertain the era during which these prophecies were given in order to understand the message Michah was relaying to his generation. I turned to the recently published book “Ki Karov Eilecha” by HaRav Ya’akov Meidan to better clarify the nevu’ah found in our haftarah.

Rav Meidan reveals that Michah spoke his words during the reign of the righteous King Chizkiyahu – a time when the Assyrian hordes invaded Judea and destroyed most of their cities. Hence, the navi addresses the ‘remnant’ of Israel, i.e. those who survived the Assyrian onslaught. And yet, although Hashem spared Yerushalayim due to the entreaties of the King, Chizkiyahu had sinned by relying upon an alliance with Egypt for salvation – and **not** upon HaKadosh Baruch Hu [see Sefer Yishayah 31:1-3; 36: 4-6].

All of this becomes clear with the closing words of this opening verse where Michah states that the surviving Judean nation will become independent from others “**that do not look to anyone nor place their hope in mortals**” [5:6]. This promise of an independently powerful Israel continues with the navi’s assurance that: “**Your hand shall prevail over your foes, and all your enemies shall be cut down!**” [5:8] and, even more powerfully: “**The remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations...like a fierce lion among flocks of sheep!**” [5:7]

In essence, the haftarah’s initial p’sukim

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establish the primary theme of Micha's message. The success of the Jewish nation will depend on Israel's complete reliance upon, and faith in, our Father in Heaven. Chizkiyahu's decision to form an alliance with Egypt, would eventually lead to the collapse of the Judean Kingdom some years later, as subsequent monarchs followed his decision and, in fear of enemy attacks, relied on alliances with neighboring powers.

Michah's message to his generation was a simple one: **Belief in G-d must mean faith in Him alone – and not in other 'gods', others' promises or other alliances.** This simple truth is found in Moshe's farewell "song" in the declaration:

"Hashem badad yanchenu, v'ein IMO el nechor" – "Hashem guides [Israel] alone; with no alien deity alongside. [D'varim 33: 12]

In fact, Rav Meidan suggests that there is a meaningful connection of this very message found in our haftarah **to** this week's parasha. He submits that this navi's lesson of **independent power** is actually echoed in Hashem's prophetic words that He placed in the mouth of Bil'am. (And, I would add, the words are ones especially significant for us in these days). For Bil'am declares: **"Hen Am l'vadad yishkon"** - that Israel would be a nation that would dwell **alone**, and then adds: **"Hen Am k'lavi yakum!"** - "She shall be a nation that rises like a lion...!"

It is only when we place our faith **in** – and rely **on** – the One and Only Divine Being, will we be successful! Only of such a nation can it be said to be an ...

AM K'LAVI YAKUM!! ■

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