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Torat Imecha
NACH YOMI

בס"ד

Huldah: Prophecy of Consequence and Continuity

For a couple of weeks following the Nach Yomi cycle having reached the division of the kingdom of Israel, almost everyone I encountered greeted me with a variation of the same theme: "I guess it's all downhill from here..." In the perakim we are currently studying, we find that there are two exceptions to the otherwise uninterrupted deterioration of the spiritual state of Israel - the reigns of Hizkiyahu and Yoshiyahu. Yoshiyahu initiated a cleansing and purification of the Beit Hamikdash from the defilement perpetrated by his father and grandfather, Menashe and Ammon. During the process, a Sefer Torah was found, prompting the king to consult with Huldah, one of the seven Neviot whose words were included in Tanach.

Hazal explain that this Sefer Torah was the very one written by Moshe Rabbeinu before his death, and that upon its discovery in the Beit HaMikdash no matter to what section it was unrolled, the verse from the rebuke in Sefer Devarim appeared: "I will exile you and your king to a foreign nation..." (Devarim 28:36). The gemara questions why, if Yirmiyahu was alive at that time, Yoshiyahu sent a delegation to Huldah for advice rather than to Yirmiyahu. Two answers are offered: First, "נשים רחמניות הן" - women are more merciful than men, and second, Yirmiyahu was

not available at the time, for he had gone in search of the ten tribes exiled by Assyria.

The Maharsha questions the assertion that Yoshiyahu sent to Huldah because women are merciful. Is it possible to suggest that Huldah would alter the essence of a prophecy dictated to her by Hashem in order to make it more merciful? Certainly the prophecy would be the same regardless of whether the Navi was male or female! The consequences of sin are not dependent upon the messenger who delivers news of the punishment! Rather, suggests Maharsha, Yoshiyahu understood from the outset that the prophet would relay bad news. The delegation to Huldah reflected the hope that as a woman, she would be moved to tears and prayer by the message she would be compelled to deliver, and that her prayers would be answered.

Mishbetzot Zahav cites a teaching of the Maggid of Mezeritch that while it would indeed be unthinkable for Huldah to change the message she was given, what would differ between her and Yirmiyahu would be the tone in which it would be relayed. We know that sometimes the difference in the "tune" (trop) to which a word is read can alter its meaning. Yoshiyahu hoped that the "niggun" with which Huldah would relay the prophecy would somehow mitigate its catastrophic implications.

