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Torat Imecha
NACH YOMI

YOM KIPPUR

בס"ד

Sounding the Shofar of Prophecy

In exploring Yirmiyahu's inaugural prophecy, the midrash draws a comparison between Yirmiyahu and Moshe Rabbeinu. Both initially resisted their appointment as prophet, claiming inability to perform the task being assigned to them. The midrash continues that they were alike not only in their initial response to their missions, but in other ways as well - both prophesied for forty years, both prophesied to the entire nation, not just one of the two divided kingdoms, both were persecuted by members of their own tribe (Moshe by Korach and Yirmiyahu by the people of Anatot), Moshe was thrown into the river and Yirmiyahu into a pit, both were saved and both offered words of rebuke.¹

Yirmiyahu is compared by the midrash to two other Neviim as well. The Mechilta teaches that three prophets, Yirmiyahu, Eliyahu and Yonah, each adopted a different stance with regard to their missions. Eliyahu demanded the honor of the Father and not of the son - he zealously defended the honor of Hashem and could not tolerate the sinfulness

of the people, and was therefore stripped of his mission, and instructed to hand responsibility over to his student, Elisha.

Yonah demanded the honor of the son but not of the Father - he tried to escape his prophecy, willing even to die at sea rather than fulfill his mission to Nineveh. If Yonah were to succeed in his mission, bringing the capital of the Assyrian empire to the point of repentance, they would then be eligible to serve as Hashem's instrument of punishment for Israel. Yonah preferred to forfeit his relationship with Hashem, even his life if it came to it, rather than endanger his beloved people.

Yonah was punished by the loss of his prophetic ability; Hashem no longer spoke to him. Yirmiyahu, on the other hand, achieved the perfect balance between his love for both Hashem and the people of Israel. He admitted the people's sinfulness, yet found ways to advocate for them. For this his prophetic ability was strengthened. In this respect, the midrash puts Yirmiyahu on the same plane as Moshe Rabbeinu and David HaMelech, who were similarly able to balance rebuke with love and advocacy.²

While the first midrash compares Yirmiyahu to Moshe Rabbeinu in terms of the circumstances they endured, the second is a more profound reflection upon a personal outlook. Yirmiyahu is one of the few prophets to allow us more than a glimpse into his



1. ילקוט שמעוני פרשת שופטים רמז תתקט

2. מכילתא דר' ישמעאל פרשת בא א



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feelings toward his mission. We are privy to his struggles and to his hopes, his love for his G-d, his people and for Yerushalayim and the Mikdash.

Rav Moshe Lichtenstein views the comparison of the midrash differently. He argues that while it's true that Moshe and Yirmiyahu both initially resisted their appointments, Yirmiyahu was easily appeased by Hashem's promise of reinforcement, while Moshe continued to argue. He suggests that the mission of each was essentially different from the other - Moshe was a prophet-leader, while Yirmiyahu was to serve as Hashem's "shofar" - a mouthpiece to relay the word of Hashem to the people. He was not sent to effect change, rather to inform, to warn and to prepare. This served to intensify Yirmiyahu's inner struggle. His loyalty to Hashem's word was in constant conflict with his desire to advocate for Yisrael and Yerushalayim.³

It is significant that Yirmiyahu's opening prophecy concludes with words of comfort that still resound in our ears, as they appear in Tefillat Musaf of Rosh HaShanah. In the bracha of Zichronot, we ask Hashem to remember, as He promised Yirmiyahu he would, the kindness of our youth and the love of our betrothal and commitment to Him as

we willingly followed Him into the desert without a thought as to how we would survive there. Only on the basis of this promise, the promise of ultimate redemption, suggests Rav Lichtenstein, was Yirmiyahu able to fulfill his mission of rebuke. May we merit to listen to the sound of the shofar during these auspicious days, and hear the echo of the words of the Neviim through Hashem's "loudspeaker", begging us to return to Him with full hearts so that He may forgive our sins and fulfill His promise of redemption. ■

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi program

In the **OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi series**, which just began its fourth cycle, women scholars deliver a daily shiur on the books of Prophets (Neviim) and Writings (Ketuvim) at the pace of a chapter a day. Shiurim are geared toward learners of all levels who would like to participate in the two-year Nach Yomi study cycle. Visit the OU Women's Initiative to register for additional content.

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