



PROBING THE PROPHETS

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Beloved By G-d

While the opening parshiot of the Torah center upon the universe and the early generations that filled the earth, this week's parasha of Lech-L'cha begins the story of Am Yisrael, by focusing upon the matriarch and patriarch of the Jewish nation, Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imeinu. As such, it is certainly understandable to find the haftarah that would be read on this parasha to connect to the builders of our nation - and, indeed, it does.

And yet, when we read through the selection that Chazal chose as the haftarah [Yishayahu 40-41], we find only three words to portray the greatness of our forefather. The navi tells Israel that they are a chosen nation of Hashem because they are "Zerah Avraham Ohavi", the descendants of Avraham, who so loved G-d. So, is that a portrayal of our forefather whose stories of belief in G-d and commitment to His divine commands fill some 13-14 p'rakim of the Torah? DO THREE WORDS SUFFICE???

In truth, Yishayahu was not looking to impress his nation with the greatness of Avraham Avinu, at all. He was **not** hoping

to remind his listeners of the remarkable accomplishments of the father of their people. He did **not** need to tell the gathering crowd of their forefather's journey to Canaan at G-d's behest, nor of his courageous victory over the powerful five kings or even of his willingness to sacrifice his own son to follow Hashem's wishes. These stories were well-known throughout the generations. The navi understood that these acts of faith executed one-thousand years earlier would have little impact upon his wayward generation to bring them to the realization of **Whom** G-d was and **Why** they should follow His ways.



Rabbi Mosheh Lichtenstein

Rav Moshe Lichtenstein turns to the Torah itself and clarifies what powerful lesson

we find in the parasha that, he insists, had to be taught to the future generations of Avraham's descendants.

The essential message we are to absorb from these "introductory" years of Avraham Avinu is the fact that Man is gifted with the ability and the privilege to stand before G-d: to question Him, to plead with Him and to pray to Him. Hashem's **willingness** to communicate with His creations reflects a closeness that He hopes - perhaps, even yearns - to feel a warmth with humanity, and, with the few, even intimacy. It was **Avraham** who was able to create that communication with HaKadosh

Baruch Hu. It was **that** ‘wonder’ which Avraham brought to the world – and one that had to be passed down from generation to generation.

If we consider the challenges that faced the nation of Israel during Yishayahu’s era including the exile of the Northern tribes, the threat of the invasion of the powerful Assyrian Empire and the real possibility of being expelled from their land by the enemy, we better understand the prophet’s soothing call from G-d of “Zerah Avraham Ohavi”. Yishayahu tells his people that G-d yearns to reconnect to them.

Yes, YOU, Israel, are the descendants of Avraham-the person that Hashem call ‘Ohavi’ – **NOT one who loved Me, but one whom I loved-“Ahuvi”!** And this is the message that Yishayahu had to relay to his challenged generation. You are descended from he who loved G-d but, more importantly, he who was loved by **HIM!**

A Jew who understands that Hashem looks to be close to you, who hopes to have a relationship with you and who has a father who was loved by G-d, is a Jew who understands what he must do! ■

Rabbi Winkler’s popular Jewish History lectures can be viewed by visiting the OU Israel Video archive: www.ouisrael.org/video-library