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A Faithful Nation

As we closed last week's parasha of Toledot, we read of Ya'akov Avinu's departure from his parent's home, following the request of his father to find a wife from his mother's family but, even more crucially, following the advice of his mother to escape the wrath of his brother Eisav who planned to kill him. This week's parasha of VaYetzei picks up on that journey, opening with the words "Vayetzei Ya'akov", that Ya'akov left Be'er Sheva on his way to Charan. Our haftarah echoes the opening verse of the parasha with the words of Hoshe'a "VaYivrach Yisra'el s'deh Aram", describing how Ya'akov fled to the field of Aram.


Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein

Although we might see nothing unusual with that statement, Rav Moshe Lichtenstein reveals to us important insights that are uncovered in the prophetic words of Hoshe'a. To begin with, it is highly unusual to find a review of patriarchal stories in the books of the nevi'im. Although we might find the mention of the personalities of our Avot or Imahot, we almost never read of the events or episodes that our patriarchs experienced. The fact that the final chapters of Sefer Hoshe'a (Hoshe'a 9-10; 12-13) DOES do that makes it quite unique. And WHY he does that requires a look at our haftarah.

Rav Lichtenstein points out that the repetitive theme found in the haftarah is that of "ne'emanut", faithfulness, fidelity, or, more precisely, a LACK of faithfulness. The navi condemns Israel, that is, the Northern Kingdom, for their rebellious ways, specifically, their ongoing idolatry and pagan worship. Hoshe'a underscores that infidelity by comparing Israel to a wayward wife who leaves her husband to seek another partner. However, Rav Lichterstein suggests, there is yet another type of infidelity. It is not a search to attach to another who she regards as better, kinder, wealthier - one to whom she would be faithful. Rather, it was a search simply for "another"..... and then "another".



Yishayahu, Rav Lichtenstein suggests, often fought against idolatry when Israel chose another "deity", believing that the different "god" was more powerful and therefore, should be worshipped. But

Hoshe'a battled against an idolatry that led Israel from one 'divinity" to another, causing the nation to constantly search for... another to save them from one threat or another. It was a faithlessness that denied their past and ignored all that Hashem had done for them in exchange for ...anyone. It was pure disloyalty to G-d.

And this is how Hoshe'a gets to the story of Ya'akov. When closely analyzing the story, we will realize that Ya'akov was the model of "ne'emanut". He loved Rachel and remained faithful to her, even when it meant working for seven more years to win her hand. He is deceived by Lavan, cheated and misled-but never leaves him, remaining faithful to his pledge. In both situations the sacrifice was great. Who would wait faithfully for seven years in order to marry his betrothed? Who would remain in the house of one who had cheated him and would remain faithful to a promise made to such a deceitful person– all the while longing to return home to see his elderly parents?

Faithfulness requires sacrifice, and the long history of our people has proven that we have internalized the lesson that Hoshe'a taught so long ago. Over our many years we have – and continue - to make that sacrifice. Sacrifice for the G-d of Israel, the Torah of Israel and the Land of Israel. It is a sacrifice and a faithfulness that no other people have ever shown.

Indeed, we have the right to read this haftarah of rebuke with pride and not with shame. We have learned what Hoshe'a's generation did not. These past years prove that we have learned well to sacrifice. Simply, because...we are a faithful nation. ■

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