

PROBING THE PROPHETS
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Ovadyah's Living Prophecy

In 1933, some months before the passing of the great Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, the 'Chafetz Chayim', he was visited by his students who shared with him the worries they had over the increasing anti-Semitism spreading through many of European countries. Their fears were certainly understandable, as the accursed new Chancellor of Germany had risen and, with that, so had the power of Nazism. What, after all, would be the fate of the Jewish communities throughout Europe? What about the yeshivas, the shuls, the culture of generations, the asked.

The eminent sage did not suggest any solution to his questioners. He did not reassure them with promises denying that anything would happen. Not at all. Instead, he simply quoted a pasuk from Sefer Ovadyah, a verse that we read in this week's haftarah:

"וּבְהַר צִיּוֹן תִּהְיֶה פְלֵיטָה וְהָיָה קֹדֶשׁ וְיָרְשׁוּ בֵּית יַעֲקֹב אֶת מוֹרָשֵׁיהֶם"

But a remnant will survive on Har Zion, and it will be holy. It will be then that Bet Ya'akov will dispossess those who had previously dispossessed them.

It is true. The Chafetz Chayim did NOT relieve his students of their fear. He did not guarantee their survival, or promise some divine miracle to save them…he only shared a simple quotation.


The Chafetz Chaim zt"l

But today, we understand that **he was sharing a nevu'ah for them, prophesying a truth** that they could never have believed in 1933!!!

Our parasha of VaYishlach begins with the return of Ya'akov from the house of Lavan who, on his way, meets up with Eisav. And, although the Torah Reading also includes Ya'akov's struggle with the angel, the Hashem's of Ya'akov, that includes the addition of "Yisra'el" to his name, and the attack on Shechem…despite these important events, the haftarah focuses **only** the relationship of Ya'akov and Eisav. And, to understand why, we should learn who this 'one-chaptered' navi really was.

The Gemara **[Sanhedrin 39b]** sees the Ovadya of Trei Asar to be the same Ovadya who served as the household minister to King Achav **[M'lachim A; 18: 2]** in the ninth century BCE. Later commentators, however, date Ovadya as a navi who prophesied during the same time of Yirmiyahu, (**6th century BCE**). This opinion is based upon our haftarah in which Ovadya strongly condemns and denounces Edom

-specifically-as the neighbor of Israel who stood as her enemy during the time of Churban Bayit [**See Tehillim 137; 7**].

And yet, the theme of the longtime hatred of Eisav's descendants that I would focus upon this week. Rather, I turn to the final p'sukim of the haftarah (and of the nevu'ah of Ovadya), that, I feel, are especially fitting for our generation. The prophet's closing message is one of comfort and promise, yet for many generations, it could not have the profound impact on our people that Ovadya had hoped to achieve. But our generation must be able to do so, for we have experienced the fruition of the navi's promised comfort:

"And they** [Bet Ya'akov] **in the South will possess Har Eisav and…the land of the Philistines; they will possess the field of Efrayim and of Shomron, and Binyamin will possess Gil'ad. And the exiled from Sefarad will occupy the cities of the Negev…"

I imagine that, for 2,500 years, very few could even have thought that such a prophecy would really happen. Even the students of the Chafetz Chayim could envision such a reality that could save Yahadut/*Yiddishkeit*.

But the saintly Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (Chafetz Chayim) knew well that "***a remnant will survive on Har Zion";*** he had the confidence, the *bitachon*, that it was the time for the nevu'ah of Ovadya to come to fruition.

And we, who have witnessed the miracles, should certainly share in the *bitachon* of the great Rabbi. ■

רפואה שלמה
Peleg Shabtai ben Chaviva Leah

