



PROBING

THE PROPHETS

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Rabbi Winkler's popular Jewish History lectures can be viewed by visiting the OU Israel Video archive:

<https://www.ouisrael.org/video-library>

There is very little to add to the short message expressed in of this week's haftarah. The ten verses describe so beautifully the dramatic rebirth of Eretz Yisrael and Am Yisrael when Hashem returns from galut with His people. And how beautifully does Rav Yigal Ariel point out the navi's the repetitive reassurances of Hashem's promises, echoing His pledges four times in but ten p'sukim and, each time, referring to G-d using four different endearing identities: "Amar Hashem", "Amar Elokayich", "Amar Go'alech", "Amar M'rachamech". Those simple appellations which describe G-d's relationship to Israel brought comfort and consolation

This year, while contemplating the haftarah's depiction of a rejuvenated nation and a revitalized Land, my thoughts turned to my dear friend, colleague and teacher and a source of inspiration for me and many others. It was just some weeks ago when the Torah world and the entire Jewish world lost this remarkable individual and I felt it proper to share with you one of his moving articles, that well reflect his love for Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael. I therefore present to you (in my abridged version) Rav Shalom Gold's view of the letter that the fruits of Israel were sending to us.

"We, the vegetables and fruits of the Land of Israel, want Jews to know what a dramatic transformation has been wrought over the

past century in our subterranean world.

"After the destruction of the Second Beit HaMikdash a message came from Heaven to all the flora and fauna of this land: "Stop growing!"

"The word spread from cedar to hyssop, from vine to olive, from flower to grain –everything must go dormant. And so, a slumber was slapped on the Land of Israel, and only when the Jewish people would return would we be allowed to begin producing anew.

"We were told not to respond to the foes of Israel who entered the land, and we obeyed. Indeed, over the centuries many foreign invaders came: Romans, Byzantines, Muslims, Crusaders, Turks and more. They all came...but we did not react to their attempts to bring us to life. The land remained barren.

"During that long interlude we, the Indigenous Fruits of the Land of Israel, waited, hoping and praying for the return of this land's Indigenous People.

"Then, toward the end of the 19th century, rumors began to race beneath the surface of the earth. Birds flying overhead and clouds cruising the skies said, 'They are coming.' And the great command came directly from Hashem: 'O mountains of Israel, shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to My people Israel; for they are at hand to come.' (Ezekiel 36:8) "Grow! Respond to the work of My peoples' hands!"

“You should have seen the joy beneath the surface. We awoke from hibernation, stretched our roots and smiled. G-d commanded us to turn this small, dry, arid and dusty land into a verdant, fruitful and agricultural world superpower.

“And the Lord further told us: ‘It makes no difference whether these chalutzim are religious or not - they are My children and they are coming home. And so, GROW! Impart your bounty. GROW!’

“And so we did... in abundance. We gave fantastic vineyards to the viticulturalists of modern Israel, from which world-class and holy wine is being vinified. And we brought forth almond, apple, apricot, banana, barley, bean, cabbage, cactus, cauliflower, corn, cucumber, date, fig, grapefruit, guava, kiwi, kumquat, lemon, lychee, mango, melon, , onion, pea, peach, pear, pepper, quince, radish, squash, watermelon, wheat... and so much more! Isn't this just amazing?

Rabbi Abba taught (Sanhedrin 98a) that “There is no greater sign of the geulah than the agricultural re-blooming of the Land of Israel,” while the Bach added (in Orach Chaim 208) that the shechina, enters the Jewish soul through the agricultural produce of Eretz Yisrael.

”They are bearers of a Divine message: that G-d has re-juiced the Land of Israel so that all His children can come home and live in plenty.

In all honesty, there are times that, upon reading Rabbi Gold's articles or hearing his lectures, I feel that the prophet himself had placed these messages in his heart. The underlying message of our haftarah is well expressed in Rav Gold's “letter”.

The vegetables were correct! The fruits got it right.

And, indeed, we should listen to the tomato...and to Rabbi Gold....

And to Yishayahu! ■

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