



PROBING

THE PROPHETS

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER

Faculty, OU Israel Center

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## Rosh Hashana II

Upon reading the haftarah for the second day of Rosh Hashana one would be overwhelmed by the magnificent prophecies of the “*acharit yamim*”, the future messianic era. The comforting promises of the navi Yirmiyahu include the pledge of an era of rebuilding the nation, of a time of celebration and dance as well of an age of rebirth for the once-desolate land. The prophet even foretells of a future when the people would call for a return to Tziyon, after which Hashem would gather His children from the ends of the earth and bring them back to their land!! In retrospect, we would consider this 31st chapter of Yirmiyahu as a fitting inclusion to the haftarat of consolation - were it found in Sefer Yishayahu.

Wonderful!!

But what does it have to do with Rosh Hashana????

The answer to that most fitting question is to be found in the very first p’sukim of the haftarah where the navi reminds Israel how Hashem found favor in ... “am s’ridei charev”, the nation who survived the sword (of Egypt) ... “haloch l’hargi’o Yisrael”, as He led Israel to its “tranquility’ (her land). But I wonder if Chazal saw these words NOT simply as a reflection

of a past history but as a future lesson for the people. Perhaps the text refers to the His nation that were “am s’ridei charev” – survivors of the ‘sword’ (“charev”) or of ‘destruction’ (“chareiv-as in ‘churban’), and, therefore, “haloch l’hargi’o Yisrael” – he is going to bring tranquility to Israel. I would suggest that the ancients saw this message to Israel as assurance that G-d looks to bring the weary and tortured people who suffered much punishment, final rest and peace.

But this is but an introduction to Yirmiyahu’s message, for the very next verse shares Israel’s disbelief – even skepticism - in the navi’s promise: “Merachok Hashem nirah li”, “But Hashem seems so far from me” is their response. And so, the very next pasuk explains the import of Hashem’s promise, and, I submit, the very core of this Rosh Hashana message. In it, G-d tells the nation: “Ahavat olam ahavtich”, - ‘do you not realize that I have an eternal and never ceasing love for you?’ “Al ken m’shachtich chased”, ‘and that is why I have extended such kindness to you.’

G-d responds to the people’s skepticism by telling His chosen nation that the comforting words and the remarkable future prophesied by Yirmiyahu would indeed

come to fruition—despite Israel’s past sins that has led them to doubt the prophet’s promises. Hashem reminds them that, although “Merachok Hashem nirah li”, G-d seems so distant from them, He, nonetheless, continues to love which is why “m’shachtich chased”, He extends kindness and mercy to them.

And what a powerful message that is for us on Rosh Hashana!!

As we turn to Hashem in tefilla on this Day of Judgment, we are understandably uncomfortable. We wonder if we really are deserving of G-d’s mercies and His forgiveness. We look back upon the year and find that we weren’t always careful in our relationships – whether with G-d or with others. And, perhaps, we might even feel that the Divine One has good reason to feel that we are not truly deserving of his

atonement. And so He reminds us: “Ahavat olam ahavtich”, I love you eternally for, as you remember your shortcomings, I recall your virtues.

And, isn’t that exactly how Yirmiyahu closes this haftarah? “Haben yakir li Ephrayim....? “Is not Ephrayim my most precious child?” And, for that very reason “rachem arachamenu..”-I will surely show mercy to him”! ■

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