



## PROBING THE PROPHETS

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This week's selection from the 40th and 41st perakim of Sefer Yeshayahu offers a primary message of encouragement and hope to a people who believe that Hashem has turned away from them, as the opening words reveal ("nistera darki meiHashem"). The navi reminds Israel that G-d is THE Eternal Creator Who does not tire nor flag and who invigorates and strengthens those who trust in G-d.

It is also important to note that the opening pesukim of our haftarah are the closing part of the well-known "Nachamu, Nachamu Ami" prophecy – the nevu'ah that opens the section of consolation of Sefer Yeshayahu. But, whereas the beginning of the chapter, the part that we read on the post-Tish'a B'Av Shabbat, portrays G-d's omniscience and power, His greatness and domination, the chapter's second part, that which opens our haftarah, focuses upon Hashem's desire to establish a closer bond with Man and, conversely, the ability of Man to connect with the Divine.

It is actually this very theme that forms the clear connection to our parasha. Consider: throughout the first two parshot of the Torah, we read of G-d speaking to individuals – Hashem speaks to Adam, He speaks to Chava and He speaks to Noach. But we are never presented with a *relationship*, we never see a conversation or discussion. Simply, there was the Master and the servant. No More.

But all of this changes in this week's parasha. For the first time we find the creations connecting with the Creator. In parashat Lech Lecha both Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imeinu succeed in creating an actual relationship with G-d. They are put to the "test" by G-d and they *pass* those tests. Hashem is not simply instructing Man or commanding Man. For the first time, He is reaching out to Man..... and Man responds. There is a connection, there is a bond....and, therefore, there is now a relationship – one yearned for by humanity and one desired by the Divine. It is here that we learn of Hashem's promise to build a great nation from Avraham's descendants and where we read of G-d's two covenants with the "first Jew": Brit Bein Hab'tarim and Brit Milah.

Once we realize this "additional" uniqueness of these first Matriarch and Patriarch of our nation, we better appreciate the prophet's message to the people who cried out that they and their "path" or "cause", has been "hidden from Hashem". Yeshayahu's encouraging message is not simply that G-d is eternal and all-powerful. It is not only that He is capable of redeeming the despondent nation. The underlying idea, the significant lesson that the navi shares with the people is that Hashem wants more from them than simple obedience; ***G-d desires a real relationship with them!***

It is for this that Yeshayahu teaches how

Hashem Himself will give strength to the weary and courage to the fearful. And why he reminds them of G-d's reassurance that "b'charticha v'lo m'asticha" – "I have chosen you and not rejected you"... because you are "zarah Avraham ohavi", the descendants of **Avraham, who loved Me**". The navi hoped to explain Hashem Himself will help us draw closer to Him and meet the challenges He places before us.

G-d wants to be seen as more than a King to Israel....He wants them to realize that He is also their Father! ■