



PROBING THE PROPHETS

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The Means Toward the Goal

In the final nine p'rakim of Sefer Yechezkel, the navi details the magnificence of a future Beit HaMikdash, the "Bayit Shlishi" that would be built during the Messianic Era. This week's haftarah, taken from the 43rd perek of that book, focuses upon the obligation to build the Mikdash precisely as directed by Yechezkel HaNavi, paralleling the parasha's description of the construction of the Mishkan. The closing section of the haftarah details the ritual to be followed for the dedication of the outer altar, the "Chanukat HaMizbe'ach", that would take place during the seven inaugural days. This final part of the haftarah creates yet another connection to our parasha where we also read of the ritual that must be followed during the seven inaugural days of the newly constructed Mishkan.

And yet, unless we understand the chapters that precede our haftarah, we would only have a partial appreciation of its eternal message. The earlier p'rakim that open the "Third Temple" section of Sefer Yechezkel (chapters 40-42) portray Hashem's return to the Sanctuary and depict in detail the structure of the future Beit HaMikdash, describing the different elements of the Mikdash and their measurements. These include the different gates and their cells, the large pillars and the narrowing windows, the outer courtyard and its balcony as well as the inner

courtyard and its chambers, etc.

But as we begin the 43rd perek (from which we read our haftarah), we read how Hashem takes Yechezkel on a "virtual tour" of this new Mikdash where the prophet sees a vision of G-d's glory being returned into the Temple by the "merkava" (the Divine Chariot) and His shechina filling the entire structure. This magnificent depiction of the Divine presence returning to the Beit HaMikdash that He had abandoned years earlier, was a powerful message of comfort and hope for the nation.

And, at that point, we begin to read our haftarah. And what do we learn? "Hagged et B'nai Yisra'el et habayit", Hashem tells Yechezkel to tell the people all of the details he had learned regarding the future Temple, "**v'yikolmu me'avonotehem**" – G-d continues to instruct Yechezkel, and tells him: "**And let them be ashamed of their sins!**" What??? Are you as puzzled as I am? For over three chapters the navi is given the specific details of the third Temple, he is given a virtual tour through the yet-to-be-constructed edifice and is now instructed to describe all of the details of this Beit Hamikdash to Israel and, out of nowhere, Hashem tells Yechezkel that the people must be ashamed of their sins?!?! What is the connection? What is G-d's message?

HaRav Amnon Bazak helps us

understand this rather perplexing charge.

Rav Bazak explains that the very goal of Hashem's command to have Yechezkel describe to the nation the physical structure of the Beit HaMikdash and the rituals to be followed was in order to encourage the people to feel remorse and shame over their poor behavior. The nation knew well that the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash could only happen if they deserved it. The vision of the prophet was meant to excite the populace with the possibility of having a Mikdash again, after it had been destroyed only a few years earlier. Hopefully, this opportunity would bring Israel to repair, repent and return.

But first there had to be remorse, shame.

Indeed, in the very next verse, Hashem tells the navi "V'im nichle'u mikol asher assu", if Israel becomes ashamed for all they had done..." ONLY THEN shall you detail to them the structure and design of the Mikdash. The crucial message that G-d sends to the people through his prophet, Yechezkel, is not one of encouragement and comfort alone, but one of challenge and trial.

G-d understood well that it was essential to teach His children that the essence of the Mikdash was not to receive forgiveness but to inspire repentance. Atonement is earned through contrition and remorse inspired by the Temple.

The goal is t'shuva; the means toward that is the Temple. ■

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