

Bringing the Prophets to Life

**Weekly insights into the Haftara
by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler**

Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)

HaChodesh - 20 p'sukim; Sh'mot 12:1-20

A Future That Can Begin Today

The Tana'im in our Mishna established this Shabbat's special maftir reading from Parshat Bo, in order to remind the congregation that the time to offer the Korban Pesach, was quickly approaching. The selection from the 12th perek of Sh'mot, describes the laws of the first Korban Pesach, including Hashem's unique instructions regarding the very first Paschal offering that was offered in Egypt itself. For the same reason, Chazal's choice for this week's haftara also speaks of the unique laws that would apply to the future Paschal offerings that would take place in the third Temple during the Messianic era. Many of the laws quoted do not coincide with the laws of the Torah, causing some consternation among the rabbinic scholars. Yet, as the Radak, suggests, and, as we have explained in earlier columns, the new era that would be heralded by the arrival of Mashiach ben David,

would bring with it different laws, more demanding observances, in order to create a higher level of spirituality and purity among the people.

Fittingly, the opening verses of the haftara, tell of the special sacrifice that would be offered on "the first day of the first month", Rosh Chodesh Nisan, and whose blood would be spread on the doorposts of the Sanctuary. Clearly, such a ritual reflects the procedure that Moshe gave to B'nei Yisra'el in Egypt, as they too spread the blood of the Paschal Offering upon doorposts (of the Israelite homes) the evening before their Exodus to freedom. Furthermore, when the haftara reading continues, we learn of how the navi Yechezkel details the future seven-day holiday during which matzot would be eaten, another mitzva that is included in our Maftir reading as well.

However, we would be mistaken were we to see these interesting contrasts and comparisons between the original offering and the yet-to-be sacrifices of the future, simply as reminders of Chag HaPesach. It might well have been the purpose of Chazal to teach us that Pesach is to be understood as more than a reenactment of the past Exodus. It

must also be seen as the promise of our future redemption.

There is, however, another important lesson woven within the words of Yechezkel HaNavi. It is a subtle, and yet most crucial, lesson that we are expected to learn and pass on. In the verses preceding the haftara itself, Yechezkel admonishes the leaders of Judea, telling them that no longer would they use their power to enrich themselves at the expense of the common people. Rather, they must fulfill their true purpose as leaders in Israel: to pursue justice and righteousness by having "honest scales and weights", by guaranteeing equal and true coinage and, by doing so, removing the lawlessness and corruption that had filled the land.

Ultimately, the future redemption brought by Mashiach ben David would not be only one demanding the purity of Mikdash or that of a close adherence to mitzvot. Rather, Hashem's demand will be to build a society dedicated to the purity of action and of deed, a world based upon relationships of ben Adam laMakom as well as those that shape our dealings ben Adam l'chavero.

It is a future we look forward to... and one we can start (continue) building today as well. ✨