

Bringing the Prophets to Life

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

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

Shabbat Rosh Chodesh

- 24* p'sukim, Yishayahu 66:1-24

Consecrating Time

As, once again, we read the special Shabbat Rosh Chodesh haftara, we are reminded that this 66th perek of Sefer Yishayahu marks the conclusion of the sefer and, as such, the final message of the prophet. And, although we cannot confidently claim that this chapter reflects the navi's very last words, the mere fact it that was instituted as the closing message of Yishayahu's prophecies requires us to consider what important lesson the navi imparted in this chapter.

This final perek also closes the book's section of consolation, and, therefore focuses on the final Geula and the arrival of Eliyahu as harbinger of the Messianic era. In fact, the closing p'sukim depicts the future observance of "Rosh Chodesh", the new month, as a time when all Mankind would gather to worship Hashem. It is also true that the very word CHODESH, is based upon CHADASH something, new, as the prophet speaks of HASHAMAYIM HACHADASHIM V'HA'ARETZ HACHADASHA, new heavens and new earth, and then tells of how MIDEI CHODESH

B'CHOD'SHO, which implies that the beginning of a new month is a time for renewal. It would appear that Yishayahu sees a renewed world, one that would be formed with the arrival of the Mashiach.

But we would be mistaken were we to ignore the other day upon which the navi focuses - UMIDEI SHABBAT B'SHABBATO - the Shabbat. How are we to understand the underlying message that the Shabbat leaves us for Y'MOT HAMASHI'ACH much as we were able to uncover that of Rosh Chodesh?

Rav Yigal Ariel proposes that the two days, Rosh Chodesh and Shabbat, have parallel lessons that are meant to complement each other. Shabbat, sanctified by G-d Himself at the Creation (VAY'VARECH ELOKIM ET YOM HASH'VI'I VAYKADEISH OTO), was to be an immutable holy day, unaffected by any calendar - solar or lunar. It is for this reason that we bless Hashem at the arrival of each Shabbat as M'KADEISH HASHABBAT - He Who sanctifies the Shabbat. The Shabbat, therefore, is meant to reflect the everlasting and unchanging Kedusha granted to the world by The Eternal and Immutable G-d, says Rav Ariel.

Rosh Chodesh, on the other hand, is, as its name proclaims, a time for "newness" (CHADASH), our opportunity for renewal, to do what the moon itself does. Significantly, we note that it is Hashem Who sanctifies Shabbat but He calls upon Israel to sanctify the

CHODESH. Such a charge stands as a reminder that we can and must renew and refresh the holiness in the world and the sacredness of life. It is for this very reason that, in contrast to the blessing on Shabbat, we greet the new month with the bracha of M'KADEISH YISRAEL V'ROSHEI CHODASHIM - recognizing that G-d has blessed Israel - and only through them is the new month sanctified [see Pesachim 117b].

It is this promise that Yishayahu leaves with Israel: the "power" to bless and sanctify is not limited to Hashem alone. Quite the opposite!

It is WE who are charged to spread holiness throughout the Earth, WE who are challenged to sanctify Hashem's world, and WE who must face up to G-d's expectation to renew, refresh and rededicate that which created. ✨