

Bringing the Prophets to Life

Weekly insights into the Haftara
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Nisan - The Month of Ge'ula

HACHODESH - 28 p'sukim -
Yechezkeil 45:16-46:18

S'faradim start two p'sukim later and
end three p'sukim earlier

The special readings of both the Maftir and the Haftara of this Shabbat HaChodesh focus upon the mitzva of Korban Pesach. Primarily, the text details the ritual that should be followed by B'nei Yisra'el in Egypt one week later, although it also touches upon the observance of Korban Pesach in future years. Besides its spotlight upon the sacrificial rite, however, the Torah takes pains to include the importance of the month of Nisan itself - an important addition as well.

The opening p'sukim of the Maftir reading declare: HACHODESH HAZEH LACHEM ROSH CHODASHIM - that you must consider this month (of Nisan) as the 'head' of the months, to regard Nisan not only as the first of the months in the year but, also, as ROSH, the most significant month of the year. In keeping with that point,

the Torah records a listing of those mitzvot to be observed during that month specifically, thereby underscoring the importance of the month of Nisan itself.

Similarly, Yechezkel HaNavi quotes Hashem's charge (to the soon-to-be-liberated nation) in his opening verses of our haftara, by saying to his generation: ...BARISHON, B'ECHAD LACHODESH... - "In the first day of the first month..." The prophet proceeds to delineate those laws of the month, primarily, the laws of the Korban Pesach, just as the Torah does in the twelfth perek of Sefer Sh'mot, but in doing so, he includes the emphasis upon the significance of the month itself.

Rav Yehuda Shaviv enlightens us quoting the words of the Ramban who reminds us that one year after the first of Nisan, the Mishkan was dedicated (Chanukat haMishkan). In his introduction to Sefer Sh'mot, the Ramban submits that this dedication actually marked the conclusion of the GE'ULA process that began exactly one year earlier, when the first mitzvot were given to the nation. This approach is supported in the closing perek of Sefer Sh'mot that opens with G-d's declaration to Moshe: B'YOM HACHODESH HARISHON, B'ECHAD LACHODESH - "On the first day of the first month..." - TAKIM ET MISHKAN OHEL MO'ED - "you shall

erect the Mishkan..." [40:2]. And then in pasuk 17, we learn that Hashem's directive was properly observed "on the first day of the first month of the second month". The repetition of the command makes it clear that the day and month are essential to the construction of the Mishkan as that same date is crucial to the initial laws given to Israel.

I include this approach of the Ramban for, I believe, it is essential in order to properly understanding the message of Yechezkel in this week's haftara.

Upon reading the haftara we realize that it does not focus upon the Korban Pesach, as we might have thought. Rather, it speaks of the requirement to sanctify the Mikdash, starting with "the first day of the first month". It does make mention of the sacrifice that must be offered on the 14th day of the month (Korban Pesach), but Yechezkel continues by detailing the other offerings to be brought on the days that follow, i.e., the seven days of the holiday itself.

The bulk of the haftara (perek 46) makes no mention of Pesach or its korbanot. Instead, it is involved with the importance of the sanctity of the Mikdash and the many rituals and laws that are required to uphold its holiness. It is, therefore, not a message of preparation for the Korban Pesach or the chag itself. It is, rather, a demand of upholding the

KEDUSHA of the Beit HaMikdash and, with that, the nation itself.

For this reason, we should not regard Shabbat HaChodesh as a time to prepare for Pesach but, rather, to prepare for sanctity, holiness and care of that which is holy. The month of Nisan. Therefore, it should not be seen as a month of "miracles" (NISan) nor as the month of Pesach.

Yechezkel makes it clear to us that Nisan is the month of GE'ULA - not simply when we left servitude of Egypt but when we began the worship of the Divine! ✨