

# Bringing the Prophets to Life

Weekly insights into the Haftara  
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## Kohanim and B'nei Aharon

EMOR - 17 p'sukim  
- Yechezkeil 44:15-31

Chazal's haftara selection for this parasha is taken from Sefer Yechezkel [44:15-31] which is part of the closing section of the sefer. That section includes nine p'rakim [40-48] of visions that describe the future of the Beit HaMikdash, Yerushalayim and Eretz Yisra'el. Many of the past articles regarding this haftara have focused upon the contrasts - even conflicts - between the rituals that, as Yechezkel promises, would be followed by the kohanim in the future Beit HaMikdash and those well-known practices that are instituted in the Torah itself.

And yet, we would have a better understanding of the entire nevu'a were we to comprehend the introduction of the haftarah itself. The opening expression V'HAKOHANIM HALVIYIM presents us with a number of queries:

- Does Yechezkel refer to the Kohanim or the Leviyim?

- Or does he speak of both?
- And, if he IS referring to the Kohanim alone - why call them HAKOHANIM HALVIYIM?
- Are not ALL Kohanim also L'viyim - being part of Shevet Levi?

Indeed, the earlier part of the navi's message does speak of the Levites alone... and not positively at all. And, upon hearing Yechezkel's message to them, we will realize why our haftara begins as it does. The navi tells the L'viyim that:

- They are idolators [v. 10]
- Nonetheless, they will guard the Temple, tend gates of the Mikdash and serve the Israelites offerings. [v. 11]
- But they will not be allowed to serve Hashem directly nor have any role in the sanctuary itself. [v.13]

Having condemned the Levites for their past sins - including idolatry - and, as a result, had them prohibited from fully returning to serving G-d, Yechezkel then turns to the Kohanim. The prophet would now call them Kohanim L'viyim - those Kohanim who were also L'viyim - who would be considered as an exception from the other Levitical families.

Indeed, we note carefully how the honors to be bequeathed upon these Kohanim would not be given to all of

the kohanic families, but to the most faithful alone, B'NEI TZADOK, the descendants of Tzadok. It is they who the navi depicts as remaining loyal to G-d when the majority of the nation - both Israelites and Levites - strayed away from Hashem [v.15].

And so, what connection does this have to our Torah reading, a parasha that delineates the responsibilities and services that the Kohanim must fulfill in the Mikdash?

I submit that the underlying message of Yechezkel HaNavi is one that rings true in his era and in future generations as well and is subtly intimated in Parashat Emor.

In delineating the multiple mitzvot incumbent upon the Kohanim, i.e. avoiding defilement to the dead, choosing proper marriage mates or limiting certain kohanim from sacrificial worship, the Torah opens our parasha by referring to the Kohanim as B'NEI AHARON. This additional designation seems to be quite unnecessary, as ALL kohanim must be B'NEI AHARON! But, perhaps, Hashem is directing Moshe to remind the descendants of Aharon must always carry on the name of their holy forefather. Their biological connection to the kehuna would not always guarantee their sanctified position or service alone. As kohanim, they must constantly be aware that they are B'NEI AHARON and, there-

fore, are expected to reflect his sanctity and greatness. If not... well, just read the warnings of Yechezkel!

Z'CHUT AVOT, the righteousness of our holy patriarchs does not guarantee that we will receive Hashem's benevolence and compassion... unless we remember WHO we come from and whom, therefore, we must emulate. ✨