

Bringing the Prophets to Life

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

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

Moshe Rabbeinu & Yishayahu HaNavi

D'VARIM-CHAZON

- 27 p'sukim - Yeshayahu 1:1-27

My father z"l, was not able to complete his yeshiva education. He was the youngest of six children from a poor family who, therefore, was compelled to leave high school at the age of sixteen to help support his family. Nonetheless, my father continued to study what his father and his yeshiva taught him and, over the years, he used that knowledge to serve as Shamash, Shliach Tzibur and Ba'al K'ri'a for his shul - and, throughout his life, taught many others what he learned. I was blessed to be his "closest student" and, at this time of my life, I understand that what he taught me - what he TOLD me - remained in my mind and my heart even more profoundly than that which I studied from books or even that which I learned from my Rebbe'im.

This Shabbat, we read the first words of Sefer D'varim and, likewise, we read the first words of Sefer

Yishayahu. On this Shabbat, our haftara reading will initiate the prophecies of Yishayahu HaNavi to his generation, as the Torah reading will commence with Moshe Rabeinu's final "speech" to the nation. And, although these truths are well-known and not at all surprising, Chazal see these connections in a different light.

Our scholars note [Tachuma: Ha'azinu Bet] how Yishayahu opens his first nevu'a with the words:

SHIM'U SHAMAYIM V'HA'AZINU ERETZ and Moshe Rabeinu opens his final address to the nation with similar words: HA'AZINU HASHAMAYIN VA'ADABERA, V'TISHMA HA'ARETZ IMREI FI". In fact, the similarity between the prophetic message of Yishayahu and the farewell speech of Moshe is more noteworthy than we would have first realized.

In his book "Hamevaser", Rav Yigal Ariel points to the numerous similarities of themes that are found in both "Shirat Moshe" (Ha'azinu) and in Yishayahu's "Chazon".

Consider:

- Moshe reminded Israel that they are the children of Hashem - HU AVICHA KANECHA

As did Yishayahu: BANIM GIDALTI V'ROMAMTI

- Moshe condemned the nation for

their lack of understanding: V'EIN
BAHEM TEVUNA

And so did Yishayahu: AMI LO
HITBONAN

- Moshe asked the people "how?"
EICHA

And Yishayahu echoed... EICHA

- Moshe equated the sinful nation to
the corrupt of S'dom and Amora:

KI MIGEFEN S'DOM GAFNAM
UMISHADMOT AMORAH

Similarly, Yishayahu censured Israel...

KIM'AT KISDOM HAYINU, LA'AMORA
DAMINU

- Moshe closed his "shira" with a
comforting promise of retribution:

V'NAKOM YASHIV L'TZARAV

Yishayahu did so as well:

HOI EINACHEM MITZORAI V'INOKMA
MEI'OYVAI

- And, in conclusion, we find that both
nevi'im concluded their respective
messages with the common theme of
MISHPAT, justice:

- Moshe said: V'TOCHEIZ B'MISHPAT
YADI

Yishayahu closed his nevu'a with:
TZIYON B'MISHPAT TIPADEH

Our Chachamim noted these similar-
ities, and, undoubtedly, saw in them a
significant lesson. But what might
that lesson be?

I would humbly suggest that
Yishayahu, addressing a generation
influenced by foreign philosophies
and values, a population turning away
from Torat Moshe, understood that
his message could not simply be one
of warning or of possible punishment,
nor one of reiteration or duplication
of Hashem's laws. He may have felt
that the most powerful - and
impactive - way to re-educate this
wayward generation would be to echo
the final words that the greatest of
prophets shared with his nation -
Shirat Moshe, Ha'azinu. It is for this
reason that HaKadosh Baruch Hu
placed in the mouth of this navi the
message most likely to inspire the
populace so lost and so aimless.

It would be the heartfelt words of the
'Father of the Prophets' (AV
HA'NEVI'IM) that could best remain in
the hearts and minds of the children.

I know that my father's words did! ✨