



Weekly Insights into the Haftara
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Two Haftarot for a “One-Day” Holiday

First day Rosh HaShana - 28 p'sukim -
Shmuel Alef 1:1-2:10

2nd day Rosh HaShana - 19 p'sukim -
Yirmiyahu 31:2-20

As we begin the new year, we expect to find that this year's lu'ach will not be identical with last year's - or the next one - for, as our calendar follows both the lunar and solar cycles, no year is identical to the last or the following one. One year might include a solar leap day, while another might have a lunar added month. When we include the fact that the Hebrew months can vary from 29 to 30 days, we fully understand why succeeding calendars are never identical.

So what? Simply put, this reality explains why our haftarot are not always repetitive, as the same parshiot might require a different prophetic selection than what was read on the past year. The days of Rosh Hashanah are, however, somewhat unique. Although both days are, primarily, identical - in fact,

in contrast to the additional day of Yom Tov in the Diaspora, the second day of Rosh HaShana is not a rabbinic "addition", as are other holidays, but is considered to be part and parcel of the first day, a YOM ARICHTA, regarding Rosh HaShana to be a one-day holiday! And, while the two Torah readings on the two days are but a continuation one of the other, we might wonder why Chazal chose two different haftarot from two different nevi'im (Shmuel and Yirmiyahu), to be read on this, so called, YOM ARICHTA.

Rav Moshe Lichtenstein takes an interesting approach in explaining the necessity for including two different haftarot for this 'one-day' holiday, by first clarifying that the themes of both readings are clearly different. He reminds us that the haftara of the first day of Rosh HaShana, taken from the opening perek of Sefer Shmuel Alef, relates the story of an individual, Chana, the barren wife of Elkana, and the miraculous birth of Shmuel. Rav Lichtenstein emphasizes that this story is one of the past, detailing the events of a saintly woman, her painful years of bareness and her heartfelt pleas to G-d. Chana's years of belief in Hashem's mercies, her depth of sincere prayer and the sacrifice of her long-awaited son to be a servant to G-d, is more than appropriate reading for Rosh HaShana. Clearly, Rav Lichtenstein

states, the overriding theme of this story of sacrifice and surrender to the Almighty, it is most fitting for the YOM HADIN.

The second-day haftara, however, focuses on the future of a nation. Yirmiyahu directed his prophecy to his generation of the churban, people whom he had cautioned numerous times of the approaching destruction and inevitable exile. Likewise, earlier prophets had also cautioned the previous generations of the coming downfall - but they too turned a deaf ear to HaShem's warnings and threats. Surprisingly, this second day haftara of Rosh HaShana contains neither visions of devastation nor promises of punishments. Yirmiyahu, the "prophet of doom", does not speak of destruction or ruin in this message! Instead, he shares a vision of redemption and freedom with Israel, a nevu'a of when HaShem would see Israel, as an AM S'RIDEI CHAREV, "a nation who has survived the sword", the navi's opening words!

And those words are extremely important, for it brings an essential message for all of us on this new year day, and, for that reason, it taught a different message than does the first day's haftara.

And, I would like to expand upon the approach of Rav Lichtenstein:

The opening haftara challenges the individual to strive and reach the

elevated level of the remarkable Chana. "Can I pray to the Almighty with proper intent feeling as she did?" "Could I build such belief and faith in G-d as Channah had?" "Would I be able to accept the disappointments and tribulations placed upon me, as did she?"

Certainly, all fitting and crucial questions for us to ponder on such a day!

The second haftara is directed to the nation - to the nation that survived the sword of the Crusaders, the exile of the Romans, the torture of the inquisitionists, the banishment from England, France, Spain, Portugal, Vienna, Cologne, Nuremberg, Sicily, Sardinia, Naples, the pogroms, the ghettos, the concentration camps. We are the AM S'RIDEI CHAREV who wonder on Rosh HaShana what we need to do to return to Hashem's graces! So Yirmiyahu tells us "You need not worry!" Read the haftara carefully, this YOM HADIN, read how the navi opens his message by promising HALOCH L'HARGI'O YISRAEL - G-d will lead you to tranquility.

The message of the prophet is not one of glorious redemption, of natural miracles or of atonement of sins. He promises... calmness and serenity. Simple things, but things denied to Israel. This is the hope for us on the beginning of the year.

So, I urge you, this year don't worry about the passage of time, don't read all the commentaries and don't rest your eyes. This year, use your haftara time to read and understand the text well. Study it, ponder over it, be inspired from it.

Certainly, I hope to do so too! ✨