

Bringing the Prophets to Life

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

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The haftara that we are privileged to read this week is taken from the 46th perek of Sefer Yirmiyahu and closely parallels the prophetic words of Yechezkel that we read in last week's haftara. This is certainly understandable, given that both nevi'im were contemporaries and received similar messages from Hashem. There are, however, significant differences between the two messengers and between the two descriptions of the punishments that would befall the Egyptians in the future - descriptions that create the connection of these haftarot to both parashot that describe the punishments suffered by the Egyptian before Yetzi'at Mitzrayim.

HaRav Yosef Carmel of the Eretz Hemdah Institute comments upon these overlapping prophecies and explains:

At the same time that Yechezkel was serving as prophet in Bavel, Yirmiyahu was serving in Yerushalayim, which gives us the opportunity to view the period from two different

vantage points. Additionally, we must point out that there are significant differences between the two prophets themselves:

1. Yirmiyahu does not consider Yehoyakim to be king from the time he was exiled to Bavel, where he was imprisoned. Therefore, the dating of his uncle Tzidkiyahu as king begins from that point. In contrast, Yechezkel counts the kingship of Yehoyakim even when he was in a Babylonian jail.

2. Yirmiyahu viewed the post-Exodus generation as a "generation of knowledge", whose relationship with Hashem was a symbol of a positive one. In contrast, Yechezkel is harshly critical of them.

In regard to the opening of both prophecies, the two nevi'im see things similarly:

Yechezkel uses very strong language, using the word SILON, a corrupt king (Targum Yonatan) and MAM-IR, a painful affliction (Rashi) [28:25]. He further describes the surrounding nations who confront Israel as SHATIM, marauders who plunder, (and, as Rashi explains it - those who degrade their victims.

Yirmiyahu, however, although using similar imagery to describe Israel's return to the land, telling of planting

vineyards and living in security (Yirmiyahu 31:4, 32:37), he does not tell of the corrupt leaders nor the marauders that surrounded them. To summarize the approaches of both, in the future, Bnei Yisrael will escape exceptional oppression and will be fortunate to live in security in their Land.

HaRav Carmel continues by applying these descriptions to our current return, as he sees this historical period as a time when our nation will return to the Land with great love, with the returnees building homes, planting vineyards and living securely. And, while our nation had been degraded in the past, and their property taken by our oppressors, we will succeed in building a highly technologically developed economy.

We indeed have witnessed our growth in becoming among the most successful countries in the world. While some 75 years ago, we were viewed as thorns in the eyes of the nations and like lepers, we now stand out as a uniquely talented nation, and those who still try to destroy us have themselves experienced great destruction. It is now the interest of many nations to share in our success - something which is also a part of the nevuot of Yechezkel and Yirmiyahu.

May we have continued success in being a light unto the nations. ✨