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Parashat Lech Lecha - #254

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## On the Haftarah... Yeshayahu Was One

[Yemenite Jews: Yeshayahu 40:25-41:17  
Sefardim/Ashkenazim: Yeshayahu 40:27-41:16]

The fortieth chapter of Yeshayahu is considered by various streams of Biblical Criticism to be the beginning of "Second Yeshayahu" - as if there were two prophets with the same name! What is the reason behind this profane insistence on breaking up the words of our great prophet?

A pseudo-“question” which was asked by German “scientists” lies at the root of the problem: How is it possible that Yeshayahu, who lived during the generation of Uziyahu, Yotam, Achaz and Yechizkiyahu, the Kings of Yehudah (Yeshayahu 1:1), could describe the Nation of Israel’s return to Zion in the time of the Persian King, Koresh (ibid. 45), which occurred two hundred years later? Was he an extremely elderly man who lived for two hundred years? Clearly, these non-believing Tanach readers, called Biblical Critics, forgot something essential: Yeshayahu was a prophet. He could see great distances into the future because the Divine Presence rested upon him. He knew quite well how to project forward two hundred years.

But this is not the only problem that bothered these critics of one hundred years ago, whose combined ignorance and hatred of Israel caused them to go astray (as they did in relation to Yehoshua bin Nun - see the article on the Haftarah for Simchat Torah). They could not fathom how one man could have numerous and diverse facets. Since the prophet Yeshayahu praises peace, the proclaimed, he must be a leftist. But he legitimizes war, so he must be a rightist! Since he praises Shabbat, he must be religious. But he raises the banner of ethics and justice, so he must be a humanist. He recited Hallel for the Nation of Israel (what a disgusting nationalist!), and yet he is

enthusiastic about all of humanity, so he is a universalist. Since he describes heavenly revelations, he must be a mystic. But he speaks so logically to us, so he is clearly rational. And so on and so on...Their conclusion: there is more than one Yeshayahu.

Let's abandon this fantastic idea. There was always only one Yeshayahu. He was a great man who was able to combine his incredible spirituality with a thorough understanding of the human psyche, in all of its manifestations. His ability to unify these diverse tendencies into one person is a capacity that transcends our world knowledge. How unlike this group of pseudo-scholars, enslaved by a dry theory and a weak understanding, who couldn't unify – who could only understand by breaking everything into pieces.

And they were further confounded by this “riddle”: how is it that the entire tone of Yeshayahu's message begins to change at the famous fortieth chapter. What began as a message of strength, courage and determination turns into one of comfort, expectation and confident hope. This observation is in fact correct and astute...but it is nothing new! Our great Rabbi, the Rambam, already referred to chapter forty and its following chapters as the "Consolations of Yeshayahu." This does not mean that there were two separate Yeshayahus: the warrior and the comforter. It means that there was a monumental shift - an unparalleled tragedy - which occurred in the seam between the thirty-ninth chapter and the fortieth chapter, and which caused the message to change. What is this momentous event? The “failure” of the designated Messiah, King Chizkiyahu himself. Yeshayahu brings us this good news: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Yishai, and a branch will grow out of his roots. The spirit of Hashem will rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and awe of Hashem. His delight will be in the awe of Hashem. He will not judge after the sight of his eyes and he will not decide after the hearing of his ears...And righteousness will be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins" (Yeshayahu 11:1-5). This was the time of King Chizkiyahu, who had the potential to become the Messiah.

Our Sages relate that "The Holy One Blessed Be He wanted to make Chizkiyahu the Messiah" (Sanhedrin 44a). He was a righteous, courageous and activist king. To our great distress, however, this messianic hope was hidden and, at the same time, the threatening clouds of Exile began to appear on the horizon.

It is now possible to understand the horrible despair that gripped the Nation of Israel at this time, and the transformation that took place in the style and content of Yeshayahu's prophecy.

He turned to his Nation with love and succinctly informed it: Do not despair, the Redemption has not been canceled, it has just been postponed. The Messiah will arrive at a later time. Be strong and courageous. "Why do you say, O Yaakov, and speak, O Israel: 'My way is hidden from Hashem, and my case has been passed over

by my G-d" (Yeshayahu 40:27). Are we eternally lost? Certainly not! "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Eternal G-d is Hashem, Creator of the ends of the earth, Who neither tires nor wearies. There is no scrutinizing His understanding. He gives strength to the tired, and He increases the strength of the powerless" (ibid. 28-29).

The Master of the Universe never reaches a point of exhausting His strength, and the more we cleave to Him, the stronger and more indefatigable we become. Even the youth, who are said to be full of energy, are sometimes broken after a difficult journey. "Youth may become tired and weary and young man may utterly fall" (30)...But those whose hope is in Hashem will have renewed strength, they will grow wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not grow tired" (31). It is in this sense that we recite the blessing each morning: "Blessed is Hashem...who gives strength to the weary."

## Rav Aviner on... With Marriage, You've Got to Invest

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Noach 5773 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Marriage involves the constant giving of oneself. Yet it isn't easy, because people naturally love themselves too much. One is certainly allowed to love oneself. It says, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18), which implies that one does love oneself. Yet one shouldn't exaggerate that self-love.

When there were just two brothers on the face of the earth, two brothers, it was enough for one to pounce on the other and kill him. That tells us that we must be cautious. It's not easy to get along together. Adam didn't physically hurt Chava, but when G-d asked him why he had sinned, he blamed her, basically saying, "The woman You gave me is a tainted gift." Yet that wasn't so. Eve was a marvelous gift, and Adam was denying a goodness done for him (see Rashi). G-d rejected Adam's claim, punishing him together with Chava. This same shortcoming surfaced later in his sons.

Still, despite this difficult beginning, G-d does not give up. He wants people to learn to live together, lovingly. After all, there are a hundred billion planets in the Milky Way, so every human being could be settled alone on one of them, thus avoiding any tension. Yet G-d instead crowded us all onto one planet, so we could learn to live together.

This gargantuan mission starts small, with relationship between husband and wife, between two people who chose each other and love each other. Yet it requires an investment. In initial love there is no need to invest. It comes by itself, and one does not generally know why. It's similar to a person loving orange juice – no investment is necessary, it love just exists!

A boy asked his father: "How much did Mom cost you?" His father answered, "After so many years, I cannot recall what I paid for the ring, but I keep paying each day..." This may be meant as a witty joke, but it holds an important truth: by signing a Ketuba, a groom undertakes an obligation to support and love and respect, etc. his wife. All his life he must keep investing in her. Nothing comes for free. Man is born for toil.

You might ask: isn't it irksome, or frightful that marital bliss requires such an extensive investment?

The answer: no! just the opposite is true. If compatibility depended on hidden reasons, then we would need to be worried about the possibility that we were not where we should be, and

that we would never know how to keep things right. Then, the first time a problem arose, we might say, "Perhaps we made a mistake!"

Yet since marriage depends on our investment, we have control over its success.. We must invest more and more, until we succeed. From that moment on, "the [miniature] 'Temple' is in our hands".

In other words, on the most fundamental level, there ARE no compatible couples. Rather, there are couples who WANT to be compatible, and who invest in order to succeed in being compatible. The stubborn will succeed.

Mazal Tov!

## **Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law**

### **Laws of Mourning**

#### **A father who is a mourner attending his son's wedding**

Q: May a father who is in mourning attend his son's wedding?

A: A father and mother have a unique status regarding the laws of mourning. We do not permit other mourners to attend a wedding. The mourners may attend the chupah, but not the festive meal. A parent is different, however, since the point of this law of mourning is to prevent one from rejoicing. But if a father does not attend his son's wedding, it is not merely that he will be prevented from rejoicing – he will be caused great distress. And this is not the goal. Many authorities, therefore, permit a parent in mourning to attend their child's wedding (see Ha-Rav Ovadiah Yosef in Hilchot Chatan Ve-Kallah).

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