

Bringing the Prophets to Life

**Weekly insights into the Haftara
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Pi-n'chas - 22 p'sukim - Yirmiyahu 1:1-2:3

Throughout the Tanach we read a number of instances where Hashem calls upon outstanding individuals to accept the mantel of prophecy and serve as a navi for G-d. Although these "calls" are usually not found in the text, we do find two instances where those who are called do not respond (Elisha and Yechezkel), one prophet who offers his service to G-d (Yishayahu, who responds: HINEINI, SH'LACHEINI - "I am here; send me") and two chosen ones who express reluctance to accept that post: Moshe and Yirmiyahu.

We are familiar with the story of Moshe Rabbeinu who stood before Hashem at the burning bush and argued that he is a K'VAD PEH, - one who was 'slow of speech' and, therefore, was incapable of being G-d's spokesman. In fact, Hashem remains at Chorev for seven days (according to Chazal) attempting to convince Moshe to take on G-d's charge, until eventually, Hashem had to insist that Moshe accept His mission.

We are, however, not as familiar with the reaction of Yirmiyahu to G-d's

charge, a reluctance detailed in the very first perek of Sefer Yirmiyahu which we read as this week's haftara. This chapter includes G-d's consecration of Yirmiyahu to be His agent and the navi's refusal, hesitating to shoulder the weighty responsibility by contending NA'AR ANOCHI - that he was young and too inexperienced to take on such a role. However, in contrast to His seven-day argument with Moshe, Hashem makes no such attempt to convince Yirmiyahu. Instead, he tells the newly appointed navi, NOT to argue with Him, for, G-d declares "wherever I send you - you shall go and whatever I command you-you shall speak!"

We should rightly wonder why there was such a difference. Why would G-d patiently deal with Moshe's reasoning but immediately reject Yirmiyahu's argument? If, ultimately, both would be required to follow the divine command - reluctantly or not - why would Hashem attempt to change Moshe's mind but not to persuade Yirmiyahu HaNavi?

I would suggest that the difference in G-d's reactions was based upon the contrast between the respective personalities of the two individuals and the particular tasks they were called to perform.

G-d's choice to have Moshe lead Israel out of bondage might be understood through the three events

included in the Torah's review of Moshe's early years. When he first leaves the royal palace, Moshe is troubled by the suffering of his brethren that he sees. He exhibits this same sensitivity to the weak and afflicted when he slays the Egyptian taskmaster who was beating the Israelite slave. And that same quality of compassion is reflected when protecting an Israelite from his attacker and yet, again, when saving the Midianite women from those shepherds who harassed them. It is, therefore, quite understandable for Hashem to see in him a future leader of His nation, one who cares, responds to suffering and, therefore, would save them from Egyptian slavery.

And yet, despite his caring and sensitivity, Moshe is unwilling to accept G-d's calling, for, as the "the most humble of all", he saw himself unsuitable for leadership. I would even suggest, that, given the fact he had been separated from the suffering of his people for the forty years he was in Midyan, Moshe believed that there had to be others far more fitting for the job. Hashem's week of cajoling used Moshe's natural caring and sensitivity to convince him that he WAS the right choice, thereby avoiding any argument that would weaken Moshe's admirable qualities that was the very reason for having been chosen.

This was not so with Yirmiyahu.

This tragic prophet was filled with AHAVAT YISRA'EL, a love for his nation - despite their shortcomings. His reluctance to accept the position Hashem offered him was because, for him, it was an impossible one. He was charged to warn his nation of a future of LINTOSH, LINTOTZ, L'HA'AVID V'LAHAROS... - "to crush, to destroy and demolish". How could such an OHEIV YISRAEL hope to fulfill that mission? Hashem understood the difficult choice Yirmiyahu would have and would never allow this Oheiv Yisrael become a SONEI YISRA'EL, for only one who deeply loved Israel could be allowed to condemn them.

Yirmiyahu's love FOR, led him to become hated BY Israel.

But not by G-d. ✨