



DESPERATE TIMES CALL FOR DESPERATE MEASURES

Coincidence? I think not! The *Haftarah* chosen by the *Rabbanut HaRashit* for Yom HaAtzmaut is the same as the *Haftarah* for the last day of Pesach (*Yom Tov Sheni shel Galuyot*).

It is from Yeshayahu (10:32–12:6) and speaks of the salvation that will come to the remnant of Israel that survive the destruction at the hands of Ashur/Sancheirev and how they will return to *Eretz Yisrael*. The prophecy contains the imagery of the lamb and the wolf being able to live with each other; how apropos for Yom HaAtzmaut following the commemorations of Yom HaShoah and Yom HaZikaron.

But we know there is no such thing as coincidence. So perhaps, if we can understand the connection of this *Haftarah* to the last day of Pesach we can uncover a deeper significance to its relevance to Yom HaAtzmaut. Finding the connection to Pesach is a bit more challenging.

Rashi (Megillah 31a) suggests that the fall of Sancheirev takes place on Pesach, and thus the connection. This is more familiar to us from the Pesach Haggadah, when we mention in a *piyut* that עוֹד הַיּוֹם בָּנֵב לְעַמּוֹד... קָפְסוּחַ. The difficulty with Rashi's explanation is that this takes place on the first day of Pesach and not the last! Others suggest that the connection comes at the end of the *Haftarah*, where the *pesukim* seem very similar to those we find in *Az Yashir*, which is the Torah reading on the seventh day of Pesach.¹ In fact, the comparison of *Bnei Yisrael's* return to *Yetziat Mitzrayim* is explicit a few *pesukim* earlier (11:15-16), where the *Navi* speaks of G-d drying up the river just like He

did at the *Yam Suf*. Rashi and the Radak explain the word *מִסְלָה* used in this context to mean the dry riverbed and thus the clear path to return.

The term *מִסְלָה* is used several other times, in one form or another, in *Sefer Yeshayahu*. For example, we see it used in the prophecy of *Nachamu* (Yeshayahu 40:3), where we are told to clear a path for G-d to return to us and begin the healing process after the *churban*. We also find it in the *Haftarah* for Yom Kippur (ibid. 57:14), where the *Navi* tells us סְלוּ סְלוּ פְנֵי דְרָךְ. In that context, *סְלוּ* means to clear a path for us to be able to easily return to G-d.

Given that *מִסְלָה* appears in several places in the context of our return to G-d and His return to us, I would like to connect Yom HaAtzmaut, and thus the choice of this particular *Haftarah*, to the *Haftarah* choice for Yom Kippur. In theory, the Yom Kippur *Haftarah* could have remained the same as the *Haftarah* of a regular fast day, which also comes from Yeshayahu and also speaks of our return to G-d (ibid. 55:6–7).

Rav Soloveitchik points out that what is unique about Yom Kippur is that unlike a regular fast day, when it is up to us to do all/most of the work, on Yom Kippur all we have to do is clear a simple path, *סְלוּ*, and G-d does the rest.² We are downtrodden and weary and otherwise hopeless, and we turn to G-d not with that we deserve His benevolence, but simply because we are not worthy, and only have Him to rely on. *מִסְלָה*.

Perhaps that is the message of Yom HaAtzmaut. On Pesach, we were on the 49th rung of *tumah* and needed an emergency miracle to take us out of Egypt before it was too late. *מִסְלָה*. It

wasn't that we deserved it; the opposite! We celebrate our miraculous salvation, despite not being worthy. As mentioned above, Yom Kippur and its *מִסְלָה* represent the same concept. So too, perhaps, Yom HaAtzmaut. We were given the miraculous present of a Jewish State, not because we were any more deserving than earlier, more pious generations. We were given this gift because, certainly in the generation post Auschwitz and Treblinka, *מִסְלָה*. Desperate times call for desperate measures.

"Behold the G-d who gives me triumph! I am confident, unafraid; For Hashem the L-rd is my strength and might, And He has been my deliverance" (Yeshayahu 12:2).

מוֹעֲדִים לְשִׁמְחָה לְגֵאֲלָה שְׁלֵמָה!

- 1 The eighth day is the *Yom Tov Sheni* of the seventh day and it is from there that it draws its significance.
- 2 *Yemei Zikaron* p. 243.

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