

Parshat Tsav 5780 Shabbat Hagadol

22 Remember the Torah of Moses My servant, which I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel- its statutes and its ordinances. 23 Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. 24 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and strike the land with utter destruction

These pesukim not only end this week's Haftora and give this Shabbat, the Shabbat before Pesach, the name "Hagadol" but also conclude the Book of Malachi (a prophet of the 2nd Temple era), and the whole of the Book of Prophets.

Two of our greatest prophets are mentioned in this last revelation of Sefer Neviim – Moshe and Eliyahu: Moshe who took Israel out of Egypt and Eliyahu who will be there to protect us at the end of days. Both these prophets were from the tribe of Levi and Hashem sent both on shlichut. Moshe- *"and now go and I will send you to Pharaoh"* ; and Eliyahu- *"I will send you the prophet Elijah before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord"* . Moshe delivered us from Egypt and we will never return to that exile and when Eliyahu comes he will herald the final deliverance from which we will never be exiled again. Moshe is called ish – elokim and so is Eliyahu ; Moshe ascended to Hashem, as did Eliyahu.

But what exactly is Eliyahu's purpose – to *"turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers"*- and what does this have to do with Pesach and yetziat mitzrayim?

A careful reading of the beginning of Shemot shows that central to Egypt's persecution was the concept of parents and children. From the outset Pharaoh's plan is to break the innate bond between parents and their children. His first decree is to the midwives to kill the male infants as soon as they are born. He then expands this, commanding parents to throw their sons into the Nile. We only realise the full import of this strategy later when Pharaoh tells Moshe after the eighth plague: *"Let the men go now and serve Hashem"* . They could have left then without macat bechorot and all the destruction but as Moshe remonstrates – *"it is a festival of Hashem for us and we will go with our cattle and our flocks but first and foremost with our youths and our elderly and our sons and our daughters"*.

The victory over Egypt is only truly achieved when the hearts of the fathers are turned to the children and vice versa and so we will only finally vanquish Egypt

when Eliyahu comes at the end of days. Pharaoh's wish to sever the connection between children and their fathers is actually rational. It is the way of the world that children rebel against their parents, against their morals and strictures. Every generation is different and if we want the world to develop then we need the generations to look to the future and not rely on the knowledge of the past. A scientist will not rely on scientific knowledge of 200 years ago; he needs to be up to date and to innovate in order to contribute to scientific development.

But in Judaism the parents do not represent defunct history but eternal belief – the knowledge that there is one G-d – the belief that there is an eternal line that unites parents with their children. When you keep Shabbat you are showing that there is an eternal bond which is stronger than any generational gap. We are observing the commandments that our fathers received at Sinai and we are acknowledging the enduring nature of those bonds. This is what Pharaoh wished to destroy.

On one night a year (2 in the diaspora!) we are commanded to speak a lot! Whoever speaks a lot about the story of the Exodus is praiseworthy. At the Seder, we expect the children to ask. All the actions we do are primed to arouse their curiosity and prompt them to ask – why? Unlike the rest of the year when we are focussed on life and doing things in an efficient way without much discussion this night we must discuss! This is the time for talk; in this way children turn to their parents and parents turn to their children they talk and through talking promote peace. This is Eliyahu's role to bring peace into the world by discussion; to resolve those unresolved arguments – the ones which have resulted in *"teiko"* – tishbi yitotz koshiot ubaiyot.

The Vilna Gaon comments that there is an argument as to whether we should drink a fifth cup of wine at the Seder, corresponding to the fifth expression of deliverance *"I will bring you into the land"* . We call this the cup of Eliyahu because he will decide whether we should drink it or not. We don't argue at the Seder, we do not include somethings and exclude others. We leave it to Eliyahu to bring peace and to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers and the hearts of the fathers to their children.

i Malachi 3:22-24; ii Exodus 3:10; iii Malachi 3:23; iv Deuteronomy 33:1; v Kings I 17:24; vi Exodus 10:8; vii Exodus 10: 9; viii Exodus 6:8