

Bringing the Prophets to Life

**Weekly insights into the Haftara
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**Shabbat HaGadol - 21+1 p'sukim
- Mal'achi 3:4-24**

Celebrating the Future

Over these many years, I have always understood this week's haftara selection from the final chapter in the book of the final Navi, Malachi, to be based upon the vision of a future redemption. We should be aware of the fact that the holiday of Pesach is meant to be more than just a reminder of past events and even more than a reenactment of those events. The Yom Tov is, after all, Chag HaGeula, a celebration of our redemption and, therefore, is also meant to celebrate our not-yet-realized future redemption.

In fact, the order of the Seder reflects this very idea. The practices we follow and the text we recite before the Seder meal are all based upon our past redemption from Egypt. The bitter maror that brings to mind the bitter slavery in Egypt, the salt water representing the tears of suffering and the charoset symbolizing the mortar used for the brick, all relate back to our slave experience. Likewise, the recitation of AVADIM HAYINU and

MIT'CHILA OVDEI AVODA ZARA fulfill Talmud's insistence of beginning the Magid section with G'NUT, the shame we suffered during our Egyptian enslavement. Even the Hallel that we begin reciting before the meal is known as HALLEL HAMITZRI, the Egyptian Hallel, and we end that pre-meal section with the verses that refer to Egypt and our release from slavery.

In contrast, the post-meal Seder practices and recitations rely heavily upon our vision of the future redemption. It is during this time, therefore, that we drink the fourth cup of wine, a cup introducing our prayers for the geula to come. It is at this point that we ask Hashem to punish those who deny His existence and oppress His people, as we open the door for Eliyahu HaNavi, the future harbinger of the messianic era, as related to us by the navi Malachi in the haftara we read on this Shabbat HaGadol. We continue the recitation of Hallel HaMitzri by completing its final part, the part that makes no mention of Egypt or our enslavement. We then praise Hashem with the Hallel HaGadol, the great Hallel as praise for G-d for our future geula. It is no wonder then that, as we conclude this final section we pray that Hashem will bring us, redeemed, to Tziyon in song, and we declare: L'SHANA HABA'A BIRUSHALYIM.

Our haftara does not, at first glance,

reflect the joy of redemption. In fact, much of the selection is filled with Malachi's criticism of the nation, including a litany of their sins and misdeeds over the years. It would appear that only the final psukim, with their mention of the arrival of Eliya(hu) HaNavi, make a direct connection to the future for which we yearn.

I believe, however, that one verse in the middle of our haftara reflects a crucial pre-Pesach message that reverberated over the years to our oppressed nation and speaks to us today as well. KI ANI HASHEM - LO SHANITI - "For I, Hashem, have not changed", I am as I was; I am still the Righteous Judge Who demands obedience and One who will punish the evildoers. And yet, V'ATEM B'NEI YA'AKOV LO CHILITEM, - "You, descendants of Yaakov, have not perished", despite the sins the navi detailed, despite your failure to live up to standards set by the Torah and despite that you have been punished by G-d for those misdeeds... you are still here. The eternity of G-d and the eternity of Israel remain.

Years ago, when Jews sat down to their Seder reeling from edicts, attacks and murders, they had little to celebrate and little reason to believe in a future redemption. And so, on Shabbat HaGadol they read these words of Malachi. You have sinned,

Hashem does punish and yet... you're still here. Your GEULA is guaranteed as is your national survival. So we remember our suffering in Egypt and beyond but we can still cry out: L'SHANA HABA'A BIRUSHALYIM. Not as a prayer nor as a dream, but as a confident proclamation.

Next year we WILL be in Yerushalayim, a rebuilt and renewed Yerushalayim. ✨