

Elijah at the Seder: From Zealous Anger to Redemptive Peace

Hi, all. Some of you may know that I just spent several days in the hospital with a bout of pancreatitis. While we were in the hospital, we received some additional news from my doctors. Specifically, we learned that the second transplant failed and that I still have plenty of leukemia in my bones. There are no other treatment options under consideration. . . .

So many people have asked what they can do to help. I've thought about that a lot, and there is something tangible that each and every one of you can do that would provide incredible comfort and support to me. . . .

The idea that I have in mind comes from an area of Jewish law. The concept is known as "lashon hara", or the sin of "the evil tongue". Basically, this is the Jewish prohibition against speaking ill of another person. It is considered an especially grievous sin. . . .

So, back to my idea as to how you can all help. I am going to try to focus on this sin and avoid lashon hara for the remainder of my life. I invite each of you to join me in this effort, using my life as the commitment period—so it won't be all too long :-). Before committing, keep in mind that this is deceptively challenging. In fact, take one day just to notice how often you find yourself disparaging a person, whether an enemy (or even worse, a friend!), a colleague, or someone that you actually might not even know that well at all. I think you'll notice that it's remarkable how tempted we can be to fill a gap in a telephone conversation or at a meal with an unnecessary dig at some other person. I am really looking forward to living out my days in an environment free from this kind of hazardous negativity.

This is what will provide me with the support that I need to get through this ordeal.
As always, thanks for all of the support.

Matt

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MANY OF US HAVE Eliyahu ha-Navi seder memories. As a little boy I always looked to see whether after Eliyahu left there was less wine in his cup. Lo and behold there was. It was a miracle, until that Pesach when I caught my uncle Srulke shaking the table resulting in wine spilling over.

As I grew older I became more aware of my father who would stand up as the door opened. “*Shalom Aleikhem reb Eliyahu,*” he’d say. “*Vas macht a Yid.*” We’d proceed to say the *shefokh hamasha*—and then my Abba would call out “*gei in gesunt, gei in shalom, un kumt nach a mahl nexte yahr*—go in health, go in peace, and come again next year.”

In adulthood I became increasingly concerned with the words we’d recite, from the seder, as Eliyahu entered. “Pour out Your wrath on the nations that did not know You and on the kingdoms that did not call on Your name.” (Psalms 79:6)

Tough words, words I still struggle with. Is this the way of the prophet of God. I began to offer all kinds of rationalization. So upsetting is this paragraph that some even suggested an alternative text attributed to the school of Rashi—not *shefokh hamatkha* pour out your wrath, but *shefokh ahavatkha* pour out your love. There’s only one problem—no one has found this text in the sources.

And so, the goal of this Shabbat Hagadol discourse is to elaborate not only on the *shefokh hamatkha* but the role of Eliyahu in the larger seder.

Eliyahu of Tanakh

My sense is that it speaks to the persona of Eliyahu ha-Navi as found in Tanakh. Who is this Eliyahu?

Eliyahu seems to be without any root, in that he suddenly appears:

And Eliyahu the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilad said to Ahav:
‘As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, There will not be dew or rain these years, but according to my word.’ (I Kings 17:1)

Unlike other major prophets, i.e. Yeshayahu, Yirmiyahu, Yehezkiel, we don’t know the names of Eliyahu’s parents. Yeshayahu is Yeshayahu ben Amotz, Yirmiyahu is Yirmiyahu ben Hizkiyah, Yehezkiel is Yehezkiel ben Buzi ha-Cohen. Not so, Eliyahu. His father is not listed. He stands alone to such a degree that some claim he was Pinchas son of Aharon who was promised long life—but that is not the literal p’shat.

In fact, when Eliyahu appoints Elisha as his successor he casts his mantle, a symbol of prophecy on Elisha. Elisha who was plowing with the oxen responds:

And he left the oxen, and ran after Eliyahu, and said: 'Let me, I pray, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.' And he said to him: 'Go back; for what have I done to you?' (I Kings 19:20)

Eliyahu is saying, if at such a moment you think of family, go back, forget the mission, for I've not done much so far, i.e. the symbolic act of covering you with the mantle does not amount to much. Therefore, it's not too late for you to step back from the prophetic mission. (Radak)

Here, Eliyahu reveals his true self. Family is unimportant. And so he discourages Elisha from saying goodbye to his father and mother. Eliyahu doesn't appreciate his past. He is without pedigree, without moorings, without roots.

Moreover, a cursory glimpse at Eliyahu's life reveals how he flitted around from place to place:

—In chapter 17 he goes to Kedma, to Nachal Kerit, probably east of the Jordan where he is fed. When running out of food he goes north to Tzarfata in what is now southern Lebanon. There he lodges and revives a child.

—In chapter 18 he's on Har Carmel (Haifa) competing with the prophets of Ba'al.

—In chapter 19 he goes south to Be'er Sheva and then to Horev in Sinai where God tells him Elisha will be his successor.

—In chapter 21 he moved north to Jezre'el where he famously confronts Navot, by brazenly asking him "Will you murder and also inherit?" (21:19)

—In chapter 1 of Melakhim 2 Eliyahu confronts Ahazya son of Ahav in the Shomron.

—And in chapter 2 he ascends heavenward—moving from Beit El to Jericho, to the Jordan.

The upshot: Eliyahu is in no one place—he is everywhere.

And during his lifetime, he carries himself with great resolve, great force, great power, great zealotry. This especially occurs in the competition on Har Carmel—chapter 18. Eliyahu had told Ahav it would not rain until he'd say so. That moment comes:

And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Eliyahu, in the third year, saying: 'Go, show yourself to Ahav, and I will send rain upon the land. (I Kings 18:1)

Ahav and Eliyahu then meet. Ahav says:

And it came to pass, when Ahav saw Eliyahu, that Ahav said to him: 'Is

it you, you **troublemaker**? And he answered: 'I have not troubled Israel; but you, and your father's house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and you have followed the false prophets. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel to mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the Asherah four hundred, that eat at Izevel's table.' (I Kings 18:17,18,19)

Note that Eliyahu was told by God to reveal to Ahav that rain would come. Instead he is confrontational. Eliyahu takes the initiative and seems to go beyond the word of God demanding that Ahav appear with his false prophets. Eliyahu then lays out the rules of the competition. The false prophets will slaughter bullocks and so will he. We'll then see which of the bullocks will be accepted by God.

The *nevi'ei ha-ba'al* begin and they are unsuccessful. Eliyahu mocks them:

And it came to pass at noon, that Eliyahu mocked them, and said: 'Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleeps, and must be awaked.' (I Kings 18:27)

One wonders, is this appropriate conduct for a *navi*, to mock, to make fun of those he's trying to spiritually reach.

Eliyahu then steps forward. He drenches the altar with water wishing to amplify the miracle and asks that God answer his prayer.

Then the fire (*aish*) of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt-offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said: 'The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God.' (I Kings 18:38,39)

Fire consumed the sacrifice. So moved were the people they call out *Hashem Hu Ha-Elokim*—the refrain of the end of Yom Kippur davening. Soon there are thunderous sounds, and wind, and it rains.

And Eliyahu said to Ahav: 'Get up, eat and drink; for there is the sound (*kol*) of abundance of rain. 'And it came to pass in a little while, that the heaven grew black with clouds and wind (*ruah*), and there was a great rain. And Ahav rode, and went to Jezreel.'" (I Kings 18:41, 45)

As all this occurs, Eliyahu seemingly on his own kills the false prophets

And Eliyahu said to them: 'Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape.' And they took them; and Eliyahu brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. (I Kings 18:40)

Here, too, one wonders whether Eliyahau overstepped his boundaries—was it necessary to kill all the prophets.

Eliyahau of Shefokh Hamatkha

The upshot: with fire, rumbling sounds of rain and wind—with zealotry, mocking and triumphalism—Eliyahau prevails. This is Eliyahau in Tanakh. No place, flitting here and there, zealous. And this is the Eliyahau of *shefokh hamatkha*.

He has no place even as the door is opened to him at the Seder. While every part of the Seder is clearly laid out Eliyahau's appearance is not in any specific section it is after *Barekh* (grace after meals) and before *Hallel*. He is betwixt and between. The Eliyahau of the Seder, like Eliyahau in Tanakh, is not rooted.

And clearly he's everywhere, flitting from home to home, crossing seas and oceans and mountains suddenly appearing here and there and everywhere.

The Eliyahau of the Seder, the Eliyahau of *kana'ut*, is the Eliyahau of *shefakh hamatkha*. Some suggest this response is appropriate. In the medieval period, as the Seder ended, participants would open the door for some air. There they would at times see a Christian child and would fear that they would be accused by the non-Jewish world of killing the child to use its blood to color the wine or bake matzot. In exasperation, participants couldn't contain themselves and would cry out, may those who do not know You, who are immoral, may they be fully confronted and done away with.

Sometimes, such strong action is necessary. As Deborah Lipstadt points out:

Why my infatuation with this hard-hitting paragraph? [*Shefokh Hamatkha*].

I picture the many beleaguered Jews, particularly in Europe, for whom Passover, with its proximity to Easter, was a dangerous time. I imagine Jews who spent much of the year fearful that the non-Jewish world might violently turn on them. They knew they would have little recourse to protect themselves. . . .

Suddenly, for one short paragraph, they opened the door of their homes—of course, most of their non-Jewish neighbors had by then retired for the night—and publicly told the world what they wished for those who had done them evil. For one brief moment they could let their desire for justice be heard publicly. They did not have to cower in fear.

And yet they did not ask God to let them pour out their own wrath. Even now when Jewish “machismo” briefly appeared, they asked god to render judgment and to punish only those who did not “call out in God’s name,” that is, those nations that failed to adhere to ethical standards.

For one brief, shining moment, the Jew stood tall. The playing field was more than equal as the Jew turned to the Judge of all the world, the same Judge Abraham challenged in Genesis, and called upon that Judge to do justice.

And then, as suddenly as it began, it ended. The door was shut, the Jew sat down, the Seder continued, and all returned as it had been and would remain for too many years.

Does Eliyahu the Zealot Succeed?

But the Eliyahu of zealotry in Tanakh doesn’t succeed. Remarkably, after Eliyahu’s great success on Har HaCarmel, after the people were so impressed that they called out *Hashem hu Elokim*—they fall into disbelief. Even Eliyahu, who seems at the height of victory runs for his life—as Izevel, Ahav’s wife is unimpressed and is intent to kill Eliyahu.

And Ahav told Izevel **all** that Eliyahu had done, and how he had slain **all** the prophets with the sword. Then Izevel sent a messenger unto Eliyahu, saying: ‘So let the gods do [to me], and more also, if I make not your life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time.’ (I Kings 19:1,2)

The narrative here parallels the story of Sinai. As the Torah is revealed, there is thunder and frightening fire—*kolot u’vrakim*—the shofar, the spiritual **wind** instrument, is sounded (Exodus 19:16) and the Jews declare *na’aseh v’nishma* (Exodus 24:7). But it doesn’t work. As necessary as Sinai was, it doesn’t end well. Fifty days later, the Jews build the golden calf.

The message is clear. Sometimes, a grandiose moment is necessary; sometimes we need a Sinai-itic experience, we need a Carmel moment. But even as the Jews declare *na’aseh v’nishma*, even as they declare *Hashem hu ha-Elokim*, it is not lasting. That’s not the experience that penetrates the soul. That’s not the experience that is transformative in a real way. The supernatural moment, the big moment, does not endure—it is not lasting.

After building the golden calf God tells Moses “. . . now let me be . . . that I may destroy them” (Exodus 32:10). Moses intercedes, he implores God to spare *Am Yisrael* (Exodus 32:11) God then renounces the planned punishment (Exodus 32:13).

Still the second *luhot* had to be given—it involved Moses fasting for forty days and nights—in Horev which is Sinai—Moses finds himself “...in the cleft of the rock” (Exodus 33:22) as God passes by and declares “The Lord, the Lord is a God of mercy and graciousness” (Exodus 34:6). The God of the first *dibrot* of jealousy becomes the God of mercy at Moses’s urging.

The second ten commandments are given without fanfare—no *kolot*, no *brakin*, no *shofar*—they’re given simply, and humbly because that’s what counts the most. And unlike the first, they endure. We today, are the people of the second ten commandments, not the first.

Moses is the leader par excellence. When *Am Yisrael* is threatened Moses defends his people asking for God’s mercy. Not so Eliyahu. If he’s like Moses, he’s Moses “lite.” In his days the people who on the Carmel had called out, “The Lord, He is God,” lost their belief. Eliyahu like Moses, is in Horev, he fasts for forty days and nights and is in a kind of cleft of the the rock—like Moses.

Note the words of Eliyahu Zuta 8:

The Holy One proceeded to force Eliyahu to go to a place where his forebears were wont to entreat mercy for His children. . . . Then the Holy One asked Eliyahu: “What are you doing here, Eliyahu?” (I Kings 19:9).

Eliyahu should have responded with an entreaty for mercy, saying: Master of the universe, Israel are Your children, the children of those who have been tested by You, the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who have done Your will in the world. But this was not what Eliyahu said. Instead he dared to say to God: “I have been very jealous for the lord, the God of hosts. . . .”

For three hours the Holy One waited for Eliyahu [to come and entreat mercy for Israel]. But Eliyahu persisted in the words he had uttered previously: “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts” (I Kings 19:14).

Thereupon the holy spirit said to Eliyahu: “Go, return on the way to the wilderness of Damascus . . . and anoint Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as a prophet in your stead” (I Kings 19:15-16). For what you have in mind for Me to do [namely, to destroy Israel], I cannot do. (Eliyahu Zuta, Chapter 8)

Eliyahu Zuta is implicit in Tanakh. After first declaring, “I have been jealous for the Lord,” God commands Eliyahu:

And He said: ‘Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD.’
And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong **wind** rent the

mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an **earthquake**; but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a **fire**; but the LORD was not in the **fire**; and after the fire a **still small voice**. (I Kings 19:11-12)

Here, God may be referring to the Carmel incident, where fire consumes the sacrifice, and wind and thunder result in rain. God tells Eliyahu that as important as power may sometimes be—it is not the ultimate teaching tool. What counts most is the humble voice, the still voice, the voice of the spirit, the voice that hears others and inspires reconciliation.

Eliyahu then stands near the cave and God once again asks, why are you here Eliyahu? When Eliyahu again responds “I have been very zealous for the Lord,” God says appoint Elisha in your stead (ibid 13-16).

And it was so, when Eliyahu heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said: ‘What are you doing here, Eliyahu?’

And he said: ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and slain Your prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.’

And the LORD said to him: ‘Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus; and when you come, you shall anoint... Elisha...to be prophet in your stead. (I Kings 19:13-16)

Here God is saying—Eliyahu, you’ve missed the point. You have failed to realize that what endures, what lasts, is the still, small voice, the little things, that’s what makes the real difference.

Eliyahu Clings to Zealotry

To the very end, Eliyahu clings to his approach of being zealous for the Lord, and approach that seems to have little impact upon the people he is attempting to reach.

Indeed, Post-Mount Carmel there’s another episode wherein four hundred false prophets are in a standoff with a true prophet. With all that occurred on Mount Carmel, with the people ecstatically proclaiming “He is God!” and Ahav seemingly convinced of the authenticity of God—Ahav sides with the false prophets, he still doesn’t believe in the true God.

This occurs in 22nd chapter of Kings I when the 400 false prophets urge

Ahav to go to war against Aram

Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, **about four hundred men**, and said to them: ‘Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?’ And they said: ‘Go up; for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king.’ (I Kings 22:6)

The true prophet disagrees. Tragically, Ahav sides with the 400 false prophets and goes to war, and loses his life.

After Ahav dies, Eliyahu confronts his son—the next king—Achazyahu. Achazyahu had fallen through a lattice and was seriously injured. He seeks relief from a foreign god—the Lord of Flies, Ba’al Zvuv or Ba’al Zvul—a play on the word “Izevel” (the name of Ahav’s wife) as he seeks relief from the god of Izevel. Eliyahu is incensed. He devours Achazyahu’s emissaries with fire, and informs Achazyahu that he will die.

Note the verbiage.

And they answered him: ‘He was a hairy man, se’ar, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins.’ And he said: ‘It is Eliyahu the Tishbite.’ Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him; and, behold, he sat on the top, rosh, of the hill. And he spoke to him: ‘O man of God, ish HaElokim, the king has said: Come down.’ And Eliyahu answered and said to the captain of fifty: ‘If I be a man of God, let fire, aish, come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty.’ And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. (II Kings 1:8-10)

Eliyahu is described as a ba’al se’ar, a hairy man (II Kings 1:8)—an anagram of *ra’ash*. He sits *al rosh hahar*, atop the mountain (II Kings 1:9)—could *rosh* be a play on *ra’ash*. And here the *ish HaElokim*, man of God, destroyed Achazyahu’s emissaries with fire—and fire descended from heaven. *Ish HaElokim* becomes an *aish HaElokim*. Eliyahu is still the man of jealousy—of *ra’ash* and *aish*.

It reaches a crescendo when Eliyahu ascends heavenward.

And when the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho some way off saw him, they said: ‘The spirit of Eliyahu rests on Elisha.’

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both assunder; and Eliyahu went up by a whirlwind into heaven. (II Kings 2:11, 15)

Eliyahu ascends in a chariot of fire—*reichev Aish*, and in a whirlwind, *b’s’e’arah*, which may play on the word *ra’ash* as \daleth and ψ are interchangeable—and it’s the same letters.

And it occurs as the prophets watch from Jericho—a play on *ruah*. This is no mere coincidence. Eliyahu leaves this world as the prophet of zealotness, the prophet of *ruah*, *ra'ash* and *aish*.

The Eliyahu of Rabbinic Literature

While Eliyahu of Tanakh was a prophet, in many ways, an unsuccessful prophet of zealotness, the Eliyahu of Rabbinic literature becomes a remarkably different figure. He appears sometimes in the garb of a beggar; sometimes in the garb of a scholar who brings together different sides; sometimes in the guise of a persona who comes from nowhere to save someone in need. What all these images of Eliyahu have in common, however, is that they reflect a figure of a still small voice.

Consider the first time Eliyahu is mentioned in the Talmud. The Talmud is discussing the variant watches, *mishmarot*, that exist at night. Night is the symbol of darkness, of suffering, of exile, and the different *mishmarot* are marked by different signs. One opinion has it that midnight, which is considered the instant of deepest exile, the *klavim*, the dogs or the foxes are howling. This reminds the reader of the scene when Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues saw the Temple in ruins and foxes roaming about (Makkot 24a). Can there be any deeper moment of national feelings of being forlorn and abandoned.

It's right then as the foxes are howling that the Talmud declares that God is simultaneously roaring like a lion. In the words of Rav:

Says . . . Rab: The night has three watches, and at each watch the Holy One, blessed be He, sits and roars like a lion. . . . (Berakhot 3a)

The lion is, the symbol of Judah, the symbol of redemption. As the foxes howl in this world, expressing the deepest sense of exile, God above, with endless power—roars like a lion—declaring that redemption will come.

The Talmud then goes on to tell the story:

It has been taught: R. Jose says, I was once traveling on the road, and I entered into one of the ruins of Jerusalem in order to pray. Eliyahu of blessed memory appeared and waited for me at the door till I finished my prayer. After I finished my prayer, he said to me: Peace be with you, my master! and I replied: Peace be with you, my master and teacher! And he said to me: My son, why did you go into this ruin? I replied: To pray. He said to me: You ought to have prayed on the road. . . . (Berakhot 3a)

The first time we meet Eliyahu in the Talmud, the same Eliyahu who in the book of Kings is in Horev and enters the cave is now outside the hur-

vah, telling R' Yossi he should not have gone inside. The insular Eliyahu of Tanakh who too often is apart and distant from his people as symbolized in his being in Horev, in the cave, now proclaims—don't go inside, pray on the road, be amongst the people.

Eliyahu then asks:

He further said to me: My son, what sound did you hear in this ruin? I replied: I heard a divine voice, **cooing like a dove**, and saying: Woe to the children, on account of whose sins I destroyed My house and burnt My temple and exiled them among the nations of the world!

And he said to me: By your life and by your head! Not in this moment alone does it so exclaim, but thrice each day does it exclaim thus!

Eliyahu in the Talmud concurs with Reb Yossi. God is not roaring like a lion but cooing like a dove. The Eliyahu of Tanakh, of *ruah*, of *ra'ash* and *aish* is finally an Eliyahu of *kol demama dakah*. The Eliyahu of Tanakh who speaks harshly of Am Yisrael now speaks compassionately about the Jewish people.

In fact, Eliyahu adds,

And more than that, whenever the Israelites go into the synagogues and schoolhouses and respond: 'May His great name be blessed!' the Holy One, blessed be He, shakes His head and says: Happy is the king who is thus praised in this house! Woe to the father who had to banish his children, and woe to the children who had to be banished from the table of their father! (Berakhot 3a)

Eliyahu of the Seder

While the Eliyahu of *shefoch hamatkha* is the Eliyahu of Tanakh, of *ruah*, *ra'ash* and *aish*, the Eliyahu of Torah sheba'al peh, of *kol demamah dakah* is, I believe, the predominant Eliyahu at the seder.

Eliyahu is mentioned explicitly only once at the seder. He appears in the Birkat Hamazon:

May the Compassionate One send us His prophet Eliyahu, of blessed memory, and announce good news, salvation and consolation.

May the Compassionate One bless my father, my teacher . . . and my mother my teacher . . . they and their children and family. (Birkat Hamazon)

All this reminds the reader of the last sentences of Malakhi,

Behold, I will send you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.

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 smite the land with utter destruction. (Malakhi 3:23-24)

This is the *kol demamah dakah* of Eliyahu, the Eliyahu who brings together generations. The Eliyahu of Tanakh who lacks family is now an inspiration, bringing parents and children together, making families whole.

It would be a good idea at this point in the Seder to read these sentences and to read Ben Sira, the second century BCE sage who described Eliyahu this way:

You were taken on high by a whirlwind, by fiery legions to heaven. Ready, it is written, for the time to put [divine] wrath to rest, before the Day of the Lord, to turn back the hearts of fathers to their children, and to re-establish the tribes of Israel. (Ben Sira, 48:9-11)

Ben Sira adds to Malakhi. Eliyahu will not only bring generations together, he will bring the people together, indeed, he will bring back and restore the ten tribes. The Eliyahu of Melakhim who only speaks to the Northern Kingdom and speaks disparagingly of them, will bring everyone together, he will merge the northern kingdom with the southern one. The divider will become a uniter.

To achieve this unity, one requires the *kol demamah dakah*. The still, small voice reflective of the ability to listen to the other, to dialogue with the other, to make space for the other, to generously give and graciously receive from the other, to bring people of different religious and political bents together.

For me, this is our greatest challenge. Israel will not make it with the political right or left alone; with the religious or secular alone. For Israel to endure we need all of the Am; the whole of the Am. This is the message of *kol demamah dakah*. Only with unity will Israel make it.

Not coincidentally, the sentences ending Malakhi are preceded by these words:

Remember you the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded to him in Horeb for all Israel, even statutes and ordinances. (Malakhi 3:22)

Eliyahu of redemption is appropriately meshed with Moses at Horev, the Moses of Hashem, Hashem, *El Rachum Vechanun*—a far cry from *kano kaniti*. This is the Eliyahu of *kol demamah dakah*.

Much like a birkat ha-mitzvah (the blessing recited before performing a commandment) which is *over l'asiyata*, said before the action, after evoking the Eliyahu of the soft, merciful, uniting voice, we open the door to actively let him in.

This is not the first time we invite guests in. At the onset of the seder we welcome guests to join us in the *Maggid*. After the meal we greet Eliyahu asking that he join us in another kind of *Maggid*—the *Hallel*. In fact the custom to open the door is first cited by the Geonim, hundreds of years before any mention of *shefokh hamatkha*. This indicates, that the opening of the door was originally independent of saying *shefokh hamatkha* and may have been a way to welcome guests to recite *Hallel*. Note that at the seder the *Hallel* is split. The first two chapters are said before the meal, the last four are said after when Eliyahu joins us. Perhaps, this is so because the earlier chapters deal with the physical redemption from Egypt. In fact, the retelling of the exodus story pre-Shulchan Aruch is fundamentally physical in nature. Thus, we declare:

When Israel went forth from Egypt . . .
 The Sea saw them and fled
 The Jordan ran backward
 Mountains skipped like rams
 Hills like sheep

Tremble, O Earth, at the presence of the Lord.
 (Psalms 114:1,3,4)

The metaphors are powerful, strong, concluding with
 Tremble, O Earth, at the presence of the Lord.
 (Psalms 114:7)

If these chapters deal with how we left Egypt, the ensuing ones are left for after the meal as they deal with why we left Egypt. If the earlier chapters describe in powerful terms the physical exodus, the latter chapters of the *Hallel* are descriptive of the spiritual *raison d'être* of *yetziat mitzrayim*. In fact, the whole of the seder before the meal primarily focuses on our extricating ourselves from Egyptian bondage, while the seder after the meal focuses on the goals of the exodus—the spiritual message.

Hence, we declare,

Not to us, O Lord, not to us
 But to Your Name bring glory.
 (Psalms 115:1)

Here we declare we have been freed to bring honor to Your Name. God has entered into the equation.

We continue:

How can I repay the Lord for His bounties to me. (Psalms 116:12)

The Hallel reaches its crescendo with

Open the gates of victory for me, that I might enter them and praise the Lord. (Psalms 118:19)

In other words, the purpose of victory is to feel the presence of God, to be inspired by His very Being.

Rabbi David Silber underscores the Hallel split:

The division of the hallel in the seder into one unit of two psalms recited with maggid, and one unit of four recited later in the evening, is a division suggested inherently by the text. The first two psalms relate to the exodus itself, whereas the next four reflect the experience of leaving Egypt and journeying toward a holy site, the mikdash.

Just as we spend much time discussing the Haggadah before the meal we should also place more emphasis on the text which follows. In certain ways it is more important as it deals with our spiritual redemption. It can be suggested that that just as there is midrash concerning our leaving of Egypt in the arami oved avi said before the meal, so, too, should we study midrash on the hallel, on the last part of the seder. In many midrashim on these latter chapters Eliyahu appears. He is the model of the search for God, the search for spirituality. Built into this model is not the Eliyahu of wind and earthquake and fire, but one of a soft, spiritual voice, a kol demamah dakah.

An Aggadah on the latter part of the Hallel describes the rendezvous between the human being and God.

And it has been taught, Rabbi Jose stated, Neither did the *Shehina* ever descend to earth, nor did Moses or Eliyahu ever ascend to Heaven, as it is written, “The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth has He given to the sons of human beings” (Psalms 115:16).

But did not the *Shehina* descend to earth? Is it not in fact written, “And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai” (Exodus 19:20)? That was above ten handbreadths [from the summit].

But did not Moses and Eliyahu ascend to Heaven? Is it not in fact written, “And Moses went up unto God” (Exodus 19:3)? [That was] to a level lower than ten [handbreadths from heaven]. But is it not written, “And Eliyahu went up by a whirlwind into heaven” (II Kings 2:11)? [That was] to a level lower than ten handbreadths. (Sukkah 5a)

The text teaches that the human being reaches up as God extends down. The two do not quite touch, but between the near connection is the spark of the divine. And Eliyahu is a prototype of this spiritual reach.

Following the *hallel* is the section of the seder called the *nirtzah*. It continues the spiritual message of the Temple rebuilt as we sing, “*adir hu, yivnei*

beito bekarov”, He is powerful! May He build his house soon, speedily ; as we outline the essential messages of Judaism *Ehad mi Yode’ah*, who knows one, and as we speak of the centrality of God, in *Had Gadya, va’atah haka-dosh baruch hu*, and along came the Blessed Holy One.

Spiritual Challenge

As we open the door and declare, *Shefokh hamatkha* and invite in the Eliyahu of wind, earthquake and fire. The Eliyahu of kana’ut is sometimes necessary, at times one must stand strong and with resolve and fight back. But if I were asked, what are the major challenges facing Am Yisrael today—even more daunting than the physical challenge, is the challenge of spirituality and unity. If we do not understand why we are Jewish, why we are defending Israel, Judaism and Israel will not endure. And Israel and Am Yisrael will not make it with only part of our people—we need all of Am Yisrael.

Eliyahu of Tanakh, of kana’ut has its place, but is not lasting. What counts most is the Eliyahu post-tanakh, the Eliyahu of kol demamah dakah, the Eliyahu of menahemet ka-yonah, the Eliyahu of harachaman, the Eliyahu of the hallel after the meal.

In Tanakh, Eliyahu does not die.

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a **chariot of fire**, and horses of fire, which parted them both assunder; and Eliyahu went up by a **whirlwind** into heaven. (II Kings 2:15)

If Eliyahu went up to heaven in fire and whirlwind, it’s possible that he awaits to return, but this time, with *kol demamah dakah* as a uniter and spiritual mentor.

Daniel Vinik, a student at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, pointed out to me that perhaps within this framework we can understand Eliyahu as the messenger of *shefokh hamatkha*. The Talmud records that only humble Shmuel ha-katan had the capacity to write the blessing of *V’la-malshinim* in the Amidah, as it deals with uprooting the slanderers of the Jewish people. (Berakhot 28b) Power involves deep responsibility; it must be ethicized. In the hagaddah, the Eliyahu of the still voice, appropriately—when necessary—is the one we invoke to take a stand against our oppressors.

Whether this Eliyahu, the Eliyahu of *kol demamah dakah* returns is very much up to us. It’s up to us to find and live the principles of the still, small voice.

I've experienced this voice it in recent months, as Matt Fenster in his 30's struggled with cancer. He wrote, that while the doctors couldn't help him—there was something that could be done. He asked that everyone resolve not to speak *loshon ha'ra*. That is the *Kol Demamah Dakah*.

Matt died a few months later but his teaching will forever remain.

I am also thinking these days, of my friend David Brody *yi'badel l'haim* he too is struggling with cancer. He too through his letters is teaching the lesson of life, of caring for wife, and young children, of struggling with dignity, of continuing to love *am yisrael*. He too is the Eliyahu of *Kol Demamah Dakah*.

This world desperately needs this softness. On this Pesah, may we all find that inner, quite, still Eliyahu voice.

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