

Pesach 5780, Part 2

BS"D Pesach 5780

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

A Challenging Task

Eliyahu Hanavi (the prophet) appears prominently in the Pesach Seder. The fifth cup of wine is called kos shel eliyahu (the cup of Eliyahu), and at a certain point we open the door to greet his arrival. The question is, what significant role, if any, did Eliyahu play in our exodus from Egypt?

The only indication of Eliyahu at that stage in our history is the tradition that Pinchas at a later stage in his life was Eliyahu the prophet.

So, I submit:

There are only two seder mitzvot which are Torah obligatory in the absence of the Bet Hamikdash: to eat matza and to convey to our children the Exodus saga as preparation for ordination as HaShem's Chosen People at Mount Sinai and our goal to liberate Eretz Yisrael from foreign Canaanite occupation.

The seder introduces us to a nonfunctional family of four sons to whom the frustrated father must transmit the full gamut of halachic and historic Judaism on this night. However, one son is too smart for the father and dismisses what he is told, the second is allergic to any spiritual messages, the last two are also intellectually challenged, each in his own way, to appreciate the spiritual implications of our relationship with the Almighty, not to mention the ever present generation gap.

Into this scenario enters the prophetic words of the last of

the prophets Malachi (3, 23-24):

וְהִנְנִי שְׁלֹחַ אֶת-עֲלִיָּהוּ (הוּ) אֶתְכֶם לְפָנֵי יְהוָה וְהִפְתִּיחַ אֶת-לְבָבוֹת הָאָבוֹת לְבָנֵיהֶם וְהִפְתִּיחַ אֶת-לְבָבוֹת הַבָּנִים לְאֲבוֹתֵיהֶם:

וְהִנְנִי שְׁלֹחַ אֶת-עֲלִיָּהוּ (הוּ) אֶתְכֶם לְפָנֵי יְהוָה וְהִפְתִּיחַ אֶת-לְבָבוֹת הָאָבוֹת לְבָנֵיהֶם וְהִפְתִּיחַ אֶת-לְבָבוֹת הַבָּנִים לְאֲבוֹתֵיהֶם...

See, I will send the prophet Eliya(hu) to (prepare) you before that great and dreadful day of HaShem. And He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents...

Eliyahu is entrusted with the task of melting the hearts of fathers to pass down their wisdom gleaned from years of experience and Torah study to their children, even when the messages are harsh.

The smart son will realize that he still has much to gain from Abba and Ima, the rasha will set aside his yetzer hara long enough to hear what will draw him closer to HaShem, and the challenged children will find that they too can understand the messages of the parents.

And the parents and their children will all experience what we call Yiddishe nachas, even when the messages require self-sacrifice.

A VERY CHALLENGING TASK

A month ago, with the onset of the worldwide Coronavirus plague, hundreds perhaps thousands of young men and women left

the safe shores of Eretz Yisrael to return to the open loving arms of their parents and siblings.

They said goodbye to Yeshivat Hakotel, to Netiv Aryeh and to the other yeshivot and seminaries across the country, to settle down to the comfort of their familiar surroundings in preparation for the next stages in their lives.

At this crossroads in world and Jewish history permit me a suggestion based on foreboding, intuition and premonition that points to the opposite direction.

Dear parents your moment of truth is approaching.

You love your children, and want to guarantee their future, as well as your own.

Sit down with your sons and daughters and in a trembling but confident tone tell them that they have to return at the first opportunity to Medinat Yisrael.

Parents in the age group of 45-65 are stuck in the routine of their lives, but young adult children are still free.

Before the US prohibits the departure of young people, as will happen when the draft will be restored, send them here.

Let them come even without detailed preparation as students, soldiers, farmers, kibbutznikim, but that will insure their lives. No one can predict what will happen in galut, but two things are imminent – life will not revert to what it was, and anti-Semitism will spike to new heights. I can hear the reaction of most people to what I am writing; but that's irrelevant if I can save Jewish lives. Young people are resilient; they can take of themselves.

I am not comparing your situation to the Kindertransport of pre-World War Two times, that brought ten thousand Jewish children to England (although their conditions were horrendous), but to the reality of life in the States today.

At this moment you cannot come here because Israel has temporarily limited air travel; however, tomorrow you could find yourselves in a situation where the US will prohibit young people of draft age – men and women, from leaving. Think seriously about it!

Do Not Turn a Mitzvah into Chametz

We read on Shabbat of Chol HaMoed from parashat Ki Tisa (the parsha of the Golden Calf).

Moshe presents HaShem with the boldest request from a humble human being to the Ultimate Entity (Shemot 33, 18):

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִצְטַפֵּנוּ

Show me Your full glory (Your essence)

And HaShem replied:

אֲנִי אֶפְתָּח אֶת-פִּי וְאֶבְרַח לְךָ וְאֶגְדֹּל לְךָ אֶת-אֵלֹהֵינוּ:

You cannot see My face for no man can do so and live

The Gamara (Brachot 7a) quotes the tanna Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha who explains:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה ,וְאַתָּה לָּמָּה פָּנֶיךָ סָבִי אֶתְּפֹלֶת :וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרָיִם וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה
וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה - וַיֹּאמֶר.

HaShem replied to Moshe, "When I was willing to let you glance at some of My glory you turned your face away (at the Burning Bush), now that you are willing to experience it I am not.

We are prohibited from eating chametz on Pesach. Chametz is dough that fermented (a mass of dough that in time became a well-risen loaf of bread by adding yeast or through the yeast found naturally in the air, which is a single-celled fungus, and functions by consuming sugar and excreting carbon dioxide and alcohol as byproducts).

There is a dictum found in many Halachic sources:

וְכִּי יִהְיֶה לָּךְ אֲמִתּוּת לַעֲשׂוֹת מִצְוָה אַל תַּעֲרֹב עָלֶיךָ עֵשֶׂת

When there is an opportunity to perform a mitzvah do not turn it into chametz (by delaying its performance until its time has passed).

If there is anything that we should learn from the Corona experience it is that when a good intention comes to mind, do not delay its performance – because one can never know.

Pesach Samayach,

Nachman Kahana

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