



PROBING THE PROPHETS

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SHABBAT HAGADOL

After studying today's haftarah reading we may realize that it has very little connection to the chag of Pesach – even though the decision of the ancient scholars to have this perek from Sefer Malachi (chp. 3) read on the Shabbat preceding Pesach was due to its proximity to the holiday! Additionally, this reading, as opposed to the previous special pre-Pesach parashot, readings, is NOT ordained by Tanna'im in the Mishna and this Shabbat carries with it no obligation to read a special Maftir. In fact, we do not find the custom of reading this haftarah mentioned in the Talmud at all, with the earliest source found for reading this haftarah, dates back to the 12th century!

So what is this all about?

It would seem clear that the Rabbis wished to connect this Shabbat with the Y'mot HaMashi'ach, the final, ultimate redemption, a theme that runs throughout the days of Pesach. The haftarah, therefore, is particularly fitting for that theme of a future redemption, as these are final prophetic

words of Mal'achi, the last and latest navi in Tanach. In effect, therefore, what we read this Shabbat is Hashem's last prophetic message to be relayed to the nation. And, were we to begin reading from the first verse of the chapter, we would understand that the prophet speaks of the day when Hashem will send his messenger to harbinger G-d's arrival to judge the people, to purify and refine them in preparation for the Messianic era.

After promising G-d's promise of future economic success and a "rebirth" of the land's productivity, the prophet focuses upon the failure of the nation to worship G-d loyally. Malachi reminds the people of how faithFUL G-d had been to them and how faithLESS they had been to G-d, pointing out that the very survival of the tiny nation was proof of Hashem's love! For that reason, he urges the nation to recognize Hashem's kindnesses and remain faithful to Hashem. In effect, the navi's message connects to Chag HaPesach and Israel's exodus from Egypt. The demand Moshe' made of Par'oh was to release the people from Egypt so that they could worship their Hashem. This was the ultimatum that brought them their freedom! And yet, bemoans the prophet, the nation had now forgotten their obligation to do just that.

As the Book of Mal'achi closes, the people are given a haunting message, one that we realize, only in hindsight, was meant as a the essential key for their survival in the

May the learning from this
Torah Tidbits be in memory of
our beloved father and patriarch

**Harav Avraham Yeshayahu
(Simon) Dolgin zt"l**

Born - Shabbat Hagadol
Yahrzeit - 28 Nissan

*Dolgin, Glasser, Weinstock
& Slomiansky families*

soon-to-be exile: “Zichru Torat Moshe Avdi...,” “Remember the Torah of Moshe my servant, and the laws and statutes which I commanded him.” With the eventual destruction of the Bet HaMikdash and the dispersion of the Jewish nation, there would seem to be nothing to keep them surviving as a united nation, a Jewish nation. They would not be remaining in their homeland, nor making pilgrimages to their Beit HaMikdash; there would be no Kohen Gadol and no Melech. For this reason, Malachi reminds the future generations that they indeed DO have something. They will have the Torah – and THAT would be the force that would keep them one and keep them as Jews.

Today, we look back at the truth of these words and realize that, because of our adherence to them, we can now look forward to the final verses of the haftarah, the sefer and the era of prophecy: “Behold I shall send you the prophet Eliyah before the arrival of the great and awesome day of Hashem.”

May we all merit to see that day when the Mashiach arrives that, we pray, will take place in the very near future. ■

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