

DRASH FOR CHAPEL MINYAN - SID KADISH

April 9, 2022

Shabbat Hagadol

Our Sages (Chazal) who set the schedule for Torah readings and Haftarot, wanted to provide our Kahal with adequate notice regarding the arrival of Pesach. This year, the schedule went like this:

Feb 26

1 Adar 25

Shabbat Shekalim

The Maftir from Ex 30:11-16 reviews the mandate of the poll tax as a census. Each Israelite was obliged to pay 1/2 shekel, regardless of financial status. The money was used for the upkeep of the Mishkan. In the Haftarah, King Jehoash devises a giant pushke box for the Temple, so worshippers can deposit gifts, again for the upkeep of the Temple (Bedek HaBayit). The message to us is...pay your dues which will join you to the Jewish community for Pesach is coming.

Mar 11

II Adar 9

Shabbat Zachor

We read a Maftir which commands us to remember to blot out the memory of Amalek, our model oppressor. This refers to Purim where Haman, the villain, is referred to as the Aggagite, referring to Aggag, king of the Amalekites. The Haftarah is that harsh one where Samuel commands Saul to attack the Amalekites, and prevails. The message to us is...there are oppressors out there.

Mar 26

II Adar 23

Shabbat Parah

We read a long Maftir about the law of the Red Heifer. The ashes of the Red Heifer were used in a purification ritual. The Haftarah is from Ezekial speaks of cleansing the people and restoration of the Temple.

The message to us is...purify yourselves before coming to the Temple to worship on Passover.

April 2

Nisan 1

Shabbat HaChodesh

The special Maftir from Ex 12: 1-20 explains the rites of the First Pesach including the eating of the Pascal Lamb. It mandates a yearly celebration of the Exodus in perpetuity, something we will all celebrate shortly. The Haftarah from Ezekial again reiterates the Pesach regulations in the soon-to-be rebuilt Temple. The message to us is... proceed with the annual celebration of Pesach.

April 9

Nisan 8

Shabbat HaGodol

Interestingly, there is no special Torah reading. Our Parashah today in Metzora, the medical code on leprosy, which has nothing to do with Pesach. It is the Haftarah that is both special and enigmatic, breaking the pattern of pre-Pesach Haftarot that reflect and amplify the message of the Torah reading.

The Haftarah is from the prophet Malachi (Heb:my messenger). He was the last prophet, writing around 450 BCE. At this time, the 2nd Temple had been rebuilt and sacrificial worship resumed, but religious fervor was absent. Both priests and laity treated sacred things with a weary indifference. In the dismal milieu, Malachi urged the people to follow the Torah of Moses, and not feel that they have been abandoned by God. In this Haftarah, there is restoration; restoration of Israel's faith in God, restoration of the observance of the Torah. He likens the recent history of military defeat, exile and return to Zion to a family which has undergone estrangement, and now is the time for reconciliation.

But there is also a special and unique message in this Haftarah. There are really two messages; a negative one and a positive one.

The negative message is of a Day of Judgement when the Evil Ones will be consumed. "V 19: For lo, that day is at hand, burning like an oven. All the arrogant and all the doers of evil shall be straw, and the

day that is coming—said the Lord of Hosts—shall burn them to ashes and leave them neither stock nor boughs.”

And then, there is a positive message: “V.23: Lo, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the awesome fearful Day of the Lord.” In Hebrew, HINEI ANOCHI SHOLEACH LACHEM ET ELIYAHU HaNavi LIFNEI BO YOM HASHEM HAGADOL V’HANORAH. Hence Shabbat HaGodol.

There are not many words here, but commentators have interpreted this to mean—on Pesach we celebrate the Exodus from Egypt and our liberation from slavery. But in a Messianic Age, heralded by Elijah, there will be an ultimate redemption. That is why we sing Eliyahu HaNavi during the latter part of the Seder, and we leave the big goblet of wine for Eliyahu’s visit.

In the spirit of fairness I must add that the early Zionists were contemptuous of the idea of Messiah. Leo Pinsker (1821-1891) who lived in and practiced medicine in Odessa, author of “Auto-Emancipation,” argued that “religious orthodoxy as well as the traditional messianic beliefs have contribute to the basically passive Jewish response to the abnormal lives Jews are leading in the Diaspora. Religion helped internalize the Diaspora and legitimize it, because religion taught that we must bear patiently a punishment inflicted upon us by God, and belief in the Messiah is the intervention of a higher power to bring about political resurrection. DISCUSS!!

SPK
3-24-22