



# Seeking The Geula Going On Right Now

## Being Geula-Focused

**A** king exiled his son from his court because of the latter's lack of maturity. Years later, missing his son, the king sent his minister to find the boy and see if he had matured enough to return him to the palace. Upon finding the son, the minister asked him what request he would make of his father if he was given the opportunity. The boy responded, "I need a new pair of socks." Surprised that the boy did not ask to be returned to his father's court and saddened by his lack of meaningful aspiration, the minister could not recommend returning him.

Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa used this *mashal* to bemoan the fact that Jews focus and pray for their daily needs instead of for the *geula*, which would return them to their full relationship with Hashem in His land. Too often we focus on the challenges of our daily grind instead of on the more significant goals we have as a people.

## Yetziat Mitzrayim in the Present

The Torah often presents *Yetziat Mitzrayim* in the present tense. The Ohr HaChaim connects this to the fact that we are meant to re-experience the Exodus anew each year. *Yetziat Mitzrayim* was not a one-time experience, but rather an annual event.

*Yetziat Mitzrayim* is also the model and the basis of our belief in future redemption. Yeshayahu (11:11) describes the future *geula* as Hashem redeeming us for the 'second' time. In fact, the Smak (Mitzvat Aseh 1) explains that belief in future *geula* is the practical significance of the first of the Ten Commandments – belief in Hashem Who took us out of *Mitzrayim* is meant to include belief in His future redemption of our people.

This explains why our hope for and anticipation of future *geula* features so prominently in the Haggadah. We begin and end *Maggid* by expressing our belief that לשנה הבאה בארץ אשׁר לא/בירושלם, and the *bracha* thanking Hashem for *Yetziat Mitzrayim* includes "may Hashem our G-d bring us to new festivals and holidays."

## The Geula Continuum

Rav Kook (*Yisrael U'Techiyato* 28) took this idea a step further by describing redemption as a continuous process that began with the initial Exodus and continues straight through until the ultimate, complete *geula*. *Geula* is not a specific limited moment in time, but a constant continuum. The Gra (*Avnei Elyahu*) saw the (re)building of Yerushalayim in a similar way, and explained the present-tense formulation of the *bracha* of *Boneh Yerushalayim* in *Shemoneh Esreh* as reflecting the fact that Hashem is constantly rebuilding the city.

Redemption is an ongoing, constant process. Chazal<sup>1</sup> compared it to the sunrise whose light increases slowly, bit by bit. This principle of the *geula* continuum means that every event has redemptive significance. The question is whether we recognize and appreciate this significance or not.

## Seeking Redemption This Pesach

Rav Kook (Olat Reiyah p. 279) explained that the reference in the Gemara (Shabbat 31a) to צפיה לישועה, seeking redemption, includes constantly seeking *geula* possibilities and what we can do to help facilitate the process.

Though we should always be on the lookout for *geula* potential, Pesach is the most appropriate time to reflect upon current events with an eye on

identifying and facilitating *geula* possibilities. This Pesach is a time for us to reflect on how the yearlong pandemic is meant to bring us, the Jewish people, and the world, closer to the ultimate redemption. These ideas may include:

- The pandemic reminded us of our dependency upon powers beyond our control, i.e., Hashem, Who controls the world.
- The separation and isolation reminded us of the significance of our relationships with our nuclear family and home lif.
- The struggle against a common 'enemy' strengthened our relationship with others and brought us together as a people and humanity together as a whole.
- Travel restrictions helped us appreciate *Eretz Yisrael*, to where we are unable to travel for the first time in our lifetimes.

As we celebrate our continued redemption this year amidst (but, hopefully, on the way out of) the continued Covid reality, I recommend reflecting on how Covid has brought us and our world one step closer to our ultimate *geula*. By doing so, may we show Hashem that we are worthy of fully returning to Him.

<sup>1</sup> See Midrash Shocher Tov Tehillim 22 based on Yerushalmi Berachot 4b.



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Rabbanit Shani Taragin

## Eliyahu at the Petach on Pesach

There are numerous customs of inviting Eliyahu to our Pesach home. One common custom is to take a large, decorative cup as the *kos shel Eliyahu*, and leave it on the Seder table in the hope he will come to herald the arrival of *Mashiach*. Another custom is to open the door for Eliyahu after the third cup is drunk, as an introduction to the second half of *Hallel*, which celebrates the Final Redemption. Some even have the custom of standing when the door is open and saying “*baruch haba*,” as if to welcome Eliyahu and *Mashiach*.

The Midrash explains (Pirkei deRebbi Eliezer, chap. 29) that when Eliyahu (Melachim 1, 19) appears on *Har Chorev*, accusing *Am Yisrael* of undermining *Brit Sinai*, G-d responds and tells him that he will witness all *britot*, testifying to the Jewish people’s fulfillment of this commandment. Based on this, the Rabbis instituted the *kisei shel Eliyahu* placed at nearly every *brit mila*. Perhaps this idea contributes to his witnessing *Brit Pesach* as well.

Perhaps there is another reason for opening our doors for Eliyahu.

Eliyahu is consistently “found” by doorposts and openings in time and space, straddling between the inside and out. This phenomenon begins in Melachim 1, 18, when he calls the king, the prophets of Ba’al and the people to come to *Har HaCarmel*, on the border between Israel and Phoenicia. “Carmel” represents wheat in an intermediary state, when not too hard or soft, neither here nor there. As such, the “*carmelit*” is qualified by *Chazal* as neither a public nor private domain, but rather someplace “in-between.” Once assembled, Eliyahu questions the nation, עַד מָתַי אַתֶּם פּוֹסְחִים עַל שְׁתֵּי הַסַּעֲפִים, “How long shall you straddle/waver between two

opinions” (i.e., G-d or Ba’al worship). He waits until *bein haShmashot*, twilight, a time of ambiguity, to resolve their dialectic, as G-d’s dominance is manifest through heavenly fire.

In Chapter 19, we find Eliyahu seeking refuge and affirmation by the entrance of the cave at *Har Chorev*. Lastly, as he departs from his disciple Elisha (Melachim 2, 2), on the Jordanian border of the Land, he is taken heavenward in “chariots and horses of fire,” while his cloak falls to the ground. Eliyahu remains suspended between Heaven and Earth.

In Talmudic sources as well, Eliyahu is conventionally situated at doorposts. He awaits for Rabbi Yossi to finish his prayer in the *Churva* to teach him the lessons he learned from *Har Chorev*: don’t enter a state or place of ruin, don’t focus on the past, pray “along the road,” as part of a process of progress for the future, accompanied by others instead of praying in isolation, and recite an abbreviated prayer along the road, to maintain focus, recognizing it may not be an ideal state. As G-d told Eliyahu at *Chorev*, לֵךְ שׁוֹב לְדַרְכְּךָ – “go upon your way.” It is preferable to work and pray with the nation even at the cost of one’s own prayer, as a means of facilitating redemption (Berachot 3a).

Eliyahu is also found at the entrance of the cave in which Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and his son were hiding, heralding for them to exit (Shabbat 33b). He is found by the doorpost of the home of Rabbi Yehoshua HaGarsi, Rabbi Akiva’s devoted attendant, to bring Rabbi Akiva’s tortured corpse to rest in a cave in *Gan Eden* (Midrash Mishlei, 9).

Eliyahu consistently reminds us of the timeless ambiguities, “twilights” and *pesachim*, straddling between extremes.

Yet he also comes to clarify and resolve our confusions, to take us to the “other side” – from the inside of the *Churva* and caves of despair and destruction, to the *derech* – the pathway to prayer and redemption.

As such, he is the prophet who must come to catalyze redemption through turning the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers (Malachi 3:24). While he awaits at the “doorposts,” he encourages us to engage in conversation with our parents and with our children, teaching us the art of listening and learning from one another.

On Seder Night, we engage intergenerationally as no other time in the year. We have a unique opportunity to bridge gaps and to stop straddling in twilight. We pour the *kos shel Eliyahu* and open our doors, as we want Eliyahu to see that we are ready – not to invite him in, but to accompany him out on a path of prayer and final redemption.

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