



HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

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The Voice That Endures

The following is a dvar Torah regarding the Haftorah assigned to Parshat Pinchas when it does not fall in the Three Weeks. This Shabbat the Haftorah is the special Haftorah for the Three Weeks (Yirmiyahu chapter 1).

After the extraordinary events on Har HaCarmel, Eliyahu HaNavi is told, “Go out and stand on the mountain before Hashem.” What follows is one of the most unforgettable scenes in Tanach. A mighty wind tears through the mountains. Then comes an earthquake. Then a fire. Yet after each phenomenon, the Navi emphasizes, “Hashem was not in the wind... Hashem was not in the earthquake... Hashem was not in the fire.” Only afterward comes the קול דממה דקה — the still, small voice.

Why does Hashem reveal Himself in this way?

The Malbim offers a remarkable explanation. After discussing the deeper, mystical dimension of the vision, he turns to what he calls כפי הנגלה — the straightforward meaning of the text. There he writes that Hashem was teaching Eliyahu that במחנה רוח ורעש ואש אין ה' — “Hashem is not found in the camp of the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but rather in the still, small voice.”

The Malbim is not suggesting that Hashem cannot reveal Himself through displays of overwhelming power. Rather, this is the lesson that Eliyahu himself needed to learn. Until this point, his mission had been marked by extraordinary acts of zeal. He declared a drought, called down fire from heaven, and oversaw the execution of the prophets of Baal. Those actions were necessary at those moments in Jewish history. But Hashem now teaches him that they cannot become the enduring model of prophetic leadership.

The Malbim makes this explicit. He writes, וממנו ילמדו שלוחיו ונביאיו בל יסערו סער, בל ירעשו רעש, ובל יבעירו אש — “From this, His emissaries and prophets should learn not to storm like the wind, not to shake like the earthquake, and not to kindle fire.” The wind, the earthquake, and the fire are no longer merely natural phenomena. They become metaphors for a style of leadership. A prophet is not meant to overwhelm people through force or spectacle.

The Malbim then points directly to Eliyahu himself, writing, כמו שעשה אליהו בקנאתו לה' — “as Eliyahu had done in his zeal for Hashem” — when he shut the heavens and slew the prophets of Baal. Hashem is not



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criticizing Eliyahu's devotion or questioning the necessity of those actions. Rather, He is teaching him that extraordinary measures, however justified in moments of crisis, are not the way hearts are ultimately won.

How, then, should a prophet lead? The Malbim concludes with one of the most beautiful descriptions of Jewish leadership: וימשכו רכים — “They should draw the people with cords of love and with gentle words.” The phrase בעבותות אהבה deliberately echoes the words of the prophet Hosea, בחבלי אדם אמשכם, בעבותות אהבה, — “I drew them with human cords, with bonds of love.” Hashem's preferred way of bringing people close is not through fear, but through love; not through coercion, but through compassion; not through spectacle, but through quiet influence.

Perhaps this is why the phrase קול דממה דקה appears in another of the holiest moments of the Jewish year. During the Avodah service of Yom Kippur, as we recount the Kohen Gadol's entry into the Kodesh HaKodashim, we describe the nation's response by saying that they heard a קול דממה דקה. The author of the piyut intentionally echoes Eliyahu's experience. One might expect the climax of Yom Kippur to be marked by thunder, heavenly voices, or an overwhelming display of Divine majesty. Instead, the moment of greatest closeness to the Shechinah is associated with a still, small voice. The deepest awareness of Hashem is often experienced not through noise and spectacle, but through profound stillness.

Immediately afterward, Eliyahu receives his next mission: to appoint new leaders and to call Elisha as his successor. His final task is no longer to call down fire from heaven, but to ensure that the future of Klal Yisrael will be built through faithful transmission—from



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teacher to student, from prophet to prophet, from heart to heart.

The haftorah leaves us with a powerful lesson. There are moments in Jewish history that require courage, conviction, and even dramatic action. Eliyahu's zeal had its place. But the future of Torah is not sustained by wind, earthquake, or fire. It is sustained by the קול דממה דקה — by leaders who draw people close בעבותות אהבה ובדברים רכים, with bonds of love and gentle words. In a world that often celebrates the loudest voices, the Navi reminds us that the voice that changes lives, and the voice through which Hashem is most often found, is the quiet one. ■



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