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HEMDAT YAMIM

PARASHAT HASHAVUA

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Three Introductions for Pesach

Harav Shaul Yisraeli – based on Shirat Hageula, p. 3-4

There are three introductory *Shabbatot* for the holiday of Pesach: *Parashat Parah*, *Parashat Hachodesh*, and *Shabbat Hagadol*.

Parashat Parah is the reading of purification. It is true that in general, one is supposed to purify himself before a holiday (Rosh Hashana 16b). However, on Pesach there is a special reason to be pure, so that one can take part in the *Korban Pesach*. Liberation must come from amidst purity. If we would view the value of liberty as just the lack of being controlled by another nation, then the whole stress on purification would be unimportant. However, our goal is to have a life built on something specific and special, and for this there is a need for inspecting our ways and for purification.

Parashat Hachodesh is about renewal, starting with the moon to which we set our calendar. Part of the moon's nature is that it is renewed just when it gets to the point of darkness.

Shabbat Hagadol possesses two elements – the Shabbat of creation and the Shabbat of Israel. As any Shabbat, it has the commands of “*Zachor*” (remember) and “*Shamor*” (observe) – remember the creation and observe the matter of the Exodus from Egypt. The *Shamor* comes to make *Zachor* a social obligation that serves as the basis for all of social life.

The goal of these three introductions is to show the essential content of Jewish nationalism, which finds expression in the Holiday of Freedom. That is to turn the divine idea into a factor that impacts on national, political, and social life. This requires an exact plan, which requires inspecting the nation's actions from time to time – this is the idea of purification before holidays.

This requires making sure that life is lived in a way that is in synch with the changing conditions from time to time. In this regard, things must be checked according to their internal content, despite the fact that there are external changes that need attention. This is included in the idea of *Parashat Hachodesh*. All of these ideas find special attention on Shabbat, which, in turn, finds its fullest meaning on *Shabbat Hagadol*.

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Ask the Rabbi

by Rav Daniel Mann

Preparation for a Shabbat Evening Seder

[We reprint this question and answer from a few years ago due to its special timeliness.]

Question: This year, with the *seder* being on Shabbat night, is there a need for any special preparations?

Answer: There are two relatively minor changes that are worthwhile discussing. (We understand that you are not referring to the more obviously different rules for cooking and reheating on Shabbat, as opposed to the significantly more lenient rules for Yom Tov.)

Preparing the saltwater for dipping the *karpas* – One is not allowed to make large quantities of saltwater on Shabbat for soaking vegetables (Shabbat 108a; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 321:2). This is because making such saltwater was part of the process that was done to store vegetables for the long term, which is, in turn, similar to *ibbud ha'or* (tanning hides). It is permitted to make small quantities to put into food or to dip one's bread or the like into it, provided one does not use double the volume of salt compared to the water (*ibid.*; see Mishna Berura 321:11).

Based on the above, several *poskim* (Taz 473:3; Chok Yaakov 473:13; Mishna Berura 473:21) say that when *seder* night falls on Friday night, one should prepare the saltwater beforehand. The Magen Avraham does not understand why this is necessary, considering that we are presumably only making a small quantity to use for the *seder*. The (partial) answer is apparently as the Misgeret Hashulchan (on Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 118:4) says: one is not always careful to make only the necessary amount. If one did not prepare in advance, there are different opinions as to whether it is better to dip the *karpas* in vinegar or to be careful to make a particularly small quantity of saltwater.

Our discussion, on the uniqueness of Pesach falling on Shabbat, assumes that it is permitted to prepare saltwater on *Yom Tov*, despite the fact that *ibbud*, which is the overall issue, is forbidden on *Yom Tov*. This indeed is the assumption of most classical *poskim* (see Misgeret Hashulchan, *ibid.*). However, the Chayei Adam (130:19) and the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (118:4) say that one should prepare the saltwater before *Yom Tov* even in a regular year. While one might be tempted to say it is just a good suggestion to save time for the *seder*, they seem to view it as a halachic requirement, as they say that if one has to make the saltwater on *Yom Tov*, he should switch the normal order and put in the water first followed by the salt.

In summary, then, one cannot really say it is forbidden to make saltwater for the *seder* on Shabbat. Additionally, some prefer making the saltwater before *Yom Tov* every year to expedite matters and maybe for halachic reasons. However, the impetus to prepare in advance when the *seder* is on Shabbat is greater.

Adding wine to the *charoset* – The *minhag* is to put (additional?) wine in the *charoset* soon before using it at the *seder* (Rama, Orach Chayim 473:5). While the mixing in of the wine may be under the category of *lash* (kneading), this is forbidden only on Shabbat but permitted on *Yom Tov* (Orach Chayim 506). Therefore, when the *seder* falls out on Shabbat, adding the wine could be a problem. Therefore, the Mishna Berura (321:68) says one should put in the wine before Shabbat. Regarding a case where he forgot to do so, one has to add the wine in a manner that does not violate *lash*. One possibility is to change the order of mixing together, by putting the wine on the bottom, adding the *charoset* on top, and mixing them together either by finger or by shaking the utensil that holds them. The Mishna Berura points out that one of the opinions in the Shulchan Aruch requires that the mixture be watery. This raises issues with the fact that we want the *charoset* to be thick like mortar (see Sha'ar Hatziyun 321:86). This is another reason why one would want to avoid the issue and simply prepare the *charoset* before Shabbat.



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Ein Ayah

(from the writings of Harav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, z.t.l.)

The Correct Growth of the Individual and the Nation

(condensed from Ein Ayah, Shabbat 2:3)

Gemara: The wicks and oils that the Rabbis forbade for Shabbat candles cannot be lit in the *Mikdash* either. This was connected to the *pasuk*, “to raise up the light consistently” (Shemot 27:20) – so that the flame will rise on its own and not with the help of something else.

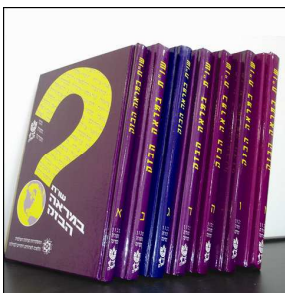
Ein Ayah: The oil and the wick for Shabbat candles must interact in a manner that the flame does not flicker. This illustrates the completeness that is the goal of Shabbat and the interdependency of the sanctity of the body and of the spiritual intellect. When one’s body is dense, i.e., when his whole purpose is to “pour a cup of indulgence into his mouth,” the intellect’s light cannot cling to it. He may be able to understand craftsmanship and say bright ideas when in the proper mood and affected by the divine form with which he was created. However, the spirit of wisdom will not rest in his heart with permanence, and his materialistic leanings will overcome him and darken the light of the intellect. One’s physical side, which corresponds to a wick, to which the spiritual light must take hold, must be purified so that the light will be constant and not flickering. The idea behind the sanctity and rest of Shabbat is to have a life at rest to the extent that one’s nature pushes him toward sanctity, justice, and goodness. The intellect (oil) must also impact positively on the physical side, not in the manner of those whose wisdom is untruthful. Such people can be intellectually sharp, yet follow their heart and perform abominations. Proper wisdom brings hope, and it is Jewish wisdom that leads a person to proper physical actions. This is oil that is drawn to the wick.

Shabbat relates to the individual Jew’s striving to complete himself as a person. Sometimes individuals are able to direct their material desires to upright matters, yet concerning national matters, the same people take an approach of physical dominance without concern for their action’s legality or propriety. Sometimes the nation uses only theoretical wisdom to flaunt its honor in the world instead of pursuing justice. Sometimes, individuals are good, but the nation is violent and merciless. The Nation of Israel does not embrace this approach. We yearn for our national honor to be in line with our individual one, with both based on Hashem’s righteous statutes. We want our wisdom to straighten our practical path so that all recognize and spread the idea that true divine wisdom is doing justice, loving kindness, and walking modestly before Hashem (see Micha 6:8).

We have seen that the proper combination of wicks and oils for Shabbat has to do with the idea that both material powers and intellectual ones will be dedicated toward sanctity and justice. Just as Shabbat candles promote this idea for the individual, so do the lights in the *Mikdash* represent this concerning the nation.

When physical powers are focused on fulfilling one’s desires and intellectual ones are for abstracts ideas, sanctity and ethics will not remain over time nationally or individually. In such cases, the quest for justice will not be innate but will be prompted by self-interest, along the lines of “I will guard for you if you will guard for me” or “I will love you if you will love me.” This will not last because this interdependency will not always suffice to keep one in check. To such a situation we can apply the *pasuk* of “to raise up the light consistently,” i.e., the flame must go up without external prodding. Divine justice must be natural, from the depths of the soul, due to the sanctity of the body that has been elevated by *mitzvot* and the purification of the intellect by means of the light of the Torah, which “goes up on its own.” When a person or a nation has developed this sanctity as a mainstay of its natural state, it will not need external stimuli.

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Historical View of Rav Mordechai Yaakov Breish (*Chelkat Yaakov*)

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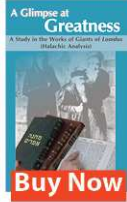
Mordechai Yaakov Breish was born in 1895 in Skohl, Galicia (today, Ukraine) to a family of Belzer *chassidim*. During the 1920s he began his career as a rabbi in Galicia, and toward the end of the decade he accepted a position as the rabbi of Disbourg, Germany. That is where he wrote his first *sefer*, on the topic of *eiruv*. A few years later, after the ascendance of the Nazis (ysv"z), he moved to France. He was there just a few years and was fortunate that before the War, he accepted a position in Zurich, Switzerland, where he served as rabbi of the Charedi community for over forty years.

In the years after World War II, Europe had only a relatively small remnant of a Jewish community, compared to pre-War Europe, as, of course, 6 million were murdered and most of the survivors left the continent for Israel or America. In Continental Europe (excluding England), few *poskim* survived and remained after the War. I can think of only two works of high-level *p'sak halacha* that were produced there at that time (apologies to any others I forgot): R. Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg's *S'ridei Eish* and Rav Mordechai Yaakov Breish's *Chelkat Yaakov*. Rav Breish was indeed a central figure, both communally, in Zurich and regionally, and in the world of scholarship. Through his large family, he became connected through marriage with some of the most prestigious families of the time, including that of the Rav Y.Y. Weiss and the Soloveitchik dynasty.

Rav Breish ruled on many issues affecting a Jewish community that was not only trying to recover from the Holocaust but was also dealing with the ravages of assimilation and intermarriage. However, as far as contemporary issues, his major contributions seem to be in the field of new (from the perspective of the 20th century) technologies, especially electrical devices and medical questions. For example, his *Orach Chayim* section has responsa on various uses of "Shabbat clocks," Hagomel for air travelers, *berachot* on "eating" through a tube, vending machines on Shabbat, and use of a refrigerator on Shabbat.

Rav Breish was not so famous for his contribution to the field of monetary halacha. However, his well-written *teshuvot* touch, in addition to standard age-old matters, on some interesting contemporary issues or post-war related issues. A few examples include buying previously Jewish-owned *sefarim* from the Czechoslovakian government, what to do with unclaimed property after the War, and guidelines on the concept of *dina d'malchuta dina* (the law of the land is binding).

Since Rav Breish's death in 1976, much has changed in the Jewish world and discussion on newer technologies replace those on formerly new technologies. However, we owe a debt of gratitude not only for his contributions to the survival and a certain measure of recovery of European Jewry, but for solid scholarship from which we still have much to learn in our times.



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