



פרשת צו שבת הגדול

ניסן תשפ"ג

שנת הקהל



## HAKHEL AND PESACH

When the Torah describes the time when Hakhel had to be observed, it uses a number of different phrases;

"At the end of seven years, at the time (במועד) of the Shemittah year, during the Sukkos festival, when all of the Jewish people come to appear before Hashem."

The Gemara explains why each of these terms is necessary. If the Torah would have just said במועד (which can mean on the Festival), we may have thought that this means on Rosh Hashana. Therefore the Pasuk has to specify "during the Sukkos festival".

Tosfos questions that once the Torah writes "when all of the Jewish people come to appear before Hashem", we would know that it cannot mean Rosh Hashana, since it isn't one of the pilgrimage festivals. So why then is it necessary to state "during the Sukkos festival"?

Tosfos explains that we would of otherwise thought that the Mitzvah of Hakhel should take place on Pesach, which is one of the pilgrimage festivals. Therefore, the Torah must qualify that it means Sukkos.

From the fact that we would have initially thought that Hakhel should take place on Pesach, we see that there is a strong connection between the idea of Hakhel and the Yomtov of Pesach.

A collection of Torah thoughts produced by Kollel Menachem



## In this Edition

A Fiery Pesach Seder Experience **P.1**

Foods Customarily Avoided on Pesach **P.2**

## A Fiery Pesach Seder Experience

One of the concepts discussed in Kabbalah is the idea of Isarusa Deleila - an awakening from Above and Isarusa Deletata - an awakening from below.

Isarusa Deleila are the moments of inspiration which we experience from time-to-time, where through no effort of our own, we feel a desire to grow and connect to Hashem. The Pesach Seder is one such opportunity, where the atmosphere of Holiness envelops us and elevates us to a higher plane.

But does the Isarusa Deleila mean we passively waiting for the flash of inspiration to come our way? Pesach is a time of incredible G-dly revelation, but can we just enter Pesach and sit at the Seder expecting to experience the spiritual light and energy of the night?

In the Beis Hamikdash, the Korbonos were brought up to be consumed by the fire on the Mizbeach. In the opening of Parshas Tzav, the Torah instructs that the fire of the Mizbeach had to burn constantly. The Kohanim were required to replenish this fire with wood each day.

But why was this fire and wood necessary? Our sages teach that a fire would descend from Heaven in the form of a lion which would devour the Korbonos and elevate them. If so, what was the need for an earthly fire that would need to constantly be replenished?

The sages teach, that even though the fire would descend from Above, it is a Mitzvah to bring a simple, earthly fire (from below).

The Mizbeach represents our service of Hashem through Torah, Mitzvos and Tefillah. The fiery flames are the feeling and passion that we experience in our

Avodah.

The Isarusa Deleila experience is like the fireball descending from Heaven. It kindles our hearts and infuses our Avodah with passion. But we cannot rely on the Heavenly fire alone. We have to bring our simple earthly fire; our own attempts to arouse within us feelings of love of Hashem and a desire to connect to Him. Rambam explains that this is achieved through thinking about His greatness.

It may not be miraculous, but Hashem desires our earthly fire because it is ours; not so much for the achievement, but for the effort that we put in. This earthly fire, albeit limited in comparison to a fire from Heaven, is actually the catalyst which arouses and elicits the flames from Above in return. Only then will the impact be lasting and become part of us.

The Talmud teaches that in conception; when a woman seeds first, the resulting offspring will be a male, whereas when a man seeds first the child conceived will be female. In the cosmic relationship, Hashem is likened to a groom and we are the bride.

The Talmud is teaching us a deep lesson; When the initiation comes from Above - the male seeds first - the result will be female, reflecting a weaker experience. But when the initiation comes from below, both the experience and impact will be strong and lasting.

If we truly wish to experience and feel the 'fireball' from Heaven on Pesach, we need to start to light our own fire. We do this by the learning that we do in the lead-up to Pesach. Then on seder night, these two fires will unite and burn together at our seder table in our hearts and souls.

- |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| 1. Mishlei 1:8  | 10. Eshel Avraham Siman 464   | 15. Orach Chaim 467:8 ועל תטוש תורת                          | 25. Since there is not definitely Chametz present, especially with our sugar nowadays, this is not considered as intentionally nullifying something forbidden. The Alter Rebbe writes that even if the sugar from their times became mixed into food on Pesach it would be permitted in a case of great loss due to a number of doubts involved. |
| 2. Shemuos Vesippurim   | 11. Klal 127:7  | 16. Mishna Berura  | 26. See Chayei Adam 127:2  |
| 3. Eshel Avraham 464:1  | 12. Eshel Avraham 447   | 17. 467:17   | 27. Nissan 20  |
| 4. Klal 127:7   | 13. Darkei Chaim Veshalom 606. Maharam Shik would not eat fish on Pesach  | 18. Chasam Sofer 79  |  |
| 5. 467:8, quoting Mahari"l  | 14. See Shulchan Aruch Harav 447:26-36. Since salted herrings would be washed thoroughly before use, they could be eaten if they were soaked three times and washed thoroughly. | 19. Orach Chaim 467:8  |  |
| 6. Darkei Moshe. Shulchan Aruch Harav 467:21                          |   | 20. 467:16   |  |
| 7. Mishna Berura 467:32   |   | 21. 467:8  |  |
| 8. Levush 467:8, Shulchan Aruch Harav 467:21 and Mishna Berura 467:32 |   | 22. Terumas Hadeshen 114                                     |  |
| 9. See Sdeh Chemed Asifas Dinim chametz Umatzah 6:8                   |   | 23. 467:20   |  |
|   |   | 24. Kerem Chabad records that this was not a Horaah Lera-bim |  |

# Foods Customarily Avoided on Pesach

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

Pesach is a time of stringencies and many families and communities will have foods that they will not eat during Pesach. Most of these customs were due to concerns of Chametz being used in making these foods.

Even when there was no longer a concern of Chametz, many communities and families retained their custom to avoid these foods, based on the verse ועל תטש תורת אמך, "do not uproot the Torah of your mother."<sup>1</sup> Some of the customs have no known basis or reason at all.

In last week's edition we looked at the custom, based on the decree of Rabbi Akiva Eiger, to refrain from drinking spirits on Pesach, even if it is certified as being completely Kosher for Pesach. In this week's edition we will look more briefly at some other foods that were customarily avoided by some communities on Pesach.

## Radish:

It is recorded in the name of the Rebbe Rashab, that the Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitch forbade the eating of radish on Pesach, without specifying any reason<sup>2</sup>. The Pri Megadim<sup>3</sup> and Chayei Adam<sup>4</sup> write that they do not know of any reason for not eating radish. Most communities follow the lenient opinion.

## Spices:

The Ram"o<sup>5</sup> writes that the custom in Ashkenaz is to not eat Saffron or onycha. There was a concern of Chametz as they would mix flour with water and sprinkle it on the saffron while drying it. They would soak the onycha in barley water before drying it<sup>6</sup>. Others write that they would use flour or yeast to enhance the colour of the spices<sup>7</sup>.

The Acharonim<sup>8</sup> write that even if one grew these spices in their own garden and prepared them without any trace of Chametz, they should not be used. This is because of Maris Ayin.

Charoses should be made to resemble the mortar that was used by the Jewish people in Egypt to fashion bricks. To do this, they would mix in straw. As a result, the Halacha is that one should put spices that make straw-like

pieces when crushed, into the Charoses. In the Rebbe's Haggadah, the Rebbe notes that it has been our Minhag for many years that we do not use cinnamon or Kidah... because of a concern of Chametz being mixed in. There are other communities who have the same custom<sup>9</sup>.

## Garlic:

The Pri Megadim<sup>10</sup> writes that even though he does not know the reason for not eating garlic on Pesach, one should not be lenient, because this is the Minhag. The Chayei Adam<sup>11</sup> writes that there is no reason to forbid the use of garlic and that one may use it on Pesach. This is also the position of the Maharsham.

## Fish:

In the times of the Gemara, fish would be eaten on Pesach. Fish is even given as one of the examples of a cooked food that can be used for the Seder Kaarah. The Pri Megadim<sup>12</sup> writes that one should avoid eating fish because they would rub the fish with alcohol in order to prevent them from spoiling. Some communities continue to avoid eating fish, even where the concern no longer applies<sup>13</sup>.

The Siddur Yaavetz records that one should only buy live fish for Pesach where there is no concern. Others are also concerned that fish may have consumed Chametz. Based on this some will eat deep-sea fish where this concern does not apply.

The Shulchan Aruch also raises concerns about salt that was not checked for Chametz crumbs that would be used for preserving or pickling foods, including fish (herring)<sup>14</sup>.

## Dried fruits:

The Ram"o<sup>15</sup> writes that the custom in Ashkenaz is not to eat dried fruits, unless one is sure that they were dried in a manner that there is no concern of Chametz. The reason for concern was because the producers may have sprinkled the fruit with flour while drying them<sup>16</sup>. This ruling is brought by the Alter Rebbe<sup>17</sup> who brings an additional concern that the fruits may have been dried in an oven that was used for baking bread.

Many have the custom to avoid eating these foods even if they have a Hechsher to certify that there is no concern of Chametz. One may be lenient for those who are sick<sup>18</sup>.

## Honey:

The Ram"o<sup>19</sup> writes that there are those who are stringent and that the custom in Ashkenaz is not to eat honey unless it is brought in the large barrels directly from the hives. The concern was that flour was mixed into the honey. However, this concern would not apply while the honey is still mixed with the honeycomb wax. The Alter Rebbe quotes the Bach that there are those who are still strict in all cases.

The Alter Rebbe<sup>20</sup> qualifies that in places where it is certain that they do not mix flour into the honey, one may eat honey even if it was separated from the honeycomb...

## Sugar:

The Ram"o<sup>21</sup> writes that we do not eat sugar on Pesach due to a concern of Chametz and that one may not even keep sugar over Pesach<sup>22</sup>. This ruling is brought by the Alter Rebbe<sup>23</sup>. In the homes of the Chabad Rebbes they would not use sugar on Pesach<sup>24</sup>.

Many have the custom of boiling the sugar with water before Pesach and straining the syrup through a fine cloth. Boiling the sugar before Pesach means that even if there was any concern or traces of flour or pieces of Chametz, they could be removed and their flavour would become Batei<sup>25</sup>.

## Peeling fruits and vegetables:

Many communities have the custom of peeling all fruits and vegetables that they eat or cook on Pesach and will only buy fruits and vegetables that can be peeled<sup>26</sup>.

## Not offering food on Pesach:

Hayom Yom<sup>27</sup> records how the Alter Rebbe taught that on Pesach one should not offer a guest food or drink, but the visitor may partake on their own. This is because the guest may have personal Chumros on Pesach and the invitation may put them in a difficult situation or cause embarrassment.

The Ariza"l famously taught that on Pesach one should be careful with all of the Chumros and that one who is careful with the minutest amount of chometz is guaranteed not to sin the entire year.