

A PARASHA THOUGHT

The Real Jewish Renewal



RABBI
NOSSON
WIGGINS

This week we read *parshas Ha-Chodesh*, in which *Klal Yisrael*, as the time for their redemption from the bitter enslavement in *Mitzrayim* neared, received their very first *mitzvah* - *kiddush ha-chodesh* (the sanctification of the new moon). From this point onward, each month the *Beis Din* (Jewish Court) was instructed to proclaim the new month upon the appearance of the new moon. Several generations after the destruction of the Second *Beis HaMikdash*, in light of intensified Roman persecution and the imminent collapse of the Jewish court system, Hillel II utilized the secret computations to create a set calendar and so, today, we no longer declare the new month. Although we no longer perform this *mitzvah*, the concept of *kiddush ha-chodesh* remains an integral aspect to a Jew's life.

Many people are accustomed to translating the word *chodesh* as month. Although this is not incorrect, Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch points out that it is only a secondary meaning. The true meaning of the word *chodesh* stems from the root *chadash*, which means a beginning or a renewal.

Rav Hirsch points out that Rosh Chodesh is a time of *kaparah* (atonement) for this very reason. When one cleanses himself through repentance and then atonement, he is able to start anew. In the words of Rav Hirsch "*chodesh* thus proclaims redemption from sin and from evil".

The fact that the *mitzvah* of *kiddush ha-chodesh* is given the Jewish Nation as it is "born" indicates that the concept of

renewal lies at the cornerstone of a Jew's life. How is this idea relevant to our daily lives?

Sefer HaYashar (an ethical work which has been mistakenly attributed to Rabbeinu Tam but whose authorship remains unknown) quoted by Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe in his *Alei Shor*, describes an element of the human psyche called *the days of love and the days of hatred*. Essentially, the human being has been wired to go through a cycle of good and bad phases. During the good phase we are invigorated in the service of Hashem, but during the bad phase we feel disenchanted or disinterested in our Divine mission. The cycle will inevitably run its course; we must simply stay afloat during the "bad days", but then we will be granted a renewal - a fresh start. When a Jew has a difficult day, week, or even month, he must always remember that ingrained within himself is the ability to start anew.

These are some of the important messages of *kiddush ha-chodesh*. As we approach the *Yom Tov* of Pesach in which we celebrate the formation of *Klal Yisrael*, let us be reminded of the power of renewal. 🔄



LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL
(BASAR B'CHALAV)

WITH

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

Q: One of the most daunting preparations we make for Pesach is *kashering*, a process to prepare *chametz* utensils for Pesach use. A question that several people have asked recently is: Why do people put/rinse utensils in cold water after doing *hagala* (purging through immersion in hot water)?

A: The *Rishonim* (medieval commentators) struggle with a very basic issue in the *hagala* process. When a utensil is placed in boiling water, that has the ability to remove any non-kosher/*chometz* taste that is infused in its walls. Considering that everything is still hot and there are no "one way street signs," what stops the taste/*chometz* that was just released, from being reabsorbed in the walls.

Several suggestions are offered:

-Rinse the utensils with cold water immediately after *hagala*. This way, if any forbidden taste that was released during *hagala* is still on the surface, it will be washed off and not be reabsorbed in the utensil.

-Only perform *hagala* on vessels that are *eino ben yomo* (have sat dormant for 24 hours). This way, the taste has become *pagum* (stale) and even if it re-enters the *kli* (vessel), it does not become un-Kosher.

-If one did not wait the 24 hours and time is of the essence, some kashrus organizations (in extenuating circumstances) will allow kashering to take place if the water is made "*pagum*" (foul-tasting) before beginning.

-When purging a smaller utensil such as

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LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL (BASAR B'CHALAV)

CONTINUED

a spoon, make sure that the pot is big enough that it contains 60 times the volume of the spoon itself. This way as soon as the *taam* (taste) leaves the *kli*, it is immediately *batal* (nullified).

-There is a more complicated approach which relies on the concept of *nosen taam bar nosen taam* (infused taste the son if infused taste). If the utensil has only been used for kosher/*heter* (permissible foods), then we say that the taste is weakened as it travels from matter to matter (i.e., food to pot to food). Therefore, as long as the kashering, with the intention to draw out the *chametz*, takes place before the 6th hour on Erev Pesach, you are fine using the aforementioned rule of *nat bar nat*.

Even though, common practice is not to kasher unless 24 hours have passed from being used for hot last (*Ramo YD 121:2*), the *Mishna Brurah* (*OC 452:34*) still recommends that the *kli* be doused in cold water immediately after its removal from the boiling water.

However, since it is only a custom, nowadays, one should not wash the utensils with cold water if this is liable to damage them. Likewise, if for some reason it is difficult to rinse vessel with cold water, one need not make an effort to do so. 🕍

A SHINING EXAMPLE

RABBI EPHRAIM SKOLNIK

The Skulener Rebbe, Rabbi Eliezer Zusha Portugal (1896-1982), was liberated from the concentration camps in the spring. Along with many other shattered souls, he found himself in the DP camps lost and alone. Being a leader and the great person that he was, the Rebbe gathered all those around him and gave them courage and hope. As Pesach neared, he managed to get his hands on some flour and an oven and announced that he would be baking matzah for Pesach. Because of the limited amounts of flour that he was able to obtain, the Rebbe decided he would give only one matzah to each person, the bare minimum needed for the seder night. The day came that the great Rebbe would be distributing matzah. Everyone lined up and took their one matzah. As the line was moving, one teenage boy leaned into the Rebbe and said “my father is the great Vishnitzer Rebbe Reb Moshe Hager who also survived the war and being from such prestigious lineage and such a righteous person feels that he should get three matzos instead of just one.” Unsure what to do, the Rebbe felt that he had no choice and gave him three matzos. A few days before Pesach

TEFILLA TIDBITS

RABBI YAAKOV MARCHUK

In the next *bracha* we thank Hashem for not making us slaves. In *Tehillim* (116:15) we find a seemingly unreadable *posuk*. Dovid *Hamelech* thanks Hashem saying, “I am your servant the daughter of your maid servant; you have freed me from your bondage.” Was Dovid a slave or a free man? There is a beautiful explanation; that the Torah defines freedom not as the ability to do whatever you want, but as the ability to say no to something that you know is wrong. Dovid was thanking Hashem for being a servant of God, saying You have made me free, and not a slave to my desires. When we say the *bracha* we are not only thanking Hashem that we are not slaves to human masters, but additionally that we don't have to be a slave to our every whim and desire. 🕍

the boy returned to the Rebbe and asked him, “my father wanted to know if you kept any matzah for you and your son.” The rebbe replied, “no, we did not keep anything. How could we turn away a Jew who is yearning for the *mitzvah* of matzah?” The boy replied, “that's what my father the Vishnitzer Rebbe thought. Here are two of the three matzos which my father requested. He wanted to ensure that you and your son would have matzah for yourselves.” 🕍

RABBI ABA MARI'S BATTLE AGAINST THE SPANISH-PROVENCAL ENLIGHTENMENT (PART II)

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

Rebbi Asher ben Yechiel (Rosh), who stopped in Provence as he migrated from Germany to Spain ca. 1300, describes his utter dismay at the dismal spiritual condition of Provencal Jewry. When he inquired why the few G-d-fearing individuals didn't protest, they replied that they were powerless to change the hearts of the people.

Rebbi Aba Mari was a native of Luniel (Provence) and subsequently moved to Montpellier (Provence), the hotbed of the “enlightened” Jews. There he became aware of the impending spiritual holocaust and brought the matter before the leader of the generation – Rabbi Shlomo ben Avraham Aderet (Rashba) of Barcelona. A lengthy correspondence followed in which Rabbi Aba Mari attempted (successfully) to convince Rashba to issue a ban against the study of philosophy. Rashba heeded the cry of Rebbi Aba bar Mari and gathered support from other rabbinic leaders. However, Rabbi Chisdai Crescras, aware of how deeply embedded the people were in the study of philosophy, advised Rashba refrain from banning its study entirely. Rather, suggested Rabbi Crescras, the *cherem* should ban the study of philosophy before the age of thirty. This way, if one were to engage in the study of philosophy, he would already have acquired a vast Torah education and would have the ability to discern the “good” from the “bad.” Rashba and the other Torah leaders accepted Rabbi Crescras' suggestion and issued a ban with prohibited the study of philosophy until the age of thirty.

A letter was dispatched to Montpellier to persuade its rabbis to implement the ban. Although the rabbis of Montpellier originally approved the ban, suddenly certain rabbinic figures withdrew their support. Eventually, two camps emerged from the rabbinic of Montpellier; one group was supportive of Rashba's ban while the other opposed it. The disagreement trickled into the general population and soon the entire city was split. A bitter controversy erupted, and a host of letters were exchanged between the two sides. Ultimately it became clear that the majority of rabbis, including Rebbi Asher ben Yechiel, who had recently settled in Toledo, sided with Rashba and Rebbi Aba Mari.

To be continued... 🕍