

The Weekly Farbrengens



PREPARING FOR PESACH

FAR-REACHING WORK

Chometz symbolizes *kelipa*. That is why we keep our distance from even the tiniest amount of *chometz*, just as a person takes every possible precaution to protect himself from robbers who wish to take his life.

While getting rid of all the *chometz*, we should have in mind our desire that just as we are scrubbing and scouring away even the minutest amount of *chometz*, *HaShem* should destroy every last bit of the *yetzer hara* from the world. We are certain that *HaShem*, Who sees all the work the Yidden invest in cleaning for Pesach, will do away with the *kelipa* and the *golus* we are in.

All the work we do for Pesach must be carried out with love and joy, with no room for anger and arguments. And the money with which we buy the *Yom-Tov* necessities should be honestly earned. Otherwise, one would be feeding the *kelipa* with *kedusha*.

(ספר קב הישר פרק פ"ט)

The Rebbe Rashab writes in a *maamar*: The main focus of Pesach is each individual's personal exodus from bondage to freedom. The preparation for this is *biur chometz* - investing every effort in checking all holes or cracks, and taking every precaution when baking *matza*. All this is done out of vigilant concern for one's *neshama*, so that even the minutest amount of *chometz* should not be seen or found, and so that the *matza* will be properly prepared.

(סה"מ אעת"ד ע' סח)

One year, before *bedikas chometz*, the Frierdiker Rebbe said, "One must check for *chometz* in *ruchniyus*, too, although the physical checking is much easier."

He added, "In the year תקכ"ה (1765) the Alter Rebbe came home from Mezritch before Pesach. On the day of *bedikas chometz* he did not eat, as he was completely occupied with his preparations for the checking, making sure to implement all the *kavanos* he had learned in Mezritch. That year, *bedikas chometz* took him the entire night, and he only owned one room!"

(ספר השיחות תרח"צ ע' 265)

TOILING FOR A MITZVA

After saying the *Yehi ratzon* following *tekias shofar*, Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev once cried out to *HaShem*, "Sweet and compassionate Father! If the *malochim* that were created from my קשר"ק (the *malochim* that were created from my תקיעה, תרועה, and שברים, תקיעה) are weak, then let them be replaced by the holy and healthy *malochim* created by the hard work of Yidden before Pesach - by their קשר"ן, קראצן, קראצן, and קראצן - their scratching, scraping, scrubbing and kashering."

(לקוטי דיבורים ע' 260)

CONSIDER

Is the elimination of *chometz* primarily a physical activity, or a spiritual one?

How can the physical exertion for a *mitzvah* change the person spiritually?

In the home of Reb Osher of Stolin, so much effort was expended on properly cleaning out the *chometz* from the cracks in the tabletops that the *chassidim* suggested to their Rebbe that it would be easier to get new tables.

The *tzaddik* responded, "If I buy new tables, with what will Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev defend the Yidden?"

(דברי אהרן ע' לו)

The effort and energy one expends while preparing for Pesach can destroy evil *malochim* and provide a person with *tikkun*. One should therefore make that effort, and *HaShem*, in His great mercy, will accept the good intentions of the Yidden and bring the *geula*. This is part of the purification one must undertake before *Yom-Tov* in order to be able to receive its *kedusha*.

(ספר קב הישר פרק צ')

At the beginning of each year, the Frierdiker Rebbe,

then the *menahel* of Tomchei Temimim, would present a list - with comments - of all the new *talmidim* to his father, the Rebbe Rashab. One year, upon receiving the list, the Rebbe took note of the name of a *bochur* about whom it was written that although he was learned, a veritable *lamdan*, he had coarse *middos* and his features lacked a certain refinement. After some thought, the Rebbe agreed to accept him, and added that he would have to be worked on.

As soon as the list was approved, the Frierdiker Rebbe set up a particularly demanding *seder* for this *bochur*. Soon after Rosh Chodesh Adar he received a letter from the Rebbe Rashab, who was then abroad, instructing him to entrust this *bochur* with all the hard work needed for preparing the *shemura matza*, and asking for a report as to how he performed his tasks.

For two weeks, the *talmid* was kept busy with the physically taxing work of sorting the wheat, setting up the hand-mill, and grinding the wheat into flour. When the time came for baking, he was again assigned the heaviest work. On *erev* Pesach, he was awake most of the night, having been entrusted with doing *bedikas chometz* in the *shul* and the *yeshiva* building. The next morning he was up early to *kasher* the oven for the last batch of *matzos*.

When the preparations for Pesach were finally completed, and the hardworking *bochurim* went to *toivel* in the *mikve* and dress for *Yom-Tov*, the Frierdiker Rebbe instructed this *bochur* to learn a certain *maamar* of the Alter Rebbe. The *bochur* was to come to the Frierdiker Rebbe the next morning at seven o'clock, to review the *maamar*. On Pesach night he still had no rest, for he had to help serve the *talmidim* who conducted their *Seder* together in the large *beis medrash*.

Nevertheless, the following morning he came to the Frierdiker Rebbe, having mastered the *maamar* thoroughly. It was now perfectly clear just how much the study of *Chassidus* mattered to him. The Frierdiker Rebbe reported all that had happened to the Rebbe Rashab, and on *Acharon shel* Pesach, when the Rebbe Rashab joined the *bochurim* at their *seuda*, he commented to his son, "Just look how powerful is the sweat of a *mitzva*! Look how he has acquired different features; instead of coarseness (*grobkeit*), he now has the face of a *mensch*."

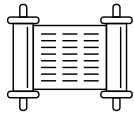
(לקוטי דיבורים ח"א ע' 244)

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ANNULLING PESACH VOWS

I have certain chumros that I adopted which are extremely difficult to keep under the current circumstances. What should I do?

The Torah places much weight on fulfilling any vow that a person verbalizes. If one began performing a hiddur which is based in halacha— knowing that it isn't obligatory—with the intent to observe it regularly, or performed it three times, even without specific intention to permanently observe it, the practice acquires the status of a vow and he is required to continue doing so.

When beginning a good custom (e.g. tzedaka before davening, or chitas), it is important to specify that it is "bli neder," not binding as a vow. (The Rebbe advised someone who struggled with the daily commitment to annul the neder and then continue bli neder.) It is also imperative to specify bli neder when accepting various Pesach customs and hiddurim; otherwise they become a neder.

If one wishes to discontinue a practice that became a neder, even for a very good cause (e.g. he would stop working on Friday at chatzos and now he needs to work longer), hataras nedarim is required. Hatara entails specifying the reason for which one wishes to annul the vow and why he would not have made that vow in the first place if he would have known this at that time.

The hatara is performed by three fully mature men who form a beis din, and it is preferable that one of them should be knowledgeable in the laws of nedarim. Since this isn't a court case, relatives—other than one's husband—may serve on the beis din, but not those who are invalid due to conduct (i.e. chilul Shabbos or dishonesty).

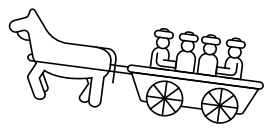
Ideally, the person should appear personally before the beis din, since this way they can better determine if his reason for hatara is sufficient. In difficult circumstances, some poskim allow sending a messenger or letter to beis din (or husband on behalf of his wife). When needed, one can do the hatara over the telephone or zoom and this is possibly better than the above methods, since the person can be questioned directly. Obviously, the three dayanim need to be together.

If extenuating circumstances prevent him from fulfilling his practice, and he wishes to forgo it on a one-time basis, the consensus of the poskim is to allow it without hataras nedarim. One reason given is that an irregular situation was never intended to begin with. Discontinuing permanently, however, would require hataras nedarim.

1. ראה טור ושו"ע י"ד סי' ר"ח ד"ס וראה לשון התרת נדרים בסידור אדה"ו.
2. ראה אג"ק חס"ו על ר"א ורח"י ע"י ס"ד.
3. ראה אג"ק ח"ד ע"י תע"ז ורח"י ע"י שפ"ג, וראה נוסח התרת נדרים שבסידור אדמוה"ו.
4. ראה כל נדרים פכ"ה ס"א ובהערות שם.
5. ראה גמ' נדרים ע"א ע"א שו"ע י"ד סי' רכ"ח ש"י סק"ב, וראה קצשו"ע סי' ס"ז ס"ח.
6. גמ' נדרים ע"ז ע"א שו"ת יפה נוף י"ד סי' קכ"א.

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

Our Heroes



REB SHOLOM REB HILLEL'S

Reb Sholom HaKohen Huminer of Beshenkovitz was known as Reb Sholom Reb Hillel's because he was a devoted talmid of Reb Hillel Paritcher. He had a store in Beshenkovitz that his wife ran, while he would accompany Reb Hillel on his travels.

On one of their journeys, they arrived at the estate of a wealthy poritz and they stayed with a local Jew. The manager of the poritz's estate was also a Jew and came to greet Reb Hillel. But when Reb Hillel saw that he was dressed like the squires and he trimmed his beard, Reb Hillel lowered his eyes, answered him coldly, and bade him farewell without conversing.

Later, Reb Hillel sent Reb Sholom to visit the manager at home, and told him not to leave until he donates a certain sum for tzedaka. Reb Sholom was taken aback and reminded Reb Hillel of the manager's surly face when he left. Reb Hillel just repeated the instruction without any explanation.

When Reb Sholom arrived at the house, he found the manager pacing back and forth, very perturbed. He didn't even notice Reb Sholom, and he was saying to himself, "He [Reb Hillel] surely knew that I have the ability to grind him like a pebble and turn him into nothing, and

still he wasn't intimidated by me. Indeed, he must be a true tzaddik." Eventually, the manager calmed down and noticed Reb Sholom, and he asked him what he wanted. Reb Sholom replied that he needed a certain amount for tzedaka. The man didn't hesitate and immediately gave him the desired amount.

Time passed and Reb Hillel came to the town again, and they were greeted by a changed man. As time passed, the manager became a chossid.

On another journey, Reb Sholom and Reb Hillel visited a village in White Russia. Reb Sholom started to daven ma'ariv and davened until daybreak. He refused to go to sleep, since it was now time to prepare for shacharis. After about an hour he began shachris, and by mincha time was only up to Shema. When the innkeeper came to daven Mincha and saw Reb Sholom still in middle of shacharis, he said in surprise, "What is wrong with this Jew that he davens all night and day? He must have a blocked head!"

Reb Hillel later said, "The three years that Reb Sholom learned Chassidus by me did not affect him as much as the words of that innkeeper..."

A Moment with The Rebbe



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A REBBE AND A PSYCHIATRIST

In the early years of the nesius, the Rebbe would receive groups of college students for a joint yechidus. The Rebbe would say a few words and give the students an opportunity to ask questions.

On one such occasion in Elul 5712 (1952), a student asked, "What is the difference between a Rebbe and a psychiatrist?"

The Rebbe responded in terms that the questioner could grasp: "When a psychiatrist treats a patient, he sees him from a distance, as a medical case. In fact, while his primary objective is to help this person integrate into a normal lifestyle, the professional is also interested in this

experience to advance his knowledge of the human psyche.

"A Rebbe is different. He dedicates himself entirely to the person who turned to him. A Rebbe gets emotionally involved in the person's life.

"But after all said and done," the Rebbe concluded, "a Rebbe is obviously not in place of a psychiatrist. Just like if a person needs an aspirin, the Rebbe will refer him to a chemist, similarly if someone needs psychiatric help, the Rebbe will of course not take the place of the doctor."

(Teshurah Sandhaus, Shevat 5768)