

Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky **Eternity of Shabbos; Renewal of Pesach**

This year there is a unique configuration of Pesach, in that *Shabbos* is the day immediately before Pesach. Although this creates certain *halachic* challenges, I would like to ponder the unusual day known as a “*Shabbos Hagadol*”.

The *Shabbos* before Pesach is famously referred to as *Shabbos Hagadol* (Tosfos, *Shabbos* 87b, Tur *Orach Chaim* 430). It is celebrated as such in commemoration of the *mesiras nefesh* of the Jewish people in Egypt. They were commanded to take a sheep on the tenth day of Nissan and keep it until they bring it as a sacrifice on the fourteenth day of Nissan. Since this was dangerous, as the Egyptians saw in the sheep their deity, it was an act of strength and heroism on the part of the Jewish people to prepare that sheep. What makes this format of commemoration unusual is that all holidays are linked specifically to the date of the month when the event they commemorate occurred. What is significant is the date, not the day of the week. For instance, even though everyone holds that the Torah was given on *Shabbos* (*Shabbos* 86b), yet we celebrate *Shavuot* not on a *Shabbos* but rather on the sixth day of Sivan. The only ‘day’ that is marked as being significant in this sense is *Shabbos Hagadol*.

If we ask ourselves about the meaning of Pesach or the nature of the *geula* that will be coming in the future, we think of a new beginning, a new era without suffering and with great good being offered to us. It is almost as if getting rid of the old and ushering in the new. However, this is the furthest from what redemption actually means. If we look at the Rambam in the beginning of *Hilchos Avoda Zara*, at the end of the first chapter, he describes the great discovery of Avraham *Avinu*, how that had descended on through his children, how that had been quashed in Egypt to the point of almost total extinction, and then due to the promise of Hashem to the *avos*, He brought that seed out of Egypt and took it to the land of Israel and gave it the Torah. In other words, the redemption was not a new beginning, rather a blossoming of the old seed, a resurrection of the almost dead.

When we read the *haftorah* of *Shabbos Hagadol*, we read about Israel’s pushing back against the covenant, and finally Hashem’s promise to redeem us. It is summed up as the “return of the hearts of the fathers to the sons”, and the “heart of the sons to their fathers” (Malachi 3:24). This means that redemption is the reconnection of the old and the new. The new is only different in its format, but the essence, the heart of it, is the same.

In the laws regarding *mashiach* (*Hilchos Melachim* 11), the Rambam describes *mashiach* and the era of *mashiach* as the **reconstruction** of the Jewish nation. Everything that had happened before and had been destroyed will now be rebuilt once again: monarchy, nationhood, *Beis Hamikdash*, and the *Sanhedrin* and the laws that they enact. So it is not about a new incarnation, but rather a resurrection of that which was, in a way which removes the flaws that crept in, and lasts eternally.

And yet, we do understand that something new will arise. The *navi* (Yirmiyahu 31:30) describes what will happen as a new covenant. This means that despite the

fact that the exterior is new, the interior, the heart, so to speak, will remain the same. There is a phrase in *Pirkei Avos* (4:20) describing “old wine in new vessels”. This means that although every generation has new tools and new resources, the content will remain the same.

Perhaps this is why *Shabbos Hagadol* is specifically celebrated on the day of the week, rather than the date in the month. The week, and its component days, were set by Hashem. We have no jurisdiction over them. *Shabbos* is referred to in *halachic* literature (*Chullin* 101b) as set and given (*kvia vkayma*). This means that it does not require any act on our part to create *Shabbos*. It is and always will be the seventh day; every seventh day from creation onward. Not so the *yomim tovim*. *Yom tov* is set by us on the day of the month which, in turn, is determined by us. Thus, if the *Sanhedrin* moves the month up a day or takes away a day, or adds a month, that changes the day that *Yom tov* is celebrated on. It is the *Yom tov* of Pesach that especially expresses this. The *halachos* of Pesach are preceded by the laws of setting the calendar. The concept of a month, called “*chodesh*” (also meaning ‘new’) is introduced here. Indeed, the first day of Pesach really is the beginning of all things new. Pesach is the first *Yomtov* on the calendar and is the beginning of the process of renewal. *Shabbos*, on the other hand, is the firm and exact day set for eternity, at the very root of creation. The two coming together give us a sense of how the eternal and permanent feed each new and renewed *Yomtov*.

There is another fascinating law associated with Pesach, and that is “*chodosh*”. Eating from the new crop of grain is prohibited. This is called ‘*chodosh*’. On the second day of Pesach it transitions to ‘*yoshon*’, and is now permitted to eat. Somehow, the transformation of the ‘new’ to the old, is the domain of Pesach!

Each and every generation has new tools, new challenges, new failures, and new achievements. But the content of it is all the same.

I’m not referring here only to the strict letter of *halacha*. I think it also refers to the spirit behind it. People can be sitting with modern editions of *gemara*. They can even be using a device to see it on. They can be listening to a Zoom *shiur* thousands of miles away. They can have videos available showing and explaining many parts of the *sugya*. But the heart and soul of learning must remain the same. A person sitting down with a *sefer* to learn needs to feel the same sense of connectivity to Hashem, the same sense of *kedusha*, the same sense of the spiritual, as was sensed by all the generations that preceded us, linking us to Moshe and the Torah given at Sinai.

This year the eternity of *Shabbos Breishis* joins the renewal of Pesach in a unique way. May we merit to speedily renew ourselves, reestablishing that link to all that was.

More *divrei Torah* from Rabbi Lopiansky

More *divrei Torah* on Pesach

© 2025 by TorahWeb Foundation. All Rights Reserved