

EREV, EREV, PESACH

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

Every Shabos possesses an Erev Shabos. One cannot observe a sacred and meaningful Shabos without the preparation and exciting anticipation during the hours, even the whole day, Friday. The Kiviyashder Rav in his Sefer published recently, much of it on Shabos, spends 14 pages on erev Shabos. The more one elaborates about Shabos already on Friday, the more emotional, the deeper inspiration, on Shabos. The Shabos meals, elaborate as we wish it to be, is only half of the experience. The other half, and even more, is the spiritual, educational, dynamics.

Yom Tov uplifts the Shabos atmosphere to desired heights. The same applies, in a higher level, erev Yom Tov. Moreover on Pesach. Preparation begins several days. Learning about Pesach begins 30 days in advance. Erev Pesach itself is much more than an erev Yom Tov. The fourth perek of Psochim discusses the minhag (custom) of communities not working on erev Pesach, which is regarded itself as a semi holiday. Chometz breakfast is limited in time, the burning of chometz, selling the chometz, disowning the chometz. In the afternoon, baking erev Pesach matzos, usually wearing Shabos Yom Tov garb, occupies hours of the day. See Jerusalem Talmud quoted in Tosfos Yom Yov (Psochim 4:1) on the minhag to bake Matzos Mitzva on erev Pesach afternoon. Setting the Seder table in the afternoon is a strong preference, so the ceremonies and Hagada could start soon after Maariv. Some say the simon "Shulchan Oreich" is a reference to preparing the Shulchan in advance of evening. The very word "Pesach", according to some authorities, refers to the Korban Pesach brought on erev Pesach, and eaten at night. (See lengthy discussion in Rav Zevin's Hamoadim BaHalacha.)

In line with this requirement, it is deemed appropriate instead of the lengthy weekly essay, to concentrate on the Hagadah, piece by piece, short glimpses. While the words of the Hagadah itself constitutes Torah learning, injecting a short thought here and there, makes the Seder more provocative, more engrossing. These could be used, hopefully, at the Seder table, to be shared with the members of the family:

- 1) Though on Shabos and Yom Tov the meal begins right after the Kidush, it is different at the Seder, the Hagada is recited before the meal. To fulfill the requirement of the meal proximity to Kidush, we rely on the Karpas (soon after Kiddush). The reason is that during the Hagada recital the Matzah (upon which the Bracha is recited) should be seen and pointed at "Baavir Zeh".
- 2) The blessing before Torah study is recited daily in the morning. Nevertheless, upon reading the Parsha, the OLEH repeats the Bracha, because the Torah reading is an additional requirement. On the Seder night, the required reading to the four different kinds of children would require a repeat of Birchah Hatorah. However, this is not on the same level as reading the Parsha on Shabos, Monday and Thursday. Therefore, it suffices to recite Baruch, without a full Bracha. This semi Bracha is recited before commencing the reply to each of the four different kinds of children, four times "Boruch".

Interestingly, though one of the four sons is defined as a Rosho, the reply to him is preceded with that semi Bracha, "Boruch", together with the others. A major principle may be gleaned from this observation, i.e. not to miss the opportunity to bring that son into the warm and loving Yiddishkeit. The Pesach experience can have an impact, the capacity to change lives.

- 3) The paragraph "Tzai Ulmad" makes reference to two stages of Egyptian enslavement of the Jews, first affliction by the burdens (Shemos 1:11) and then "BEFORECH", with crushing harshness. The purpose of depicting two levels of mistreatment may be to accentuate the freedom from Egyptian slavery, to become happy "servants" of Hashem, and in this endeavor there are also two stages. In observance of Judaism it is basic to apply the principle of מחיל אל חיל, from strength to more strength (Tehilim 88:8). (See this writer's essay "עבדי ה'" in the current issue of Hamaor).

(אי"ה to be continued)

