

PREPARING FOR PESACH

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לימוד הדבר תורה לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שני בן רבקה לגאולה קרובה מן המיצר אל המרחב

REMOVING THE CHOMETZ

The Friediker Rebbe related, "In Lubavitch, much stringency was placed on checking for (and getting rid of) *chometz*. The day before Pesach, early in the morning, the Rebbe Rashab would walk into the courtyard and shake out the pockets of his clothing. Afterwards, his *meshares*, Mendel, would brush off the clothing. Now, what could my father have had in there that could have been *chometz*...?"

"One year, the Rebbe Rashab asked Mendel if he had cleaned out the chicken coup and the barn, and he answered that he had. The Rebbe said, 'You should know that you are responsible for this with your *neshama*.' Although not usually emotional, Mendel fell faint from fear."

(ספר השיחות תש"ב ע' 90)

After saying the *yehi ratzon* following *tekias shofar*, the *tzaddik* Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev once cried out to Hashem, "Sweet Father! If the *malochim* that were created from my קשר" (the תבועה, תבועה, and תבועה) are weak, then let the holy and healthy *malochim* created by the yidden's hard work before Pesach, (in קרצון, קרצון, and קרצון) (scratching, scraping, scrubbing and kashering), come in their place."

In the home of the *tzaddik* Reb Osher of Stolin, much effort was expended to properly clean out the *chometz* from the cracks in the tabletops. 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?"

(לקוטי דיבורים ע' 260, דברי אהרן ע' לו)

One year, before *bedikas chometz*, the Friediker Rebbe said, "The checking for *chometz* must also be done in *ruchnius*, although the physical checking is much easier." He related, "In the year תק"ה the Alter Rebbe returned from Mezritch before Pesach. On the day of *bedikas chometz* he did not eat, as he was completely occupied with his *hachana* for the *bedikah*, 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)

Chometz symbolizes *kelipah*. Therefore, we keep ourselves away from even the smallest amount of *chometz*, like one who uses all precaution to protect himself from the robbers who wish to take his life.

While getting rid of all the *chometz*, we should have in mind that just as we are scrubbing and scouring away even the minutest amount of *chometz*, Hashem should destroy every last bit of the *yetzer horah* from the world. We are certain that Hashem, who sees all the work the yidden put into cleaning for Pesach, will destroy the *kelipah* and the *golus* we are in.

All the work done for Pesach must be accomplished with love and *simcha*, and include no anger, fights and arguments. The money used to buy the *yom tov* necessities should be honestly earned money. Otherwise, one will be feeding the *kelipah* with *kedusha*.

(ספר קב הישר פרק פ"ט)

At a *farbrengen*, the Rebbe related, "When cleaning the home for Pesach, it is necessary to begin in advance, and not wait for the last moment of *bedikas chometz*, for otherwise, how will all the cracks and holes be properly cleaned? To do it all in one moment is impossible. One cannot wait for the last moment and then claim that it is too late.

Similarly, *yidden* need to rid themselves of their *ruchnius'dike chometz*, which is arrogance. This must be done in advance, because closer to *Pesach* they may be busy with other aspects of *avoda*.

(תורת מנחם תשמ"ג ח"ב ע' 1171)

PREPARING THE MATZAH

In Lubavitch, the cutting of wheat for Matzah was a special event. The *chossid* Reb Zalman of Shzerbina would supply the wheat for the Rebbe's *shemurah matzah*, and all the local *yiddishe* farmers, several *yoshevim* (men who learned full time in the Rebbe's *beis medrash*), and some guests in Lubavitch at the time, would join Reb Zalman and his family for the reaping. The Rebbe himself would also participate; first the Rebbe Maharash, and later, the Rebbe Rashab.

The day for the cutting had to be clear with a hot sun and be preceded by three dry days. Reb Zalman would travel to Lubavitch with a number of wagons to transport the *chassidim*, and since they could not foretell when the necessary weather conditions would occur, they often stayed in Shzerbina for a week or longer. The Rebbe was brought by special transport on the chosen day.

For Reb Zalman, this was a tremendous *simcha*! Having the *zechus* of cutting the wheat for the Rebbe's *shmura matza*, being able to

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fulfill the mitzvah of *hachnsosas orchim*, which he truly enjoyed, and especially having the opportunity to host the Rebbe, gave Reb Zalman *chayus* for the entire year.

From the day Reb Zalman departed with his wagonloads of helpers, the people in Lubavitch began speculating the next day's weather. Day by day, they eagerly awaited the messenger from Shzerbina who would let them know that the day of reaping had arrived. When that happened, the Rebbe would set out on the two hour journey to Shzerbina.

When the sun blazed its strongest, between the hours of twelve noon and two, the chassidim reaped the wheat with great *simcha* and earnestness. Wearing their hats and *gartelach*, they worked energetically in the sweltering heat, as if they were accustomed to such intense physical labor.

Even when he was already advanced in years, Reb Zalman himself, with his flowing beard and joyful, shining face, would rush around the fields with his cutting tools in hand, as if he were a young man. His *simcha* carried him! His feet soared to fulfill a *shlichus* of Hashem, as can only be done by a true servant of Hashem who feels an inner delight in performing His *mitzvos*.

While some men reaped, others sang, their pleasant voices reaching far and wide. The local women and their children, dressed in their Shabbos best in honor of the occasion stood at a distance. Looking at their faces, it was evident that something extraordinary was taking place.

When the work was done, some of the *chassidim* went to wash themselves, and Reb Zalman would put on his silk Shabbos *kapote*. *Mincha* would follow, with Reb Zalman leading the davening to the joyous *nigun* of *Simchas Torah*. Concluding the final *kaddish*, Reb Zalman would wait for the minyan to turn him in somersaults, as they were wont to do on *Simchas Torah*. Then Reb Zalman broke into a lively dance, somersaulting three times back and forth.

Following that, a festive *seuda*, prepared from many *milchig* delicacies, was held. The Rebbe said a *maamar* and *farbrenged* for hours. Everyone would daven *maariv* and the Rebbe retired to rest in a room prepared for him, while the *chassidim* continued *farbrenging* throughout the night.

The next morning, after *davening shacharis*, the Rebbe would leave for Lubavitch at ten o'clock. Later that day, Reb Zalman used to bring the *chassidim* back to Lubavitch, taking along the sack of wheat they had reaped, to hang in a designated room.

(לקוטי דיבורים ח"א ע' קכא)

THE SWEAT OF A MITZVAH

The effort and energy one expends while preparing for Pesach can destroy evil *malochim* and bring *tikun* for the person. Therefore, one should make the effort, and Hashem, with His great mercy, will accept the good intentions of the *yidden* and bring the *geulah*. This is part of the purification one must do before *yom tov* to be able to receive the *kedusha* of *yom tov*.

(ספר קב הישר פרק צ')

At the beginning of each year, the Frierdiker Rebbe, then the *menahel* of *Tomchei Temimim*, would present a list 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 a '*lamdon*' (learned), he had coarse *middos* and his features lacked a certain refinement. After much thought, the Rebbe agreed to accept the *bochur*, saying that he would have to be worked on.

As soon as the list was approved, the Frierdiker Rebbe set up a particularly strict *seder* for this *bochur*. When *Rosh Chodesh Adar* arrived, the Rebbe Rashab (then abroad) wrote a letter instructing the Frierdiker Rebbe to entrust this *bochur* with all the hard work needed for preparing the *shmura matza*. He asked the Frierdiker Rebbe to report to him how the *bochur* 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 *mikvah* and dress for *yom tov*, the Frierdiker Rebbe instructed this *bochur* to learn a *maamar* of the Alter Rebbe. The *bochur* was to come to the Frierdiker Rebbe the next morning at seven o'clock, to learn the *maamar* again. Pesach night, he still had no rest, for he had to help serve the *talmidim* who ate the *seder* together in the large *Beis Medrash*.

Nevertheless, the following morning he came to the Frierdiker Rebbe, knowing the *maamar* thoroughly. This finally proved just how much the learning 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's seuda*, he commented to his son, "Just look how powerful is the sweat of a *mitzvah*! Look how he has acquired different features; instead of '*grobkeit*' (coarsness), he now has the face of a *mentsch*."

(לקוטי דיבורים ח"א ע' 244)

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