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By the Hakham
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5784/2023 Rosh Hashanah

Happiness at Night of Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah, is one of the more serious days in the Jewish calendar. After all, what could be more serious than being judged for life or death? However, when eating the Se'uddah (festive meal) on the night of Rosh Hashanah, one must eat it in happiness.

This is the first meal of the new year. All the Simanim (the special seder with the additional foods) that we eat at night on Rosh Hashanah, are symbolic for a good portent for the rest of the year. Our behavior must be its best as a good portent for the rest of the year.

So too, the meal must be carried out in a manner that is a good sign for the rest of the year. Therefore, in addition to conducting it in happiness, one must be particular to make it an important meal and include words of Torah.



מדרש בן איש חי
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5784 ראש השנה

Tashlikh on Shabbath

When the first day of Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbath (as is the case this year), there are those who do Tashlikh (the symbolic casting of one's sins into the water) on the first day as usual, and others who postpone it to the second day. It is understood from the Maharil (a Rishon from Germany) that it should always be done on the first day. The Mishnah Berurah brings down that there are a few communities that have the custom of postponing it to the second day when the first day is Shabbath and that it is possible that the reason why they do this is because the river is outside the city and there is a fear that people will carry prayer books and the like. The prevalent custom amongst Ashkenazim today has become to postpone it to Sunday. We should note that there are those, especially in the Hassidic community, who never do it on Rosh Hashanah in any year, but do it later.

While some Sephardim have also adopted the practice of doing it on Sunday, the prevalent ruling by Sephardi Posqim is that Tashlikh should be done on the first day, even when it falls on Shabbath. It says in Ben Ish Hai that it must be done on the first day and only if, for reasons out of one's control, one was unable to do it then, one should do it on the second day after Musaf. The Kaf HaHayim states that the custom of the Qabbalists in Beth E-I, who followed the Ari z"l, was to do it on the first day even when it was Shabbath. This is also the custom at Midrash BEN ISH HAI.

If the congregation goes outside the 'Erub, one must ensure that nothing is carried. In such a case, only the three main Pesuqim (verses) of Mi E-I Kamokha are recited by heart at the water. The lengthy readings before and after are read in the Synagogue. It says in Ma-ammar Mordekhai, that in these circumstances, they may also say it next to a barrel of water in the Synagogue grounds.

(Mishnah Berurah [PMG] 583: 8 - Kaf HaHayim ibid: Oth 31. Ben Ish Hai, yr 1, Oth 12 - Maamar Mordekhai, Haggim, 40:21)

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If one is uncertain if he said "HaMelekh HaQadosh"

During the Ten Days of Repentance one says HaMelekh HaQadosh instead of HaE-l HaQadosh. If one, out of force of habit, erred and said (or is uncertain if he said) HaE-l Haqqadosh, but corrected it right away, he has fulfilled his obligation. If, however, he paused longer than the time it takes to say "Shalom 'Alekhem Ribbi (Umori)", or started the next Berakha, he must go back to the beginning of the 'Amidah.

If, while the person is praying the 'Amidah, he becomes uncertain whether he said HaMelekh HaQadosh or not, we consider that he said "HaE-l HaQadosh", like the rest of the year and must repeat the 'Amidah. However, if before starting the 'Amidah he was conscious of the fact that he had to say "HaMelekh HaQadosh", and only after he completed the 'Amidah became doubtful whether he said it correctly or not, he does not need to repeat the 'Amidah.

(See Ben Ish Hai, yr 1, Parashath Niṣabim, Oth 18)

What Foods Require Jewish Action in the Cooking (Bishul Yisrael)?

The laws pertaining to Bishul Yisrael (food cooked by a Jew), are much more stringent than those for Path Yisrael (baked goods made by a Jew). There is also a difference between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, with Sephardim following a substantially stricter approach.

Foods that require Bishul Yisrael, require the participation of a Jew in the cooking process, without which they are forbidden. This holds true even if they were cooked in the utensils of a Jew in a Jewish home. There are two reasons for this enactment of the Ḥakhamim (sages). One is that they were concerned about the possibility of forbidden relations and intermarriage. Another reason is due to the concern that one might come to eat food that was not Kasher.

Not all foods are required to be Bishul Yisrael. Anything that is regularly eaten raw is exempt from the requirements of Bishul Yisrael if it is cooked. In addition, it must be the type of food that has some importance attached to it. Specifically, it must be the kind of food that would be served at a king's royal banquet or a banquet of one of his ministers. Food that does not fall into this category may be eaten without the participation of a Jew in the cooking process, (provided one knows that the food is Kasher in other respects).

(See Yoreh De'ah, 113:1. Ben Ish Hai, 2nd year, Parashath Ḥuqqath, Oth 9)

Women's Corner - by Rabbanith Ruth Menashe 'a"ḥ

The Significance of the Simanim (Part 2)

(continued from last week)

Let us explore one of the Simanim of Rosh Hashana, the pomegranate. When we eat a pomegranate on Rosh Hashanah and recite "May it be Your will that we will be filled with a good deeds like [the seeds of] the pomegranate", we prepare the ground for ourselves to indeed be loaded to capacity with good deeds. Undoubtedly, a mere act of saying and eating is not sufficient for turning us into such people, as we are required to improve and work hard to collect good deeds and perform the Miṣwoth (commandments). However, we should not belittle the importance of those "Simanim".

All year round, and particularly on Rosh Hashanah, our acts carry weight with regard to our future. Since Rosh Hashanah is the day that Adam was created, it is the root and source of our existence, and therefore our acts on this day are most significant. When our Ḥakhamim warn us specifically not to get angry on Rosh Hashanah, or to increase the amount of sweet foods we eat, they teach us the importance of these acts and how they can make a difference for the upcoming year.

From the bottom of my heart I would like to wish every single one of you, a year of sweetness, true happiness, health and growth in our connection with our Father, our King.