



The Mysterious and Mystical Meal
By Rav Paysach Krohn shlita (Shiur E28)

Some of the secrets behind Seudah Shlishis (or Shalosh Seudos)

Take good care!

There is an unusual emphasis in the הלכה when referring to שבת קודש of סעודה שלישית. The מחבר admonishes us¹ to be exceedingly careful to fulfil the requirement to eat three meals on שבת.

Part of the required care is to make sure that we leave room to eat a שיעור of bread at סעודה שלישית. After all, on a short (winter) Shabbos it is very easy to lose track of our eating at the main Shabbos meal such that we have no appetite for סעודה שלישית. This could result in our forcing ourselves (אכילה גסה) which is not called eating at all. Or we will be unable to eat the third meal at all and we will have to rely on one of the בדיעבד alternatives. The מחבר preempts the story by telling us to let our wisdom and not our stomachs dictate our consumption. Keep סעודה שלישית in mind.

A special time within a special day

There is more to סעודה שלישית than just making sure that you have room to eat it. If we had to mark the spiritual high-water point of שבת קודש we would, based on the Zohar, say that point is when the holy day is nearing its conclusion. The Zohar teaches:²

תא תזי, בכל שיתא יומי דשבתא, פד מטא שעתא דצלותא דמנחה, דינא תקיפא שלטא, וכל דינין מתעריין. אכל ביומא דשבתא, פד מטא עדן דצלותא דמנחה, רענא דרעוין אשתכח, ועתיקא קדישא גליא רצון דיליה, וכל דינין מתפפין, ומשתכח רעותא וחדו בכלא.

Translated into Hebrew (סולם):

בוא וראה בכל ששת ימי השבת, כשמגיע שעת תפלת המנחה, דין קשה שולט, וכל הדינים מתעוררים, אבל ביום השבת, כשמגיע שעת תפלת המנחה, רצון הרצונות נמצא, ועתיקא קדישא מגלה הרצון שלו, וכל הדינים נכנעים, ונמצא רצון ושמחה בכל.

And, in English:

During the weekdays at Mincha-time there is a predominance of strict judgment and shortcomings are highlighted. However, on שבת, when Mincha arrives, there is an outpouring of desire for human beings and all judgment is subdued, and great desire and joy is present.

Perhaps that is why it is universally referred to as 'three meals' and not just as 'the third meal.'

[The Rebbe of Riminov זצוק"ל explained that the ebbing hours of Shabbos are the moments before creation of the World (which began on ראשון) when, despite all the imperfections of future mankind, Hashem desired that the World come to be. Hence those moments are filled with רצון.]

We should feel Hashem's great yearning for us and reciprocate with deep yearning for connection with Hashem. It is a time of

¹ אורח סימן רצ"א סעיף א'

² זוהר שמות (יתרו) דף פח: 2



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inspiration and looking to the תורה הק' for insight and connection. This is the best time to give one's נשמה a boost.

Typically, a time of דין

As we saw in the Zohar, the Gemara³ teaches that typically Mincha is a time of judgment. For example, Eliyahu HaNavi needed to bring down judgment on the idolatrous prophets and so he was careful to take advantage of Mincha time.⁴

But another implication of the תפילה of Eliyahu HaNavi is that he was answered immediately at that time. Hence, concludes the Gemara, one must be careful with Mincha. It is a great source of רחמים that the same time on Shabbos is a spring of great רצון. That is the 'news' of the רעוא דרעוין – the time of great רצון on Shabbos. [It is said that the חת"ם סופר taught that one can seek protection from the deadly effects of a מגיפה ר"ל by paying special attention to שלוש סעודות. The relevance to our times should be obvious.]

Have Bread/Challah at סעודה שלישית

The ערוך השלחן makes the case strongly that one should not rely on leniencies when it comes to סעודה שלישית; one should wash on a proper שיעור of bread and given that the preponderance of Rishonim rule that one must eat bread, "עבירה גדולה ביד המקלים בזה" – it is a great transgression to be lenient.

שלוש סעודות or סעודה שלישית

Grammatically, the third meal is called, in Hebrew, סעודה שלישית. However, check at your

Shul and you will hear it called שלוש סעודות (or, even more commonly, שלושודים) – meaning 'three meals' instead of the 'third meal.'

I have heard it explained that in a sense, this meal is all three meals. The Friday night and Shabbos morning meals are predominantly a fulfilment of עונג שבת – after all, one is hungry, and a filling meal provides relief from that hunger and עונג for the one eating. But כבוד שבת, doing some for the honor of Shabbos, not just for one's comfort and pleasure, seems absent.

But once we set the table and enjoy the third meal לכבוד שבת קודש (since it is a meal that we would not necessarily look for as עונג), we thereby announce the importance of כבוד שבת and that כבוד was part of our agenda even when we were enjoying the previous meals. In a sense, then, we are now gaining the כבוד שבת of all three meals. Perhaps that is why it is universally referred to as 'three meals' and not just as 'the third meal.'

Davening for פרנסה

Rav Pinchos M'Koretz said that since שלוש סעודות time is a time of רעוא דרעוין, it is appropriate to request that Hashem provide one with sustenance (פרנסה). This seems surprising given that we do not make requests on שבת קודש. My Rebbi Rav Dovid Cohen שליט"א suggested that such a request is already built in to the Minhag to recite מזמור לדוד three times at שלוש סעודות. There we say ה' רועי לא אחסר – Hashem is my Shepherd; I will not lack. We are making the

³ ברכות ו: 3

⁴ עיין צרור המור בראשית פי' חיי שרה



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request by proclaiming our faith in the ה' three times!

קבלת עול מלכות שמים

In many Shuls, particularly Nusach Sfar, The Rov stands before the דרשה and leads the קהילה in accepting upon themselves the sovereignty of Hashem. Some say ה' מלך, ה' מלך, ה' מלך and some also declare the שמע ועד. Given the עת רצון that these moments represent, it is only fitting that we should declare our absolute loyalty to Hashem at that time.

Source for the three meals on Shabbos

The Gemara⁵ derives the requirement to have three meals on Shabbos from the three appearances of the word היום when Moshe instructs the People how to handle the מן and the Shabbos meals.⁶

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֲכַלְהוּ הַיּוֹם כִּי שֶׁבֶת הַיּוֹם לַה' הַיּוֹם לֹא תִמְצְאוּהוּ בַשָּׂדֶה.

[A Rebbe once quipped that the fare at סעודה is often rather sparse when compared with the other two meals... the third היום in the פסוק is followed by the words לא תמצאוהו – you'll not find it...]

Raise a cup of wine

The Rambam⁷ rules that all three meals must be accompanied with a cup of wine. While חז"ל did not establish a formal קידוש over the third meal, the idea that the performance of a significant Mitzvah is always accompanied with a cup of

wine is familiar to us. And while it is not formalized in the Halacha, many people have the custom to adorn the third meal with this cup.

The אריז"ל explained his custom to drink wine at the third meal as having to do with his sadness over the imminent departure of the holy שבת. He therefore took advantage of the joyful properties of wine to dispel his sadness (as the פסוק says יין ומרי נפש and ישמח לבב אנוש).⁸

Three Avos, three Meals

The three meals align with the three אבות הקדושים. The Friday night meal aligns with אברהם אבינו, with the Middah of חסד; the day meal with יצחק אבינו; and the third meal with יעקב אבינו, the Middah of Torah. [This might explain how this meal could be fulfilled through Torah study for one who has no food or who cannot eat.]

אתקינו סעודתא

We have no writings from the אריז"ל (what we have is all related by his Talmid, Rav Chaim Vital) except for the פיוט called אתקינו סעודתא which the אריז"ל wrote for the three meals of שבת קודש. The prevailing custom is to recite this פיוט only at the third meal (although you should feel encouraged to recite the others if you are inclined). We find there a reference to the תקל – תפוחין קדישין – the field of holy apples – who are coming to join the הקב"ה at the meal.

This reference to Klal Yisroel as a field of holy apples surely draws from the Gemara⁹ where we

⁵ שבת קיד:

⁶ שמות טז:כה

⁷ הל' שבת פרק ל הל' ט'

⁸ תהלים קד:טו ומשלי לא:ו

⁹ תענית כט:



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are likened to the apple. One aspect of this comparison is that other fruit trees produce a flower before the fruit emerges. The apple tree does the reverse; it bears fruit and then produces flowers. The ספרים say that this alludes to the way that כלל ישראל reversed the usual order when accepting the Will of הקב"ה when they said נעשה before נשמע.

Grab the opportunity

If you are looking for that which is very precious in the world, check for that which is regarded

Takeaway: I will try to regard סעודה שלישיית with the significance that it deserves.

lightly by people. That is a good indicator that great holiness is lurking behind the scenes which the Yetzer attempts to conceal from us. Shalosh Seudos, the רעוא דרעוין is one such example. Let this be an encouragement to gather with the 'holy apples' and join הקב"ה at this meal, declaring our unity with Him, being מכבד the שבת קודש and giving a weeklong boost to our נשמות.