



The Fourth Meal

By HaRav Eli Mansour (Shiur E17)

There is a bridge from שבת to the weekdays, and we cross that bridge with Tefilah and a meal.

שבת does not 'just' end

Just as שבת does not 'just' start (there is much transition in the שבת ערב experience), it does not 'just' end with צאת הכוכבים. There is a lingering effect which, if used properly, spills over into the week. Capturing and transferring the effect of שבת is the key to one's spiritual and material success through the course of the week.

What we call ויהי נועם

Unlike a weekday ערבית, the ערבית recited on שבת מוצאי שבת includes תהלים צ"א which begins with יושב בסתר עליון. But nobody thinks of saying יושב בסתר, everyone refers to it as ויהי נועם. The פסוק of ויהי נועם is the last פסוק of the previous chapter, פרק צ'.

There is much to say, mystically, about פרק צ"א and with some background we should be able to begin to understand how it 'adopted' the last פסוק of the previous פרק.

שיר של פגעים

The Gemara¹ refers to this פרק (תהלים צ"א) as the שיר של פגעים. The אריז"ל explains the mystical message of that name. Each נשמות our שבת are elevated and we have less to do with the forces of negativity in the world called חיצונים. We are

afforded a buffer or gap between us and them throughout שבת. However, with the departure of שבת we come 'down' closer to where the חיצונים reside and that is a dangerous zone. It is all too easy to fall prey to negative forces when we are suddenly back in the bad neighborhood.

The שיר של פגעים is designed to ask for or invoke heavenly protection from those forces. We therefore find this פרק recited not only on מוצאי שבת but also when one goes to sleep (since sleep,

1/60th of death, brings one into proximity with (חיצונים) as well as when a body is being brought out for burial ר"ל.

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Start before and repeat after

Rav Yisroel Chaim Menashe Friedman מנהגים wrote a collection of insights into our מצ"ל called ליקוטי מהרי"ח.² There³ he discusses the various customs as to how this פרק is to be read. In nearly all communities, the last פסוק of the previous פרק, beginning with ויהי נועם is inserted prior to reciting פרק צ"א with some communities even reciting it twice. Similarly, nearly all have the מנהג to repeat the last פסוק of the פרק, ארן ימים, ארן ימים upon its conclusion.

He quotes the אבודרהם who tallies up the words of the פרק and comes to 124, including the added

¹ שבועות טו:

² He was the Rockover Rav and later Satmar Dayan.

³ ליקוטי מהרי"ח חלק ב' דף



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words of נועם. Adding (and, per some, doubling) the first and last פסוקים create a doubling or repeat effect such that it is as if one has said the words twice, or 248 words – the same as the number of limbs in one's body. We are asking for the above-mentioned protection for every limb in our bodies.

So far, our spiritual lives

The יהיה נועם or impact of our recitation of סגולה is a request to carry the ברכה of שבת into our weekday spiritual lives. A תפילה recited on Tuesday afternoon becomes infused with קדושת שבת. And, as we know, everything associated with שבת carries with it ברכה – כי היא מקור הברכה –

The ברכה into our material lives

To draw the קדושת שבת and its associated ברכה into our material or mundane lives, says the אריז"ל, we must eat סעודת מלוה מלכה. He cites the Gemara which teaches that the fourth meal is associated with protection from משיח – the unrest right before the birth of the משיח. The merit of this, and the third meal, סעודה שלישית, are both enhanced precisely because we are not generally inclined to eating at that time. Most of us are fully sated from the main סעודת שבת and have little appetite to eat a third, much less a fourth meal. Therein lies the spiritual power of eating לשם שמים. When a mundane act is performed with more spiritual focus and less animal drive it is greatly elevated. Hence, the ability of the מלוה מלכה to carry שבת into our week is strong, indeed.

⁴ בראשית רבה מא: ד' וגם נ: ד'

The more 'fuss' one makes over a 'spiritual' meal the better. Wearing בגדי שבת, setting the table, serving a special dish are all ways to capitalize on the meal that is spiritually driven and not stomach driven.

Significance cannot be overstated

The בן איש חי asserts that if people knew the lofty spiritual significance of מלוה מלכה they would surely give it great honor. Alas, that is often not the case as most people do not grab the gift which could keep giving throughout the week. He finds an allusion to this challenge in the פסוק. We read, in the dream of יעקב אבינו, about a סולם. מוצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה. If you allow that the word סולם refers to סעודת לויית מלכה, we find an allusion to our problem. The סולם is resting on the ground, treated as though it were a simple matter, but its head is in the heavens, referring to the lofty nature of the מלוה מלכה.

The סעודת דוד המלך

The סעודת דוד מלוה מלכה is traditionally called the סעודת דוד. On one level, this name reflects the celebration which דוד המלך made, together with כלל ישראל, when שבת ended and he was still alive. Since he knew that he would pass into the next world on שבת, the end of שבת signaled that he would be with us for yet another week.

Another 'hint' at his name draws from the Midrash.⁴ The Midrash interprets the פסוק⁵ which says מצאתי דוד עבדי and explains, somewhat cryptically, that Hashem proclaims that He 'found' His servant דוד. Where did He find him, asks the Midrash? In סדום (where רות

⁵ תהילים פט: כא



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originated). Homiletically, the word סודם can be understood as סעודת דוד מלכא – the meal מלוח מלכה associated with דוד המלך.

סגולות

There are many סגולות associated with מלוח מלכה. R' Elimech of Lizhensk taught that pregnant women should partake of this meal as a סגולה for an easier childbirth.

It is also a סגולה לפרנסה. This is a play on the words אם כסף תלוה which simply translate to mean 'if you lend money.' It can also be read homiletically as אם כסף – if you want פרנסה – then תלוה – escort the Shabbat Queen on her way.

לוח

We know from the Midrash⁶ that תחיית המתים is associated with a metaphysical bone called the לוח. This remarkable 'bone' draws its sustenance from סעודת מלוח מלכה. The implications, then, of this meal are quite cosmic. One would be quite foolish to fail to give sustenance to that which sparks one's eternal resurrection.

If we needed further support for the significance of מלוח מלכה we could add two anecdotes from גר"א. The Vilna Gaon's wife would fast the entire week (ערב שבת to מוצאי שבת) as do some of the צדיקים even until our times. However, the גר"א told her to not skip מלוח מלכה and to only

Takeaway: I will try to upgrade the attention that I give to מלוח מלכה

begin her fasting thereafter. He asserted that all the fasts throughout the week do not 'add up' to the קדושה of this special meal.

The גר"א himself would spare no effort to eat מלוח מלכה. Digestive problems would at times prevent him from eating right after שבת without first resting. He would rest until the pain subsided and then get up to eat the מלוח מלכה even if it was three o'clock in the morning!

Try to have something hot

The Gemara,⁷ when discussing the obligation to eat מלוח מלכה teaches that a hot drink and/or hot bread on מוצאי שבת is curative. We do not need to consult medical books to understand this חז"ל, nor do we need to discard our medications. But we should recognize that there is much spiritual activity on מוצאי שבת. The same hot drink at that time has a unique effect which is greater than the same drink at another time.

It has even been suggested that these curative powers extend to one's psychological state. They point to the פסוק which says that Hashem is מחבש לעצבותם – literally 'He binds up their sorrows'⁸ – can also be understood as an allusion to מחבש – חמין במוצאי שבת מלוגמא – that one's sorrows can be addressed by that spiritually warm drink.

⁶ בראשית רבה כח: ג

⁷ שבת קיט:

⁸ תהלים קמז: ג