



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת and חדוותא דזעיר אנפין collections of maamarim given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

Shabbos Ha'Gadol - (from Hagadah Maasei -Avos Tolna)

In *Maseches Chulin* (:o) R. Shimon ben Pazi asks;

In *Parshas Bereishis* (א"ט:ט"ז), the *pasuk* begins וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹקִים אֶת שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים (And Hashem made the two great sources of light), but then continues הַמְּאֹר הַגָּדֹל לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת הַמְּאֹר הַקָּטָן לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַלַּיְלָה (the great illuminator to rule over the day, and the small illuminator to rule over the night). How did one of the *meoros* suddenly become *katan*? It is because the moon said before Hakadosh Baruch Hu, *Ribono Shel Olam*, is it possible for two kings to utilize one crown? Hashem told the moon, 'Go and diminish yourself.'

The Gemara (סוכה מ"ב:) teaches us how to differentiate between *katan* and *gadol*.

"If a *katan* is able to eat a *kzayis* of roast meat, we slaughter the *korban Pesach* for him....R. Yehudah says - he is considered to be a *katan* until he is able to identify food. For example, if we give him a pebble he throws it away, but if we give him a nut, he will keep it."

Throughout *Shas*, we find that Chazal often utilized R. Yehudah's definition of *katan* and *gadol*.

The rationale behind R. Yehudah's definition is that as long as a child is unable to distinguish an edible nut from an inedible pebble, his intellect is still undeveloped. Only when he is able to make that distinction do we consider him to have reached the beginning stages of intellectual



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maturity. In other words, the first evidence of a child becoming a *gadol* is the ability to distinguish good from bad, and primary from secondary.

Chazal (ירושלמי ברכות פ"ה: ה"ב) express a similar concept when explaining the placement of *Havdalah* (אתה חוננתנו) in the *brachah* אתה חונן לאדם דעת on *Motzaei Shabbos*. "אם אין דעת, הבדלה מנין?" - If there is no *daas*, how is *Havdalah* possible? In other words, the primary expression of a person's *daas* is his ability to differentiate between two items or concepts that, while superficially similar, are essentially different.

We can now understand R. Shimon Ben Pazi's narrative. When the moon complained that two kings can't utilize the same crown, it became evident that the moon didn't realize that despite their external similarities, the sun and moon aren't one and the same. Even before the moon was diminished, it wasn't simply another, identical sun. Therefore, by Hashem commanding the moon to diminish itself, the difference would now be obvious.

We can now understand why *Shabbos Hagadol* is such an appropriate title for the Shabbos preceding Pesach. *Midrashim* relate, (מכילתא דר"י בשלח פרשה ו', שמו"ר כ"א:ז"ז זה"ק ח"ב קע:) that at the time of *krias Yam Suf*, the *midas ha'din* prosecuted Am Yisrael by asking, "How are these (Am Yisrael) different from those (the Egyptians)? Both these and those are guilty of *avodah zarah*, *giluy aryaos*, and *shefichus damim*. Why should Yisrael be saved and the Mitzrim drowned?"

There was a basis for the *midas hadin's* question. Superficially, the Jews standing by *Yam Suf* resembled the Egyptians who pursued them, both in appearance and in deed. The *midas hadin* found no mitigating factor that could justify saving the Jews while drowning the Egyptians.

However, the gaze of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, who is the Master of all *gadlus*, penetrated the filthy garments of Bnei Yisrael, and found the inner point, the *pintele Yid*, that differentiates Am Yisrael from all other



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nations. That eternal, immutable *nekudah* refutes the *midas ha'din's* claim that "these and those" are identical.

Most people are familiar with the *Tur's* explanation, (או"ח סימן ת"ל) of why the Shabbos before Pesach is called *Shabbos Hagadol*.

"The Shabbos preceding Pesach is called *Shabbos Ha'gadol* because of the great miracle that occurred...The tenth of the month came out on Shabbos, and each person took a lamb for his *korban Pesach* and tied it to his bedpost. When the Egyptians asked them to explain their actions, the Jews responded that it was in order to slaughter the lamb for Pesach as per Hashem's command. And the teeth of the Egyptians (who worshipped sheep) were shaken because Am Yisrael were slaughtering their gods. However, they had no ability to even say a word to the Jews. Because of that miracle, it is called *Shabbos Hagadol*."

We can understand these events in light of the way the *Gemara* defines the term *gadol*. Even though there was no visible difference between the Jews and Egyptians on the tenth of Nisan, *Am Yisrael* fulfilled the mitzvah מִשְׁכּוֹ וְקָחוּ לָכֶם צֹאן לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֵיכֶם וְשַׁחֲטוּ הַפֶּסַח (בא י"ב:כ"א). The *Mechilta* explains that the words משכו וקחו mean "Draw back your hands from *avodah zarah* and grasp mitzvos."

Meaning, even though externally the Jews still resembled the Egyptians, their fulfillment of this *mitzvah* left a deep impression in their souls. That is why it is called *Shabbos Hagadol*, for at that moment the difference between Jew and Egyptian began to manifest itself.

Our ability to identify differences that lie beneath the surface must be utilized for self-examination. Sometimes, a person feels that all of his actions are expressions of his *anavah* - humility, and that his intentions are purely *l'shem shamayim* - for the sake of Heaven. In reality, his actions are expressions of his arrogance and his intentions are entirely *l'shem atzmo* - for his own benefit.



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A *gadol* also knows how to be discerning in his dealings with other people. Not all those who appear to be good are truly good people, and vice versa. There are many who, like Bnei Yisrael in Mitzrayim, appeared to be *reshaim*, yet were truly full of mitzvos.

Now, as Pesach approaches, each of us must be very careful not to lose his *gadlus ha'daas* during the stressful preparations for Yom Tov, especially as a result of emphasizing different stringencies in *bedikas u'biur chametz*. A *gadol* knows how to differentiate between the *ikar* - the primary and the *tafel* - the secondary and subsidiary. He will focus on preparing his heart for the experience of the *seder*, and fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *sippur yetzias Mitzrayim*. He will remember that the many *chumros*, despite their importance, are *tafel* and therefore must not be our primary focus.

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