

Tapping Into the Energy of Shabbat HaGadol (A Once a Year Opportunity)

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

To Slaughter Their God

The Shabbat before Pesach is called Shabbat *HaGadol* (The Great Shabbat), because of the miracle that took place on that day. On Shabbat *HaGadol*, (the 10th of Nissan), the enslaved Jews took the lamb – the Egyptian deity – and paraded it through the streets of Egypt past the infuriated Egyptians. Miraculously the Jews were able to tie the Paschal lambs to their bedposts and ultimately slaughter these Egyptian gods, to eat them as the *korban Pesach*, on the night of the Exodus. When the Egyptians would ask: “What is this lamb for?” The Jews would answer, “To be slaughtered as a Pesach sacrifice according to G-d’s command.” The Egyptians would then gnash their teeth in anger without being able to utter a sound, or stop the Jews from slaughtering their god.

The Pascal Lamb and the Astrological Sign of Aries

The month of Nissan is under the influence of the astrological sign of Aries (the ram). Explicitly during this time when the power of the sign of the ram was strongest, Israel was commanded to slaughter and eat it, to prove that Hashem’s power nullifies the power of the ram (*Akeidat Yitzchak*).

Additional Reason’s for the Name *Shabbat HaGadol*

1. We keep Shabbat to remember that Hashem created the world, and also to commemorate the Exodus. The second reason was only added on the last Shabbat in Egypt – Shabbat *HaGadol*. On this day the reasons for keeping Shabbat were increased, to make the Shabbat itself greater.
2. “Just as a child is called *gadol* when he becomes of the age to keep mitzvot, so is the day, when the entire Jewish people kept their first mitzvot, called *gadol*.”
3. Just like Shabbat is separated from the profane work of the week, so on Shabbat *HaGadol* did Israel separate themselves from idol-worship.
4. The *haftorah* for Shabbat *HaGadol* from *Malachi*, Chapter three culminates in the promise that Hashem will send us “Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the Great (*HaGadol*) and awesome day of Hashem” (*Malachi* 3:23).

Why Shabbat *HaGadol* and not the Tenth of Nissan?

Why do we commemorate the miracle of the Pascal lamb on Shabbat, and not every year on the tenth of Nissan when the event took place, regardless of which day of the week it falls? During Shabbat, each of the ten plagues that Hashem inflicted upon the Egyptians was temporarily suspended. In honor of the greatness of Shabbat, even the plagues “rested”. On the tenth of Nissan, in the middle of the plague of darkness, the Jewish people led the lambs through the streets of Egypt. Had this event taken place on a weekday instead of on Shabbat, due to the plague of darkness, the Egyptians would not have been able to see what the Jews were doing, and there would have been no need for Hashem to miraculously protect the Jewish people. Therefore, we

celebrate Hashem's performance the wondrous miracle of saving the Jews specifically on the Shabbat before Pesach, rather than on the tenth of Nissan, because it was Shabbat that caused the miracle. Had the date not occurred on Shabbat, the entire land would have been engulfed in darkness, and this event would not have been a miracle worthy of commemoration.

Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov explains that the Egyptians were fully aware that the Israelites kept Shabbat and would not busy themselves with animals on that day. Therefore, when the Egyptians saw them take the sheep and bind it to the bedpost on Shabbat, they were surprised and inquired about it. The Israelites were in great danger at being thus confronted and were saved only by a miracle.

A further reason to remember the miracle on Shabbat and not on the tenth of Nissan is that, forty years later, Miriam died on that day and the well ceased to exist.

The Anniversary of Miriam's Death

The source of water for the Israelites in the desert was the well of Miriam. Its source was at the entrance of the courtyard of the Tabernacle, near the tent of Moshe. The waters of the well would separate into different rivers to form boundaries between each tribe and even between each family, so that everyone knew his personal place and position in the camp of Israel (*Yalkut Shioni, Pekudei*).

Why did the well of Miriam determine the boundaries of Israel?

Miriam was the midwife of the nation of Israel. She gave birth to redemption. She was the one who molded the Jewish people. Miriam was the mother who enabled her children to find their place and bring forth their full potential. It is, therefore, fitting that she determined the boundaries of each tribe.

What is the spiritual significance that the well dried up on the tenth of Nissan?

On the tenth of Nissan we gained spiritual freedom from the Egyptian exile. This is followed by our physical freedom on Pesach. Thus, Israel went beyond themselves on this day. They freed themselves from their personal boundaries to merge with the Divine.

Shabbat HaGadol includes the Spiritual Powers for the Entire Year

Rav Raphael Luria explains that the holiness of Shabbat is beyond time since the worlds rise on Shabbat through the revelation of the root of emanation. The holiness of all the holidays derives from the power of Shabbat that precedes it. The first holiday that we celebrated as a people, is Pesach. Since Pesach is the head of all our holidays, the other holidays receive their sustenance from it. First we bring holiness into the head and from the head into the rest of the body. Therefore, when we draw down the holiness for the holiday of Pesach, on Shabbat preceding Pesach, its lights include the holiness for all of the other holidays. From this we may conclude that we should be extra careful to honor Shabbat *HaGadol* properly, as this will enable us to draw down more holiness not only for the holiday of Pesach but for all the other holidays as well. As difficult as it may be this last Shabbat before Pesach, let us make the greatest effort to light the Shabbat candles at the preferred time. Let us tap into the energy of Shabbat *HaGadol* which occurs only once a year by being careful to speak only words of holiness, avoiding mundane activities, and devoting ourselves to prayer and Torah learning!

About Us



Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work.

For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.

*In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, *Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion*.*

Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.

If you are interested in:

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or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>

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