
Sichos in English Classics 11

Moshiach Meal: A Deeper Understanding



**ACHARON SHEL PESACH,
5746 (1986)**



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IN PLACE OF AN INTRODUCTION

At the Shloshim of R' Yonah Avtzon A"H, Director of Sichos in English, a resolution was taken to reprint the original weekly Sichos in English publications.

To fulfill this, a weekly booklet including a translation of a *farbrengen* as it was first published will be distributed. Our intention is to reprint the entire set in the near future.

Following the Sichos we will include an addendum with pictures, notes, and insights into the process of its publication.

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THE HISTORY OF MOSHIACH MEAL

This meal (after Minchah on the eighth day of Pesach) has traditionally been called “Moshiach’s Feast,” by our Rebbes the Nesi’im. It is therefore appropriate that I should begin by analyzing the theme of “Moshiach’s Feast.” It would seem that participation in such a celebration as “Moshiach’s Feast” should evoke astonishment among people, yet, we see that many people in many places do participate in this meal of Moshiach, which indicates that the celebration of Moshiach’s Feast has become truly important for all Jews.

It all began in the days of the Baal Shem Tov who was accustomed to eat three meals on the last day of Pesach and he called the third meal, “Moshiach’s Feast.” In the early years of the Chassidic movement only special individuals used to eat Moshiach’s Feast, while in the later generations the Rebbe Rashab used to join the students of the Yeshivah Tomchei Temimim for “Moshiach’s Feast.”

Finally, the previous Rebbe attended the “Moshiach Feast,” and not only the select students of Yeshivah Tomchei Temimim joined in the festive meal, but also all the Chassidim participated. Since then the custom has caught on in many circles, and tens of thousands of Jews celebrate the third meal of the last day of Pesach, known as “Moshiach’s Feast.”

The previous Rebbe also instituted the custom of drinking four cups of wine at Moshiach’s Feast.

Normally a festive feast consists of meat, fish and other delicacies, why do we observe the meal of Moshiach with only four

cups of wine? But the answer may be found by referring to the Talmud:

The Holy One, Blessed be He, will make a great banquet for the righteous on the day He manifests His love to the seed of Yitzchok. After they have eaten and drunk, the cup of Grace will be offered to our father Avraham, that he should recite the Grace, but he will answer them, "I cannot say Grace...." Then Yitzchok will be asked, "Take it and say Grace." "I cannot say Grace," he will reply.... Then Dovid will be asked, "Take it and say Grace." "I will say Grace, and it is fitting for me to say Grace," he will reply, as it is said, "I will lift up the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the L-rd."¹

WINE AND MOSHIACH

At that banquet, Dovid, King Moshiach, will have a special connection to the wine (he will be given the wine which has been "preserved in its grapes" from the six days of creation). Consequently, we may understand that at "Moshiach's Feast" the main emphasis should also be on the wine.

Another point:

The Gemara states:

The cup of King Dovid in the future world will hold 221 *logs* (1 *log*=approx. 12 oz.), as it is said: "My cup is overflowing (*revayah*)" and this is the numerical value of *ReVaYaH*.²

So our sages attribute a special association between Moshiach and *overflowing wine*. Therefore at "Moshiach's Feast" the main emphasis is on *drinking the four cups of wine*.

The question however remains, why, at that future banquet, will Dovid HaMelech particularly associate with the *wine* of the "cup of the blessings" of the Grace, and not with the other foods.

Concerning Moshiach the prophet tells us:

1. Pesachim 119b
2. Yoma 76a

*Behold My servant shall prosper (be exceedingly wise), he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.*³

THE WISDOM AND TEACHINGS OF MOSHIACH

In Likkutei Torah, in the Chassidic discourses which discuss the themes of the seventh and eighth days of Pesach, the Alter Rebbe expounds on this verse that Moshiach's wisdom will supersede the wisdom of the Patriarchs and Moshe our teacher, and he will teach all the people Torah including the Patriarchs and Moshe. The discourse goes on to deduce that we *must* say that the Torah and the wisdom which Moshiach will teach will be the inner secrets of the Torah:

After the resurrection all will rise...the Patriarchs, Moshe and Aharon, all the righteous ones and the prophets, tens of thousands beyond number. Is it possible that Moshiach will teach them the same Torah which is revealed to us today?... Will all the sages of our past, who knew the whole Torah, be required to learn new halachos from Moshiach?

We must therefore say that Moshiach will instruct them in the "good of discernment and knowledge of the secrets of the esoteric teachings of Torah," which the "eyes will not have seen." Moshe and the Patriarchs not having been privileged to that knowledge, for only to Moshiach will it be revealed as it is written of him, "and be very high."⁴

And so the subject matters of the future Torah study taught by Moshiach will be the esoteric teachings of Torah.

But there will be another distinction. The intellectual pursuit of the esoteric knowledge will not follow the temporal pattern of a teacher imparting knowledge and comprehension, instead it will take the form of *visualization*:

They will comprehend with the visualizing light of the supernal wisdom, to the degree that they will all perceive with the vision of the innermost wisdom, the reasons, and the heretofore, utterly

3. Yeshayahu 52:13

4. Likkutei Torah, Tzav 17aff.

sequestered secrets.... This is what is meant by the prophet: “He will be permeated with the spirit of the fear of the L-rd”⁵ he will judge by the “spirit” of G-d; “He will not judge by the sight of his eyes”⁶, but by the sight of his mind’s eye. He will “Not decide by the hearing of his ears”⁷, the listening of understanding, only with the power of the vision of Chochmah.⁸

TEACHING THROUGH SEEING

And since the study will take the form of *seeing*, he will be able to teach tens of thousands at once. It will be unnecessary to *explain* the meaning in lengthy logical discussions or lectures, rather the knowledge will come instantaneously, grasped in its full depth and breadth by *seeing*.

In *Pri Etz Chaim* we are told that the AriZal was able to perceive and comprehend in one instant the deep secrets and esoteric teachings of the Torah, at a “*glance*.” If he had had to teach that knowledge in the conventional manner of transmitting wisdom, in speech and writing, it would have taken 60-80 years of discourses.

In dealing with esoterics we must remember that there were earlier sages who did learn the secrets of the Torah. Moshe, the Rashbi and others who were mentioned in the Zohar, yet in this field of learning — there is the level of “secrets” and then “secrets of the secrets” and so on, ad infinitum. Moshiach will teach the highest levels and it will be transmitted in a manner of *seeing*.

When Moshiach comes, Moshe and Yehoshua and the Elders will all teach large schools of students the revealed aspects of Torah. Each will teach according to his personal system of learning which could differ from another system.

5. Yeshayahu 11:3

6. Ibid

7. Ibid

8. Likkutei Torah, Ibid.

But the secrets of Torah will be taught *only* by *Moshiach*, who symbolizes the “Yechidah” of the Jewish people, the innermost aspect of Jewish souls.

WHAT THE ‘PERSERVED WINE’ REPRESENTS

This same dichotomy in study will also be applied to the *food* of the meal of the righteous which we spoke of earlier. At the meal there will be words of Torah — but the food itself will also express this difference. For the “Leviathan” and “Shor Habar” represent the exoteric Torah while the “preserved wine” will represent the “wine” of Torah, the esoteric, inner teachings of Torah.

And therefore, in relation to the “fish” and “meat” of the banquet there will be no distinction between the sages of Israel and *Moshiach*, but in the case of the “cup of blessing” only *Moshiach* will say: “I will say Grace and it is fitting for me to say Grace.”

To reveal the “wine of Torah” the quality of *Dovid the King Moshiach* will be revealed, and that which could not be seen or comprehended in the past will be understood and *seen*.

In our allegorical fusion of esoteric wisdom and wine we should be able to find the aforementioned diverse levels of esoteric teaching also in the parable of wine. This will lead to the distinction with which *Dovid* was specifically associated, the wine of the “cup of blessings.”

The difference will emerge between the wine which is drunk during the meal and wine which is drunk after the meal — “the cup of blessing.” The wine imbibed during the meal will connote the secrets of Torah which relate to the exoteric study. Whereas the wine which follows the meal, the “cup of blessing,” not taken with fish and meat, symbolizes the loftier level, the “*secrets* of the *secrets* of the Torah.”

For this reason *Dovid Moshiach* is associated with the “cup of blessing,” for the Patriarchs and *Moshe* refused to lift the cup of blessing and say the Grace, being that they are associated with the “food” of the meal and only *Moshiach* will say, “It is fitting for me to say the Grace.”

WHY WE ONLY EAT MATZA AND DRINK WINE

Now we can appreciate why at Moshiach's Feast we only eat matzah and drink four cups of wine. And although the fourth Shabbos meal (Melaveh Malkah), when other foods are eaten, is also considered by the AriZal to be the meal of "Dovid King Moshiach" (see Siddur of AriZal), nevertheless, on the last day of Pesach when we read the *Haftorah* of Moshiach's coming, in all its glorious details, and especially at the conclusion of the day, the aspect of Dovid Moshiach reaches its zenith as it will be at the time of Moshiach's coming. Therefore it is appropriate that we emphasize the loftiest level of Moshiach's symbolic association with the "wine of blessings" and we partake only of wine (in addition to the matzah) at the meal of Moshiach!

The custom of drinking *four* cups of wine during Moshiach's feast may also be linked with the "cup of blessings" of Moshiach.

The numeral "4" represents the four methods of Biblical interpretation, *Pardes* — plain, symbolic, homiletic and esoteric. Chassidus explains that the four levels of Torah exposition relate to the four spiritual worlds and effect the purification and perfection of the corresponding worlds. The fourth level raises the world of Atzilus — Emanation — to the level of "Secrets of Secrets of the Torah," which we explained is symbolized by the cup of blessing *after* the meal. And since the highest level of *Atzilus* is associated with the lowest world of action, we may deduce that the cup of blessing of Moshiach must be brought down into the temporal world.

Having analyzed these lofty concepts and developed the magnitude and enormity of the principles involved in Moshiach's Feast, it now seems astonishing and baffling: How can a human being sit down and eat a *physical* meal called "Moshiach's Feast"?

EVERY YID SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS MEAL

There is even a movement to encourage more and more Jews to adopt this custom and participate in this meal! But, no preparation is made, no lessons in Chassidic philosophy are

taught, they are not even told a story of the Baal Shem Tov in order to lead them into the subject. They are just invited to sit down and eat and drink.

As a result there are those who seek pretense and decry this practice with the argument that there is no precedent for such customs!

But the answer is that we all participate in a Moshiach meal every Motzai Shabbos, for the Melaveh Malkah meal is termed “The meal of Dovid King Moshiach”! Of course, the meal of the end of Pesach is on a much loftier plane as we have discussed.

It should also be kept in mind that the three Shabbos meals also represent lofty planes. A Jew says Kiddush on wine, ritually washes his hands and then sits down to dine on Shabbos day and he proclaims: “This is the meal of the holy *Chakal Tapuchin*” — the supernal attribute of royalty; or on Friday night he says: “This is the meal of the holy Ancient One” the attribute of *Atik* in the supernal crown; or at the third Shabbos meal, “This is the meal of *Zei’er Anpin*” — the six supernal attributes of the world of Emanation.

Having established that Moshiach will teach all the Jews, we realize that even the people whose level of Torah comprehension is still on the level of plain meaning and could just as well receive instruction from a lesser tutor — nevertheless Moshiach will teach them also.

Being the *Yechidah* (only one) soul of the Jewish people, Moshiach truly has a connection with every Jew and will relate to each one *equally*, for *Yechidah* equalizes the great and the small.

Consequently, it follows that every Jew really should participate in “Moshiach’s Feast.”

THE AMAZING PRAYER WE SAY ON YOM TOV

Here we come to another thought which is often overlooked. Every Yom-Tov when the Torah is taken from the Holy Ark we recite a special prayer following the 13 attributes of mercy. It begins: “Master of the World.” In it we say:

...And may there be realized in us the verse which states: “And the spirit of the L-rd shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the L-rd.”⁹

Contemplate on this for a moment. An overbearing “Klotz-Kashe” begins to crystallize in our minds. The verse, “And the spirit of the L-rd shall rest...” refers to our righteous Moshiach of whom the previous verse spoke: “And a shoot shall go forth from the trunk of *Yishai*.” How is it possible that every festival we stand before G-d and beseech Him, “...And may there be realized in *us* the verse, etc.” How can we ask for something which was promised to *Moshiach*? This request is not for something similar to, or modeled after Moshiach’s spirit, for we are asking that the “spirit of the L-rd” which was promised to Moshiach should “be realized in us.”

Certainly, when we pray in the manner prescribed by Torah, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will accept and fulfill our requests so that the spirit of G-d will truly rest on us, immediately, not only later when Moshiach comes, and even though we may not sense it or realize it — it does happen.

How does it affect us?

Well, we know that there are daily announcements made by heavenly voices which the human ear cannot hear, nevertheless the root of the *neshamah* and its *mazal* does “hear” these calls to repentance. This is why we sometimes have a strong inner urge to repent and better our ways — it is the source of the soul, which heard the heavenly voice, pushing the body to improve.

Similarly, when the spirit of the L-rd rests on us, even though we are unaware, it will have some effect. Does it happen sometimes that a person finds outstanding success beyond his capabilities, either in material matters or spiritual matters? This success is a result and effect of the resting of the spirit of G-d on this person. At the same time, if we contemplate on this phenomenon and try to make ourselves worthy of this G-dly revelation then we will be

9. Siddur

able to feel it and utilize the powers to a much greater degree. Thus the effect will depend upon the utilization and concentration.

Likewise in the case of Moshiach's Feast — each individual must work to integrate as much as possible. Therefore, it is important to publicize the matter and encourage all Jews to participate.

SPREAD THE WORD

If you ask why mention this now, it is too late to go out now and invite others to the Moshiach's Feast? The answer is that you can still make it up on the day after Pesach and you can make the theme of Moshiach's Feast a continuing function, to extend into the following days and weeks. For, just as in the days of the Beis HaMikdash, Chassidus explains, that the revelation of G-dliness seen at the time of pilgrimage lasted until the next festival, so too, today the inspiration of the festival and especially the last day — the Moshiach's meal — continue to radiate till next Pesach.

And we must take this aura of the revelation of Moshiach from Pesach and apply it to our daily Divine service all through the year.

Do not be surprised by the phenomenon that at first there was some trepidation whether it would be accepted to eat a physical meal and call it "Moshiach's Feast" — and eventually tens of thousands of Jews enthusiastically embraced the custom and participated in these feasts.

The same phenomenon has been seen in spreading the wellsprings of Chassidus. When a Chassid carries out his role as a "lamplighter," and illuminates the public domain, then even those who were lost, or hidden in the cracks and crevices come out and gravitate towards the light and they, too, become lamplighters.

Thus, the custom of "Moshiach's Feast" as well as all the aspects of Moshiach connected to the last day of Pesach should be publicized and disseminated to all circles and it should influence all classes of Jews.

May all these efforts find great success and may we gather the Jewish people through our righteous Moshiach with love and

kindness and peace, and by accepting these good resolutions we will merit the reward of the true and complete redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

* * *

WHAT TOOK SO LONG?

Do you wonder that it took many generations to reveal this important aspect of the last day of Pesach? And even more generations until the Moshiach's Meal was actually celebrated among the multitudes of the Jewish people?!

This is the way of Torah!

Our sages relate:

“There are threescore queens”: these are the sixty tractates of the *Mishnah*. “And fourscore concubines”: these are the *Beraisos*, “And maidens without number”: there is no end of additional halachos. (see Shir HaShirim Rabbah 6:9, par. 2)

This means that through the teachings of the *Tannaim* and *Amoraim* the increase in Torah reaches to infinity. For although the infinity of Torah existed at the time of Moshe also, it was not revealed until the era of the *Tannaim* and *Amoraim*.

Chassidus further explains on the verse, “You (*Aisanim*) [are the] strong foundation of the earth”¹⁰ that the teachings of the *Tannaim* (*Aisanim* = *Tannaim*) and *Amoraim*, as well as their whole beings, constituted the body of the Oral Torah, which further emphasizes the multitudinous vastness of the Oral Torah. Not only their *words* but also their *beings* became part of Torah¹¹.

The teachers of the generations after the Talmud are also included in this progressive expansion of Torah for:

Even what a faithful disciple would in the future innovate...were all communicated to Moshe on Sinai.¹²

10. Michah 6:2

11. cf. Zohar II, 110b; Torah Or, Shmos 49b

12. cf. Vayikra Rabbah ch 22:1

And all the rulings of the Geonim, and the later codifiers and then the annotators on the codifiers will all be included in the Oral Torah with the full authority of the Oral Torah¹³. Thus there is a steady increase in the “additional halachos” in every future generation. And the contributions of the “Aisanim — Tannaim” also increase in quality as well as quantity.

Consequently, it is no wonder that new things are revealed in later generations; as in our case, Moshiach’s Feast and the custom to drink four cups of wine at that meal.

This principle of continual progressive development in Torah finds further expression within the context of the esoteric teachings of Chassidus.

The Alter Rebbe writes in Tanya that in the era of the Talmud:

*The whole science of the Kabbalah was hidden in their days and concealed from all the scholars of Torah, except for a select few and even then in a mode of “walking hiddenly” and not publicly, as mentioned in the Gemara. Thus, R. Yitzchok Luria, of blessed memory, wrote that it is only in these latter generations that it is permitted and a duty to reveal this science but not so in the earlier generations.*¹⁴

In these latter generations, when the revelation of the esoteric teachings has been enhanced and increased through the dissemination of Chassidic philosophy — and especially Chabad — to the point of “spreading the fountains to the outside,” we see a greater intensification and multiplication of the wellsprings of Torah. In the time of the previous Rebbe the teachings of Chassidus were translated into other languages, in order to bring this knowledge to the far corners of the world.

MOSHIACH MEAL FOR OUR TIME

In this context we may clearly understand why the practice of Moshiach’s Feast only became popularized in recent years.

13. See Alter Rebbe, Laws of Talmud Torah, 2

14. Iggeres Hakodesh 26

Moshiach will reveal the innovations of the hidden secrets of the Torah, as Rashi explains, that when Moshiach comes G-d will once again communicate the innermost secrets of His Torah directly to the Jewish people.¹⁵

Thus, at the time that the Baal Shem Tov was revealing and spreading the esoteric teachings of Torah, the practice of Moshiach's Feast was also revealed by the Baal Shem Tov. And over the years as the study of Chassidus has spread, so has the custom of Moshiach's Feast spread to the widest spectrum.

And in truth, these studies and activities really do apply to every Jew, since the function of Moshiach pertains to everyone and everything. And in our generation, which is the last and lowest, Moshiach will accomplish the greatest "lifting up." For the lever accomplishes its job when it is placed below the lowest point to be raised. Therefore in our generation the greatest powers have been given even to the foot soldiers of the "Army of Hashem."

May it be G-d's will, that on this day, when the spirit of Moshiach is revealed, and we celebrate Moshiach's Feast, we should utilize these lofty powers that descend from above, and absorb them internally, so that the revelation of Moshiach will penetrate to the point of engendering the resultant action all year long.

We know that the Alter Rebbe did not include the words "The order of Pesach ends," at the close of the Haggadah, his reason? because the theme of Pesach continues all year and the eighth day has in it the lofty aspects of all the earlier seven days and thereby further transmits them into the rest of the year. And may it bring the revelation of the King Moshiach who will redeem us and lead us "walking upright," to our land, with the true and complete redemption, speedily and truly in our time.

15. cf. Rashi ad. loc. Shir HaShirim 1:2

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