

## Twice as Nice; the 2<sup>nd</sup> Day of Yom Tov

Here we are on the second day of Yom Tov doing everything we did yesterday all over again. Occasionally it is nice to have a two day Yom Tov, even the non-Jewish world appreciates a “long weekend.” But sometimes it seems a bit much. For instance, when a two day Yom Tov turns into a “three day Yom Tov” when the two days of Yom Tov run into Shabbos, as happens like this year.

And this year we feel it more than usual as we pretty much fixed in one spot for three long days. No leaving the house to go to shul or visit with friends. No virtual escapes or even communication with the outside as technology ordinarily enables us to have. Someone sent me a meme with a floorplan of a two bedroom apartment and the inscription “Looking at the map for some weekend travel ideas.”

And, why are we doing the Seder twice? Matzah, Marror, more Matzah and Marror, more Matzah interspersed with four cups of wine and a lot of words. And the next night we do it all over again.

The Gemara explains that it is because of the times when the new month was determined by Bais Din in Yerushalayim, and people far away did not get the news in time to know the correct date for Pesach. Out of doubt they did it twice. OK, but nowadays we have a calendar that everyone follows, and instant communication, so that if the Bais Din were to be re-established and determination of the date was no longer as simple as looking at a calendar, we would still be instantly updated and would know which day was Pesach?

Yet we continue to observe two days of Yom Tov outside of Eretz Yisroel. Why? The Gemara says that we maintain the custom of our forefathers – Minhag Avoseinu. But, if that is the reason, why would a person from Eretz Yisroel who takes up residence in America, for example, have to keep two days of Yom Tov? His or her forefathers have the custom of one day of Yom Tov – shouldn't they maintain that?



The Alter Rebbe, R. Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad, came to the Mezeritcher Magid (successor to the Baal Shem Tov) in about 1765 when he was 20 years old and became his student and Chasid for the next eight years until the passing of the Magid in 1772. During this time, the Magid, seeing the incredible scholarship and insight of the Alter Rebbe asked him to write a concise Code of Law which would give final rulings on the various finer points of Halacha which were the subject of dispute by the many commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch and other later authorities. The Alter Rebbe immediately set about doing that and in the course of several years compiled most of what we know now as Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch or Shulchan Aruch HaRav.

Years later, the Alter Rebbe, having grown even more in Torah erudition and having developed further his philosophy of Halacha, began a rewrite of his previous work. We don't know how far he got in the second writing; all that is available to us are the first four chapters.

In this second version, the Alter Rebbe explains how it can be that Shabbos, for example, is observed at different times depending on where one is in the world? Or, how can it be that we were permitted to eat Chometz on Wednesday morning, while in Israel they were about to begin the Seder? Or, how can it be that we can be davening Maariv and in Israel someone is already past Shacharis the next morning?

The answer lies in the fact that what makes a day holy, or what makes a certain time of day appropriate from one Mitzvah or another, is derived from a spiritual reality. That spiritual reality is actually above time and space but it "shines" into this world, into the time and space of this world. And therefore the spiritual reality associated with Shma in the morning, for example, manifests itself in each part of the world according to the space/time reality of that place in the world. The time for morning Shma is, therefore, in each place when it is morning in that place. Similarly, the holiness of Shabbos enters into the world when it is Friday evening. Just as the timing of Friday evening varies from place to place in the world, so, too, the onset of Shabbos varies, depending where in the world one is.



This understanding, that the spiritual quality of any given time in any given place is really an expression of a transcendent spiritual reality shining through into that particular place at that particular time, explains the two day Yom Tov as well.

There is a special aura of Yom Tov holiness on high which shines into the world when it is Yom Tov in this world. It shines into each place in this world when it is appropriate for that place. And the Yom Tov aura which shines into Eretz Yisroel on Yom Tov begins shining into Skokie about eight hours later, and it keeps on shining, not for twenty four hours but for forty eight! And, therefore all Jews living in Skokie celebrate for forty-eight hours while our friends and relatives in Israel celebrate for only twenty four (actually more like twenty-five, but let's not go there now).

What we just wrote in four paragraphs, the Alter Rebbe writes in a parenthetical aside (literally, it is enclosed in parentheses) in about four lines. I assume because this is not the place for it, as the opening chapters of Shulchan Aruch are about rising in the morning, not about two day Yom Tov (that is in Chapter 496). The Alter Rebbe does not tell us why the light which radiates in Eretz Yisroel for one day radiates here in Skokie for two days. I bet you are curious about that, right?

To paraphrase in my own words what is explained elsewhere:

There are two things to consider. One of them is that Eretz Yisroel is Eretz Hakodesh, the Holy Land, a land which, spiritually speaking, is on a much higher plane than the rest of the world. The second idea we need to recognize is that each occurrence of Yom Tov does not merely elevate the particular day on which it occurs, but it has a residual effect into the future, into the rest of the year which follows after the Yom Tov.

Putting those two ideas together we can understand that Eretz Yisroel being on that higher plane can absorb that higher level of spiritual radiance in the course of a single day. On the other hand, the rest of the world, being that much lower, needs that transcendent radiance to make its way further down so that it is less intense and it is possible for the lower level to absorb it, too. Due to the reduced intensity of the radiance as it enters our world outside of Eretz Yisroel, it takes



twice as long to have the required impact. And therefore, a former resident of Israel now living in Skokie needs to keep two days of Yom Tov in order to get the full Yom Tov holiness experience, and so that it will remain in the days, weeks and months to come.

This idea applies more broadly to all of life and not just to Yom Tov. Every moment exists and is unique because there is a unique spiritual reality calling the world into existence at that particular moment. And, every particular thing or person which is present in any given time or place exists there and then because there is a Divine spiritual reality putting him/her/it there at that time. And the Divine power creating that individual is custom tailored to the time, the place, and the individual creature. Just as the spiritual radiance of Yom Tov is calibrated to suit each time and place for the correct intensity and duration, so to the creative energy giving everything its being is carefully calibrated for it.

As we sit in our homes with no place to go, no people to see, nothing to do, we are in the precise place, time and situation that we are meant to be in. And, we are here because Hashem Himself is carefully creating us and calibrating our circumstances to be exactly what they are. And since He is the quintessence of goodness, where we are is the absolutely best place for us to be at the moment.

It seems kind of weird that after seeing the world operating in a certain way for many years, all of a sudden everything is being turned upside down. Going to Shul used to be good. Having guests at the Seder used to be good. Getting together family used to be good. Being supportive and being there for people in the community used to be good. Shaking hands or giving a hug used to be good. A soaring stock market and full employment used to be good. And, now?

We are headed to something better, but we won't know it until we see it. One of the Sages in the Talmud said about the coming of Moshiach, "May it come, but may I not be there to see it." We, thank G-d are here. May we continue to be here as we see things unfold, leading to the coming of Moshiach NOW.

