

Minhogeï Chabad

Excerpts from sichos

about the importance of minhagim and their profound effect on our lives.

This pamphlet is being presented in honor of Yud Alef Nisan, the birthday of the Rebbe. This year is the 113th birthday of the Rebbe. On Yud Alef Nisan we begin saying the 114th chapter of Tehillim which mentions Yetzias Mitzrayim and Krias Yam Suf and how the Jewish people were elevated by the exodus and how nature was overwhelmed by Hashem's intervention.

The redemption took place in the merit of the Jewish people's not changing their names, their dress or their language. By this they continued in the ways of our forefathers and stayed connected.

So too in our times. Through our careful observance of Chabad minhagim and upholding Chabad standards we continue in

their ways and strengthen our connection to the Rabbeim, our forefathers.

We present to you this pamphlet which contains articles about Chabad customs and Chabad standards. Appropriate to this time, it is being given out on the eve of the festival of Pesach, days filled with special customs.

We also know that the Rebbe spoke often about minhagim and encouraged their careful observance. He placed great emphasis on publishing and publicizing Chabad minhagim.

By continuing in their ways may we all merit the exodus from this last and final galus and the splitting of the Jordan River immediately, with the revelation of Moshiach Now!

**A Kasher and Freilichen Pesach
Rabbi Shimon Raichik**

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Why are our Minhagim so important and valuable to our lives?

In Lubavitch there are different types of minhagim. There are general minhagim that intended for everyone. These include minhagim for weekdays, Shabbos and Yom Tov. There are minhagim that are unique to the house of the Rebbeim. There are also personal minhagim of the Rebbe that we saw, as well as those that the Rebbe did in private. (Sefer HaSichos 5705 pg. 122).

The minhagim of bnei Yisroel are Torah. There are three explanations for what this means. One is that minhagim are an outgrowth of the Torah. Another is that the minhagim bring one closer to the Torah. And a third that a minhag is Torah. All the minhagim were given to Moshe on Har Sinai, just as the entire Torah was revealed to Moshe. In every generation deeper and deeper dimensions of the Torah have been revealed. Each generation has merited revelations of the Torah based upon its particular level. So too, Hashem has directed through which Tzaddik each particular facet of the Torah and minhag is to be revealed. Through this Klal Yisroel receives its guidance (Sefer HaShichos 5701 pg. 128) The Rebbe, the Tzemech Tzedek once said that the Alter Rebbe related to him that the minhagim of the Ba'al Shem Tov are Halacha l'Moshe m'Sinai.

Certain minhagim were established by the Ba'al Shem Tov. He had mesirus nefesh that these minhagim should be implanted in all Jewish homes for all generations. It is with these minhagim that we will go to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

When the Alter Rebbe returned from Mezritch, he said that the minhagim that he

received from the Maggid were received by the Maggid from the Ba'al Shem Tov. The Baal Shem Tov received them from the Ba'al HaChai, Achia HaShiloni. These include general minhagim for everyone as well as specific minhagim for the Rebbeim. (Sefer HaShichos 5708 pg. 231)

In 1936, on the 25th of Shevat (Sefer HaShichos 5696 pg. 48) the Previous Rebbe said that "Minhagei Lubavitch are set upon strong foundations. This includes all the minhagim that we have from Rabboseinu Nesienu in every generation. There are minhagei Lubavitch that we: know the reason; don't know the reason; that only a few from the house of the Rebbeim followed. Most were received from the Alter Rebbe. From those there are two types: those that he received from the Maggid either his own or in the name of the Ba'al Shem Tov; and those from the Alter Rebbe himself."

The minhagim of the Alter Rebbe are the main aspect and root for the minhagim that we have. They provide the basis upon the minhagim that the Rebbeim enacted in every generation. Most of those minhagim are a branch of the Alter Rebbe's, while certain ones were specific to the Rebbeim in each generation.

In Sefer HaSichos 5702 (pg. 27) it says that minhagei Lubavitch are not just founded on halacha or hidur mitzvah, but are also dimensions of the spiritual that are important for the soul. The minhagim bring an enlightenment and a spirit of purity to the person and his family that place them on an elevated platform of service to Hashem.

In a sicha from parshas Chukas, the first day of Rosh Chodesh Tammuz 1984, (Hisvaadus 5744 pg. 2077) the Rebbe spoke about a person who said they he saw someone practicing a certain minhag (not Chabad). He thought that since he saw this that it was b'hasgacha protis, perhaps it would be proper for him to follow this minhag as well. Chassidim know that an essential part of observance of minhagim is that we follow them with a tradition. We practice only those minhagim that come directly from the Rebbe. If the Rebbe practices the minhag then you should do it. If it was not passed down from the Rebbe, then although it may be a very beautiful minhag, and we greatly admire it, we would not actually observe it.

To explain, there is a story in the Gemara about hadassim. Reb Acha the son of Rava was careful to take a hadas that had two leaves and the third leaf that was at a distance from the two, not

the usual cluster of three leaves. The reason why Reb Acha took that type of hadas was because his Rebbe, Rav Kahana, felt that it was good enough to fulfill the mitzvah. It is important to note that Reb Acha did this as a hidur even though his Rebbe, Rav Kahana did not say that you couldn't have a cluster of three. All he said was that it was permissible to have a hadas with two leaves and a third leaf that was distant. Nevertheless, Reb Acha was mehader only to take a hadas with two leaves together and the third at a distance. His purpose was to be connected to his Rebbe. He wanted to show that if his Rebbe allowed it, he was careful and only took that one and considered it the best possible way to fulfill the mitzvah. The Rebbe used this story of the Gemara to explain minhagim in many of his letters. This means that even if someone can say otherwise, it is still a bigger hiddur to do the minhag the way your Rebbe does it.

When were our Minhogim compiled

Last week we began to quote sichos that explain the source, purpose and greatness of our minhagim. This week we continue by reviewing the history of how the minhagim of the Rebbeim came to be known in our time and their special purpose for our generation.

The process of compiling minhagim began at an Achron shel Pesach fabrengen in 1940. The Previous Rebbe said that a compilation of all the minhagim of the Rebbeim should be created in a way that is practical for everyday use. It should include customs, Chassidic sayings and stories. He said that this can only be accomplished by a person who is well organized and confidant. He needs to have deep seated spiritual integrity, be fundamentally methodical and have a broad and profound mind. When the Rebbe came to America, the Previous Rebbe gave him the job of creating this compilation which is known as the HaYom Yom. It was printed for the first time in 5703-1942,3.

The first print of the Rebbe's Haggadah shel Pesach, which included a compilation of the minhagim of the Rebbeim for Pesach, was in 1946.

In 5708-1947, on Shabbos Chol HaMoed Sukkos someone asked the Previous Rebbe if the correct custom is to have honey on the table during Chol HaMoed. At that time the Previous Rebbe said that it would be a good idea to compile a complete collection of the minhagim of the Rebbeim. Later that year, when the maamar for Purim was printed for distribution, as an addition, it included a collection of minhagim at the end that the Rebbe compiled. This continued, and finally in 1966 these collections along with

Sichos that related to the minhagim were combined to create Sefer HaMinhagim.

At an Achron shel Pesach fabrengen in 1940 the Previous Rebbe discussed the minhag of using a towel when washing each hand three times by netilas yadayim. The reason is to avoid touching the cup with wet hands. He told a story about a Shabbos guest by the Rebbe Rashab. After the Rebbe washed his hands, he offered the guest to wash as well. The guest proceeded to wash exactly the way he had observed the Rebbe washing. While he was washing the Rebbe was watching him intently. Later on, the Previous Rebbe asked his father the Rebbe why he had stared so intently at the guest while he washed. The Rebbe replied that it is a fine thing when a simple person emulates the minhag of a Ben Torah. If a Ben Torah, especially someone involved in Chassidus does so, he needs to be sure that he does so in a sincere and proper way.

In 5740-1980, parshas Titzavah, the Rebbe repeated this story and added that today we see that it has become a custom for everyone to wash three times with a towel. Are we on such a high level? The Rebbe explained that we are like midgets standing on the shoulders of giants. What once were great hidurim, even mehadrin min hamihadrin for a select few has now become the common minhag for everyone.

In Likutei Sichos volume 33 parshas Shlach the Rebbe discusses the proper way to wear tzitzis. There is a difference between the Shulchan Aruch and the Arizal, on whether to wear the tzizis on top or underneath one's garments. Nevertheless, even according to the one who wears them underneath, the common minhag is to keep the strings on the outside. In 5743 on

Shabbos parshas Miketz the Rebbe said that the minhag today is to wear the tzitzis on the outside. Therefore if he does not he is making a statement that he does not want to go in the ways of those that fear Hashem. He said that this is the way of those that fear Hashem and one should not deviate from the minhag.

The Rebbe also discussed that some have at times taken directives from his answers incorrectly. They quote answers that were given to specific individuals and then apply them to anyone in general. They often do not know the question asked and to whom the answer was given. Sometimes the minhag depends on the background of the individual. For example, Sefardim and Ashkenazim differ with regard to naming children after people that are alive. For Sefardim it's an honor while Ashkenazim are very careful not to do so.

Since these minhagim differ, the proper way to understand the answer given is to know the context of the specific person being addressed. Also, the answer may be limited to the situation of the person. An example for this would be the difference in minhag in adding a name to a child after the name was given. For Sefardim it's a shame for the person whom the child is named after, and therefore an addition should be avoided (except for special circumstances).

Therefore, any answer given by the Rebbe to an individual depends on the person being spoken to, their place, as well as their situation. Therefore it is important to be careful when applying the Rebbe's words when directed to an individual to anyone else.

In a fabrengen on Rosh Hashana 5739-1978, the Rebbe spoke of the great merit that this generation has for having received the guidance of the Previous Rebbe who revealed to us these minhagim. The minhagim we received are a

preparation for the coming of Moshiach. They give us the strength that we need to fulfill all that is necessary for Moshiach's arrival. They enable us to do what we need to do, not in a lifeless and lethargic way but in a way that is illuminated with profound insight and grasp that inspires true simcha shel mitzvah.

When we speak about the coming of Moshiach, often we use the expression to be; "Mikabel pnei Moshiach- to receive the countenance of Moshiach". This also means to receive the penimius of Moshiach. This means something in addition to the removal of the burden of the nations and all the good things that the Rambam mentions that will occur when Moshiach arrives. To be mikabel pnei Moshiach means that we will continue to fulfill and add in our mitzvos until we grasp Hashem our Creator to the greatest measure that a person is able. We will merit receiving Moshiach with our utmost penimius, from the most profound perspective possible.

The Ramban says at the end of Hilchos Teshuva and at the end Mishna Torah that the Neveim and great Chachamim did not desire for Moshiach in order to rule over others or to receive the wealth and physical benefits of the era of Moshiach. Rather their desire was that there should be calmness in the world in order to have time to serve Hashem and be able to know Hashem in the greatest way possible.

Chassidus was revealed to the world to prepare us for Moshiach by giving us the knowledge of "Da es Elokei Avicha-to know the G-d of our Fathers". An additional reason the minhagim were revealed to us in this generation is to prepare us to be mikabel pnei Moshiach.

True Freedom and the Rebbe's Pesach Haggadah

Sometimes we find that people have a relaxed attitude toward minhagim. They may say; "It's only a minhag" or, "If I missed it, it's not so terrible." The Rebbe explains the great virtue of minhagim. He speaks about how it advances the inner development of a Yid in his connection to Hashem and to the Rebbeim.

An example is the degree simcha we have throughout the Yom Tov of Sukkos. One level of simcha is reached when celebrating the Yom Tov itself which is a commandment from the Torah. An even greater level of simcha is celebrated during Simchas Beis Hashueiva. There is no commandment in the Torah for Simchas Beis Hashueiva. Although it is derived from a drash (meaning that it is inferred, but not a direct reference from the Torah), nevertheless it is a greater simcha. An even greater level of simcha is celebrated on Simchas Torah even though it is not a commandment in the Torah or even derived from a drash, but is rather a minhag. The reason for the minhag is because we are completing the reading of the Torah and we want to celebrate by expressing our great joy and gratitude in having received it and that we have the opportunity to begin reading it again. Why is the greatest simcha of all not associated with a mitzvah or even a drash, but rather a minhag? The reason is that a minhag has the power to reveal the inner connection of a Yid in the greatest possible way.

The Rebbe explains the difference of our minhag when it comes to the order of the questions in the Mah Nishtana by the Pesach Seder. In most other Haggadas the first question is about chametz and matza which is a

commandment from the Torah. In our Haggadah, the first question is about dipping which is only a minhag which was instituted in order to get the children to wonder and ask questions. In other words, we place the minhag first because of the impact that it has upon the child. This shows our emphasis on the importance of a minhag.

In the year 5748 – 1987, Sukkos was a Hakel year. During Yom Tov and Chol HaMoed the Rebbe held the esrog differently than his normal custom. Normally, the Rebbe only picked up the esrog when he waived it during Hallel. During the rest of Hallel in between the pesukim designated for waving the Rebbe would place the esrog back into the box. On this occasion, the Rebbe held the esrog together with the lulav throughout the entire Hallel.

The Rebbe later explained in a sicha that the Previous Rebbe would only hold the esrog when he waved the lulav during hallel. One might have thought that the only reason the Previous Rebbe only held the esrog at that time was because he wasn't well. And because he was weak there was a concern that the esrog might get scratched. Nevertheless, since this was done publicly, we do it the way the Rebbe did for his Kashrus, in order to be connected. If we change it, it has an effect.

The Rebbe explained that since it (that year) is Hakel which is a year of ingathering of Yidden. Since the four types represent the different types Yidden, therefore he held them all together with the esrog the entire time because of the Hakel year. What happened here? What was the purpose of the Rebbe going into such great detail about such a small change? Because he held it a little

longer, for that it was necessary to dedicate part of a sicha to explain? The reason is because we do not change the minhagim because it effects our connection to the Rebbe. A chosid has a sense of wanting to always be connected to the Rebbeim. Therefore, notwithstanding other possible explanations, I do not want to do it any other way. This is the path of a chosid.

When it comes to Pesach we do not eat gebrochs. The source for this minhag is because perhaps there is some unbaked flour within the matza. Nevertheless, on Acharon Shel Pesach we eat gebrochs! The reason is because we saw the Previous Rebbe would take his matzah and eat it with every food at the meal of Acharon Shel Pesach. The Rebbe explains in Likutei Sichos how we are not afraid to do this. Every minhag has a solid foundation. It is not arbitrary.

We need to spend time to read the Rebbe's Haggadah and to follow it carefully throughout the seder. We also need to differentiate between the minhag for us and a 'minhag from the house of the Rebbe' (discussed in the previous article). One example for this is that in the house of the Rebbe, the Rebbe himself was the only one to place a plate under the kaira (the matzos). The Rebbe explains in a note that this only applies to

the Rebbe's house. Privately however in our own homes there should be a plate under the matzos. The plate represents the attribute of malchus and therefore needs to be together with the matzos of the kaira. From this we see that even something we saw openly being done at the Rebbe's house needs clarification as to whether we need to do it ourselves.

Therefore, all the details that we find in the Siddur and the Haggadah have a source. We see many places in the Haggadah where the Rebbe brings the exact source for the minhag. Our job is to learn about them, know them and care for them. When we learn we need to check into what we are learning. Through this we will impact upon ourselves and our entire families, a sense of what is special and unique about minhagim, and how through them we are connected to I'lane d'chaya, the living tree, to the Rebbeim. This enables us to achieve cheirus amiti, a true sense of freedom on Pesach.

A Kosher and Freilichin Pesach!

(See this month's HaChodesh magazine for details about the minhagim for Pesach.)

Chabad Standards

Recently there has been a public discussion taking place about Chabad standards. On one side of the discussion there are those that have taken a more lenient approach that is a direct challenge to what Chabad standards have been until now. Their reasoning is that the Rebbe's approach is to have Ahavas Yisroel towards everyone. Therefore, we need to show understanding and compassion towards those who have not yet assimilated Chabad standards into their day to day living. They feel that even mosdos need to make accommodations by easing the requirements in order that they feel comfortable within the Chabad system.

On the other side of the discussion the reasoning is as follows. Who instituted standards in Chabad? Was it Chassidim or the Rebbeim? Since we know that it was the Rebbeim who instituted Chabad standards, are we allowed to negotiate those standards ourselves or to look for guidance from the Rebbeim? Surely, we should look for direction from the Rebbeim for our present situation. After all, the effects of our decisions impact all Chabad institutions in the present and also for generations to come.

Based on the above, I am not going to get involved directly in the pros and cons of this discussion rather discuss a few points from a letter of the Rebbe (Igros Kodesh; v. 20 pg. 174). The subject of the letter is that Chabad educational institutions demand a very high standard of learning etc. It's possible that this high standard might scare off some to accept this tremendous responsibility and their fear is that they will end up going to other institutions and get a less desired education. The following are a

few adapted excerpts from the letter that answer this dilemma.

...if the educational demands are compromised from the highest level then there will be a ripple effect on the average and lesser than average students...

... Chabad institutions throughout the world represent a unique approach towards both action and education. This standard represents a foundation in which all mosdos share, even by their name alone. Therefore, if the standards are changed in any institution throughout the world, it will cause an effect in similar way throughout the Chabad system, not just in the local country...

...The Friediker Rebbe explains that there is an interlinked social hierarchy amongst people. Therefore, if there is a descent of one level, even on the highest level, this causes a descent on all the succeeding levels. Even though the descent on the highest level was from the holy of holies to the holy, automatically the descent on the subsequent levels will be from holy to ordinary, and even lower from permissible to the forbidden. Therefore, each and every one of us needs to constantly ascend in holiness and obviously not to descend even if his general level is higher than his social peers. The same thing applies to mosdos...

...This is certainly true if mosdos have and established standard over many years. Any descent from those standards could be interpreted as a response to the demands of the times, not of principles...

...There is a clear directive from divrei Chazal that says that when Rav arrived in Bavel he found a valley and built a fence. The explanation is that Rav saw that the standards in Bavel had been compromised. He chose to be

machmir and to add new fences, new even higher standards. This means to us that when we find a group that has dropped their standards in a specific area we should not respond in kind. There are those that are concerned that if we uphold the standard we could distance those people from us or push them into things that are worse. The lesson is to do the exact opposite. We should try to inspire them to a higher standard and

to set the highest possible standard in the challenged areas...

This is a printed letter from the Rebbe. I highly recommend that each person read it himself or have it translated so that they can fully understand it. The point here is not to take sides rather to always be sure to consult the Rebbe when making such important decisions whose repercussion will affect us for generations to come.

לע״נ
אבי מורי
הרה״ח הרה״ת הרב
מנחם שמואל דוד ב״ר שמעון הלוי ע״ה רייטשיק
שד״ר רבותינו נשיאנו למעלה מיובל שנים
נפטר חי שבט ה׳תשנ״ח

ולע״נ
אמי מורתי
הרבנית אשת חבר מרת
לאה בת הרה״ח אברהם אבלי הכהן ע״ה ראפפורט
מגזע הש״ך והרמ״א
נפטרה כ״ד מנחם-אב ה׳תשס״ז

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.