

PRACTICAL HORA'OS

A CLOSER
LOOK AT
SOME OF
THE REBBE'S
HORA'OS

SEUDAH SHLISHIS

WHAT CHASSIDIM DO – AND
DON'T DO – AT THE THIRD
SHABBOS MEAL, AND WHY

“TODAY YOU WILL NOT FIND IT”

When the Torah discusses the *man* that the Yidden were given by Hashem, the word “*hayom* — today” is mentioned three times. “ויאמר משה אכלהו היום כי שבת היום לה' היום לא” — תמצאהו בשדה — And Moshe said, eat it **today**, for **today** is a Shabbos to Hashem; **today** you will not find it in the field.”¹ Chazal inferred from this *posuk* the obligation to eat three meals on Shabbos. While a “meal” in *halacha* is typically defined by eating bread, when it comes to *seudah shlishis*, the third Shabbos meal, the *poskim* differ whether eating bread is required. While some require it, “some are lenient, and say that one may fulfill the obligation of *seudah shlishis* with any *mezonos*, and some are more lenient and say it can be fulfilled by eating foods that typically accompany bread, such as meat, fish and the like. Some are yet more lenient and say it can be fulfilled even by eating fruit.”²

The Alter Rebbe cites these opinions in his Shulchan Aruch and concludes, “One should not rely on [these lenient opinions] unless it's impossible to do otherwise. For example, if one is so full that he wouldn't be able to eat bread without being in much pain.”

Nonetheless, our Rebbeim would almost always not eat bread at *seudah shlishis*, instead fulfilling this obligation by just eating a bit of food. The Rebbe also once commented that his father, Harav Levi Yitzchok, would only eat fruits for *seudah shlishis*.³ The reason for this is because the third mention of the word “*hayom*” is in the phrase “Today you will *not* find it” — and so it is fitting that *seudah shlishis* be observed by *not* eating bread.⁴

THE RUCHNIYUSDIKE REASON

There are a number of *ruchniyusdike* reasons for the *minhag* not to wash and eat bread at *seudah shlishis*:

Chassidus explains that *seudah shlishis* corresponds to the *Shabbos* of *Olam Haba*, when there will be no eating or drinking. Therefore, it is fitting to not eat a full meal at this time.

But isn't it a leniency? Chassidim *famously* don't rely on leniencies — we fulfill mitzvos to the utmost! Why, when it comes to *seudah shlishis*, do we rely on an opinion upon

which the Alter Rebbe says specifically *not* to rely on?

The reason for this is, as the Alter Rebbe also explains,⁵ because the mitzvah of eating on Shabbos is only for pleasure — so if eating is *not* pleasurable, but instead painful, there may be an obligation *not* to eat!

When a person understands that at the time of *seudah shlishis* is “רעוא דרעוין”—the [radiance of the] innermost Will of Hashem,” the lofty level of G-dliness that is connected to *Olam Haba* and to Yom Kippur — it will pain him to eat at this time, and therefore, there is no actual obligation to eat.

However, we do not skip *seudah shlishis* entirely. We eat something small, which symbolizes our bringing these lofty levels down into this world, just as *Olam Haba* will be a time when our *neshamos* are in physical bodies.⁶

The Rebbe mentioned that it was often the custom of the Friediker Rebbe to make kiddush on Shabbos day and eat something small just to fulfill the obligation of eating together with kiddush (“*makom seudah*”). He would then daven Mincha and wash for the Shabbos meal. In this way, the main Shabbos meal was eaten last⁷.

WHEN DO WE WASH FOR SEUDAH SHLISHIS

At the conclusion of Yomim Tovim — Rosh Hashanah, Simchas Torah, Pesach and Shavuot — the Rebbe led farbrengens that would go until after the time that Yom Tov concluded. The Rebbe would encourage everyone to wash, requesting announcements to be made as *shkiah* neared.

When the last day of Yom Tov occurred on Friday, the Rebbe held an additional farbrengen on the next day, Shabbos afternoon, encouraging everyone to wash and have a *seuda*. The Rebbe once explained that the power of this farbrengen is able to bring the subconscious level of *taanug* (“*bilti-murgash*”) into consciousness (“*taanug hamurgash*”) by washing for a meal at this sublime time⁸.

LEARNING TORAH AS SEUDAH SHLISHIS

Another alternative for fulfilling the obligation of

seudah shlishis that the Rebbe mentioned several times is to learn Torah. This is brought in Zohar⁹ and the Magen Avraham.¹⁰ However, this option comes with several important caveats and it seems clear that the Rebbe was not pleased with those who would simply ignore the obligation of *seudah shlishis* entirely.

“There are some who fulfill their obligation with Torah or with a *niggun*, and there are even those who consider themselves to be *shpitz Chabad* and don’t do anything to fulfill their obligation ...”¹¹

“When fulfilling *seudah shlishis* with speaking words of Torah, if someone says their own novel Torah thought, it’s possible that someone will come along after Shabbos and refute it, and then they would be left with no *seudah shlishis* at all... Therefore, it’s better to fulfill one’s obligation with eating a piece of herring or with saying a true *dvar Torah* that cannot be refuted.”¹²

DON'T DECIDE FOR OTHERS

Even if one is fulfilling his own obligation of *seudah shlishis* with eating something light or with learning Torah, one cannot expect the same of others. Instead, the Rebbe taught, when it comes to giving tzedakah to someone else, we are required to give them a full meal for *seudah shlishis*.¹³ **T**

1. Beshalach, 16:5.
2. Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, 291:7.
3. Hamelech B’mesibo vol. 2, p. 135.
4. Hayom Yom 22 Adar I. Likkutei Sichos vol. 21, Beshalach 2.
5. Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, 288:2.
6. See Likkutei Sichos above for further explanation.
7. See farbrengen Acharon Shel Pesach 5739, se’if 23.
8. Sichas Shabbos Bereishis 5751.
9. Zohar vol. 3, 95:1.
10. Magen Avraham, Orach Chaim 444, 2.
11. Farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Bereishis, 5718, Sichos Kodesh 5718-19, p. 60.
12. Shabbos Parshas Toldos 5714. See also Shabbos Parshas Tzav 5745, sicha 1.
13. Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim 5745.