

“Echoes of Redemption: Shabbat HaGadol”
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It is truly heartbreaking to witness the widespread devastation across Israel following the attacks from Iran.

Israel is confronting an enemy that has sworn to wipe it off the map. This adversary possesses the means to do so and funds terror proxies surrounding Israel to murder its citizens.

Remarkably, we are witnessing extraordinary miracles unfold before our eyes: the might of the Israeli air force, powerful defence capabilities. Yes, the damage is considerable, but it could be vastly greater.

Despite the onslaught and devastation, the resolve of the Israeli people remains strong, and the IDF is achieving significant success in reducing the enemy’s capabilities. With the help of G-d, Israel has shown itself to be the dominant force of the Middle East.

And here we are on the eve of *Shabbat HaGadol* – the “*Great Sabbath*.” The Shabbat before Pesach is called by this name for several reasons:

- 1) On this Shabbat many gather to study the details of the Laws of Pesach. Customarily, the rabbi of the community gives a long (Gadol) speech preparing the community for the festival.

It is especially important to study the laws concerning how to remove chametz from our possession, how utensils must be prepared for use on Pesach, how to bake matzot and how to properly fulfill the mitzvot and traditions of the *Seder* night.

- 2) The Haftorah read on this Shabbat ends with the verse speaking about the future Redemption. “Behold I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the Great and Awesome day of G-d.” (Malachi 3:23). This verse is the very last verse of all the books of the Prophets.
- 3) A great miracle occurred on this day, several days before the Exodus. The Jewish people were commanded by Moses to take a lamb and tie it to their bedposts on the 10th of Nissan, just five days before leaving Egypt.

When the Egyptians asked why, the Jews replied that these lambs were intended for the Paschal Offering. Though the Egyptians were enraged, they could not stop the Jews. On this Shabbat, it became clear that the Egyptians were powerless against them.

In many ways, on this day the Jewish People, as a nation, became *Gedolim*, mature and sovereign, by observing this first mitzvah of taking the lamb and preparing it for the Pesach sacrifice.

- 4) While slaves in Egypt Moshe asked Pharoah to give them one day a week, Shabbat, as a day to rest. Every week, as soon as Shabbat was over, they

would immediately return to work. On this Shabbat however, they did not return to slavery. So, this really was a significant and “great” Shabbat.

Shabbat HaGadol was a **test of faith**. To select a sheep for the Korban Pesach, knowing that their enemy oppressors would be infuriated. It was a test of conviction and trust in G-d’s protection. To step into harm’s way, exposing themselves to potential attack.

In many ways, what we are witnessing today reflects the faith of our ancestors. The Jewish people live in Israel despite immense challenges, fulfilling G-d’s call to dwell in our ancestral homeland. Likewise, Jews around the world live with pride in their religion and heritage. Though we face attacks, we remain steadfast, knowing we are fulfilling the will of G-d and trusting in G-d’s divine protection.

Especially noteworthy is that this year, Shabbat HaGadol and Passover occur on the exact days and dates that they occurred at the time of the Redemption from Egypt 3,338 years ago.

In many ways, there is a sense of a repeat of that first Seder night. G-d commanded the Jewish People: Everyone remain in your homes. Conduct your Seders as I have instructed. I will “pass-over” your homes and “mete out punishment” obliterating your enemies once and for all.

May G-d grant us the merit to see this “Great” day.

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