

Now, the people of Sodom were wicked and sinful toward Hashem. (13:13)

Every once in a while, I like to veer from the recurrent themes of our commentary and digress with an exposition that has an esoteric *Chassidic* slant to it, especially if it presents the message of the *pasuk* in a totally new and positive light. The *seudas Melaveh Malkah*, meal bidding farewell to the *Shabbos* Queen, holds great significance in Jewish tradition. While it is true that it seems to have taken on a greater celebratory life in *Chassidic* circles, it does not mean that it has any less significance in other Orthodox circles. After spending an entire day immersed in the unique – almost mystical – retreat from the material and mundane, our added *Shabbos* soul, the *neshamah yeseirah*, takes its leave, and we return to our daily lives. Many sit down to a meal on *Motzoei Shabbos*, sing *zemiros*, religious songs, themed concerning Dovid *Hamelech/Moshiach* and Eliyahu *HaNavi*, and recite stories of *tzaddikim*, righteous persons. A further tradition is that we each have a small, indestructible bone in the body called the *luz*. It sits at the base of the skull, where the knot of the *Tefillin* rests. It is from this bone that Hashem will reconstruct the entire body when the time for *Techiyas Ha'Meisim*, Resurrection of the Dead, arrives. The only food that nourishes the *luz* bone is that which is eaten during the *Melaveh Malkah seudah*, meal.

In the *sefer Divrei Chonoh*, *Horav Chonoh*, *zl*, *m'Koloshitz* homiletically renders the *pasuk*, *V'anshei Sodom raim v'chataim l'Hashem*, with the word Sodom serving as an abbreviation for *samech – seudassa; daled – d'David; mem – Malka*, - the meal of David *Hamelech*, namely the *Melaveh Malkah* meal. The author continues by interpreting *ra'im*, as *reim* – friends, and *chata'im*, as related to *v'cheetai es ha'bayis*, “He shall cleanse the house” (*Vayikra* 14:52), in which *ra* and *chet* are interpreted as friend and cleanse, respectively. The *pasuk* thus implies that when we eat the *Melaveh Malkah* meal together with friends, it is a purifying and uplifting experience, facilitating our spiritual ascendance.

The *Ohr Pnei Moshe*, *Horav Moshe*, *zl*, *m'Pshevorsk*, was a close associate of *Horav Elimelech*, *zl*, *m'Lishensk* and *Horav Zushe*, *zl*, *m'Annepole* and other *Chassidic* giants (1720-1806). He was known to be an unusual *sofer*, scribe. It is known that the *Alshich HaKadosh* appeared to him often to teach him Torah. Apparently, prior to being *megaleh*, revealing himself as a *Rebbe*, the *Pshevorsker* was a manager in a whiskey factory. (This story was related by *Horav Shlomo Halberstam*, *zl*, first *Bover Rebbe*.) When the *Rebbe* applied for the position, the owner of the factory (himself a deeply-observant Jew) asked if he knew the secret of producing high-quality whiskey. The *Rebbe* said not to worry, he would produce high grade-whiskey which would be highly sought after. Obviously, having no experience whatsoever in the whiskey-making field, this assurance was a stretch, but, true to his word, the reputation of the whiskey which the factory produced spread far and wide, making the owner a wealthy man. The relationship between the owner and his manager was very amicable. Out of a sense of appreciation for the success engendered by his manager, the owner invited him to share in *Melaveh Malkah*, to which the manager agreed.

One *Motzoei Shabbos*, the manager did not come by. After a while, the owner became concerned and went to *Rav Moshe's* home to find out if anything was wrong. When he came to the house, he noticed a brilliant light shining from the window (This is before light bulbs. A candle gives off just so much light. Apparently, an unusual illumination emanated from the house.) The owner walked over to the window to discover *Rav Moshe* in deep conversation with an elderly man. Their discussion was Torah-related and involved the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* 89:21, *Matzasi David Avdi, b'shemem Kodshi Meshachtiv*, "I have found David, My servant, with My holy oil I have anointed him." The *Midrash (Rabbah, Lech Lecha 41)* asks: "Where did I find him? In Sodom." Clearly, this *Midrash* appears enigmatic. The elderly man (who was evidently a holy person – if he was, in fact, a person) explained that Sodom is a *notrakon*, acronym, for *seudassa d'David Malkah*, which alludes that the *Melaveh Malkah* meal is a time to connect with the attributes of David *Hamelech*. Afterwards, the elderly man informed *Rav Moshe* that the time had come to reveal himself as a *Rebbe*.

The owner of the whiskey factory now realized that *Rav Moshe* was no simple Jew who knew how to prepare a good whiskey. He was a spiritually-elevated, holy Jew. The very next morning, the owner stood by *Rav Moshe's* door, bearing a *kvittel*, written petition, with his family names and a *pidyon*, redemption money, both of which are given to a *Chassidic Rebbe* upon petitioning his blessing. He said, "I want to be the first person to give the "*Rebbe*" a *kvittel*."