

## **Breslov Customs and Practices, Part IV: Adar Through Menachem Av**

Please note that this is a work in progress, and is subject to revision.

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### **Adar**

The Rebbe states that the month of Adar is a propitious time to give *tzedakah* to the needy in Eretz Yisrael.

(*Chayei Moharan* 562)

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The Rebbe also explains that every Jew has a portion in Eretz Yisrael, and goes on to relate Eretz Yisrael to the “*no’am ha-elyon*,” supernal sweetness and peace. By contrast, the Diaspora is related to *chovlim*, disturbance and conflict. The *no’am ha-elyon* may be experienced by giving *tzedakah* to those who dwell in Eretz Yisrael. A *remez* to this is that the initials of “*lachzos be-no’am Hashem u-levaker be-heikhalo / to gaze upon the Divine Pleasantness and explore His chamber*” spell the word “*terumah* (portion),” meaning *tzedakah*. Reb Noson adds that if one does so with proper intent, *be-emunah u-ve-lev shalem*, one will receive the *no’am ha-elyon* in a way that cannot be harmed or effected by any *chovlim*.

(See *Likkutei Moharan* II, 71; *Toras Noson* on *Likkutei Moharan*, ad loc., 4)

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Reb Elazar once pointed out that in *Likkutei Moharan* II, 10, the Rebbe states that through *simchah* one attains *yishuv-ha-da’as*, a settled, focused mind. This is the prerequisite for experiencing *Elokus*. Therefore, since the month of Adar is a time of *simchah*, it enables one to attain this *yishuv ha-da’as* and feeling of closeness to Hashem.

### **Zayin Adar / Yahrtzeit of Moshe Rabbenu**

Reb Gedaliah instructed his *talmidim* to recite “*Sha’ar Tikkun ha-Nefesh*,” which is the second section of Rabbi Noson Hanover’s “*Sha’arei Tzion*,” on Zayin Adar.

(Heard from Rabbi Dovid Shapiro)

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Reb Elazar has told his *talmidim* that since Zayin Adar is an “*es ratzon*,” a time of heavenly favor, we should *daven* for other people at this time. He related this to *Likkutei Moharan* I, 215, which discusses how Moshe Rabbenu stands between *shmad* and *ratzon*. That is, Chazal state that “whenever *avodah zarah* is present, Divine wrath is present” (*Sifri, Devarim* 13:18); however, Moshe Rabbenu transmutes this wrath to mercy and favor. This is especially true on his *yahrtzeit*.

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In Eretz Yisrael, many Breslover Chassidim (and others) go to Meron on Zayin Adar to prayer near the *kever* of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

\*

Reb Avraham Sternhartz used to spend either the Shabbos before or after Zayin Adar in Meron. He would give a public *shiur* in *Likkutei Moharan* on that Shabbos to Chassidim and *anshei ma’aseh* of all backgrounds.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

### **Yud-Gimmel Adar / Ta'anis Esther**

The *yahrtzeit* of Rabbi Nachman Goldstein, Rav of Tcherin, falls on the thirteenth of Adar Sheini, which is Ta'anis Esther. The Tcheriner Rav was one of Reb Noson's younger *talmidim*, being a grandson of Reb Aharon, the Rav of Breslov and a close *talmid* of the Rebbe. His father, Rav Zvi Aryeh (also known as "Reb Hirsch Leib"), succeeded his father Reb Aharon as Rov of Breslov, and was a *talmid* of Reb Shmuel Eizik of Dashev. Yet he sent Reb Nachman as a *bochur* to learn from Reb Noson. Eventually the Tcheriner Rav emerged as the leading thinker of his generation in the Breslov community.

A prolific author, the Tcheriner Rav's *seforim* include *Parpara'os le-Chokhmah*, *Zimras Ha-aretz*, and *Yekara de-Shabbata* on *Likkutei Moharan*; *Rimzei ha-Ma'asiyos* on *Sippurei Ma'asiyos*; *Leshon Chassidim* and *Derekh Chassidim* on *Toras ha-Baal Shem Tov*; *Nachas ha-Shulkhan*; and others. His foremost *talmid* was his grandson, Rabbi Avraham Sternhartz, whom he raised after his daughter, Reb Avraham's mother, passed away.

(More biographical material and stories about the Tcheriner Rav may be found in Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn's Introduction to the *Toras ha-Netzach* of edition *Parpara'os le-Chokhmah*; Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Bender, *Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh*, vol. II, pp. 133-146; et passim. Tragically, numerous manuscripts of the Tcheriner Rav were lost during the Stalinist persecutions, and those remaining in the possession of Reb Avraham Sternhartz were lost during Israel's War of Independence in 1948, when the residents of Yerushalayim's Old City were killed, taken captive, or forced to flee.)

## Purim

As mentioned above, Purim is one of the five times Breslover Chassidim *daven ki-vasikin bitzibbur*.

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After Shacharis, Breslover Chassidim are accustomed to immediately give *matanos la-eyyonim* and exchange *shalach manos*. Many also remain in *shul*, where they wash for “*ha-motzi*,” eat a light meal, drink wine, sing, and say *divrei Torah*. Thus, they fulfill the *mitzvos* of Purim right away. However, most wait until after Minchah to share the *se’udah* with their families.

(Cf. Rabbi Benayahu Yissachar Shmueli, *Siddur Rechovos ha-Nahar, Kavannos Purim* [5762 / 2002], *Hilchos U-Minhagei Purim* 20, citing the ARI *zal* and RaSHaSH, et al. Some give *matanos la-‘eyyonim* prior to the Megillah reading, following the custom mentioned in *Siddur ARI Kol Yaakov, Kavannos Purim*, 60b.)

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During the Purim *se’udah*, those capable of drinking wine, etc., do so to the point of intoxication in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of “*‘ad de-lo yada’*.” (However, as a rule, Breslover Chassidim do not drink more than an occasional “*le-chaim*” or two during the rest of the year.)

(In addition to the Gemora in *Megillah* 7b, this is supported by Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavannos*, 104a. However, those who cannot do so may fulfill the *mitzvah* of “*‘ad de-lo yada’*” by drinking a small amount of wine and taking a nap. See RaMA, *Orach Chaim* 695:2, citing MaHaRIL; *Sha’arei Teshuvah*, ad loc.; et al. A person who may not drink alcohol for medical reasons is entirely exempt.)

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Reb Gedaliah said that the drinking of Purim is an expression of *simchah*, and therefore should be done *be-simchah* – not just to fulfill the *mitzvah* and “get it over with.” The appropriate time for this is during the Purim *se’udah*.

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He did not agree with those who drink to the point of intoxication soon after Shacharis. The wife of a certain Breslover who did so, and thus was not present for the *se'udah* at home, once told Reb Gedaliah: "For him it was Purim, but for the rest of the family, it was Tisha be-Av..."

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig)

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Reb Noson *darshans* at length about all the *mitzvos* of Purim, including wearing masks, drinking, feasting, etc. He also mentions the *minhag* of his day to wrap the foods for *mishlo'ach manos* in two napkins, above and below.

(These sources are too numerous to mention; for a comprehensive index, see Rabbi Shmuel Tukatzinsky, *Shevet be-Hora'ah al Shulchan Arukh* 686-697)

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The Rebbe states: "Rejoicing and dancing on Purim makes us worthy of receiving the Torah anew, in both its revealed and hidden aspects." He also discusses how clapping the hands and dancing mitigates harsh judgments.

(*Likkutei Moharan* I, 10:8)

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When Purim falls on Motz'ei Shabbos, we do not recite "*V'yiten lekho*" or the Melaveh Malkah *zemiros*.

(Heard from Rabbi Chaim Man.)

## **Megillah**

Reb Noson writes that when one looks into the Megillah, one beholds the faces of Mordechai and Esther; for reading the Megillah is an aspect of “*re’iyas pnei ha-tzaddik*,” gazing upon the face of the tzaddik. Reb Gedaliah used to listen to the Megillah reading *be-eimah u-ve-yirah*, with intense awe.

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After reading the Megillah, it is customary to sing “*Shoshanas Ya’akov*.” There are various *mus’chos* for this *piyut*. Following the words “*arurim kol ha-resha’im*,” Reb Gedaliah used to say “*berukhim kol Yisrael*,” not “*berukhim kol ha-tzaddikim*.”

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig. Somewhat similarly, the RaSHaSH used to say: “*arurim kol ha-resha’im shel umos ha-’olam / berukhim kol Yisrael...*”)

### **Purim in Yerushalayim**

Regarding Purim “*meshulash*,” Reb Gedaliah instructed his *talmidim* to follow the *kuntres* by Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld on that subject. Rav Michel Tukatzinsky ruled that *Shechunas Etz Chaim* (opposite the central bus station) is not called “*samakh ve-nireh*,” and its residents should read the Megillah on 14 Adar. (Rav Michel Tukatzinsky’s son, Rav Nisan Tukatzinsky, is Reb Gedaliah’s *mechutan*.) However, Reb Gedaliah followed Rav Sonnenfeld’s opinion that the ancient walls of Yerushalayim extended as far as Rechov Diskin in Givat Shaul. (In Givat Shaul, the Megillah is read on the 15<sup>th</sup>.) Rav Sonnenfeld’s *shittah* is the prevailing view today.

(Heard from Rabbi Dovid Shapiro)

## Nisan

The Rebbe taught that the days of Nisan are days of *teshuvah*, like the days of Tishrei.

(*Likkutei Moharan* I, 49)

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The Rebbe was born on Rosh Chodesh Nisan, which is the Mishnah designates as the "*Rosh Hashanah shel malakhim*," the day on which the reign of a Jewish king officially begins. Today many Breslover Chassidim travel to Uman to pray near the Rebbe's *tziyun* on Rosh Chodesh Nisan because it, too, is a "Rosh Hashanah," and to some extent possesses the *segulos* of Rosh Hashanah.

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In a letter to Rabbi Avraham Jacobovitch, Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz mentions that Nisan is the head of all months, and is a time of *simchah* in all the worlds; each day is comparable to a Rosh Chodesh and a Yom Tov; and through this *simchah*, one can attain *tikkun* and *shemiras ha-bris*, as discussed in *Likkutei Moharan* I, 49.

(Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz, *Michtevei Shmuel* [Jerusalem: Keren R' Yisrael Dov Odesser, first edition], Letter 26, p. 103)

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Beginning on Rosh Chodesh Nisan, the *minhag* in the Ukraine was for each person to recite the *parshas ha-nasi* followed by the "*yehi ratzon*" after Shacharis, not to read it from the Sefer Torah in public. This was also the Breslover *minhag*.

(Heard from Rabbi Michel Dorfman. Those who read the *nasi* privately include the communities of Chernobyl-Skver, Boyan, Karlin-Stolin, Chabad, etc. Reading it from a Sefer Torah was the *minhag* of Rabbi Chaim of Tzanz, also mentioned in *Darkei Chaim ve-Shalom* [Munkatch])

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However, in recent years it became the *minhag* in the Tzefas Breslov community to read the *nasi* from the Sefer Torah. This change was made out of concern that people not forget to do so.

\*

Reb Elazar and a group of *talmidim* from Tzefas usually go to Uman immediately after Pesach to spend the last days of Nisan at the Rebbe's *tziyun*. The *chaburah* spends one day visiting the *kivrei tzaddikim* in Berditchev, Medzhibuzh, and Breslov. While in Uman, Reb Elazar teaches *Sippurei Ma'asiyos* and *Likkutei Moharan* every day, and the *chaburah* recites *Tikkun ha-Klalli be-tzibbur*.

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Reb Gedaliah and his *talmidim* used to go to Tzefas in order to pray there on Erev Rosh Chodesh Iyar. When asked about this, Reb Gedaliah said that this was the date that Mosdos Nachal Novea Mekor Chochma had purchased its first property in Tzefas.  
(Heard from Rabbi Dovid Shapiro)

### **Mekhiras Chometz / Sale of Chometz**

Reb Gedaliah stated that the *mekhirah* is a complete sale, and *chas ve-shalom* that one should think otherwise. Therefore, one may sell any quantity of *chometz gamur*.

(Heard from Rabbi Yaakov Klein)

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Reb Gedaliah did not instruct his *talmidim* to sell their *chometz* through a Rov who used an '*arev kablán*. Therefore, it seems he was not particular about this.

(Heard from Rabbi Yaakov Klein. The Baal ha-Tanya advocated the use of an '*arev kablán*, a Jew who acts as the agent of the non-Jew who buys the *chometz*.)

### **Shabbos Ha-Gadol**

After Minchah, it is customary to recite the Haggadah, beginning with “*‘Avadim hayinu*” until “*le-khaper ‘al kol ‘avonoseinu.*” One does so even if Shabbos ha-Gadol falls on Erev Pesach.

(RaMA, *Orach Chaim* 430:1; *Mishnah Berurah*, ad loc.)

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The Rebbe *darshans* on the custom that once prevailed in Eastern Europe to turn over the tables after Shabbos HaGadol. (We have been told that the tables were commonly made so that the top rested on the legs. Therefore, by turning over the top, one was provided with a new, “*chometz-free*” surface.)

(See *Sichos ha-Ran* 88)

### **Erev Pesach**

Reb Avraham told Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz that Reb Noson used to say: “As soon as one recites the *berakhah* for *bedikas chometz*, it is already a *shtick Pesach* (i.e. one is already connected to the essence of Pesach).”

(Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz, editor of Rabbi Avraham b'Reb Nachman, *Yemei T'la'os* [Jerusalem 1982, fifth edition] p. 41)

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Reb Avraham described how after the *bedikah*, Reb Noson would speak words of *mussar* to his sons: they should strive to remove the *chometz* from their hearts, etc. This was the only time he spoke *mussar* at such length the entire year. He did so order to awaken the paradigm of “*yom nakam bi-libi . . . the day of retribution is in My heart, and the year of My Redemption has come*” (Isaiah 63:4). This mood lasted until the burning of the *chometz* the following morning, when one must also destroy the *chometz* from one's heart. Reb Noson's allusion to the verse “*yom nakam bi-libi*” alludes to *Likkutei Moharan* I, 83, which speaks of searching for *chometz* with the “light of the eyes” (see there), destroying the *chometz* in one's heart, and other awesome *tikkunim* that are bound up with the Redemption and Beis ha-Mikdash.

(Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz, editor of Rabbi Avraham b'Reb Nachman's *Yemei T'la'os* [Jerusalem 1982, fifth edition] p. 41)

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Reb Gedaliah had a large family and an extremely small *dirah*. Yet despite the challenges of operating within such circumstances, he remained calm and patient throughout the Pesach preparations, with *tzelilus ha-da'as*.

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig)

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Reb Gedaliah showed great *zehirus* in all *mitzvos de-rabbanan*. Thus, he would not even drink water before *bedikas chometz*, even though this is halakhically permissible.

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig and Rabbi Yaakov Klein)

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Reb Gedaliah did not use a feather and wooden spoon during *bedikas chometz*, but only a candle and a sheet of paper made into a cone to collect the ten pieces of *chometz*, etc. One year one of his children came back from kindergarten and gave him a wooden spoon for the *bedikah*. However, he put it aside and did not use it, commenting, “*Ich fier zach vie der Tate . . .* I conduct myself like my father.”

(Heard from Rabbi Yossel Sofer citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

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Reb Gedaliah's wife would place each of the ten small pieces of *chometz* on a piece of paper, and put them on the floor. Reb Gedaliah would collect them during the *bedikah* and put them in the paper cone together with the candle to be burned in the morning.

(Heard from Rabbi Yossel Sofer citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

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Reb Gedaliah was not extreme in his manner of performing the *bedikah*. For example, if a drawer were not normally used for *chometz*, he would just open it and quickly look inside. He told his children to clean out the pockets of their clothes during the day, and he did not inspect them at night.

(Heard from Rabbi Yossel Sofer citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

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Reb Avraham used to fast all day on Erev Pesach and did not avail himself of the *heter* to make a *si'um* or attend one. This also had been the practice of his *zeide*, the Tcheriner Rov.

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig and Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

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Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn remembered hearing that Reb Avraham had had an older sister who died young, and therefore he was not obligated to fast on *Ta'anis Bekhorim*; yet he did so anyway. Another possible reason for this stringency, he speculated, was that Reb Avraham wished exempt his *bekhor*, Reb Noson, during the latter's childhood, and he simply continued to do so after Reb Noson came of age.

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The Rav of Tcherin writes that there is no special *'inyan* in Breslov to bake Erev Pesach *matzos*, which entails many halakhic risks if conditions are not optimal. "However," he adds, "if one can do so properly and without great difficulty, *mah tov u-mah na'im*."

(See *Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* IV, 257. However, Reb Elazar has a copy of an unpublished letter from Reb Noson asking for wheat in order to make Erev Pesach *matzos*. This was a custom of the Baal Shem Tov still observed in many circles; see *Shivchei Baal Shem Tov* [Avraham Rubenstein, ed.] 199; *Siddur ARI Rav Shabbsai, Seder Erev Pesach*, et al.)

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Reb Gedaliah did not bake Erev Pesach *matzos*. Moreover, he was particular not to use them, due to the halakhic problems surrounding them.

(Heard from Rabbi Yitzchak Kenig, Rabbi Chaim Man, and Rabbi Moshe Grinberger)

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Sometime after *chatzos*, Reb Gedaliah would recite the letter of Rabbi Shimshon Ostropolier, printed in many editions of the Haggadah. He encouraged his *talmidim* to do so, as well.

(Heard from Rabbi Moshe Grinberger)

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After Minchah, he would read recite the account of the Korban Pesach. This is the common *minhag*. It is possible that the *nusach* he followed was that of Rabbi Yaakov Emden's Siddur. This was one of his favorite *seforim*, which he often reviewed at different times of the year.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)



### **Pesach Hanhagos / Miscellaneous Practices**

The Rebbe stated that on Pesach one should cry out in *davenning*.

(*Likkutei Moharan* I, 201)

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On the first night of Pesach (and also on the second night in *chutz la'aretz*) after Ma'ariv, it is a universal Chassidic custom to recite the full *Hallel be-tzibbur*. Reb Noson mentions this in *Likkutei Halakhos*.

(*Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 487:3, with RaMA; Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Kavannos, Drushei Pesach, Drush* 3, 81b; also see *Likkutei Halakhos, Even ha-'ezer, Pru u-Revu* 3:29)

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In the Tzefas community, the *minhag* is to wear a white *caftan* (or *kittel*) to *shul* on Pesach night, and subsequently at the Seder meal. However, one does not do so on Pesach by day.

(Heard from Rabbi Yitzchak Kenig)

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In the Me'ah She'arim community, the common *minhag* is to wear a white *caftan* only at the Seder. However, in Katamon, the Breslover Chassidim of the previous generation used to wear a white *caftan* to *shul* at night. Today Rabbi Moshe Burshteyn still keeps this *minhag*.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

## Matzah

One is halakhically required to use *shemurah matzah* (i.e. made from wheat that was guarded from the time of harvesting) for the *sedorim*. If possible, one should also use them for the entire Pesach. In the Rebbe's day, however, this presented a great difficulty for many Chassidim. Thus, once a Chassid came to the Rebbe and asked him if it was mandatory to supply his entire family with *shemurah matzos* (in the Ukraine and neighboring regions pronounced "*shemirah*"). "*Shemirah matzos?*" the Rebbe replied. "Something else needs *shemirah*..." – meaning *shemiras ha-bris*.

(Oral tradition)

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Another version: Some people once came to the Rebbe and complained that they could not obtain *shemurah matzos*. The Rebbe held up a *matzah pshuta* and said, "Matazah plus *shemiras ha-bris*" (indicating himself) "is '*shemurah matzah!*' "

(Heard from Rabbi Meir Carlebach)

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Once on Pesach the Rebbe picked up a *matzah pshutah* (i.e. not made from wheat that was guarded from the time of harvesting), and said, "*Az meh halt matzah in der handt, halt men G-tt in der handt . . .* When one holds *matzah*, one holds G-d!"

(*Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* II, 51. Obviously this does not mean that the *matzah* is "G-d" in the literal sense. As a historical note, all *matzos* were hand-made in the Rebbe's day, both *shemurah matzos* and *pshutos*. Machine *matzos* were first introduced during Reb Noson's lifetime, several years after the Rebbe's *histalkus*.)

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Nevertheless, Reb Gedaliah used only hand-made *shemurah matzos*, and encouraged his *talmidim* to do so. This is the common practice in Breslover communities today.

(Heard from Rabbi Chaim Man)

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Reb Gedaliah told his *talmid* Rabbi Shmuel Tukatzinsky, who came from a Litvishe family, to switch from machine *matzos* to hand *matzos*. However, he was not particular that the wheat be milled by hand (*rechayim shel yad*).

(Heard from Rabbi Shmuel Tukatzinsky. Most Chassidim have traditionally used hand *matzos*. In one of his letters, the Chiddushei ha-RIM, founder of the Gerer dynasty, refers to those who permit the use of machine *matzos* as "*talmidim* of Yeravam ben Nevat." However, we see that historically the Breslov community has taken a less stringent position.)

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During Reb Gedaliah's younger years, machine *matzos* were both less expensive and easier to digest than hand *matzos*. Although he refrained from using them, he did not consider them to be inherently of questionable *kashrus*.

(Heard from Rabbi Chaim Man. As a historical note, Yerushalayim was a predominantly Litvishe community, and machine *matzos* were widely used. Moreover, many Yerushalayimer *rabbonim* came from the school of the Chasam Sofer, which viewed machine *matzos* favorably.)

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In Reb Gedaliah's home, the children ate machine *matzos* until they reached the age of *bar mitzvah* and *bas mitzvah*. They used *matzos pshutos*, not *shemurah matzos*.

(Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

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It seems that the only reason Reb Gedaliah used machine *matzos* at all was poverty, and perhaps because they were easier for the children to digest. Food was scarce, and this way he could give them more. Plus this was the local custom in Meah Shearim, and the machine *matzos* had an excellent *hekhsher*.

(Heard from Rabbi Yitzchok Kenig)

\*

In the Ukraine, Breslover Chassidim did not use machine *matzos*. With the persecutions that followed the Russian Revolution, and then those of Stalin, Breslovers began to flee the Ukraine, and a number came to Yerushalayim. There, machine *matzos* were widely used, which had the *hashgochah* of the BaDaTZ of the Eidah ha-Chareidis. Thus, Rabbi Elyah Chaim Rosen, Rosh Yeshivah of Jerusalem's Breslov Yeshivah, used machine *matzos*, as did prominent Breslovers Rabbi Yitzchok Gelbach, Rabbi Moshe Rosenthal, and Rabbi Meir Anshin.

(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Cheshin)

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Rabbi Nochum Yitzchok Frank, a *mechutan* of Rabbi Shmuel Shapiro, also came from a Litvishe background and used machine *matzos*.

(Heard from Rabbi Meir Carlebach)

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Rabbi Shimon Anshin recalled that Rabbi Dovid Schechter, father of Rabbi Yaakov Meir Schechter, once joked that he used hand *matzos* because of the Rebbe's advice not to follow *chumros yeseiros*, unnecessary stringencies – meaning that machine *matzos* are more *mehudar*. However, this joke probably reflected the prevailing attitude in Yerushalayim at that time, which was heavily influenced by the Litvishe community.

(Heard from Rabbi Yitzchok Kenig)

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Rabbi Ephraim Kenig observed that if these prominent Chassidim had felt that the use of machine *matzos* was foreign to the *ru'ach* of Breslov, they never would have done so. Therefore, this cannot be an issue that divides the Chassidim from non-Chassidim, but is essentially a practical matter that depends upon each person's circumstances.

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Some say that Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman ate machine *matzos* when he was in poor health and stayed with the Anshin family, although this requires further investigation.

(Heard from Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Vitriol)

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Rabbi Shimon (ben Avraham) Anshin attested that the Anshin family, including his *zeide*, Reb Meir, used machine *matzos*. He did not know if Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman ate machine *matzos* when he lived in the home of his *zeide*, but he did know that Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman suffered from digestive problems and had to eat *matzah* in small quantities. Therefore, he used to wash for "*hamotzi*" many times a day in order to do so.

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Reb Avraham Moshe Wasilski asked Reb Levi Yitzchak directly if Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman ate machine *matzos* during his later years in Eretz Yisrael. However, Reb Levi Yitzchak said that this remains unclear, because he never spoke with him about it.

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Others say that during the last two years of his life Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman ate *gebrokhts*, because of stomach illness.

(Heard from Rabbi Meir Carlebach)

\*

Rabbi Avraham Moshe Wasilski pointed out that Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman spent the last three and one half years of his life in Uman, where machine *matzos* were not available. Therefore, he could not have eaten them at this time of his life. However, it is possible that he ate *gebrokhts* due to his digestive problems. Yet if he did, this was only to make it possible for him to eat *matzah* – not like those who do so because they enjoy eating *gebrokhts*.

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Rabbi Eliezer Cheshin (son of Rabbi Zvi Cheshin, and a son-in-law of Rabbi Moshe Kramer) thought that all of these stories are untrue. Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn (son of Rabbi Nachman Burshteyn, and a son-in-law of Rabbi Moshe Kramer) said that he never heard these stories, but if anything they should teach us the opposite: that Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman never ate *gebrokhts* or machine *matzos* except when he was physically incapable of eating matzah any other way.

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Concerning machine *matzos*, Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman once commentated, "It would be proper to make a '*shechiyanu!*' " Rabbi Eliezer Cheshin understood this to mean that he was happy because this made it possible for more Jews to have *matzos* for Pesach. Rabbi Meir Carlebach also remembered hearing this *sichah*.

\*

Rabbi Avraham Moshe Wasilski heard a different version of this story. Historically in Poland and Russia, machine *matzos* were not produced with the *hiddurim* of those in Eretz Yisrael, and therefore were rejected by most *rabbonim*. (This was not the case in Hungary-Oberland, where machine *matzos* with reputable *hekhsherim* were available.) Thus, Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman praised the fact that in Yerushalayim such machine *matzos* with reputable *hekhsherim* were commonplace.

\*

Mashgiach of the Breslov Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, Rabbi Ze'ev (Velvel) Cheshin, came from a Litvishe background, *davened* according to Nusach Ashkenaz, and used machine *matzos*. However, he told his children to *daven* according to Nusach Sefard, and to use only hand *matzos*.

(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Cheshin)

\*

Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn added that the prevailing attitude in the Breslov community, past and present, certainly did not reflect the viewpoint of the Tzanzer Rov and *Chiddushei ha-RIM*, both of whom were fiercely critical of machine *matzos*.

\*

Reb Noach Cheifetz once discussed with Reb Gedaliah the possible halakhic advantages of machine *matzos* over hand *matzos*. Reb Gedaliah countered, “Hand *matzos* are *eidelkeit*.” Reb Noach understood this to mean that they embody and are a paragon of the refinement that is characteristic of *Yiddishkeit* altogether. Reb Gedaliah also told Reb Noach not to eat machine *matzos* and not to eat *gebrokhts* (according to the more liberal definition of *gebrokhts*, i.e. that no liquids create the problem of *gebrokhts* except water).

\*

Rabbi Elyah Chaim Rosen told his *talmidim* in the Breslov Yeshivah that the machine *matzos* with the *hekhsher* of the Eidah ha-Chareidis were prepared according to the highest standards, and were preferable to the hand *matzos* commonly available in Yerushalyim during those days. This was during the early 1960s.

(Heard from Rabbi Chaim Kramer)

\*

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Bender once remarked: “I knew people who ate machine *matzos* who are in Gan Eden today; and I knew people who ate hand *matzos* who are in Gehenna today. *Ober mir fieren zach az meh est handt matzos...* However, our custom is to eat hand *matzos*.”

(Heard from Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Vitriol)

\*

Reb Levi Yitzchok Bender used only hand *matzos*. However, he kept a box of machine *matzos* in his house during Pesach. It is unclear if he did so for his wife or for another reason.

(Heard from Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Vitriol)

\*

There was a regional custom in the Ukraine to use *razaveh matzos*, whole-wheat *matzos*. For example, the Rabbi Moshe Bick of Borough Park, whose ancestors were the *rabbonim* of Medzhibuzh, was particular to use *razaveh matzos*. However, it does not seem that there was any *hakpeidah* about this in Breslov.

(See 'Erkhei Yehoshua [Manistrich], *Perach Shoshanim* 107, that this was considered a *hiddur*, similarly *minhagei* Chernobyl-Skver.)

\*

The Wasilski family has a *hakpeidah* to use only *razaveh matzos*. Reb Avraham Moshe Wasilski heard from his father that this was once *hiddur* because it entailed less processing.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Moshe Wasilski)

\*

EDITOR: There was a time when the flour was sifted through coarse canvas sacks. After awhile, the canvas would get hot from friction. This created a *chashash* of *chometz* if there might have been any moisture in the flour. Therefore, the whole-wheat *matzos* were considered to be more *mehudar*, since the flour used was only sifted once. However, from a practical standpoint, none of this applies today. Some continue to use *razaveh matzos* out of loyalty to family tradition, while others do so because of a dietary preference.

### ***Gebrokhets* / Matzoh or Matzoh Products Cooked or Dipped in Water**

Like his saintly great-grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov, the Rebbe did not eat *gebrokhts*. However, in the Breslov community this *chumrah* is not taken to extremes. This is due to the Rebbe's remarks about not allowing *chumros yeseiros* (excessive stringencies). Therefore, although most Breslovers refrain from *gebrokhts*, those who have a previous custom to eat *gebrokhts* are not obligated to change.

(Re. Rabbi Nachman's attitude about *chumros yeseiros*, see *Sichos ha-Ran* (English: "Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom," Breslov Research Institute), sec. 235. This seems to have been the prevailing view in the circle of the Baal Shem Tov; cf. Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz, *Imrei Pinchas ha-Shalem* [Frankel ed., Bnei Brak 2003], vol. I, "*Pesach*," sec. 170-173, that Reb Pinchas was opposed to excessive stringencies except on Pesach, and even then limited himself to those mentioned in the *Shulchan Arukh*.)

\*

Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn remarked that since Breslover Chassidim avoid *chumros yeseiros*, "half of what most people are preoccupied with on Pesach falls away."

\*

Reb Nachman Tulchiner once said, "Don't tell me if a piece of *matzah* falls into my soup!" He also once remarked, "The Torah is *makpid* on a *mashehu chometz*, not a *mashehu matzah*." (Oral tradition)

\*

In Reb Gedaliah's home, during the Sedorim and all the Pesach meals, *matzos* were served on the table, and were not eaten in a *matzah tasch*, etc. (Some communities do so to protect the *matzos* from accidentally coming in contact with liquids. However, Reb Gedaliah was not *machmir* about this.)

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

\*

Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn observed that in the Breslov community, it is possible that those who come from families that use a *matzah tasch* continue to do so. When it comes to *chumros*, everyone follows his own family's *hanhagos* – as is well known, on Pesach, many people avoid eating foods prepared by others, since they all have different *chumros*.

\*

Reb Gedaliah told his *talmidim* that if necessary, one may give *gebrokhts* to small children, but they should have separate dishes for this purpose.

(Heard from Rabbi Dovid Shapiro)

\*

He personally allowed his children to eat *gebrokhts* until they reached the age of *bar mitzvah* or *bas mitzvah*, although prepared and served in separate *keilim*.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

\*

The children ate machine *matzos* and *gebrokhts* at a separate table. However, when they ate together with the adults, as on Shabbos and Yom Tov, machine *matzos* or *gebrokhts* were not allowed on the family table.

(Heard from Rabbi Yossel Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn said that his grandfather, Rabbi Moshe Burshteyn, conducted his household the same way. He added, “*Der Zeide is oichet a Poilisher!*” However, his father, Rabbi Nachman Burshteyn, was a little more lenient and allowed his children to eat machine *matzos* and *gebrokhts* in their own area at the far end of the table.

\*

Despite what is written above about Reb Gedaliah's leniency with his children, Reb Yossel Sofer remembered his grandmother, Reb Gedaliah's wife, once telling him as a child "*nisht brok'n*" – despite their separate *keilim* for *gebrokhts*.

\*

In Reb Gedaliah's house, the *matzah* was removed from the table before the soup was served. Therefore, it was very unlikely that *matzah* would ever mistakenly fall onto the bowls or plates.

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig)

\*

Once Reb Gershon Ginsburg and his wife were visiting Yerushalayim, and asked their mentor, Rabbi Michel Dorfman, if they could join him for the Pesach Seder. He replied that he would be happy to have them as guests, as long as they did not mind the way he handled the issue of *gebrokhts*. Reb Michel did not eat *gebrokhts* – but his wife did. And Reb Michel made no issue of using the same *keilim* and utensils for *gebrokhts* and non-*gebrokhts* during the entire Pesach.

(Heard from Reb Gershon Ginsburg)

\*

Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn said: "The Polish and Russian Chassidim certainly did not use *gebrokhts*. Absolutely not! However, some people were used to *gebrokhts*, if that was their background. The Litvishe did use *gebrokhts*. So they relied on what the Rebbe says about *chumros yeseiros*, and continued their *minhag*."

### **Pesach Foods**

In Reb Gedaliah home, they did not peel fruits and vegetables for Pesach, but merely washed them thoroughly.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig. However, today's produce is often sprayed with various substances, possibly containing *kitniyos*. One should consult a qualified Rov about how to conduct oneself with these foods.)

\*

As a rule, Reb Gedaliah rarely used commercially prepared food products throughout the year, and all the more so on Pesach.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

\*

However, he had no *chumros* about fruits and vegetables on Pesach. For example, a number of people refrain from garlic on Pesach, but he did not. Likewise, he had no *chumros* regarding meat, poultry, or fish.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

\*

He used pre-ground pepper and other spices with a Pesach *hekhsher* from the Eidah ha-Chareidis.

(Heard from Rabbi Chaim Man)

\*

In her old age, Reb Gedaliah's mother-in-law, Mrs. Ehrentherau, lived with the Kenig family, and she used to prepare all of the spices for Pesach by hand. However, after the Eidah ha-Chareidis gave its *hekhsher* to such spices, Reb Gedaliah began to use them.

(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

Reb Gedaliah used potato starch with the *hekhsher* of the Eidah ha-Chareidis. During his last Pesach in 5740 / 1980, he told his grandson, Reb Yosef Sofer, “*Meh iz zokh mishtadel nohr tzu nitzen mit dem hekhsher fun der Eidah fahr Pesach . . .* We try to use only products with the supervision of the Eidah ha-Chareidis for Pesach.” It seemed to Reb Yosef that Reb Gedaliah meant only with the *hekhsher* of the Eidah and no other.

(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

When Rav Pinchas Epstein was Rosh Beis Din of the Eidah ha-Chareidis, he allowed a *hekhsher* on potato starch only for children, since he was concerned about the *shittah* of the *Chokhmas Adam*. However, in later years, the Eidah gave an unqualified *hekhsher* to potato starch, and Reb Gedaliah’s family baked cakes with it.

(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer.)

\*

As an aside, Reb Gedaliah told Reb Noach Cheifetz on more than one occasion, “*Der Eidah ha-Chareidis iz unzerer ‘rov’ . . .* The Eidah ha-Chareidis is our authority!”

(Heard from Rabbi Noach Cheifetz)

\*

Reb Yossel Sofer heard from his mother that if a utensil fell on the floor during Pesach, Reb Gedaliah would put it away for the rest of the season. He once remarked, “In truth, the floors that we have, which can be washed, are not like earthen floors. *Uber me hott zokh azoy gefirt, firt men zokh vieter . . .* Since this is the way things used to be done, we do the same.”

(Heard from Rabbi Dovid Zeitlin)

\*

Reb Gedaliah was *meikel* concerning eating at the homes of other family members, *mechutonim*, etc., who kept a similar level of *kashrus* and did not eat *gebrokhts* on Pesach.

When he and his family visited relatives on *Chol ha-Mo'ed*, they would eat in their homes. However, the foods usually consisted of only fruits, salads, and hard-boiled eggs, etc.  
(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

\*

Reb Gedaliah tried to purchase all dairy products for the entire week prior to Pesach. However, if it became necessary for the children, he would do so during *Chol ha-Mo'ed*.  
(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

He had no objection to frying matzah in oil, as for *matzah brie*. (Presumably he used olive oil, since the *Eidah ha-Chareidis* only gave a *hekhsher* to olive oil, not cottonseed oil, due to a question at the time about *kitniyos*.) He also added salt when he fried the matzah.  
(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

When Pesach ended on Erev Shabbos (so that in Eretz Yisrael, where Reb Gedaliah lived, Shabbos was *isru chag*) he allowed *gebrokhts* to be served on the dishes, etc., but not prepared in the cooking utensils.  
(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer, who heard from his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

### ***Hanhagos ha-Seder / The Seder Night***

Before going to *shul* on Seder night, Reb Gedaliah prepared the three *matzos* for the *ka'arah*, and made other *hachanos*, as well, such as arranging the chairs, etc. Thus, he could begin the Seder without unnecessary delay as soon as he came home from *shul*. However, he did not actually put the *matzos* on the table until he came home from *shul*.

(Heard from Rabbi Yossel Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

During his early years, he used to check all of the *matzos* for *kefulos* before Pesach and separate the whole *matzos* from the broken ones in order to expedite things at the Seder. However, it seems that during his later years he did not always do so, and if he found *kefulos*, he broke them off and put them aside. Reb Yossel Sofer added, "These are practical matters, and one can't build on them."

(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

Like most communities today, Breslover Chassidim arrange the *ka'arah* (Seder plate) according to the custom of the ARI *zal* presented in the *Mishnas Chassidim*. That is, the three *matzos* (Chokmah-Binah-Da'as) are placed under the six *simanim*, with the *zero'a* / bone (Chesed) to the upper right, *beitzah* / egg (Gevurah) to the upper left, *morrer* / bitter herbs (Tiferes) in the middle, *charoses* / chopped fruit and nuts with grape juice or wine (Netzach) to the lower right, *karpas* / celery, parsley, or another vegetable that grows from the ground (Hod) to the lower left, and *chazeres* / second portion of bitter herbs (Yesod) between them, under the *morrer*. The *ka'arah* itself corresponds to Malkhus.

(See *Mishnas Chassidim*, *Seder Leyl Pesach* 2; *Siddur ARI Rav Shabbsai*, et al. This is also cited in *Be'er Heitiv*, *Orach Chaim* 473, s.k. 8. *Arukh ha-Shulchan*, *Orach Chaim* 473:11, states that this is the prevailing Ashkenazic custom today. However, the RaSHaSH and other Sefardic *mekuballim* have a different *mesorah*, according to which the *matzos* are not placed underneath the six *simanim*, but above them on the *ka'arah*. This is possible because traditionally the Sefardic *matzos* are smaller and are made somewhat like pita breads. An interesting exchange on this subject between Rav Asher Zelig Margolios and the Minchas Elazar appears as an appendix to *Kocho de-RaSHBY*, pp. 18-23.)

\*

Reb Avraham Sternhartz also arranged the *ka'arah* in this manner.

(Heard from Rabbi Michel Dorfman)

\*

The *matzos* may be placed in a cloth bag with three sections; or between napkins; or in a special metal unit with three metal racks and a *ka'arah* on top. Reb Gedaliah did not own a special holder, but used to rest a plate containing the *simanim* in small vessels directly on top of the covered *matzos*. Reb Elazar explained that this was another example of his father's extraordinary *histapkus* – contentment with his modest material circumstances and avoidance of luxuries, even when it came to the performance of certain *mitzvos*.

\*

Mrs. Mirel Sofer remembered that Reb Gedaliah used napkins between the *matzos*.

(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer)

\*

Reb Gedaliah's *minhag* was to use romaine lettuce for *morrer*, and he took the "*kepel*," the part from which the leaves grow, for *chazeres* on the *ka'arah*. (That is, the bottom point of the upper *segol* was the leaf of the romaine lettuce, while the bottom point of the lower *segol* was the "*kepel*" of the romaine lettuce.) Once he tried to use *chrein* (horseradish), but found that it made him ill.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig. *Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 473:5 states that romaine lettuce is the preferred type of *morrer*. This is based on *Pesachim* 39a. However, cleaning these leaves to remove insects may be a difficult and time-consuming task. Therefore, some just use lettuce stalks. Special insect-free lettuce with rabbinic supervision is also available today.)

\*

However, Reb Avraham Sternhartz used *chrein* for *morror*.

(Heard from Rabbi Michel Dorfman)

\*

For *karpas*, Reb Gedaliah at first used potatoes, and then changed to a raw celery root (not the stalks or leaves), in keeping with the view of the ARI *zal*. However, he also continued to serve cooked potatoes, which some people prefer. Many Sefardic kabbalists also use celery root for *karpas*.

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig and Rabbi Ephraim Kenig. This is supported by *Kitzur Shulchan Arukh* 118:2, *Teshuvos Chasam Sofer*, *Orach Chaim*, no. 132. See Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Kavannos*, 'Inyan Pesach, *Drush* 6, that the ARI was particular to use *karpas* and not any other vegetable. Sefardic authorities understand this to mean the celery root. *Darkei Chaim ve-Shalom* 589 states that the Minchas Elazar used a small amount of parsley leaves (*petrizeil*), which he held to be the *karpas* mentioned in the Gemara and *Kisvei ARI zal*. Some use the parsley root. The Hornestiepler Rebbe of Flatbush, Rabbi Mordekhai Twersky, told us that his family *minhag* is to use radishes. Bobover Chassidim use cucumbers. However, most Eastern European Jews probably used potatoes.)

\*

In any case, Breslover Chassidim do not use raw onions for *karpas*, in keeping with the Rebbe's family *mesorah* that the Baal Shem Tov said not to eat raw onions.

(See *Sichos ha-Ran* 265)

\*

However, Reb Gedaliah did not consider raw scallions to be the same as onions. When he spent Pesach in Brooklyn, at the home of Reb Moshe Grinberger, he considered using them for *karpas*.

(Heard from Rabbi Moshe Grinberger)

\*

Reb Gedaliah would eat the *karpas* without reclining.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig. This follows the view of *Shevilei Leket*, 64; *Matteh Moshe* 626; *Birkhei Yosef* 474:14; *Siddur ARI Rav Shabsai*; *Darkei Chaim ve-Shalom* [Munkatch] 590; *Minhagei Chabad*; et al. However, those who recline follow the *shittah* of *Abudarham*.)

\*

For *zero'a*, Reb Gedaliah used a roasted chicken wing.

(Heard from Rabbi Yitzchak Kenig, Rabbi Ephraim Kenig, and Rabbi Yossel Sofer)

\*

For *beitzah*, Reb Gedaliah used a hard-boiled egg, but did not roast it.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

### ***Amiras ha-Haggadah / Reciting the Haggadah***

Many Breslover Chassidim use the Haggadah *Ohr Zarei'ach* compiled by Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua Beziliansky, better known as Reb Alter Tepliker. This work is a digest of Breslover teachings related to the text of the Haggadah. However, there is nothing special about the *nusach* of this Haggadah.

\*

The women in Reb Gedaliah's family used to light the Yom Tov candles after the men came home from *shul*. They recited the *berakhah* "*Shehechyanu*" immediately afterward, and did not wait to do so until Kiddush.

(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

According to Reb Gedaliah's daughter, Mrs. Mirel Sofer, everyone in the family, including the women and children, used to recite the Kiddush aloud and in unison. However, she was married in 5722 / 1962, so her memories precede this date.

(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer)

\*

Reb Ephraim, on the other hand, attended his father's Seder even after his marriage, during the 1970s. He disagreed with his sister, and stated that no one but his father recited the Kiddush. On one occasion, Reb Gedaliah noticed that he (Reb Ephraim) had quietly recited his own Kiddush, and he reprovved him, saying "*Iber a yohr zolst nisht machen di chokhmahs . . .* Next year don't be so smart!"

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

\*

As for children drinking the Four Cups, most of them drank grape juice, each one according to his or her desire. Women, too, used grape juice or wine, according to their preference, and Reb Gedaliah did not make an issue about this.

(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

Reb Gedaliah said “*Ha lachma ‘anya*,” with a *kametz* under the *heh*, as in most versions of the Haggadah, not “*Heh lachma ‘anya*,” with a *tzeyre* under the *heh* -- although the latter is the *nusach* of the ARI *zal*.

(The common *nusach* of “*hah*” with a *kametz* is mentioned in *Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 473:6. For the *nusach* of the ARI *zal*, see Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Pri Eitz Chaim, Sha’ar Chag ha-Matzos*, 7; *Mishnas Chassidim, Masechtas Seder Leyl Pesach*, 5:2, et al. This is based on several *pesukim*: *Bereishis* 47:23, *Yechezkel* 16:43, and *Daniel* 2:43.)

\*

Reb Gedaliah followed the more common order of “*Mah nishtanah*” (*Matzah, Maror, Matbilin, Mesubin*), not that of the *Yerushalmi* (*Matbilin, Matzah, Maror, Mesubin*), although the ARI *zal* preferred the latter.

(The common *nusach* is that of the Talmud Bavli, and is cited in the *Machzor Vitry*. It also appears in all of the Slavita *siddurim*. The ARI *zal* follows *nusach* of the *Yerushalmi*, as redacted by the *RIF, RaMBaM, Rosh*, and *Baal ha-Roke’ach*; see Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Pri Eitz Chaim, Sha’ar Chag ha-Matzos* 7. Chassidic sources that follow the *minhag* ARI include *Siddur Baal ha-Tanya; Darkei Chaim ve-Shalom* [Munkatch] 599; *‘Erkhei Yehoshua* [Manistrich], *Perach Shoshanim* 121; *Siddur Tzelosa de-Shlomo* [Bobov]; et al. The ARI explains that the Four Questions parallel the Four Worlds, in ascending order.)

\*

Reb Gedaliah and his family recited the “*Mah nishtanahs*” in unison, not the children first, followed by the adults.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

\*

After the “*Mah nishtanahs*,” Reb Gedaliah used to exclaim, “*Oo-ah! Azoyne shtarkeh kashas . . .* Such strong questions!” Then he would say “*Der teretz is . . .* The answer is...” and recite “*Avodim hoyinu.*”

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

\*

Sometimes after reciting the section “*Avodim hoyinu*,” he would add: “*Me darf es noch fahrenferen. Tzorekh biur . . .* We need to give more of an answer. This needs explanation...”

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

\*

The Rebbe stated that reciting the Haggadah in a loud voice (*be-kol ram*) is a form of *tikkun ha-bris*, rectification of the Covenant.

(*Likkutei Moharan* I, 20:10)

\*

Reb Avraham knew all of Reb Noson’s children. He heard from them, and particularly from Reb Noson’s daughter Chanah Tzirel, “*az Pesach ba-nacht is geven zeyr a shverrer tzeit . . .* Pesach night was an extremely difficult time . . . *Es is geven fun di shvester tzeiten fun a gantz yohr . . .* It was one of the hardest times of the entire year.” Reb Avraham explained that first, there were all of the *hakhanos*, physical and spiritual preparations; and later during the Seder, Reb Noson was enflamed with emotion. Reb Noson used to recite the Haggadah loudly and with great fervor. His *deveykus* was so intense that once – and possibly more than once -- when he came to the words “*U-ve-morah gadol – zeh gilui’i Shekhinah*,” he actually fainted. His family was therefore extremely nervous about what would happen at the Seder. They were afraid that he might suddenly expire.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

Reb Noson used to recite the Haggadah loudly and passionately to the point of *hishtapkehus ha-nefesh* (departure of the soul), chanting the words according to his *niggun*, which is still known to Breslover Chassidim. He did so while seated on his bed, his face turned to the wall. However, when the *se'udah* began, he would sit together with his entire family, his face radiating joy and pleasantness. At the conclusion of the meal, he again turned his face to the wall, and recited the *birkhas ha-mazon*, *Hallel*, and “*Nishmas*” with fiery intensity, according to the *niggun* of “*Nishmas*,” until the conclusion of the Seder.

(Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz, editor of Rabbi Avraham b'Reb Nachman, *Yemei T'la'os* [Jerusalem 1982, fifth edition] p. 42)

\*

Once during the years of persecution of Breslover Chassidim, Reb Noson's family was almost prevented from making Pesach altogether. During the Seder meal, they began to discuss their sufferings, expressing their gratitude to Hashem for their personal redemption from the cruel designs of their opponents. However, this upset Reb Noson.

"This is such a great and awesome time," he said. "After all the effort every Jew has put into his Pesach preparations, after all the money every Jew has spent to honor the festival, after all our longing to perform the *mitzvos* of Pesach, it is forbidden to speak against them, God forbid. Are they not our brothers? Certainly they will receive their *tikkun* – and we ourselves must seek *tikkunim* for them!"

(For the extraordinary circumstances surrounding this episode, see Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz, *Yemei T'la'os* [Jerusalem 1982, fifth edition] p. 42)

\*

Reb Gedaliah recited the Haggadah like a “*flamm fier*,” with intense passion. He conducted the Seder with awe and *yiras Shomayim*, creating a rarified atmosphere that affected everyone present. He did not allow the emotional climate to degenerate, notwithstanding all the children and the lateness of the hour, but maintained this exalted mood from beginning to end.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

\*

Reb Ephraim Kenig once remarked that the way his father recited the Haggadah, intensely probing the meaning of its words, was “*a perish af der gantzeh Haggadah.*”

\*

Reb Gedaliah would place the *Kos shel Eliyahu* on the table at the beginning of the Seder and fill it after *bentching*. He used a slightly larger *kos* than the rest, made of glass, not silver. (Heard from Rabbi Yitzchak Kenig and Rabbi Yosef Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

The wine from the *kos shel Eliyahu* was used the next morning for Kiddush. (Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

Reb Gedaliah usually spoke briefly after “*Avodim hoyinu,*” and perhaps once or twice during “*Maggid.*” However, he and his sons and guests did not say *vertlach*, or engage in lengthy discussion of the Haggadah. (Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

\*

Reb Gedaliah would spill a drop of wine while reciting each of the Ten Plagues, and did not remove wine with his finger. (Heard from Rabbi Yossel Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer. Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Pri Eitz Chaim, Sha’ar Chag ha-Matzos* 7, with glosses of Rabbi Yaakov Tzemach, *hagahah* 1; cf. *Shulchan Arukh ha-Rav* 473:51, s.v. “*ve-yesh nohagin*”; *Kaf ha-Chaim*, ad loc. 166. The custom of using one’s finger is also mentioned by these sources, as well as by the RaMA, *Orach Chaim* 473:74.)

\*

The spilled wine would be collected and poured into an unglazed earthenware container, and subsequently disposed of.

(Heard from Rabbi Yossel Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

Breslover Chassidim in Uman used a combination of apples, pears, nuts, and wine for *charoses*. This is the common Russian-Ukrainian custom (although some omit pears). However, Reb Gedaliah, who was born and raised in Yerushalayim, used a combination of fruits and spices.

(See *Sha'ar ha-Kavannos*, *Drushei Pesach*, *Drush* 6, end, where Rabbi Shmuel Vital mentions that this is the *minhag Ashkenaz*. A mnemonic device for this is the word “*even*”: *eppel-barren-mussen* / apples, pears, nuts. Rabbi Meir Poppers notes that this does not reflect the kabbalistic custom. However, the *ARI zal* used seven fruits and three spices: grapes, figs, pomegranates, dates, walnuts, apples, and pears, spiced with spikenard, ginger, and cinnamon. Rabbi Shmuel Vital adds that he saw his father Rabbi Chaim pound these ingredients and knead them with wine specifically, and not with vinegar. *Ben Ish Chai*, *Halakhos* II, *Mishpatim* 19, and *Akim Es Yitzhak*, 25, state that in Baghdad the *minhag* was to use date honey with nuts. In many parts of Europe, only apples, nuts, and wine were used; e.g. ‘*Erkhei Yehoshua* [Manistritch], *Perach Shoshanim* 121. Similarly, *minhagei* Skver-Chernobyl, Chabad, etc.)

\*

Reb Gedaliah used to save a pomegranate from the Sukkan decorations in the refrigerator until Pesach, in order to use it in the *charoses*.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

\*

In addition, he used a combination of almonds, walnuts, apples, pears (if available), dates, cinnamon, and ginger. He did not use figs.

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig)

\*

The omission of figs seems to have been due to a question about their *kashrus* at that time.  
(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

Mrs. Sofer and Mrs. Tukatzinsky (both daughters of Reb Gedaliah) also remembered that their father always used cinnamon and ginger, and all of the fruits mentioned in *Shir ha-Shirim* in connection with Klal Yisrael.

\*

Reb Gedaliah prepared the *charoses* himself, and added the wine just before the Seder. However, he did not add it to the *charoses* when it was already on the *ka'arah*. Mrs. Sofer was not sure if he did so in the kitchen or at the table.  
(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

Reb Ephraim seemed to remember that his father poured it into a large bowl and then put some in a smaller container and placed it on the *ka'arah*.

\*

Reb Gedaliah would give the smaller children smaller *shiurim* of *matzah*. He once commented, "It is not a *mitzvah* to have *matzah* strewn under the table."  
(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

As for the time frame for eating the *matzah kedai le-achilas pras*, it was not noticeable to those present if Reb Gedaliah had any special *hakpadah* about this. He didn't make an issue of it, and he didn't talk about it.

(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

Reb Gedaliah would dip the *morrer* in *charoses* for both *morrer* and *korekh*, and immediately shake it off. He did not eat *charoses* together with the *matzah* and *morrer* for *korekh*.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig. According to 'Erkhei Yehoshua', *Perach Shoshanim* 131, the Manistritcher *minhag* was to include *charoses* in the *korekh* / sandwich. *Sefer Minhagim-Chabad* similarly states that one dips the romaine lettuce in *charoses* and then shakes it off, as prior to eating the *morrer*.)

\*

He added a little grated horseradish to the lettuce for *korekh*, but did not do so for *morrer*.

(Heard from Rabbi Yossel Sofer, citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

When Reb Avraham Sternhartz ate the *morrer*, he would exclaim again and again, "*Ot azoy is gevezen bitter di Yidden...* Just like this, it was bitter for the Jews!" Reb Gedaliah used to repeat what Reb Avraham said when he ate the *morrer*, as well.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

\*

During the meal, Reb Gedaliah would use a bed in order to recline while eating. However, he would sit in the usual manner while eating the soup, or if it became difficult for him at some point.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig. This reflects the view of the Rama, *Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 472:7, end; also cf. *Mishnah Berurah*, ad loc., that this is only *le-chatchilah*. Some say that this is entirely not applicable today; see *Piskei Teshuvos*, ad loc.)

\*

Reb Gedaliah did not permit his sons to recline at the family Seder until they were already married.

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig)

\*

In Reb Gedaliah's home, it was customary to eat the egg after the fish, not immediately at the beginning of the meal. He used the egg on his *ka'arah* (unlike those who leave all the *minim* on the *ka'arah* for the entire Seder).

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig. The Maharil states that the egg should be eaten "before all other cooked foods." *Siddur YaVeTZ* mentions that the egg is eaten soon after *korekh* because "both are *zekher le-chorban*." However, there is a dispute among the Poskim about dipping the egg in salt, since we are only supposed to dip twice during the Seder. Possibly Reb Gedaliah's *minhag* reflected a *zehirus* about this, so that putting the egg in salt water would not appear to be a distinct act of dipping. As for using the egg on the *ka'arah*, see *Mishnah Berurah*, ad loc.)

\*

However, Reb Elazar did not remember his father waiting to eat the egg.

\*

Reb Gedaliah would slice the egg into sections, dip them in salt water, and give them to everyone with a spoon. If he needed more slices, he would use a second egg, in addition to the one from the *ka'arah*. Before eating the egg, he would announce, "*Zekher le-chagigah*."

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

\*

Mrs. Mirel Sofer remembered that when she was a girl, Reb Gedaliah did not use the egg from the *ka'arah*, but took eggs from a separate bowl, dipped them into salt water, and distributed them. The egg from the *ka'arah* was eaten during the day meal, and Reb Gedaliah would distribute slices to those present.

(Heard from Rabbi Yosef Sofer)

\*

In Reb Gedaliah's house, sour pickles, *chrein* mixed with beets, and other sharp-tasting foods and condiments were not served during the meal. Evidently this was because the Haggadah, in the second of the Four Questions, states: "*ba-laylah ha-zeh, marror.*" This is an old *hanhagah*, which is mentioned in various *seforim*.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

### ***Achilas ha-Afikoman / Eating the Afikoman***

*Afikoman* before *chatzos*: Reb Levi Yitzchak Bender stated that Breslover Chassidim follow the Rebbe's view that *chatzos* is six sixty-minute hours after *tzes ha-kokhavim*.

(*Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* IV, 141; concerning the Rebbe's *shittah* concerning the time of *chatzos*, see above, Part I.)

\*

Reb Shmuel Breines and Reb Avraham Moshe Wasilski both heard from Gedolei Breslov that we follow the Rebbe's *chatzos* when it comes to eating the Afikoman. Reb Avraham Moshe specifically mentioned Reb Levi Yitzchak.

\*

Reb Zalman Naftalis similarly heard that the *'olam* follows the Rebbe's *zman*. Reb Dovid Zeitlin told him that he had heard from Reb Shlomo Chaim Vitriol that Reb Levi Yitzchak Bender was careful to finish eating the Afikoman before the earlier *zman chatzos*. To this, Reb Zalman replied that Reb Levi Yitzchak simply preferred to finish early, and this did not reflect any *shittah* about *chatzos*.

\*

Reb Avraham Moshe concurred that Reb Levi Yitzchak finished the Seder early, but added that this was only the case during the last few years of his life, when he was not well and did not have patience for a long Seder.

\*

Reb Moshe Grinberger and Reb Aharon Waxler both asked Reb Gedaliah about the *zman chatzos*, and he clearly told them to follow the Rebbe's *chatzos*. Reb Aharon further questioned, "Isn't the Rebbe's *chatzos* only for an *'es ratzon* or *amiras Tikkun Chatzos*?" To this, Reb Gedaliah replied, "The Rebbe's *chatzos* is for everything."

\*

When Reb Elazar was told about this conversation, he said, “We can rely upon this.”  
(Heard from Rabbi Dovid Zeitlin)

\*

Reb Dovid Shapiro, on the other hand, once asked Reb Gedaliah about this issue, and he hesitated. However, eventually he said that we could be *somekh* on the Rebbe's *chatzos*. Reb Dovid speculated that Reb Gedaliah's hesitation seemed to reflect the fact that some Poskim who follow this *shittah* for *chatzos* say that it does not apply to *korbonos*, and the Afikoman commemorates the Korban Pesach.

(See Rabbi Simcha Ben Zion Rabinovitch, *Piskei Teshuvos*, vol. V, “*Leyl Pesach*,” in his discussion of *Orach Chaim* 477, that one should be *zahir* to eat the Afikoman before *chatzos*. He mentions that the Chasam Sofer, Rabbi Moshe Leib Sassover, Rabbi Chaim Brisker, NeTZiV of Volozhin, and others were not particular to do so. *Teshuvos Minchas Yitzchak*, vol. IX, no. 48, points out that this is a matter of *zehirus le-chatchilah*; however, if one fails to do so, one is nevertheless *yotzei* with the *matzah* eaten during the meal; see *Mishnah Berurah*, *Orach Chaim* 477:2, s.k. 12. As for the *inyan* to not eat after the Afikoman, the *Minchas Yitzchak* states that this may be rectified by eating *matzah* at the end of the *se'udah*, even after *chatzos*. Another approach is that of the *Avnei Nezer*, who opines that one may eat a *shiur* of *matzah be-hasebah* before *chatzos* and then after *chatzos* at the end of the *se'udah*, with the *tenai* that if the *halakhah* follows the view of Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah [*Pesachim* 120b], the first *shiur* should be considered the Afikoman, and if the *halakhah* is according to Rabbi Akiva, the second *shiur* should be considered the Afikoman. Reb Velvel Brisker lauded this *'eitzah*, adding that even without an explicit *tenai*, it works; see *Haggadah Beis Levi*. However, the *Minchas Yitzchak* contends that it is preferable not to make such a stipulation, see there at length.)

\*

In Reb Gedaliah's home, the children would “steal” the Afikoman, and barter to return it to the owner.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig and Rabbi Yitzchak Kenig)

\*

When he was ready for the Afikoman, Reb Gedaliah would cry out, “*Ganovim!* Thieves!” and he made a “big deal” out of this. There was no *‘esek* about the *zman* of *chatzos*.  
(Heard from Rabbi Yossel Sofer citing his mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer)

\*

Once one of his married children stole the Afikoman and asked Reb Gedaliah for a son. Reb Gedaliah gave him a *berakhah*, and within the year his wife gave birth to a son.  
(Heard from Rabbi Noach Cheifetz)

### **Conclusion of the Seder**

For “*Shfokh chamoskha*,” he would send someone to open the front door. Upon that person’s return, he would ask, “Did you open the door?” When the one who did so replied to the affirmative, he would immediately cry out “*Borukh haboh!*” to welcome Eliyahu ha-Navi.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

\*

Reb Gedaliah, his guests, and any children who were still awake would sing all of the *zemiros* after the Haggadah.

\*

According to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Bender, Reb Noson once observed that most people sing “*Adir Hu*” at approximately *chatzos*. This is because those who compiled the Haggadah felt: how can we pass such a holy night without mentioning the *churban beis ha-mikdash*? Therefore, they included “*Adir Hu*” at this point, when it is more or less *chatzos*.

(Heard from Rabbi Moshe Wasilski, citing Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Bender. Re. the origin of the melody for “*Adir Hu*” that Reb Levi Yitzchak popularized in the Breslov community, see *Si’ach Sarfei Kodesh* VI, 485)

\*

Reb Gedaliah was accustomed to remain awake until dawn after the Seder, reciting *Shir ha-Shirim*. Then he would go to the *mikveh* and *daven ke-vasikin*.

### **Pesach Customs of the Barsky Family**

Rabbi Shimshon Barsky of Bnei Brak, a son of Rabbi Noson Barsky and grandson of Rabbi Shimshon Barsky of Uman, remembered a number of customs and *hanhagos* of his father and grandfather. Rabbi Shimshon Barsky of Uman was a descendant of the Rebbe through his daughter Sarah, and a leading figure in the Breslov community before World War II. His son Reb Noson spent the first twenty years of his life with his parents in Uman, until in 1914 on the eve of World War I, he married the daughter of Rabbi Hennich Guterman, a Gerer Chassid from Lublin, Poland, who had become a Breslover. From then on, Reb Noson lived in Lublin, while his father remained in Uman until his passing in 1935. Reb Noson and his wife and seven children miraculously escaped to Eretz Yisrael on the last ship, two weeks before the outbreak of World War II, when Shimshon was four years old. Reb Noson Barsky's customs mentioned below were those of his father.

\*

Reb Shimshon remembered that his father Reb Noson Barsky allowed the smaller children to eat *gebrokhts*. However, when the children were older, he no longer permitted *gebrokhts* in his home.

\*

Reb Noson Barsky put out ten pieces of bread, but did not perform a lengthy *bedikas chometz*.

\*

He wore a *spodek* and *kittel* at the Seder.

\*

His wife and any other women present lit the candles when the men came home from *shul*. They were *yotzei* "*Shehechyanu*" after Kiddush.

\*

He did not *bentch* the children before the Seder.

\*

Only the men and boys said Kiddush. The women just listened, as on a regular Shabbos or Yom Tov. Reb Noson Barsky and his sons recited Kiddush together, and the boys also said the words out loud.

\*

The *bekhers* they used contained a smaller *shi'ur*, as was common in those parts of Eastern Europe in past generations.

\*

The men leaned on a pillow next to the arm of the chair for the *mitzvos*, but not during the *se'udah*. The women did not recline.

\*

“*Kadesh, Urchatz*,” etc. were recited at the beginning of the Seder, and at each component of the Seder, the name of the new section was announced with the *niggun* of the Haggadah.

\*

After “*Yachatz*,” Reb Noson Barsky wrapped up the Afikoman and put it aside. He did not put it on his shoulder, etc. The children “stole” the Afikoman, and Reb Noson bartered to get it back, according to the common *minhag*.

\*

Only the children said “*Mah nishtanah*,” and the adults did not repeat it.

\*

After the Four Questions, Reb Noson said, “*Der teretz is...*” and recited “ ‘*Avodim hoyinu.*”

\*

He used *chrein* for both *morrer* and *korekh*. Lettuce was not available in either Poland or the Ukraine at Pesach time.

\*

For *karpas*, he used potato. This seems to have been the common *minhag*.

\*

He reclined for *karpas*.

\*

The egg for the *ka'arah* was boiled and then roasted on the fire.

\*

*Charoses* consisted of grated apples, chopped walnuts, cinnamon, and wine.

\*

The wine was added to the *charoses* when it was prepared, not when the mixture was placed on the table. A small amount of *charoses* was placed on the *ka'arah*, and the rest remained on the table in a bowl for serving.

\*

Reb Noson Barsky placed a plate containing the *minim* on top of the three covered *matzos*.

\*

He did not use the egg from the *ka'arah* at the beginning of the meal, but distributed eggs from a separate bowl.

\*

He dipped the *chrein* into the *charoses* and left a little *charoses* on the *chrein* (not a lot) both by *morrer* and *korekh*. He was not *makpid* about the *matzah* not coming in contact with the *charoses* for *korekh*.

\*

On the *ka'arah*, he used grated *chrein* for *morrer* (i.e. the lowest point of the upper *segol*), and a piece of the head of the horseradish root for *chazeres* (i.e. the lowest point of the lower *segol*).

\*

For *zero'a*, he used a roasted chicken wing.

\*

He used the *Ohr Zarei'ach* Haggadah compiled by Rabbi Alter Tepliker.

\*

He recited the Haggadah with intense *his'orerus*, and chanted the entire Haggadah the same *niggun* except for "*Vehi she-'amdah*," which he sang to the familiar upbeat melody that is still sung by many Chassidim.

\*

He simply recited the Haggadah and explained a few highlights briefly to his family in Yiddish.

\*

He sent the children to open the door for “*Shfokh chamoskha*” and no one said “*Borukh haboh.*” The *kos shel Eliyohu* was placed on the table and filled after *bentching*, prior to “*Shfokh chamoskha.*”

\*

After concluding the Seder, he recited *Shir ha-Shirim* with great emotion.

### **Reb Michel Dorfman's Pesach Customs**

Reb Gershon Ginsburg once spent the Pesach Seder with Reb Michel. He remembered the following *hanhagos*:

Reb Michel used potatoes for *karpas*.

\*

Despite his advanced age, he used actual *chrein* for morror. However, he also served romaine lettuce for those who preferred it to *chrein*.

\*

He recited the Haggadah with fervor, sang a few passages, according to the common minhag, and did not say *vertlach*. At the conclusion of the Seder, Reb Michel recited *Shir Ha-Shirim*, and remained awake learning Torah until it was time to go to *mikveh* and *daven kivasikin*, as he did every morning.

### ***Acharon shel Pesach / Last Day of Pesach***

In *chutz la'aretz*, *gebrokhts* are prepared and eaten on *Acharon Shel Pesach*, even in the vessels and dishes used for non-*gebrokhts*. Although this does not apply to Eretz Yisrael, where *Shevi'i shel Pesach* is the last day, something similar is observed during a leap year when Shabbos falls on Motza'ei Yom Tov. Then *gebrokhts* are eaten in the regular Pesach vessels and dishes.

\*

The Rebbe used to go to his daughter Udel for the *se'udah* on *Acharon shel Pesach*, during which the family ate soup with *kneidlach*. Once Udel served her father two *kneidlach*, and he blessed her that in their merit she should have two children. This *berakhah* came to pass -- and Udel regretted that she had not served her father more *kneidlach*.

(*Avanehah Barzel*, sec. 43, p. 33)

\*

However, during first seven days of Pesach, the Rebbe did not eat *gebrokhts*, as stated above.

\*

The last meal of *Acharon Shel Pesach* is called the "*Baal Shem Tov Se'udah*," during which it is customary for a member of the group to retell the story of the Baal Shem Tov's attempted journey to the Holy Land. There is a special Breslover *mesorah* concerning the details of this story, preserved by oral tradition.

(Most Chassidim used to call this meal the "*Baal Shem Tov Se'udah*." In the communities of Skver-Chernobyl, Skolye, and others, they still do. The Breslov *nusach* of the story of the Baal Shem Tov's journey may be found in *Eretz ha-Kodesh / Masa' ha-Kodesh*, Jerusalem: Toras ha-Netzach, 5758/1998; and in Yiddish in *Der Otzar Fun Yiras Shomayim*, Hotza'as Ben Adam, Aharon Weinstock, ed. 1992, pp. 71-87. The story was also published many years ago in *Mabu'ey HaNachal*. Other *nus'chos* of the story preserved by various Chassidic communities are presented and discussed by Rabbi Shlomo Abish, "*Koros Chayav ha-Mekoriyyim shel Rabban Shel Yisrael ha-'Baal Shem Tov ha-Kadosh' zy 'a*," #4, *Kuntres Heichal ha-Baal Shem Tov*, Nisan 5764 / 2004, pp. 145-152.)

\*

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Bender used to tell the story of the Baal Shem Tov's journey to the Breslover *kehillah* in Yerushalayim. The *mesorah* he received was from Rabbi Shimshon Barsky of Uman.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Moshe Wasilski, who possesses a tape of Reb Levi Yitzchak Bender's version of the story)

\*

When Reb Levi Yitzchak told the story in the Me'ah She'arim *shul*, Reb Gedaliah always tried to sit facing him, as close as possible, and listened intently to the story.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Moshe Wasilski)

\*

Reb Gedaliah mentioned that Reb Avraham's *mesorah* for this story included the detail that when the cannibals were preparing to kill the Baal Shem Tov and Reb Zvi Sofer, suddenly they heard the ringing of the ship's bell, and this is why they fled.

(Heard from Rabbi Dovid Zeitlin)

\*

There are several versions of one of the key points of the story: the decision to cast either the Baal Shem Tov's *ksavim* or his daughter Udel into the sea. Reb Levi Yitzchak's *mesorah* from Reb Shimshon Barsky was to preface this part of the story with the words: "*Anderer zoggen...*" ("Others say..."). Then he would go on to state that Udel was actually cast into the sea -- at which point she received a heavenly communication that she was destined to have a grandson who would write "*shenmerer ksavim*," i.e. even greater teachings than those of her father. She lifted up her hands and called to the Baal Shem Tov and told him this, and she was immediately retrieved and the precious manuscripts were cast into the waters. Other versions state that she merely considered jumping into the sea, either mentally or even

verbally, but did not actually do so. Suddenly she had a heavenly communication about her grandson, and told her father that they could cast the manuscripts into the sea after all.

(This detail of Reb Levi Yitzchak's *mesorah* heard from Rabbi Avraham Moshe Wasilski, Other versions are those published in the sources mentioned above.)

\*

Whenever Reb Levi Yitzchok told the story and described how Udel was cast into the sea, Rabbi Nochum Yitzchok Frank would interrupt the story to protest this point, vehemently shouting “*Sheker! S'iz nisht shayakh! Es kennisht zein!* Lies! It isn't possible! It can't be!”

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Moshe Wasilski)

\*

Rabbi Shimshon Barsky of Bnei Brak, a grandson of Rabbi Shimshon Barsky of Uman through his son Rabbi Noson Barsky, remembered a few other details of his grandfather's version of the story that may be different than some other versions: 1) when the emissaries told the people in *shul* about their miraculous delivery from death the previous night, they mentioned the man they had overheard singing “*Le-’oseh nifla’os gedolos levado,*” the Baal Shem Tov told them, “*Mir dacht zokh az der Yid mit zein zingen 'le-’oseh nifla’os gedolos levado,' hott ehr mevatel geven di gezerah . . .* It seems to me that by singing ‘Who alone performs wondrous miracles,’ this Jew nullified the heavenly decree”; and 2) the bells that scared off the cannibals were those of the *kareteh* (carriage), and the “people” in the *kareteh* were actually *malakhim* sent by the *Eybishter* to save the Baal Shem Tov, Udel, and Reb Zvi Sofer. Rabbi Shimshon Barsky also remembered that when his father told the story (according to the version of Rabbi Shimshon Barsky of Uman), and he described how the Baal Shem Tov sang “*Le-’oseh nifla’os gedolos levado,*” both when the emissaries were on their way to the Sultan's mother and on their return, he used to sing the well-known *niggun* of the Baal Shem Tov, thus demonstrating how the Baal Shem Tov actually sang these words.

\*

Rabbi Itche Meyer Korman used to repeat certain details that he heard directly from Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman. For example, at one point Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman would

roll up his sleeves and say, “*Un in di ma’aseh iz doh noch a ma’aseh . . .* And in this story there is still another story...”

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

Reb Levi Yitzchok always said that he told the story the way he received it from Rabbi Shimshon Barsky. However, he said that once someone asked Reb Avraham b’Reb Nachman if Reb Shimshon’s version was accurate. He answered, “*S’iz doh nuschos . . .* There are many versions!”

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

In the Tzefas community, the Gabbai announces that people should not bring machine *matzos* to the Baal Shem Tov Se’udah. The reason for this is that all sorts of people attend the *se’udah*, and not everyone keeps the same standards. By using only hand *matzos*, those who are particular about this will not be *nichshol*.

(Heard from Rabbi Yitzchok Kenig)

\*

On the Shabbos after Pesach, some are accustomed to bake a *challah* with the form of a key on the loaf. Some engrave this shape by pressing a key into the dough; some attach a piece of dough in this shape; and some bake an actual key in the *challah*. Reb Elazar’s family attaches a piece of dough shaped like a key.

(‘*Erkhei Yehoshua, Perach Shoshanim* 156, mentions that the Manistritcher *minhag* was to engrave this shape. A reason for the *minhag* of baking a “*shlissel challoh*” is offered by the Apter Rov in *Ohev Yisrael, “Le-Shabbos Achar Pesach,”* pp. 282-283, 330-331.)

\*

Someone once complained to the Tcheriner Rov, “Purim is over, Pesach is over...” The Tcheriner Rov corrected him, replying, “*Mer hobben areingenumen a Purim un a Pesach . . .* We have internalized Purim and Pesach!”

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

In this spirit, Reb Avraham would learn *Likkutei Moharan* I, 135 (“*Ki Ekakh Mo’ed*”), saying, “I am taking the Yom Tov into myself!” He also used to mention that the number of this lesson (135) is *be-gematria* “*matzah*.”

(*Mabu’i ha-Nachal*, *Kovetz* 53, Nisan 5782, p. 37)

## Sefirah

According to *Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh*, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Bender stated that on the second night of Pesach in Uman, most Breslover Chassidim counted *sefirah* after the Seder. This seems to have been a regional *minhag* that is still followed in many Breslov circles in *chutz la'aretz* today. Reb Levi Yitzchak also mentioned that the legendary 'oved, Reb Getcheh of Uman, was accustomed to do so in *shul* with a *minyan* of *bochurim*, who had made the Seder meal with him in the Beis Medrash.

(*Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* IV, 262. In support of this custom, see Rabbi Immanuel Chai Ricci, *Mishnas Chassidim, Masechtas ha-'Omer* 1:1; Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Pano, *Mayan Ganim, Seder shel Pesach*, 35b; *Siddur Tefilah Yesarah-Berditchev*. The Chassidim of Karlin-Stolin count in *shul be-tzibbur* after the Seder. Others who count after the Seder include the communities of Chernobyl-Skver, Bobov, etc.)

\*

Rabbi Zalman Naftalis also heard that in *chutz la'aretz*, Breslover Chassidim used to go to *shul* after the Seder and count the *sefirah*.

\*

However, Rabbi Avraham Moshe Wasilski disputed this. He discussed this subject in detail with Reb Levi Yitzchok, who (despite what is printed in *Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh*) told him that most Breslovers in Uman counted the *sefirah* in *shul* after Ma'ariv. This was also the practice of Reb Avraham Moshe's father, Rabbi Zvi Yosef Wasilski, and his *chaburah* in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn.

(*Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 489:1 mentions the more common practice of counting in the synagogue after Ma'ariv, see. Among Chassidim, see *Kedushas Aharon* [Komarno] in the name of the Baal Shem Tov, et al.)

\*

Reb Avraham Moshe asked Reb Levi Yitzchok if those who counted after the Seder did so *be-tzibbur* in *shul*, and he replied that they counted at home. As for the story about Reb Getcheh, Reb Avraham Moshe questioned the circumstances surrounding this incident,

speculating that this may have been an exceptional incident, when Reb Getcheh was in poor health.

\*

Rabbi Zvi Aryeh Rosenfeld and his *talmidim* in Brooklyn used to count after the Seder.  
(Heard from Rabbi Chaim Kramer)

\*

EDITOR: Various schools of Kabbalah debate this issue. For example, the followers of the RaSHaSH (Rabbi Shalom Sharabi) count the *sefirah* prior to the Seder, while the followers of Rabbi Yaakov Abuchatzera count after the Seder.

\*

*Nusach*: Breslover Chassidim are accustomed to recite the "*le-shem yichud*" and then to count the *sefirah*, followed by the additional psalms and kabbalistic prayers found in most *Nusach Sefard siddurim*. The last *tefilah* relates each day of the *sefirah* period to a particular combination of *sefiros* (e.g. the first day corresponds to "*chesed she-be-chesed*," etc.).

\*

Reb Noson *darshans* on the custom to recite after counting the *sefirah*: "May it be Your will . . . that the *Beis ha-Mikdash* should be rebuilt speedily in our days."  
(*Likkutei Halakhos, Netilas Yadayim* 6:29)

\*

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Bender told how in Uman, the Breslover Chassidim used to count the *sefiros ha-omer* together with *hislahavus*, *hispa'alus*, *be-arikhus u-ve-kolos*. This is still the *derekh* in Breslover communities today.  
(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Moshe Wasilski)

\*

Even when Reb Avraham did not *daven* before the *'amud*, the *tzibbur* always was *mekhabed* him to lead the counting of *sefiras ha-'omer*. His way of counting the *sefirah* was uniquely moving and powerful, and people from all sectors of Klal Yisrael came to hear and be inspired by him. Reb Dovid Rosenfeld, father of Reb Itzik Rosenfeld and a brother-in-law of Reb Gedaliah Kenig, said that even when Reb Avraham was ninety years old, he recited the words "*u-le-tahareinu u-le-kad'sheinu...*" like a young man who is consumed with the desire to attain *kedushah ve-taharah*.

(Heard Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

Rabbi Chaim Yehudah Schlessinger of Katamon, who was a grandson of the *Lev Ivri* and a son-in-law of Rabbi Velvel Mintzberg, told Reb Avraham Shimon Burshteyn that whenever he heard Reb Avraham *davenning* Ma'ariv during these weeks, he would stop and wait to hear him count the *sefirah*. Rabbi Schlessinger explained that Reb Avraham's counting of the *sefirah* was without compare, and he found listening to him to be irresistible.

(Heard Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

Rabbi Moshe Burshteyn instituted the custom in the Ohr Avraham *shul* that the *baal tefillah* ends the Kaddish before counting the *sefirah* with a certain *niggun* to remind the *mispallelim* know that they are about to recite the "*Le-shem yichud*" and count.

(Heard Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn, in the name of Rabbi Moshe Burshteyn. However, Reb Moshe was not sure if this *minhag* was his own, or came from Reb Avraham.)

\*

Reb Avraham used to publicly announce "*Ha-yom yom...*" and the day and week of the *sefirah* in the synagogue after Shacharis, after the Kaddish following *'Aleinu*. Reb Moshe Burshteyn instituted this *minhag* in the Ohr Avraham *shul*, as well.

(Heard Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

Reb Gedaliah heard from Reb Avraham that Breslover Chassidim follow the view of the ARI *zal* that the restrictions of *sefiras ha-'omer* remain in force until Erev Shavuos. He did not relax these restrictions even during the *sheloshes yemei hagbalah*.

(Heard from Rabbi Chaim Man and Rabbi Ephraim Kenig. See Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Pri Eitz Chaim, Sha'ar Sefiras ha-'Omer*, 7; also cf. *Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* VI, 496. Reb Noson mentions this subject in *Likkutei Halakhos, Minchah 7:35; Lo Yilbash Gever 3*.)

\*

Rabbi Shimshon Barsky of Bnei Brak mentioned that his father, Rabbi Noson Barsky, son of Rabbi Shimshon Barsky of Uman, conducted himself the same way and did not cut his hair until Erev Shavuos.

\*

These restrictions include not listening to music, except on Lag ba-'Omer. Although the ARI *zal* states that one may not cut one's hair until Erev Shavuos, he does not discuss music. However, the *Poskim* designate it to be a time of *aveilus*. Therefore, it seems that one should also refrain from listening to music until Erev Shavuos.

(However, these restrictions may not apply to professional musicians and others who work in various phases of the music business. A musician who needs to practice and work during the weeks of *sefirah*, or a music producer, recording engineer, composer, music teacher, music therapist, etc., should ask a *she'eilah* to a qualified Rov.)

\*

Reb Gedaliah did not approve of making weddings during the entire *sefirah* period.

(Heard from Rabbi Chaim Man)

\*

Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz wrote to Rabbi Avraham Jakobovitch of Toronto: “At this time, during the holy days of *sefirah*, we must greatly yearn for Hashem and prepare ourselves to receive the Torah anew. [We should] recite Tehillim every day, which is extremely beneficial for *Teshuvah*, and thus receive the holy and awesome Yom Tov of Shavuos -- the unique day that transcends all days, when we attain the holiness of Kesser [“Crown,” the highest *sefirah*], for which we have exerted ourselves throughout the days of *sefirah*...”

(Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz, *Michtevei Shmuel* [Jerusalem: Keren R' Yisrael Dov Odesser, first edition], Letter 3, p. 14)

\*

Reb Levi Yitzchok Bender heard from Reb Avraham Sternhartz that in addition to the *Tehillim* he recited every day, Reb Noson had an extra *shi'ur* of *Tehillim* that he recited during the days of *sefirah*.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Moshe Wasilski)

\*

It is a widely-observed custom to read a chapter of *Pirkei Avos* after *Minchah* on each Shabbos until Shavuos, and then the cycle begins again, continuing through the summer months. Reb Noson mentions this *minhag* in his letters.

(See *'Alim le-Terufah* [Toras Ha-Netzach ed. 2000], 261)

\*

Reb Levi Yitzchok Bender stated that it was the *minhag* among Ukrainian Chassidim, including Breslover Chasidim, to eat a piece of *matzoh* left over from Pesach on every Shabbos during the weeks of *sefirah* until Shavuos.

(*Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* IV, 222. Cf. Rabbi Aharon Brandwein, Introduction to *Tal Oros*, re. *Minhagei Alik*; *'Erkhei Yehoshua'* [Manestrich], *Perach Shoshanim*, 156; et al.)

\*

Reb Gedaliah was accustomed to put some *matzos* on the table during the week, from Pesach until Shavuos. If someone wished to eat, he could take whatever he desired. However, Reb Gedaliah wanted the *matzah* to be there.

(Heard from Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

## **BaHaB**

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Bender stated that in Uman, most Breslover Chassidim used to fast at least half the day for the three fasts of *BaHaB*. Some, including Reb Noson, fasted the entire day, particular the last Monday, when *selichos* with the *Yud-Gimel Middos* are recited. (If there is a *minyan* fasting on *BaHaB*, *selichos* are followed by reading the Torah portion "*Vay'chal*," as on other public fast days). This applies to *BaHaB* following Sukkos, as well.

(*Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* IV, 203; also see *Likkutei Halakhos, Kriyas ha-Torah* 4:5)

\*

Many Breslovers of the previous generation in Eretz Yisrael also used to fast until mid-day on *BaHaB*.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn, citing Rabbi Moshe Burshteyn)

\*

Reb Avraham Sternhartz used to fast all day on *BaHaB*. He also did so during *SHoVeVIM*, and on Khof Sivan, Heh Tammuz, *Ta'anis Bekhorim*, etc.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

In the Ohr Avraham *shul*, the *hanhalah* does not put out coffee for the *mispallelim* during *BaHaB*.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

"*Avinu Malkeinu*" is not recited on *BaHaB*. However, it is recited on the minor fast days, during both Shacharis and Minchah.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

“*Tachluyei ha-Yeladim*” is always included in *Selichos*, whether on *BaHaB* or the minor fast days.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

## Lag ba-'Omer

Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz writes lavishly about the *simchah* and *his'orerus* experienced by those who celebrated Lag ba-'Omer in Meron, particularly the Breslover Chasidim who participated in the "*hillula de-RASHBI*." He writes: "What can be said, what can be communicated? One should yearn, long, and exert himself all of his days with *mesirus nefesh* to experience and share in this. In the inner part of the tomb, people weep and do *teshuvah*, and their hearts are deeply aroused; even on Yom Kippur, no one ever heard of such a place of *teshuvah* as this! On the outside [in the courtyard and surrounding areas], rejoicing, gladness, singing, music, and dancing prevail; even at the weddings of kings, no one ever beheld or heard of such ecstasy! *Ashreinu mah tov chelkeinu*, that we were privileged to witness all this!"

(Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz, *Yemei Shmuel*, vol. I, chap. 56. For more extensive Breslov teachings and historical material on Lag ba-'Omer, see *Mo'adei Yisrael: Lag ba-'Omer*, Bnei Brak: Agudas Mayanos ha-Netzach 2003)

\*

On the Shabbos before Lag ba-'Omer, in the Breslover communities of Yerushalayim, Williamsburg, Monsey, and Borough Park it is customary to sing "*Bar Yochai*," etc., before "*Ki-gavna*" on Friday night. This is a widespread custom today.

(Heard from Rabbi Nachman Burshteyn and Rabbi Meir Wasilski)

\*

In the Tzefas community, they sing "*Bar Yochai*" and "*Amar Rabbi Akiva*" on every Friday night before "*Ki-gavna*." (One can see the tomb of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai through the windows of the Breslov synagogue in Tzefas.)

(Heard from Rabbi Binyamin Rosenberg)

\*

This is also the custom in Meron.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

*Tachanun* is omitted on both Erev Lag ba-'Omer and Lag ba-'Omer, as stated in *Shulchan Arukh*. However, it is not our custom to omit *Tachanun* for the entire week of "hod," as in some Chassidic communities.

(See *Orach Chaim* 493:2, with *Mishnah Berurah*)

\*

In *Likkutei Halakhos*, Reb Noson mentions the *minhag* to give a child his first haircut on Lag ba-'Omer.

(See *Likkutei Halakhos*, *Rosh Chodesh* 3:11, 9:13; *Pesach* 7:24; *Dam* 1:12; *Simanei Behemah ve-Chayah Tehorah* 4:6; *Hekhsher Keilim* 4:4; *Nezikin* 3:3)

\*

In addition to participating in the traditional festivities, many Breslover Chassidim recite Reb Noson's prayer in honor of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, *Likkutei Tefilos* II, 47.

\*

It is also common practice to learn the Rebbe's lesson "*Lekhu Chazu*" at the beginning of *Likkutei Moharan*, which discusses Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and the *Zohar*. This lesson is usually delivered by one of the speakers at the Lag ba-'Omer *se'udah* in the various Breslov communities.

\*

The Rebbe states that shooting arrows on Lag ba-'Omer is a *segulah* for having children.  
(*Sefer ha-Midos*, "Banim" I, 63)

\*

Members of the Tzefas community visit the grave of Rabbi Shimon in Meron on Lag ba-'Omer, together with the many thousands of Jews who come from far and wide in honor of the *tzaddik* and in order to pray for divine mercy at this auspicious time.

\*

Reb Avraham used to spend either the Shabbos before or after Lag ba-'Omer in Meron.  
(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

## Shavuos

Shavuos was one of the three fixed times of the year when Breslover Chassidim came to the Rebbe. Therefore, in recent years it has become common for many Breslovers travel to Uman to spend Shavuos near the Rebbe's *tziyun*.

\*

However, in Reb Noson's day, his *talmidim* used to travel to him for Shavuos. They would try to arrive in time to conclude the counting of *sefiras ha-'omer* together on the night of Erev Shavuos. One such occasion was Shavuos of 1834, when some eighty followers came to Reb Noson in Breslov. They prayed with such fervor that ever since, Breslover Chassidim refer to this as "*der groiser Shavuos*."

(See Rabbi Chaim Kramer, "*Through Fire and Water*," chap. 33, pp. 366-377)

\*

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Bender mentioned that during Reb Noson's time, when the Breslover Chassidim who had come from far and wide counted the *sefirah* together on the night before Shavuos, virtually the whole city used to come to witness their fervor. This was an annual event that everyone looked forward to.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Moshe Wasilski)

\*

In the Tzefas community, most Breslover Chassidim wear a white *caftan* on Shavuos at night and during Shacharis-Musaf. However, they do not wear this *caftan* for Minchah (see above, "Hoshanah Rabbah").

(Heard from Rabbi Yitzchok Kenig)

\*

In Tzefas, the Breslover *shul* is decorated with greenery, following the common *minhag*.

\*

The Steipler Gaon mentioned that in the Ukraine it was customary to spread grasses and small twigs on the entire floor of the *shul*.

(*Orchos Rabbenu*, vol. II, Bnei Brak 1992, p. 99, sec. 7)

\*

Reb Noson *darshans* on the *minhag* of eating dairy foods on Shavuos.

(See *Likkutei Halakhos, Birkhos ha-Torah* 1; *Masa U-Matan* 4:6; *'Eruvei Techumin* 5:13; *Shavu'os* 1:4, 2:2; *Devarim ha-Yotziyim Min ha-Chai* 2:2 and 7; *Simanei Behemah ve-Chayah Tehorah* 4:40, 46; *Mezuzah* 2:4)

\*

In Tzefas, as in most communities, the *minhag* is to eat *milchigs* after *davenning Shacharis*, during the Kiddush. However, the day meal is *fleishig*.

(Heard from Rabbi Yitzchak Kenig)

\*

Breslover Chassidim commonly remain awake all night and recite the *Tikkun Leyl Shavuos* of the ARI *zal*. In the Tzefas community, the *chaburah* recites the *Tikkun* in unison, and the Chassidim recite Kaddish and dance after concluding the *Chumash, Nach, Mishnayos*, etc.

\*

Reb Noson states that the main parts of *Tikkun Leyl Shavuos* are *TaNakh* and *Mishnayos*. (Although the ARI *zal* omits the *Mishnayos*, the *Shelah ha-Kadosh* includes them.)

(*Likkutei Halakhos, Kriyas ha-Torah* 6:26)

\*

Reb Avraham Sternhartz used to recite the *Tikkun Leyl Shavuos* with the *Mishnayos*.

(Heard from Rabbi Nachman Burshteyn)

\*

In a letter to Rabbi Avraham Jacobovitch, Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz writes: “Remaining awake on the night of Shavuos gives life to all of one’s conduct for the entire year, both spiritually and physically. One should rejoice, for this is the ‘wedding’ of *Matan Torah* -- and one should rededicate himself to the study of the Rebbe’s teachings, which are a *chiddush niflah*, a wondrous innovation that comes from the Future World, from [the Torah of] ‘*Atika Setimah* [the Hidden Ancient One], destined to be revealed in time to come...”

(Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz, *Michtevei Shmuel* [Jerusalem: Keren R’ Yisrael Dov Odesser, first edition], Letter 2, p. 14; cf. Reb Noson’s description of the Rebbe’s teachings at the beginning of his *Hakdamah* to *Likkutei Moharan*.)

\*

The Terhovitza Maggid, a close *talmid* of the Rebbe and a prominent Chassidic leader in his own right, and Reb Menachem Nochum of Chernobyl, author the classic Chassidic work *Me’or Einayim*, always used to take turns visiting each other to celebrate Shavuos. On Shavuos night, they would dance with each other in ecstasy all night long. When Reb Nochum grew too old and weak to continue, he sent his son Reb Mordechai of Chernobyl to the Terhovitza Maggid for Shavuos, and they, too, danced all night.

(Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz, *Michtevei Shmuel* [Jerusalem: Keren R’ Yisrael Dov Odesser, first edition], Letter 64, p. 201)

\*

Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz states that on Shavuos in Uman, the Chassidim took turns dancing all through the night. Thus, one group was always reciting the *Tikkun* and another was always dancing.

(Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz, *Michtevei Shmuel* [Jerusalem: Keren R’ Yisrael Dov Odesser, first edition], Letter 54, p. 190; *ibid.* Letter 64, p. 201)

\*

By contrast, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Bender recalled that the Breslover Chassidim in Uman recited the *Tikkun Leyl Shavuos*, as is customary, and then danced for a long time. On one occasion, Reb Borukh Getche's danced with the members of his *chaburah* all night until it was time to get ready for Shacharis.

(*Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* V, 303)

\*

Rabbi Nachman Burshteyn heard that in Uman, it was primarily the *'ovdim* who danced at such length on Shavuos night. Most of the *'olam* simply recited the *Tikkun*.

\*

In Katamon, they used to dance after each of the three or four "*kaddeishim*" in the course of reading the *Tikkun*.

(Heard from Rabbi Nachman Burshteyn)

\*

The melody for "*Atah Nigleisa*" that we sing on Shavuos night came from Reb Borukh'l of Medzhibuzh, who sang it on Shabbos evening to "*Eishes Chayil*" – while the melody we sing to "*Eishes Chayil*," Reb Borukh'l sang to "*Atah Nigleisa*." However, the Rebbe switched them.

(Heard from Rabbi Nachman Burshteyn)

\*

Just before *alos ha-shachar*, one immerses in the *mikveh*. Kabbalistically, this *mikveh* represents the Fiftieth Gate, and is the source of holiness of all immersions in the *mikveh* throughout the year.

(*Likkutei Moharan* I, 56:7; Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz, *Michtevei Shmuel* [Jerusalem: Keren R' Yisrael Dov Odesser, first edition], Letter 64, p. 201; Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Pri Eitz Chaim, Seder Leyl Shavuos*)

\*

As mentioned above, Shavuos is one of the five times that the *tzibbur davens ki-vasikin*.  
(Oral Tradition)

\*

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Bender stated that throughout the Ukraine, including in Breslover communities, it was customary to omit the *yotzros* on the first day of Shavuos, but to recite them on the second day. In Breslov communities in Eretz Yisrael today, *yotzros* are recited during *chazoras ha-sha"tz* on Shavuos.  
(See *Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* IV, 463)

\*

In America, the Borough Park Breslov congregation recites *yotzros* so on both days.

\*

Rabbi Nachman greatly praised the medieval poem "*Akdamus Milin*" and the regal melody with which it is sung. This remains a highlight of the Shavuos *davening* in Breslover *shuls* today. It is our custom that each stanza is sung by both the *chazzan* and the congregation, not by alternating stanzas, as in some communities.  
(See *Sichos ha-Ran* 256)

\*

Reb Avraham used to sing a melody without words prior to *Akdamus*, and extend and embellish the stanzas with various melodic phrases as he recited them.  
(Heard from Rabbi Nachman Burshteyn)

\*

Reb Noson mentions the *minhag* followed by most congregations to recite *Sefer Rus* on the second day Shavuos (in *chutz la'aretz*).

(See *Likkutei Halakhos*, *Birkhas ha-Shachar* 5:18, 52; *Kriyas Shema'* 5:17; *Birkhas ha-Peyros* 5:22; et al. This custom is mentioned in *Machzor Vitry*, based on a *midrash* in *Pesikta Zutra* (*Midrash Rus*); see *Likkutei Maharich* III, p. 579.)

\*

Reb Gedaliah told Reb Aharon Waxler that one should say “*shnei se'irim le-khaper*” during the *Musaf* of Shavuos, as in the *Musaf* of Rosh Hashanah.

(Heard from Rabbi Aharon Waxler. Cf. *Siddur Baal ha-Tanya*, ad loc.)

\*

Shavuos is the *yahrtzeit* of the holy Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, and the Rebbe's great-grandfather. Therefore, it is a custom of Chassidim in general to mention a teaching from the Baal Shem Tov, or at least to mention him on Shavuos.

### **Khof Sivan**

It was customary throughout the Ukraine and Russia to recite *selichos* on the twentieth of *Sivan*, including in the Breslover community. This commemoration of the 6,000 martyrs of the Nemirov massacre of 1648 persisted in Eretz Yisrael and *chutz la-arets* until recent years, when it began to fall into neglect. However, Reb Noson mentions it in *Likkutei Halakhos*. (See *Likkutei Halakhos*, *Shluchin* 5:36; *Chovel Be-chavero* 3:7, 9. The *selichos* for Khof Sivan are printed in the *Siddur Tefillah Yesharah-Berditchev* and elsewhere.)

\*

Reb Avraham Sternhartz used to fast on Khof Sivan.

(Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn, in the name of Rabbi Moshe Burshteyn)

### **Ches Tammuz**

In Uman, *selichos* were also recited on the eighth of Tammuz, when many thousands of Jewish men, women, and children were slaughtered during the Haidamak uprisings of the same period. However, this *minhag* has also fallen into disuse.

\*

Reb Avraham Sternhartz used to fast on Ches Tammuz.

(Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn, in the name of Rabbi Moshe Burshteyn)

### **Khof-Gimel Tammuz**

This is the *yahrtzeit* of Rabbi Gedaliah Aharon Kenig, *talmid muvhak* of Rabbi Avraham Sternhartz and founder of Mosdos Nachal Novea Mekor Chochma, the umbrella organization of the Tzefas Breslov community. Reb Gedaliah was a legend in his own time for his *ahavas Yisrael*, *arichas apayim*, and great wisdom both in understanding people and in all areas of Torah, particularly *pnimiyus ha-Torah*. He edited and published several *seforim* of other Breslover Chassidim, including his teacher Reb Avraham's *Tovos Zichronos* and Reb Ephraim ben Naftali's *Likkutei Even / Tefillas ha-Boker*, as well as an original work, *Chayei Nefesh*, on the nature and role of the *tzaddik*.

Khof-Gimel Tammuz is also the *yahrtzeit* of sixteenth century kabbalist Rabbi Moshe Cordovero of Tzefas, author of *Pardes Rimonim*, *Tomer Devorah*, *Ohr Ne'erav*, and other important mystical works – a *tzaddik* with whom Reb Gedaliah felt a deep lifelong affinity. Reb Elazar, his brothers, and other *chaveirim* usually visit Reb Gedaliah's *kever* on Har ha-Zeisim in Yerushalayim on the *yahrtzeit*, where they recite Tehillim and *beyt rachamim be-zekhuso*.

(An English translation of the first half of Reb Gedaliah's "*Chayei Nefesh*" is available on the "Learn" page of this website. It is hoped that his other *seforim* still in manuscript, including his commentaries on *Likkutei Moharan* and *Tikkunei Zohar*, will be published in the near future, *be-'ezras Hashem*, by Mosdos Nachal Novea Mekor Chochma of Tzefas.)

## **Heh Av**

This is the *yahrtzeit* of the ARI *zal* (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria Ashkenazi) of Tzefas, universally recognized as the foremost master of Kabbalah by all Chassidic, Lithuanian, and Sefardic kabbalists. His teachings were written down by his *talmid muvhak*, Rabbi Chaim Vital (Calabrese), and primarily consists of “Eight Gates,” including the bedrock of his teachings, the *Eitz Chaim*.

In Tzefas, the *hillulah* of the ARI *zal* attracts thousands of visitors from all over the world, who recite Tehillim and pray at his gravesite. It is also a widespread custom to immerse in the natural spring where he was accustomed to immerse, not far from his *kever* in the old *Beis ha-Chaim*. The ARI *zal* stated that whoever did so would succeed in doing *teshuvah* for all his sins before he died.

(“*Chayei ha-ARI zal*,” a Hebrew biography of the ARI *zal* culled from *Shivchei ARI zal* and other classic sources was compiled and annotated by Rabbi Avraham Abish Tzeinvirt, and published by Makhon Da’as Yosef, Yerushalayim 1990. Chakham Ya’akov Hillel of Machon Ahavat Shalom also has published an important annotated critical edition of *Shivchei ARI zal*.)

### Three Weeks

Many Breslover Chassidim study *Likkutei Moharan* II, 67, during the Three Weeks and recite the corresponding prayer, *Likkutei Tefillos* II, 33. Some also recite this prayer on Tisha be-Av, but only after *chatzos*, since it contains words of consolation.

(Cf. *Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* VI, 499)

\*

Breslover Chassidim dance after *davenning* even during the Three Weeks, until Rosh Chodesh Av. The melody usually sung at this time is "*Nicham HaShem Tzion*." However, beginning on Rosh Chodesh, dancing is curtailed until after Tisha be-Av.

(*Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* IV, 191)

\*

During the Three Weeks, many Breslover Chasidim are accustomed to sit on the floor every weekday at noon to recite *Tikkun Chatzos*, including on Erev Shabbos, as mentioned in *Shulchan Arukh*. This was Reb Gedaliah's practice. Reb Elazar informed us that his father would have liked his *talmidim* to do so *be-tzibbur*, but this was not feasible at the time.

\*

Like all Chassidim, Breslovers follow the *shittah* that there is no public display of mourning on Shabbos Chazon.

### **Tisha be-Av**

Tisha be-Av is one of the five times that Breslover Chassidim *daven* together *ki-vasikin*. The 'avodah of reciting *Kinno*s is taken very seriously and lasts until the late morning.

\*

Reb Levi Yitzchak Bender stated that on Tisha be-Av, it is our *minhag* to recite the *berakhah* "*she'asah li kol tzorkhi*" in its proper place in *Birkhos ha-Shachar*.

(*Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* VI, 497. Similarly, cf. *Darkei Chaim ve-Shalom* [Munkatch] 675.)

\*

The fast is broken immediately after Ma'ariv in the synagogue, prior to *Kiddush Levanah*. It is customary to dance after reciting *Kiddush Levanah* upon the conclusion of Tisha be-Av, despite the fact that most restrictions are maintained until noon of the following day.

(Cf. *Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* IV, 270)

\*

Soon after Tisha be-Av, Reb Elazar Kenig usually begins studying the lesson from *Likkutei Moharan* that he will publicly deliver on the second night of Rosh Hashanah, together with its related teachings from *Likkutei Halakhos*, etc. On some years he has started learning his Rosh Hashanah lesson even earlier.

### **A Few Breslover Sayings (Just for Good Measure)**

"*A bissel is oych guht . . . A little bit is also good!*"

"*Gott is groys, mir vays'n gohrnisht . . . G-d is great – we know absolutely nothing!*"

"*Oif yedden lefel hisorerus, darf men tzu hobben a shissel ful mit hischazkus . . . With every spoonful of aspiration, one needs a pail full of encouragement!*"

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We have tried our best to make certain that what we have written is correct. However, this is still a work-in-progress. Therefore, we welcome any additions or corrections from our readers that are based upon reliable sources. If you have any constructive comments, please send us an email: [meoreiohr@aol.com](mailto:meoreiohr@aol.com)

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