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The Mitzvah of Tasting the Shabbos Foods on Erev Shabbos Kodesh

We will touch upon additional point with regard to *Shabbos Kodesh* - to illuminate it with the special light of Shabbos, the light of the *neshamah*.

The *Magen Avraham* writes: It is a *mitzvah* to taste the [Shabbos] dishes and one needs to taste every dish on erev Shabbos." [1] The *Arizal* says [2] that the source for this is hinted in the verse "Those who taste it will merit life." [3] What is the reason for this concept, that one needs to taste each dish on erev Shabbos?

The *Arizal* explains that this is for the purpose of honoring Shabbos. It is just like one who has invited the king, who prepares each of the foods and tastes them in order to check that they are good and tasty in order to honor the king. An additional reason is, that one should taste the foods in order to make sure they are prepared properly so that they will be eaten with an appetite. [4] Sometimes a dish lacks a certain spice which cannot be prepared on Shabbos itself, and thus one should taste it before Shabbos to make sure that it has been spiced well.

Let us, with Hashem's help, attempt to contemplate the deeper meaning of this. There is a fundamental principle that if one wants to understand something better, he must investigate its root. And the first time something is mentioned in the Torah is its root. From there we can understand the depth of the matter. This principle is mentioned many times in the writings of *Rabbeinu Tzadok Hakohein* from Lublin.

To give the general outline of what it is to come: the *mitzvah* to taste the Shabbos dishes before Shabbos has three elements to it: 1) the essential concept of taste, 2) that which is tasted, and 3) when to taste it.

Let us now explain this.

The act of Tasting is Only Mentioned in the Torah with regard to the Manna

First, we must contemplate the essential concept of taste. Where is this concept first found in the holy Torah?

The concept of taste is only found in the Torah twice, both of which appear in the part of the Torah relating to the manna. The first time is in *parshas Beshalach*: "And the Jewish people gave it the name 'manna.' And it was like coriander seed, it was white, and it tasted like dough fried in honey." [5]

The second time is in *parshas Beha'aloscha*: "The people would wander and gather it and grind it in a millstone or pound it in a mortar and cook it crumbled up or make it into cakes and it tasted like the taste of dough kneaded with oil."^[6] While the word "delicacies," ("מטעמים") which shares the same root as the word for "tasting" ("טעימה"), appears in the story of Yitzchak, the act of tasting is only used with regard to the manna.

What did the manna taste like? In *parshas Beshalach* it says that it tasted like dough fried in honey. But in *parshas Beha'aloscha*, it says that it tasted like dough kneaded with oil. In order to explain this, the Gemara says: "The Torah calls it [manna] 'bread' [from heaven], 'oil,' and 'honey.' Rabbi Yossi says in the name of Rabbi Chanina: 'To the young people, it tasted like bread, to the elders, it tasted like oil, and to the children, it tasted like honey.'"^[7]

So there are three different tastes that the manna had: like bread, like oil, and like honey.

One Omer per Person Equally - For every Person every Day

Let us now contemplate the concept of taste. We revealed it with regard to the manna, but now, let us try to understand its deeper meaning.

The manna descended for all Jewish people in equal measure; one *omer* per person every single day. As the verse says, "Every man collected from it according to what he could eat, one omer per person according to the number of your souls, each person according to [how many people were] in his tent, they took."^[8] Each person got one *omer*, and there was no distinction between a young boy and an elder, between a young man and a child, or between the weekdays and Shabbos.

This requires explanation, because no two people eat in exactly the same way and even an individual does not eat the same amount every single day. Each person eats differently every time and eats differently on Shabbos than he does on weekdays.

On the other hand, we find that the manna fell in a very measured way, as the Gemara says: "The verse says 'And when the dew fell on the camp at night,' and it says 'and the nation went out and collected,' and it says 'They wandered and collected.' How did this occur? It descended to the doors of the homes of the *tzadikim*, the average people went out and collected, and the wicked people wandered around and collected."^[9] The "packages" of manna were measured according to the number of Jewish people in such a way that a wicked person could not take from the manna that fell into the camp, and had to go outside of the camp.

The same Gemara states further that the manna was able to clarify legal disputes: "How so? If two people came to Moshe for judgment, and one says 'my servant stole from me,' and this one says 'You sold it to me,' Moshe would say to them, 'I will give judgment in the morning.' In the morning, if the *omer* [of manna corresponding to the one which was 'stolen'] was in the house of the first one, it is known that [the second one] stole it. If the [first one's rightful] *omer* is found in the second one's house, it is known that [the first one] sold it to him."^[10]

We see that the manna descended in an extraordinarily clear, measured way, in an exact spot, and in an exact amount corresponding to the number of Jewish people. But we also see that the amount was exactly the same for every person, which contradicts our notions of common sense because it is the nature of people to have different ways of eating.

We must therefore understand why the manna did not descend for each person according to the way he personally eats. There is a very deep point in this, and we will try to clarify it with G-d's help.

Manna - the Root of all Tastes

We also find that Chazal state that even though the Torah says that the manna tasted like dough fried in honey, and like dough kneaded with oil, the person would taste in the manna whatever taste a person wanted to taste in it.

“They tasted all types of taste in the manna.”^[11] The Midrash says that Hashem caused the manna, which contained all types of tastes within it, to descend for them. “Every Jewish person would taste whatever he wanted.”^[12] Every single taste in the world was contained in the manna.

We can now understand the deeper reason why the source for the idea of taste is found in the Torah’s discussion of manna: because the manna is the root of all taste, and it teaches us about all other tastes.

The root of all tastes, therefore, is in the manna. This is because “they tasted all types of taste in the manna”^[13] and because “Every Jewish person would taste whatever he wanted.”^[14] If the taste of the manna had only been a branch of the potential tastes, then they would have only been able to taste a portion of the possible tastes in it. But because the manna is the root of all tastes, it is possible to taste all tastes in it.

Sensual Taste and Intellectual Taste: “In the Name of” of Taste (“מטעם”), and the Sounds of the Torah (“טעמי המקרה”)

The manna is the root of the inner world called “taste.” Let us try to expand on these ideas and understand them.

What is the concept of taste? On what plane does it exist and what is it related to? With what does a person taste? With the mouth, with the palate, or with the *neshama*? What types of taste can a person perceive?

The simplest tastes, which we perceive, are those that we taste with our mouths and palates in the food we eat. There are, in general, four kinds of taste: bitter, sweet, sour, and salty foods. Each of these tastes corresponds to the four elements: fire, water, wind and earth.

Aside from the tastes we can perceive with our mouths, there are other kinds of tastes (“טעמים”). First, there is an “intellectual” kind of taste, which is a taste for an idea and explains it so that it will be intellectually understandable. We therefore find that taste can be sensual or intellectual.

There is an additional type of taste (“טעם”) called “in the name of” (“מטעם”). As the verse says: “*and had it promulgated and declared in Nineveh in the name of the king and his nobles, saying ‘the man and the animal, the herd and the flock shall not taste anything; they shall neither graze, nor drink water.’*”^[15] Thus, “מטעם המלך” means “thus has the king decreed.”

Another type of taste is the sound, the tune to which the Torah is read. As we know, the Torah is divided into four elements: letters, crowns, vowels, and sounds. The word taste, “טעם,” in the phrase “טעמי המקרה” means the tune to which the Torah is read.

We therefore find many different types of “tastes.” It is clear, however, that all of these different types of taste have one central deeper meaning which we must discern.

Let us contemplate. Things exist which are sweet to the palate but which the intellect knows are bad for a person. For example, it could be bad for the health, forbidden to eat, or the like. This is a simple contradiction between “intellectual taste” and “sensual taste.” Intellectual taste is not always in sync with the sweet things that a person’s palate desires.

Comprehensible Taste and Taste which is Above Understanding

The highest concept of “taste” is called “מטעם,” meaning “in the name of the king.” One who hears the word of the king and his decree is obligated to fulfill the king’s command even if he does not intellectually understand the reason for the decree, and even if he finds it unpleasant, and that the decree does not “taste good” to him. If he does not do so, he would be rebelling against the king.

We must make a deep distinction here. In general, there are two kinds of “tastes:” comprehensible taste, and taste which is not understood.

We experience the kind of taste which appeals to the mouth and the intellect, which is understood by the mind. Similarly, we understand the concept of the “sound of the Torah,” because we have a connection to the one who is singing. But “מטעם המלך,” the concept of “in the name of the king” is not necessarily understandable because it is not dependent on the person understanding the reason for the king’s decree (“טעם” also means “reason”). Rather, we must only know that this is the decree of the king. When a king decrees something, he does not have to give a reason for it, but the nation must still fulfill his words even if he did not give a reason.

We therefore understand that there is “taste,” meaning “reason,” and there is “in the name of the king.” “In the name of the king” is the source of taste and reason, but we do not comprehend the essence of the reason.

“In the Name of” - Above Taste/Reason

Let us explain more. There are some tastes or ideas whose taste or reason is understandable. We eat something and sense its taste. We study something and understand the reason for it. This is the idea of the “טעמי המצוות,” which give a person the taste for a mitzvah and explains the reason why we were commanded to fulfill it.

On the other hand, there is a type of “taste” which is above reason and understanding. Where do we see this? Before we answer this question, we must first make a tangential distinction. When we eat bread, it has one taste, when we eat *matzah*, it has another taste, and when we eat meat, it has an additional taste. But the snake was cursed in that no matter what it eats, it only has one taste.[\[16\]](#)

The first distinction which we must make is that tastes are different from one another. No one wants all of his food should have one taste. Rather, they should have different tastes. It is the same with the “טעמי המקרה,” the Torah’s sounds. All notes are not the same. Rather, there is a variety of different notes. It is also the same with the “טעמי המצוות,” the reasons for the mitzvos. Even though, deep down, all of the mitzvos have one reason, attachment to Hashem, there are nevertheless a variety of reasons for the specific mitzvos.

We therefore see that there are two types of worlds. There is a world of understanding in which the reasons for things are each different, and there is a world of understanding in which the reasons are all unified together – they are all one reason.

The World of Taste Will be Revealed at the end of the Sixth Millennium, and the Secret of the Multiplicity of Tastes in our Generation

Therefore, *Chazal’s* statement that the manna “had in it the taste of all kinds of foods, and every Jew would taste in it whatever he wanted” means, on a deeper level, as we said before, that the manna was the essence and root of all tastes. All tastes, at their root, have the same taste which became differentiated into all of the other tastes.

"Taste and see that Hashem is good."^[17] This is the root of all tastes. The root word here for taste is singular. Afterward, it becomes differentiated so we can receive a wide variety of flavors. The analogy for this is the following: A father had ten sons each one of whom resembled their father in some way. But each child was nevertheless different from his brothers in his nature, appearance, and so forth. They nevertheless had one father.

The variety of flavors continues to expand and evolve in our generation. One hundred years ago there was not such an enormous variety of flavors as there is today. Every few years, hundreds and thousands of flavors are invented! Why is this occurring in this generation in particular?

The secret of this idea is that we find ourselves at the end of the sixth millennia of creation, about to greet the seventh millennia, Shabbos. In that time, the world of taste will be revealed. So just like we taste the Shabbos foods on Erev Shabbos, we now see the revelation of many, many types of new flavors. This is the root of the revelation of the multiplicity of flavors that we have today.

But because the primary revelation is not being revealed in its truly proper place, it is being revealed in other things like foods, drinks, and the like. The root of this revelation, and the fact that there are so many different flavors today, is the world of taste becoming more revealed - both in Torah and in the physical flavors of this world.

There is only one Root to the World of Taste - "Taste and See that Hashem is Good"

According to this we can understand the depth of the topic of taste. We have a root, and we have its branches. There is only one root to the world of taste, but it has many branches.

The verse says about the curse of the snake: *"And you shall eat dust all the days of your life."*^[18] The Gemara explains that "Even if he would eat all of the delicacies of the world, he will only taste dust."^[19] In other words, this is an eating without taste. "Hashem also made this in balance with that."^[20] As we know, anything that exists in holiness also exists in its opposite. If, therefore, the concept of the curse of the snake exists wherein all tastes are the same, it must be that even on the side of holiness, there is a concept of one unified taste.

With regard to the particularized manifestations of the root taste of the manna, the palate desires many, many tastes, always trying something new. But in the depths of our souls, there is only one taste: *"Taste and see that Hashem is good."*

When the snake was cursed, Hashem took the highest light, the light of "one taste," and caused it to descend to the level of physicality. So the snake was only able to taste one taste in everything. This was the curse of the snake, *"And you shall eat dust all of the days of your life."*

We are familiar with the fact that *Chazal* say that "one uses the source of the infliction to create the remedy."^[21] If so, the curse itself must be the root of the remedy. The root of the remedy here is that the light of singular taste should illuminate even below, *"And you shall eat dust all of the days of your life."*

The Light of Moshiach - the Revelation of the Light of Singular Taste

"Hashem also made this in balance with that." For every power in the world that is evil, there is an equally powerful force of good which we can use to counter it. What is the opposite of the curse on the snake that it can only experience one taste?

The numerical value of the Hebrew word for "snake", *nochosh* in Hebrew, is equivalent to the numerical value of the Hebrew word "*Moshiach*." So Moshiach is the equal and opposite balancing

force to the snake! The snake was cursed with “one taste,” and on the other side, the light of Moshiach will reveal the world of “one taste.”

And what is the “one taste” which is revealed by the light of Moshiach? *“Taste and see that Hashem is good.”* This is the light of Moshiach and this is the taste which the *neshama* desires deep inside.

For the snake, the light of “one taste” descended into his food, so that even if he would eat all of the delicacies of the world, they only tasted like dust. Everything he ate had one taste. But the root of all of this is the root of all tastes because at the source, there is only one taste.

The Different Tastes in the Manna - Different Tastes for the Body but not the Neshama

We have explained that the manna was the root of all tastes. But the manna, in and of itself, had only one taste, although everyone tasted whatever they wanted in it. But if a person did not think of any taste at all when he ate the manna, what did it taste like?

The Gemara explains that it had three tastes: bread, dough kneaded with oil, and dough fried in honey. For the young boys, it tasted like bread, for the elders, it tasted like oil, and to the children, it tasted like honey, as we mentioned. But besides that, it would taste like whatever the person eating it wanted it to taste like. It is apparent, then, that the manna itself contained all tastes within it, and it was the root of all tastes, which was only one taste. The “one taste,” at its root, exists in the *neshama*. There, there is only one taste. But at the level of the branches, it differentiates into many tastes. In a curse, taste is revealed as only one taste even in the branches. This was the curse of the snake.

On a deeper level, “for the young boys, it tasted like bread, for the elders, it tasted like oil, and to the children, it tasted like honey,” the three categories of young boy, elder, and child exist in the body. But there is no such thing as youth or age for the *neshama*, which was formed at the beginning of the creation of the world.

The different tastes in the manna therefore exist only from the perspective of the body. But someone who has stripped himself of any notion of the body’s independent significance will only taste the flavor of the “bread from heaven” from the aspect of heaven within him, and not the “bread from the earth.”

Bread from Heaven - Without the Garment of Physicality

We know that Shabbos was blessed that the manna did not descend on Shabbos. *“For six days shall you gather and on the seventh day, Shabbos, [the manna] will not [fall] on it.”*[\[22\]](#) We must understand why it was considered a blessing that the manna did not fall on Shabbos.

The manna is bread from heaven. During the six days of the week it fell to the earth, but on *Shabbos Kodesh*, it did not descend. Then, it remained on the level of “bread from heaven,” which means that when they ate it, they did so with the perspective that it had not descended.

During the six days of the week, the manna descended from heaven much like rain does, which descends from heaven. But they ate the manna here on earth with the perspective of the body which is rooted in the earth, in physicality. From that perspective, the manna had all of the different tastes that we mentioned: bread, oil, and honey, or that each person tasted in it whatever he wanted, as we mentioned. This is all from the perspective of the understanding of the body.

But on *Shabbos Kodesh*, it was like bread from heaven which had not descended to earthliness. *“Today you will not find it in the field.”*[\[23\]](#) Bread from heaven does not exist with the perspective of

a physical body. Therefore, its taste was also with the perspective of heaven, meaning that it was not encloded in physicality.

This is according to the perspective of the *neshama*.

The Manna of the Six Days of the Week and the Manna of Shabbos Kodesh

We therefore find two perspectives with regard to the manna. The manna is bread from heaven which has descended to the earth. This is a revelation of the manna from the perspective of the body on the six days of the week. But this is not the case on Shabbos, when it did not descend to the earth. This revealed the perspective of heaven, of the *neshama*.

For example, let us consider the “extra *neshamah*” which is given to man on *Shabbos kodesh*.

On one hand, it is revealed in the body, as *Rashi* explains, “the extra *neshama* [means] expansiveness of the heart for rest, joy, openheartedness, and for eating and drinking from which the soul will not be repulsed.”[\[24\]](#) This is how the “extra” *neshama* manifests itself in the body.

There is, however, another way that the extra *neshama* is expressed - in the “regular” *neshama*; meaning, in a way which reveals the *neshama*.

We see, therefore, that there is a manna of the six days of the week and a manna of Shabbos Kodesh. The manna that they ate during the six days of the week had all of the tastes in creation in it. The manna that they ate on Shabbos, however, even though it could also taste like anything, it also had “one taste.” It had the deeper aspect of manna which did not descend. It was possible to taste this higher source in it so that one could grasp the fact that it was “bread from heaven” without any descent to the earth. In this way, they tasted a revelation of “*Taste and see that Hashem is good.*”

Two Aspects of Manna - Oil and Honey

The very fact that the Torah says that the manna tasted like oil and honey hints to these concepts. The nature of oil is that it floats, it rises to the top. But the nature of honey is also that it sinks, going to the bottom.

These are the two aspects of the tastes which they sensed in the manna. “The taste of dough kneaded with oil” is the taste of the concept of heavenly bread which floats. “Its taste was like dough fried in honey” is the taste from the perspective of manna which has descended to the earth, from the perspective of sinking.

The concept of oil, in relation to the manna, is the idea of tasting the higher taste in the manna as it exists above. This is the aspect of the manna of *Shabbos kodesh*. The concept of the taste of honey in the manna, however, refers to the idea of manna as it is when it descends to the earth in which they could taste all of the tastes in it. This is the aspect of the body, as we mentioned above.[\[25\]](#)

Bread from Heaven - Perceiving Unity

According to all of this, we can see that there are two perspectives about the world of taste. One is the perspective according to how it is differentiated into numerous tastes. The deeper meaning behind “taste” is the understanding that all tastes have one unified taste.

We must understand: What difference it makes whether the manna had one taste or many tastes? We must also understand why Hashem had to provide for the Jewish people in such a miraculous way, with bread descending from heaven.

We know that “the Torah was only given to be derived by those who ate manna.”[\[26\]](#) The deeper meaning of this is that had their bread been “bread from the earth,” then we would have lived with the perspective of differentiation and the taste would also have been differentiated. But because Hashem chose to give “bread from heaven,” our perspective of life became one of unity.

Let us contemplate this and understand it. In the section of the Torah which discusses manna, it is explained that Moshe delayed in teaching rules [regarding the manna] on Shabbos. “*And it was on the sixth day that they collected double bread, two omer per person. And all of the princes of the congregation brought it and told Moshe.*”[\[27\]](#) They measured what they had collected and found that it was double.[\[28\]](#) Moshe then immediately explained the Torah portion of manna to them: “*And he said to them, ‘This is what Hashem was talking about when He said ‘Tomorrow is a rest day, a Shabbos to Hashem... Six days shall you gather and the seventh is Shabbos, there will be no [manna] on it.’*”[\[29\]](#)

How could it have happened that Moshe made such a mistake?[\[30\]](#) Also, why did the Jewish people have to collect double on Fridays?

There is an additional matter which also requires explanation. *Shabbos Kodesh* itself is called “the secret of oneness.” (*rozoh d’echad*).[\[31\]](#) Shabbos is the secret of oneness, distinct from the six days of the week which reflect differentiation. How could it be, then, that the Shabbos manna, in particular, contains the aspect of “double?”[\[32\]](#), when it Shabbos is all about oneness?

At its Source, the Shabbos Manna was not Double - the Secret of Moshe’s Mistake

The deeper meaning of these ideas is that on one hand, Shabbos Kodesh is the *source* of blessing and on the other hand, it contains the aspect that “one who toils on *erev Shabbos* will eat on Shabbos.”[\[33\]](#)

These are, ostensibly, two opposite concepts. If Shabbos is really the source of blessing, why, then is it true that only one who toils on *erev Shabbos* will eat on Shabbos?[\[34\]](#)

The answer is that from “Shabbos’s perspective,” from above to below (*m’leila l’lisata*), Shabbos is the source of everything. But from our perspective, when we strive to reach from below to above (*m’lisata l’leila*), we must prepare for Shabbos.

From our basic perspective, which is to go from the below to the above, we toil with our perspective of “differentiation” in order to reveal the oneness. They therefore collected double on Friday, in order that for Shabbos, the “oneness”, would remain.

This is the deeper explanation of the mistake that Moshe, as it were, made in not explaining the Torah portion of manna to them. They therefore collected only one portion on Friday. It was only afterward, when they measured what they had collected, that they found it to be double; two *omer* per person. The manna itself became double. We see that on the deepest level, they did not have to collect double. They only had to come to Shabbos with one portion. But because we are not yet on the level of the complete revelation of Shabbos, we therefore collect double for Shabbos.

We find a similar idea in the Gemara: “Both *zachor* and *shamor* were said at the same moment, which the mouth cannot speak and the ear cannot hear.”[\[35\]](#) Even though both words were said in only one utterance, in our reality they are divided into two, *zachor* alone in the first tablets and *shamor* alone in the second tablets.

We exist now with the perspective of differentiation, such that we even come to *Shabbos Kodesh* with duality because our preparations for Shabbos are rooted in duality, in “double.”

But if we want to have the deeper level, we must try to come to Shabbos with oneness just as we find with the manna, regarding which we see that the Jewish people collected only one portion because of Moshe's mistake, as it were, in not telling them to collect double. They therefore came to Shabbos with "oneness."

What is the root of all of this?

These are sparks of the light which is above the reason and knowledge of even Moshe, which comes in order to illuminate the fact that in essence, the goal is to collect only one portion. Although on a practical level they indeed had to collect a double portion, the light of the ultimate goal on Shabbos is that they will be left with only one singular portion.

This idea does not merely concern how much was left for Shabbos on a practical level. Instead, it relates to what *perspective* one should have about Shabbos.

Multiplicity of Taste in the Manna - the Root of the Mitzva to have many Foods in Honor of Shabbos

We explained that the manna had two concepts. One is that it had a multitude of tastes. The second aspect is that it only had one taste. We also explained that the aspect that it had many tastes was related to weekdays and that the aspect of "one taste" of the manna was related to *Shabbos kodesh*.

Today, we still live during the six thousand years of the world's existence, which correspond to the six days of creation. For us, even our Shabbos is the perspective of multiplicity. A person therefore ideally needs to make a wide variety of delicacies for *Shabbos Kodesh* in order to experience many tastes in honor of Shabbos.

But the taste of the Shabbos of the World to Come is "*Taste and see that Hashem is good.*"

"*A man eats the bread of the mighty.*"^[36] This refers to manna, the "bread of heaven," the bread in which they tasted the taste of heaven. But today, because we do not exist on the level of "heaven," and instead live on the level of earthliness, we must taste many tastes.

What is the source from which these tastes derive their existence? They derive their existence from the source of taste, so there is a mitzvah to multiply the number of tastes one experiences on Shabbos. The idea of preparing a variety of tastes on Shabbos is to bring out the "representatives" of the wide variety of tastes which exist in the world and thereby, to connect everything to the source of all tastes.

Shabbos - the Name of the Holy One, Blessed is He

The Gemara relates the following story: "The Caesar said to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya, 'Why does Shabbos food have such a strong fragrance?' He said to him, 'We only have one spice, and 'Shabbos' is its name. We put it in the food and it has a strong fragrance.'"^[37]

This special spice is Shabbos itself! During the six days of the week there are a variety of spices. But on *Shabbos Kodesh*, which only has one spice, Shabbos itself is the spice.

Let us understand. What is the taste which Shabbos infuses? What does this "spice" taste like?

We said earlier that one of the reasons for the mitzvah to taste is so that one can make sure the foods are spiced properly so that they will be eaten with an appetite. This way, if one needs to add something, he can do so on erev Shabbos, because on Shabbos, one may no longer add it. The

deeper meaning of this is that on Shabbos itself, one cannot spice the food because there is no such thing as a variety of spices on Shabbos. There is only “one” spice: Shabbos itself.

The six days of the week are the aspect of the multiple tastes, but *Shabbos Kodesh* is the aspect of the one taste, of only one spice.

This spice is Shabbos itself, as it says in the Zohar: “What is Shabbos? The name of the Holy One Blessed is He.”[\[38\]](#) That is what Shabbos is!

On weekdays, the spices are the aspect of differentiation, the aspect of flavors which differentiate into the wide variety flavors. That is not the “secret of one.” The true “secret of one,” the oneness in which we are unified G-d, is different from the tastes of the six days of the week.

Shabbos Kodesh is “the secret of one,” in which the name of the Creator of the world is revealed. There is, therefore only one spice for Shabbos.

The Gemara we just quoted continues by saying that the Caesar said to Rabbi Yehoshua, “‘Give us some of it.’ He said to him, ‘It will only work for one who keeps Shabbos. And it does not work for one who does not keep Shabbos.’”[\[39\]](#) Only one who keeps Shabbos will merit to taste that spice, because he is connected to the source. But someone who does not keep Shabbos will not merit to taste this spice, because he is not connected to its source.

Not only that, but for him, there would be no taste at its source, because the reality of his soul only perceives differentiation.

Only One Thing was Created on Shabbos - When Shabbos comes, Rest comes

Hashem created the world in the six days of creation and on *Shabbos Kodesh*, He rested. “*And on the seventh day, Hashem ceased the work which He had done.*”[\[40\]](#) Rashi there explains: “What was the world lacking? Rest. When Shabbos comes, rest comes.”[\[41\]](#) What then was created on Shabbos? Rest. Multiple things were created on all of the other six days of creation. The only day on which only one thing was created is Shabbos.

“Ten things were created on the first day of creation: 1) heaven, 2) earth, 3) emptiness, 4) void, 5) light, 6) darkness, 7) wind, 8) water, 9) day, and 10) night.”[\[42\]](#) Similarly, many things were created every single day of creation.

There was only one day on which only one thing was created. “When Shabbos comes, rest comes” to the world. The spice of the six days of the week is multiplicity. Ten things were created on the first day and they became more and more differentiated with each subsequent day. But on Shabbos Kodesh, only one thing was created. When Shabbos comes, rest comes and true rest only exists at the root, which is oneness.

When we study the idea of taste now, we see that rest is the root of all of the tastes. Rest is not a creation of something new. Instead, it means connecting the branches to the root. This is the meaning of the creation of *Shabbos kodesh* which is “rest.”

In other words, all of the branches were created on the six days of creation and they were all reconnected with their root with the creation of Shabbos, since rest can only exist at the root.

“Taste” has the Same Letters as “a Little” - the Purpose of Taste on Weekdays

We have explained that the wide variety of tastes which exist are related to the six days of the week

and that “one taste” is related to *Shabbos Kodesh*. We also explained that the mitzvah to taste the Shabbos foods on *erev Shabbos Kodesh* is divided into three elements: 1) the tasting itself, 2) that which is tasted, and 3) when the tasting takes place.

So far we have explained taste itself. Now we will expand on and explain the second element; that which is tasted, the Shabbos foods.

We now understand that there are three types of taste: 1) weekday taste, 2) tasting food on Erev Shabbos, and 3) tasting food on *Shabbos Kodesh* itself.

Let us contemplate the matter. Do the tastes which one experiences on weekdays derive their existence from the “source of taste?” In terms of soul (according to the concept of that Space and Time is all contained in our Soul), it is possible that one does indeed taste the source of taste during the week. But in terms of time, weekdays exist in the perspective of differentiation, so in terms of the world of time, there can be no connection to the source of taste.

What, then, is the purpose of tasting during the week?

The word taste, “טעם,” has the same letters as the Hebrew word for “a little,” “טמט.” On weekdays, “taste” is the aspect of “a little”, so a person’s job is to minimize his eating. “Eat bread with salt and drink measured water.”^[43] If a person tastes too much physicality, he becomes oriented to physicality. In other words, when taste is experienced from the perspective of differentiation, its appropriate amount is “a little.” Then, a person should minimize the amount he eats, and not eat a lot.

But when one tastes in the way of *Erev Shabbos Kodesh*, then he tastes some of the taste of Shabbos. Then, it is appropriate to multiply tastes and experience all different kinds of tastes - because that tasting is *connected* to the source of tastes.

This kind of taste has the power to attach a person to the source. It is only with regard to that kind of tasting that one should taste “all” of the Shabbos foods on Erev Shabbos. One should not minimize the amount he tastes. Instead, he should multiply the number of things that he tastes. And actually, the more one does, the more he is praiseworthy.^[44]

When one understands that taste is separate from the source of taste, from Hashem, then tasting food attaches a person to only the separateness of the taste. This is the world of separation, the world of physicality. One must therefore minimize this and make the taste, “טעם,” a little, “טמט.”

But when taste is connected to the source of taste, then “those who taste it merit life”^[45] because in this way, a person attaches himself to the source of the taste, and the taste thereby becomes a conduit through which he connects to the source. This is the positive aspect of taste.

When a person eats something with the perspective that the tastes are separate and do not all correct to one root taste, this is a negative type of taste. But if he samples many tastes through which he connects to the source of taste, then the tastes become a source of connectedness. This is a positive kind of taste and represents the light of “those who taste it will merit life.”

The ultimate purpose of taste is to taste *Shabbos Kodesh*. What taste should one taste? The “one taste” of Shabbos!

Taste is like the Source itself - The Purpose of Taste is to Connect to the Source of the Taste

Let us summarize the point of the depth of these ideas.

There is a well known discussion in many places throughout the Talmud concerning whether taste has the same status as the source of the taste.^[46] We have the food itself and then we have its taste. The Gemara discusses whether a food's taste has the same *halachic* status that the food itself has (*taam k'ikkur*).

For example, a *nazir* may not drink wine and he will receive lashes if he drinks a *revi'is* of wine. "He has forbidden wine and aged wine from himself. He shall not drink wine vinegar and aged wine vinegar, and anything in which grapes have been soaked, and fresh and dried grapes he shall not eat."^[47] What does "anything in which grapes have been soaked" mean? This refers to water in which grapes were soaked. The water received the taste of the grapes and if the *nazir* drinks a *revi'is* of it, he is liable!

The reason is that because the water has the taste of the grapes, even though it is not the wine itself, it is as if he drank the wine. This is the rule of "taste is like the thing itself," that the taste of the wine is considered the same as the actual wine and a *nazir* receives lashes for drinking it. This is just one example.

We now understand two concepts; one thing is the taste, and another is the source of the taste. The Hebrew word for "taste", *taam*, actually has the same letters as the Hebrew word for "a little," *me'at*, as we mentioned above. It is "a little" of the source, but it is not the source itself.

Tasting something means that I have taken a little bit from it. And the idea that "taste is like the source itself" means that when I take a taste of something, it is considered that I have taken the source itself.

What is the purpose of connecting one's self to the "little bit" of the taste?

As we said before, the purpose of tasting is to attach one's self to the source of the taste. "*Those who taste it will merit life.*" "Those who taste it" refers to the idea that taste has the same status as the source of the taste. Using the taste, we must connect to the source, which is above taste. The taste is just "a little" bit, just a part of the source, but it is not the ultimate goal.

Taste and Above Taste

We know the words of the *Ramchal* who says "that man was only created to delight in Hashem and to bask in the radiance of the Divine presence."^[48] Is the purpose of one's service in order to "delight" for the sake of the taste? Does it not also say in *Mesilas Yesharim* that "as long as a person has his own benefit as his intention, his service is, at the bottom line, only for himself"?^[49]

What, then, is the purpose of one's service? The *Ramchal* continues by saying, "But the true intention found among the pious, who toil and work to achieve this, is that a person should only serve G-d in order that the honor of the Master, blessed is He, be increased and multiplied." The purpose of our service is not for the sake of the taste. It is above the taste. The taste is merely a vessel with which one can attach himself to the source.

"Those who taste it will merit life" - This is the purpose of one's service on erev Shabbos. But what happens on Shabbos itself? We elevate the multiplicity of tastes to the root of all tastes. And if we access the "one taste," the root of all tastes, then it is actually completely above taste.

The Main Service - to reach from the Taste to the Source

“In the name of the king” (“מטעם”), as we mentioned with regard to Nineveh, is the root of taste. It is above taste but it is also the inner reality of taste.

The inner depth of the concept of taste “טעם,” is “מטעם,” “in the name of the King.” But this is not the kind of concept one can literally taste. At the beginning, when one hears the words of a king or ruler, he cannot accept them unless he has some taste for them. Similarly, one cannot fulfill the mitzvos if he has no taste for them. If, however, he has some taste for them, it is easier to fulfill them whether the reason given is emotional or intellectual.

In contrast, it is said about Moshe, “A faithful servant You have called him.”^[50] A servant fulfills the words of his master whether he understands or whether he does not understand. The deep, inner meaning of one’s service is to reach from the taste to the source, the main point.

This should not be done excessively through one specific taste because one must minimize this. But we should sample many true tastes as a vessel to access the source.

One who involves himself only with taste, and not with the source of the taste, is compared to a groom on the way to his wedding who, because of an accident, cannot make it on time, so he returns home. Although he has an excuse because of the accident, the reality is that no marriage took place and he is still single!

“Those who taste it will merit life” – When a person reaches the real point of taste, he realizes that it is taste is entirely a *path* which can bring him to the essential *source*.

The Purpose of Eating is to Lead to Unification with Hashem, and not the Heaviness of the Body

We eat many foods on Shabbos. There is a very simple test which one can use to check where exactly his eating is taking him.

If it brings him straight to his bed in order to sleep well, then he is only accessing the “taste” of differentiation. This is the heaviness of the body which brings him to physicality. His eating is thus bringing him to nothing.

But if the taste brings him to oneness, this is a sign that the taste is bringing him to the right place. He has merited the concept of “the taste is like the source.” Using the taste, he has reached the source and connected to the “one,” to the Singular One of the universe.

“Those who taste it will merit life” – Tasting brings a person to the aspect of the soul called *Chaya*,^[51] to the “merit life.” From there, it brings a person to even the *Yechida* aspect of the soul – the deepest part of our essence.

The level of *Yechidah* is when one unifies himself, in an absolute way, to the Creator of the world. Absolute unification with the Creator can exist when the person fulfills the word of the King, *without reason* (without any *taam*\reason....without any *taam*\taste)!

Shabbos Kodesh is called “the Shabbos Queen” (*Shabbos Malkesa*). This is the aspect of kingship in Shabbos. If a person truly wants to attach himself to Shabbos on this deepest level – the kingship of Hashem - the way to reach it is through complete self-nullification to Hashem.

“One who toiled on *erev Shabbos* will eat on Shabbos.” Our perception today is that we bring the tastes, the foods, to Shabbos. But on a deeper level, Shabbos *itself* is the spice which a person tastes in the Shabbos food. Through this “taste,” one can touch the source of all taste, which is oneness

with Hashem, the secret of oneness – the one taste of Shabbos. From the “one taste,” one can reach *above* taste, the source, the complete attachment with the Creator of the world.

These ideas are deep and broad and we have tried to summarize them only briefly. May Hashem merit us to taste the taste of Torah, to merit and see the “*taste and see that Hashem is good,*” and from there, to help us reach the Source of all Sources - the Creator of the world

[1] On *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 250.

[2] *Sha’ar Hakavanos* 62a.

[3] Shabbos Mussaf service.

[4] *Kaf Hachaim* on the *Sha’ar Hakavanos* 62a, § 5.

[5] *Shmos* 16:31.

[6] *Bamidbar* 11:8.

[7] *Yuma* 75b. There is a different version of this in the *Midrash Raba* on *Shmos* 25:3: “How were these three verses fulfilled? The young men tasted the taste of bread, the elders tasted the taste of honey, and the children tasted oil.”

[8] *Shmos* 16:16.

[9] *Yuma* 75a.

[10] *Id.*

[11] *Id.*

[12] *Midrash Raba Shmos* 25:3.

[13] *Yuma* 75a.

[14] *Midrash Raba Shmos* 25:3.

[15] Yona 3:7.

[16] See *infra*, note 19 and accompanying text.

[17] Tehillim 34:9.

[18] Bereishis 3:14.

[19] Yuma 75a.

[20] Koheles 7:14.

[21] Shmos Raba 26:2: "Hashem said to him, 'My traits are not like those of flesh and blood. They injure with a knife and heal with a bandage. But for me; I use the same thing to heal as I do to smite.'"

[22] Shmos 16:26.

[23] *Id.* at 16:25.

[24] *Rashi* on Beitza 16a.

[25] Man is composed of layers within layers within layers. A person can do various actions and each one will be based on a different layer. Similarly, one can do one action which is motivated by many different layers within himself, each one because of a different reason. It is therefore possible to have two levels of perception in the manna at one time. The physical part of man can taste all of the flavors, and the neshama within him can taste the inner taste.

[26] Midrash Tanchuma Beshalach 20.

[27] Shmos 16:22.

[28] *Rashi*, on *Id.*

[29] Shmos 16:23, 26.

[30] *Rashi* there explains that this was a mistake.

[31] Zohar Vol. 2, 135a.

[32] Although one may attempt to answer that the double portion of manna was not given on Shabbos, but on a weekday in preparation for Shabbos, this is not satisfactory. Indeed, we find in *halacha* that we are commanded to use two challahs on Shabbos as a remembrance of the manna. We carry out this reminder about the manna which descended double on Shabbos itself. And even on a superficial level, we find that their preparation for Shabbos involved a double taking, implying some connection between the idea of “double” and the Shabbos for which they were preparing.

[33] Avoda Zara 3a.

[34] We offered a different answer to this question in the first chapter in the text accompanying notes ____.

[35] Rosh Hashana 27a.

[36] Tehillim 78:25.

[37] Shabbos 119a.

[38] Vol. 2, 88b.

[39] Shabbos 119a.

[40] Bereishis 2:2.

[41] *Rashi on id.*

[42] Chagiga 12a.

[43] Pirkei Avos 6:4.

[44] This means that it is praiseworthy to taste from more dishes and not to eat a lot of each dish.

[45] Shabbos Mussaf service, as quoted by *Magen Avraham* on *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 250.

[46] Pesachim 44, Nasir 37, and Avoda Zara 67.

[47] Bamidbar 6:3.

[48] Mesilas Yesharim 1.

[49] *Id.* at 19.

[50] Shabbos Shacharis service.

[51] The soul has five parts. The bottom three, *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neschama*, exist in the body. The top two, *chaya* and *yechida* are the loftiest and exist connected to, but outside, the body.

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/shabbos-kodesh-04-tasting-food-erev-shabbos>