

I want to thank Reb Mimi Feigelson for some of the ideas in this Dvar Torah.

This is the Shabbat just before *Pesah*, a time for us to contemplate what this holiday means to us and how we will celebrate this time of remembering our liberation from slavery in Egypt. We all know we are expected to clean our homes thoroughly; remove all *hametz* from every place we dwell during the holiday; and prepare for our two *seders* which includes inviting our family and friends to join us. With all of this physical preparation we tend to forget to spend time on the spiritual reflection that is just as important.

The first *Mishna* in the first chapter of the tractate Shabbat helps us turn our attention to the spiritual. This *Mishna* names the two main domains in Jewish law: the private domain, inside any building, and the public domain, almost every other outside place. Then it tells us we are not allowed to carrying an object from one domain to another. We can't even hand an object from a person in a private domain to a person in a public domain. This prohibition seems very simple.

But the *Mishna* uses a special designation for the one inside and the one outside. The *ba'al habayit*, the homeowner, is inside the house and *oni*, the poor or needy person is on the outside. Why would the rabbis use those specific descriptions?

One of our great *Mishna* commentators, *Rabbeinu Ovadia* of Bartenura, Italy in the 15th century tells us why. Along with learning about not carrying on Shabbat, we are also learning about how to do a particular mitzvah on *Shabbat*. We may think handing a basket of food to a poor person is a good enough reason to transgress the prohibition of carrying on *Shabbat* but *Rabbeinu Ovadia* tells us something different.

He says that the *Mishna* uses the phrases *poor person* and *homeowner*, to tell us that we cannot do this. He further tells us that we are more likely to transgress the commandment of not carrying on *Shabbat* if we think of some people as belonging on the inside and others as belonging on the outside. The only way to insure that the poor person is fed on *Shabbat* without any transgression is for the homeowner to invite the poor person into his home.

On *Shabbat* there is no such thing as 'insiders' and 'outsiders.' There is just one *Ba'al Habayit*, one Master of the House and that is God. He invites all people to remember *Shabbat* and keep it holy. It is on this day that all of us are treated with honor because all of us are allowed to rest. And we certainly can't rest unless we have had enough to eat.

How does this teaching connect with *Pesach*?

On the *seder* night we all sit at the table of the Holy One. We are the ones who do the cleaning, shopping and cooking but when we sit down to the *seder*, we are sitting at God's table. He is the true *Ba'al Habayit*.

On *seder* night we read in our *hagaddah*, '*Kol dichfin yeitei v'yechol*,' 'let all those in need come and eat.' We must include a poor person at our table.

To emphasize this requirement we are given a moral tale in our Talmud [*Baba Batra* 7b]. We are told about a righteous man who builds an entry way at the front of his house so that he would not hear the voices of poor people asking him for some food. In reaction to this *Eliyahu Ha'navi*, Elijah the prophet stops coming to visit him.

This *Shabbat* is called '*Shabbat Ha'gadol*,' the great Shabbat. The *haftara* ends with *Eliyahu* coming to bring peace between parents and children, to bring them

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home. On this *Shabbat* may we be open to hear the cries of the poor whether they manifest physically, emotionally or spiritually. On this *Shabbat* may we prepare for our *seder* by deciding which poor person we can invite to join us. And on this *Shabbat* or any other may there be no entry way that keeps us from hearing the voices of the poor.

May we all have a *zissen Pesah*, a joyful *Pesah* and become ever more liberated than before.

Shabbat Shalom.