

Maimonides 613 Series

Eruv Tavshilin: Cooking from Yom Tov to Shabbos

את אשר תאפו ואת אשר תבשלו בשלו ואת כל הע דף הניחו לכם למשמרת עד הבוקר

So he said to them, That is what the Lord spoke, Tomorrow is a rest day, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Bake whatever you wish to bake, and cook whatever you wish to cook, and all the rest leave over to keep until morning. [1]

Rabbinic Commandments

The Rambam states in the introduction to his code of Jewish Law, the *Yad haChazaka*, that there were seven commandments instituted by our Rabbis after the giving of the Torah. One of these is the setting up of an *eruv tavshilin*.

What is an *Eruv Tavshilin* and Why is it Necessary?

When a Yom Tov (holiday) falls on Thursday and Friday, one must make an *eruv tavshilin* before Yom Tov begins so that one will be allowed to prepare food for Shabbos during the Yom Tov. To make an *eruv tavshilin*, one prepares a challah roll and a piece of fish or chicken, and then sets it aside for Shabbos while reciting the appropriate blessing.

The Rambam says that an *eruv tavshilin* serves as a reminder that one is normally not permitted to prepare food on Yom Tov for the weekdays. However, making an *eruv* requires that one start preparing food for Shabbos before the Yom Tov begins, so a distinction is created between cooking for Shabbos during Yom Tov and cooking for a regular weekday. The Talmud [2] brings the above verse from this week's Torah portion as the Scriptural source for the Rabbinic commandment of *eruv*.

The Talmud [3] actually offers two reasons (in contrast to the Rambam's one reason) for the necessity of an *eruv tavshilin*, which are expounded upon in the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*. [4]

- 1) To increase the honor of Yom Tov — if one may not cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos, then certainly one may not cook for a regular weekday.
- 2) To increase the honor of Shabbos — we are concerned that perhaps all the food we have prepared will be eaten during Yom Tov, and none will be left for Shabbos. We therefore increase the honor of Shabbos by beginning to cook for Shabbos as we prepare the *eruv tavshilin*, before Yom Tov even begins.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out that there are a negative and a positive aspect to these explanations of *eruv tavshilin*. The first reason is negative — the *eruv* is necessary so that I **do not** cook on Yom Tov for a weekday. The second is positive — the *eruv* is needed so that I **do** cook in honor of Shabbos. [5]

This positive-negative dynamic is also apparent in the commandments that pertain to Shabbos and to Passover. On Shabbos, we are commanded to "guard" and "remember". The concept of "guarding" is negative — we refrain from work; the concept of "remembering" is positive — we engage in pleasurable and tranquil activities.

On Passover, we are commanded to recount our exodus from Egypt. The exodus can be broken down into the negative aspect of no longer being slaves, and the positive aspect of becoming a free people.

Going Deeper

Every Rabbinic commandment has its deeper roots in Torah Law. What, then, is the deeper concept of *eruv tavshilin*?

The answer: *Ahavas Yisroel* — loving your fellow as yourself.

The blessing we make when setting aside our *eruv* is preceded by a declaration that our *eruv* is not just for our personal use, but for the use of the entire community, and that anyone who needs an *eruv* may rely on ours. By doing this, we unite ourselves with our fellow Jews and concern ourselves with their wellbeing, that they should have enough food for Yom Tov and Shabbos. The word "*eruv*" itself means "to mix" — we all mix together as one.

And just as the concept of *eruv* has a negative and a positive aspect, so, too, does *ahavas Yisroel*. The negative aspect, the starting point, is to not create strife and divisiveness among the Jewish people. But this first step is not enough. We must incorporate the positive aspect of the commandment and go out of our way to concern ourselves with the wellbeing of other Jews, to perform acts of goodness and kindness for our fellowman — to plan ahead of time how we can make someone else's life better and easier like we do with an *eruv*.

A Story

When Reb Levik [6] was receiving his *smicha* (rabbinic ordination) from the

brilliant Reb Chaim Brisker, he was required to sit and answer questions that townspeople brought to Reb Chaim. On the Shabbos of Sukkos, a man came with the following problem: he and his neighbors shared a sukkah in a yard that joined their houses together and forgotten to make an *eruv* that would allow each family to carry food from their house to the sukkah. How would they be able to eat their Shabbos meals in the sukkah? Reb Levik thought for a moment, then answered: "The sukkah itself is *me'erev* — it unites the families as if they'd made an *eruv* since they built it together. The Gemara says that it is fitting for all Jews to sit together under one Sukkah, so let your sukkah serve as your *eruv*." Reb Chaim Brisker agreed with Reb Levik's ruling and laughed, saying, "You have such a good head. What are you filling it with?..."

FOOTNOTES:

1. Exodus 16:23
2. Tractate Betzah 15B
3. *Ibid.*
4. Orach Chaim 527:16
5. *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 16, Beshalach 4
6. The famous Gaon and Kabbalist, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak Schneerson, who was the father of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi M. M. Schneerson.