

# HAVDALA: THE GREAT SEPARATION

*by Joshua Kruger*

The silly people in the following story make five mistakes as they try to make havdala. Can you find them? Can you think of three ways that havdala is connected with the parasha?

## **The story:**

In the city of Balagan, on a street named Gevalt, lived a couple named Mr. and Mrs. Mevulbal. This family was nice and funny and very very very mixed up.

One Friday, as Shabbos was about to begin, Mr. Mevulbal called out to his wife, who had her head in the fridge looking for her toothbrush.

"Honey, I just realized that we forgot to say havdala!"

"Havdala?? Shabbos is going to begin," answered his wife, "Don't you mean that we have to set up our Neiros Shabbos?"

"No, we forgot to say havdala after last week's Shabbos! Quick, pass me the wine from inside the fridge!"

Mrs. Mevulbal answered, "But all I can find in here is apple juice and beer...we can't use those!"

"Oy!" answered Mr. Mevulbal, "that's terrible! Okay, I'll skip that part of havdala then. How about the havdala candle? I think I put it in the dishwasher or maybe the laundry hamper -- please check for me while I look for the besamim!"

"Look for the besamim?" laughed Ms. Mevulbal. "They've been sitting right there on the counter since Tuesday. Didn't you notice?"

"I've had a cold since Monday. I haven't been able to smell anything. By the way your meals have been wonderful over the past days."

"Okay. Look's like we're ready to make havdala" they said.

"WAIT!" said a voice from the window. Rabbi Oyvey had been passing by their home and kindly explained some important halachos about making havdala.

## **Discussion**

What are the 5 mistakes?

1. It's too late to make havdala! If someone forgot to make havdala on Saturday night, they can still make havdala up until sunset on Tuesday. The center of the Jewish week is Shabbos. The first three days of the week belong to the previous Shabbos and the next three days belong to the Shabbos after. They have no connection with the previous Shabbos (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 91:15).
2. If you do not have wine or grape juice available, you can still make a bracha with popular national beverages, such as apple juice or beer. It would not be proper to use water, tea, or coffee because they are considered too plain (Mishna Berurah 296:10).
3. A candle is only used when havdala is made on a Saturday night. On the first Saturday night of the world, Hashem gave Adam the wisdom to make fire (by rubbing two stones together). Adam recited the bracha of **בורא מאורי האש** to thank Hashem. Every Saturday night we too thank Hashem for teaching Adam how to make fire and we add this bracha to our havdala (Pesachim 54a). However, if we make havdala on a different day of the week such as motzaei yom tov, or if we forget to make the Shabbos havdala on Saturday night, then it is not the proper time to make the bracha of the fire.
4. Spices (besamim) are also only used when havdala is made on a Saturday night. During Shabbos every Jew is given a neshama yeseira - their neshama becomes larger. At the time of motzaei Shabbos the neshama yeseira leaves, and the remaining neshama in our body is sad. A nice smell comforts our neshama and this is why we use spices (besamim) in the havdala on Saturday night (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 29:28; Tur, Orach Chaim 297). If we make havdala on another night, then there is no need to comfort our neshama with a special smell.
5. If someone cannot smell, they cannot make the bracha of besamim. This is because it is a bracha of ha'naah (pleasure) and besamim cannot bring pleasure to someone who cannot smell them. Similarly, if someone is blind, G-d forbid, they cannot make the bracha on the candle (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 91:10).

Can you think of 3 ways that havdala is connected with the Parasha?

1. The parasha teaches that Hashem created light and darkness and divided between the two: **ויבדל בין האור ובין החושך**
2. The parasha introduces the concept of Shabbos
3. Hashem gave Adam the wisdom of how to use fire

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