

## **D'var Torah: Shabbat HaGadol**

by Benjamin Gee - Tuesday, April 09, 2019

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### **This is the greatest day of all...**

This Shabbat we will experience an exception to a rule. Let me explain.

On the Shabbat prior to Pesach, we have 'Shabbat HaGadol'. This is a reminder of the fact that the Exodus took place on a Thursday, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan. Five days prior to that, was the Shabbat, on which the Israelites were commanded to set aside a lamb and to prepare it for sacrifice. Now, the Egyptians deified the lamb, and the fact that the Israelites could take their 'god', and set it aside for sacrifice without any fear of punishment indicated that the winds of change were bringing about a new era for our people.

That's what we celebrate on Shabbat HaGadol! But my question is – isn't this an exception? Usually, on our calendar, we celebrate or commemorate events on the anniversary of the date on which they took place. So surely therefore, we should recall what transpired on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisaan – regardless of the day of the week on which it falls. Why is it always marked on the Shabbat before Pesach?

I believe that what took place on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nissan is connected to every single Shabbat. You see, on that 10<sup>th</sup> of Nissan we recognised how privileged we were to have our own traditions. What a unique nation we are, doing things that others do not do. And that is exactly what we do every single Shabbat. Shabbat provides us with a weekly opportunity to celebrate our tradition and to highlight what makes us uniquely Jewish.

Isn't it remarkable therefore, that whilst we correctly prepare for Pesach for 30 whole days and we look forward to it with such anticipation, it is the Shabbat beforehand, which we call Shabbat HaGadol – the 'Great Sabbath', to remind us that as important as our festivals are, Shabbat is even more important. Actually, Shabbat is the greatest of them all.

Shabbat Shalom.