



Pesach 5775

April 10, 2015

A Taste of Torah

Matzah Roles

By Rabbi Shmuel Halpern

The great Talmudic sage Rabbi Alexanderi would say the following personal prayer: “It is known before You, Master of the Universe, that our desire is to do Your will; only the *Yetzer Hara* (Evil Inclination) and the trials and tribulations of our exile prevent us from doing Your will (Brachos 17a). It’s interesting to note that the Gemara refers to the *Yetzer Hara* as the leavening of the dough, which leads us to question: What is the connection between the *Yetzer Hara* and leavening?

The Maharsha (Rabbi Shmuel Eidels; 1555-1631) explains that the rising of the dough represents an extreme form of indulgence in pleasure, and the trials of exile represent an extreme form of privation. Both of these extremes impede our progress as servants of Hashem; it’s the happy medium that allows us to actualize our inner desire to serve Hashem properly. The Mishna at the beginning of Tractate Pesachim teaches that the search for chometz (leavened bread) must be done by the light of a candle. The Gemara (Pesachim 7b) brings the following verse as a source for this halacha: “The soul of man is the candle of Hashem, which searches the inner recesses of man’s heart.” Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz (1873-1936) points out that there seems to be a connection between searching for chometz and searching one’s heart. Chometz, as explained, represents the *Yetzer Hara*. As we eradicate chometz from our homes for the duration of Pesach, we seek to erase all evil influences from our lives.

Building on this idea, it would seem obvious that the obligation to eat matzah represents the idea that we need to ensure that our involvement in this world doesn’t lead us to an empty pursuit of pleasure above all else; rather,

we strive to elevate the physical, as we keep within the G-d-given structure of the Torah.

The question begs to be asked: What does all this have to do with Pesach? Isn’t the matzah meant to remind us of the Exodus from Egypt? And isn’t the abstinence from chometz due to the great rush out of Egypt, when there wasn’t enough time to allow the bread to rise? To answer this question, let’s take a look at the references for matzah in the Haggada. Toward the beginning of the Haggada, we refer to the matzah as *lachma anya*, bread of affliction, which reminds us of the great troubles we experienced in Egypt. On the other hand, later in the Haggada we say that the matzah that we are eating reminds us how Hashem hurried us out of Egypt. So is the matzah a remembrance of the exile or of the redemption?

Rabbi Shamson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) and the Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin; 1816-1893) both address this question with the following explanation: There was a danger that the Jews would treat the Exodus as no more than an opportunity to finally be able to enjoy life at their leisure. The message of the matzah is that the only road to true freedom of spirit is our allegiance to the Master of the World. The matzah reminds us that even at the very moment of our redemption, we were rushing to fulfill the will of Hashem. It turns out that the exodus from Egypt, which taught us about the Creator of Heaven and Earth, also teaches us how to serve Him, showing us how the idea of redemption and the concept of negating the influences of evil are very closely related.

Stories For The Soul

Sandwich Generation

A couple dealing with infertility issues had contacted a Jewish organization that provided assistance in navigating the challenges. This particular couple had gone through a number of trials and tribulations; they had recently tried a particularly difficult intervention, and were anxiously awaiting the results of some tests. The husband contacted the member of the organization he had been in touch with to discuss where things were up to, and the counselor suggested that they all go out for lunch so that they could talk in person instead of over the phone. As they talked on the phone, the counselor mentioned this restaurant and that one, mentioning the pros and cons of each place.

The husband had little interest in where they went for lunch; he wanted to know what the results were! After listening to the counselor for a bit, he snapped, “I don’t want a tuna fish sandwich! I want a baby!”

There was silence on the other end of the line for several long moments. Then the counselor uttered a sentence that changed the husband’s perspective: “I just want you to know that Hashem can give you a child as easily as He can give you a tuna fish sandwich.”

The splitting of the sea occurred due to the faith of the Jewish people that Hashem can do anything, in any circumstance, no matter what.

Kollel Happenings

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD ADOPT-A-BUBBY PROGRAM

Do you know of a senior – a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, neighbor, fellow congregant – who would benefit from a weekly phone call to schmooze, share a thought on the parsha or Jewish calendar, or just say hello? Do you have a few minutes a week to call a senior in the community and make a difference in the life of another? Contact the Denver Community Kollel's M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Adopt-A-Bubby program! Call Joyce Litzman at the Denver Community Kollel, at 303-820-2855, or email jlitzman@denverkollel.org.

LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact rmh@denverkollel.org. Class will resume after the Pesach break.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

Don't miss a great Lunch and Learn class on the weekly parsha for seniors and retirees at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St., at 11:30 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855. Class will resume after the Pesach break.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By: Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Which Torah readings are split up differently in Eretz Yisroel than in the Diaspora?

A: 1) On the second day of Pesach we read from Vayikra (22:26-23:44). In Eretz Yisroel, where it is already *Chol Hamoed* (Intermediate Days), only four *aliyos* take place, three from the above portion, and the final *maftir aliyah* in the book of Bamidbar. In the Diaspora, however, it is Yom Tov, and the same portion in Vayikra is split into five sections, and a sixth section for *maftir* in Bamidbar.

2) On Simchas Torah, we read the final portion of the Torah. Since it is Yom Tov, it is read in six parts: five

main *aliyos*, and one for the special *Chasan Torah aliyah*. In the Diaspora, Simchas Torah is the ninth day of the holiday, and never falls on Shabbos; thus it is always six *aliyos*. In Eretz Yisroel, where Simchas Torah is on the eighth day (Shemini Atzeres), it can fall on Shabbos, which would require dividing the reading into at least seven *aliyos*.

This week's question: How many times a year do those in Eretz Yisrael read a different Torah reading than those in the Diaspora?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org

Ask the Rabbi

3 Matzos at Seder

Neil Reznik from Valley Forge, PA wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Why is the afikomen taken from the middle matzah during the Seder rather than from the top or bottom matzah?

Dear Neil Reznik,

On the first night of Pesach, we say two blessings over the matzahs.

The first blessing, *hamotzi*, is the usual blessing we say when eating bread. Since this blessing is always best to say on a whole "loaf," we therefore put an unbroken matzah on top of the stack.

The second blessing, *asher kideshanu*, is the special blessing we say for the commandment to eat matzah on this

night. This blessing applies especially to the broken matzah, because this matzah symbolizes our broken, impoverished state as slaves in Egypt. Since this blessing is second, the broken matzah is second in the stack.

The third matzah is just there to complete the idea of *lechem mishneh*, which means that on Shabbos and festivals we use two whole loaves instead of just one, so it goes on the bottom. According to widespread custom, this bottom matzah is let slip from the hands before the second blessing is said. (According to some, no third matzah is used at all.)

Sources:

Mishnah Berurah 473:57, 475:2

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