

Matzah

Matzah has a dual symbolism. It symbolizes slavery and it symbolizes the *geulah*.

Matzah symbolizes the *shibud*, the slavery. The Torahⁱ refers to *matzah* as “*lechem oni*” “the bread of affliction.” We ate *matzah* as slaves in *Mitzrayim*. *Matzah* does not taste as good as bread. Part of the oppression of the *Mitzrim* was to give us food that we did not enjoy as muchⁱⁱ. The Avudrahamⁱⁱⁱ explains another idea. *Matzah* takes longer to digest than *chometz*. Therefore, if one wants to feed his slaves and give them enough energy to continue to work for a long time, then *matzah* is more economical than *chametz*. The *Mitzrim* gave us *matzah* in order to save money. The Sferno^{iv} offers another reason how *matzah* symbolizes slavery. The *Mitzrim* would rush us back to work during our lunch breaks and we were forced to go back to work early, before we were ready. Therefore, the dough which was baked in the oven did not have time to rise, and we were forced to eat *matzah* instead of *chametz*. It is quite clear that *matzah* symbolizes the *shibud*, the terrible slavery and oppression which we, *Am Yisroel*, felt in *Mitzrayim*.^v

At the same time *matzah* symbolizes the *geulah*. The Torah tells us (*Shmos perek 12*) that we ate *matzah* because the *Mitzrim* rushed us out of *Mitzrayim*. This is what the Sefer HaChinuch (*mitzvah 11*) writes that *matzah* reminds us of the *nissim*, that we left *Mitzrayim* so quickly. It is interesting that *matzah* is baked quickly, taking the dough out of the oven before it develops fully. So too, the seforim say that *matzah* symbolizes the *geulah*. Hashem took us out of *Mitzrayim* early, before the full, original four hundred years of slavery were completed^{vi}. The aramaic term for *matzah* is, '*lachma anya*'. The *gematriya* of '*lachma anya*' equals two hundred ten. So on the one hand this symbolizes the slavery; we were in *Mitzrayim* for 210 years. But at the same time, one reason we left *Mitzrayim* early is because the slavery was so intense and the oppression was so severe. Therefore, the same *gematriya* of '*lachma anya*' equaling two hundred ten, is also a *remez* to the *geulah*. It was only two hundred ten years because the oppression was so severe. Another example of *matzah* symbolizing the *geulah* is that *Chazal*^{vii} interpret “*lechem oni*” to be “bread of talking.” This means it is bread over which we say many things. We are supposed to tell the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* over the *matzah*, in front of the *matzah*. We see

that *Chazal* already interpreted the *posuk* to not only refer to *matzah* as a symbol of slavery, but also as a symbol of the *geulah*. This is the source for the idea that during most of *magid* we keep the matzos uncovered because one is supposed to tell the story with the *matzah* in front of him, seeing the *matzah* while telling the story^{viii}.

Am Yisroel ate *matzah* twice when they left *Mitzrayim*. They ate *matzah* once at night together with the *Korban Pesach*; and we ate *matzah* again the next day when we actually left *Mitzrayim*- when the *Mitzrim* rushed us out. The Abarbanel^{ix} says that this represented the two symbolism of *matzah*. The *matzah* we ate during the day clearly represents the *matzah* of *geulah*; we ate *matzah* because the *Mitzrim* rushed us out. The *matzah* we ate at night with the *Korban Pesach* symbolized the *shibud*. The Torah writes, “eat the *Korban Pesach* with *matzah* and *maror*.” *Maror* clearly symbolizes the slavery. And since the Torah groups the *matzah* together with the *maror*; it seems that the *matzah* we eat with the *Korban Pesach* has the same theme as the *maror*- the theme of the *shibud*. So, the Abarbanel explains, we find the two themes of *matzah* reflected in the two times we ate *matzah* when we left *Mitzrayim*.

Both of these aspects of *matzah* are mentioned at the *seder* during *magid*. We refer to *matzah* at the beginning of *magid* as the 'bread of affliction,' “*ha lachma anya*.” And at the end of *magid* we refer to *matzah* as the bread of the *geulah*. At the end of *magid* we say, 'why do we eat *matzah* tonight? Because the *Mitzrim* rushed us out.' It actually works out very well that we begin *magid* focusing on *matzah* as the symbol of slavery, and we end *magid* focusing on *matzah* as the symbol of *geulah*. Exactly! During *magid*, we are describing and talking about the process of leaving *Mitzrayim*. We begin *magid*, in a sense, as slaves. And we end *magid* free, as a free nation. It works out beautifully that the two themes of *matzah* become the book ends of *magid*. We begin *magid* focusing on one theme of *matzah*- we are slaves, “*ha lachma anya*.” And when we end *magid*, we are free- the bread of *geulah*^x.

One can raise the following question. Why? Why did Hashem work it out that *matzah*, which had been the symbol of slavery, also becomes the symbol of *geulah*? Hashem could have orchestrated *Yetzias Mitzrayim* in a way that the symbol of *geulah* would have been, let's say, Brooklyn Bakery brownies. It would have been a lot

easier to eat a *k'zayis* within two minutes if we were eating a *k'zayis* of brownies instead of *matzah*. What is the message that the same *matzah*, which had been the symbol of slavery, suddenly becomes the symbol of the *geulah*^{xi}? Rav Soloveitchik explains as follows. This shows and teaches us Hashem's complete control over world events. On *Pesach* we experience *giluy shechinah*. When something completely unexpected happens, and this unexpected occurrence is part of the salvation of *Am Yisroel*, that reflects *giluy shechinah*. The very same *matzah*, which for generations, was a negative symbol- the symbol of slavery, the symbol of oppression- suddenly becomes the symbol of *geulah*, overnight, that is something only *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, Himself, could bring about. So *matzah* having this dual symbolism is a further expression of the *giluy shechinah* which we are experiencing on *Pesach*.

These are some of the ideas that we can take with us into our lives from the various symbolisms of *matzah*.

Chag Kasher V'Sameach,

B. Ginsburg

ⁱ Devarim 16,3

ⁱⁱ See HaSeder Ha'Aruch 142,2.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Hegyonei Haggadah page 86.

^{iv} Devarim 16,3.

^v There is a beautiful gematriya. The Aramaic term for 'lechem oni' is 'lachma anya.' The gematriya of 'lachma anya' is 210- exactly the number of years we were in *Mitzrayim*. Wow!

^{vi} See HaSeder Ha'Arauch 142,1 quoting the Tiferes Yisroel.

^{vii} Pesaachim 115b

^{viii} See the Rama (End of Siman 573 with the Gra).

^{ix} See the Abarbanel on the Hagaddah in his discussion of *matzah*, as further explained by Rav Mersky in the Hegyonei Halachah page 78.

^x See Hegyonei Haggadah and Rav Nevenzah's haggadah (p. 58) for a discussion of this point.

^{xi} Rav Hirsch (Shmos Perek 12) develops a good approach to this question. Even as we were leaving *Mitzrayim*, and even after we left *Mitzrayim*, we were still servants. We had become servants of Hashem. Hashem was teaching us that even in our 'freedom' we were never totally free. We became free to serve Hashem. Instead of serving the evil Pharaoh, we now had the freedom to serve Hashem. But we were never free to 'do whatever we want'. This idea that we were still servants even during and after *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is reflected in *Matzah*, which is a symbol of slavery, also becoming the symbol of freedom.