

## Matzah Mindset: Parshat Bo

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

When Bnei Yisroel were commanded to prepare the Pesach meal, they were told to eat the lamb with *matzot* and bitter herbs. The Torah states: "They baked the dough that they took out of Egypt into unleavened cakes, for they could not be leavened, for they were driven from Egypt for they could not delay..."

The narrative raises many questions, related to the timing and process of baking *matzah* versus baking bread. Perhaps the overarching question is since the Jews had advance notice of their redemption, could they not have prepared their bread in advance and prepared provisions for the journey? How do we then explain the timing of the *matzah* baking? Did their being chased out of Egypt play a significant role in the baking of the *matzah* as seems to be the focus of the *Haggadah*?

Rabbi Broide, quoting the Ramban notes that the Jews were commanded not to eat leavened bread both the night and day of the exodus and were not even allowed to have leavened bread in their possession. They were baking *matzot* when they were rushed out of Egypt, and therefore had to make them in *Sukkot*. The Ra"n however, argues that they were allowed to have leaven in their possession, and hence they were baking bread for the following day, when they were rushed out of Egypt. Nevertheless, there was quite a distance between Ramses and *Sukkot*. How was it possible that the dough did not ferment? The Seforno explains that the Exodus occurred in the blink of an eye, and the journey itself was also instantaneous so the dough had no time to ferment. Further, as the *Haggadah* explains, the dough did not have time to ferment until the King of Kings revealed Himself to *Bnei Yisroel*. This happened at *Sukkot* when Hashem surrounded them with the Clouds of Glory. He waited until *Bnei Yisroel* were distant from the impurity of Egypt before He allowed His presence to descend among them. It was the specialness of that experience, notes the Seforno, that although they could have baked bread for the morrow; they opted to make

*matzahs* that take a shorter time, to enjoy Hashem's presence.

Rabbi Matityahu Salomon, based on the Maharal, explains that it was specifically in the timing of the events that God's presence was revealed. *Bnei Yisroel* had in fact been trying to bake bread for the journey, but Hashem orchestrated the events so that they would not be leaving on their timetable, but on Hashem's. The fact that they did not have time to complete their preparations was proof that their redemption was totally God's doing. As the Sifsei Chaim, notes, Hashem is above nature. *Matzah* is about recognizing that Hashem is the key element in any scenario that occurs in the physical world. By being commanded to eat *matzah* at the *Seder* we are attesting to this reality. Therefore *matzah* is called the bread of faith and healing.

In order for the exodus experience to remain spiritual, it was necessary that it occur in the blink of an eye, explains Rabbi Tatz. Time would have reinforced the idea that the redemption was somehow natural. *Bnei Yisroel*, as a spiritual nation, had to be born in a moment of complete spirituality. Our physical existence has always been precarious, and it is only through Divine intervention that we continue to survive. Hashem decides our lives and our fate, both nationally and individually. Therefore, writes the Sifsei Chaim, while we must exert effort on our own behalf, we must never forget to daven, for Hashem alone controls the outcome.

Rabbi Schwab note that When Hashem reveals Himself, time itself stands still. Since fermentation requires not only flour and water, but time, the dough could not ferment. It resembled the "bread" *Bnei Yisroel* were forced to eat in Egypt, for as slaves they couldn't wait for their dough to ferment. Now, with time in suspension, the dough that *Bnei Yisroel* took out of Egypt remained unfermented. So while *Bnei Yisroel* were forced to eat the unleavened bread while in servitude to Egypt, they now ate that same bread as a symbol of their servitude to Hashem in freedom. The eating of *matzah*

therefore represents the intensity of Hashem's revelation, that stopped the fermentation process. At every seder we once again experience Hashem's presence in our midst.

Rabbi G. Schorr discusses the reciprocal relationship between *Bnei Yisroel* and Hashem with the words of *Shir Hashirim*. "*Medaleg al hehorim*, He comes leaping upon the mountains," quickly, to show Himself, but He also caused us to leap (*medaleg* is also causative) after Him, "Draw me, after You I will run." The two *mitzvot* of that first Pesach allude to this relationship. *Korban Pesach* involved Hashem drawing us to Him as we drew the lamb to our homes, while *matzah* which must be baked quickly to prevent fermentation implies the haste of running after Hashem. We ran after Hashem with no preset agenda, no provisions, completely on His terms. That is the pure essence within every Jew. When we eat the *matzah*, it is with the realization that our puffed up egos should play no part in our actions, that we are ready to follow Hashem wherever He leads us. As recorded in *Letitcha Elyon*, it is not enough to declare one's faith and belief; one must act on it and be ready to submit physically and spiritually to His will. Rav Schwadron notes, it was the willingness of *Bnei Yisroel* to immediately leave the familiar surroundings of Egypt, however difficult they were, and follow Hashem into the unknown wilderness that Hashem was praising.

Rabbi Frand explains, certainly *Bnei Yisroel* had expected to be redeemed after each plague and had prepared accordingly, but when the redemption didn't happen time after time, they became disillusioned and stopped preparing. So when the redemption actually took place the next morning, *Bnei Yisroel* were taken by surprise at its immediacy. But God's salvation is always quick, and just as that first redemption from Egypt was immediate, without time for the dough to rise, so too will our final redemption be quick. Eating the *matzah* reminds us that just when things seem most dark and hopeless, that is when Hashem brings salvation in the blink of an eye.



## Yechekel Perek 35: The Fate of Edom-Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Chapter 35 in Yechekel depicts what the end of Esav will be. "Behold Hashem spoke to me saying, human being turn your face to *Har Seir* and prophesy concerning it." The literal meaning of *Har Seir* is a mountain of hair. Why was Esav's nation called by that name? The Alshich suggests an analogy of two balls, one of glass and one of angora wool. If you dip the wool ball in ink it will soak it all up. If you do the same with the glass ball, it will slide off. Esav is called *Har Seir*, the one who absorbs all of external reality. He is like the peel of a fruit that conceals and protects it, but isn't the actual fruit. Peel an onion and underneath there's another layer and another. There was no limit to Esav's externality. Because of this he felt an inner opposition towards Yaakov, who like the ball of glass,

remained true to his essence.

Hashem makes an oath – "I'll turn you into blood and blood will pursue you because you've hated blood, blood will pursue you." The Targum clarifies, those who shed blood will pursue you. Just as you were a hunter, you'll be hunted. The Midrash explains, you hated the blood of sacrifices. On Esav's worst day he came in weary from idol worship, murder, and immorality. Not only did he sell Yaakov the birthright but along with it the right to his spiritual heritage. After the deal was made he shamed the birthright. The firstborns had the role of the *kohanim* which was to elevate the animal instinct within us. We are meant to redefine it, to put it in a holy vessel and to commit to using it the way it was

determined by Hashem. Esav despised this idea of sacrifices, of taking his nature and dedicating it to Hashem.

Everything discussed about a sacrifice applies even more so to the *mitzvah* of circumcision where man uplifts his base instincts and consecrates it to Hashem. This is the antithesis of Esav. When we came out of Egypt we had no merits. Hashem said, "*B'damayich chayi*." You shall live with your blood. Hashem gave us the *mitzvoth* of circumcision and sacrificing the lamb so that we could uplift ourselves and commit to follow Him. This is what Esav hated and since the hate was a part of his essence it was irresolvable. Therefore Hashem said, I will render *Har Seir* desolate.

## The Turning Point in Egypt

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

When Hashem sent Moshe to redeem the Jewish people he asked, "If they will ask me what is your name what shall I tell them?" The Jewish people knew Hashem quite well. What did Moshe mean?

We cannot fully know Hashem. But we can experience His closeness and comprehend Him somewhat through His names, which is His way of revealing Himself in this world. The *Shem Havaya* symbolizes compassion. The name *Elokim* signifies His justice. Moshe asked Hashem, "What is the change in the way you will deal with us that will take place now? What shall I tell them will happen?" Hashem responded, "*Ani Hashem*." The name of Hashem -*yud, key, vav, keh*, tells us that He

is *hayhe, hoveh, v'yiyhe*, He was, is, and will be. In addition He is *mehave*, the source of all existence. Hashem tells Moshe that He revealed myself to the *avot* with the name *Kel Shakai* and now there will be another way. *Shakai* is a combination of the words *shehkocha dai* (Whose power is enough). Hashem created the rules and boundaries of nature. But with the *Shem Havaya*, Hashem expressed that He was not bound by these laws. Now He would be revealed in a way that everyone would see Him. The Kuzari notes that the proof that there is a Hashem in this world are the Jews. For if one examines Jewish history one sees that it is supernatural. Hashem deals with the Jewish people beyond the laws of nature and it started when He sent

Moshe to redeem them. The ten plagues transcended nature. Hashem did with creation what He wished and it was clear that His hand was there. Why did Hashem perform miracles at this point? The Ramban says He will not perform miracles in front of every human who wants to see it as this takes away free choice. But at the time when Hashem set the foundation of the nation who would reveal His name in this world, when he chose *Klal Yisrael*, he removed the veil of concealment. He recorded it in the Torah so that we could always come back to Him and know Him with the certainty that the Jewish people knew Him at the time of the Exodus.