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Sincerely,

Rabbi Yehoshua Werde
Director

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ב"ה



CHAMETZ AND MATZAH

What is their significance?



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Chametz and Matzah

PART ONE

Chametz

On Pesach we celebrate the Exodus of our forefathers from slavery in Mitzrayim, and we do so by refraining from eating chametz for the duration of seven nights and days (eight days outside of Israel), and by eating matzah and conducting a seder on the first night (first two nights outside of Israel).

While the seder may be the most popular observance of Pesach, the most critical is the prohibition against eating chametz.

What is chametz?

Rambam, Laws of Chametz and Matzah, 1:1-2

אין אסור משום חמץ בפסח, אלא חמשת מיני הדגן בלבד – והם שני מיני החיטים, שהן החיטה והכוסמת, ושלושת מיני השעורים, שהן השעורה ושיבולת שועל והשיפון... בלא שם מים בעולם – אינם באין לידי חימוץ... ואם נתערב בהן מים כל שהוא, הרי אלו מחמיצין.

The prohibition against chametz applies only to the five species of grain. They include two species of wheat: wheat and rye; and three species of barley: barley, oats, and spelt... without any water, it will never become leavened... If any water is mixed with them, they cause [the flour] to become leavened (chametz).

When flour and water are mixed and left untouched, it can

take as little as 18 minutes for the dough to rise and become chametz.

The prohibition against consuming chametz is one of the most severe biblical prohibitions that exist, on par with eating on Yom Kippur.

The posuk mentions several obligations and prohibitions with respect to chametz. How many distinct obligations and prohibitions can you count in the following pesukim? (For now, ignore the ones about matzah.)

Shemos 12:15,19, 13:7

שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מִצֹּת תֹּאכְלוּ אֶדָּ בַיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן תִּשְׁבִּיתוּ שָׂאֵר מִבְּתֵיכֶם
כִּי | כָּל אֹכֵל חֻמֵּץ וְנִבְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל מִיוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן עַד יוֹם
הַשְּׁבִיעִי...:שִׁבְעַת יָמִים שָׂאֵר לֹא יִמָּצֵא בְּבֵתֵיכֶם כִּי | כָּל אֹכֵל מִחֻמֵּצַת
וְנִבְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מֵעֵדֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגֵר וּבְאֶזְרַח הָאָרֶץ...: מִצֹּת יֹאכְל
אֶת שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה לְךָ חֻמֵּץ וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה לְךָ שָׂאֵר בְּכָל גְּבֻלְךָ:

For seven days you shall eat matzos, but on the preceding day you shall clear away all leaven from your houses, for whoever eats leaven from the first day until the seventh day that soul shall be cut off from Israel.... For seven days, leavening shall not be found in your houses, for whoever eats leavening that soul shall be cut off from the community of Israel, both among the strangers and the native born of the land.... Unleavened cakes shall be eaten during the seven days, and no leaven shall be seen of yours [in your possession], and no leavening shall be seen of yours throughout all of your borders

Rambam counts no less than six biblical obligations and prohibitions pertaining to chametz!

Rambam, Laws of Chametz and Matzah, Introduction

(א) שלא לאכול חמץ ביום ארבעה עשר מחצות היום ולמעלה. (ב) להשבית שאור מארבעה עשר. (ג) שלא לאכול חמץ כל שבעה. (ד) שלא לאכול תערובת חמץ כל שבעה. (ה) שלא יראה חמץ כל שבעה. (ו) שלא ימצא חמץ כל שבעה.

1) *A prohibition against eating chametz on the fourteenth after midday.*

2) *An obligation to destroy chametz from the fourteenth.*

3) *A prohibition against eating chametz [for the duration of] all seven days [of Pesach].*

4) *A prohibition against eating a mixture containing chametz [for the duration of] all seven days [of Pesach].*

5) *A prohibition against seeing chametz [in your possession for the duration of] all seven days [of Pesach].*

6) *A prohibition against finding chametz [in your possession for the duration of] all seven days [of Pesach].*

While it is not listed as a separate Mitzvah in the count of 613, there is an additional biblical prohibition against benefiting

from chametz (included within the mitzvah of eating chametz):

Midrash Sechel Tov Shemos 12

אמר חזקי" מנין לחמץ בפסח שאסור בהנאה, שנאמר לא יאכל חמץ (שמות יג ג), לא יהא בו היתר אכילה, היינו דלא יעשה בו דבר לצורך אכילה, כגון להסיקו תחת תבשילו:

Chizkiya said: How do we know that there is a prohibition against deriving any benefit from chametz on Pesach? As the posuk says: Chametz may not be eaten (Shemos 13:3) [instead of saying simply "do not eat chametz"]—It shall not make eating possible [on account of it], i.e., that a person should not [even] use it for something that will facilitate eating, such as to use it as firewood under his cooked dish.

Rambam, Laws of Chametz and Matzah, 1:2

החמץ בפסח אסור בהנייה שנאמר (שמות י"ג) לא יאכל חמץ לא יהא בו היתר אכילה

On Pesach, it is forbidden to derive any benefit from chametz, as [Shemos 13:3] states: "Do not eat chametz"; i.e., it is not permitted [to be used to derive benefit that leads to] eating.

In addition, even the minutest amount of chametz that is mixed into a dish (on Pesach) can make the entire dish be considered chametz with regards to eating it. This is different to most other prohibitions in which a mixture containing the

prohibited substance is only prohibited when the prohibited food can be tasted within the mixture (Chazal established that a maximum of 60 times the prohibited food of non prohibited food substance would completely remove its taste from the mixture). With chametz, however, even one spec of chametz can prohibit an entire mixture many thousands of times its volume. (It should be noted that this only applies when the chametz was mixed in during Pesach. If chametz got mixed up with a mixture of non-chametz before Pesach, the regular rules of 60 times apply.)

Rambam, Laws of Chametz and Matzah, 1:5

חמץ שנתערב בדבר אחר תוך הפסח בין במינו בין שלא במינו הרי זה אוסר בכל שהוא,

If, on Pesach, even the slightest amount of chametz becomes mixed together with another substance, either of its kind or not of its kind, [the entire mixture] is forbidden.

Also unique to chametz, is that the number of transgressions for not destroying the chametz in ones possession, eclipses that of any other mitzvas asei:

Minchas Chinuch 9:3

כל מ"ע כגון מצה ולולב ודומיהם א"ע אלא רגע א' בסוף היום שלא נטל לולב או לא אכל מצה אבל עשה כזו...עובר בכל רגע כ"ז שהחמץ ברשותו

Every mitzvas asei (positive commandment), for example matzah, lulav, and the like, one only transgresses once at the end of the day for not

taking the lulav or for not eating matzah, but a mitzvas asei like this [to destroy the chametz in ones possession], one repeatedly transgresses at every moment for as long as the chametz is in his possession.

Not only are we not permitted to eat chametz, we are prohibited from even benefiting from it; and even when we do not benefit from it, we are still not permitted to allow it to be found in our possession.

Why is the prohibition against chametz so severe? And considering that it is so severe, why is chametz permitted on every day of the year other than Pesach?

Arrogance

According to the Chinuch, (a 13th century compilation of the 613 mitzvot and their explanations, likely written by Rabbi Aharon HaLevi of Barcelona 1235-c. 1290,) chametz represents arrogance:

Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 117

לפי שהשאור מגביה עצמו ... ולכן נתרחקו, לרמוז כי תועבת ה' כל גבה לב.

The yeast in the flour raises itself up and inflates itself [which represents arrogance]. Therefore, we distance ourselves from it, as reflected in the posuk, "Every arrogant heart is an abomination to Hashem" [Mishlei 16:5].

The Rebbe explains that the reason why we go so far as to

distance ourselves from even the smallest trace of chametz is because arrogance is poisonous even in the smallest increments:

Lekutei Sichos vol. 22, p. 269

אחד הטעמים לכך שאיסור חמץ הוא אפילו במשהו—הוא כדי לרמז שגאווה וגסות הרוח צריך לשלול לגמרי

One of the reasons why the prohibition of chametz applies even to the minutest amount—is in order to signify that one must completely and utterly reject any amount of haughtiness or arrogance.

In ones service of Hashem, arrogance (symbolized by chametz) is considered the source of all downfall. The Alter Rebbe points out how the term “chametz” is used in various sources in Chazal as a metaphor for sin and the evil inclination:

Lekutei Torah, Tzav 13c

כי החמץ הוא בחי הגבהה והתנשאות שתופח ועולה ומגביה א"ע... וכמ"כ בעבודת ה' חמץ הוא בחי התנשאות וגסות הקליפה...[וזהו כי יתחמץ לבבי המשיל הלב הנוטה להרשיע לחמץ, וכן בלשון רז"ל (בר"ה ד"ג סע"ב) כאן קודם שהחמיץ כאן לאחר שהחמיץ, וכן משלו היצה"ר לשאור ואמרו מי מעכב שאור שבעיסה מעכב והיינו מפני שבח" גסות הוא מקור כל הנפילות לתאוות וכל מיני רע ה' ישמרנו].

Chametz represents the lifting up and raising oneself over others in which one is inflated and ascends and raises themselves... similarly, in ones service of Hashem, chametz represents the raising

up and arrogance of *kelipah* (the forces opposed to holiness)...[this is the meaning of (Tehillim 73:21) “for my heart was in ferment (became chametz)” the posuk uses chametz as a metaphor for a heart that leans towards evil, similarly in the language of Chazal (Rosh Hashanah 3b) “this refers to before he soured (lit. became chametz) and this refers to after he soured (became chametz).” Similarly, they compared the evil inclination to leaven (chametz) and said “who obstructs? the leaven (chametz) in the dough, i.e., because arrogance is the source of all instances of falling to ones desires and all types of evil, Hashem spare us]”.

Elsewhere, the Alter Rebbe describes arrogance as the chief source of impurity and temptation:

Lekutei Torah, Shir Hashirim 14d

בחי' גסות נקרא אבי אבות הטומאה שהוא מקור על התאוות

Arrogance is called the “father of fathers of impurity” which is the source of desire.

When discussing laws pertaining to human temperament, Rambam describes the severity of arrogance as a trait that one should take unusually extreme measures to avoid:

Rambam, Deot 2:3

ויש דעות שאסור לו לאדם לנהוג בהן בבינונית אלא יתרחק מן הקצה האחד עד הקצה האחר והוא גובה לב שאין דרך הטובה שיהיה אדם

עניו בלבד אלא שיהיה שפל רוח ותהיה רוחו נמוכה למאד ולפיכך נאמר במשה רבינו ענו מאד ולא נאמר ענו בלבד ולפיכך צוו חכמים מאד מאד הוי שפל רוח ועוד אמרו שכל המגביה לבו כפר בעיקר שנאמר ורם לבבך ושכחת את ה' אלקיך ועוד אמרו בשמתא מאן דאית ביה גסות הרוח ואפילו מקצתה

There are temperaments with regard to which a man is forbidden to follow the middle path. He should move away from one extreme and adopt the other.

Among these is arrogance. If a man is only humble, he is not following a good path. Rather, he must hold himself lowly and his spirit very unassuming. That is why the posuk (Bamidbar 12:3) describes Moshe Rabeinu as "very humble" and not simply "humble". Therefore, Chazal directed: "Hold oneself very, very lowly." Also, they declared: "Whoever is arrogant is as if he denied Hashem's presence, as implied by (Devarim 8:14): 'And your heart will be haughty and you will forget Hashem, your G-d.' Furthermore, they said: "Whoever is arrogant should be placed under a ban of ostracism. This applies even if he is only somewhat arrogant."

Classically, chametz symbolizes this arrogance, and the obligation to eradicate chametz in terms of ones "service of the heart" is to search out and eliminate ego and arrogance altogether.

Swiftness

In addition to the lesson of avoiding arrogance, chametz teaches us the value of not delaying to do whatever needs to be done. The difference between chametz and matzah is not in the ingredients (chametz and matzah are both comprised of grain and water), it is merely a matter of time, i.e., letting the dough sit around for more than 18 minutes to leaven.

The Mechilta (a collection of interpretations from the time of the Mishnah—1st and 2nd centuries CE) teaches this lesson citing a midrashic interpretation of the obligation to guard the matzos:

Mechilta, Shmot, Bo 9

...ושמרתם את המצות. ר' יאשיה אומר אל תקרי כן אלא ושמרתם את המצות כדרך שאין מחמיצין את המצה כך אין מחמיצין את המצוה אלא אם בא מצוה לידך עשה אותה מיד.

And you shall guard the matzos. Rabbi Yoshiah says: Do not read thus, rather and you shall guard the mitzvot: Just as you should not allow the matzah to become chametz (by leaving it to rise) similarly do not leave the mitzvah to become sour (chametz), if a mitvah comes to your hand, do it right away.

The Chinuch also mentions this as the symbolism of getting rid of chametz:

Sefer HaChinuch Mitzvah 117

ועל כן בהרחיק החמץ, שהוא נעשה בשהיה גדולה, מקורבנו, יקח

דמיון לקנות מידת הזריזות והקלות והמהירות במעשי השם ברוך הוא, וכמו שאמרו זכרונם לברכה הוי קל כנשר ורץ כצבי וגבור כארי לעשות [רצון אביך שבשמים].

Therefore, getting rid of chametz symbolizes our desire to work with enthusiasm and speed in the service of Hashem. This is reflected in the statement of Chazal, “Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, to carry out the Will of your Father in Heaven” [Avos 5:20].

The Search for Chametz

Because the prohibition against eating chametz is so severe, and in following with their mandate to enact legislation to protect Torah law, the Chachomim instituted a three-part process to ensure one has removed all chametz from their possession.

These steps include:

- 1) “Bedikas chametz”—searching for chametz;
- 2) “Bitul”—nullifying and disowning the chametz, and
- 3) “Biur chametz”—destroying the chametz (this is essentially a biblical requirement that Chazal contextualized).

The Mishnah instructs:

Mishnah, Pesachim 2a

אור לארבעה עשר בודקין את החמץ לאור הנר

On the eve of the 14th, we check for chametz to the

light of a candle.

“Bedikas chametz” is performed on the night before Pesach, and it entails searching every crack and crevice of every room of all of ones properties for chametz. This is done accompanied by the light of a candle (to see into spaces that are not lit), a feather to sweep up the chametz, a wooden spoon with which to lift the chametz, and a bag in which to place any chametz that is found.

In times when a home consisted of a single room, it was possible to perform all of the Pesach cleaning and search for chametz on the night before Pesach. However, nowadays, when people live in large homes with multiple rooms and many possessions, the custom is to first clean in the days and weeks before Pesach, so that “bedikas chametz” serves as a final search to ensure that every room is indeed “chametz free.”

After nightfall on the night before Pesach, we recite a brochoh on the fulfillment of the mitzvah of eradicating chametz from our possession “al biur chametz,” “on the eradication of chametz.” We recite this brochoh before the search (even though the brochoh is not on the search but on the eradication) since the purpose of the search is to find chametz and destroy it (even though the actual burning of the chametz will only take place on the following day).

By the time the search for chametz comes around, we have likely already cleaned our homes to ensure there is no chametz present. For this reason, the custom is to hide 10 pieces of chametz around the house so that chametz will be found in the search and the brochoh will not be for nothing (if one did not hide 10 pieces they should still recite the

blessing, unless they have verified for certain that no chametz remains hidden anywhere in the home).

After we have finished checking every room, we recite the “kol chamira” to disown any chametz in our possession that did not come up in the search:

Haggadah Shel Pesach

כל חמירא וחמיעא דאיכא ברשותי, דלא חזיתיה ודלא בערתיה, לבטיל
ולהוי הפקר כעפרא דארעא

All the sourdough and chametz in my possession that I have not seen and not eradicated is hereby nullified and made like the dust of the earth.

This statement does not include any chametz that was found or that one knows exists, since the assumption is that there is chametz that he knows about and wishes to burn on the following day (if he were to nullify it, there would be no mitzvah in burning it).

On the morning before Pesach, we burn the chametz and once again recite the “kol chamira,” this time including both known and unknown chametz:

Haggadah Shel Pesach

כל חמירא וחמיעא דאיכא ברשותי, דחזיתיה ודלא חזיתיה, דבערתיה
ודלא בערתיה, לבטיל ולהוי כעפרא דארעא

All the sourdough and chametz in my possession whether I have seen it or I have not seen it, whether I have eradicated it or I have not eradicated it, is hereby nullified and made like the dust of the earth.

In Halachah, an official declaration of disownership is effective in removing the chametz from ones possession and permits anyone who wishes to take ownership of whatever was disowned.

The Inner Search for Chametz

From a perspective of personal growth, this system of searching for and eradicating chametz is a yearly exercise to remove any trace of arrogance from our character:

Lekutei Sichos vol. 22 p. 269

כיוון שהאדם עוסק בחמץ כל השנה כשהוא עוסק לפרנסתו ששת ימים תעבוד בעולם גשמי של חולין עם השפעות של חול הרי כמעט בלתי נמנע שלא תתגנב אליו מחשבה של ישות אני ולי וכיוצא בזה ובמיוחד לאור הרגש הטבעי האמור של אדם קרוב אצל עצמו עלול להיות שהתנהגות זו לא זו בלבד שתהיה אצלו לטבע שני אלא שאף תיקבע בלבו הנחה שהיא מוצדקת וישרה כביכול יש צורך איפוא להבטיח את השמירה מפני האמור במדה חזקה ביותר משום כך הרי כשמגיע ערב פסח על האדם לבצע בו עצמו בדיקת חמץ וביעור חמץ יסודיים לבער כליל את החמץ שהצטבר במשך כל השנה גם אם הוא בכמות זעירה ואפסית משהו ולאחר מכן לשמור בקפדנות את עצמו ואת כל ביתו ממהו חמץ במשך כל השבוע של חג הפסח...עד לאופן שלא יראה ולא ימצא.

Since a person deals with chametz for the entire duration of the year, when he works to make a livelihood “for six days you shall work” in the material, secular world with secular influences, it is impossible that a thought of ego, of “I” and “me” and the like, will not enter is mind; particularly

given the natural tendency of a person to be partial. Eventually, such conduct will not only become a person's second nature but will set in his heart this premise that it is so to speak "warranted" and "just."

For this reason, one needs to assure that one is protected from the aforementioned in the strongest way possible.

Therefore, when the night before Pesach arrives, a person must conduct within himself a foundational search for chametz and eradication of chametz, to completely eradicate the chametz that has built up over the course of the entire year, even if it is a tiny and minuscule amount. And he must guard himself and his home aggressively from the minutest trace of chametz for the duration of the entire week of Pesach...to the extent that "one may not see and may not find" [chametz in their possession].

The Sale of Chametz

Nowadays, an additional precautionary measure has been added to allow people to hold onto chametz until after Pesach without them owning it and potentially transgressing the various prohibitions.

In the times of the Mishnah (1st and 2nd centuries), there were very few non-perishable forms of chametz in existence and people made sure to consume whatever they did own before Pesach. If they had any remaining chametz, they would

burn it (or destroy it through other means) on the day before Pesach.

If someone had a large amount of chametz and would incur a loss if he had to burn it, he was allowed to sell it to a non-Jew, as the mishnah describes:

Mishnah, Pesachim 21a

כל שעה שמותר לאכול מאכיל לבהמה לחיה ולעופות ומוכר לנכרי

So long as it is permitted to eat [chametz] one is permitted to feed it to animals and birds and sell it to non-Jews.

This sale was a perfectly ordinary sale in which the buyer needed the goods and the seller sought to get rid of his goods at their market value. There was a transfer of money and goods, and the non-Jew took the chametz from the Jew's home to never again return to the Jew's possession. This sale took place in the marketplace as any other sale would, and therefore we do not find any particular laws in the Talmud that apply to the sale of chametz.

At a later stage, there was a sale of chametz in which the non-Jew bought the chametz from the Jew with the understanding that he would sell it back to the Jew after Pesach. However, there was a full transfer of money (amounting to the market value of the goods) and the non-Jew actually removed the chametz from the Jew's property as he would with any other purchase of goods.

We find record of such a sale in the Tosefta (a collection of teachings similar to the Mishnah compiled by Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Oshiya in the late second century):

...ישראל וגוי שהיו באין בספינה וחמץ ביד ישראל הרי זה מוכרו לנכרי...
וחוזר ולוקח ממנו לאחר הפסח.

If a Jew and a gentile are traveling together on a boat and the Jew possesses chametz, he should sell it to the gentile...and buy it back from him after Pesach.

While there was an intent to buy the chametz back after Pesach, the sale itself was considered a legally binding sale according to the law of the land.

Before the 17th century, Jews didn't really own significant amounts of chametz to make a sale necessary. Stockpiles of wheat were not essentially considered chametz (unless one knew that they came in contact with water) and the average Jew's chametz consisted of a few pieces of bread and little bit of liquor, which are things that could easily be moved if it was necessary to sell them.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, this all changed when liquor became the primary occupation of Polish Jewry (it was one of the few businesses Polish authorities allowed Jews to engage in). If you owned a liquor factory with huge vats of grain-based liquor, it was impossible to remove the large vats from your premises to sell to a non-Jew and it would incur a huge loss if the entire vats of liquor had to be destroyed.

The Bach (Rabbi Yoel Sirkis 1561-1640) therefore offers a solution for such merchants:

ובמדינה זו שרוב משא ומתן הוא בין שרף ואי אפשר להם למכרם לגוי מחוץ לבית בפרט למחזיקים באורנד"א יש להתיר בענין זה שימכור לגוי כל החמץ שבחדר וגם החדר עצמו ימכור לגוי

In this country, since the main business is selling liquor and it is impossible to remove all the liquor and equipment from the premises of the Jew to sell it to a non-Jew; it is permitted to sell all of the chametz in a particular room to a non-Jew, including selling the room itself (and the chametz may remain on the premises of the Jew).

Originally, this sale included an exchange of funds, without the official sale document that exists today. When people started questioning the authenticity of the sale, calling it “halachic fiction,” it became necessary to formalize the sale with a document. These sales were private sales that were conducted by individuals directly with the non-Jewish buyer. Only in recent generations did the practice of selling chametz through a rabbi or beth din develop.

Concerned that since the non-Jew doesn't actually transfer all of the funds to the Jew for his Chametz, the transaction between them may not be completely valid and the chametz might remain in the possession of the Jew, the Alter Rebbe established an alternative method of sale in which the remaining monetary relationship after the sale took place, was not between the owner of the chametz and the non-Jew, but between the non-Jew and a third-party guarantor. Nowadays, this has become accepted as the most widespread and halachically acceptable arrangement for selling chametz.

Nowadays, the custom is for people to sell their chametz through a rabbi or a beth din who act as an agent to sell chametz on behalf of individuals. The sale of chametz provides an additional safeguard against owning chametz over Pesach and is a practice that has now become widespread among all Jewish communities and by all members of the community.

Chametz owned by a Jew on Pesach

Once Pesach is over, the prohibition against benefiting from chametz is not entirely over. It is prohibited to derive benefit from chametz that was owned by a Jew during Pesach:

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 448:3

חמץ של ישראל שעבר עליו הפסח, אסור בהנאה

It is forbidden to derive any benefit from chametz that belonged to a Jew over Pesach.

Therefore, during the weeks following Pesach, one should take care when buying chametz from a store owned by a Jew who did not sell his chametz or drinking whiskey that belongs to a Jew who may not have sold his chametz.

Caring About the Minutest Amount of Chametz

Because chametz is prohibited in the smallest of quantities, there is no limit to how careful a person can be in avoiding it. The Arizal is said to have made a guarantee to anyone who is careful about even the minutest amount of chametz:

האר"ז"ל כתב הנוהר ממשוהו חמץ בפסח מובטח לו שלא יחטא כל
השנה

The Arizal writes: He who is careful about the most minuscule amount of chametz on Pesach is guaranteed that he will not sin the entire year.

What does this mean? How can one guarantee that a person will not sin? Does being careful about chametz on Pesach remove one's free will to choose to sin?

The Rebbe qualifies this statement:

ואולי הכוונה שלא יאונה לו כל און בשוגג, שהרי בודאי בעל בחירה
הוא גם אז.

Perhaps the intent is that no sin will befall him by accident (B'shogege), for he certainly retains his freedom to choose [to sin] even then.

How does a person sin "by accident?"

In the times of the Temple in Jerusalem, if a person sinned by accident he was required to offer a sin offering.

Why should a person be penalized (to offer a sin offering) for something he did by accident? The Rebbe explains that the reason for this "penalty" is because sinning by accident stems from a state of carelessness and an insensitivity to avoid the sin.

Just as in the workplace, there are situations in which no one

person can be blamed for a mistake, but there are precautions and security measures that can be taken to minimize the risk of an accident occurring. Similarly, with regards to sinning by accident, there are things one can do to make oneself more mindful to avoid making such mistakes.

When one exhibits utmost care and attention to minute details, such as chametz that is prohibited in the smallest of traces, this sensitizes the person to be mindful of the details and, in the words of the Arizal, he is “guaranteed that he will not sin (by accident) the entire year.”

PART TWO

Matzah

Besides for the prohibitions against eating chametz for the entire duration of Pesach, there is a biblical requirement to eat Matzah on the first night of Pesach, as the posuk says:

Numbers 9:11

עַל מִצּוֹת וּמְרֹרִים יֹאכְלֶהוּ

With Matzos and Maror they shall eat it [the Korbbon Pesach].

This posuk only obligates us to eat the Korbbon Pesach alongside matzah and maror. However, this obligation is conditional on the presence of a Korbbon Pesach. Nowadays, when we do not have a Korbbon Pesach, there is no longer a biblical obligation to eat maror.

Regarding Matzah, however, there is another posuk that links the obligation of eating matzah to the prohibition against eating chametz, and because the prohibition against eating chametz applies nowadays as well, the requirement to eat matzah remains a biblical one as well.

(During the rest of the days of Pesach, however, there is no obligation to eat matzah, while there is a prohibition against eating chametz):

Talmud, Pesachim 28b

נֹאמַר לֹא תֹאכַל עֲלֵינוּ חֻמֵץ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל עֲלֵינוּ מִצּוֹת...הַחֹהוּ
לְקוֹבְעוּ חוֹבָה אֲפִילוּ בּוֹמֵן הוּא דַּאֲתָא

The posuk states (Devarim 16:3): “You shall not eat Chametz with it, for seven days you shall eat Matzos with it”...to establish [the command to eat matzah] as an obligation even nowadays [when there is no Korbon Pesach].

The essential requirement for eating matzah is to eat an olive-sized portion (approx. 9.6-16.5 grams—Halachah considers an olive size to be considerably larger in volume than the common olive). In practice, however, there are three times over the course of the seder when we eat this amount of matzah:

- 1) During the regular eating of matzah
- 2) For the korech sandwich together with marror
- 3) For the afikomen (to commemorate the Korbon Pesach that was eaten after the meal on a full stomach).

Why do we eat Matzah?

The Haggadah provides two different explanations for this:

1) Bread of Affliction

Haggadah for Pesach

הא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא בארעא דמצרים.

This is the bread of poverty that our ancestors ate in the land of Mitzrayim.

Ramban on the Torah, Devarim 16:2

והיא עני זכר כי היו במצרים בלחם צר ומים לחץ

[The matzah] is considered “poor” as a reminder that in Mitzrayim they had meager bread and were hard-pressed for water.

According to this explanation, the matzah is representative of slavery, and the food the Jews ate as slaves, but not of the Exodus and the freedom they experienced as a result.

1) Bread of Haste

Later in the Haggadah, a different reason is provided to explain why we eat matzah:

Haggadah Shel Pesach

מצה זו שאנו אוכלין על שום מה? על שום שלא הספיק בצקם של אבותינו להחמיץ עד שנגלה עליהם מלך מלכי המלכים הקב"ה וגאלם מיד שנאמר "ויאפו את הבצק אשר הוציאו ממצרים עגות מצות כי לא חמץ כי גורשו ממצרים ולא יכלו להתמהמה וגם צידה לא עשו להם"

*This Matzah that we eat is for what reason?
Because the dough of our fathers did not have time to become leavened before the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself to them and redeemed them. Thus it is said (Shemos 12:39): “They baked Matzah-cakes from the dough that they had brought out of Mitzrayim, because it was not leavened; for they had been driven out of Mitzrayim and could not delay, and they had also not prepared any [other] provisions.”*

The very same Matzah is both the bread of slavery, poverty, and affliction, as well as the bread of our freedom. The

difference between slavery and freedom is not the bread that we eat or the things we do, but in our mentality. When our ancestors ate matzah in Mitzrayim they were slaves to Paraoh and that was what was provided to them for food. Now that we are free from Paraoh's service, we again eat matzah, but this time it is in the service of Hashem, not Paraoh, and doing so because it is a mitzvah, which in and of itself represents our freedom.

Simplicity — The Free Man's Bread

Matzah is the simplest form of bread, made of flour and water that is simply kneaded, rolled, and baked. It does not entail a rising process, nor are there any added ingredients for flavor. This simplicity represents the freedom of being as you are without any external attachments, as the Maharal of Prague (Rabbi Yehudah Lowe 1520-1609) points out:

Marahal, Gevuros Hashem 36

המצה פשוטה, שהרי אין בה שאור, וכל דבר שהוא פשוט מבלי שמצטרף אליו דבר, הוא ענין החירות, שהרי המשועבד יש בו צירוף שהוא מצטרף אל אשר הוא אדון לו ומשעבד בו, ומי שהוא בן חורין עומד בעצמו אין לו צירוף כלל, ולפיכך ראוי מי שיצא אל החירות אל המצה, שהיא פשוטה מבלי צירוף שאור

Matzah is simple in that it contains no leaven, and anything simple without anything attached to it represents freedom. One who is enslaved has attachments that bind him to whoever his master is and he is enslaved by them. Someone who is free stands on his own without any attachments. Therefore, matzah which is simple without any

attached leaven is befitting for one who left [slavery] to freedom.

Selflessness

Whereas chametz represents the hot air of ego and arrogance, matzah represents selflessness:

Lekutei Sichos vol. 1 p. 129

בחמץ מתנשאת העיסה ואילו במצה נשארת העיסה כפי שהיא משמעות הדבר ברוחניות חמץ ישות והתנשאות מצה התבטלות לפיכך עיקר ענינה של מצה הוא לחם עוני לפי שמהותה של המצה היא התבטלות ודבר זה מתבטא רק בלחם עוני למרות שמותר לאכול מצה עשירה אי אפשר לצאת ידי מצות אכילת מצה אלא בלחם עוני.

The dough of chametz rises, whereas the dough of matzah remains as it is. The spiritual implication of this is: Chametz represents haughtiness whereas matzah represents selflessness. Therefore, the primary concept of matzah is that it serves as “bread of poverty” since the meaning of matzah is selflessness. And this is expressed in the “bread of poverty” even though it is permitted to eat “rich matzah” (i.e., matzah made from eggs, oil, or fruit juice) one cannot fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah without “bread of poverty.”

Chametz and matzah are, on the one hand, opposites, on the other, they share almost everything in common, save a few key distinctions that make all the difference. Between chametz and matzah is a fine line, but one worth taking note

of:

Ibid

ב' המלים מצה וחמץ מורכבות מאותיות זהות פרט לכך שמצה היא באות ה' וחמץ באות ח' האות ה' דומה לאות ח' כל אחת מהן מורכבת משלשה קוים ופתוחה מלמטה ההבדל הוא רק בכך שהח' סגורה בשלשת הצדדים לגמרי ואילו הה' יש לה פתח מלמעלה הפתח מלמטה שבשתי האותיות משמעותו לפתח חטאת רובץ הסגירה מכל הצדדים באות ח' משמעותה אין מקום ליציאה מלפתח חטאת רובץ הפתח מלמעלה באות ה' משמעותו הוא אמנם במצב של לפתח חטאת רובץ אך יש לו פתח מלמעלה אפשרות של יציאה ממצבו ועשיית תשובה...

ההבדלים תלויים זה בזה כשאדם שרוי ברגש של התבטלות הרי אף אם הטא ח"ו מהרהר הוא בתשובה אך כשהוא בישות התנשאות אינו חושב על תשובה כשהוא בטל אינו משתדל להצדיק עצמו ועושה הוא אז חשבון צדק וכשהוא נוכח שהתנהגותו אינה ראויה שב הוא בתשובה לעומת זה כתוצאה מגאווה מוצא אדם חשבונות להצדיק כל התנהגויותיו

A basic difference between chametz (חמץ) and matzah (מצה) can be perceived by comparing the letters which make up these words. Both words contain the letters tzaddik (צ/ץ) and mem (מ); they differ only in that matzah is spelled with a hei (ה), and chametz, with a Ches (ח). A hei (ה) and a Ches (ח) are both formed of three lines, with an opening below which recalls the posuk, "Sin crouches at the opening." The letter Ches (ח) is closed on all three sides, signifying no escape from the "sin at the opening." The hei (ה), by contrast, has an additional

opening near the top. This escape hatch refers to teshuvah, the ever-open opportunity for repenting and returning to Hashem.

These two differences between chametz and matzah [ego vs. selflessness and Ches vs. hei] are interrelated. The self-inflation symbolized by chametz is one of the fundamental causes of sin. An opinionated person is concerned primarily with his personal desires and places them above all other goals, increasing the possibility that he will sin.

A person in this state will not be easily moved to teshuvah. Instead, he will seek excuses to rationalize his behavior. For “love covers all faults” — especially self-love, which can blind us to even our most glaring inadequacies.

By contrast, a person whose nature reflects the qualities of matzah will be more willing to step beyond his personal wants and fulfill Hashem’s will. Even if he errs, he will not try to justify his behavior, but will seek to correct his faults through teshuvah.

Egg Matzah

Matzah is not just any bread that is not chametz, it is specifically a bread that can become chametz but does not, because of the haste with which it is prepared:

אמר קרא לא תאכל עליו חמץ שבעת ימים תאכל עליו מצות דברים
הבאים לידי חימוץ - אדם יוצא בהן ידי חובתו במצה, יצאו אלו שאין
באין לידי חימוץ אלא לידי סירחון

The posuk states: You shall not eat chametz with it [the Pesach offering] for seven days you shall eat Matzos with it [from the heikesh/juxtaposition of the command to eat Matzos with the prohibition against eating chametz, we derive that] only with things that come to leaven [when left to rise] does one fulfill their obligation to eat matzah, This excludes types that do not come to leaven.

From this we learn that matzah must be made from one of the five grains, wheat, barley, spelt, oats, and rye that leaven when ground into flour, mixed with water, and left in a warm temperature to sit. This excludes Matzos made from substances that do not leaven, such as millet or rice.

It also excludes mixtures that do not leaven because they have no water, such as matzah made with only flour and eggs, oil, or fruit juice without any water (since the dough will not come to leaven without water).

The reason for this is because the posuk says:

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת הַמִּצּוֹת

And you shall guard the Matzos

This teaches that the only Matzos that may be used for the

seder are ones that will become leaven if you do not guard them from rising (by kneading, rolling, and putting them in the oven for baking within 18 minutes from when the flour came in contact with the water), only such Matzos may be used to fulfill the mitzvah. Hence, one may not use Matzos that do not require guarding, such as egg matzah that was made without water, to fulfill the mitzvah on the first night of Pesach.

In one's service of Hashem, leavening and flavor represents the reason and enjoyment in spiritual matters, whereas "bread of affliction" represents Kabbalas Ol—"acceptance of the yoke of heaven"—doing what must be done even though one does not understand or enjoy the work, or find it meaningful. Both reason and blind faith have their advantages. However, at the seder, the matzah represents accepting Hashem's yoke with a faith that is not rational. This is why "rich matzah" (egg matzah, that represents reason and enjoyment) is invalid for the seder:

Lekutei Sichos vol. 16 p. 122

"לחם עוני" הוא העבודה דקבלת עול (ללא "טעם" ו"געשמאק") הגם שאין לו כל הסברה בשכלו ו(במילא) כל "טעם" בענייני אלוקות אעפ"כ הוא עובד את הקב"ה בקבלת עול ואילו "מצה עשירה" היא העבודה מצד טעם ודעת עבודה שיש בה "טעם" ו"געשמאק".

כאשר עבודתו של יהודי היא רק מצד קבלת עול ללא הטעם שבא משכל ומדות הרי הוא במצב שמצד שכל ומדות יש נתינת מקום לנהוג אחרת נתינת מקום לרע אלא שבכוח הקבלת עול הוא כופה את הרע (אתכפיא) ועובד את ה': כאשר העבודה היא מצד טעם ודעת (ובשלימותה) אזי השכל והמדות שוללים את האפשרות לעשות היפך רצון העליון ואין מציאות של רע (אתהפכא).

וזהו הקשר בין שני סוגי המצה [א] מצה עשירה ב) מצה מדברים שאין באים לידי חימוץ] כי בפנימיות הענינים פרט אחד הוא תוצאה מזולתו, עבודה באופן דמצה עשירה (בשלימותה) – מצד שכל ומדות – שוללת בדרך ממילא את האפשרות לחימוץ ורע [כמצה עשירה כפשוטה ש(ע"ד הרגיל) איננה יכולה לבוא לידי חימוץ].

דוקא (העבודה ד) "לחם עוני" – קבלת עול – נותנת מקום לחמץ ורע – (יכול לבוא לידי חימוץ), אלא שע"י "ושמרתם," עבודה והתעסקות, כופים את הרע ומונעים אותו מלבוא להתפשטות, הגבהה וחימוץ

"The bread of affliction" is the service of "Kabolos Ol" (without any flavor and enjoyment) even when he has no rational explanation and (by extension) no enjoyment in spiritual matters, nevertheless he serves Hashem with Kabolos Ol. Whereas, "rich matzah" (made of egg, fruit juice, or oil in place of water) represents a service of Hashem that is a product of reason and knowledge, a service that has a "flavor" and "enjoyment."

When a Jew serves Hashem with Kabolos Ol, without any intellectual or emotional reasoning, there is a possibility for him to act otherwise, i.e., a potential for evil. However, because of his "acceptance of the yoke [of Heaven]" he suppresses the evil (the concept of eskafiya—subjugation) and serves Hashem. Whereas when his service of Hashem stems from reason, then the intellect and emotions reject the possibility of doing anything that is against the supernal will (the concept of

es'hapcha—transformation).

This is the connection between the two types of matzah: 1) Rich (Egg) matzah 2) Matzah from ingredients that will not leaven. For, on a deeper spiritual level, one detail is a consequence of the other. Serving Hashem in a manner of “rich matzah” — with reason and emotional connection, automatically rejects the possibility for it to leaven and become evil, [just as egg matza (without any water) (in the simple sense) cannot become leaven].

Specifically (the service of Hashem in a manner of) “bread of affliction” — of Kabolas Ol—“accepting the yoke [of Heaven],” creates a possibility for chametz and evil (“can possibly become chametz”), however, by “guarding [the Matzos]” — through work and effort, one can suppress the evil and prevent it from finding expression — i.e., from rising and leavening.

A Difference of Time

The Maharal of Prague links the significance of Matzah to the lack of time (for rising) in its baking process. Matzah commemorates the exodus of our forefathers from Mitzrayim, when they were hastened to leave, and from a spiritual perspective, there was a revelation of G-dliness from a dimension that transcends time. Matzah is reminiscent of this concept since in its baking it lacks time (to rise):

לא יצאו ישראל במדריגה שיש בה זמן, רק במדרגה שאין בה זמן, כי כל הדברים נופלים תחת הזמן ונבראים בזמן, וצוה על המצה שהויתה בלא זמן... ולפיכך נתן הכתוב הסבה באכילת המצה שלא הספיק בצקם של אבותינו להחמיץ עד שנגלה עליהם מלך מלכי המלכים וגאלם, זכר מלך מלכי המלכים אצל זה... להודיע כי הגאולה שלהם מדריגה נבדלת, לא מצד המזל שהוא גשמי פועל בזמן.

When the Jews left Mitzrayim it was not from the dimension of time, but from a dimension that transcends time, for all things are bound by time and were created with time, and Hashem instructed about matzah which is created without time (it is not left to rise)... Therefore, the posuk provides the reason for eating matzah as: "Because the dough of our fathers did not have time to become leavened before the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself to them and redeemed them." It mentions "the King of the kings of kings" concerning this...to make known that their redemption was from a [higher] level that was set apart [transcending time, and] not due to astrological workings which is a physical phenomenon that occurs within the confines of time.

Machine Matzah

In 1838, a French Jew named Isaac Singer produced the first known machine for rolling matzah dough. Although this is often called a matzah-making machine, the machine actually only covered one part of the process-rolling-not

the equally critical and very labor intensive process of kneading the dough. Singer's machine, and variants of it, won approval from various poskim and quickly spread into France, Germany, England, Hungary and the United States. The machine changed and shortened the process of matzah baking, and also deprived many poor women of their meager livelihoods. At the same time, as machines are wont to do, it increased the supply of matzah, which was critical given the rapid growth of the world Jewish population in the 19th century, and it also led to a reduction in the price of matzah, since fewer hands were now needed to produce it.

Subsequently, the matzah machine became embroiled in a sharp and very significant halachic controversy. The dispute was initiated in 1859 with the publication of an "announcement to the House of Israel" (Moda'ah le-Beis Yisrael) by Rabbi Shlomo Kluger of Brody, and within the next few decades some eighteen other leading rabbis, particularly rabbis from Galicia as well as Chasidic rabbis, came out in opposition to the machine; some of them went so far as to declare machine-made matzah to be no better than chametz.

Some two-dozen other rabbis, many of them from Lithuania, Central and Western Europe, and Yerushalayim, strongly disagreed. Led by the influential posek, Rabbi Yoseph Shaul Nasanson, who published a work entitled "Bittul Moda'ah", "Annuling the Announcement," they vigorously defended the matzah machine; some insisted that machine-made matzah was actually more kosher than the hand-made kind, because there was less possibility of human error. There were technological arguments: Is the machine fully reliable in preventing chametz from entering the process? There were also social justice arguments—is it better to sustain

traditional, expensive hand-made matzah that provides work for poor people, or is it better to encourage cheaper machine-made matzah that even poor people can afford?

With the later invention of machines to aid in the kneading, and baking processes as well, additional problems arose, such as:

- » Trimmings were mixed back into the next batch and took longer than 18 minutes to reach the oven
- » Whether the shape of Matzos need to be round as they had always traditionally been (the new machine Matzos were square)
- » There was no longer any manual kneading done to ensure that no unmixed flour remained in the dough
- » The new ovens were designed for the commercial baking of crackers and had heat blowers positioned in the center of the oven to facilitate a slow baking process that would allow the dough to rise (to produce a crispy, airy cracker)
- » The machine Matzos rose 200%—the same as bread
- » The machine Matzos were placed on a very warm metal conveyor belt on the way into the oven that would speed up the rising process, even before they reach the oven
- » Matzah factories would produce chametz matzah and Pesach matzah in the same facility, and the factory cleaning would entail blow chametz matzah crumbs into the air, much of which would invariably land in boxes of matzah that were for Pesach (this is why some brands of matzah will have a collection of crumbs on the bottom of the box).

One of the more foundational arguments against using machine matzah for the seder, is that there is a biblical requirement that the matzah for the seder be “shmurah” — guarded:

Shemos 12:17

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת הַמַּצּוֹת...

And you shall watch over the Matzos...

The Alter Rebbe outlines in his Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law) what this biblical requirement entails:

Shulchan Aruch Harav, Orach Chaim 460:1

אין אדם יוצא ידי חובתו אלא במצה שישראל בן דעת נתעסק בלישתה ועריכתה ואפייתה לשם הפסח...ויש חולקין על זה ואומרים...שאין צריך כלל שתהא כוונת הלישה לשם פסח אלא שיהא השימור מחימוץ מלישה ואילך לשם הפסח...והעיקר כסברא הראשונה...

A person does not fulfill his obligation (to eat matzah on the first night of Pesach) unless he had matzah that a Jew of sane mind was involved in kneading, rolling, and baking it for the sake of Pesach...and there are those who disagree with this and say...that there is no need whatsoever for the intent of the kneading to be for the sake of Pesach, only that it should be guarded to ensure it does not become chametz from the time of kneading and onwards for the sake of Pesach...the law follows the first opinion...

While we find that there is a dispute about whether a human being is needed to perform the kneading, rolling, and baking of the matzah, the conclusion is that indeed human labor is required. The question is, if the machine operator is Jewish and merely presses the button to initiate the process, can it be considered as if he is responsible for all of the actions of kneading, rolling, and placing it in the oven which the machine does in response to his pressing the button?

A premise for this concept can be found in the laws of shechita in which a Jewish shochet is needed to perform the act of shechitah otherwise the meat is not kosher. The Talmud inquires whether slaughtering by machine might be considered valid:

Talmud, Chulin 16a

אמר מר השוחט במוכני שחיטתו כשרה והתניא שחיטתו פסולה ל"ק
הא בסרנא דפחרא הא בסרנא דמיא ואיבעית אימא הא והא בסרנא
דמיא ולא קשיא הא בכח ראשון הא בכח שני

The master has said: If one slaughtered with a wheel (i.e., a spinning blade), his slaughter is valid. But, [in another Baraisa] it was taught: [If one slaughters with a wheel] his slaughter is invalid. [How can this contradiction be resolved?] There is no difficulty. This [first Baraisa speaks of] a potters wheel [a tool that is operated manually that is valid, whereas,] this [second Baraisa speaks] of a waterwheel [a tool that is operated by hydraulic force and is considered invalid.]

Or, if you prefer to say: Both this Baraisa and

that one speak of a waterwheel and there is still no difficulty. This [Baraisa deals with an act of shechitah performed] through the person's primary force, and that [second Baraisa deals with slaughter performed] through the person's secondary force.

The automated machine referenced in the Gemarah is a hydraulically powered machine (much like a water mill). The Gemarah rules that when “the person's primary force” is responsible for turning the wheel, then it is possible for it to be considered an act performed by a human being. What does “the person's primary force” mean?

Rashi explains:

Rashi, ad loc.

בכה ראשון - מיד כשנטל הדף המעכב את המים והתחיל לגלגל
ובתחלת גלגולו שחט מכח אדם שנטל הדף.

The person's primary force: Immediately upon removing the board that blocked the water, the wheel started turning, and when it first started turning, it shechted as a result of the force of the person who removed the board.

While there is indication that at least some of the process is attributed to the person who turned the machine on, as in the Gemarah's case of the hydraulic machine, it remains unclear how much of the process is attributed to human force. Therefore, with regards to machine-made matzah, even if the kashrus for Pesach was 100%, one should nevertheless endeavor to find hand-made shmurah matzah to use for the

seder (since then the obligation to have “shmurah matzah” is a biblical one).

Shmurah Matzah

Moreover, according to the second opinion cited earlier that the definition of “shmurah” (in fulfillment of the posuk “and you shall guard the Matzos”) means guarded from not becoming chametz, there is a dispute as to when this applies. Does it apply from the moment of harvest, or only from when the flour touches the water and the kneading process begins? Because of this dispute, there is a stringency to seek out Shmurah matzah that was “guarded” (from coming into contact with water) from the time of harvest.

Wetting Matzah (Gebrochs)

Particularly in recent decades, it has become increasingly popular for Frum communities to adopt the chumra of not wetting matzah. This means that for the duration of Pesach they don't have kneidelach in their soup, or use matzah in any dish containing water.

What is the reason for this practice? The Machatzis Hashekel (a commentary on Shulchan Aruch written by Rabbi Shmuel Halevy Loewe 1720–1806) explains:

Machatzis Hashekel Orach Chaim 458

יש להחמיר לבעל נפש שלא לעשות תבשיל ממצות בפסח, דלפעמים אין כל הקמח נילש ומתגבל ונשאר מעט קמח על גבי עיסה, ואם היה נשאר על גבי מצה למעלה לא היה חשש כל כך, דכיון שניתן לתוך התנור נקלה אותו מעט קמח, והוי כמו קמחא דאבשונא...אך לפעמים אותו קמח הוא באמצע המצה מבפנים...וכהאי גוונא כתב מ"א...

לאסור ליתן לתוך תבשיל, והניח בצ"ע אם נתנוהו לתוך התבשיל אם יש לאסור...לכן אין מזהיחים למאן דנוהג חומרא זו:

A spiritually attentive person should be strict not to cook dishes from matzah on Pesach because sometimes the flour isn't entirely kneaded into the dough and some flour remains on the dough. If it were to remain on top of the matzah it would not be a concern at all, since it was baked in an oven, that bit of flour was roasted, and becomes like flour of roasted wheat (that can no longer leaven)... However, sometimes the flour is in the inside of the matzah (and does not become roasted)...and in such a situation the Magen Avraham prohibits inserting it into a dish cooked with water, and is doubtful whether if one placed it into a cooked dish, it should be prohibited... Therefore, one who practices this stringency should not be shunned.

In the Chabad community, the custom is to be exceedingly careful not to wet matzah. However, on the final day of Pesach (in the diaspora), the custom is to specifically wet the matzah, to the extent that the Rebbe Rashab took care to eat soaked matzah with every course.

What is the reason for this custom?

The simple explanation is that since the eighth day is only a rabbinic addition (to the biblical seven days of Pesach, and only applies in the diaspora) we are not as stringent as the other days of Pesach (since the biblical prohibition against eating chametz no longer applies).

A more insightful explanation for this strange custom, is based on what was explained earlier, that matzah represents the nullification of self—serving Hashem as an act of pure faith, without any reason or enjoyment. This is because Pesach represents the birth of the Jewish people as a nation, and just as a young child who cannot yet understand everything he is asked to do is expected to do what he is told without seeking to understand. Similarly, when the Yidden first became a nation, our relationship with Hashem was based on a devotion that transcended reason. However, 50 days later, on the festival of Shavuos, we were given the Torah—which provides the ability to understand the rationale behind many of the mitzvos, and develop an intellectual appreciation for them. This represents a more mature level in our development as a nation and this is why the korbos of two loaves of bread on Shavuos had to be made specifically of chametz (the korbos in the Beis Hamikdash were almost never allowed to include chametz, but this one had to specifically be made of Chametz).

On the eighth day of Pesach, once we have completed an entire week of Pesach, we are one step closer to Shavuos and receiving the Torah, and we therefore do not have to take as much care about the Matzah not rising.

Bread of Faith

The Zohar explains why, if we are so careful about chametz on Pesach, why are we particular to use chametz for the korbos on Shavuos:

Zohar vol. 2 p. 183a-b

בפסח נפקו ישראל מנהמא דאתקרי חמץ כתיב (שמות יג) ולא יראה לך חמץ וכתיב (שם יב) כי כל אוכל מחמצת ההוא נהמא דאתקרי מצה, השתא דזכו ישראל לנהמא עלאה יתיר לא יאות הוה לאתבטלא חמץ ולא אתחזיא כלל, ואמאי קרבנא דא חמץ הוה דכתיב סלת תהיינה חמץ תאפינה, ותו דהשתא ביזמא דא אתבטל יצר הרע ואורייתא דאתקרי חירו אשתכחת, אלא למלכא דהוה ליה בר יחידאי וחלש, יומא חד הוה תאיב למיכל, אמרו ייכול בריה דמלכא מיכלא דאסוותאא ועד דייכול ליה לא ישתכח מיכלא ומזונא אחרא בביתא, עבדו הכי, כיון דאכל ההוא אסוותא אמר מכאן ולהלאה ייכול כל מה דאיהו תאיב ולא יכיל לנזקא ליה, כך כד נפקו ישראל ממצרים לא הוי ידעי עקרא ורזא דמהימנותא אמר קודשא בריך הוא ישעמון ישראל אסוותא ועד דייכלון אסוותא דא לא אתחזי להון מיכלא אחרא, כיון דאכלו מצה דאיהו אסוותא למיעל ולמנדע ברזא דמהימנותא, אמר קודשא בריך הוא מכאן ולהלאה אתחזי לון חמץ וייכלון ליה דהא לא יכיל לנזקא לון,

Now one has to consider: On the Pesach the Yidden emerged from their subsistence on the [spiritual] bread called "leaven" to be nourished by the more honourable bread called matzah (unleavened).

Now, when the Yidden were worthy (on the Day of Shavuos) to eat a more excellent bread, would it not have been more appropriate that the "chametz" should have been abolished altogether and not been in evidence at all? Why, then, was that sacrifice based chiefly on chametz bread, as it is written: "They (the two loaves) shall be baked with chametz" (Vayikra 23:17)? Moreover, on that day (Shavuos) the "evil inclination" (chametz) came to naught, and the Torah, called "Freedom", was then

given. We may, however, explain by the following parable. A king had an only son who fell seriously ill. After a time the prince expressed a desire to eat, but he was forbidden to eat any food other than that prescribed by the physicians, and orders were given that for the set term of that diet no other items of food should be found in the palace. All was carried out accordingly. But when the prince came to the end of the period of his special diet the ban was lifted, and it was intimated that now he was free to eat whatsoever he fancied, since it would not harm him. Similarly, when the Yidden came out from Mitzrayim they knew not the essence and mystery of the Faith. Said Hashem: "Let them taste only the medicinal food, and before they have finished it be shown no other food whatsoever." But when the Matzos were finished, which was the medicine by means of which they were to enter and to comprehend the mystery of the Faith, then Hashem proclaimed: "From now on they may see and eat chametz bread, because it cannot harm them."

Matzah is the bread of faith that represents our unbound commitment to Hashem that transcends reason. It is the premise upon which our faith is built. It is both the bread of affliction—a poor man's bread that has no ego and does not rise, but it is also the bread of freedom. On Pesach, when we are careful to rid ourselves of chametz and eat matzah, we create a clean canvas for us to begin serving Hashem, out of

humility and unbound devotion. The purpose is not that our service of Hashem should remain flavorless like matzah, but that we should graduate from matzah to a service of Hashem that is based on pure faith but filled with lots of reason, meaning, and enjoyment (like on Shavuos when the Torah was given).

Take-aways

- » There is a biblical prohibition against eating chametz, owning chametz, seeing ones chametz, and benefiting from chametz on Pesach, as well as a requirement to destroy chametz before Pesach.
- » Chametz represents arrogance and ego, a trait that one should eradicate any trace of. Another lesson from chametz is to be swift and not delay doing what needs to be done.
- » We eat Matzah because it is a poor man's bread, what our forefathers ate in slavery, and it is also the bread of freedom—that they ate during Yetzias Mitzrayim.
- » Matzah represents simplicity, without any external attachments (freedom). It also represents selflessness, as it does not rise beyond the essential ingredients it is comprised of.
- » Matzah is symbolic of accepting Hashem out of pure faith, without the need for reason, meaning, or enjoyment. It represents a person working on himself to avoid evil despite a situation that is prone to evil, and it celebrates the effort to suppress temptation (even over the achievement itself).