

For a seven day period you shall eat matzos. (13:15)

The *Rambam* writes that *matzoh* is a reminder of our bondage, representing the *lechem oni*, bread of affliction, which our ancestors ate while they were slaves in Egypt. It also commemorates the speed with which the redemption was brought upon them. They had no time to bake bread to take with them for this journey. They were, consequently, forced to make matzos, to avoid the delay inherent in preparing leavened bread.

Horav S.R. Hirsch, z"l, views these two reasons as complimentary to one another. It is significant to note that *Bnei Yisrael* played no role in their own liberation. They did not fight; they could not even leave their homes. They simply waited for their freedom. What did they do to earn their freedom? What was it that made them worthy of liberation? Their freedom was attained through their devotion to Hashem. By sacrificing the god of the Egyptians as the *Korban Pesach*, they demonstrated their total subservience to the Almighty. Yet, they still took no part in their own deliverance. They did not eat the *matzoh*, which represented their slavery, until the very last moments. During that final moment of redemption, when they were "summoned" to leave, they grabbed whatever food they had and left. They had no bread because they had no time to prepare it. Hence, the *matzoh*, the unleavened, uncompleted bread, serves as external testimony of the Divine nature of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. The *matzoh* is a tribute to the fact that it was Hashem--only Hashem--Who effected our release. To paraphrase *Horav Hirsch*, "How could a people, incapable of preparing itself with proper provisions for such a great journey, think that they were instrumental in obtaining their own freedom?"

The **Bnei Yissaschar** cites the *Zohar Ha'kadosh* who expresses a similar view. *Matzoh* is referred to as *Michla D'meheimenusha*, the food of trust (in Hashem). Dough which has a leavening agent in it continues to rise on its own, even after it has been kneaded. Unleavened dough has no power of its own. It rises only when man kneads it. The inertness of unleavened dough symbolizes our liberation. We did nothing to effect our freedom. It was the exclusive work of Hashem. During the Festival of Freedom, we eat the food that best describes Hashem's Hand in our deliverance.

Horav Eli Munk, z"l, suggests another reason that *matzoh* is ideal to symbolize our Festival of Freedom. We are enjoined to rid ourselves of *chametz*, leaven, which is *matzoh's* counterpart. Leaven initiates fermentation by decomposing the dough. In this process, a pure, static, natural material is subjected to the work of man who kneads, molds and shapes it to fit his own taste. This represents man's mastery over nature. Likewise, in the spiritual dimension, the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, causes the human soul to ferment through its "ability" to decompose the soul's natural purity by provoking it to oppose the forces of good. The *yetzer hora* creates discord within the human personality in the same manner that leaven distorts the wholesomeness of the flour and water. Indeed, as *Horav Munk* notes, the numerical equivalent of .nj, leaven, is 138, the same number as *vnhdp*, blemish/defect.

As *Pesach* approaches, we are adjured to search for and destroy all *chametz*. This requirement

gives the Festival of Freedom, the holiday commemorating our people's birth as a nation, a feeling of complete moral, physical and national renewal. As we rid our homes of *chametz*, we must similarly rid ourselves of any vestige of envy and hatred. This festival is consistent with the season of *Aviv*, Spring--the time of nature's renewal.

With this in mind, it is truly appropriate that the "national" food for this holiday is *matzoh*. It represents our return to national purity. Our inauguration as the nation of Hashem is imbued with purity and integrity. After the seven-day festival is over, we return to our usual eating patterns epitomized by leavened bread. Our abstinence from *chametz* at the beginning of the year inspires us to be resolute in ridding ourselves of the vestiges of evil which plague us. Hence, the taste of *matzoh* remains with us all year long.