

This is the decree of the Torah. (19:2)

Being that the Torah, which is our blueprint for life, is Divinely-Authored, it is understandable that it is intrinsically “beyond human cognition.” Whatever we think we understand of it is the result of interpretation by mentors throughout the generations. They have plumbed its depths and transmitted their knowledge to future generations. Nonetheless, one does not know the actual, reason that Hashem chose a specific *mitzvah* for us to perform, or not to transgress. The reasoning that our *gedolim* have transmitted to us throughout the generations is only to make it easier for the human mind to accept. While some *mitzvos* may have practical or moral rationale which aligns with human understanding, others (such as *chukim*: *Parah Adumah*, prohibition to eat certain animals, *shaatnez*, mixing wool and linen) may appear mysterious or lack any apparent rationale.

As *Horav Simchah Wasserman, zl*, observes, the word *chok/chukas* has two definitions. It is either a *mitzvah* whose rationale defies human cognition or something that endures forever, as in *chukas olam*, a law forever. Essentially, the two definitions complement one another. An endeavor or institution that is based upon a specific rationale will attribute its longevity to the reason in vogue and its applicability throughout time, life’s vicissitudes and environmental influences. A *mitzvah* that defies human rationale endures forever, *l’olam*, because it transcends all criteria which may impact its observance.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* underscores the notion that we perform *mitzvos* only because they are Divinely-decreed. Reason does not play a role – even with regard to the supposed rational *mitzvos*, like acts of *chesed*, *tzedakah*, and interpersonal relationships. Our mandate to act comes directly from Hashem. Furthermore, even those *mitzvos* for which the Torah offers a reason, it does not mean that we perform the *mitzvah* for that specific reason. Absolutely not! The reason is present to provide a moral/ethical lesson for us to incorporate into our lives.

This idea comes into play in the *Haggadah*, when we recite: *Matzah zu she’anu ochlim al shum she’lo hispik b’tzeikam shel avoseinu l’hachmitz*; “We eat this *matzoh* (to commemorate) that our ancestors (who were liberated from Egypt) did not have sufficient time to allow their dough to become leaven.” The question is obvious: Why should the lack of time to produce bread be so important that it is the basis for our eating *matzah*? The accepted explanation offered by the commentators is that the Jews in Egypt had sadly descended to the nadir of the *shaarei tumah*, gates of impurity. They were already at the lowest rung of the ladder, the forty-ninth level. If they had remained in Egypt any longer, they would have plummeted to the fiftieth level of *tumah* and might never have been able to leave. Therefore, even before their bread became bread – while it was still unleavened *matzah* – Hashem liberated them. Speed was of the essence; the urgency of the moment dictated their immediate evacuation. Thus, in commemoration of the speed, we eat *matzah*.

One issue remains to be resolved. The Jews knew they were going to be liberated at any time. Why did they wait for the last second to make bread? When one goes on a trip, he prepares the

sandwiches in a reasonable amount of time. The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that *Klal Yisrael* had what they determined were false alarms. They saw the Egyptians punished with nine plagues. Each plague brought renewed hope for their release. They waited anxiously – but nothing happened. Life went back to business as usual. The Egyptians were their masters, and they remained slaves. After nine plagues of shattered hope, they had second thoughts. Maybe it was not going to happen after all. Thus, when the time of redemption came, they were caught with unleavened dough and had to eat *matzah* instead of *chametz*. The lesson that we take away from this is that *yeshuas Hashem k'heref ayin*, the salvation of Hashem comes in the blink of an eye. We may never give up or even second guess Hashem's resolution of whatever challenges we experience. Hashem's salvation is not bound by human limitations or time constraints. The immediacy and swiftness of Divine intervention can occur suddenly and inexplicably – often when it is most needed.

This is one of the tenets of our faith. The term “despair” is antithetical to the concepts of *emunah* and *bitachon*. Even in the face of adversity and uncertainty, we are “encouraged” to maintain hope in Hashem's Providence. Throughout the ages, this belief has served as a source of comfort, strength and resilience to individuals, inspiring *Bnei Yisrael* to persevere through life's trials and tribulations. This is the lesson of the *matzah*. It is not only applicable for *Pesach*, but to the entire year.