

Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

This matzo that we eat - what is its reason? Because the dough of our fathers did not have time to rise before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed is He, revealed Himself to them and redeemed them, as Scripture (Shemos 12:39) states: "And they baked the dough that they took out of Egypt as cakes of unleavened bread, for it could not be leavened, for they were expelled from Egypt and they were not able to tarry, and also provisions they did not make for themselves."

Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (1786-1869), in his commentary *Maasei Yedei Yotzer* on the Haggadah, page 64a, asks: If the reason for eating matzo is to remember the haste of the Exodus, then why did the Jews eat it while still in Egypt, when the Exodus had not yet taken place? Furthermore, why was the haste chosen as the central point we must remember, as opposed to any of the miracles that took place during the Exodus?

He explains that the exile and redemption from Egypt serve as a model for our current exile and the redemption for which we are waiting. During the current exile, Hashem made us swear with the following words (Shir Hashirim 2:7): "I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or deer of the field, not to arouse or awaken the love before it is desired." The Midrash explains that this was an oath not to force the end of exile, because if we do, it will cause bad things to happen to us, G-d forbid. However, Hashem was concerned that after being in exile for a very long time, we would feel as if He had abandoned us or, at least, that He was not in any hurry to redeem us, because He is not in exile and does not feel our pain. We might therefore

decide to push for redemption on our own, in order to remind Hashem of our situation.

Therefore Hashem showed us during the Egyptian exile that He was in a greater hurry to redeem us than we were ourselves. The Torah says, "They were not able to tarry," implying that the Jewish people wanted to spend a little extra time in Egypt, but Hashem did not let them stay. He took them out as soon as possible and as quickly as possible. The lesson for us is that if Hashem is not redeeming us now, it is only because redemption is impossible; as soon as it becomes possible He will redeem us without any delay. Therefore we need not push for the redemption with actions of our own.

This is why the oath in Shir Hashirim, warning us not to "arouse or awaken the love before it is desired," is followed immediately by the following verse: "The voice of my beloved, behold it has come, skipping over the mountains and jumping over the hills" (Shir Hashirim 2:8). The Midrash there says, "The voice of my beloved – this refers to Moshe. When he came and told Israel, 'In this month you will be redeemed,' they said, 'Moshe our teacher! How can we be redeemed? Didn't the Holy One, blessed is He say to Avraham that they will enslave us for 400 years? It has only been 210 years so far.' He said to them, 'Since He wishes to redeem you, He does not look at your calculations. He skips over the mountains – the predestined end-times.'" The proximity of this verse to the oath is meant to teach that just as in Egypt Hashem shortened the exile as much as possible, today as well we can rest assured that He will take us out of exile as soon as possible, and therefore we must not attempt to push for the end early.

Now, the Torah gives another reason why we eat matzo - it is the bread of poverty (Devarim 16:3). And Chazal say that just as a poor man usually eats a piece of bread rather than a complete loaf, the matzo we eat must also be a piece, not a whole (Pesachim 115b). And we say in the Haggadah, "This is the poor bread that our fathers ate in the Land of Egypt." Why isn't this reason mentioned in answer to the question "this matzo that we eat"?

The answer is that the two reasons applied at different times of history. When the Jews were powerful and in their land, and even at the very end of the Egyptian exile, when they were about to go free and felt very powerful and important, they needed a reminder of their humble past. If not, they might say, "Our strength and the power of our hands brought us this wealth" (Devarim 8:17); or even if they remembered that Hashem gave them everything, they might forget Moshe's warning (Devarim 9:4) and think that He gave it to them because of their own righteousness. Therefore Hashem commanded that they eat matzo, to remember how they were slaves, so that they should say to themselves, "If it was our own power or righteousness that got us here, why weren't we able to do it earlier? It can only be that Hashem, in His kindness and mercy, redeemed us."

However, during exile this reason does not apply. We are so weak and we suffer so much that there is no fear that we might think thoughts of arrogance and pride. Rather, we eat matzo now for the other reason: to recall the haste with which Hashem took us out of Egypt, and to learn from this that He will take us out of the current exile as quickly as possible.

Now we understand the words of the Haggadah: "This matzo that we eat - what is its reason?" Matzo has two reasons, but the matzo that we eat today, during exile, is to remind us of the haste of the redemption.

Both reasons for matzo are written in the following verse: "For seven days you shall with it eat matzos, bread of poverty, for in haste you went out of the Land of Egypt, so that you will remember the day you went of the Land of Egypt all the days of your life." The Haggadah says that "the days of your life" refers to the daytime, and the word "all" comes to include nighttime. The Maasei Hashem explains daytime as a metaphor for the times when the Jewish people dwelt in its land, and nighttime as a metaphor for exile. Thus, the Torah is saying that because of these two reasons for matzo, we eat matzo and recall the Exodus "all the days" of our history - both in the good times and during exile.



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