

MATZAH – מצה

According to the Zohar, מצה is the “מאכל הרפואה - food of healing - מיכלא דאסוותא”, also referred to as the “לחמא דמהימנותא – bread of faith” and “רזא דמהימנותא - secret of faith. (Zohar II, 183b)* The *halacha* states that the מצה fit for performing the *mitzvah* on this night can come only from the five species of grain (wheat, barley, spelt, oats and rye). This is because only these species have the potential of becoming *chametz*, of rising and becoming leavened – באים לידי חמץ. Rice for example would not ferment but only spoil; therefore it is unfit for the ritual eating of מצה. (Mesechet Pesachim 35a)

There is a great paradox here. Only the מצה which has the potential of becoming *chametz* is the desired faith. This is the faith predicated on intellect not on irrational thought. The Talmud says, “An infant does not know how to call *Abba* and *Imma* until he has tasted grain.” For this reason, Rabbi Yehuda was of the opinion that the “עץ הדעת טוב ורע – Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil” was actually wheat. (Mesechet Berachot 40a)

Intellect has the potential for corruption, and one must be exceedingly careful that it not go awry, but the alternative --- a faith that is not rooted in intellect, that is irrational --- is no alternative at all.

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*The Zohar gives the following parable:

A King had an only son who fell ill. One day the prince desired to eat. The court physician said, “Let the prince eat this ‘*food of healing.*’ And until he finishes eating it, let no other food be found in the house.” They did so. Once the prince ate that medicine, the court physician said, “From now on he may eat whatever he desires and it will not harm him.”

So, when Israel left Egypt, they did not know the fundamental and mystery of faith. Said the Holy One, “Let Israel taste medicine, and until they have finished eating this medicine, let there not appear in their homes other food.” Once they had eaten מצה, which is medicine to enter and to know the mystery of faith, the Holy One said, “From now on, חמץ is appropriate for them and they may eat it, for it cannot harm them.

MAROR – BITTER HERB – מַרְרֹר

Maror symbolizes the bitterness of life due to the yoke of exile. This bitterness causes the refinement of the soul from the dross. With that, the soul returns to its purity, to its holy nature. So it is worthwhile to greatly esteem the bitterness brought on my servitude. (Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, *Tanya* I, Chapter 31, concerning the beneficial spiritual effect of *merirut* – bitterness or remorse – as opposed to the detrimental, debilitating effect of *atzvut* – depression.

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The bitter herbs symbolize the servitude of Egypt. There are aspects of our personality that require refinement. We take the positive aspects of servitude and incorporate them into our everyday lives as service of (practice with) G-d – עבודת ה'.

The bitter herb also symbolize the bitter things in life. We are willing to lovingly swallow the bitterness of life knowing that we have before us an exalted ethical goal.

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KOREICH – SANDWICH – כורך

זכר למקדש כהלל: כן עשה הלל בזמן שבית קים. היה כורך פסח מצה ומרור ואוכל ביחד. לקיים מה שנאמר: על מצות ומרורים יואכלהו. במדבר ט,יא

A remembrance of the Temple according to Hillel. So did Hillel at the time the *Beit HaMikdash* existed. He would sandwich the *korban Pesach*, *matzah* and maror and eat them together, to fulfill what is said, “They shall eat it (the *korban Pesach*) with *matsot* and *maror*. Numbers 9:11

It is important that we understand that the two aspects of life, freedom and servitude, symbolized by the *matsah* and *maror*, are not independent of one another but rather interact and compliment one another. The highest freedom is attained only when crowned with sublime service, namely the service of the King of Glory. That is complete freedom. This cojoining finds symbolic expression in the sandwiching together of *matsah* and *maror*. Ultimate freedom comes sandwiched with servitude. This is when a man finds in his soul the complete mastery of a truly free man, who rules over the greatest of his powers, the very power of freedom itself!

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It is no coincidence that the exclusive remembrance of the *Beit HaMikdash* in the entire *Seder* is in conformity with the approach of Hillel. Hillel is author of the adage, “Be of the disciples of Aaron: a lover of peace and a pursuer of peace, a lover of humanity who would bring them to Torah.” (Avot 1,12)

It is this approach of the peacemaker Hillel that will bring about the restoration of our *Beit HaMikdash*.

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770 — A TRANSCENDING-PLURALITY SANDWICH - *Rebbe Nachman*

In this world we experience plurality. The oneness of all things, the Unity of God as it is manifested in Creation, is hidden. We find it difficult to comprehend how from the One comes the many.

It is this element of multiplicity in Creation which allows for the existence of evil, for the forces within and without man which seek to conceal the Creator. It is the dissension within man's heart, the dissidence between men's minds, which give rise to the actualization of that potential evil (*Likutey Moharan I*, 51 and 62:2; *Likutey Halakhot, Ribit 5:1*).

Matzah symbolizes Divine Manifestation; Maror, Divine Concealment. Together, they symbolize the plurality in Creation.

A commemoration of the Holy Temple, according to Hillel...

It is Hillel who symbolizes the transcending of contention between men. It is Hillel who realizes that all things *are* One. (The schools of Hillel and Shammai disagreed upon a vast range of Halakhic matters and had very divergent approaches to Jewish life. Even so, there was great accord and mutual respect between them; see *Shabbat 14b* and *Yevamot 13b,14b*. MoSheH is an acronym for Machloket [the dispute between] Shammai and Hillel, indicating that at their source, both opinions are one; see *Likutey Moharan I*, 56:8.)

It is the Holy Temple which symbolizes the great harmony in Creation (*Likutey Halakhot, Betziat HaPat 5:16*), the elevation of all things to their Source (*Likutey Halakhot, Pikadon 4:19*).

There, with the Holy Temple, we transcend plurality: we eat the Matzah and Maror as one. There, we experience the unity of mankind, the oneness of adversity and contentment (*Likutey Halakhot, Rosh Chodesh 3:5*).