

THE HAMANTASH - FOOD FOR THOUGHT

by Rabbi Yehudah Prero

There is a widespread custom that during Adar, people make and bakers bake three cornered filled cookies called Hamantashen.

One year, on the day before Purim, Rav Yaakov Berlin, the father of the famous Rabbi Naftoli Berlin (the Netziv), went to the market to purchase this special treat in honor of Purim. He went from baker to baker, but no Hamantashen were to be found. He found this situation to be quite odd, and he therefore asked one of the bakers why no one had any Hamantashen. He was informed that the year had been one of a serious drought. The price of flour skyrocketed, and bakers were only able to afford flour for the Shabbos challah. Flour for any other purpose, including Hamantashen, was not even considered because it was so expensive.

As soon as Rav Berlin heard this, he immediately called for all the city's bakers. Once they were assembled he presented them with a large sum of money. Rav Berlin told them that the money was to be used to purchase flour so that they could bake Hamantashen. Why did Rav Berlin feel so strongly about having Hamantashen available? He explained that these special cookies had for generations been consumed during Adar. Being that it was a long standing tradition to have Hamantashen, and it is forbidden to annul customs, Hamantashen must be baked.

Rav Berlin then explained how Hamantashen got their name. In Megillas Esther, we find that Achashverosh had never rewarded Mordechai for his role in saving the king from a plotted assassination. However, one night, "the sleep of the king was disturbed." On that night, Achashverosh was reminded that Mordechai had not been rewarded, and he ordered Haman to parade Mordechai around in royal fashion. This marked the beginning of the salvation of the Jews from the murderous scheme of Haman. The Yalkut Shimoni tells us that Achashverosh was not the only one who had his slumber disturbed that night. On that night, the "slumber" of our three forefathers Abraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov was disturbed because of the evil that was to befall the Jews. They pleaded with G-d to spare the Jewish people from destruction. In the merit of the forefathers, Haman's power weakened. When combined with the prayers and repentance of the nation, this merit helped saved the people from destruction. The word for "weaken" in Hebrew is "Tash." Thus, the three cornered cookie, with each corner representing one forefather, is named "Haman tash," "Haman was weakened." The presence of this highly symbolic cookie was a long standing custom, and therefore, Rav Berlin explained, the custom must continue.

When we munch on our Hamantashen, we should make sure that we properly digest the reminder

contained within!

(From Sefer Sarei HaMeah)

For questions, comments, and topic requests, please write to [Rabbi Yehudah Prero](#).
