

# A NEW OUTLOOK

*by Rabbi Shlomo Jarcaig*

When the Torah discusses the holiday Pesach (Passover), it refers to it as the Holiday of Matzos (see Devarim/Deuteronomy 16:16). Matzos are of such a central theme of Pesach that the Hagada opens the Maggid section - the portion of the Seder that discusses the Departure from Egypt and the mitzvah (Divine command) to discuss, especially with our children - with Ha Lachma Anya/This is the Bread of Affliction that our fathers ate in the Land of Egypt. When describing the reason behind the mitzvah of eating the matzos, the Torah says, "for seven days you shall eat matzos because of it (the Paschal offering) - bread of affliction, for you departed from the land of Egypt in haste - so that you will remember the departure from the Land of Egypt all the days of your life". (ibid. 16:3) Rashi explains the nature of their haste was they did not have time to let their dough rise. On Pesach we celebrate our redemption from Egyptian slavery and our birth as a nation. Many miracles took place in order for this to happen. The haste in which we left and lack of time to let the dough rise seem insignificant details relative to the G-d's primary goal of the sequence of events: our redemption. Why are matzos the focal point of the holiday? Moreover, the Torah calls matzah Lechem Ony, a poor man's bread. But if we are celebrating our exodus from bondage and servitude, are not poverty and affliction contrary to our celebration?

The Maharal (acronym of Rabbi Yehuda (ben Betzalel) Loewe; 1526-1609; Chief Rabbi of Moravia, Posen and Prague and a seminal figure in Jewish thought in the last half millennium, he authored numerous works in all fields of Torah) explains that a person is truly prepared for redemption - and the freedom of choice that accompanies it - when he not bound by anything beyond himself. The wealthy person is easily constrained by the responsibilities of his many belongings and the demands they make upon his time and energy. This weight impacts his choices. The most basic physical need that occupies the attention and guides the decisions of man is his need for sustenance.

But, explains Rabbi Loewe, in order to become G-d's nation, we had to put aside our previous lifestyles - the mindset of the nation enslaved to the most immoral, materialistic culture on earth - and prepare to follow the word of Hashem without delay. Matzos are made from the most basic elements, flour and water, and must be made within a short period of time. The Jewish nation's exodus from Egypt in such haste that their dough did not have enough time to rise demonstrated a willingness to put aside their own will and follow that of G-d. This celebration of emerging from Egypt as G-d's nation encourages our focus upon the reason we were redeemed; the matzos awaken within us the understanding that we must follow G-d's will first, and only then think about

our belongings and time. It is through this transformation of outlook that we were redeemed 3315 years ago, and - by following the same guidelines - will be redeemed again.

Have a Good Yom Tov and a Good Shabbos! Chag Kasher v'Samayach!

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Kol HaKollel is a publication of the Milwaukee Kollel Center for Jewish Studies 5007 West Keefe Avenue; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; 414-447-7999