

No Sports. No Politics. Just Matzah.

Nearly every article I write touches on current events, whether in the news or on social media. But today, I want to focus on something uniquely Jewish: our tradition of turning our enemies into food! Antiochus and the Greeks became latkes and sufganiyot, Haman and his three-cornered hat became hamantaschen, and Pharaoh—well, he became a matzah ball! We Jews don't just eat well; we eat our enemies!

All kidding aside, what is the deeper meaning of matzah? Of all the symbolic Jewish foods, matzah is the simplest—no spices, no yeast, just water and flour. In previous articles, I have shared different explanations, but today, I want to explore the essence of matzah and what it truly represents.

The Maharal on Matzah

The Maharal of Prague (Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, 16th century) expounds on the passage from the Haggadah, where we lift the matzah and proclaim:

“מִצָּה זוֹ שְׂאֵנוּ אוֹכְלִין, עַל שׁוֹם מָה? עַל שׁוֹם שְׁלֵא הִסְפִּיק בְּצֶקֶם שֶׁל אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לְהַחְמִיץ עַד שֶׁנִּגְלָה עֲלֵיהֶם מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא וּגְאֻלָּם.”

“This matzah that we eat, what is its reason? Because the dough of our ancestors did not have time to rise before the King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself and redeemed them.”

The Maharal asks: Why does this hurried departure justify an entire holiday? Why does the Exodus, a moment of unparalleled miracles, become defined by the fact that there simply wasn't enough time for the bread to rise?

A Strange Way to Remember

To illustrate how unusual this is, consider a family preparing for a long-anticipated vacation. They've saved up for years, meticulously planned every detail, and are finally set to embark on a trip of a lifetime. The itinerary is perfect—beginning with a relaxing breakfast at their favorite bagel shop before heading to the airport.

But on the morning of departure, everything goes wrong. They oversleep, rush to the airport, and barely make it to the gate in time. The planned breakfast? Forgotten. Instead, they grab a breakfast bar from the pantry and eat it on the way.

Despite the frantic start, the trip itself is incredible. The experiences, the meals, the adventures—all perfect.

Now, imagine that the following year, as they reminisce about their vacation, instead of scrolling through the digital photo albums or reliving the highlights, they each grab a breakfast bar to commemorate that rushed morning. Sounds absurd, right?

Yet, when it comes to Pesach, we do exactly that. Instead of commemorating the great miracles of the Exodus with something grand, we focus on the bread that didn't have time to rise.

Above Time, Above Nature

The Maharal explains that time itself is a function of nature. Everything in the natural world unfolds within the framework of time. For something to be supernatural, it must transcend time.

The hurried departure from Egypt wasn't just about the logistics of leaving in a rush; it symbolized our relationship with Hashem—a relationship that is beyond nature. The Jewish people were not bound by the limitations of time because their redemption was miraculous, beyond the natural order.

A Parallel in Purim

We see a similar concept in the Purim story. The decree to annihilate the Jewish people was miraculously overturned (וְנִהְפָּוּ הַיּוֹא). But there is an intriguing linguistic clue in the Megillah.

When Haman was summoned to Esther's banquet—the moment that would ultimately lead to his downfall—the Megillah doesn't simply say he was invited. Instead, it states:

”מָהָרוּ אֶת הָמָן לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת דְּבַר אֶסְתֵּר”

“Hurry Haman to fulfill Esther's request.” (Esther 6:14)

Why the urgency? There was no obvious rush. Yet the Megillah uses this word maharu—hurry—because the entire Purim miracle was beyond nature. Just as the Exodus defied time, the salvation of Purim was equally supernatural.

The Relevance Today

As Jews in the modern era, this lesson is more important than ever. We face challenges from all directions, but we must remember: we are not bound by the normal rules of history. We are a nation that exists above nature.

Nowhere is this clearer than in Israel today. Look at our chayalim fighting in Gaza. In any normal army, soldiers go into battle with weapons and tactical gear. But not our soldiers. They carry Gemaras, Siddurim, and Tehillim.

We don't rely solely on nature. We don't rely solely on time. We rely on Hashem.

This is the lesson of matzah. We didn't have time to let the dough rise because, as a people, we are not subject to time. We are subject to Hashem and His miracles.

Wishing you a Chag Kasher V'Sameach!

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