

# Sparks

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## **Wonder Bread** *Tapping the Transformational Power of Faith*

During the seven days of Passover we are required to eat only *Matza*-- unleavened bread that looks somewhat like a cracker and is made of just water and flour. The *Matza* reminds us that we were slaves to the Egyptians who treated us as if we were subhuman and fed us brittle and tasteless unleavened bread. The *Matza* is therefore referred to as the “bread of affliction.” However, *Matza* also reminds us of how we left Egypt in an astounding record time, faster than it takes dough to leaven into bread. How can *Matza* be both a sign of our painful affliction and our joyous freedom?

The Zohar, the Kabbalah classic, refers to *Matza* as the “Bread of Faith.” In other words, when we eat the *Matza*, we are internalizing the message of faith that it embodies. That message is -- know that even if you hit rock bottom and feel far and alienated from G-d, G-d is right there to help you and free you from your enslavements, addictions and obsessions. Even when you feel that it’s been years that you are trapped in your personal Egypt and it would seem that it will take years to get out-- just know, as the Psalmist put it, “The salvation of G- d is within the blink of an eye.”

Although *Matza* is the very bread of affliction and exile, at a blink of my eye, it can become the bread of freedom and redemption. Revolutionary transformation is available to us all, as long as you believe it can happen. The paradoxical symbolism of the *Matza* teaches us that G-d Himself, at any moment, can do a miracle for you. Even if you reach the bottom, never despair, never give up. Therefore, *Matza*, the “Bread of Faith,” is an antidote to despair and nurtures within in us faith and hope.

The Exodus from Egypt assures us that if the Jewish people could get out of Egypt, then we could get out of any situation. Certainly G-d could have orchestrated the Jewish people’s liberation through some kind of worthy deed that they would do to earn them their freedom. However, He precisely arranged it to be without merit so as to instill forever within us the confidence that His love is unconditional. Therefore, no matter how low the Jewish people or any of us may fall, we should never despair. The paradoxical symbolism of the *Matza* also teaches us that in the very bitterness of affliction and exile, lays the sweetness of freedom and redemption. The great Hasidic Master, Rabbi Nachman of Breslav taught, “Being far from G-d itself is for the purpose of coming close...the downfall can be transformed into a great ascent.”

It all depends on the way you look at it. The *Matza* itself is basically tasteless. If you want, you can taste the freedom and redemption that lies at the core of affliction and exile.

Perhaps this is the meaning of G-d’s response to Abraham when he requested a sign that the land of Israel would be an eternal inheritance for him and his descendents. G-d showed him the future history of exile. Abraham experienced a great darkness and fear. But G-d comforted him saying, “Know that your offspring will be strangers in a strange land. There they will be enslaved and afflicted for four hundred years. Also the nation that will afflict them I will judge and your children will leave with great assets.”

In other words, although your offspring will endure much suffering, they will survive and even profit from it. So don't worry, don't lose faith. Even the darkest hours are the very seeds of growth, transformation, renewal and redemption.

Rav Nachman of Breslav also taught, "Sometimes when you want to come close to G-d, you encounter new and even greater obstacles than before. However, don't let that discourage you. G-d is only challenging you so you will try even harder and thereby come even closer. It's really all for the best."

The Gerrer Rebbe, another great Hasidic Master, taught that on Passover we can achieve a huge leap forward in our spiritual evolution. In other words, in general, great feats take much time. However, on Passover, we can accomplish great moves at a "beyond-time" pace.

The Hebrew word for Egypt is *Mizraim*, which also translates as "narrowness." Indeed, Egypt represented the deification of the narrow confines and limitations of nature, time and space. To leave Egypt also meant to leave this narrow and confining attitude. It meant leaving the world of nature, science, logic and reason and enter into a new worldview—the world of faith and unconditional love.

There are many people who own mansions and yet there is never enough space in their lives for others. And even when they are free of any obligations of time, they never have time for others. These people live only in the world of time and space. However, in the world of love, time and space are not obstacles.

## **Happy Birthday**

Passover is the birthday of the Jewish people. It is a time to remember that we are children of G-d, born with an innate G-dliness. Our relationship to G-d is similar to a parent and child relationship. From the child's perspective he and his parent are two separate beings. However, the parent sees herself and her child as one. Therefore, the parent loves the child with the same unconditional love that she has for herself. Sometimes parents give to their children not because their children deserve it but simply because they are their children--an extension of their own selves. However, with all the love a parent may shower on her child, it is up to the child to acknowledge and thereby enjoy the ecstasy of that connection.

The Torah refers to the Jewish people, so to speak, as the firstborn child of G-d. This is because the Jewish people are the first nation in history who believed that G-d is like a loving parent and they are His beloved children. And His love is unconditional and forever.

May everyone in the world realize that they too are beloved children of G-d.

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