

Organic Jews

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I've always found it odd that we read about the Exodus from Egypt in the middle of the winter. It's icy and cold outside, and we are (finally!) finished with the holiday season. To me, Pesach conjures memories of the days getting longer and the beginnings of spring.

Actually, there is a great lesson in all of this. When it comes to experiencing something physical, time and place are of absolute necessity. Since the Torah and its prescribed festivals are spiritual in nature, they don't have those limitations and are applicable year-round.

So this week we read about the great exodus from Egypt. When the time of redemption finally came, the Jews were sent out so

quickly that they didn't have time to bake proper bread and instead baked matzah (Exodus 12:39). The difference between matzah and regular bread is a seemingly minor one: bread has time to ferment and rise, whereas matzah is baked "as is." Interestingly, our Sages teach that the cakes that the Jewish people brought out of Egypt had the same taste as the miraculous manna that fell from Heaven while the Jews encamped in the desert (*Kiddushin* 38.) Our Sages are revealing that the difference between these two isn't only the chemical fermentation process – it's also the spiritual fermentation that we each experience.

Matzah consists of essential ingredients and nothing else. The verse above concludes by stating, "and also provisions they did not take with them." This represents the organic Jew who lives with complete trust and faith that God is running the show. On the other hand, *chametz* (leavening) represents the "processed" Jew who has allowed his mind to ferment with belief that nature runs its course. He lives his life believing that he controls everything and that his efforts determine his fate.

He is mistaken, for we see from the great miracles performed in Egypt that God runs the world; it only appears as if He is hidden behind the curtain of nature. True, we must all make an effort, but the outcome is determined solely by God. Similarly, we see that there are so many beautiful and exotic trees and plants throughout the world that sprout from a simple seed and grow without any human intervention whatsoever!

The *Zohar* explains that matzah is represented by the Tree of Life and *chametz* is represented by the Tree of Knowledge. When Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge, he was cursed to earn his keep by the sweat of his brow. Yes, we must all work – but we must also realize that our hard work does not bring about our success. Our success is determined only by God. If we want to be successful, we must approach God directly and believe in

His capabilities.

We have been blessed to have received the holy Torah. The Torah is the antidote to our weaknesses and problems, and the source of our strength and happiness. While it's not possible for each of us to study all day, it's essential for us to take encouragement from the Torah and set aside as much time as possible for its study. We can also exchange Adam's curse for a blessing. When we aren't studying, instead of moping around and looking for trouble, we can occupy ourselves with working according to the ethics of Jewish law, thus remaining connected to our Father in Heaven and protected from the Serpent of the earth.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Birkhot HaShachar 5:12

A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!