

TIMELESS TORAH

TZAV: MATZAH MESSAGES - TOOLS FOR INSPIRED LIVING

Gratitude of Dependence

The prohibition against consuming or possessing chametz on Pesach is very familiar. A slightly less well-known law is that chametz is precluded from almost all of the *korbanot*, the sacrificial service, as described in *Parashat Tzav* and *Parashat Vayikra*. The rationale behind this law, as explained by the Sefer HaChinuch (unknown authorship, 13th century) is connected to the underlying principle of *korbanot* in general, which is to provide an important symbolism to focus the human mind. Specifically, Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (d.1888) explains that chametz, which is dough left to rise and grow, represents human independence and self-reliance. Just as on Pesach the matzah emphasises Divine intervention in the Exodus, helping the Jewish people focus on the source of their salvation, so too does the matzah of the *korbanot* stress the need for dependence upon Hashem.

With this in mind, it is fascinating to analyse the various types of meal or bread offerings mentioned in these two *parshiyot*. As a general rule, the *menachot*, meal-offerings, may not be chametz. The Torah stresses both that 'any *minchah* that is offered to Hashem may not be made of leaven' (2:11) and that 'Aharon and his sons will eat them unleavened' (6:9). The one exception to this is the *korban todah*, the thanksgiving offering, which is offered with forty loaves, thirty of them matzah and ten of them chametz. Rav Hirsch, following his previous line of reasoning, explains this discrepancy as follows. Rav Hirsch, following his previous line of reasoning, explains this discrepancy as follows. The *korban todah* is brought by a person who is thankful for having been delivered from danger.

Having regained their life and independence, such a person is liable to fall into the

'chametz mindset', and thus, their *korban* includes ten loaves of chametz, through which they express their attribution of their salvation, livelihood and good fortune only to Hashem. This notion is demonstrated also in the various types of matzah, which are all made of oil, flour and water, but are divided into three sets, each prepared in a progressively complex manner. These represent the various levels of a person's prosperity and sustenance, which are all ultimately subservient to Hashem. Moreover, the amount of flour used in the ten chametz loaves is exactly equal to the amount of flour used in all of the thirty matzah loaves put together. This symmetry underscores to the person bringing the *todah* that their regained worldly independence only magnifies their obligation to serve Hashem.

Inauguration Matzah

Another *korban minchah* mentioned in *Parashat Tzav* was brought as part of the *Miluim*, the inauguration ritual of the Mishkan. This was a seven-day period that took place in the last week before the month of Nissan, during which Moshe offered up various *korbanot* and initiated Aharon and his sons in the service of the Mishkan. Among the *korbanot* that were brought were three types of matzah *menachot*, identical to those brought with the *todah*. Of these, some were offered on the *Mizbei'ach* (Altar) and others were eaten by Aharon and his sons. Here too, Rav Hirsch explains that the matzah used in the *Miluim* was a warning to the Kohanim not to abuse their elevated status in order to attain luxuries or take advantage of people. As servants of Hashem, they must subordinate their will to His will.

The Meshech Chochmah (Rabbi Meir Simchah of Dvinsk, d.1926), makes a fascinating observation here. Several times in this



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passage, the Torah describes the loaves as being contained in a 'basket of matzot'. This terminology changes at the end of the ritual, however, when Aharon and his sons are described as consuming their portion of the *korban*. At this stage, the loaves are said to have come from the 'basket of the *miluim*'. The Meshech Chochmah suggests that it is possible that the prohibition against the *menachot* being chametz applies only to the part that is offered on the *Mizbei'ach* and to the parts consumed by the Kohanim. The parts of the *menachot* that were consumed by the ones bringing the offering, however, might not have to constitute matzah. During the inauguration ritual, Moshe acted as the Kohen, offering up the *korbanot* of Aharon and his sons, who were not yet formally consecrated as Kohanim. The parts of the *menachot* that they ate, therefore, were not given to them in their role as Kohanim, and these loaves were therefore did not necessarily have to be matzot.

In light of the above, this can be readily understood. Apart from the *korban todah*, chametz, representing independence, cannot be accepted by the *Mizbei'ach*. Chametz is also inappropriate for the Kohanim, who are in danger of assuming too much independence for themselves. Ordinary people, however, have no issue with partaking of chametz produced from the parts of the *korbanot* they may consume, and are therefore not subject to this prohibition.

The Seder Table of Hashem

Taking this notion one step further, the Chatam Sofer (d.1839) discusses why chametz is forbidden on Pesach but permitted all year round. As we have seen, matzah emphasises complete dependence on and subservience to Hashem. For ordinary people, this is difficult to maintain, and it is

indeed appropriate for us in general to consume chametz together with matzah. The insistence on matzah as opposed to chametz is reserved only for the *Mizbei'ach* and for the Kohanim, who consume the *korbanot* as part of the sacrificial service, as they eat, so-to-speak, from 'Hashem's table'.

At the Pesach Seder, in the section of Rabban Gamliel, we declare that the matzah is a commemoration of the dough that did not have time to rise before Hashem revealed Himself in Egypt. The verse, however, puts this slightly differently, stating that the dough did not have time to rise before we 'were driven out of Egypt'. The Chatam Sofer explains that the reason for this discrepancy is that our declaration at the Seder is intended to answer the first question of the Mah Nishtanah: why is it that on every night of the year we eat both chametz and matzah but on this night only matzah? According to the Chatam Sofer, this question is referring to the *korban todah*, which is normally brought with a combination of both chametz and matzah. On Pesach, however, we give thanks to Hashem using only matzah and not chametz. This, the Hagaddah answers, is because Hashem revealed Himself to us on the night of the Exodus. On Pesach night, our spiritual level is similar to that of the *Mizbei'ach* and the Kohanim who consume the *korbanot*. Our physical reality, as human beings, is that we need chametz throughout the year, but on Pesach, we are effectively all Kohanim, eating matzah given to us directly by Hashem. This remarkable insight teaches us the immense potential of the Pesach Seder to turbo-charge our spiritual growth.

The next Timeless Torah Shiur (Shemini) will take place on Monday, 6th April at 8:00pm