

REEH

BREAD, MATZAH...AND PIZZA

2001 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

"Mazel Tov: Just Call Me 'Yente'"

Tonight (Thursday) is a very special occasion. My wife, my daughter and I are invited to an engagement party. It is a special thrill for me because I was the "*Shadchan* -- "matchmaker." I had spoken with the parents of the young man and young lady before they met, and arranged for them to meet. They obviously hit it off, and they are now planning, G-d willing, to be married.

There is another reason that I am looking forward to this event. Tonight, for the first time, I will get to meet the soon-to-be bride and the soon-to-be groom!

How, you may wonder, did I manage to arrange a "*Shidduch*" without ever having met the parties?! I'm not sure myself. To make a long story short, a friend of mine asked me if I knew anyone for his neighbor's son. I asked my daughter, who, initially had no ideas, but came back to me a few months later, and suggested a friend of hers. The rest, as they say, is history.

The moral of the story is: if G-d presents you with an opportunity to help someone, even a stranger, don't wait around for someone else to grab the Mitzvah. My son often chides me for continuing to drive when I see a pedestrian walking along the sidewalk, rather than pulling over and offering him a ride. G-d has many messengers who can do His bidding, but if He chooses to honor you with the opportunity, JUST DO IT!!!

"BREAD, MATZAH...AND PIZZA"

One of the 613 Mitzvahs is the obligation to remember the Exodus from Egypt. This Mitzvah is not limited to the annual recitation of the Haggadah on the Seder Nights. There is a daily (and nightly) requirement to remember that G-d saved us from a land where we were beaten, tortured, and murdered. The Egyptians, who considered us their property, persecuted our Nation without mercy. G-d miraculously turned everything around and gave us our freedom. We commemorate this great event by eating underbaked bread:

"Do not eat leavened bread...for seven days, eat Matzahs...for you left Egypt in a hurry -- so that you will remember the day of your departure from Egypt all the days of your life." (Deut., 16:3)

Did you ever wonder why we left in a hurry? We eat Matzah to remember that since we were in a hurry, there was no time for our bread to rise. But what was the rush? Why were we in such a hurry? We couldn't afford a few more minutes to take the bread out of the oven and put some peanut butter on it?! 210 years in Egypt, and we can't take the time to pack and leave like a mentch?!

Chizkuni, a 13th century commentary, points out that if G-d can take us out of Egypt, He can do so in whatever time frame fits His divine plan. Through nine plagues, the Pharaoh refused to allow the Israelites to go. Suddenly, along comes the 10th plague, and the Egyptian firstborn are dying. Pharaoh can't wait to get us out of his country. The pressure is on for us to leave. Surely, G-d could have held the Egyptians back for a few minutes. Why didn't He?

The answer, says Chizkuni, can be found by carefully reading the verse. *"... eat Matzahs...for you left Egypt in a hurry -- so that you will remember the day of your departure from Egypt all the days of your life."* We think that we eat Matzah so that we'll remember leaving in a hurry. It's just the opposite: *"...you left Egypt in a hurry -- so that you will remember..."*

G-d deliberately accelerated our departure from Egypt so that our bread wouldn't rise. The purpose of this rush was to give us the Mitzvah of eating Matzah -- a tangible reminder of the Exodus. He wanted to give us something that would insure that we would never forget what He did for us that first Passover -- how He took us out of a seemingly hopeless situation and gave us our freedom.

We must never forget the Exodus from Egypt. Most of our prayers contain reminders. The morning and evening services contain references to the Exodus and the splitting of the Red Sea. The Kiddush that is recited Friday and Yom Tov evenings tell us that the special day is *"Zecher l'yetzias Mitzraim -- a reminder of the departure from Egypt."* The message is that G-d is in control of the world.

There are two ways to look at the Mitzvah of remembering our emigration from Egypt:

1. Appreciation of past kindness and how we benefit from it today. At the Seder we read that *"if G-d had not taken our ancestors out of Egypt, we... would still be there."*
2. Inspiration for the future. Remembering that G-d saved us from slavery in Egypt is what has given our People the strength and hope to withstand inquisitions, pogroms, and holocausts. Remembering that G-d saved us from slavery in Egypt is what inspired the sainted Rebbe of Bluzhov to request (and receive!) permission from the Nazis to bake Matzahs in Bergen-Belsen. Remembering that G-d saved us from slavery in Egypt is what gave our people the faith and Chutzpah to return to Zion after World War 2.

And remembering that G-d saved us from slavery in Egypt is what keeps us going when the streets of Jerusalem flow with the blood of Jews whose only crime is buying a slice of pizza. It is up to the Master of the World to decide when to "take us out of Egypt." Our Father in Heaven saved us before, and He'll save us again. The only question is, "When?"

Please, dear Father, let it be now.

Have a great Shabbos.

Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplowitz

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