



THE OMER: A CHAMETZ TRANSFORMATION

Before Passover, we scrub our houses clean of all leavened bread. Yet, just a few weeks later, chametz becomes a most important element of the Holy Temple service. Why the transformation? What does it represent in the journey of the soul?

TEACHER'S MANUAL



JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



SEFIRAT HA'OMER

שיעור זה מוקדש

לעילוי נשמת

הרה"ת הרב בנימין ע"ה

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Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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During Passover, chametz is absolutely forbidden (Source 1). After Passover, the Torah commands us to count seven weeks and then, on Shavuot, to bring a special offering, made specifically of chametz (Source 2). Sefer Hachinuch gives a detailed description of the baking of the offering (Source 3), and the Talmud describes the process of waving, as well as explaining the merit and blessing the offering provided. (Source 4)

The Rebbe asks a basic question: If chametz was so terrible just a few weeks ago, how did it get promoted to being a sacrifice in the Holy Temple?!

B. From Belief to Real Transformation.....10

As you surely learned over Passover, chametz represents ego while matzah represents humility (Source 5). However, the Alter Rebbe adds something else: chametz represents rationalization, while matzah represents simple faith (Source 6). The Exodus took place as a sublime revelation which the people weren't really ready to internalize, as they had just left a place of extreme impurity (Source 7). Their 'intellect' wasn't ready to agree, and it was only after seven weeks of internal improvement that they were able to internalize, understand, and feel this revelation. (Source 8)

C. A Personal Journey.....16

The Rebbe explains that this is the basic journey from Passover to Shavuot. At the outset, we embrace G-d out of simple faith while eradicating all chametz, but after refining ourselves during the Omer Counting, we become ready to bring our intellect and feeling along, using them to commit ourselves to G-d and to make G-d's will our own.

The emphasis on G-dly service based on our own intellect is a basic part of Chabad philosophy, which prioritizes personal understanding as opposed to relying on trust in a leader. (Source 9)

Introduction

Just a few days ago, we concluded the Passover holiday, a festival which necessitates extensive preparations. The most important mitzvah of the holiday, alongside eating matzah on the Seder night, is the commandment to rid our homes of any crumbs of chametz.

If you attended a Passover associated event at any Chabad center, you probably heard about the deeper meaning of chametz vs. matzah — ego versus humility. Chametz, which rises, represents our ego, while matzah, which is flat, represents humility.

Exactly seven weeks after Passover, we celebrate the festival of Shavuot. Surprisingly, the sacrifice associated with this holiday is specifically one that is made of chametz! What happened? How did something as intimidating and negative as chametz suddenly become material for the most sacred of services?

In this talk, the Rebbe speaks about the spiritual journey of a Jew. The humility that we experience through Passover is only a beginning. The journey continues through the counting of the Omer and culminates with the holiday of Shavuot, when we are commanded to serve G-d specifically with our ego.

השיעור לספירת העומר

משיחת שבת פרשת קדושים, מברכים החודש אייר, ה'תש"ד, בלתי מוגה.
תורת מנחם חלק י"א עמוד 249 והלאה.

A. Converting a Prohibition Into an Obligation

The Prohibition of Chametz on Passover

Source 1 Exodus 13:6-7

Student's For seven days you must eat matzot, and the
pg. 4 seventh day shall be a festival to G-d.

Matzot must be eaten these seven days. No chametz may be seen in your possession, and no leaven may be seen in all your boundaries.

שְׁבַעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל מַצֹּת וּבִיּוֹם
הַשְּׁבִיעִי חַג לַה'.

מִצּוֹת יֹאכַל אֶת שְׁבַעַת הַיָּמִים
וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה לְךָ חֶמֶץ וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה לְךָ
שָׂאֵר בְּכָל גְּבֻלְךָ.

The Offering of The Two Loaves

Source 2 Leviticus 23:15-17

On the holiday of Shavuot, we bring a special holiday offering to the Temple: two loaves of bread which must consist of chametz.

Student's You shall count, from the day following the
pg. 4 [Passover] holiday when you brought the omer offering, seven complete weeks.

Until the day after the seventh week, you shall count fifty days, and then you shall present a new meal-offering to G-d.

From your settlements, bring two loaves of bread as a wave offering. They shall be made of two-tenths [of an ephah measurement] of wheat meal, and shall be baked as leavened bread. They are the first-harvest offering to G-d.

וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשָּׁבֹּת
מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאָכֶם אֶת עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה
שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָתוֹת תְּמִימַת תְּהִינָה.

עַד מַחֲרַת הַשָּׁבֹּת הַשְּׁבִיעִית
תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם
מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַה'.

מִמּוֹשְׁבֵיכֶם תְּבִיאוּ לֶחֶם תְּנוּפָה
שְׁתֵּים שְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרִים סֵלָת תְּהִינָה
חֶמֶץ תֹּאפִינָה בְּכוּרִים לַה'.

After the “Day of Rest”, here meaning Passover, the Omer offering was brought in the Temple. There is then a mitzvah to count 49 days, and on the 50th to bring another grain offering, baked into two loaves of bread. The Torah stresses that this offering needs to be leavened, it needs to be chametz.

This is a startling departure from the norm, as all other grain offerings were made out of unleavened matzah, including the Lechem Hapanim (showbread) which was on display all week. There was never any chametz to be found in the Temple, besides this sacrifice of Two Loaves.

The one other exception was the Thanksgiving offering, which included 40 loaves of bread, 10 of which were made as chametz. (This is the reason we do not say the prayer Mizmor L'Todah in our morning prayers on Passover, as the Toadah/Thanksgiving offering could not be offered on Passover). However, that sacrifice was a personal sacrifice. The Shavuot offering of Two Loaves is the only communal sacrifice to be made out of chametz.

Source 3 Sefer Hachinuch, Mitzvah 307

A Description of The Two Loaves Offering

Student's
pg. 5

They would do as follows: They would bring three se'ah of new wheat and smooth them and pound them just like all meal-offerings, and grind them...and make two loaves from them... Each loaf was seven handbreadths long, four handbreadths wide, and four fingers tall. They were square. They were baked on the day before the holiday, and on the morrow after their waving, they were eaten by the priests on that day and half the night.

וְהַעֲנִין הָיָה כֵּן: שֶׁהָיוּ מִבִּיאִים שְׁלֹשׁ
סָאִים חֲטִים חֲדָשׁוֹת, וְשָׁפִין אוֹתָן
וּבֹעֲטִין בָּהֶן כְּדֶרֶךְ כָּל הַמִּנְחֹת
וְטוֹחֲנִין אוֹתָן... וְלוֹקְחִין אוֹתָן
וְעוֹשִׂין מֵהֶן שְׁתֵּי חִלּוֹת... וְאֶרֶךְ
כָּל חִלָּה שְׁבַע טַפָּחִים, וְרֹחֶבָה
אַרְבָּעָה, וְגִבָּהָ אַרְבַּע אֶצְבָּעוֹת,
וּמִרְבָּעוֹת הֵיוּ. וְאֹפִין אוֹתָן מֵעֶרֶב
יוֹם טוֹב, וְלִמָּחָר אַחֵר הַנִּפְתָּה, הֵיוּ
נֹאכְלוֹת לְכֹהֲנִים כָּל אוֹתוֹ יוֹם,
וְחֻצֵי הַלַּיְלָה.

The loaves were rectangular, seven handbreadths by four handbreadths, with protrusions on the corners, four fingerbreadths high.

With much pomp and ceremony the loaves would be waved—moved up and down and side to side—and then given to the Kohen-priests to eat, with one loaf given to the High Priest and one to all the other Kohanim. They were obligated to eat it inside the Temple courtyard, and to finish it before midnight.

Source 4 Babylonian Talmud, Menachot 62

The Talmud tells us how exactly the loaves were waved, and what this brought to the world.

Student's
pg. 5

With the Two Loaves Offering, what did he [the Kohen] do? He would extend it toward each of the four directions of the skies, and then bring it back. Then he would raise it upward and lower it downward.

Said Rabbi Chama bar Ukva: He waved it back and forth to all four directions, to hold back the harmful winds, and he would raise and lower it to hold back the harmful dews.

שְׁתֵּי הַלֶּחֶם .. כִּיצַד הוּא עוֹשֶׂה?
.. מוֹשִׁיט אוֹתָם אֶל כָּנָגְד אַרְבַּע
רוּחוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְשָׁב וּמַחְזִיר
אוֹתָם. וְלֵאחֶר מִכֵּן הִרְהוּ מַעֲלָה
אוֹתָם כָּלִפִּי מַעֲלָה וְשָׁב וּמוֹרִיד
אוֹתָם מֵטָה.

אָמַר רַב חָמָא בַּר עֲקִבָּא, אָמַר ר'
יוֹסִי בַּר ר' חֲנִינָא: מוֹלִיךְ וּמְבִיא
לְאַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם - כְּדִי
לְעַצֵּר בְּעַד רוּחוֹת רָעוֹת שֶׁלֹּא
תְּבוֹאֵנָה לְעוֹלָם, וּמַעֲלָה וּמוֹרִיד
- כְּדִי לְעַצֵּר בְּעַד טָלָלִים רָעִים
מִלְרָדָת לְעוֹלָם.



The ceremony of the two loaves offering in the Temple

>> The Rebbe

How Chametz Became a Mitzvah

Student's
pg. 6

Between Passover and Shavuot we count the Omer, which means that there are three time periods: Passover, the Omer period, and Shavuot.

The distinctions between them: On Passover, chametz is forbidden. During the Omer period, it is permitted. On Shavuot, its consumption is a commandment—the two loaves were specifically made of chametz.

This raises the question: If chametz is forbidden on Passover, how does it suddenly become an article of a mitzvah (with two loaves specifically of chametz)?

בין חג הפסח לחג השבועות ישנו הזמן דספירת העומר. והיינו, שבכללות ישנם שלשה זמנים: חג הפסח, ספירת העומר, וחג השבועות.

והחילוק ביניהם: בפסח - חמץ הוא דבר האסור, בספירת העומר - הוא דבר הרשות, ובשבועות - הוא מצוה חיובית, שהרי שתי הלחם היה צריך להיות מחמץ דוקא¹.

ולכאורה אינו מובן: אם חמץ בפסח הוא דבר האסור - איך יתכן שבשבועות נעשה חמץ ענין של מצוה (ששתי הלחם צריך להיות מחמץ דוקא?)

(1) אמור כג, יז. מנחות נב, ב.

B. From Belief To Real Transformation

Let's first explain the spiritual difference between chametz and matzah:

>> The Rebbe

Student's
pg. 7

The explanation: Chametz represents ego and haughtiness, and logic, while matzah represents the opposite, it is called "poor man's bread" as it has no self-importance, and no taste.

וביאור הענין: חמץ - הוא ענין של ישות והתנשאות, טעם ודעת, היפך ענין המצה שנקראת "לחמא עניא", שאין בה התנשאות ואין בה טעם.

The Rebbe notes two metaphors implied by the contrast of chametz vs matzah: Chametz portrays self-worth, conceit, even arrogance; and also represents understanding and logic, meaning and "taste." Matzah symbolizes humility, and also implies a lack of understanding. The following texts expound on these two themes:

Arrogance and Humility

Source 5 Or Hatorah, Nevi'im-Ketuvim pg. 974

Chametz and matzah are made of the same main ingredients: flour and water. What is the difference? Chametz rises while matzah remains flat. Chametz represents ego, and matzah represents humility.

Student's
pg. 7

The difference between chametz and matzah is: Chametz represents ego, as expressed in the fact that it rises. Matzah represents humility, in that it does not rise.

כִּי הַהֶפֶרֶשׁ בֵּין חֻמֶּזֶץ לְמֶצֶה הוּא: שֶׁהַחֻמֶּזֶץ הוּא בְּחִינַת יִשּׁוּת, שֶׁלֹּכֵךְ הוּא מִגִּבָּה בְּטָבְעוֹ לְהִיּוֹת עוֹלָה וּמִגִּבִּיהָ. וְהַמֶּצֶה הוּא מְבַחֲיִנַת בְּטוֹל שְׂאִינוֹ מִגִּבִּיהָ אֶת עֲצָמוֹ.

Enlightenment vs Simplicity

Source 6 Maamarei Admur Hazaken, Torah Umoadim vol. II pg. 551

On the other hand, chametz also represents comprehension, while matzah - humility - represents simple, unquestioning faith.

Student's
pg. 7

This is the main difference between chametz and matzah: the bread of chametz, which has flavor, symbolizes a person's intellect, which likewise has a 'flavor.' The bread of matzah, on the other hand, is called "bread of the pauper," lacking any flavor at all... It represents humility and nullification... That is why matzah is called "bread of faith," because faith transcends reason.

וְזֶהוּ עֵקֶר הַהִפְרָשׁ בֵּין חֵמֶץ לְמַצָּה,
שֶׁבְּלֶחֶם שֶׁבְּחֵמֶץ יֵשׁ בוֹ טַעַם
הַמְּמִשִּׁיךְ בְּחֵינַת הַשֶּׁקֶל, שֶׁיֵּשׁ בוֹ
טַעַם כּו', אֲבָל לֶחֶם הַמַּצָּה שֶׁנִּקְרָא
לֶחֶם עֲנִי שֶׁהֵיא בְּלֹא טַעַם כָּלֵל...
וְהוּא בְּחֵינַת הַבְּטוּל... וְזֶהוּ שֶׁהַמַּצָּה
נִקְרָאת מִיְּכָלָא דְמַהֲיָמוּתָא
שֶׁלְמַעֲלָה מִן הַטַּעַם.

We see that matzah and chametz represent two distinct methods of serving G-d:

The first way is through nullification - matzah:

The Jew serves his Creator out of acceptance of the yoke of Heaven. It does not matter whether he personally understands and feels the internal meaning of the commandment or not, nor whether he has an inner desire to fulfill it or not. The very fact that the Creator commanded him to perform it causes him to fulfill the will of his Creator, like a servant obeying his master. In this mode of service, the great virtue of absolute subservience to G-d is evident.

The second way is through understanding - chametz:

The Jew learns Torah and fulfills commandments out of understanding and feeling. He understands the greatness of G-d and the significance of the mitzvot, and as a result, he has a desire to fulfill them. And therefore, he serves his Creator.

What is the advantage of this second mode, over simple dedicated service?

Acceptance of divine authority through self-nullification does not elevate the human so much. Instead it ignores his personality and inner drives, forcing him to behave according to the will of G-d, which is against his nature. What about intellect, emotion, and satisfaction? Have these faculties been purified and drawn closer to G-d? Not at all. The intellect doesn't understand why the commandment needs to be fulfilled, the emotion isn't drawn to the Torah and the mitzvot, and the soul remains immersed in worldly matters. The person may have neutralized the influence of these faculties on his actions, not letting them interfere with serving G-d. But these faculties and tools themselves remain low and

distant from G-d, just as they were before.

In contrast, when a person incorporates his intellect, emotion, and enjoyment (Mochin, Middos, and Taanug) into this framework of serving G-d, when he understands the significance of the mitzvot, feels an emotional desire to fulfill them, and gets satisfaction from them, he raises these faculties and uses them in his divine service. He's not shutting down his natural inclinations, he's transforming them and using them for good.

A person who serves G-d in this manner becomes a different person. His intellect becomes refined, and he is capable of understanding divine matters, comprehending the greatness of G-d and the significance of the mitzvot. His heart feels an inner connection to the Torah and its commandments, and he possesses a love for G-d and fear of Him. His enjoyment is found in holy matters. He has "convinced" himself in a deep and internal manner that he must engage in Torah and mitzvot, and now his own nature draws him there.

In this mode of service, the absolute subservience of the person to G-d is not explicitly emphasized, but the refinement in serving G-d through understanding and emotion is highlighted.

*

After learning about the idea of chametz and matzah in the service of G-d, as well as the two paths they symbolize, we can go on to understand why during the Exodus from Egypt we can only eat matzah, whereas during Shavuot it is permissible and even required to eat chametz.

At the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites Were in a Low Spiritual State

Source 7 Likkutei Sichot vol. 1 pg. 267

Student's
pg. 8

Before the Exodus from Egypt, the People of Israel were sunken in the "forty-nine gates of impurity"; they were not receptacles for G-dliness, as the verse says, "You were naked and bare." G-d Himself, the King of kings, personally revealed Himself and rescued them from Egypt.

בְּשַׁעַת יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם הָיוּ בְנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂקוּעִים בְּמִ"ט שְׁעָרֵי
טְמֵאָה, וְלֹא הָיוּ כְּלִים לְאַלּוּקוֹת,
כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְאַתָּה עָרוֹם וְעָרִיָּה,
אֲלֹא שֶׁ"נִּגְלָה עֲלֵיהֶם מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי
הַמְּלָכִים הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא"
בְּכַבּוּדוֹ וּבַעֲצָמוֹ וְהוֹצִיאָם וְחָלַץ
אוֹתָם מִמִּצְרַיִם.

Since this was not a result of their own efforts but merely a 'revelation' from above, the experience didn't not change them internally—because they did not have the necessary capabilities—and it was only the revelation that drew them to G-d. When they left Egypt they were not yet free of the evil inside them, as their animalistic soul was still at full strength.

וְכִינּוּן שֶׁהַדָּבָר לֹא בָּא מִצַּד עֲבוֹדָתָם
אֲלָא מִצַּד גְּלוּי אֹר מְלֻמְעָלָה,
מִמִּילָא לֹא פָעַל בָּהֶם גְּלוּי זֶה שְׁנוּי
בְּפִנְיָמִיּוֹת, שֶׁהָרִי לֹא הָיוּ עֲדִין
כְּלִים לֶכֶךְ, וְרַק שֶׁמִּצַּד גְּלוּי הָאֹר
נִמְשְׁכוּ לְאַלּוּקוֹת... וְהָיִינוּ שְׁבִשְׁשַׁעַת
יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם, לֹא נִפְטְרוּ עֲדִין
מִהָרַע שְׁבִקְרָבָם, שֶׁהָרִי הִנָּפֵשׁ
הַבְּהֵמִית עֲדִין נִשְׁאַרָה בְּתִקְפָּה.

Since at the time of the exodus from Egypt, the children of Israel were immersed in impurity—as the Talmud relates that they served idols right alongside the Egyptians—they were unable to completely and immediately transform themselves internally and depart from the impure way of life and thinking in which they were entrenched. Therefore, G-d gave them a powerful experience that revealed the faith in their souls, and in one moment, He brought them out of Egypt. This revelation of divinity did not change their thoughts and character traits, but rather neutralized them with an excess of spiritual good, which affected at least their actions. This is the first type of service we mentioned earlier - nullification and dedication, which is symbolized by the matzah.

After The Counting of The Omer, The Jews Were Improved Spiritually

Source 8 Likkutei Sichot vol. 22 pg. 35

Student's
pg. 8

However, Shavuot comes after the process of the Counting of the Omer, during which we refine the seven traits of the Animal Soul; at that point, chametz is no longer a contradiction to serving G-d. To the contrary, we then reach a state where the chametz can be (and therefore must be) utilized in our performance of Torah and Mitzvos. Therefore, on Shavuot we are specifically commanded to bake chametz.

לְעֻמַּת זֹאת בְּשָׁבוּעוֹת, לְאַחֵר כָּל
הָעֲבוֹדָה הָרוֹחֲנִית שֶׁל סְפִירַת
הָעֹמֶר, שָׁבָה מְבָרָרִים אֶת כָּל
שְׁבַע הַמִּדּוֹת שֶׁל הִנָּפֵשׁ הַבְּהֵמִית
לְכָל פְּרֻטָּיָה, אִזְּ הָחֵמֵץ אֵינוֹ סוֹתֵר
לְעֲבוֹדַת ה', אֲלָא לְהַפֵּךְ: נִמְצָאִים
אִזְּ בְּמִצְבֵּ, שְׁבִאֲמִצְעוֹת הָחֵמֵץ
עֲצֻמוֹ אֶפְשָׁר, וְלִכְנוּ צָרִיךְ, לְקַיֵּם
אֶת הַתּוֹרָה וְאֶת הַמִּצְוֹת... וְלִכְנוּ
בְּשָׁבוּעוֹת צָרִיךְ לִהְיוֹת דּוֹקָא "חֵמֵץ
תֹּאפִינָה".

>> The Rebbe

After The Counting of The Omer, Chametz Can Be a Mitzvah

Student's
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Therefore, on Passover, when the People of Israel left Egypt, chametz was prohibited. They had simplistic faith — they were humble and faithful, but they were internally empty, and therefore, their intellect (their chametz) was not yet in a desirable state.

Only on Shavuot, after the proper completion of the Counting of The Omer and refinement of the inner character traits, is the intellect made holy, and then chametz can be made into a mitzvah.

ולכן, בחג הפסח - מיד בצאת בני ישראל ממצרים - היה חמץ אסור, כיון שאז האירה בהם האמונה בבחינת קטנות, דהיינו שהיה בהם אמונה וביטול בלבד, אבל בפנימיות עדיין לא היה בהם כלום, ולכן הטעם ודעת (שהוא ענין החמץ) שלהם - עדיין לא היה כדבעי;

ורק בחג השבועות, לאחר שלימות העבודה דספירת העומר בבירור המדות בפנימיות, כך, שגם ענין הטעם ודעת נעשו קדושה - אזי אפשר לעשות גם מהחמץ ענין של מצוה.

Story

In 1985, there was a bitter dispute regarding the ownership of the Chabad library of the Previous Rebbe. One of his heirs claimed that the library was private property of the Previous Rebbe and his family, and should therefore be divided among all the heirs, including himself. On the other hand, Chabad argued that the library was not private property, but rather belonged to the movement and the community of Chassidim, and therefore should remain in the movement's possession.

This issue was argued in court, and after a long legal battle, the courts ruled in two separate judgments that the library belonged to the movement, and therefore should remain in its possession.

During one of the earlier meetings that the Rebbe held with Chabad's attorneys, he instructed them to buttress their argument with a letter from the previous Rebbe, in which he declared that the books were the public property of the movement. The Rebbe said that this was the main argument that would tip the scales in their favor.

At the end of the meeting, the Rebbe said that he did not want the attorneys to act on this line of reasoning only because he said so, but rather because they truly believed

in it. The Rebbe did not want the attorneys to act out of blind obedience, but to bring all their experience, insights, and skills to the table. This would only happen if they were convinced and believed in the Rebbe's argument, and then they could advance it with their expertise and experience in court.

The same applies in serving G-d. He does not want us to perform mitzvot merely out of obligation or duty. He desires that we be convinced in our hearts and minds of the importance and correctness of Torah and mitzvot, for only then can we serve Him with all our strengths.

C. A Personal Journey

>> The Rebbe

Leaving Egypt Every Day

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In our day, we do not physically offer the sacrifice of the two loaves, but it is still relevant to our soul's spiritual journey during those three periods. Our sages said, "In every generation, a person must view himself as if he left Egypt today." We must always strive to escape the constraints of our body and animal soul, leaving Egypt in a spiritual sense.

והנה, בזמן הזה אין הקרבת שתי הלחם בגשמיות, אבל ישנו ענין זה בעבודה הרוחנית בנפש האדם, בשלושה זמנים הנזכרים לעיל: אמרו חכמינו ז"ל³ "בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא (היום)⁴ ממצרים", והיינו שתמיד צריך להיות ענין היציאה ממצרים הגוף ונפש הבהמית, שהוא ענין יציאת מצרים ברוחניות.

The journey out of Egypt is also our personal journey. Chassidut explains that the word "Mitzrayim" is from the root "meitzar" which means a boundary or a narrow limit. Every person has their own "Mitzrayim," limitations that restrict and hinder them from being who they truly are. These "Meitzarim" include habits, patterns of thought, desires, environment, and so on. All of these constrict and limit an individual, even attempting to divert them to a different path. They do not allow one's real, inner, G-dly self to express itself fully.

A person is obligated to "leave Egypt" - to release himself from his own limitations and constraints. To become who they truly should be - a good person, who wishes to do good for those around them, and fulfill the Torah and its mitzvot. A person must free their soul from its chains, and enable it to find its true expression through sincere prayer, fulfilling mitzvot, doing good for others with warmth, etc.

The Basis of Divine Service: Simple Acceptance

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We do so in the following order: At the outset (corresponding to the actual exodus from Egypt on Passover) chametz

והסדר בזה - שבהתחלת העבודה (בדוגמת הענין דיציאת מצרים בחג הפסח) חמץ הוא אסור, דהיינו שאין

(3) פסחים קטז, ב (במשנה).
(4) תניא רפמ"ז.

should not be consumed, meaning, we should not scrutinize everything from an intellectual viewpoint. Our personal perspective might be skewed. Instead, focus on humility and accepting the yoke of G-d. That is something that transcends intellect.

לחשוב כלל על הטעם ודעת שלו, איך ענין פלוני נראה בעיניו על פי שכל כו', שהרי שכלו עדיין אינו כדבעי, ולכן עליו להיות בתנועת ביטול וקבלת עול שלמעלה מטעם ודעת.

The basis of divine service is acceptance of divine authority. That is to say, a person cannot expect to first understand the reasons for the mitzvot and wait for inspiration and excitement. One can only focus on the action itself, doing it just because G-d commanded it.

An analogy would be a person who goes to a doctor complaining of a specific malady, and the doctor prescribes a specific medication. Would the patient say to the doctor, "Explain to me what the pill is made out of and exactly how and why it works, and only then will I take the pill"? Obviously, this is not the right way! The patient does not have the required knowledge and time to understand all the nuances and complexities of the treatment. He must take the pill in obedience to the doctor, and in the future, he can go learn medicine and understand why and how the pill helps.

It is the same with serving G-d. When a person is just starting on their path, they cannot expect to first understand the why, and have a feeling of love for G-d, and only then fulfill the mitzvot and learn the Torah. They are not there yet. The first step is to accept the authority and obligation of the Torah, and to do what is necessary just because G-d commanded it.

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[This idea is applicable not only at the outset of our general journey to Judaism, but in every situation that can be considered a "beginning." For, our sages said, "In every generation" — meaning, in every situation — "a person must view himself as if he left Egypt today." Therefore, this approach applies to every situation: focus less on your own perspective; as we said earlier, even righteous people need to strive to escape their limitations].

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[וענין זה אינו רק בהתחלת העבודה ממש, אלא בכל מצב ישנו ענין שהוא בדוגמת התחלת העבודה, שהרי "בכל דור ודור (דהיינו בכל מעמד ומצב) חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא היום ממצרים". ולכן, בכל מצב ישנה תנועה זו - שלא להתחשב בעצמו ובשכלו, וכנזכר לעיל⁵ שגם בעבודת הצדיקים צריך להיות העבודה דתשובה ויציאה ממציותו].

The concept that one needs to start with “kabbalat ol” and only later on reach a deeper understanding that penetrates the heart and mind, doesn’t only apply in the general spiritual journey of life, but also to every time we rise to a higher level, or embark on a new journey to discover something deeper. The beginning of that personal journey needs to be with “kabbalat ol,” and only then can we ascend further.

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However, once you leave your Egypt – your constraints and limitations – chametz is no longer prohibited, even if you cannot fully transform it to holiness. At that point, it is time to focus on your internal character and intellect – your personal chametz – and align it with your spiritual journey.

אמנם, לאחר שכבר יצא מ"מצרים" (מהמצרים והגבלות שלו) - הרי אף שגם אז אינו יכול עדיין לעשות מהחמץ מצוה חיובית (היינו, קדושה ממש), מכל מקום, אין זה כבר דבר האסור, אלא דבר הרשות - דהיינו שעליו להתחיל לחשוב על פנימיותו ועל מציאותו שלו (שהוא ענין החמץ שבו), שיהיו באופן המתאים לקדושה.

The Completion of Divine Service: Intellectual and Emotional Connection

The final goal is when you reach a state in which you can (and therefore must) bring your chametz, your intellect, to become a part of your spiritual journey and a vessel for G-dliness, transforming it entirely.

ועד שבגמר ותכלית העבודה - אפשר (ובמילא - חייבים) לעשות מהחמץ (טעם ודעת) ענין של קדושה ממש, כלי לאלקות, על ידי בירור פנימי, שהוא תכלית שלימות העבודה.

After a person gets accustomed to the idea of “kabbalat ol” in his daily life, only then can he also start mixing in enthusiasm in his service, based on his nature and character. And not only is he able to do so, but he is also obligated to do so, because work that is done solely with kabbalat ol, without any emotional expressions or elevated experiences, is not enough, and does not penetrate every aspect of a person’s existence.

*

This logical progression is a major condition for healthy and balanced living. At the beginning of one’s spiritual efforts, at the beginning of the journey out of Egypt, it is forbidden to eat chametz – one must not wait for understanding and feeling, the basis is accepting G-d’s authority. Only later in

one's spiritual journey is he commanded to eat chametz, meaning to ensure that his understanding and character understand and adapt to G-d's will.

Serving G-d with nullification and subservience is the type of work required during Passover – at the beginning of the journey of the people of Israel. Therefore, they ate matzah, which symbolizes nullification. But the Jew cannot be satisfied with that. They must continue the work of Counting the Omer – to work on themselves and refine their character traits. Thus, they progress to the holiday of Shavuot, where the type of service required of them is intellectual understanding and emotional feeling. And then, the commandment is to bring a new offering – the “chametz” of the individuality and essence of the human soul.

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This is the advantage of Chabad Chasidic Philosophy: Instead of making do with external inspiration, it gives the individual his own path to G-d, making his mind and heart a receptacle for G-dliness.

והרי זוהי מעלת תורת חסידות חב"ד
- שאין מסתפקים בהענין ד"צדיק
באמונתו יחיה", אלא השכל עצמו
נעשה כלי לאלקות.

This brief sentence references a clash of ideas between the Chassidic discipline of Chabad, and other Chassidic disciplines. Let's read a little more on that, with the following excerpt of a different talk of The Rebbe.

Source 9 Torat Menachem vol 24, pg. 269, 19 Kislev 5719

Student's
pg. 12

It is known that the students of the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch forged various distinct paths, which were generally split into two categories:

The philosophy of the Chassidic communities of Poland – [The verse states:] “A righteous person lives by his faith,” which can be interpreted to read “gives life by his faith.” This means that the study of the esoteric parts of Torah was performed by the righteous spiritual leader, and “by his faith”—meaning through trusting in and following him—his followers were enlivened, and all they needed to do was the practical aspect [of divine service].

ידוע שאצל תלמידי הבעל
שם טוב והרב המגיד היו כמה
שיטות, ונחלקו בכללות לשני
סוגים:

(א) השיטה של חסידות פולין
- ש"צדיק באמונתו יחיה", אל
תקרי יחיה אלא יחיה, הינו,
שהעסק והלמוד בפנימיות
התורה נעשה על-ידי צדיק
הדור, ועל-ידי ההתקשרות
אליו באמונת צדיקים,
"באמונתו", מחיה הצדיק את
המקשרים אליו, ופותר אותם,
ואצלם צריכים להיות רק

The study and understanding of their rebbe was enough for them.

The philosophy of Chabad Chassidism, which rejects the previous approach and instead requires everyone to themselves study the esoteric meaning behind Judaism. This is a foundational principle [of Chabad thought].

הַעֲנִינִים הַקְּשׁוּרִים עִם הַמַּעֲשֶׂה
שֶׁבִּדְבָר, וְהִינוּ, שֶׁתְּלִמּוּדוֹ שֶׁל
הַצַּדִּיק מְבִיא אֶת הַמַּעֲשֶׂה גַם
אֶצְלָם.

(ב) שִׁיטַת חֲסִידוֹת חַב"ד - שֶׁלֹא
קִבְּלָה סֵדֶר הַנ"ל, כִּי אִם, שֶׁכָּל
אֶחָד צָרִיךְ לַעֲסֹק בְּעֶצְמוֹ בְּלִמּוּד
פְּנִימִיּוֹת הַתּוֹרָה, וְקִבְּעָה זֹאת
בְּתוֹר עֲנִין עֲקָרִי.

What the Rebbe is saying is that it is not enough for a person's personal service to mostly consist of his practical actions being correct and holy, while he relies on his spiritual leaders to study and understand, as well as to bless him or reprimand him when his spiritual state is lacking. Rather, each individual must use his specific gifts to work on his own spiritual refinement and understanding of the divine.

משיחת שבת פרשת קדושים, מברכים החודש אייר, ה'תשי"ד
בלתי מוגה.
תורת מנחם חלק י"א עמוד 249 והלאה