

Preparing for Impact

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Eating *matzah* is a fundamental experience, a moment of instruction for the body and its needs. The *matzah* teaches the body to strive toward holiness. It is like a seed, generating bodily yearning for holiness, faith, clarity, humility, purpose, control, experience, life, love, joy and union. The *matzah* reaches deeper than any class, any word, any conversation or intellectual realization could possibly reach. It is a seed of heaven, of enlightenment, planted where it needs to be planted - at the very heart of the place where resistance to these ideals happens: in the body, in the kishkes.

This is one of the key moments of the year - like blowing the shofar or Kol Nidrei. And it requires preparation. This washing, then, is how we orient ourselves toward this crucial moment where body meets soul. And it carries the key to one side of a crucial balance: on one hand, we are meant to eat *matzah* out of hunger. We are supposed to be literally hungry when we eat it. But on the other hand, we do not want this eating to be overly physical - and this is why we wash. Hungry, in the most literal sense, but not overly physical.

The washing is meant to help us feel this hunger - a perfectly normal, human, healthy, holy feeling - without letting it cause us to forget the ultimate purpose or distract us from Hashem. Our hunger is meant to guide us toward the experience of eating *matzah*, but it should not determine the nature of the experience. The eating itself—all eating, according to Rebbe Nachman—is a moment of deep and honest encounter with the Divine: we need, Hashem provides. Hunger lets us know it is time to have that encounter again.