

# Explaining Korech

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**In keeping with the custom instituted by Hillel, the great Talmudic sage, a sandwich of matzah and maror is eaten. Break off two pieces of the bottom matzah, which together should be at least one ounce. Again, take at least one ounce of bitter herbs and dip them in the charoset. Place this between the two pieces of matzah and eat the sandwich while reclining.**

In the days of the second temple in Jerusalem, Rabbi Hillel was a great teacher who would discuss the Passover story until the dawn of the next day. Once he was asked to teach the whole Torah while standing on one foot. Hillel said: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. That is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary. Now go and study."

During Passover, Hillel would eat a sandwich of the lamb offering plus matzah and maror, in order to perform the Law: "With unleavened bread and bitter herbs shall they eat it." Since we no longer make sacrifices at the Temple, the tradition has changed to eating a Hillel sandwich of matzah, maror and charoset.

Rabbi Levi reminds us that while the men toiled at making bricks without straw, the women never lost hope. They brought food and water to the fields, and encouraged the men to have sex with them, so as to bring the next generation into the world. R. Levi suggests that the sweetness of charoset is about the Jewish women's way of relating to slavery and the slaves. True, the enslavement was bitter, both physically brutal and psychologically degrading, but the Jewish women didn't lose hope. They helped maintain the dignity of their husbands, and raised a new generation of Jewish children.

Rav Kook, the first chief rabbi of Israel, taught that the Hillel sandwich represents bringing together the symbolic messages of the matzah and the maror. The sages disputed the validity of such bundling together of mitzvahs, because they didn't want to make it seem like the mitzvot are a burden. But for Hillel, the bitterness of slavery embodied in the maror is combined with the freedom of matzah prepared as we left Egypt represents the "yoke of heaven," where one commits doggedly as a slave to the service of God and thus uncovers an even greater spiritual freedom.

For us, the contradiction of the slavery of maror and the freedom of matzah represents the transitional period we face after a revolution and before the establishment of socialism. We are weighed down by the consciousness of the oppressed hammered into us throughout our lives in capitalism, and we have to grapple with this just as we grapple with transforming a degenerate economic system into a prospering one. Just as the generation who left Egypt in the exodus could not go into the land of Israel, so too will the generation who carry out the revolution not be the ones to fully bring socialism into being. We will toil for its establishment with all our hearts and abilities, but we cannot undo the decades of internalized messages of unworthiness. It is for our children to bring us to our promised land, the spread of socialism around the world.