

## Matzah

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Source:



What is the reason we eat matzah? Because there was insufficient time for our ancestors' dough to become leavened as they left Egypt. As it says: "The dough, which they brought out of Egypt, they baked into unleavened bread, because they were driven out from Egypt and they were not able to delay, and they had not prepared any provisions." (Exodus 12:39)

But why is matzah so basic to the celebration of Passover? Why is Passover called *Chag HaMatzos*, "the Holiday of Matzos" by the Torah? Why is this simple food a foundation of Jewish experience and ideology? Why has matzah come to symbolize human freedom?

Matzah has many aspects. It is the "bread of affliction," poor man's bread, eaten by slaves. It is also the bread of liberation and freedom. Let's attempt to plumb its many meanings.

Passover enables us to undergo a personal exodus from Egypt by transcending our individual limits. Accordingly, HaShem gave us the mitzvah of eating matzah to help us internalize that experience. For our food is assimilated into our bodies, becoming part of our flesh and blood. Eating matzah thus converts the experience of self-transcendence into an integral part of our beings.

The Sages taught that the "puffed up" nature of chametz symbolizes the character trait of arrogance and conceit. The flat, unleavened matzah represents total humility. Humility is the beginning of liberation and the foundation of internal growth. Only a person who can acknowledge his shortcomings can free himself from his own limitations. When we eat matzah, we internalize the quality of humility. By not eating chametz, we rid ourselves of arrogance and self-centeredness.