

WHY MATZAH TASTES GOOD EVEN THOUGH IT TASTES BAD

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IN ONLY A FEW WEEKS, PASSOVER WILL BE HERE. WE WILL REVIEW THE STORY OF HOW MOSES LED OUR FATHERS OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT WHERE THEY WERE SLAVES, AND, ONCE AGAIN, WE WILL GET TOGETHER AT A SEDER WHERE WE WILL EAT SUCH THINGS AS MATZAH. NOW I HAVE SELDOM MET A JEW WHO DIDN'T LIKE TO EAT MATZAH WHICH, IT STRIKES ME, IS A VERY STRANGE THING. IT IS SOMEWHAT STRANGE BECAUSE, YOU SEE, MATZAH DOESN'T REALLY TASTE VERY GOOD. I DECIDED TO MAKE AN INVESTIGATION OF THIS UNUSUAL FACT, SO I MET WITH SEVERAL DOZEN YOUNG PEOPLE, AND I ASKED THEM ALL THE SAME QUESTIONS. I ASKED THEM, "DO YOU LIKE MATZAH, AND WHY OR WHY NOT?". I THOUGHT YOU WOULD LIKE TO HEAR SOME OF THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS.

ONE YOUNG MAN, NAMED JERRY, WHO WAS SIX YEARS OLD, SAID, "IT ISN'T THAT I LIKE MATEZAH SO MUCH, BUT I LIKE EATING IT AT A SEDER PARTY WITH A LOT OF OTHER PEOPLE". FOR JERRY, EATING MATZAH MEANT DOING THINGS TOGETHER WITH A GREAT MANY OTHER PEOPLE. IN THIS SENSE, MATZAH IS AN ANSWER TO LONELINESS. AS LITTLE JERRY SPOKE TO ME, I WAS REMINDED HOW IMPORTANT IT IS FOR PEOPLE TO DO THINGS TOGETHER. I THOUGHT OF HOW SOME TEEN-AGERS WILL DO ALMOST ANYTHING JUST TO BE ACCEPTED BY THE GANG. A YOUNG LADY BY THE NAME OF SHARON, WHO WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD, SAID, "IT ISN'T THE MATZAH ITSELF THAT'S SO GOOD, IT'S THE THINGS THAT YOU DO WITH MATZAH, LIKE SPREADING BUTTER ON IT, OR EATING JELLY WITH IT, OR FRYING IT, OR EATING BITTER HERBS WITH IT, OR PUTTING IT IN CHICKEN SOUP". IN MY INVESTIGATION, I GAVE A PIECE OF MATZAH TO A THREE YEAR OLD BOY WHO RAN HIS FINGERS ALONG THE RAISED PART AND SAID, " I LIKE THE HILLS ON IT". FRANKLY, I HAD NEVER THOUGHT OF THE RAISED COLUMNS ON MATZAH AS HILLS, BUT THE WORD "HILL" MADE ME THINK OF THE MOUNTAIN THAT MOSES CLIMBED AFTER HE LEFT EGYPT, THE MOUNTAIN ON WHICH HE RECEIVED THE TEN COMMANDMENTS. I ALSO SUDDENLY REALIZED THAT NO OTHER COOKIE THAT I KNEW ABOUT HAD THOSE RIDGES OR HILLS ON IT. THIS SORT OF MADE MATZAH VERY SPECIAL IN DESIGN.

A THIRTEEN YEAR OLD GIRL NAMED MIRIAM SAID, "MATZAH IS REALLY RATHER DRY AND NOT VERY SWEET, BUT I LIKE TO EAT IT BECAUSE I THINK OF OUR ANCESTORS WHO HAD NO BREAD TO EAT, AND I GET SAD. I DON'T KNOW WHY, " MIRIAM SAID, " BUT GETTING SAD MAKES ME FEEL HAPPY". PERHAPS MIRIAM MEANT TO SAY THAT EATING MATZAH MAKES HER VERY THANKFUL FOR ALL THE GOOD THINGS SHE HAS TODAY THAT OUR FATHERS IN EGYPT, WHO WERE VERY POOR, DID NOT HAVE. OUR FATHERS, THOSE WHO LIVED BEFORE MOSES, HAD TO WORK SEVEN DAYS A WEEK FROM SUNRISE TO SUNSET. THEY NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO PLAY OR TO HAVE FUN. "EATING MATZAH", MIRIAM SAID, "CAN MAKE YOU FEEL LUCKY"

A NINETEEN YEAR OLD COLLEGE BOY, WITH A LONG BEARD, TOLD ME, "MATZAH IS THE SYMBOL OF AN OPPRESSED AND SUFFERING PEOPLE. IT SHOULD MAKE US THINK OF ALL THE PEOPLE TODAY WHO ARE POOR AND WHO DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT. "MATZAH", HE SAID, "SHOULD INSPIRE US TO GO OUT AND HELP THE POOR PEOPLE OF TODAY". AS THE COLLEGE BOY SAID THIS, I THOUGHT OF THE SENTENCE IN THE HAGGADAH, THE STORY-BOOK OF PASSOVER, THAT DESCRIBES MATZAH IN THIS WAY, "HAH LACHMAH ANYAH, THIS IS THE BREAD OF AFFLICTION". THE NARRATIVE CONTINUES, "LET ALL WHO ARE HUNGRY COME AND EAT". THIS YOUNG MAN FROM COLLEGE HAD A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF THE MEANING OF MATZAH.

IN RESPONSE TO OUR QUESTIONS, AN EIGHTEEN YEAR OLD COLLEGE GIRL SAID, "I LIKE MATZAH BECAUSE IT DOESN'T HAVE AS MANY CALORIES AS BREAD. I THINK WE EAT TOO MUCH TODAY," SHE SAID, " TOO MANY RICH THINGS ARE NOT GOOD FOR THE BODY OR FOR THE SOUL". WHEN THIS BRIGHT YOUNG LADY HAD FINISHED SPEAKING, I THOUGHT TO MYSELF, "EATING MATZAH IS LIKE GOING ON A SPIRITUAL DIET. IT MAKES YOU THINK OF THE LEAN THINGS IN LIFE, THE BASIC THINGS". AS I THOUGHT THIS, I REALIZED THAT PERHAPS MY REASON FOR LIKING MATZAH WASN'T THE BEST. I LIKE TO EAT MY MATZAH WITH HOT TEA. I DIP THE MATZAH IN THE HOT TEA, AND THE MATZAH TASTES WARM AND SOFT. I FIND THIS TASTE SENSATION SOOTHING AND RESTFUL. "MAYBE", I THOUGHT TO MYSELF, "WHEN YOU'RE EATING MATZAH YOU SHOULDN'T FEEL SO SATISFIED AND PLEASANT". I ASSURE YOU, HOWEVER, THAT I STILL INTEND TO DIP MY MATZAH IN HOT TEA.

NOT THE LEAST INTERESTING OF THE ANSWERS I RECEIVED TO MY QUESTIONS ABOUT MATZAH WERE GIVEN BY A GROUP OF TWO YEAR OLDS. ONE OF THEM SAID, "I LIKE DA CRUMBS WOT IT MAKES WHEN YOU BITE IT. I LIKE TO EAT DA CRUMBS". ANOTHER TWO YEAR OLD SAID, "I LIKE DA NOISE WOT IT MAKES WHEN YOU BITE IT. I LIKE TO HEAR IT". WITH ALL OF THESE VARIETY OF ANSWERS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE VARYING IN AGE FROM PRE-NURSERY SCHOOL CHILDREN TO COLLEGE STUDENTS, I DECIDED THAT MATZAH WAS, INDEED, A MOST AMAZING SYMBOL, PROVIDING AN UNUSUAL AMOUNT OF FOOD-FOR-THOUGHT AS WELL AS FOOD FOR THE BODY. I KNOW ONE THING FOR CERTAIN, I SHALL NEVER AGAIN EAT MATZAH MYSELF WITHOUT SEEING, HEARING, AND TASTING THINGS THAT I HAD NEVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE. YOU MIGHT TRY YOUR OWN MATZAH INVESTIGATION. IT'S FASCINATING.