

Passover - Meaning Of The Matzah

BY DR. SHMUEL HIMELSTEIN

There is a story told about the cultural conflict of the last century - when the Haskalah ('Enlightenment') movement clashed with traditional Judaism. It seems that two free-thinkers came to the local rabbi with a 'confession.' "Rabbi," they began, "we have sinned by eating pork." "Why my children? What drove you to this?" said the rabbi. "Well, you see, it's like this. We were absolutely ravenous." "Well then, why didn't you go over to some Jew and ask him for some Kosher food?" "Well, rabbi, we tried to, but every single Jew we asked refused to give us anything to eat, so we were forced to go to Ivan's inn and eat there." "What? Is it possible that in our town Jews were so heartless that they refused to feed you when you were ravenous?" "Rabbi, that's the absolute truth. You see, it was on Yom Kippur..."

A freethinker who visited Israel on Passover might be faced with the same problem. Try as he might, he wouldn't find a Jewish store or bakery willing to sell him bread, cake or any other leavened product. In fact this is the time of year that all bakeries take their annual vacation. Cookies and crackers suddenly disappear off the supermarket shelves, or else are covered by long rolls of paper. In fact 80% of all Israelis do not eat bread during Passover. Only the most desperate souls, who cannot forego their 'daily bread,' venture into the Arab areas, where there is still bread to be found.

Chassidism gives a beautiful interpretation of the removal of all leaven during Passover. If we look at bread and Matzah, they are basically identical as far as ingredients are concerned. There is only one major difference - bread has been allowed to ferment and rise before being baked, while Matzah is baked before it has any chance to be fermented. Chassidism thus sees bread as being the symbol of

pride and haughtiness - of being 'puffed up', while Matzah is the symbol of humility. By removing even the tiniest crumb of bread before the holiday, the Jew is symbolically also removing all the signs of haughtiness from himself.

Of course when bread is removed, Matzah replaced it, but the choices of Matzah available are remarkable. In addition to the normal machine - made Matzah, to which most of us are accustomed, there is hand - made Matzah produced in little bakeries, each group or Chassidic sect having its own bakery. Then again, there is the special Shmurah Matzah, in which the wheat had been guarded at every single stage, to be sure that it has not come into contact with water (ordinary Matzah is only 'guarded' from the time it is kneaded). This too comes in two varieties - hand and machine - made.

Finally, to top them all off, we have the most difficult Matzah of all to produce -- the so - called Matzat Mitzvah, which is Matzah baked on the day before the Seder, or just a few short hours before the Seder begins. There are, of course, very limited quantities of this available, because of the short time span in which it can be baked. (Incidentally, because of the seven hour difference between Israel and the U.S., there is Matzat Mitzvah which is baked on the day before Passover in Israel, flown to the United States, taken off by waiting cars, and distributed before the Seder in New York.)

While Matzah is eaten during the entire seven days of the festival, there are those poor souls who can hardly wait to savor the taste of bread. The Arab bakers, knowing

this, prepare for the end of the festival by baking large quantities of Pitta bread. Thus, throughout Israel, little signs are put up by the rabbinate informing Jews as to the earliest opportunity that one may buy bread after the festival.

Pesach is the festival of freedom, and what better place is there to celebrate it than in the land where Jews are truly free -- free in the physical and spiritual sense. Leshanah Haba'ah Biyerushalayim - may next year indeed be the year in which many more of our brothers will celebrate the festival in Jerusalem.

N.Y. PUBLIC SCHOOLS MARK JEWISH HERITAGE WEEK

NEW YORK (WUP) -- April 21 - 29, 1980 has been designated as the fourth annual Jewish Heritage Week in the local public school system.

Sponsored by the Jewish Community Relations Council of N.Y. and the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York in cooperation with the N. Y. C. Board of Education, Jewish Heritage Week is intended to further the goals of our multi - cultural and multi - lingual society.

State Attorney Robert Abrams, chairman of the Jewish Heritage Week Advisory Council since its inception, announced this week that students plan to explore the diverse components which constitute the New York Jewish Community, including the multiplicity of traditions and mores brought to this city by Jews from their native homelands. Stress will be placed on historical experiences common to their ethnic groups in order to provide a unique opportunity for all students to gain greater understanding of each other's heritage and culture.

The JCRC announced that the week of April 21 was selected for this year's celebration because of the important events occurring at this time -- Passover April 1 - 8; Holocaust Remembrance Day, April 13; Israel's Independence Day, April 21, and Solidarity Sunday for Soviet Jewry, April 27.

ISRAELITE ADS PAY



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Passover Greetings



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TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY
from



John C. Mowbray
Supreme Court Justice

A Happy Passover



SAM AND ANNE PINK

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TO OUR FRIENDS IN THE
JEWISH COMMUNITY
MEL & JUDY GOLDEN

A Very Joyous Passover To All




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Passover Greetings
To The Jewish Community



MR. AND MRS. FORREST DUKE



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