



## Have Your Cake and Eat it Too: Matzah as a State of Mind

RRC President's Council Pesakh Teaching Call With  
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### Reference Texts

*Zohar* 2:183a-b

“Now we must look carefully. On Passover, Israel went out from the bread which is called leaven, as it is written, ‘You shall not see any leaven’ (Exodus 13:7) . . . What is the reason? On account of the honor of that bread which is called unleavened. Now that Israel merited the highest bread, it was not appropriate for the leaven to be wiped out and not seen at all. And why was this sacrifice from leaven? . . . For on that very day [Shavuot] the evil inclination was wiped out because the Torah, which is called freedom, was to be found.”

This may be compared to a king who had an only son who was sick. One day, the son desired to eat. They said to him: The king's son should eat this medicine, and until he eats it, no other food will be found in the house. So it was done. When he ate the medicine, he [the king] said to him: From now on you may eat whatever you desire, and it will not harm you. Similarly, when Israel left Egypt, they did not know the essence or secret of faith. The blessed Holy One said: Israel shall eat medicine, and until they eat the medicine, no other food shall be shown to them. When they ate the unleavened bread, which was medicine, in order to enter and to know the secret of faith, the Holy One said: From now on, leaven shall be shown to them, and they can eat it, for it cannot harm them. And all the more so on the day of Shavuot which is a complete medicine. Therefore, leaven is offered to be burnt upon the altar with two other loaves of bread that are brought as one. The leaven is burnt in flames upon the altar and it cannot rule over nor harm Israel. On account of this, the holy ones of Israel cleave to the blessed Holy One on this very day with the remedy of the Torah. And if Israel had not been properly protected, the two sides of the bread would never have rightly ascended. )

### **Zohar 2:182a**

It is written, “You shall make for yourself no molten gods” (Exodus 34:17), and the next verse states, “You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread.” What has one to do with the other? They have explained it in this way: One who eats leaven on Passover is like an idol worshiper. Come and see: When the Israelites departed from Egypt, they departed from their domain, from the other domain, the domain called leaven, evil bread. That is why idolatry is given the same name. This, too, is the mystery of the evil inclination, foreign worship, which is also called leaven. This is the evil inclination, for such is the evil inclination in man. It is like leaven in the dough. It enters a person’s belly little by little, and then grows until it permeates the whole body. And this is idolatry. That is why it is written, “There shall be no strange god in you” (Ps. 81:10)--‘no strange god’ indeed.

**Joseph of Hamadan, *Book of the Reasons for the Commandments*** (pp. 221-23)

. . . *Matzah* is the side of purity and leaven symbolizes the camps of Samael and the evil inclination. The *matzah* symbolizes the camp of Michael, the High Priest of the heavens, and it annuls the evil inclination, because the latter is not of its type. Also, in order to subdue the evil inclination at the beginning of the year in the face of the good inclination; and to accustom [oneself] to the camps of Michael, the High Priest; and to distance oneself from the camps of Samael, the Lord, may He be blessed, forbade us to eat leavened bread on Passover . . . . [He forbade leavened bread] since leavened bread is symbolic of the evil inclination. As an egg’s volume of leaven slowly transforms the dough, so did the Evil Inclination, bit by bit, draw Adam and Eve according to his own will, causing them to err . . . In order to weaken his strength and to alleviate his burdensome yoke from us, our Creator, the Lord, may He be blessed, commanded us to eat *matzah* on Passover eve, at the beginning of the year in order to recognize and know and to destroy the evil inclination, to hate evil and choose the good. This is another reason according to the simple meaning. . . . According to the way of the kabbalah, . . . since that night is protected from agents of destruction, [we eat the *matzah*] in order to uproot the agents of destruction and the evil inclination from the world, and in order to inculcate the good inclination in the body. The *matzah* symbolizes the *Shekhinah* so that the blessed Holy One will cause His *Shekhinah* to dwell there . . .