PESAH, why do we eat Matsa?

We explained yesterday that one of the three positive Biblical Mitsvot of Pesah is to eat Matsa. Now, why do we eat Matsa? There are at least two reasons. One, is explicitly mentioned in the Tora and the second, less known, is mentioned at the very beginning of the Hagada. Let us begin from the second reason.

For many, many years when we were slaves in Egypt, every single day we ate Matsa. We ate Matsa for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Matsa was the food conceived by the cruel Egyptians as the ideal meal for the Jewish slaves. First, because the Matsa lasted longer than regular bread in the slave's stomach. And mainly because Matsa was cheaper than any other food. All you need to make Matsa is flour and water. Matsa was cost-effective also because of its time-factor. To make regular bread you need to let the dough rest for approximately 15-20 minutes and only then you would place the spongy-dough into the oven. In the Egyptian captivity the raising of the dough was skipped. Instead, the Jewish slaves had to put the dough into the oven *flat* because they had to work for the Egyptians without a pause. The Egyptians were not willing to waste 15 extra minutes of Jewish work to allow the dough to raise and made it into regular bread.

Thus, we declare at the very beginning of the Hagada pointing at the Matsa: *ha lahma 'aniya…* This is "the bread of poverty that our ancestors ate in Egypt"

The Biblical text emphasizes a different reason for eating Matsa. Upon our departure from Egypt we also ate Matsa. Why? Because we did not leave Egypt progressively, during the course of a few weeks or even days. We were rescued by HaShem in a speedy operation (*behipazon*) which lasted just one night. (Try to visualize the mobilization of 3 million people leaving in one night!). And as much as we were eager to have our first normal meal with bread, ironically, there was no time to waste in preparing bread for the journey. We did not have even 15 extra minutes to wait for the dough to rise. We had to leave swiftly.

Ever since, Matsa *also* has the taste of freedom. In our memories, Matsa reminds us of the food we take with us when we went out of Egypt.

Matsa represents both, the sweet flavor of freedom and the bitterness of slavery. With the Matsa, particularly during the Seder when eating Matsa is mandatory, we celebrate our freedom without forgetting our suffering.