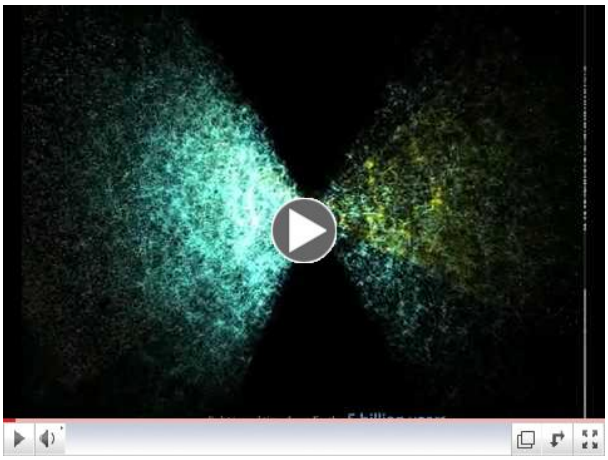
Psychological Hamets

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In addition to the Mitsva of eating Matsa during Pesah, it is strictly forbidden to eat or possessing any food that is or contains Hamets. Why? Beyond the well-known historical reasons, our redemption was so hasty that there was no time to loss, our Rabbis saw in Hamets, the fermentation process that raises the dough, a very meaningful representation. Our rabbis compared Hamets with arrogance and vanity: the dough that raises by itself, with the individual who allows his ego to grow and expand. Arrogance, like Hamets, is simply air, an illusory inflation of the ego.
But why should we think about arrogance vs. humility specifically during Pesah? Because not everyone is at risk of becoming an arrogant individual … A Jewish slave in Egypt, for example, could not afford to be full of himself. The risk of excessive pride is only relevant for a free man. And on Pesah, when we celebrate our freedom from physical slavery, we should have in mind that as free individuals, we could easily fall into a different kind of a mental self-slavery: an addiction to the inflatable aspects of our ego, the "psychological Hamets".
Modern society, in its tireless efforts to transform us into loyal consumers, contributes greatly to the growing of our ego. By teaching you, very often to be more narcissistic, more self-centered and more hedonistic. It persuades you that you deserve to have not only everything you need, but also everything you want and everything you wish. And if you are wealthy enough to afford it, you can easily become haughty. Feeling that you ARE more than others, because you HAVE more than others.
The Matsa, a flat and unpretentious bread, represents humility. Humility does not mean humiliating myself. Being humble means understanding the true dimension of human life, becoming aware of our inescapable mortality, and recognizing that we are totally God-dependent. Humility is also the essence of self-esteem. Loving yourself, and accepting yourself, is a prerequisite to be at peace with yourself. The arrogant lacks this inner peace. He is insecure. He needs a permanent public praise and applause. He seeks approval,

sometimes desperately, in order to compensate for his incapacity to accept his own failures and mistakes.
Only the humble man or woman, the person who does not need seeking the applause of those around him to feel better, is truly free, independent. The humble man is able to admit his mistakes without risking the collapse of his ego. Thus, the humble person is capable of changing and constantly improving. The arrogant person, on the other hand, is psychologically incapable of admitting mistakes, and therefore lacking the ability of change. And since he is not able to correct himself, he ends up adapting (= enslaving) himself to his shortcomings. Arrogance is a tyrant Pharaoh, who condemns our personality to stagnation.
Our Hakhamim explain that arrogance, this mental Hamets, is the main barrier between man and his neighbor. While the humble person knows that every human being deserves dignity and respect and has the right to be heard and understood, the arrogant individual becomes a servant of his own inflated reflection. Arrogance is an silver layer behind a glass, which only allows us see our own image.
Finally, and most importantly, arrogance is also the main barrier between man and God. The proud person cannot conceive "serving God", rather he expects to "use" God for his or her own benefit. Our Rabbis asserted that from the perspective of an arrogant man: "there is no place in this world for him and for God". What does this mean? If the reality of this existence is a circle, someone or Someone, must be in the center. In the center of the circle, there is no room for two. The arrogant person lives in the center of his illusory reality, and displaces God to the periphery of the circle. Can you worship God when YOU are in the center?
The most important goal in the life of a Jew is reaching this level of humility: recognizing that HaShem is in the center, and live his or her life accordingly. This is a nothing short of an impossible mission for the haughty individual…
Pesah is an intensive lesson in humility. In the same way we eliminate every crumb of Hamets from our homes, we must erase all traces of vanity from our hearts.



Watch this when you forget how small we are…