Think As You Eat. Matzah is a mitzvas asei min hatorah. It shouldn’t be merely an external act, it should be accompanied by intelligence, by meditation. As you’re chewing the matzah, try to think of whatever you could apply to this symbol of matzos – that’s the way to eat matzah.

Remember the Exodus. Why are you eating matzah, why not bread? The answer is to remember yetzias Mitzrayim. That’s a mitzvah d’oraisa. Not only on Pesach, all year round as much as you can – kol yemei chayecha, kol hamarbeh harei zeh meshubach – the more you do, the more you’re getting reward for it. But on Pesach, we have a special time when we eat matzah, don’t waste the opportunity, when you eat matzah you have to think about yetzias Mitzrayim, that’s the way to eat matzah.

Bread of Affliction. Lechem oni, it’s the bread of affliction that our forefathers ate in Egypt. So we are commemorating the days when they lived under the oppression of the taskmasters and whatever they ate was lechem oni, the bread of affliction. We lived with utmost privation. We don’t know all the tzoros that took place in Egypt, you need volumes in order to relate it. And so the utmost privation was suffered by our people; Ha lachma anya di achalu avhasanu, not only when they were going out of Mitzrayim on that night, no, they ate all the time lachma anya, they ate matzah all the time. And therefore when we eat matzah it’s one of the intentions. We are reminded of the poverty that our forefathers suffered for a very long time.

Affliction Brings Salvation. The bread of affliction wasn’t for naught. It was due to the tzoros of Mitzrayim that our nation accepted the Torah. When they went out of mitzrayim and finally got rid of the whole thing, of Pharaoh and his whole regime, they were so happy that they accepted to become kohanim to Hashem. The lachma anya, the matzos that we ate in Mitzrayim, that caused us to have a wave of gratitude in our hearts that washed us up on the shores of Torah and avodas Hashem.

A Nation of Priests. Matzah you have to know, is also a sign of nobility. Matzos were what the kohanim ate in the korbonos. And so, the matzah is a form of kedusha. Up till now, nobody ever dared to partake of a korban, it was always olah, fully for Hashem. When Pesach came, it was the first korban that anybody ate, the Am Yisroel ate it; we became so holy that we were able to eat the korban. And matzos is the same idea, they were niskadesh, they became a mamleches kohanim, a goy kadosh, they could eat matzos. Matzos was a food of kehunah. A kohen is not a farmer, he didn’t have any land, a kohen does nothing except serve Hakadosh Baruch Hu and that’s what the ben Yisroel is supposed to be and we’re reminded of this when we eat matzah on Pesach.

Bread of Haste. Matzah is a symbol of haste. The dough didn’t have the opportunity to leaven. And the lesson is that there is a time when action must be taken. Our forefathers in Egypt were sinking into the grease of uncleanness. A Jew could be so long among the nations, that he sinks into the mire until chas v’shalom it’s too late and Hakadosh Baruch Hu has to take drastic and rapid action. That’s what matzah means. Matzah means before it’s too late, pull it out, it shouldn’t ferment. That’s a very important lesson. Hakadosh Boruch Hu watches over us and pulls us out in the nick of time.
7 Unleavened Bread. Do you know what leavening is? You take flour, mix it with water and let it stand. Why does it leaven? Bacteria causes it to ferment. It creates gases inside and because it’s exposed to the air, the action of the air helps facilitate fermentation. That’s the process of chumutz. “Lo ye’raeh – no chometz should be seen in your territory for the seven days of Pesach”. Chometz is a symbol of the Egyptian influence, the outside influence. It means, nothing Egyptian, nothing gentle. In all your boundaries no gentile influence. And that’s what the matzah has to tell us, nothing but flour and water, don’t let the bacteria come in. The outside world shouldn’t have any influence on us, that’s an idea of matzah.

8 Affliction Brings Greatness. Lechem oni, we translate in English – affliction, which means suffering. And of course it is connected to the word oni; a poor man. But fundamentally עני means to speak up and that’s why he is called an oni, because he cries out. The man who cries out is called an oni. In Mitzrayim it was a kind of bread that caused the eaters to cry out. It wasn’t leavened, because they were working and they didn’t have the chance to let their dough become leavened. They worked all the time and the Egyptians were not kindhearted. And so the Bnei Yisroel cried out, the affliction caused them to cry out. When a man is in trouble and he cries out to Hashem, little by little the awareness of Hakadosh Baruch Hu enters his mind and that’s the greatest achievement in life.

9 Hashem’s Timetable. The Torah gives a reason why you can’t eat chometz: because their dough didn’t get a chance to rise, “ki gorshu mimitzrayim”, because they were driven out of Mitzrayim. Pharaoh did it with a haste in the middle of the night, it’s a ness! Pharaoh didn’t have any patience to wait, it’s a tremendous thing that happened there. We waited 210 years and we were begging him. Nothing doing, nothing doing – Pharaoh wouldn’t listen. And when the time came; in the middle of the night he jumped out of bed and said “Get out of Mitzrayim!”, that’s a ness. Therefore it’s one of the reasons why we eat matzah. That’s plain, it’s in the chumash. Think about that ness. Hashem is the boss and when He presses the button, that’s the time to leave.

10 Affliction Brings Appreciation. Whenever a person is living now happily, he should look back on the times when he suffered. He shouldn’t forget that once he didn’t have all these things. And so it’s important as you are reclining at the seder to remember that there was a time when you were driven by the lashes of Pharaoh’s overseers to work heavy labor, never forget that. And so when you sit down at the seder, or even whenever you eat matzah during Pesach, you should remind yourself that this is the memorial of the great chessed, the kindness of Hashem that He delivered us from the house of bondage. It’s very important to keep that in mind.

11 Bread of Calling Out. Lechem oni – she’omin alav devaram harbeh, you have to talk about food. The first talking is, you have to pray for food, every day. When you say birkas hamazon, please Hashem, don’t make it necessary that they should bring food packages to my house. Therefore it’s in the chumash. Now while you’re at it there’s another purpose. You sit down to eat bread and it tastes good, it’s a pleasure to eat bread. So you say “Hakadosh Baruch Hu, I love You”. Say that! That’s the purpose of bread. The purpose of food is to bring you to ahavas Hashem. And therefore lechem she’omin alav devaram harbeh! Many words have to be said over the bread. That’s a function of food in order to bring to the very great achievement of thanking Hashem.

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