The Meaning of Matzah

Including profound explanations of the passages in the Haggadah in which it is mentioned

An adaptation of the discourse LeHavin Mah SheKasuv BaHaggadah, “Matzah Zu SheAnu Ochlim…” found in Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi’s Likkutei Torah

From a forthcoming volume in the Words of the Living G-d series published by Purity Press PurityPress@gmail.com

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A complete set of selected maamarim from Torah Or and Likkutei Torah has been substantially completed, Boruch Hashem. Most of these can be viewed, in draft form, at LikuteiTorah.com.

Words of the Living G-d, vol. 1, containing maamarim from Sefer Bereishis, was published several years ago by Purity Press. Vol. 3, on Sefer Vayikra, will be published b’ezras Hashem after Pesach. This requires substantial funds, and contributions are sought for this purpose.

To participate in, or inquire about, this monumental mitzvah opportunity, please email puritypress@gmail.com.

© 2002-2005 Dach Holdings, Ltd. Please note that the foregoing is an informal adaptation by a private person, and that, therefore, errors are possible. Please email puritypress@gmail.com with corrections or comments. Also, the Hebrew original contains much more than could possibly be presented here, and constitutes a much more direct transmission of the Alter Rebbe’s teachings. Furthermore, the adaptation may contain supplementary or explanatory material not in the original, and not marked as such in any way. Thus, for those with the ability to learn in the original, this adaptation should not be considered a substitute for the ma’amor. A Kasher and Joyous Pesach!
FOREWORD TO THE 2005 EDITION

With humility and gratitude to the Al-mighty, I am pleased to offer the public this English adaptation of the *ma’amar* (discourse in Chassidic philosophy), *L’havin Ma Shekasuv B’hagadah*, “Matzah Zo She’anu Ochlin…”, which appears in the original in *Likutei Torah*, Vayikra, beginning at p. 11b.

The present adaptation is one of a set of selected *ma’amrim* from *Torah Or* and *Likutei Torah* by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, of blessed memory (known as the *Alter Rebbe*), which Hashem has graciously enabled me to complete. These are now being readied for publication, with G-d’s help.

Chassidic tradition considers *Torah Or* and *Likutei Torah* the “Oral Torah” of Chassidus, for they expand and elaborate the principles of Jewish mysticism set forth by the *Alter Rebbe* in more concise form in his masterwork, *Tanya*—the “Written Torah” of Chassidus.

A unique and important—indeed, historic—aspect of these adaptations is that they are, in a very real sense, a “primary source”: explanation and background material is very liberally included within the text, to be sure, but the work remains, essentially, representative *ma’amrim* from *Torah Or* and *Likutei Torah* rendered into English for the first time anywhere.

This is therefore a work for the serious student—in the sense that any philosophical work is for “serious” readers—but it does not require any background at all in either Chassidic philosophy or even Jewish knowledge. I have attempted to convey the *Alter Rebbe’s* original teachings to even the utterly uninitiated, provided they 1) understand English and 2) are willing to think about what they are reading.

Needless to say, mistakes are inevitable in human undertaking, and I take full responsibility for any found within. I would very much appreciate if they would be brought to my attention at puritypress@gmail.com.

I dedicate this booklet to my wife Leah, to my parents, and to my children, and with prayerful best wishes on the occasion of the upcoming marriage, in a good and auspicious time, of my son Avremil to our future daughter-in-law Devorah Leah. Our sages teach that “our forefathers were redeemed [from the Egyptian bondage] in [the Hebrew month of] Nissan, and in Nissan we are destined to be redeemed [from this final exile by the Messiah]. In our days as well, the Lubavitcher Rebbe has prophesied the imminent arrival of the Messiah. May this come true immediately, and may we all celebrate together the upcoming holiday of Passover, the festival of our freedom, from within the context of the immediate redemption by Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

Yitzchok Dovid Wagshul
(Yitzchok Dovid ben R. Menachem Mendel)
Crown Heights, Brooklyn, NY
*Ta’anis B’chorim (mukdam)* 5765 / April 21, 2005
ADDITIONAL NOTE TO THE PRESENT EDITION

As many readers will know, since the last publication of this booklet two beautifully produced volumes of maamarim in this series have been published, and are available in stores worldwide. They are Beyond All Reason—containing the Purim maamar Chayav Inash Livsumei from Torah Or—and Words of the Living G-d, vol. 1—containing 12 maamarim from Torah Or on Sefer Bereishis. Now, b’ezras Hashem, another volume stands ready for press: the long-awaited Words of the Living G-d, vol. 3—containing 10 maamarim from Likkutei Torah on Sefer Vayikra.

One might wonder, since drafts of virtually all these maamarim have been posted on LikuteiTorah.com since 2002, why is it taking so long to publish them? The answer is simple: it costs money! But the solution is simple, too: it is you. Please do not think that someone else will donate, because experience has shown that (with notable exceptions, may Hashem bless them) they won’t. Therefore, I appeal to you: if you agree that it is worthwhile to publish Torah Or and Likkutei Torah adapted into English, please come forward and claim your share in this unique zechus by emailing puritypress@gmail.com, or by contacting me personally. You can still participate in the Vayikra volume. May the merit of the Alter Rebbe stand you and your family in good stead forever.

Best wishes for a kosher and joyous Pesach to all.

--Yitzchok Dovid Wagshul
Crown Heights, Brooklyn, NY
7 Nissan, 5771
FINALLY, IT should be noted that the lofty revelations we have been discussing are only available within this physical world, where it is possible to perform mitzvos. This, too, is alluded to by the Haggadah's wording. The full expression quoted earlier is “[the phrase] ‘for the sake of this’ [indicates] a time when matza and maror [are present].” Maror, bitter herbs, symbolize sincere repentance, in which the penitent feels bitter over his or her sins. One is not stuck in the low depths to which one’s transgressions have brought one; instead, one can rise to a higher level through t’shuva, repentance. This can only be accomplished in this world, but once one has entered the next world, the opportunity for repentance and spiritual change is over. Likewise, matza symbolizes, as we have said, protection from contamination by the forces of unholiness. In the next world, however, there will be no unholiness; alternatively, even what non-exclusively-holy things may exist will nevertheless be spiritually purified, so that, even if they are not positively holy, they will certainly not impede holiness anymore. Thus, we must take full advantage of the opportunity presented during this time “when matza and maror [are present].”
referred to as mochin d’abba, “the intellectual faculties [literally, the brains]” of abba”; it is, in fact, directed exclusively at the “sons” – the Jews.

…)

PASSAGE IN the Passover Haggadah (the text read at the Passover Seder, in which we recount the story of the Exodus from Egypt) explains the reason we eat Matzah as follows: “This matzah that we are eating is on account of what? On account of [the fact that] our forefathers’ dough did not have a chance to rise before ‘the King of the kings of kings’ [i.e.,] the Holy One, blessed is He, was revealed to them and redeemed them, as it is stated (Exodus 12:39), ‘And they baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt into unleavened cakes, for it was not leavened; because they were driven out of Egypt and they could not delay, nor had they made [any other] provision for themselves.’”

This passage implies that had they not been expelled from Egypt – had their dough only had time to rise – they would have
eaten chometz (leavened bread and similar items, which, unlike matzah, have risen). Yet this seems inconsistent with another part of the Biblical account (Exodus 12:8), which relates that, while still in Egypt, the Jews were commanded to sacrifice a lamb and eat it together with matzah and bitter herbs. In other words, the Jews had been expressly commanded to eat matzah even before they left Egypt; how, then, are we to understand the verse which attributes the eating of the matzah to the mere happenstance of their leaving in such a rush? Furthermore, not only does this apparent inconsistency exist with respect to the historical exodus from Egypt, but we also find it with respect to the Biblically-mandated practice of Jews from that time forward to commemorate the exodus from year to year. In instructing us to do so, the Torah says (Exodus 12:19), “For seven days, leaven shall not be found [in your possession … instead,] in all your dwellings you shall eat matzohs.” The context makes clear that the purpose of this command is to commemorate the Exodus from Egypt. Yet during the actual Exodus, the prohibition against leaven only applied for one day, not seven (Pesachim 96b).

The explanation, however, as the commentator Mizrachi writes, is that indeed, since Passover in Egypt was only one day, the Jews of the Exodus had no reason to eat matzah after leaving, other than that their dough had not risen. In subsequent years, however, to commemorate the entire episode — including the fact that they ended up eating matzah for a longer period — we eat it for the duration of the holiday.

Nevertheless, there is still a great deal to be said about the significance of matzah, and to understand some of this, we must first examine a fundamental distinction between Yom Tov (the major Jewish holidays) and Shabbos.

This idea lies at the root of the phrase we recite in the Haggadah (quoting D’varim 6:21), “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.” It was in Egypt, during the exile, that we were slaves because of the power tapped into by Pa’ro. However, when the time came to break free of Egypt, “for the sake of this…a time when matza [is present]”: the actual performance of the mitzvah of matza drew the sublime radiance of abba down specifically onto the Jews and not onto the Egyptians (“for me [exclusively]”). This is also hinted at by the Haggadah’s phrase (in connection with the expression la, “for me”), “for me and not for him; had he [the wicked son] been there, he would not have been redeemed.” In other words, previously, even a wicked person could get by in Egypt by tapping into the spiritual life force available through achorayim, the “back” or the “other” level; not so once G-d directed His holiness exclusively “to me,” to the Jews.

This, then, is the meaning of “I am the One, and no other.” The “other” referred to is the spiritual level of achorayim, “otherness,” which can serve as a source of life force even to the undeserving by virtue of the fact that G-d Himself is utterly above the distinction between good and evil. The Haggadah is telling us that through the mitzvah of matza (“for the sake of this”), the holiness was made exclusive to the Jews (“for me”).

(This needs clarification, though, for can we not ask: if the holiness is of that rarified level at which good and evil are all the same, how is it even possible for it to be restricted specifically to good? Is that not a contradiction? Nevertheless, G-d can do anything, including this. True, the spirituality elicited by the first night’s matza is of an order where dark and light are the same, etc. Yet, as explained, matza draws this transcendent spirituality down within the level of chochma ila’a (the supernal chochmah), that is, the level known as abba, “father.” The Jews are called “sons” of our “father,” G-d; is it really surprising, then, that there exists a special and direct relationship from Father to sons? Jewish mysticism speaks of a son as being ultimately derived from the brain of the father. Recall that the spiritual transmission that comes to us through eating matza is
are devoted to G-d. To prevent G-d’s spiritual benevolence from being usurped by the forces of unholiness, as it were, Moshe prayed that G-d’s presence not dwell among those elements, and G-d granted his request, as it is written (Exodus 33: 17), “Also this thing which you have spoken, I will do.”

However, had G-d not granted Moshe’s prayer to “restrict” His revelation, the forces of evil would have received just as much G-dly energy as the forces of good, as we find regarding Bilam (Balaam), who had the power of prophecy in spite of his being a depraved sinner. To reiterate, this is all because on the level of G-d’s very “self,” so to speak, the level of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, there is no distinction between good and evil; to G-d, the utterly transcendent, it is all the same.

This was the source of Pharaoh’s power as well. He was able to enslave the Jews because he had tapped into that sublime level at which good and evil are all the same. (This is hinted in the Hebrew spelling of the word Pharaoh, Par’o, which is spelled with the same letters as the word for the back of the neck, or ef. As explained elsewhere, the face expresses a person’s inner feelings to the outside, whereas on the opposite side of the head from the face, we find the blank uniformity of the or ef. Yet the two are on the same level, indicating that the same spiritual plane that is reachable directly, through the front, is also accessible from the back (achorayim).

The quality of the transmission is different, though. If, for example, one gives one’s grandchild a crisp new one-hundred dollar bill as a birthday gift, one very likely places it in a nice card and writes a loving message first. If one is actually present when the gift is given, one will probably look on, beaming with pleasure, as the child opens their present. If, on the other hand, one must pay a one-hundred dollar parking ticket, one probably does so with great resentment. One could envision turning on one’s heel, tossing the money over one’s shoulder at the parking official, and stalking off in disgust. It’s the same one hundred dollars either way, but the relationship between giver and recipient bears no comparison.

Intuitively, we tend to think of chochmah as a higher, more rarified, level than bina. There is, however, something which transcends even chochmah. Chochmah, as explained above, is the ability of the mind to conceive new ideas, seemingly out of nowhere. This first stage (chochmah) is the essence of the meaning of matzah. Matzah represents the rejection of G-d's benevolent energy on the level where good and evil are all the same. Matzah is not just a piece of bread; it is a symbol of the rejection of the forces of evil. It is a reminder of the struggle against evil, and the importance of maintaining a level of holiness even when evil seems to be prevalent.
utterly inscrutable, unknowable source of ideas, the “nowhere” from whence they spring, may itself be thought of as a level which transcends everything: chochmah, bina, and all subsequent stages.

The above is hinted at in the verse (Job 28:12), “From where shall wisdom be found?” In Hebrew, this expression can also be read, “Wisdom [chochmah] will be found from ‘Where’ [ayin],” that is, the level known as chochmah derives from the antecedent level known as “Where,” or ayin (a word which can also be translated as “Nothing”).

In a spiritual sense, all the above is an allegory representing different degrees of G-dly revelation. Jewish philosophy separates the human personality into ten discrete levels, consisting of the three intellectual faculties chochmah, bina and da‘as, followed by seven emotions such as love and fear. In this overall scheme, bina – understanding – is a sublime and exalted level, second only to chochmah, the highest human faculty. Jewish mysticism therefore uses the term bina to refer to a certain lofty degree of G-dly revelation; chochmah is used to indicate a level even higher than that.

What is more, on each specific level, the revelation of G-dliness is in a manner which corresponds to the characteristics of human chochmah, bina, etc. That is, the G-dly revelation alluded to by the term chochmah is so sublime that it cannot be fully grasped; it is there, just as a new and as-yet-unformed idea is perceptible to a person, but it is still beyond our grasp, reflecting the ayin, or “Nothingness,” from which it came. This in turn symbolizes that transcendent and unknowable aspect of G-d that cannot be revealed at all, not even in the inchoate manner of chochmah. Likewise, when we speak of G-d’s “understanding,” or bina, we are referring to a level of G-dly revelation that is somewhat more within the ability of mortals to grasp, somewhat more “down to earth,” than chochmah. The same may be said of all ten attributes, known as the ten sefiros, that the Kabbalah allegorically ascribes to G-d.

(In fact, rather than these Divine attributes mirroring the human personality, it was the latter which was deliberately fashioned
by G-d to mirror the former, in order that we could attain some limited degree of comprehension of Him.)

Finally, just as human comprehension – *bina* – brings about a certain joy in the person, the revelation of the spiritual level known as *bina* occasions great joy as well.

Now, *Yom Tov*, a Jewish holiday, is characterized by the manifestation of G-dliness to the degree referred to as *bina*. That is why *Yom Tov* is a time of great joy and celebration. The joy of *Yom Tov*, is, in fact, so much an integral part of the holiday that it is a requirement of Jewish Law, in accordance with the verse (Deuteronomy 16:14), “And you shall rejoice on your holiday.” On Shabbos, by contrast, we experience a relatively higher G-dly revelation on the exalted order of *chochmah*, which is why Shabbos, although a happy time, to be sure, is not associated specifically with joy as is *Yom Tov*. (Instead, for reasons that will be explained later, Shabbos is associated with pleasure. That is why it is a mitzvah to enjoy delicious foods and otherwise engage in pleasurable activities on Shabbos.)

The Divine attributes (or sefiros) of *chochmah* and *bina* are Kabbalistically identified, respectively, as *abba* and *imma*, father and mother. We may thus find a reference to the above idea in the verse (Psalms 113:9), recited as part of the Hallel prayer on *Yom Tov*, “He restores the barren woman [to become] a household; a joyful mother of children…” It is specifically the aspect known as “mother,” that is, *bina*, which is associated with “joy.”

The distinction between the revelations of *chochmah* (experienced on Shabbos) and *bina* (experienced on *Yom Tov*) will be better understood by considering that there are basically two modes of Divine revelation:

On one level, G-d makes Himself known to us through a progressive order of revelation, analogous to cause and effect. That is to say, the spiritual source of a given created entity may be discerned
within or inferred from the characteristics of that entity, as a cause may be inferred from its effect. In a chain of causes and effects, each effect is itself a cause with respect to the succeeding link in the chain: A causes B, which in turn causes C, etc. In theory, even the final link in such a chain contains an element of the initial link, since Z, the final effect, contains an element of its immediate cause Y, which in turn contains an element of its own immediate cause X (which element of X is therefore also implicit within the end result Z), and so on back to the initial cause A. To use a more concrete example, one’s intellect may possess knowledge that a certain thing is desirable. A person knowledgeable in painting and art, for instance, may know that certain factors are characteristic of great works of art and that a given painting possesses those features. This objective knowledge may motivate one’s emotions to desire the painting in question. And the emotional feeling of desire for that painting may be expressed in the person’s conscious thought about the painting and how to realize his or her desire to acquire it. There is a fixed order to this progression: one’s abstract knowledge of art would not directly give rise to thoughts of acquiring a particular painting, even if one is studying about that very painting. A necessary intervening step would be for the knowledge to first bring about a desire for that painting. Only then would it be worthwhile to entertain such thoughts as what would be the best manner of approaching the museum directors with a bid, how to raise the funds, etc. Thus, those thoughts reflect an underlying desire for the painting, which is in turn evidence of sufficient knowledge to know that it is desirable. This “cause and effect” manner of progression may be termed “something from something,” yesh miyesh. As it relates to G-dly revelation, it refers to the fact that G-d manifests Himself on a very sublime spiritual level, which in turn is reflected in a relatively lower level, and so on, progressively downward until the spirituality finds expression even in physical creations.

The other mode of G-dly manifestation transcends the entire fixed order of spiritual progression (known as seder ha-hishtalshelus), and may be characterized as “something from nothing,” or yesh me’ayin. Instead of the effect resulting from some pre-existing cause, Now, of course, everything proceeds from none other than Hashem Himself. Even the spiritual levels alluded to by the expressions, “angel, seraph, and messenger” are not independent powers (G-d forbid); they are nothing but G-d’s “tools,” as it were, like clay in the hand of the sculptor, through which G-d channels His creative energy into the universe. Nevertheless, the G-dly light and influence channeled through these levels comes, by definition, by way of the fixed hierarchy of creation (seder ha-hishtalshelus): the G-dly revelation is transmitted from one level to the next, in a manner of cause and effect, and finally invested within the spiritual level of “angel,” or “seraph,” and so on. By contrast, revelation of an order that transcends the entire seder ha-hishtalshelus to begin with cannot be contained within the vessel, for example, of “angel,” such that that spiritual level, “angel,” should facilitate its manifestation. That is what is meant by specifically “I, and not an angel, etc.”
The Meaning of Matzah: an adaptation of the maamar, LeHarin Mah SheKasuv BaHaggadah, “Matzah Zu SheAnu Ochlim…” in Likkutei Torah

The Meaning of Matzah: an adaptation of the maamar, LeHarin Mah SheKasuv BaHaggadah, “Matzah Zu SheAnu Ochlim…” in Likkutei Torah which in turn was the result of a prior existing cause, etc. (even if the ultimate first cause is G-d), yeSh me’ayin is a direct manifestation of that incomprehensible level of G-d as He transcends seder ba-bishtalsheles, progressive manifestation. Thus, what is manifest in the end is not a reflection of a reflection of a reflection, etc., of G-d, but actually G-d Himself, directly revealed.

We are now in a better position to understand the joy associated with Yom Tov. As noted above, Yom Tov is a time of revelation of the sublime spiritual level of bina. As explained elsewhere (see, e.g., the synopsis of the discourse V’Hinei Anachnu M’Almim Alumim on the Torah portion Vayeishev), G-d’s attribute of sovereignty (in mystical terms, the sefer of malchus) is invested, throughout the year (i.e., on non-holidays), within the three “lower” spiritual realms of Beriah, Yetzira and Asiyah (collectively abbreviated BYA). This is in accordance with the fixed order of progression of spiritual revelation explained above. From its position in BYA, the attribute of malchus – which is the spiritual source (the “cause” in the cause and effect chain) of the created universe – cannot perceive its own “cause” within G-dliness. However, the revelation of bina – G-d’s attribute of understanding, as it were – on Yom Tov allows malchus (and, therefore, the universe at large) to comprehend its own spiritual source, its own “cause.”

Any time an “effect” draws close to its “cause,” great joy results for the “effect.” This is because proximity to its cause makes the effect realize, on the one hand, how, as a mere effect of that cause and not a part of the cause itself, the effect is nothing more than a dimmed reflection of some underlying reality and not itself the “real thing.” Its existence is essentially one of darkness and concealment; it is a sham. On the other hand, by drawing close to the cause, the effect is enabled to perceive this truth after all, and the realization that it is now coming from the darkness into the glorious light is what causes the joy. This is comparable to the inexpressible joy of a prince who, no longer imprisoned, sees his father the king again.

This, too, is alluded to in the words of the Haggadah. It is written (Exodus 12:12), “And I [G-d] passed through the land of Egypt”; the Haggadah, quoting this verse, gives the interpretation of the Sifri, that the Hebrew word meaning “and I passed through” indicates, “I and not an angel; I and not a seraph; I and not a messenger; [rather] I am the One, and no other.” The three levels mentioned (angel, seraph, and messenger) hint at the three realms of Briah, Yetzira, and Asiyah. Within the highest of the four spiritual realms, that is, Atzilus, there are likewise levels that correspond to these lower realms of Briah, Yetzira, and Asiyah: within Atzilus itself, the s’fira of malchus is considered the “Asiyah aspect of Atzilus”; the s’firos of the triad chagas are the “Yetzira aspect of Atzilus”; and the s’fira of bina is the “Briah aspect of Atzilus.” (This is another explanation of “I and not an angel”: malchus is also called “the angel.”) The point is that it was not by means of any of those spiritual levels that the Jews were freed from Egypt; rather, it was the level associated with G-d Himself – “I” – namely, it was through the drawing forth of obr abba, the very source of chochmah, the “Atzilus aspect of Atzilus.”

Any “lesser” revelation would not have done the trick, so to speak, for Egypt was a place of the utmost impurity, so much so that only a revelation of the level at which, in fact (Tehillim 139:14), “even darkness cannot darken before You…darkness and light are both alike,” could “work.” This level is specifically that of obr abba

this,” that is, the fact that through matza, the mochin d’abba are called forth, about which it is written “From where shall wisdom be found?” As explained above, this verse alludes to a level of G-dliness so sublime that it transcends the entire fixed hierarchy of creation (seder ha-bishtalsheles), a level at which there is no difference between darkness and light, higher or lower (as the verse says (Tehillim 139:14), “like darkness; like light,” and as we recite in the High-Holiday liturgy, “[G-d is] uniform, and equates [the small and the great]…”). Because of that, it was possible for the sublime level of Havaye (mochin d’abba) to be revealed even “to me” down in the physical world of Asiyah.

Any “lesser” revelation would not have done the trick, so to speak, for Egypt was a place of the utmost impurity, so much so that only a revelation of the level at which, in fact (Tehillim 139:14), “even darkness cannot darken before You…darkness and light are both alike,” could “work.” This level is specifically that of obr abba.
On **Yom Tov**, then, we experience a revelation of G-d’s attribute of *bina*, which elevates us to the point that we rejoice in the perception of our spiritual source, which this revelation brings about. That is the mystical significance of the verse quoted above: “[G-d] restores the barren woman [to become] a household; a joyful mother of children…..” The Hebrew expression, “the barren woman … a household” is *akeres habayis*, which is a double entendre in which the word *akeres* can mean both “barren woman” and “foundation.” In the latter sense, the phrase would mean, “foundation of the household.” Both meanings refer to the attribute of *malchus*, since “she” (*malchus* is considered feminine) is, as the relative “lowest” of the ten sefiros and that sefirah which descends into the realms of BYA, the foundation of the entire spiritual structure; yet at the same time “barren” in that she cannot, from that low position, have any perception of her spiritual source. Nevertheless, G-d “restores” her through the revelation of *bina* – the “mother,” as explained above – on **Yom Tov**, so that she herself becomes no longer barren but rejoices in this great revelation.

The above is also alluded to by the verse (Psalms 66:6), “They will go through the river on foot; there we will rejoice in Him.” Mystical literature interprets the verse (Genesis 2:10), “A river went forth from Eden to water the garden” as referring to the attribute of *bina*, an outpouring, or “river,” of comprehension and transmission of holiness which flows from “Eden” (the highest attribute, or *chochmah*) through the intervening sefiros all the way to the “garden” – *malchus* – at the end. In our verse from Psalms, the Hebrew word for “on foot” is an allusion to **Yom Tov**, because the three major Jewish holidays, on which Jews from all over the land of Israel would make a pilgrimage to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, are called for this reason “the three feet.” The verse can thus be interpreted to mean, “On ‘foot,’ i.e., **Yom Tov**, we go through the ‘river’ that is *bina* and thereby rejoice in G-d, Whose revelation we experience then.”

The verse (Isaiah 58:13), “And you shall call Shabbos a delight,” hints at this. The Hebrew word for “delight” is *oneg*, spelled by the letters *ayin*, *nun* and *gimmel*. These three letters are the initial letters of *ohr abba*. The name of G-d used in the above statement is the Tetragrammaton, *Havaye*. The Hebrew word for “did,” as in “G-d did,” can be read as if it meant “was done.” In that case, the phrase would mean “the spiritual level associated with the Divine name *Havaye* was done,” was brought about, was accomplished. In other words, “because of this,” the elicitation of matza, “the level of *Havaye* was brought about” – namely, the revelation of *ohr abba*.

This is underscored by the word *li*, “for me.” Not only was the spiritual level of the name *Havaye*, the blessed Light of the *Ein Sof*, made manifest (“G-d did”), it was manifest “to me,” all the way down here in this physical world where I am, the physical realm of *Asiyah*.

And how is it possible for such a lofty revelation to be made openly manifest even “to me” in this lowly world, and while I was still in Egypt, besides? Indeed, that was only possible “because of
that we ourselves should draw the protective benefits of matza (resulting from the revelation of ohr abba) into the rest of the holiday, as explained above. Mystically, this is because the seven days represent the seven midos, the seven “emotional” s’firos from chesed through malchus. The Kabbalah teaches that the mystical “breaking of the vessels” (sh’viras ha-keilim) only affected the seven lower s’firos (i.e., the midos), leaving them susceptible to encroachment by the forces of unholiness. Accordingly, the subsequent days of Passover, which are associated with these midos, require the extra degree of protection we bring about by scrupulously avoiding chametz during that period, investing those days also with the qualities of matza and bitul.

The joy we have been discussing comes from comprehension of the G-dliness that is revealed on Yom Tov, a manifestation of G-dliness on the level of bina. By contrast, none of the above can apply to revelation of the spiritual level of chochmah, which is superior to bina. This is because chochmah is a spiritual level so lofty that it is beyond comprehension; its revelation therefore does not engender joy. It is bina which is characterized by the joy of intellectual comprehension. Chochmah, the faculty to conceive ideas, is like a “blank slate” upon which those ideas may be written; it is characterized by complete absence of “self” and total receptivity, instead, to the ideas to be conceived. What happens when chochmah is revealed, then, is not joy, but a negation of self in deference to the unknowable G-d. This is what we experience on Shabbos.

While the revelation of bina makes an “effect” recognize and rejoice in its superior “cause” – which may be thought of as an elevation of the effect to a higher level – revelation of chochmah means manifestation of that aspect of G-d before Whom darkness and light, up and down, etc. are all the same. One has not been “elevated”; instead, “higher” and “lower” have themselves become equivalent in that all is insignificant before G-d. In the face of a revelation of this magnitude, there is simply no meaning to being “elevated.” Instead, all is as naught before G-d.

And this is the meaning of the verse (Exodus 31:14), “You shall observe the Shabbos, for it is holy.”

The Hebrew word for “holy,” kodesh, alludes to the spiritual level associated with Shabbos, as just discussed. By contrast, Yom Tov is referred to, not as kodesh, but by the term mikra kodesh, “[that which] calls forth holiness.” This reflects the fact that, although Yom Tov itself is not on the same exalted spiritual plane as Shabbos, the potential exists on Yom Tov – through performance of the mitzvos of letters of the Hebrew words Eden, Nahar, and Gan (Eden, River, and Garden) – symbolizing the concept explained in the previous paragraph.
that holiday – for us to call forth, to elicit, a manifestation of Godliness stemming from the level known as kodesh, which is manifest on Shabbos automatically.

Now, we must understand a crucial point in connection with the above: the concept of rejoicing on Yom Tov, when the level of bina is manifest, is not (only) joy over the revelation of bina as described above. Rather, the joy is primarily over the element of chochmah invested within bina – i.e., it is over the kodesh called forth on the holiday, the day of mikra kodesh. For bina, although an exalted spiritual level, to be sure, is nevertheless considered yesh (“something”) in relation to chochmah, the only sefira that truly reflects ayin (“nothingness”). It would certainly not be proper for us to rejoice over anything other than G-d Himself, the ultimate ayin, as opposed to any creation of His, any form of yesh.

Still, bina is not just “any” yesh: all yesh comes from ayin, and bina represents yesh as it comes from ayin. Thus, bina is inseparable from chochmah; in fact, the Kabbalah (Zohar III, 4a) calls these two sefiros the “two inseparable friends.” It has been explained elsewhere (see, e.g., the adaptation of the discourse, U’Sefartem Lachem MiMacharas HaShabbos on the Torah portion Emor) that the sefiros are actually composites: each contains within itself aspects of all the others. Among the other sefiros are netzach, hod, and yesod. We said above that mikra kodesh means a “calling forth” of kodesh, of chochmah, into bina; technically, what is invested within bina are the netzah, hod, and yesod (collectively abbreviated “NHY,” pronounced “n’hee”) aspects of chochmah. On Yom Tov, then, we elicit NHY of chochmah into bina, and this is the (main) reason for our joy.

The above is also consistent with the verse (Mishlei 24:21), “Fear G-d, my son, and the king.” The simple meaning of this verse is that, just as one must fear G-d even though one does not see Him (and thereby, one will keep from sin), one must likewise fear the king, even though one might not see him in person, thereby avoiding the capital offense of treason. This is the explanation given in the work, Kad HaKemach” in the section, “Fear.” However, on a homiletical level (Dvarim Rabba, 2:33), the verse can be interpreted as if it read, “and reign” (u-m‘loch) instead of “and the king” (va-melech). Then, the meaning would be, “Fear G-d, my son, and reign [over your impulse to sin].”

Both interpretations are correct. Through true fear of the “King of the kings of kings” (similar to the first interpretation, although that refers to a human king), one automatically rules over his or her own impulse to sin, for one would not be drawn after the pleasures of this world if one is truly in reverent awe and bitul (a state of self-nullification) before G-d.

One’s evil impulse is symbolized by chametz, as in the verse (Tehillim 71:4), “Save me, my G-d…from the hand of the…violent person (chametz).” This comparison is a play on words, since the word for “violent person” is similar to “chametz.” Thus, just as true fear of the King (G-d) negates the possibility of sin, the revelation to our forefathers leaving Egypt of the “King of the kings of kings” automatically rendered the possibility of chametz (encroachment by the forces of evil) null.

Subsequent generations, however, had need of the requirement that “matzos shall be eaten for the seven days” – that is,
Another explanation of this expression is that it describes G-d’s manner of ruling and conducting the worlds through His ten s’firos. The word “kings” refers to the lower triad (excluding malchus) of s’firos, i.e., the attributes of netzach, hod, and yesod (collectively abbreviated “N.H.Y.” and pronounced n’hee). The phrase “kings of” (malech melchei) refers to the middle triad, comprised of chessed, g’vurah, and tiferes (abbreviated “C.G.T.”; pronounced chagas). Finally, “King of the kings of” (melech melchei) refers to the highest triad, formed by chochmah, bina, and da’as (“C.B.D.”; pronounced chabad). The s’firos of N.H.Y. illuminate the realm of Atzilus; the realm of Yetzirah is illuminated by C.G.T.; and in the world of B’riah, it is the s’fira of bina that predominates. However, the attribute of chochmah shines in the highest realm of Atzilus, for it is only within chochmah that the blessed Light of the Ein Sof, G-d’s Infinite Light, characteristic of Atzilus, can be invested. That, then, is the level alluded to by the phrase “the King of the kings of kings”: the level of chochmah, which contains within it the blessed Light of the Ein Sof.

The revelation of the s’fira of chochmah is thus an open manifestation of the spiritual level of obr abba (the radiance of abba [father]), in the face of which, as explained above, the forces of evil have no hold.

To summarize, then, all the above is the inner meaning of the Haggadah’s relating – with respect to the second category of matza, that is, the matza we eat all through the holiday – that our forefathers’ dough did not have a chance to rise before ‘the King of the kings of kings’ [i.e.,] the Holy One, blessed is He, was revealed to them. Their dough did not have a chance to rise – that is, to become chametz, symbolizing the forces of evil – precisely because ‘the King of the kings of kings,’ that is, the quality of abba, the attribute of chochma, was openly manifest unto them.

During historic Passover, that happened automatically on the first night, by virtue of the revelation of the light of abba, and continued all through the holiday because of the spiritual influence and protection of Moshe and Aharon. Today, however, while the
Matza represents mochin d’abba, “the intellectual faculties of abba.” Yet, like the child who does not really understand what he or she means by “father,” we cannot fully grasp G-d. What we can have, though, might just be even more precious: a simple, childlike intuition of our relationship to Him, the certain knowledge, unconstrained by the limits of reason, that G-d is “Daddy,” “Tatty,” “Abba.”

This is the inner meaning of the teaching that “a child does not know to call ‘Father!’ until it has tasted the taste of grain.” It is only by eating matza (“tasting grain”) – drawing NHY of chochmah into bina on the Yom Tov of Passover – that we can gain this special relationship with our Father, this recognition of Him as our Father – even if it is only in the form of katnus, the limited perception of a child. This is why the Zohar (In Sefer HaMa’amarim 5708, p. 166, the Rebbe states, “In Sefer Ta’amei HaMitzvos of the Tzemach Tzedek, he indicates the Zohar [on the Torah portion] Vayeitzei, p. 157. This must be looked into a bit. See Zohar II, 41a.”) refers to matza as the “food of faith” – it has the spiritual effect of infusing into our Jewish souls our characteristic, supra-rational, simple faith in G-d.

Thus, it turns out that there are really two distinct categories of matza: the matza of the first night of Passover, which is a Biblical obligation even today, and the matza eaten throughout the rest of the seven days, which is really more a function of avoiding chametz than of eating specifically matza. It is with reference to the second category of matza that the Haggadah states that it is “on account of [the fact that] our forefathers’ dough did not have a chance to rise before ‘the King of the kings of kings’ [i.e.,] the Holy One, blessed is He, was revealed to them and redeemed them.” That is, it really was a sort of “happenstance” (their dough didn’t have a chance to rise) that caused the Jews who left Egypt during historic Passover to eat matza all seven days, for they didn’t really need the spiritual protection it afforded, as explained above.

For them, protection against encroachment by the forces of unholliness was automatic, as hinted in the wording of the above quote, which refers to G-d as “the King of the kings of kings.”

On a simple level, the “kings” referred to in this expression are the human kings found in this lower world. “Kings of kings” alludes to the spiritual sarim, the archangels of each particular nation (see Daniel 10:13: “the archangel of the Kingdom of Persia…”). In this sense, the expression under discussion implies that the Holy One, Blessed is He, Who rules over all, is thus “the King of the kings of kings.”
NOW, THIS DRAWING down of mochin d’abba in matza only occurs on the first night of Passover. From then on, a different purpose is served by eating matza. It is written (Exodus 13:7), “matzos shall be eaten for the seven days.” In the original, this sentence may be considered grammatically irregular. The Hebrew language uses the word eis (sometimes es), which has no English equivalent, to indicate the direct object. For example, to say “I ate the matza,” one would not say achalti (I ate) hamatza (the matza); the correct phrase would be achalti es hamatza. The word es indicates the direct object of the sentence (“the matza”). In Hebrew, the above verse reads, matzos yei-acheil eis shiv’as hayamim – the word eis is used before the words meaning “the seven days,” as though the seven days were the direct object; that is, as though the seven days should be “fed” the matza.

This is a mystical allusion to the spiritual function of matza for the duration of Passover, i.e., after the first night. It is indeed necessary to “feed” the seven days of Passover with the matza. What this means is that the benefit of matza on the first night – namely, the spiritual level of abba – should provide “nourishment” to, transmit its influence into, all the following days of the holiday.

(During the first week of s’firas ha-omer, the period of counting the days between Passover and Shavuos – the entirety of which initial week falls during Passover – we also find that those seven days are associated with the “seven mochin of chochmah,” i.e., that the sefirah of
chochma is invested within each of the seven midos (emotional sefiros) manifest each day of that initial week’s s’fira count.)

There is a reason why all seven days “need” the benefit of mochin d’abba. As explained elsewhere (see the adaptation of the discourse Vayeavek Ish Imo on the Torah portion Vayishlach), G-d does not bestow His creative life-force into the forces of evil. Evil is only able to exist by usurping some of the “leftover” spirituality that the forces of good have received. The more “good” something is, the more G-dly life-force it possesses. Thus, it is necessary to be vigilant where great holiness is present, to safeguard against the possibility that any of that spirituality might be “siphoned off” by the “other side” (G-d forbid).

The Midrash (M’chilta to B’shalach, P’sichta; Bamidbar Rabba 1, 2; Tanchuma to B’shalach 3) tells us that the protective cloud column (see Exodus 13:21) which escorted the Jews out of Egypt would kill snakes and scorpions in the Jews’ path. Snakes and scorpions symbolize the forces of evil, and the cloud killing them symbolizes the concept that a lofty spiritual level known as a makif, or “transcendent” level, is able to “kill,” to destroy the evil.

During historic Passover, as noted at the beginning, the prohibition against chametz, leavened bread – which also symbolizes evil – only applied for one day. This was all that was needed, for the Jews were accompanied by Moshe (Moses) and Aharon (Aaron), who were both on the exalted spiritual level of abba. Their very presence served to safeguard the Jews against encroachment by forces of evil (G-d forbid), indeed, the protective clouds were called the “clouds of Aharon,” for they were the makifei abba (“transcendent levels of abba”) and possessed the power to destroy evil and prevent the possibility of any holiness being “hijacked.” The clouds never left the Jews, as it says (Exodus 13:22), “[G-d] would not remove the cloud column by day.” This refers to the first day, representing the attribute of chesed, the influence of which extends throughout the seven days of Passover (as touched upon above in connection with s’firas ha-omer; each of the seven midos of the first week of s’fira are associated with the s’fira of chesed).

By contrast, each subsequent Passover, as observed to this day, we do eat matza all seven days, because we need the spiritual protection from the forces of evil furnished by mochin d’abba. Actually, our eating matza today (after the first night, that is (although note well that outside the Land of Israel, the first two nights of Passover have the status of the first night)) is not a requirement unto itself; the real requirement is strict avoidance of chametz all seven days. This is because, as explained, chametz represents the forces of evil, and we must avoid these scrupulously. The matza of the first night, though, remains a Biblical commandment, for even today, it provides protection that does not stop throughout all the following days, as hinted in the verse “[G-d] would not remove the cloud column by day.” This refers to the first day, representing the attribute of chesed, the influence of which extends throughout the seven days of Passover (as touched upon above in connection with s’firas ha-omer; each of the seven midos of the first week of s’fira are associated with the s’fira of chesed).