

# FUCHSBERG JERUSALEM CENTER CONSERVATIVE YESHIVA

## TORAH SPARKS

### Parshat Tazria

April 13, 2024 | 5 Nissan 5784

**Torah:** Leviticus 12:1–13:59 **Triennial:** Leviticus 13:29–59

**Haftarah:** II Kings 4:42–5:19

---

**We believe that in times of great strife, words of Torah can provide stability and comfort in our lives.**

We know that you join us in praying for the safety of our soldiers and citizens, and that together we mourn the terrible losses already suffered.

**We stand together for a strong and secure Israel.**

---

### The Little Girl

**Bex Stern-Rosenblatt**

*Parashah*

We read this week about how to maintain our community, even when there are people we must temporarily remove. There are two examples given: the postpartum woman and the person with skin disease. In both cases, these people are separated from their regular lives and from the rest of the community, forbidden from being in contact with the rest of us, until their abnormal state has passed and the *kohen* welcomes them back into the community. We recognize the liminal states, the outside of the norm experiences, that can occur. And we make room for them to occur without overwhelming the norms of our

community. We separate those experiencing them and then welcome them back in afterward.

Life is not all childbirth and skin disease. Our community is not optimized to support those going through childbirth or skin disease. Instead, we send them away to specialists and focus our own community on what we do best, which is creating holy spaces. By definition, childbirth and skin disease bring impurity, a form of corruption, with them. While we do not in any way disparage those birthing or experiencing skin disease, we also do not give up our commitment to holiness in order to make room for them within our community.

The haftarah this week turns this whole system on its head. We read of a person with skin disease, but that person is Naaman, the army commander of Aram, our enemy. By his very nature, he is not part of our community. However, he comes to Israel to have his skin disease cured. Rather than being separated from us due to skin disease, it is his skin disease that brings him into contact with us. Once the disease is cured, he will leave our community and return to his home.

Moreover, the story contains no mention of *kohanim*. Naaman will try to have the King of Israel cure him. When that fails, the prophet Elisha summons him for a cure instead. Repeatedly, we are told that the point is to learn that there is a prophet in Israel. Leviticus has been all about moving us from Moses's prophetic leadership in the style of a king to

# FUCHSBERG JERUSALEM CENTER

## CONSERVATIVE YESHIVA

priestly leadership under the *kohanim*. Coming many hundreds of years after the Exodus story in our parashah, the story of Elisha and Naaman has reverted to prophetic leadership. We are no longer concerned with contamination or the *beit hamikdash*. Elisha uses the Jordan River to purify Naaman.

Most strikingly, we no longer seem to be concerned with self-definition. In a world with no priestly leadership and an incompetent king, a prophet chooses to use his power to cure one of our enemies. Perhaps we believe that if we only contribute enough good to the rest of the world, they will stop attacking us. However, Aram does not stop being our enemy. Just one chapter later, they will attack us yet again. The whole system described in the haftarah is a failure. The structures we find in our parashah, which the haftarah seemingly rejected, got something right.

Reading this haftarah in light of our parashah also encourages us to look in the haftarah for a parallel to the birthing woman from our parashah. We don't find her, exactly. We do find one of our girls, taken captive, and forced to serve Naaman's wife. It is this girl who will let Naaman know that his skin disease can be cured in Israel. She then disappears from the text. We never read of a rescue mission. We don't learn of Elisha insisting that she be brought home before he cures Naaman. And in light of the birthing woman of our parashah, there is the horrible possibility that this girl, too, gives birth. In captivity. Bearing the children of our enemy.

This week's parashah gives us a roadmap, provides us with a way to welcome such people back home. We recognize that they have been through something that is both beyond the limits of our normal experience and also something that could happen to any of us. We provide them with the room to recover and the ritual to be rebirthed back into the homes they left behind.

# FUCHSBERG JERUSALEM CENTER CONSERVATIVE YESHIVA

## Getting Low to Get High

**Rabbi Daniel Raphael Silverstein**

*Insights from Hassidut*

*Rabbi Daniel Silverstein teaches Hassidut at the CY and directs Applied Jewish Spirituality ([www.appliedjewishspirituality.org](http://www.appliedjewishspirituality.org)). In these weekly videos, he shares Hassidic insights on the parashah or calendar.*

Click below to watch the [video](#):



# FUCHSBERG JERUSALEM CENTER CONSERVATIVE YESHIVA

## How Did the Matzah Get Rich?

**Rabbi Joshua Kulp**

*Halakhic Essays on Pesah*

I moved to Israel thirty years ago. That's a long time and for the most part, I've grown accustomed to the subtle differences between Israel and the United States. I've learned to park in smaller parking spaces, I've learned that lemons can be green, and I've gotten used to not having any carpeting and cleaning the floor with what we call "sponge" (pronounce the e as if you're saying "spunja"). But there are still a few things I have not gotten used to, and one of them is the absence of egg matzah! As a kid, we always had a box or two of egg matzot at home. The most important function of the egg matzah is that we could eat it on erev Pesah, when we were not allowed to eat real matzot. Once Pesah began, we usually had a choice.

To understand the issues surrounding egg matzah, we need to understand the status of matzah made with other liquids besides water. On **Pesahim 35a**, Rabbah bar Hannah and Reish Lakish rule that "dough that was kneaded with wine, oil, or honey, one is not liable to receive karet for eating it in its leavened state." The first reason that the Talmud offers for this is that one cannot use such matzah at the seder for one's "*matzat mitzvah*" because this is a "*matzah ashirah*," literally rich matzah, and the Torah requires לחם עוני, that matzah be "poor man's bread." Poor people would not make bread with wine, oil or honey. However, this reasoning fails and the Talmud ends up with

an alternative reason—"fruit juice does not cause leavening." In other words, bread made with liquids other than water cannot become hametz because the bread will not rise.

As often happens, there is another passage in the Talmud that complicates the matter. A page later, on **Pesahim 36a**, the Talmud cites a source about dough kneaded with wine, oil or honey. The Talmud says that one should not knead with such substances, but if one does, the sages still allow eating the matzah, so long as it is not allowed to rise. R. Akiva even relates that he kneaded flour with wine, oil and honey in front of R. Joshua and R. Eliezer and they did not say anything to him. Thus, according to this source, bread kneaded with wine, oil or honey can be used as matzah on Pesah, but like regular matzah, it must be guarded so that it does not rise. This seems to directly contradict the previous sugya, according to which dough made with wine, oil or honey cannot rise—it can never become hametz.

There are two main resolutions to this contradiction—one by Rashi, and one by most everyone else, including the Rif, Rambam and the Tosafot. According to Rashi, the first passage, where we learned that bread made with wine, oil or honey can never become hametz, did not mean to say that such bread is permitted on Pesah. It just meant that such bread cannot become fully prohibited hametz. It can become "hard hametz"—*hametz nukshe* in Hebrew. *Hametz nukshe* is still prohibited on Pesah.

# FUCHSBERG JERUSALEM CENTER CONSERVATIVE YESHIVA

The other main resolution is that if there is no water mixed in with the wine, oil or honey, the dough cannot possibly become hametz. This is what the first passage refers to—dough kneaded without any water. The second passage refers to cases where these liquids were used in combination with water. Thus, according to this resolution, which is far and away the most dominant resolution among medieval authorities, without water, there is no such thing as hametz. Dough made with fruit juice can be left to rise and it's still not considered hametz.

Rashi seems to have been the first to be asked about matzah made with eggs. The **Tosafot on Pesachim 35b** relate that Rashi had some doubt about the status of “egg water”—probably referring to egg whites. Can dough kneaded with egg whites become hametz? His concern was that he noted that the dough made with egg water became thick, like risen bread. I should note that from a search on the internet, it seems that Rashi's concern was correct—dough made with eggs will rise, and indeed, egg whites provide quality material for the yeast and other agents that aid in rising. However, in contrast with Rashi, Rabbenu Tam would eat matzah made with eggs, particularly on erev Pesah, at a time when he could not eat matzah. Thus, egg matzah on Pesah is originally a dispute between two of the greatest Talmudic commentators in history, Rashi, and his grandson Rabbenu Tam.

R. Yosef Karo, **Shulkhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim 462:5**, codifies the dominant opinion—fruit juices, including eggs, cannot cause leavening.

Therefore, matzah made only with eggs can never become hametz. However, in his gloss on the Shulkhan Arukh, R. Moshe Isserles, the Rema, chimes in that this is not the custom in his lands (Poland and Eastern Europe) and that no one should eat egg matzah except for the sick and elderly if regular matzah is too hard to digest. Note that this is not absolute opposition to the Shulkhan Arukh's ruling that fruit juice cannot cause leavening. It is a hesitant reservation probably for two reasons (both cited by the **G'ra**): 1) water might have been added; 2) the halakhah might actually follow Rashi, who ruled stringently.

Today, according to all opinions, egg matzah should not be used as the mandatory matzah at the seder. Egg matzah is considered “rich matzah” and not “*lehem oni*”—poor man's bread, and therefore, one cannot fulfill one's obligation with it on Pesah. However, during Pesah, Sephardim, who follow the custom of the Shulkhan Arukh, eat egg matzah, but Ashkenazim, who follow the stringency of the Rema, general do not, unless the person is old or sick and needs to eat softer matzah. In other words, egg matzah is certainly kosher for Passover, but is not eaten by Ashkenazim.

To return to my original question of why egg matzah is not found in Israel. The truth is that one can find products here labeled “*matzah ashirah*”—“rich matzah.” But they do not look like matzah. They look and taste like cookies (I think they are made with a lot of sugar). Regular, machine-made egg matzah cannot be usually found out of fear that Ashkenazim will think that this is “regular matzah” and

# FUCHSBERG JERUSALEM CENTER CONSERVATIVE YESHIVA

consume it against Ashkenazi custom, or that people will come to use it at the seder.