

Rav Kook Torah

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Who Brings You Forth

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HaMotzi

Most blessings recited over food refer to God as the Creator. Thus we say: BOREI P'RI HA-EITZ ("Creator of fruits of the tree"), BOREI P'RI HAADAMA ("Creator of fruits of the ground"), BOREI P'RI HAGAFEN ("Creator of fruits of the vine"), and so on.

The blessing for bread, however, does not fit this pattern. Before eating bread, we say HaMotzi - HAMOTZI LECHEM MIN HAARETZ - "Who brings forth bread from the earth."

Why do we not acknowledge God as the Creator of bread, as we do with other blessings?

The wording of this blessing appears to quote God's announcement to Moshe:

"You will know that I am the Eternal your God, Who brings you forth (HaMotzi) from under the subjugation of the Egyptians." (Sh'mot 6:7)

Is there some connection between bread and the Exodus from Egypt?

The Special Function of Bread

The earth contains a wide variety of

nutrients and elements. Through various processes, these elements are formed into foods suitable for human consumption. With regard to foods that are not essential for human life, we cannot say that these elements attain their ultimate purpose when they are transformed into food. They fulfilled certain functions while still in the ground. We cannot positively state that now, as a fruit or vegetable, they are more important for the functioning of the world.

Bread, on the other hand, is the staff of life. Bread is necessary for our physical and mental development. "A child does not know how to call 'Father' and 'Mother' until eating grain" (B'rachot 40b). Due to its importance in sustaining life, bread differs from other foods. The elements used to make bread have attained a significant role which they lacked while they were still buried inside the earth.

The words of HaMotzi blessing - "Who brings forth bread from the earth" - reflect this aspect of bread. The act of "bringing out" draws our attention to two stages: the elements' preliminary state in the ground, and their final state as bread, suitable for supporting humanity. Other blessings focus on the original creation of fruits and vegetables. HaMotzi, on the other hand, stresses the value these elements have acquired by leaving the earth and becoming life-sustaining bread.

What does this have to do with the Exodus from Egypt?

The elements which are used to make bread started as part of the overall

environment (the earth), and were then separated for their special function. So too, the Jewish people started out as part of humanity. Their unique character and holiness were revealed when God took them out of Egypt. "I am the Eternal your God, Who brings you forth from under the subjugation of the Egyptians."

Like the blessing over bread, God's declaration emphasizes two contrasting qualities: the connection of the Jewish people to the rest of the world; and their separation from it, for the sake of their special mission. 📖👉