

SEASONS OF THE MOON

THE MONTH OF NISSAN

No. 10 VOL. 2

The refrigerator had stood in its place for many months but now Pesach was approaching and it would have to be moved.

As its small wheels grudgingly struggled through months of sticky underfridge grunge, a white object came into view; stiff as a board, but devoid of even a hint of mould, a flawless monolithic slice of white bread greeted the first light of day it had seen in many a month.

I marveled at our chemical society that manages to immortalize the transient with no less skill than an Egyptian embalmer.

Time and food don't get on well together.

The Torah (*Shemot* 12:17) tells us to guard the matzot from becoming *chametz*. Rashi comments that the word *matzot* can be read as *mitzvot*, meaning that just as we should guard the matzot from tardiness, similarly we should not delay our performance of mitzvot; rather when a mitzva comes to hand, we should do it immediately.

This Rashi is perplexing: Rashi is the *parshan* par excellence; he tells us the literal meaning of the Torah. It's not his style to deliver homilies.

Secondly, the comparison is difficult to compre-

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hend; there's an enormous gulf between not doing a mitzva in a timely fashion and chametz. For delaying a mitzva one receives no punishment at all; the punishment

for eating chametz, on the other hand, is *karet*, spiritual excision and premature death.

Quite a difference!



The basis of all atheism is the perception that the world has always been here and always will be here. It's an easy mistake to make. Time seems immutable. We divide time into minutes and seconds, but that's only for our convenience. To the untutored eye, time is a megalithic existence with no

beginning or end. Time just is.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

The very first word in the Torah – *Bereishet* – comes to contradict that presumption. *Bereishet*, “In the beginning...” G-d created beginning. Time itself is a creation.

In Hebrew, the word for time is *zman*. The same root appears in the word *hazmana*, which the Talmud uses to mean “preparation.” Time's greatest lie is

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that each moment seems to be prepared from the moment that precedes it; that each moment obliges the one that follows.



Look into a flame flickering and moving.

All we really see when we look at the flame is the combustion of that split-second, for as soon as it shines, that particular flame is burned and gone forever. The flame you see in the next second is a different flame, and the moment after that there is yet another flame ...and another ...and another...

We know that each nanosecond of a burning fire is a separate event, yet the flame gives every appearance of being continuous.

The Medrash describes how G-d made Himself known to Avraham Avinu: Avraham was like a traveler who sees a great building ablaze with light and remarks that such a building must have an owner. Avraham Avinu looked at the creation and saw that this world must also have an owner.

In Hebrew, the expression “ablaze with light” could also mean “ablaze with fire.” In other words, Avraham saw that this world was like a burning flame, that every single second was a discrete existence; he saw that the seeming continuity and immutability of Time was a lie.

It was this perception that showed G-d that Avraham was worthy to be shown the reality behind the lie, and the Creator of time appeared to Avraham.



The truth of this world is that G-d re-makes the world every single second. Every moment is like a flame that blazes and is then replaced with another.

Matza has only two ingredients: flour and water. Bread has a third ingredient.

Time.

The addition of time to matza turns it into chametz. A mitzva is an expression of the will of G-d. Doing a mitzva in a tardy fashion places it into the domain of time. And there can be no greater lie than that.



Pesach is the birthday of the Jewish People. Our mission and the mission of the Torah is to proclaim that G-d creates reality every single second; time has no independent existence of its own.

Therefore during Pesach, right at the beginning of our mission in this world, we avoid the food that embodies time — bread — and eat matza, the spiritual food that is above time.

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