

LAWS OF PESACH April 22 – April 30

Pesach this year extends from Friday night, April 22, until Saturday night, April 30.

BEDIKAT CHAMETZ

During the days preceding Pesach, the house should be thoroughly cleaned. Any chametz that will be sold to a non-Jew should be put in a secure, secluded place. On Thursday, April 21, at nightfall, the search for chametz is done, involving every part of the house where it might have been brought during the year. Areas to be cleaned and checked include the basement, attic, garage, children's pockets, picnic box, lunch box, etc. The Ashkenazi custom is to take a feather and spoon to aid in the check. Sepharadim and others had traditionally hidden ten small (less than an ounce) pieces of chametz in zip lock bags around the house to be found by the person who is doing the search. For the chametz search, a candle or flashlight must be used. Before starting the search, the following berachah is recited:

BARUCH ATAH ADO-NAI ELO-HEINU MELECH HAOLAM ASHER KIDESHANU BEMITZVOTAV VETZIVANU AL BI-UR CHAMETZ.

When the search is concluded, the following declaration is recited:

All chametz and bread in my possession, which I have not removed, or have no knowledge of, shall be null and disowned as the dust of the earth.

All bread and chametz that was found during the search has to be carefully preserved in a bag. In the morning it is burned, together with any chametz left over from breakfast, and the same declaration is recited.

WHAT IS CHAMETZ?

The five types of grain from which chametz can be made are: wheat, spelt, barley, oats and rye. When any of these are mixed with water and left standing, fermentation begins. The mixture coagulates swells, pales, and its surface cracks. Whether or not this is then baked into bread, it is chametz.

To make matzah we take flour of any of the above five species, that has never come in contact with water, mix it with cold water, constantly kneading the dough, roll it out and thoroughly bake it before fermentation can get underway. The Sages set the maximum time allowed at eighteen minutes. The resulting bread is unleavened and free of any suspicion of chametz.

Kitniyot

Legumes such as rice, beans, and lentils cannot become chametz at all. However, since they can be ground into flour which forms a dough-like mixture with water, and also because a few grains of wheat or barley are often found mixed up in bags of legumes, it became the general Ashkenazi custom to forbid the eating of legumes on Pesach. Certain Sephardi communities also have this custom, particularly with regard to rice and/or chick peas. The general Sephardi custom is to permit them, as long as they have been thoroughly checked before Pesach for the presence of any of the five types of grain. Because of the limited application of this restriction, people who do not eat legumes on Pesach may nonetheless eat other foods at the homes of those who do, even if legumes have been cooked in the same utensils. Chametz that was once fit for human consumption remains prohibited, even if it is no longer fit, as long as a dog could eat it. If it has become inedible even to a dog before Pesach, (like ink and certain cosmetics that may be made from chametz), it is no longer considered chametz and Sepharadim may use it on Pesach as may some Ashkenazim. In case of illness (more than just a headache), one may even swallow it in medicines as long as it is not made up into a pleasant-tasting mixture (as in coated tablets, throat lozenges, etc.).

FAST OF THE FIRST BORN: Friday, April 22 firstborns should attend a siyum in order

to eat.

SELLING CHAMETZ, Make sure fill and return sale form below.

The prohibition of eating bread or any type of leaven begins at 10:10 a.m. All leaven must be disposed of by 11:18 a.m. From that time on, only food that is kosher lePesach may be eaten. However, one should not eat any foods that will be eaten at the Seder: matzah, marror, etc. "Kal Chamira" should then be recited:

All chametz and bread in my possession, which I have not removed, or have no knowledge of, shall be null and disowned as the dust of the earth.

If one has any chametz, one is required to sell it to a non-Jew by the above date and time. The legal intricacies covering this transfer of property (the selling to a non-Jew) are many, and only a competent Rabbi should be entrusted with its execution. Our Rabbi will act as intermediary and as representative of the seller and must be given this authority before Pesach, no later than Thursday, April 21. After Pesach, care should be taken not to benefit from chametz belonging to a Jew or patronizing a Jewish store suspected of not having transferred this chametz properly.

KASHERING FOR PESACH

Not only is eating chametz prohibited, but even eating food prepared during Pesach in a chametz pot or with a chametz utensil (spoon, knife, etc.) is also prohibited, even if they are perfectly clean. The reason is that the vessel absorbs the taste of every food. Therefore, when Pesach food is cooked in it, the taste will penetrate and one will be eating chametz on Pesach.

Since the laws of kashering are many and very complicated, it is best to simplify matters by setting aside a new set of dishes, pots, pans, glassware, and flatware to be used only during Pesach. However, under specific conditions, certain utensils that are used during the year for chametz may, after cleaning and kashering, then be used for Pesach.

The following items that were used with hot chametz CANNOT be kashered with boiling water (hagala):

- (a) China, earthenware, porcelain.
- (b) Utensils made from bone or plastic.
- (c) Utensils that cannot be thoroughly cleansed: sieves, grinders, and graters.

According to Sephardic tradition, clear glass does not absorb and may be used for Passover and metals coated with Teflon may be kashered.

THE SEDER

On the first two nights of Pesach it is incumbent upon each of us, men and women alike, to perform the following five mitzvot the first two of which are Torah obligations:

- 1) **The eating of matzah** on the first and second nights of Pesach while reclining on the left side. MATZAH SHEMURA IS REQUIRED on the first two nights of Pesach for the fulfillment of the mitzvah. The wheat used in these special matzot is guarded from the moment of harvest from any water or moisture that would cause the wheat to swell and make it chametz. The matzah is then baked by hand by Jews who know the importance of this mitzvah.
- 2) **Relating the story of the exodus from Egypt**, as it says: "You should relate to your son (the story of Pesach) on this night." Women and children are also required to perform this mitzvah. It is essential that the important sections of the Haggadah should be translated and explained for any who may not understand the context of the Haggadah.
- 3) **Drinking four cups of wine** while reclining to the left. If one's health does not permit the drinking of wine, the wine may be diluted with grape juice or for Sepharadim grape juice may be used. Sepharadim only make Bore Peri Hagefen on the first and third cup whereas Ashkenazim make Bore Peri Hagafen on all four cups.

- 4) **Eating marror** (Sephardic minhag Romaine lettuce Ashkenaz minhag raddish). Care should be taken that the lettuce leaves are checked very carefully for any insects.
- 5) **Reciting the Hallel.** (In Arvit of erev Pesach both men (and women should say full hallel with a berachah.

THE SEDER PROCEDURE

- 6) **Kiddush** is recited over the wine. For Sepharadim just over half of a 3.04 oz. cup of wine and for Ashkenazim a cup holding between 4 and 6 oz should be drunk. When drinking it, it is customary to recline as a sign of freedom. The word Kiddush means to make holy; the first step of the Seder is to create an awareness of holiness and an atmosphere of joy.
- 7) **The Washing of Hands** – two or three times consecutively on each hand from a cup. The blessing is not recited. The ritual washing of the hands parallels that of the priests in the temple. The intent is to purify oneself before eating.
- 8) **The Eating of a Vegetable** - Less than an ounce of any vegetable is dipped into salt water and then eaten. The blessing, Borei Peri Ha'adamah, is recited before eating. When making the Berachah, one should also be conscious to cover the marror. A vegetable is a symbol of spring and regeneration. (One of the names of Pesach is the Festival of the Spring). The salt water represents the tears of the Jewish people who suffered in Egypt. The dipping process was instituted in the Seder to arouse the children's curiosity and stimulate them to ask questions.
- 9) **The Breaking of the Matzah** - The middle matzah is broken and the larger half hidden for use in the Afikomen. The reason is so we will recall the hardships of our forefathers in Egypt—that all they had to eat was broken, unleavened bread. The Sephardic custom is to break the large piece into the shape of a 'vav' and the small piece into the shape of a 'dalet'.
- 10) **The Recitation of the Haggadah** - No matter how knowledgeable we are about Passover, the retelling of the story of the Exodus heightens our awareness and stimulates our consciousness. After the story is completed, the second cup of wine should be drunk. Sephardim only make a berachah on the second and fourth cup of wine Ashkenazim on all four cups.
- 11) **The hands are washed** ritually again as in item 2, but this time with a blessing.
- 12) **Eating the Motzi-Matzah** - Matzah is called the bread of faith because it reminds us of the faith that our forefathers displayed in journeying out of Egypt, without packing food, confident of G-d's help. Everyone must eat at least two ounces of matzah for Sephardim and three to four ounces for Ashkenazim, which is eaten in a reclining position.
- 13) **The Eating of the Marror** - The Marror symbolizes the bitterness of our forefathers' lives in Egypt. It is dipped into, and then shaken free of the Charoset, which in color and composition reminds us of the mortar used to make bricks in Egypt. At least one ounce should be eaten for Sephardim and between one and a half to two ounces for Ashkenazim.
- 14) **A sandwich of matzah and marror** is eaten, commemorating the way Hillel used to celebrate Passover during the time of the Temple at least two ounces of matzah for Sephardim and three to four ounces for Ashkenazim. The sandwich is eaten while reclining.
- 15) **A festival meal**, replete with many delicacies is enjoyed. We are asked to use the best of food, wine, dishes, and silverware to demonstrate our joy at our freedom.
- 16) **The Afikoman** is eaten after the meal in commemoration of the Paschal sacrifice. At least one ounce should be eaten for Sephardim and between one and a half to two ounces for Ashkenazim in a reclining position.
- 17) **The Grace after Meals** is recited over the third cup of wine, thanking G-d for His blessings to us.
- 18) **The Hallel** (praise of G-d) is recited, recalling the many miracles that He performed for us. Then the final cup of wine is drunk.
- 19) **Nirtzah** - The efforts of man are completed and G-d accepts our Seder service
- 20) Ashkenazim pour the cup of Eliyahu Hanavi

COUNTING THE OMER

Starting on Saturday night, April 23, we count 49 days from the first day of Passover to the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot). Maimonides explained the counting of these days as one who patiently awaits a beloved and dear friend. Every day, with hope and anticipation, he looks forward to his arrival. So do we look forward to the holiday of the giving of the Torah. Tradition tells us of adversity that befell the students of Rabbi Akiva during the counting of the Omer, and history records the appalling massacres of the year 1096 by the Crusaders. Therefore, this period has become a period of semi-mourning, in which Jews abstain from weddings and rejoicing. An exception to this is the 33rd day, called Lag BaOmer. On this day weddings are permitted. This period is called "Sefirah," which in Hebrew means, "counting". Every day is counted with a berachah after dark.