



Sephardic Halakhot of Pesah

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The Month of Nissan

Torah considers the month of Nissan as Rosh Hashanah, similar to the first of *Tishre*, to highlight the great events of *Pesah*. Since most of Nissan's days are festive occasions (the first twelve days commemorating the *Mishkan*'s dedication followed by *Pesah*), *tahanunim* supplications (*ana*) are omitted from prayers the entire month.

Birkat HaIlanot

When one sees two blossoming fruit trees during Nissan, *Bircat Ha Ilanot* is recited. This *beracha* is recited only once each year. It may be recited on Shabbat or *Yom Tob*. While the month of Nissan is the ideal time for this *beracha*, it may be recited afterwards. The blessing is not recited subsequent to the blossoming stage, when the fruits are growing.

Searching for Hametz

The Torah prohibits possession of *Hametz* on *Pesah*, it is therefore mandatory to check one's home and remove all *Hametz* before *Pesah*. Notwithstanding the fact that the home was thoroughly cleansed of *Hametz* beforehand, on the night before *Pesah* we perform *Bedikat Hametz*, a search for *Hametz*, in all places where it might be found.

Before beginning the search, we recite the *Beracha Al Bi'ur Hametz* which covers the entire process of getting rid of *Hametz*. This blessing is usually found at the beginning of your *Hagadah*. After the *beracha*, one must be careful not to speak until at least beginning the search, in accordance with the principle of not interrupting between *beracha* and the act for which the *beracha* was recited. It is proper to refrain from digressions and extraneous talk throughout the search so that it will be done correctly. In addition to homes, place of business and cars require checking if *Hametz* is normally brought into them. The search is performed by the light of a single wick candle (a multi-wick is dangerous) or a flashlight. The *beracha* is recited even if one uses only a flashlight.

As the home is usually thoroughly cleansed from *Hametz* before the *bedikah*, it is customary but not mandatory to place pieces of *Hametz* where the searcher will surely find them so that he will have *Hametz* to burn. Immediately after the search at night, the owner should recite *Bitul Hametz*, an annulment/renouncement of *Hametz* in his possession. As most people will continue owning and benefiting from *Hametz*

until the morning, this first *bitul* is directed only to *Hametz* which the owner does not know about.

It is important that one should understand the meaning of the words he/ she is reciting. If one does not understand the traditional Aramaic words of *bitul* (found at the beginning of the *Hagaddah or Mahzor*), he/ she should recite it in English. Translations are readily available.

Erev Pesah The Eve of Pesach 2010

It is forbidden to eat *Hametz* after the fourth *Halakhic* hour of the day beginning from dawn.

Erev Pesach the Eve of Pesach is On Monday March 29th

Hametz must be burned by 11:30 AM

Eating Hametz is prohibited from 10:31 AM

All Hametz must be destroyed by 11:46 AM

It is preferable to completely get rid of all *Hametz* without having to sell any of it. However, selling is permitted even if the *Hametz* remains in the overall confines of one's home, providing the *Hametz*'s specific location is also sold or leased to the non-Jew. Because this transaction must be done according to Halakhic criteria it is advisable for one who sells *Hametz* that is going to remain in the overall confines of his / her home to do so through a rabbi. *Hametz* that will be sold should be gathered together, covered and placed where no member of the household would forget and inadvertently partake of it.

The destruction of any remaining *Hametz* should be done before the end of the fifth hour. It may be accomplished either by burning, shredding, dissolving, etc. It is customary and preferable to destroy *Hametz* through burning. *Hametz* can be left in a garbage receptacle placed by the street curb in front of one's home. It is considered *hefker*, not in one's possession, even if the sanitation department did not remove it by the end of the fifth hour. Some rabbinic authorities suggest that the *Hametz* not be in one's private receptacle but in a carton that will be discarded with the *Hametz*. After getting rid of all *Hametz*, one recites *Bitul Hametz* again. This second *bitul*, unlike the one of the night before, is comprehensive, including all *Hametz* one owns.

Matzah should not be eaten Erev Pesah even in the morning so as to eat the *Matzah* of the Seder with greater desire and appetite. This applies only to *Matzah* with which one may fulfill his obligation in the evening. This does not include egg *Matzah* that may be eaten on *Erev Pesach*.

One should not eat a filling meal of any food in the later afternoon as it may lessen one's appetite for the evening's *Matzah*.

Fast of First Born

There is a custom for first-born-males to fast *Erev Pesah* as a sign of appreciation for the Almighty's miracle of smiting the Egyptian firstborn. This fast is overridden if the first-born partakes in a *seudat mitzvah* (festive meal attached to a mitzvah) including the completion of a section of the Talmud even though he himself has not learned that section.

**Rabbi Levy Invites all first-born to join him for a *Seudat Mitzvah* on
Monday Morning March 29th immediately following serves.
Shacharit begins at 6:30 AM.**

Hametz

The Torah forbids eating, deriving benefit from, or owning *Hametz* during *Pesah*. *Hametz* results when any of the five grain (wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt), after harvesting, makes contact with water and fermentation takes place. Mixtures including *Hametz* are also prohibited, as are edible extracts and alcoholic fermentation of *Hametz*. Bread, cereal, cake, cookies, crackers, pastas and spaghetti from the five grains are pure *Hametz*.

Kitniyot

Rice, soy, corn (maize), potatoes, fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, fish and dairy products are permitted for Sepharadim when in their pure form. If processed, one must be careful that the product does not include or did not absorb from a *Hametz* derivative.

Hametz derivatives unfit for human or animal consumption are not considered food and are permitted on *Pesah*. Included in this category are virtually all deodorants, soaps, cleansers and cleaning agents, polishes, toothpastes, lipsticks, most cosmetics and medicines (all ill-tasting liquids, tablets and capsules), etc.

Matzah

There is a Biblical commandment to eat *Matzah* (unleavened bread) on the first night of *Pesah*. Our ancestors did not have time to allow their dough to leaven before baking as they were chased out of Egypt. It is also symbolic of the "bread of affliction", recalling the slavery of our ancestors.

Matzah is made from flour of one of the five types of grains that can become *Hametz*, kneaded with water and baked before it has a chance to begin leavening.

For this *misvah* one should obtain *Matzah* that has been under supervision from the grain harvest (***Matzah Shemurah***). Each person should make an effort to eat *Shemurah* for the *hamosi*. If not available, *Matzah* under supervision from the

grinding is sufficient. All commercial *Pesah Matzah* in New York is supervised at least from the time of grinding.

Matzah, once baked, may be dipped in water. An elderly or ill person may eat the *masah of misvah* in such a manner. Egg *Matzah* is permitted to be eaten during *Pesah*. Indeed, *Matzah* which was kneaded with fruit juice and not water, which is the standard procedure for making egg *Matzah*, does not become *Hametz* even if the dough was left unbaked for a lengthy period of time. **However, egg *Matzah* is not “poor man’s bread” and cannot be used to fulfill the obligations of the seder.** The *beracha* on regular *Matzah* during all of *Pesah* is *hamosi* even if one is eating a small amount as a cracker. During *Pesah*, *Matzah* is our bread. All year long we recite *mezonot* on regular *Matzah*. The *beracha Al Achilat Masah* is added to *hamosi* only at the Seder. Egg *Matzah*, even during *Pesah*, is *mezonot*.

Utensils for Use on Passover

Pesah requires special utensils to ensure that even a little *Hametz* not enter our food. Glassware does not absorb and merely requires washing to be kosher for *Pesah*. This includes Duralex, Pyrex, Corningware, Corelle and colored glass.

Absorption by utensils from food takes place in the presence of heat, thus utensils primarily used for foods and liquids that are not hot (salad bowls, refrigerator trays, etc.) can be used on *Pesah* after thoroughly washing clean. The same applies to tabletops and counters. Utensils used with heat but known not to be used for *Hametz* all year long are acceptable for *Pesah*, such as teapots, hot water urns and decanters.

Porcelain, enamel and steel sinks are koshered by pouring boiling water all around their receptacle portion. Ovens and their racks should be cleaned for *Pesah* as follows:

After thoroughly cleaning with a scouring agent, leave unused for 24 hours; then heat at maximum for an hour. Self-cleaning ovens merely need to be run through a self cleaning cycle. In the case of microwave ovens, after cleaning, insert a microwave-safe utensils full of water and microwave at maximum for several minutes, until the oven fills with steam.

Dishwashers are koshered by their normal use – boiling water and soap. Table cloths are koshered by washing in soap and water.

The Seder of Pesach

KADESH

After arranging the items on the Seder Table correctly, the head of household recites *kiddush*. Everyone should be standing and attentive. Kiddush is recited after *set hakochavim* (in New York, about 35 minutes after sunset). Each person should have his or her own cup containing at least 3 ounces (*reviit*) of wine and drink at least the majority of the cup. Red wine is preferable but grape juice may be used. This is the first of the four Seder cups. The above regulations apply to all four cups. The *beracha* of *hagefen* is recited on the first and third cups only. The drinking of the four cups and the eating of the *matzot* are done while reclining to the left. A left-handed person also reclines to the left.

URHATS

Each person washes his or her hands for the wet vegetables that are going to be eaten next. A *beracha* is not recited on this washing of hands.

KARPAS

Less than a *kazayit* of a green vegetable (celery is our custom) is eaten after dipping it in salt water. (Less than a *kazayit* to avoid a centuries-old unresolved question: should one who eats a measure that requires *beracha aharona* of *Bore Nefashot* recite that *beracha* if he plans to shortly afterwards recite *hamosi* eventually followed by *Bircat Hamazon*? We recite *Boreh Pri-Haadamah* on the *karpas* vegetable. It is our custom to have intention that this *beracha* cover the *adamah* of the *maror*, which will be eaten later.

YAHAS

The middle *Matzah* is broken, by hand, into two pieces. The smaller piece is replaced between the two whole *matzot* while the larger piece is set-aside for *Afikoman*. At this point there are a wide range of customs that symbolically re-enact the Exodus.

MAGID

One raises the *Matzah* and recites *Ha Lahma Anya*. The tray is removed for children to question, the second cup of wine is poured, *Ma Nishtana* is recited, the tray returned, and the *Matzah* uncovered. The *Haggadah* is read with great joy. Questions are asked, and explanations are given. The relating by fathers to sons of the Exodus from Egypt and the Almighty's miracles is the central theme of the Seder. Those who do not understand Hebrew must perform this *misvah* in a language they understand. English translations are readily available.

ROHTZA

One should wash his or her hands and recite the *beracha Al Netilat Yadayim* to prepare for *Hamosi*.

MOTSI MATSAH

The head of household raises all 3 *matzot* (the two whole and one broken) and recited the *beracha* of *hamosi* and, releasing the bottom whole *Matzah*, the *beracha* of *Al Achilat*

Masah. Reclining to their left, all eat at least one *kazayit* (approximately one ounce). It is preferable to eat two *kazaytim*, one for *Mosi* and one for *Masah*. At least one *kazayit* should be eaten within a four-minute period to be considered a single eating.

MARROR

Kazayit maror (bitter herbs) is dipped in *haroset* (a date, nut and wine mixture), the *beracha Al Achilat Maror* is recited, and the *maror* is eaten without reclining. Romaine Lettuce is the preferred vegetable for *maror* but great care must be taken that it first be thoroughly checked and cleaned of any tiny insects that are often found in it. Escarole or endives are acceptable and generally easier to check.

KORECH

A sandwich containing one *kazayit* each of *Matzah* and *maror* is dipped in *haroset* and eaten in a reclining position after reciting the explanation of this custom, *Zecher Lamikdash* etc. Those for whom it is difficult to have *kazayit Matzah* and *maror* may eat smaller measures for *korech*.

SHULHAN ORECH

The egg and shank-bone are eaten followed by the meal. On the egg we recite *Zecher LeKorban Hagiga*. Nothing is recited on the shank-bone. To distinguish from the *Pesah* sacrifice brought in the days of the *Beit Hamikdash* which was only broiled, the shank-bone should also be cooked. It is important not to be totally satiated during the meal in order to leave room for the *afikoman*, which must be eaten “with appetite”.

SAFON

After the meal a piece of the middle *Matzah* is distributed to each person, to which additional *Matzah* is added to make a *kazayit*. This should be eaten reclining before midnight.

BARECH

The third cup of wine is poured and *Birkat Hamazon* is recited.

HALLEL

Hagefen is recited on the third cup (with intention to also cover the fourth cup) and it is drunk reclining. The remainder of *Hallel* is recited without a *beracha* beforehand, followed by *Nishmat* and the concluding *beracha of Hallel*. The fourth cup is drunk, reclining, followed by *beracha aharona*.

NIRTSÁ

It is customary to sing songs and continue discussion of the Exodus and other miracles that the Almighty wrought until one falls asleep.

Measurements

The measure for a *kazayit Matzah* is widely accepted in our community as one ounce of weight. However, the original measure of a *kazayit* (an olive) is basically a volume, widely interpreted as $\frac{1}{2}$ the volume of an average egg. (The “olive”, although widely cited by the rabbis of old, was supplanted by the egg for actual measurements). Eggs used for determining this measure must be those of the present time and locale. The weight measure we use today was derived from the volume; rabbis of the past calculated the volume and then weighed it for the convenience of the public.

A question has arisen with the one ounce of weight measure. An average-to-large size egg of today displaces approximately two fluid ounces. The cubic volume of one fluid ounce can be completely filled with less than $\frac{2}{3}$ of an ounce (weight) of *Matzah*. Thus, when eating the *motzi-masah* where it is preferable to eat two *kazaytim*, one who is unable to eat two ounces may eat 1.33 ounces for two *kazaytim*. Of course, as stated earlier, *bediabad* (concession) one *kazayit* is sufficient. The measure for a *reviit* wine is (just under) three fluid ounces. This is based on the Talmudic standard that a *reviit* is the displacement of 1.5 eggs and on the fact that an average egg displaces approximately two fluid ounces.

A *kazayit karpas* or *maror* is of slightly lesser weight than a *kazayit Matzah* as vegetables have a lower density of mass and thus a lower weight for the standard volume of half an egg’s displacement.

MEDICINE on Pesach

Most prescriptions today can be filled with kosher for Pesach (“KFP”) certification. For information of the kosher status of your medicines please feel free to contact Rabbi Yamin Levy at the synagogue office 482-8080 or in his office 212 666-0036. The following are some guidelines for those who must take medicine on Pesach.

1. If someone suffers from an illness through which his / her life may become endangered, he / she may eat *Hametz* on Pesach and may use any medication needed to avoid a life-threatening situation, but, if possible, such *Hametz* should be owned by a non-Jew.
2. If someone is ill but his life is not endangered, he /she may not eat *Hametz* on Pesach. However, he/ she may take medicine under certain circumstances as long as he/ she does not take it in the normal way. A Rabbi should be consulted for further information.
3. Cough syrups and other liquid medicines may contain grain alcohol and may not be used on Pesach. When one must take medicine during Pesach, the doctor should be asked to prescribe medicine without alcohol or capsules.
4. Many common over-the-counter medicines require no special certification to be used on Pesach.

**DELEGATION OF POWER
FOR SALE OF CHOMETZ**

KNOW YE that I, the undersigned, fully empower and permit Rabbi Yamin Levy to act in my place and stead, and in my behalf to sell all *Chametz* possessed by me (knowingly or unknowingly) as defined by the Torah and Rabbinic Law (e.g. *Chametz*, possible *Chametz*, and all kinds of *Chametz* mixtures). Also *Chametz* that tends to harden and to adhere to inside surfaces of pans, pots or cooking and usable utensils, and all kinds of live animals that have been eating *Chametz* of mixtures thereof. And to lease all places wherein the *Chametz* owned by me may be found especially in the premises located at _____ and elsewhere.

Rabbi Yamin Levy has the full right to sell and to lease by transactions, as he deems fit and proper and for such time which he believes necessary in accordance with all detailed terms and detailed forms as explained in the general authorization contract which has been given this year to Rabbi Yamin Levy to sell the *Chametz*.

This general authorization is made a part of this agreement. Also, do I hereby give the said Rabbi Yamin Levy full power and authority to appoint a substitute in his stead with full power to sell and to lease as provided herein, the above given power is in conformity with all Torah, Rabbinical regulations and laws, and States. And to this I hereby affix my signature of the _____ day of _____ in the year 5770.

Signature _____

Address _____

City _____