

## From the Rav's desk (Courtesy Rabbi Y Sprung, Mizrahi Synagogue)

### Summary of the Laws of Pesach

#### Please Note:

Due to the multitude of laws governing the Pesach Yom Tov and its preparation, the digested laws that follow should be viewed solely as a summary of the *halachos* pertaining to the proper observance of the holiday.

Please contact me for any further information concerning any doubtful *halachic* decision.

#### Shabbat Hagadol

Shabbat Hagadol commemorates the Jews tying the lamb to their bedposts on Shabbat, the 10<sup>th</sup> Nissan, five days before leaving Egypt. When the Egyptians inquired about this unusual use of the Egyptian god, they were informed that the Jews were going to offer it as a *korban* (sacrifice) to G-d. The Egyptians were powerless to intercede, and no Jew was harmed. It is customary on this Shabbat for all to attend the Rav's *drashah*, that is traditionally longer than usual, focussing upon a Pesach theme.

The *Haftarah* for Shabbat hagadol speaks about the coming of Mashiach on the "great" seminal day of the Hakadosh Baruch Hu (*Malachi* 3:23).

#### Chometz

*Chometz* results when one of the five types of grain (wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt) or their derivatives is permitted to maintain undisturbed contact with water for a period of 18 minutes or longer. Extracts of *chometz*, alcoholic fermentation, foods processed in *chometz*, utensils, and *chometz* admixtures are *halachically* considered *chometz* as well. The Torah forbids an individual to *eat*, *possess* or *derive* benefit from *chometz* during the Pesach Yom Tov. Ashkenazi Jews refrain from partaking of legumes (beans, corn, rice, peas) – *kitniyos* – and their admixtures during Pesach.

#### Removal of Chometz

Prior to Pesach, one must remove all *chometz* from one's properties and jurisdiction. This is accomplished through the following processes:

#### Mechiras Chometz (the Sale of Chometz)

1. All forms of *chometz* not destroyed must be transferred to a Gentile before the end of the "fifth hour" on the 14<sup>th</sup> Nissan. This is normally done through the sale of *chometz* via the Rav as appointed agent for this sale. The sale is bona fide in nature and transfers possession of all *chometz* to the Gentile, accompanied by the subleasing of the property on which the *chometz* is to be found. The non-Jew should be allowed free access to the property and items he has purchased.
2. *Chometz* utensils are rented and their contents are sold. (Sale of utensil would require immersion if and when acquired.)

#### Bedikas Chometz (The Search for Chametz)

1. After *tzais hakochavim* (appearance of 3 stars) on the evening of 14<sup>th</sup> Nissan (or evening prior to taking leave of one's residence within 30 days of Pesach), one must diligently search for *chometz* in all areas in which it may have been stored or eaten. This search is not ceremonial in nature and must include such places as: closets, toasters, medicine cabinets, clothes, cars, toy chests, vacuum bags, etc. As such, proper time must be allotted to the search.

**This year the search is conducted on Sunday evening 13<sup>th</sup> Nissan, after 6.39 PM.**

2. No work, study, or meal should be commenced within ½ hr prior to the search.
3. The search should be facilitated by the aid of a single-wick candle.
4. Prior to the search, the blessing *al biyur chometz* is recited. It is a custom for some to scatter 10 pieces of bread throughout the house prior to the *bedikah*. The mere collection of these morsels should not be misconstrued as the fulfillment of the search.

### **Bittul HeChometz (Nullification)**

After the search, *Kol Chamiroh* is recited, renouncing title to any *chometz* not already set aside for either the next morning's breakfast, sale or destruction. One who does not understand Aramaic should recite *Kol Chamiroh* in his native tongue.

The English translation of the Aramaic formula for *Bitul Chometz* recited after the burning follows:

I HEREBY DECLARE ALL LEAVEN AND CHOMETZ IN MY POSSESSION WHICH I HAVE DISCOVERED OR NOT DISCOVERED OF WHICH I AM AWARE AND OF WHICH I AM NOT AWARE, TO BE NAUGHT AND AS DUST OF THE EARTH.

### **Biur Chometz (Destruction of the Chometz)**

*Chometz* found during the search, and remaining from breakfast, must be destroyed (preferably by fire) during the fifth hour of the "halachically-divided 12 hour day." This is followed by a more encompassing *bitul* nullifying all *chometz* seen or unseen. This can not be recited during the *halachic* sixth hour of the day when the use of *chometz* and its benefits are already forbidden. The Rabbinic prohibition for eating *chometz* begins with the commencement of the *halachic* fifth hour of the day.

### **Eating Matzah on Erev Pesach**

1. It is forbidden to eat *matzoh* usable at the *seder* or consume wine on erev Pesach. One may eat fish, fruit, and meat in moderate amounts that will not detract from his appetite for the *Seder Matzoh*.
2. When erev Pesach falls on a weekday tedious and or profitable work should not be engaged in after *chatzos* (*halachic* midday).

### **Ta'anis Bechorim (Fast of the First Born)**

In gratitude to the Almighty for having been spared during the slaying of the Egyptian first-born, first-born males fast on erev Pesach. A father fasts on behalf of a son too young to fast and a mother fasts for her *b'chor* when the father is a first-born as well. Firstborns may participate in a *siyum*, which enables them to eat during the remainder of the day. This year the fast is commemorated on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> Nissan and the *siyum* will be at 7.05 am.

### **Matzoh**

1. *Shemura matzoh* (i.e. *matzoh* guarded from any possibility of becoming *chometz* and processed expressly for the purpose of *Matzas mitzvah*) should be used during both Seder nights for the different *mitzvos* involving *matzah*.
2. Egg *matzoh*, whole wheat *matzohs* made with fruit juices, and chocolate covered *matzohs* should not be eaten all Yom Tov by anyone, excepting the sick or elderly.

### **Tefillos (Prayers)**

1. *Tachanun*, *tzidkascha tzedek*, fasts and eulogies are deleted during the entire month of Nissan.
2. *Mizmor l'soda* and *lamnatzai'ach* are omitted on erev Pesach and Yom Tov itself.

3. Full *Hallel* is recited the first two days of Pesach. (It is a custom in some shuls to recite the entire *Hallel* on the first two nights of Pesach.) Half *Hallel* is recited during the remainder of the holiday.
4. *4.Mashiv Haruach u'Morid HaGashem* is deleted beginning with the *repetition* of the *Musaf sh'moneh esrai* on the first day of Yom Tov.
5. *Vesain Bracha* is substituted for *tal u'matar* in the weekday *shmoneh esrai*, beginning with the first night of *Chol Hamoed*.
6. Women who normally recited *shehecheyanu* with the kindling of Yom Tov candles do not recite *shehecheyanu* on the last two days of Pesach when ushering in the *Yom Tov*.
7. *Yaaleh Veyavo* is inserted in *Birchas Hamazon* during the entire eight days. If one forgets its recitation and begins the next *brachah*, the entire benching must be repeated.
8. There is a dispute regarding the wearing of *tefillin* during *chol hamoed*. Most authorities agree that those who are accustomed to wearing them on these days should not recite the two accompanying blessings.

### **Chometz discovered during Pesach**

*Chometz* discovered during *chol hamoed* should be immediately destroyed. *Chometz* found during Shabbos or *Yom Tov* should be covered with a vessel and destroyed after *havdalah*.

### **Sefiras Ha-Omer (Counting the Omer)**

1. Beginning with the second night of Pesach until the night preceding Shavuot, the *Omer* is counted, computing the days and weeks in the enunciated formula.
2. If, during the day, one realizes that s/he has forgotten to count the preceding evening (or if s/he is doubtful), one should count immediately without the accompanying *brachah*. One who has entirely missed a day (and night's) count should continue counting **without** a blessing.
3. There are different customs regarding the 33 day "mourning" period within *Sefirah*. Some observe it from Pesach until Lag B'Omer, others observe from 1 Iyar until Shavuot (except Lag B'Omer), and yet others observe it from the first day Rosh Chodesh Iyar till 3 Sivan (except Lag B'Omer).

**As Lag B'Omer this year falls on Sunday, following Shabbos Kodesh, according to minhag Ashkenaz, haircuts and shaving are already permitted on Friday, Erev Shabbos in honour of Shabbos itself.**

4. Weddings, parties, musical entertainment, and haircutting are prohibited during the period of mourning. When crossing the **international dateline** to Australia from the West Coast of the U.S.A. or from Israel, one should count the "**missed day**" upon returning, **without** a *brachah*, and continue counting the **next day's** Omer (the evening of one's arrival) **with** a *brachah* (מועדי ספר).