

The Jewish

Weekly

Pesach

Guide,

Halachot, Minhagim and stories

for the year 2025 / 5785

According to Shulchan Aruch Harav, Mishna Berurah and Nittei Gavriel

All times listed are for Jerusalem only as per www.myzmanim.com

Based on Rabbi Shmuel Lesches's Halachah Sheets

Reviewed by Reb Elimelech Rabinowicz שליט"א, Rav of Tzeirei Kehal Chassidim, Shaarei Chessed

Compiled by Yossi Fraenkel

in memory of his grandparents

ר' ראובן בן הרב משה אליעזר הלוי ע"ה

וחיה ברכה בת ר' נפתלי משה ע"ה רבינוביץ

ר' יוסף בן ר' אורי ע"ה

ומלכה בת ר' יצחק צבי הלוי ע"ה פרנקל

ר' ברוך שמחה בן ר' אליהו דוב הכהן ע"ה כהן

And in memory of his close friend and mentor,

ר' מנחם משה בן ר' נפתלי הירצקא ז"ל

דבורה חנה ע"ה בת מנחם מענדל שליט"א

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FOREWORD

In honor of Pesach, The Jewish Weekly is pleased to present our very own Pesach Guide, replete with Halachot and Stories.

“The Jewish Weekly” is a weekly publication, which can be found on our website, www.thejweekly.org as well as being a popular download on ladaat.info, dirshu.co.il, yiddishevinkel.com, torahtable.com and parshasheets.com’s websites as well as through our ever-growing email list and many WhatsApp groups.

“The Jewish Weekly” is a compilation of stories and Divrei Torah and before every Chag or fast “The Jewish Weekly” releases a Halacha Guide which has grown “bli ayin harah” to becoming the most popular Halacha companion in English, due to its diversity, compiled extensively from the Shulchan Aruch Harav, Mishna Berurah and Nittei Gavriel.

On behalf of “The Jewish Weekly” I would like to thank my dear beloved parents, Rabbi Gershon and Rivka Fraenkel, for all their hours of research, proofreading, distribution, sponsorships and emotional support. It’s thanks to you both that what started as a dream with only 100 printed copies, has grown to now being one of the most popular publications in the central Jerusalem area and worldwide.

The “Pesach Guide” is only available online, to be viewed or downloaded from either our website www.thejweekly.org or the aforementioned websites.

To subscribe to “The Jewish Weekly” please email; editor@thejweekly.org or visit our website; www.thejweekly.org

At this time, I urge you to join me in prayer with all our hearts, for the healing of all those injured, both mentally and physically, for the safe return of those taken as hostages, as well as Divine Protection for our brave IDF soldiers, police officers, medical professionals, firefighters, ZAKA members, security personnel and all those citizens protecting us in Israel as well as around the world, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah.

May we be blessed with an amazing summer,
Chag Pesach Kasher Ve'Sameach,
Yossi Fraenkel,
Editor

Laws & Customs: Chodesh Nissan

For the year 5785

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The Jewish
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🕊 MONTH OF NISSAN

Some have the custom to visit a cemetery on Erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan.

Tachnun is not recited the entire month.

Some say Lamnatzeach and 13 middot, besides for Erev Pesach and some don't say the whole month, the Yehi Ratzon after Kriat Hatorah during the week is omitted too as it is a kind of Tachnun.

Some hold that an Avel (within 12 months of a parent's passing or within 30 days of a spouse, child or sibling's passing) should not serve as the Chazzan in Shul the whole of Nissan, besides for a Yahrzeit.

Others, including Chabad, hold that they do serve as Chazzan, besides for Pesach.

There is a custom to read the portion of the Nassi from a Sefer Torah or from a Chumash or Siddur, each of the first twelve days of Nissan, each day representing one of the tribes, followed by the Yehi Ratzon printed in the Siddur. It is even recited by a Kohen and Levi.

Some have the custom to start the first day from Birchat Kohanim and some (including Chabad) start from vayehi byom kalot Moshe.

On the twelfth day, some continue with reciting from "Zot Chanukat Hamizbeach" until "Ken Assah et Hamenorah", some (including Chabad), recite the above on the thirteenth day, but without reciting the Yehi Ratzon.

Some have the custom not to eat Matzah from Rosh Chodesh Nissan and some refrain thirty days prior to Pesach, and some eat up until Erev Pesach. However, Matzah that is Chametz may be eaten until Erev Pesach.

One may not fast during Nissan, even those who fast on a Yahrzeit, with the exception of a Chattan and Kallah, who some say fast even on Rosh Chodesh Nissan.

During the month of Nissan, we do not eulogize over someone who has died.

Some have the custom not to go to cemeteries in the month of Nissan as these are days one does not say Tachnun. That being said, for the Yahrzeit of a Tzaddik, one may go to daven.

One should not lay a headstone during the month of Nissan, although there are some who allow it.

It is a general custom to give money (known as מעות חטים – money for wheat), to make sure that less fortunate people have all the necessities for Pesach.

During the month of Nissan, one recites the applicable Brachah when seeing blossoming fruit-trees for the first time.

Av Harachamim and Tzidkatecha are omitted each Shabbat in Nissan.

Haircuts may be taken only until Erev Shabbat, 13th of Nissan (see further).

🕊 SHABBAT (7TH NISSAN, PARSHAT VAYIKRA)

Some have the custom to say Piyutim during the Amidah repetition of Shacharit.

One attends a Shabbat Hagadol Drashah about the practical Halachot of Pesach as many Halachot are already applicable prior to Shabbat Hagadol. The usual Kaddish D'rabanan is recited at the conclusion of the Drashah.

Some also attend a Shabbat Hagadol Drashah next week for Shabbat Hagadol and Erev Pesach.

On Motzei Shabbat Vihi Noam and V'Atah Kadosh are recited followed by Kaddish Titkabel like usual as there is a full week before Pesach.

After Maariv, one says Kiddush Levana.

One should empty their pockets from Chametz before putting away their Shabbat clothes.



The Last Clean Cup

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Every year, in honor of Passover, members of the Baal Shem Tov's household purchased a large quantity of new glasses to be used for the duration of the holiday. Of course, the glasses that were to be used would first be immersed in a mikvah, following Jewish law.

The glasses came in a variety of shapes and sizes. And in classic Jewish legal sources, there is a system for measuring liquids, with specific names for the various amounts. In the Baal Shem Tov's home, the glasses were referred to by the Jewish name for the amount of liquid they were able to contain. Thus, a glass that contained 3-4 ounces was called a revi'it glass, etc.

Before Passover, the Baal Shem Tov would look through the glasses and instruct which glasses could be set upon the table and which should be set aside. He provided no reasons for his directives, but everyone understood that his reasoning was a product of his exalted spiritual level.

Thus passed the first seven days of Passover.

Then, the final meal on Passover, known as "Moshiach's meal," was special. It was open to the public; everyone who passed through the Sage's door was free to enter and partake of the festivities.

One year, before Moshiach's meal began, the Baal Shem Tov instructed that a certain glass be removed from the table because it had not been immersed. After, during the meal, a newcomer entered and asked for some wine. "Sorry," he was told, "but there are no more clean glasses."

"What do you mean?" he asked with surprise, pointing to the glass that had been set aside. "I see a clean glass right over here that no one is using!"

"Oh," he was told, "that glass has not been immersed in the mikvah and must not be used."

"It doesn't matter," he replied dismissively, reaching for the glass.

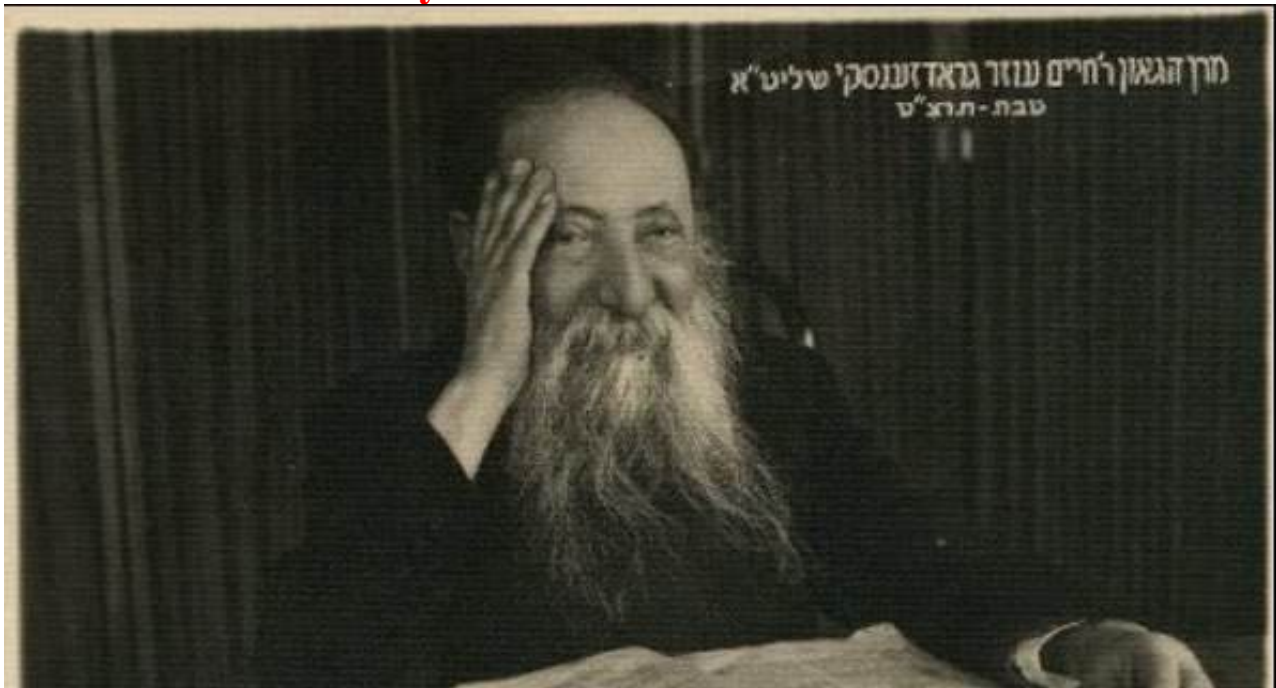
At that point, the Baal Shem Tov, who had been silent until this point, interrupted. "He just testified about himself," he declared in a sad tone.

The words were mysterious to everyone aside from the man himself. Hearing the Rebbe's caring words of rebuke, he admitted his shortcoming. It was true. He and his wife were not particular about the laws of family purity, which require a previously menstruant woman to immerse in a mikvah before being intimate with her husband.

Inspired by this revelation of the Baal Shem Tov's extraordinary holiness, the couple resolved to mend their ways.

A Unique Pesach Seder

By Rabbi Yoni Schwartz



Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky, the chief rabbi of Vilna, had legendary Ahavas Yisroel (Love for a fellow Jews). One year, three weeks before Pesach, the non-religious leader of the Jewish socialist organization at the University of Vilna received a message from him. The message stated that the Rav would like to meet him. Curious, the young Jew began to make his way over.

As he arrived, the Rav warmly greeted him and offered him cake and tea. He then explained that there are about 3,000 non-religious Jews in his organization and he would like to do a Pesach Seder for them. The Rav added that if he does a Seder, nobody will show up, however, if the leader of their organization does a Seder, many will come.

Rav Chaim Ozer was even willing to cover the costs of the Matzah, Marror, and four cups of wine for each person, no matter how large the crowd. Being willing to pay for Matzah (which is pretty expensive), Marror, and that much wine for thousands of students is accepting a major financial burden.

Nevertheless, for the Rav, to remind thousands of people of their Jewish identity and their collective history, it was all worth it. Indeed, the leader of the group made the Seder and thousands of Jews attended with the event being a massive success.

Comment: The exodus from Egypt begins our story as a free nation and is a pivotal moment in the formation of our collective Jewish identity. Hashem fights for the freedom of a powerless group of slaves against the world's most powerful empire. Every Shabbos during Kiddush we say, "a remembrance of the exodus from Egypt." Each week we "remember" because, although learning forms our character, remembering forms our identity.

Our identity is only as strong as our memory. That is why many Jews go off the derech (veer off the Torah path). They lose their Jewish identity because nobody has ever reminded them of their Jewish story. What we remember shapes our destiny and Rav Chaim Ozer wanted to make sure that each Jew remembers who he/she is: a child of Hashem.

The Reward of a Pesach Mitzvah

By Rabbi David Ashear

There's an amazing story told by Rabbi Yitzchak Shlomo Unger of Bnei Brak, which shows how much Hashem loves us when we go above and beyond our limits to follow the Torah and fulfill the mitzvot Hashem gave us!

One morning, one of Rabbi Unger's congregants, whom we'll call Yosef, came to him all shaken up about a dream he had had that night and related the following: Thirty years earlier, Yosef had been in a labor camp in Auschwitz. Toward the end of the war, Moshe was assigned to his barracks, he appeared to be very pious, the son of an illustrious Rabbi, who was following in his father's footsteps.

Moshe had just been separated from his wife and children, who were taken to the gas chambers. Despite what he went through, he clung to Hashem, using his spare moments to learn and pray, and gave chizuk in Emunah (Faith) to the other inmates. As the Yom Tov of Pesach was approaching, Moshe turned to Yosef and said, "I managed to save up enough flour to bake two k'zeisot – (measures) of matzah. If you go bake them, I'll give you one k'zayit, and we'll each do the mitzvah properly."

Yosef accepted and he managed to bake the matzot, but before he could make it back to the barracks, a Nazi caught him and started to viciously beat him. The matzah fell out of his jacket. The Nazi saw it, smashed it, and struck him again more forcefully. When the brute was finally done, Yosef was bloody and sore. He gathered up whatever fragments he could and managed to salvage one k'zayit worth of matzah.

The question now arose. Who should eat it? Moshe, who owned the flour, or Yosef, who took the beating for baking the matzah? The men came to the agreement that Moshe, who owned the flour, would eat the k'zayit, but Yosef, who took the beating, would get the reward in Heaven for it. The next day, Moshe sang Hallel as they labored.

He sang a little too loudly for one of the Nazis, who got angry and killed him on the spot.

Yosef managed to survive the war and rebuilt his life, eventually getting married and having children and grandchildren. Now, 30 years after the war ended, he had had a strange dream in which he saw his friend Moshe, his face was shining. "Remember when I ate the matzah in the labor camp and gave you the reward.?" he said. "Please, give that reward back to me, I need it. Yosef replied in the dream, "I risked my life for that matzah. I took a beating for it. Why should I give it up'?"

And with that, Moshe left his dream...

In the morning, Yosef remembered the dream and was very disturbed. That's when he came to Rabbi Unger and told him what happened. He asked the Rabbi if he should give up the reward. Rabbi Unger said, "I don't know how to answer this question, but I will send you to the Rebbe of Machnovka, who will be able to help you."

Yosef presented his dilemma to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe told him, "It is only proper that you give him the reward." Yosef then asked, "Why is that proper? I suffered for it." The Rebbe replied, "Your friend Moshe can no longer do mitzvot, nor can his children, who also perished in the war. You, baruch Hashem, are alive, with a family. You can still fulfill mitzvot. You will also receive the rewards for all your children doing mitzvot, as well as their children, until the end of time. You can still put on tefillin; you can pray; you can make berachot; you can keep Shabbat and you can eat a k'zayit of matzah. Your potential is endless.

"Moshe, on the other hand, can't do anything. He doesn't have people doing mitzvot for him. Isn't it proper that you should at least give him the mitzvah that he did?"

Yosef agreed. The Rebbe then told him, "I want you to go to my shul late tonight, when nobody's there. Stand in front of the Aron HaKodesh. Think about all you went through to bake that matzah, and the beating that you took. And only then, wholeheartedly, say that you give all that up to Moshe." Yosef did as he was told, and that night a beaming Moshe came to him in a dream and thanked him for what he had done.

The next morning, Yosef went to the Rebbe and told him what happened. The Rebbe replied, "I want you to learn a lesson from this. Moshe was a very pious man, the son of a great tzaddik. He grew up religious and spent all his time in Avodat Hashem, even in the labor camp. After he lost his wife and children, he still kept his Emunah and never stopped learning and praying. He died while saying Hallel, al kiddush Hashem. Chazal (Pesachim 50a) tell us that anyone who dies al kiddush Hashem is elevated to a place in Gan

Eden that no one else could reach. And still, after all that, years later, he is still yearning to go higher in Gan Eden. And for that, he needed the merit of this difficult mitzvah."

We can't imagine what mitzvot do for us. And when we do them in the face of difficulties, they become infinitely greater. How fortunate are we that we have opportunities to fulfill mitzvot all the time!

May we all have uplifting Seder nights, and may we be able to convey the story of our redemption to our children and grandchildren so that they may grow up and convey it to their children in order to link the generations. May we also learn from the story the importance of our mitzvot and how much they help to elevate the Neshamot of our ancestors in Olam Habah as we look forward to the coming of the Mashiach in our days! Amen!

Reprinted from an email from Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon.

Kriyat Yam Suf

By Rabbi Nachman Zakon

As all the Jews watched, the greatest miracle they had ever seen happened before their eyes. The waters of the sea split! With the Egyptian army chasing after them, wanting to capture or kill them, the Jews raced into the sea, which then became dry land! Many, many miracles happened on that night.

The sea didn't just split in half. The raging sea split into twelve separate paths. The waters of the sea rose up to become frozen solid walls. Each shevet (tribe) passed through its own pathway. As the Jews walked on their roads, Hashem made roofs over them. They didn't have to step into the wet mud of the sea bed. Instead, there was a dry floor under their feet.

Not only was it dry, it was beautiful, since it dried like floor tiles. And Hashem made a roof over their heads. The walls were see-through. That way people could see their friends and relatives from different shevatim, walking safely across what had been the sea.

Imagine: The Jews are walking through the dried sea, and a little child starts to cry. He's thirsty! His mother touches the wall — and out comes sweet water. And what about food? There's plenty to eat. The Jews walking through the tunnels see fruit trees miraculously growing out of the ground. There's even some grass growing for the animals to munch on.

The Tailor Who Had No Matzah

By Rabbi Hillel Baron

The evening before Passover is a busy one. Aside from the countless tasks needed to prepare for the joyous holiday, that evening is the time when Jews all over search their homes for any remnants of leaven (chametz), which are carefully collected and burned the next morning.

On that night, Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch, typically prayed the evening service quickly so he could begin the important mitzvah of cleansing his home of chametz as soon as possible.

One year, however, he prayed with intense fervor for several hours, almost like it was Yom Kippur. Afterward he secluded himself in his room for a long time, deep in thought.

The Maggid's students were perplexed and waited anxiously for their teacher to leave his room and perform the mitzvah of the night. Finally, some of the closest students ventured to knock on his door to ask: "Rebbe, what is happening? It is already well past midnight!"

"It is not good," the Rebbe answered, "the Heavens are holding me back from doing the search."

Several hours later, the Maggid finally emerged from his room and announced: "There is a Jew in our area who does not have matzah for Passover, and I cannot search for chametz until we find him and take care of him!"

The chassidim immediately organized groups and began a thorough search of the city. Alas, they returned empty-handed, having not found a single Jewish person without matzah.

The Rebbe was quiet for a while and then replied: "I cannot do the search until you find

that Jew! Look far and wide, even outside the city."

Finally, they succeeded. Two chassidim had made their way to a tiny village and found the only Jew in the hamlet. When they woke him up and asked if he had matzah, he let out a great sigh and told them his story.

A tailor by trade, he would save his extra money to give to those in need. Every year before Passover, he would come to the city and contribute a respectable sum to the Maggid to distribute among the needy, and he would personally also distribute funds to help others obtain their needs for the holiday.

This year, he had been bedridden for many months and his savings had dwindled to the extent that it was already the eve of Passover and he had absolutely nothing with which to celebrate the holiday, not even matzah.

Much to his surprise, the chassidim began laughing with relief and insisted that he come with them to the Maggid.

As soon as the tailor arrived, the Maggid gave him a warm welcome and handed him a large sum of money to buy holiday provisions for himself and to distribute to others as was his custom. Then, at long last and with great joy, the Maggid performed the search for chametz together with his students.

Have we done everything we can to ensure that every Jew has what he or she needs for Passover? How about those who are distant and isolated?

The Fifth Question

By Rabbi Asharon Baltazar

For the eight days of Passover, Rascov, a small community in what is now known as Transnistria, became a colorful epicenter of Jewish life as guests from the surrounding towns and villages descended upon it. From all strata of society, its visitors had come to absorb the marvelous Seder of Rabbi Yosef, son of the great Rabbi Shabtai. He sat at the table's head, dressed in a brilliant white robe, his glowing face resembling that of an angel, and his wonderful presence filling every corner of the packed room.

The detail that perhaps stood out most in his guests' minds was the fact that there were no seating arrangements. Whoever arrived first merited to sit by the Rebbe's side, with no preference given to those guests of greater stature, and a common but unforgettable sight was a simple water-carrier sitting to Rabbi Yosef's right and a woodchopper to his left. "All Your people are righteous," Rabbi Yosef regularly said. "All come from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and there's no need to treat one as an inferior."

The same went for the women, who filled a nearby chamber. There were no reserved seats closest to the Rebbetzin. Everyone sat together, one family, united.

Rabbi Yosef read the Haggadah in a loud, clear voice so that all present were able to hear him, and for the women and children sitting in the adjacent room with his Rebbetzin, he translated every line into Yiddish. He then followed with his novel explanation of the verse, either through a Kabbalistic lens or a homiletic one. Every word was uttered with holy conviction and fiery enthusiasm. After concluding the Seder, he began to chant the Songs of Songs and danced around the table, joined by his many guests.

"When Rabbi Yosef sings around the Seder table," Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heshel of Opatow

(Apta) would say, "a Heavenly procession of angels immediately swoops into that room to learn how to praise their Creator. For in those moments, Rabbi Yosef's soul ascends before the Creator Himself and arouses mercy for those who ask."

For this reason, a follower of Rabbi Yosef was permanently present at the Seder for many years. He and his wife were childless, and the two persistently requested a blessing from Rabbi Yosef. Yet his answer was always the same: "Now is not the time."

One year, the couple came to Rascov, their broken hearts buoyed by a sliver of hope. Night fell, and after the evening Passover prayers, the man found a spot behind Rabbi Yosef's chair while his wife stood near the Rebbetzin in the adjacent room, which opened to the table's head.

Following the Seder, Rabbi Yosef flipped to the Songs of Songs and started belting out the words in his special melody. His singing was mirrored by the crowd, the noise in the room slowly swelling to rapturous heights, as it seemed no one - not even the heavens and earth - was able to resist singing the praises of the Jewish People. When Rabbi Yosef reached the words, "What will you see for the Shulammit, as in the dance of the two camps," he sprang to his feet and began to dance. Almost immediately, the guests found themselves joining hands - wealthy and poor, the simpletons and rabbis - circling around the old Rebbe.

One man avoided all the excited flurry, his spirit sodden with worry. He occasionally glanced at his wife, who stood in the other room, quietly watching the proceedings with tears streaming down her face. That afternoon, they had once again begged Rabbi Yosef to bless them with children, only to be turned away as usual.

The dancing finally stopped. Rabbi Yosef turned to sit back down, but found the sullen woman in

his path, unable to contain her silent tears anymore.

“Rebbe!” she cried. “I swear that I won’t move from here until you command Heaven to bless me with a child!”

Her outburst caused the room to immediately fall quiet. Rabbi Yosef regarded her sadly, and with an overwhelming rush of shame, the woman realized what she had done.

But the slight frown on Rabbi Yosef’s face slowly melted, replaced by warm contentment. Rabbi Yosef raised his eyes heavenwards.

“Master of the Universe,” he said in a loud voice. “These are the words of our sages recorded in the Mishnah: ‘A glass of wine is poured for him, and the son asks [the Four Questions].’ Every Jew is required to fulfill this commandment, yet I, Yosef the son of Rabbi Shabtai, ask You: Why haven’t You granted this couple with a son of their own who can ask these four questions?”

“Our sages are also recorded as saying, ‘And we distribute nuts for the children on the eve of Passover to arouse their curiosity.’ Why hasn’t this poor couple of Yours been granted the same opportunity?”

Rabbi Yosef swept the room with a look of intense triumph.

“Passover is a time of favor for the childless. Sarah, our matriarch, was barren, and our sages say that she had no uterus. Yet, Sarah gave birth on Passover, exactly one year after receiving news that she would bear a son. This is a time for mercy for those in need of children.”

As he finished speaking, Rabbi Yosef turned to the woman.

“I promise that you’ll be hugging your son next year. Return to your place.”

Indeed, the following year, the tzaddik’s blessing came true

Reprinted from an email from chabad.org.

The Healing Power of Matzah

By Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

Reb Tzvi Kintzlicher zt”l was rav of Seban, Romania (until he moved to Yerushalayim in 5709). Due to severe stomach pains, he traveled to the medical center in Klausenberg, where the doctors urged him to have immediate surgery. Reb Kintzlicher realized that if they would operate on him right then, he wouldn’t be home in time for Pesach.

So, he told them that he wants to go home, and will return right after Pesach. The doctors tried to persuade him to remain, but when they saw he was adamant, they told him to be careful to only eat light foods, such as eggs, milk, and fruits.

Reb Kintzlicher was planning to keep these rules, but at the Seder he decided to eat matzah soaked in milk. While eating the matzah he felt something positive happening to his stomach. He ate matzah on the second night of Pesach too, and when he

finished eating that kezayis, he didn’t have any stomach pains at all.

On Shabbos after Pesach, he stood up on the bimah of his beis medresh and gravely told his congregation that he was leaving for a serious operation. "Pray for me, because who knows if I will survive..."

When he returned to Klausenberg, the doctors examined him, and saw that he was better. “Which doctor did you go to?” they asked, stunned. He told them that he was cured with the mitzvah of eating matzah, the healing food.” One of the doctors said, "A great miracle happened to you. But I've always known and I've seen it several times: everything we doctors know is like nothing when Hashem desires differently."

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🌀 CLEANING AWAY THE CHAMETZ

It is improper to complain about the work and effort required in preparing for *Pesach*.

One should remember to clean or discard any *Chametz* found in the “less obvious” locations such as vacuum cleaners, brooms, mops, floor ducts, kitchen walls, car interiors (including rented cars), car-seats, baby carriages, highchairs (the tray should also be lined), briefcases, pocketbooks, phones, mobile devices, computer keyboards and other devices commonly handled when eating.

Items regularly used around *Chametz* (e.g. cookbooks, *Birkonim*, *Siddurim* and *washing cups*) must be stored with the *Chametz* that is sold for *Pesach*. *Sefarim* and toys should be cleaned well or included in *Mechirat Chametz*. Some play items such as plasticine may contain *Chametz* and must be included in *Mechirat Chametz*.

Tablecloths or napkins should not be used if they were starched with a substance that may contain *Chametz*. One should also ensure that starched clothing does not come into contact with food.

Shabbat candlesticks should be cleaned thoroughly. If the usual tray will be used on *Pesach*, it should be cleaned well and covered in foil. No food should be placed on the candlestick tray on *Pesach*.

Garbage cans should be thoroughly cleaned. Before the end time of *Biur Chametz*, City bins should be placed in the public domain for the entire *Pesach*, with the bin and its contents deemed ownerless.

New toothbrushes should be prepared for *Pesach*.

A *Rav* should be consulted regarding the use of vitamins and medicines (taken orally) which may contain *Chametz*.

Pet food must be *Chametz*-free. Some say, it may contain *Kitniyot*. Cages, enclosures and feeding bowls must be thoroughly cleaned.

One does not need to clean behind or under heavy furniture rarely moved, as long as there are no plans to move it on *Pesach* itself. [Even if one knows for certain that there is *Chametz* there, one may include it in the *Mechirat Chametz*.]

🌀 KASHERING

It is customary to avoid *Kashering* utensils where possible, and to instead use utensils designated exclusively for *Pesach*. [If *Kashering* is performed, it should be done under the guidance of one who is well versed in the relevant *Halachot*.]

Dishwashers, regular ovens, continuous-cleaning ovens, toaster ovens, microwave ovens, grills and BBQs are not *Kashered* and used for *Pesach*. Self-cleaning ovens which reach approximately 480°C/900°F may be *Kashered* by running it through a full clean cycle; the oven door and seals should be cleaned well beforehand.

For gas cooktops, the grates are *Kashered* through *Libbun Gammur* (heating the grates until they glow red-hot in the dark). The burners, drip-trays and cooktop surface beneath the grates are *Kashered* by cleaning them thoroughly, after which *Libbun Kal* (heating the metal until the other side is hot enough to scorch paper) is performed. One way to achieve all of this is by turning all the burners on the highest,

and covering the entire cooktop with a *Blech* until the grates glow red-hot, by which time the other components of the cooktop will have reached the heat of *Libbun Kal*. [Do not leave the stove unattended when *Kasher*ing with this method, and ensure adequate ventilation.]

For standard electric cooktops (where the burner coils are exposed), the coils are *Kasher*ed through *Libbun Gommur* (turning them onto the highest setting until they glow red-hot), while the burners, drip-trays and cooktop surface are *Kasher*ed by cleaning them thoroughly, after which *Libbun Kal* is performed.

If the cooktop surface cannot be *Kasher*ed through *Libbun Kal* (e.g. if made of glass or enamel), it may instead be covered with a durable and heat-proof covering or lining.

Cooktop knobs and backsplashes should be cleaned and lined with foil.

Induction cooktops and electric smoothtops (where the burner coils lie beneath a flat ceramic glass surface) are not *Kasher*ed nor used for *Pesach*.

Wooden or laminate tabletops and countertops are *Kasher*ed by cleaning them thoroughly (including crevices) and waiting 24 hours. Then, after ensuring that the surface is thoroughly dry, one pours boiling water from a kettle that has just been removed from the source of heat, ensuring that the flow of water from the kettle to the entire surface is direct and uninterrupted.

Stone countertops are *Kasher*ed similarly, but the boiling water is poured over an *Even Meluban* (red-hot stone) which is moved around (or right above) the entire surface as the water is poured over it. The *Even Meluban* remains effective as long as it causes the boiling water to bubble.

Metal countertops and sinks are *Kasher*ed with boiling water and an *Even Meluban*, in the manner described above. The water should be poured over the lowest surfaces first, before moving upward. Alternatively, they may be *Kasher*ed through *Libbun Kal* (blowtorching until the other side of the metal is hot enough to scorch paper).

Metal faucets and faucet handles are *Kasher*ed by pouring boiling water (in the manner described above for tabletops and counters). The hot water tap should be turned on and running through the interior of the faucet at the time that it's exterior is being *Kasher*ed. Bleach should be poured down the sink drain and onto any crevices between the sink and the sink drain. Any tap filters, aerators, strainers and sponges should be replaced.

The kettle used to boil the water for *Kasher*ing is customarily reserved for this purpose alone, and is used neither with the *Chametz* nor with the *Pesach* cooking.

If a tabletop or countertop will be damaged by *Kasher*ing, or is made of a material that cannot be *Kasher*ed, one should cover it well instead, ensuring that no liquid is trapped beneath.

After *Kasher*ing, all countertops, backsplashes, tables and cooktop surfaces should be lined or covered. Sinks should also be lined or fitted with sink inserts.

A separate *Blech* and urn is used for *Pesach*. Pantries, cupboards, shelves, fridges and freezers (defrosted first) should be thoroughly cleaned with a cleaning agent, and lined. The fridge/freezer rubber door seals should be cleaned as well, and the interior circulation vents should not be blocked, so as not to cause damage.

Fans, hoods and other areas above stoves and ovens should be cleaned and ideally

covered due to the steam that circulates when cooking.

☞ MECHIRAT CHAMETZ

Mechirat Chametz is effective only if one truly commits to sell his *Chametz* in an unconditional and absolute sale. It is therefore customary to perform a *Kinyan* (act of acquisition) when authorizing the Rav to sell the *Chametz*. [However, this *Kinyan* is not an absolute requirement.]

Mechirat Chametz must occur before the fifth seasonal hour (according to the Magen Avraham 11:23am and according to the Gra and the Baal Hatanya 11:36am) on *Erev Shabbat*, in keeping with the usual time schedule every other year. However, it is preferable to visit the Rav before the night of *Bedikat Chametz* (i.e. Thursday night). Practically, one should not wait until then, and instead go at the earliest opportunity.

When the householder sells the *Chametz*, his dependents (who dwell with him permanently) do not need to, unless they own *Chametz* independently.

Chametz belonging to a *Shul* or public organization should be sold by the office-bearer responsible for finances.

In the sale, one includes all *Chametz* and *Chametz* utensils. Since the actual location of the *Chametz* is also leased to the non-Jew, one should list the full address of each of his personal and business properties, including common-owned properties, preferably concluding with the words “and wherever my *Chametz* may be found”.

If one owns *Chametz* in a different time-zone, or is travelling to a different time-zone for *Pesach*, he should inform the Rav of his situation for further guidance.

If one is away from home for the entire *Pesach*: If he arrives at his destination

before the night of *Bedikat Chametz*, he includes his entire home in the *Mechirat Chametz*. If he will still be at home the night of *Bedikat Chametz*, he includes most of his home in *Mechirat Chametz*, but excludes a small area so that he can conduct *Bedikat Chametz* (see “*Bedikat Chametz*” section).

☞ FAST OF THE FIRSTBORN (THU MORNING)

Those who would regularly fast the fast of the firstborns on *Erev Pesach*, fasts a day earlier, Thursday, the 12th of *Nissan*.

Every male *Bechor* (firstborn), as well as the father of a *Bechor* under the age of *Bar Mitzvah*, should attend and eat from a *Seudat Mitzvah* such as a *Siyum*, *Brit* or *Pidyan Haben*. They should not eat before partaking of the *Seudat Mitzvah*.

A *Siyum* may be made on a *Masechta* of *Gemarah* or an entire *Seder* of *Mishnah*. [The *Siyum* may be made even by a child.] Some, including *Chabad*, say the usual *Kaddish D’rabanan* at the *Siyum*, and some say the “*Kaddish Hagadol*” printed in the back of the *Gemarah*.

A *Bechor* (or the father of a *Bechor* under the age of *Bar Mitzvah*) who did not hear a *Siyum* must fast

Some have the custom to make a *Siyum* also on Friday, *Erev Shabbat*.

☞ BEDIKAT CHAMETZ PREPARATIONS (THU NIGHT)

This year, when *Erev Pesach* coincides with *Shabbat*, one may eat *Chametz* until *Shabbat* morning. In fact, eating *Chometz* is a requirement for the purposes of making *Hamotzie* on Friday night and *Shabbat* morning, given that *Matzah* cannot be used at these times. [See further for details.]

Nevertheless, since *Bedikat Chametz* and *Biur Chametz* cannot be performed in the usual manner on *Shabbat*, both of these

are conducted one day earlier, and their times are equivalent to every other year. Thus, Bedikat Chametz is conducted on Thursday night at Tzeit (7:41pm), and the Chametz is burned on Friday morning (according to the Magen Avraham 11:23am and according to the Gra and the Baal Hatanya 11:36am).

From after the time of Bedikat Chametz, it is advisable that all Chametz be eaten only in one designated area, and it be a place where crumbs are easily cleaned even on Shabbat (as opposed to carpet, or dining furniture with crevices). Young children should not be left unsupervised with Chametz.

The house should be completely cleaned, the floors swept (including under the beds), and all Chametz removed prior to *Bedikat Chametz*.

Anything included in *Mechirat Chametz* should be securely stored away before *Bedikat Chametz*, either by placing it in a closed area such as a closet (which should be locked or marked), or by completely barricading it with a sturdy *Mechitzah* at least ten *Tefachim* tall. A curtain that is easily slung aside does not suffice. [When extremely necessary, one may access these areas during *Pesach*, but must avoid remaining there for any length of time, and must not touch the Chametz nor open any boxes containing them.]

Chametz that will be eaten later in the evening or the next morning should be placed in a secure location before *Bedikat Chametz*, out of the reach of children and of rodents.

A paper bag, single-wick preferably beeswax candle, feather and wooden spoon are prepared for *Bedikat Chametz*.

Ten pieces of bread are put out in various location in the property. A record should be kept of the pieces' locations, in case they are not found during the search. Each piece should be less than a *Kezayit*, but all pieces should total at least a *Kezayit*. Each piece should be wrapped well in paper in order to prevent crumbs. The wrapping material must be flammable (as opposed to foil) so that the pieces of bread burn well.

🕯️ TIME OF BEDIKAT CHAMETZ (THU NIGHT)

Bedikat Chametz is performed as soon as possible after *Tzeit Hakochavim* (7:42pm), and after *davening Maariv*.

From half an hour prior to *Tzeit Hakochavim* until after *Bedikat Chametz* (even if running late), one may not eat more than a *K'beitzah* (Chaim Naeh is 55cc, Chazon Ish is 100cc) of bread or *Mezonot*, drink alcoholic beverages, nap, learn *Torah*, bathe, haircut, work or perform other absorbing activities unrelated to *Bedikat Chametz*.

If one began these activities prior to this time, he may continue during the half hour before *Tzeit Hakochavim*, but must stop as soon as it is *Tzeit Hakochavim*.

One may begin learning during the half hour before *Tzeit Hakochavim*, only if he appoints a *Shomer* (guardian) who is not learning to remind him to perform *Bedikat Chametz*, as soon as it is *Tzeit Hakochavim*. Even so, a *Shomer* does not allow one to engage in the other prohibited activities.

🕯️ BEDIKAT CHAMETZ (THU NIGHT)

Although not a requirement, some have the custom of washing their hands prior to *Bedikat Chametz*.

One lights the candle before reciting the *Brachah*, and holds it in his right hand during the *Brachah*, in order to begin searching as soon as the *Brachah* is finished.

After the *Brachah*, one should not speak **at all** prior to beginning the search, even matters related to the search. If one did speak, he must repeat the *Brachah* **if** his words were unrelated to the search.

After one already began the search, until the conclusion of *Kol Chamirah*, one should not speak matters unrelated to *Bedikat Chametz*, nevertheless, if one did speak unnecessarily, he does not repeat the *Brachah*.

The search begins in a location right next to where the *Brachah* was recited, and is conducted carefully and thoroughly.

The obligation of *Bedikat Chametz* rests with the householder. Nevertheless, he may delegate part (but preferably not all) of the search to male family members over *Bar Mitzvah*. Ideally, before spreading out, they should hear his *Brachah* and immediately begin searching in a location right next to where he recited the *Brachah*. Otherwise, they search without a *Brachah*.

One searches by the light of the candle and with a feather. Any *Chametz* found is placed in the paper bag.

One must carefully and meticulously search every location into which *Chametz* may have potentially been brought, even if only on occasion, and even if it has already been cleaned for *Pesach*. Even after all ten pieces are found, one must properly search the remainder of the house. However, one does not need to check the locations that are being leased in the *Mechirat Chametz*.

One should remember to search his porch, garage and vehicle during or after *Bedikat Chametz*.

After *Bedikat Chametz* is concluded, the bag of ten pieces along with the feather and any remnant of the candle is placed inside

the hollow of the spoon. It is then all wrapped in paper and tied with string, ensuring that the spoon handle remains visible, and stored in a secure location inaccessible to children or rodents.

Afterwards, one recites "*Kol Chamirah*", ensuring that he understands the meaning. [Otherwise, he should recite it in a language that he understands.]

One must also perform *Bedikat Chametz* (or appoint a *Shliach* to do so) at any other property he is fully or partly responsible for (e.g. workplace, dormitory room, common-owned entryways and facilities rooms), if it is not being sold for *Pesach*. Ideally, this is done right after *Bedikat Chametz* at home. [The *Brachah* is not recited again; one should therefore have these locations in mind when reciting the *Brachah* at home.] A person must also be delegated to perform *Bedikat Chametz* at the *Shul* and the *Beit Midrash*.

If one is vacating his home for the **entire** *Pesach*: If he arrives at his destination before the night of *Bedikat Chametz*, he includes his entire home in the *Mechirat Chametz*, and performs *Bedikat Chametz* at his destination. [When one is guesting with a host, he may rely on the host's *Bedikat Chametz* and need not perform it himself. Alternatively, he may rent a room from the host with a valid *Kinyan* and perform *Bedikat Chametz* himself.]

If he will still be at home for the night of *Bedikat Chametz*, he should include most of his home in the *Mechirat Chametz*, but exclude a small area in which to conduct *Bedikat Chametz*. He must also perform *Bedikat Chametz* (without a *Brachah*) when he arrives at his destination, unless someone else already performed it there.

If one is away from home for the night of *Bedikat Chametz*, but will be returning on *Erev Pesach* or during *Pesach*, he must conduct *Bedikat Chametz* (including *Kol Chamirah*) the night before he leaves home, without a *Brachah*. [This is in addition to searching at the place he is staying on the night of *Bedikat Chametz*.] Alternatively, he may appoint a *Shliach* to search his home on the night of *Bedikat Chametz* with a *Brachah*; however, the homeowner must still recite *Kol Chamirah*.

If one forgot on Thursday night to make *Bedikat Chametz*, he needs to do it on Friday during the day.

If he forgot and only remembered after *Shabbat* came in, he should not search for the *Chametz*.

If one forgot to make the *Brachot* of *Bedikat Chametz*, they should not say the *Brachah* at the time of burning the *Chametz*, but should rather say the *Brachah* without Hashem's name.

🕯️ PESACH AND SEDER PREPARATIONS

One should familiarize himself with all the *Halachot* associated with the *Seder*.

A clean and undamaged *Becher* (or cup) that holds at least a *Revi'it* (Chaim Naeh is 86ml, Chazon Ish is 150ml) is prepared for every participant, both male and female. When choosing the size of the *Becher*, one should bear in mind that each of the four cups of wine are ideally consumed in one swallow.

Preferably, the *Becher* or cup should be of significant quality, such as silver or glass, as opposed to disposables.

One should prepare enough red wine to supply four cups for every participant. (White wine is not used at the *Seder*, unless it is superior to all available red wines.) Since a great variety of wines are readily

available in present times, including dry wines and low-alcohol wines, one should avoid grape-juice if possible.

If a non *Shomer-Shabbat* Jew or non-Jew will be present in the room during the *Seder*, the wine should be *Mevushal*.

One should prepare a sufficient supply of unbroken (concave-shaped) *Matzot* for the *Seder*.

The romaine lettuce should be washed and checked for bugs before *Shabbat*. Whoever is particular about *Gebroks* should also make sure to dry the lettuce before *Shabbat* so that they may be eaten together with the *Matzah* at *Korach*.

The horseradish should be ground before *Shabbat* and placed in an air-tight container to retain its potency. [If, prior to purchase, the horseradish was cut with a knife whose status is unknown, the area of the cut should be removed and discarded.]

The *Charoset* should be prepared (with apples, pears and nuts) before *Shabbat*.

Hard boiled eggs should be prepared before *Shabbat* (but remain unpeeled) for the *Kaarah*.

Onions or potatoes are prepared for *Karpas*.

There are various customs regarding the *Zeroah*, which should be roasted before *Shabbat*.

Salt water should be prepared before *Shabbat*. If one forgot and remembered after *Shabbat* came in, they should wait till after *shabbat* and pour the water first then add the salt after, and it should be minimal just enough for *Karpas* and egg.

Roasted meat or poultry may not be eaten at the *Seder*, even if it was cooked **prior** to roasting. However, it may be eaten if it was cooked **after** roasting. [Liver is often just

roasted, and it should therefore not be eaten at the *Seder*.] Pot-roast is treated as regular roast, unless water or juice is added before cooking.

With regards to meat and other foods, one should not say, "This is for *Pesach*," for he appears to be designating it for the *Korban Pesach*. [This prohibition does not apply to the wheat used for *Matzot*.]

Children are encouraged to be given their own illustrated *Haggadah* to increase their excitement.

Chag in general, and the *Seder* in particular, is an especially appropriate time to host guests.

The *Mitzvah* of *V'Samechta B'Chagecha* entails eating meat, wine and delicacies; providing new clothing or jewelry for one's wife according to his means; and giving sweets to the children. These should be arranged in advance.

🌀 **EREV SHABBAT HAGADOL MORNING (FRI MORNING)**

When in *Shul*, one should clean and remove any *Chametz* in his locker.

As it is not Erev *Chag* but rather Erev Shabbat, *Mizmor L'Todah* is recited but from Shabbat until after *Pesach* some do not recite it, however, some hold that it is recited. If someone started saying it, he should continue.

A child who would start to put on *Tefillin* (before his 13th birthday) during *Pesach*, some say he should start on *Erev pesach*, some say on the 13th of *Nissan* and some say to wait till after *Pesach*.

The activities regularly prohibited on Erev *Pesach* may be performed today even after midday. This includes tailoring or sewing new garments, laundering, meticulous forms of writing, giving haircuts. [as per any Erev Shabbat, any manual labor which is not

for the sake of Shabbat and *Chag* should not be performed after *Mincha Ketanah* (4:28pm) in a focused and permanent manner.]

Since one may not launder on *Chol Hamoed* either, the laundry should be tended to before Shabbat.

One should have a haircut in honor of *Pesach*. (furthermore, for some, including *Chabad*, haircuts are not taken again until Erev Shavuot 5th Sivan)

Nails are trimmed in honor of *Pesach*. [because they cannot be trimmed on *Chol Hamoed*.]

On *Erev Shabbat*, one should not donate blood or undergo any procedures or tests involving blood loss. [This does not apply in cases of great need, and certainly not when it is *Pikuach Nefesh*.]

🌀 **BIUR CHAMETZ (FRI MORNING)**

This year, *Biur Chametz* occurs on Erev Shabbat, before the fifth seasonal hour (according to the *Magen Avraham* 11:23am and according to the *Gra* and the *Baal Hatanya* 11:36am), in keeping with the usual time every other year. Even so, one may continue to consume *Chametz* until Shabbat morning (see further).

Prior to the end-time for *Biur Chametz*, one should:

- store any *Chametz* for Friday and Shabbat in a secure location.
- remove from his property all garbage that may contain *Chametz*.
- check the pockets and cuffs of any unlaundered clothing and coats.
- seal and mark all locations included in *Mechirat Chametz*.

If one is running late, these may be done anytime prior to Shabbat.

When Erev Pesach coincides with Shabbat, one may kasher utensils the entire Friday until evening. One should remember to clean jewelry rings, then kasher them by pouring boiling water over them. Nevertheless, some advise that all Kashering should be done before midday (12:40pm) so as not to distinguish from other years.

One should ensure that the actual pieces of *Chametz* are thoroughly burned before the end-time of *Biur Chametz*. [nevertheless, if one is running late, the *Chametz* may – and should - be burned the rest of the day, prior to Shabbat. One may also burn the *Chametz* earlier in the morning.]

Flammable liquids are not recommended when burning the *Chametz*, due to the concern that they may render the *Chametz* inedible, as well as safety concerns.

If still extant, the *Daled Minim* and/or *Hoshanot* are burned at *Biur Chametz*.

The fire is used solely for burning the *Chametz*. One should not derive any benefit from the fire.

One does NOT say the second *Kol Chamirah* on Friday after burning the *Chametz*, as he would leave some *Chametz* for Shabbat.

Some recite the accompanying *Yehi Ratzon* when they burn the *Chametz*.

EATING MATZAH & CHAMETZ ON EREV SHABBAT

One may eat Matzah all day on Erev Shabbat, and some hold to be stringent and not to eat Matzah as on Erev Pesach.

One may give Matzah to minors even those who regularly would not eat Matzah on Erev Pesach.

Some hold that one may eat *Chametz*, the whole of Erev Shabbat, and others hold not to eat *Chametz* from the time of *Biur Chametz*.

It's best not to eat the *Chametz* at the same table that one would be eating on Pesach.

COOKING FOR SHABBAT

One does not cook for Shabbat using *Chametz*.

One may not dip the Challah in sauce as well as lokshen or Kneidelach which was cooked before Shabbat, soup croutons can also not be poured into the pot.

All cooking should be done using Kosher for Pesach products and utensils.

One who takes Lettuce for Marror should check them for bugs before Shabbat.

Salt water should be prepared before Shabbat. If one forgot and remembered after Shabbat came in, they should wait till after shabbat and pour the water first then add the salt after, and it should be minimal just enough for Karpas.

One should prepare the Charoset before Shabbat so that the seder should not be delayed, however, if one did not prepare before Shabbat, it can be prepared on Chag.

The Zeroah should be roasted before Shabbat, if it was not roasted before, then it should be roasted after Chag starts but it would have to be eaten on Chag by day.

The hardboiled egg should be boiled before Shabbat.

BAKING MATZAH ON EREV SHABBAT

Those particular to bake Matzot on Erev Pesach, should bake them after Chatzot on Erev Shabbat.

Some have the custom not to say Hallel during the Matzah baking as on a regular year as it is not the day of Erev Pesach, while some do say Hallel.

Some have the custom to go to Mikva and be dressed in Shabbat clothes while baking the Matzah.

One should remember to take Challah from the dough on Erev Shabbat.

PREPARATION FOR THE SHABBAT TABLE

One should prepare the table so it would be easy to collect the crumbs, some would put a plastic tablecloth over the regular one.

One should try to prepare on Erev Shabbat a nice table specifically for the Seder, with comfortable chairs, the Seder plate and Haggadot so that the Seder should start as soon as possible after Shabbat.

The candles should be placed at the end of the table and not on the same tablecloth as the one which will be used for the Shabbat meals.

The candles for Pesach should be prepared before Shabbat. The candles should also be long so they can last longer, some even hold till after the Seder.

Some have the custom to prepare candles for Shvi'i shel Pesach as some do not prepare the candles or wicks on Chol Hamoed.

One should put an object on the candlestick tray like a siddur or another sefer as one can not use a Challah as in the rest of the year in order to be able to move the candles, however, One can use a Matzah.

It is advisable to use plastic dinnerware and cutlery so it can all be disposed of together with the Chametz, however the Kiddush cup and Wash station cup which in general should not be from plastic.

One should have just enough Challah for Hamotzie.

It is a Mitzvah to have hot food for Shabbat and not cold.

One should remember to set the Shabbat timers to be able to cover the Seder night which would usually be longer than the regular Friday night Seudah.

One gives Tzedakah on Erev Shabbat for both Shabbat and Chag.

One should arrange a pre-existing flame so as to be able to light the candles for Pesach and to cook on Pesach..

Candle-lighting is at 6:19pm, as per a regular Erev Shabbat.

FRIDAY NIGHT MEAL

Hamotzie of the night and morning meals should be brought out only when it is time to eat it. The Challah should be consumed in a manner that will not leave crumbs in one's property, such as by eating it over napkins. [Hand jewellery should be removed before eating the Challah.]

One who wears braces should make sure not to eat any Chametz once they have been cleaned for Pesach.

After eating the Challah, any used napkins should be flushed down the toilet. Tablecloths and / or tableware should be shaken out over the toilet to remove all crumbs, and then discarded. [If non-disposables were used, they should not be rinsed. Rather, they should be cleaned in the above fashion and then stored with the items included in the Mechirat Chametz.]

One should also wash his hands and mouth at a sink which is not being used for Pesach foods, and inspect his clothes and the eating area for any remaining crumbs, which should all be flushed down the toilet.

As an added precaution, many people choose to eat the Challah in another location, such as the porch or backyard, and then return to the main dining area for the

remainder of the meal. In this case, one will (generally) be required to make Kiddush at the place where the Challah will be eaten, and also have in mind the transfer of location when making the Brachah of Hamotzi. Similarly, one should ensure that the Shabbat candles can be seen from the place where the Challah will be eaten.

One should use a proper Becher for Kiddush, ensuring it doesn't mingle with the Challah.

If someone has a baby boy, the Shalom Zachor should contain only Kosher for Pesach food, unless the event is in a property that is sold to a Non-Jew.

🕯️ SHACHARIT FOR SHABBAT EREV PESACH

One who goes to Mikva regularly on Shabbat should have in mind for Chag as well.

One should rise early to daven so that they should be able to eat the meal before the end time to eat (*according to the Magen Avraham 10:07am and according to the Gra and the Baal Hatanya 10:31am*).

The Haftorah of V'arva is recited, since Shabbat coincides with Erev Pesach.

If one has a Brit on Shabbat morning, they should try to have it right after Shacharit and should be done at a fast pace.

One who delayed the davening and doesn't have time to daven and eat before the time, should Daven and afterwards eat without washing and in such a case it would be better to drink two Reviit of wine.

Some people have the custom not to eat apples, pears, nuts and Maror from Shabbat morning until Shulchan Orech of the Seder.

🕯️ SOF ZMAN ACHILAT CHAMETZ (SHABBAT MORNING)

One must stop eating Chametz, according to the Magen Avraham 10:07am and

according to the Gra and the Baal Hatanya 10:31am, and wash his hands and mouth at a sink which is not being used for Pesach foods. One may floss or use a toothpick on Shabbat if he does so regularly (for then it is not inevitable that his gums will bleed), but the floss itself needs to have been cut before Shabbat.

🕯️ DESTROYING THE CHAMETZ (SHABBAT MORNING)

One may still benefit from Chometz until the end-time of Destroying the Chametz (according to the Magen Avraham 11:23am and according to the Gra and the Baal Hatanya 11:35am).

One should inspect and clean any Chametz eating areas (including floors), ensuring that any remaining pieces or crumbs of Chametz are flushed down the toilet before the end-time of destroying the Chametz (according to the Magen Avraham 11:23am and according to the Gra and the Baal Hatanya 11:35am).

One should also clean his clothes, including pockets and cuffs, of any Chametz traces.

All the crumbs and leftover Chametz should be destroyed by flushing it down the toilet, however, if it is too big to be disposed of in the toilet, it should be given to an animal, and if no animal can be found, one gives it as a gift to a Non-Jew.

If there is no Non-Jew available, it should be placed outside and have chemicals poured over it to destroy it.

If one can not do any of the above, one should be mevatel the Chametz in his possession and cover it until after Pesach after which it should be disposed of in the garbage.

Before the end-time of destroying the Chametz, one recites the second Kol Chamira, ensuring that he understands its meaning. [Otherwise, he should recite it in

a language that he understands.] He should do so now even if he accidentally recited it on Friday when the Chametz was burned.

The accompanying Yehi Ratzon, which was already recited yesterday, is not repeated at this time.

One should recite Kol Chamira even if he did not destroy any of the Chametz (e.g. a child or guest).

🌀 CHAMETZ AFTER THIS TIME

On *Pesach*, one cannot benefit from any *Chametz* – even belonging to a non-Jew. [Examples include sitting on a sack of flour, enjoying the smell of *Chametz*, selling or giving *Chametz* to a non-Jew, feeding *Chametz* to an animal – even one that is ownerless, renting/lending any item to a non-Jew when it is known or he clearly states that he will use it for *Chametz*, or placing an order for *Chametz* to be delivered right after *Pesach*.]

One may not assume responsibility for any *Chametz* on *Pesach*, even if it belongs to a non-Jew. [Examples include providing a delivery service, storing it in one's property or warehouse, or relying on it as collateral for a loan.] If one did assume responsibility for such *Chametz* before *Pesach*, he must include it in *Mechirat Chametz*.

One may not touch *Chametz* throughout *Pesach*, unless while destroying it. [On *Shabbat* and *Chag*, there is the additional concern of *Muktzah*.] One may also not eat at the same table as a non-Jew eating *Chametz*, even if they are not acquainted, and even if there is a *Heker* (item serving as a reminder) in between.

One must prevent a gentile employee from bringing *Chametz* onto his premises. A gentile who is not an employee may enter with *Chametz* and eat it on site, provided that one doesn't thereby assume any

responsibility for the *Chametz*. One must also ensure that the gentile removes the *Chametz* from the premises as soon as he leaves, and the area must be cleaned.

🌀 FINDING CHAMETZ AFTER THIS TIME

If one finds *Chametz* on *Erev Pesach* after the end-time for *Biur Chametz* – or on *Chag*, he should cover it immediately without moving it, as it is *Muktzah*. He should burn it immediately after *Chag*. [If, for whatever reason, the *Chametz* is already in someone's hand, he should be directed to immediately flush it down the toilet.]

If one finds *Chametz* on *Chol Hamoed*, or after *Pesach*, he should burn it immediately.

When burning such *Chametz*, the *Brachah* of *Al Biur Chametz* is recited only when **all** the following conditions are met:

- It is definite *Chametz*.
- It belongs to him.
- It is a *Kezayit* or bigger.
- It is still *Pesach* (not before or after).
- It was not in his possession at the time when the *Rav* sold the *Chametz*.

If a guest mistakenly brings *Chametz* as a gift, one should intend to not acquire it. One should also remember not to handle it directly on *Chag*, and should follow the instructions above for destroying it.

🌀 EREV PESACH AFTERNOON

Parents should ensure that their children nap during the day, so that they are awake and alert for the *Seder*.

It is forbidden to eat a proper meal once the tenth Halachic hour of the day begins (3:52pm), in order to eat the Matzah at night with a healthy appetite. However, one may snack in small quantities that won't ruin his appetite for the *Seder*.

🌀 MINCHA EREV PESACH (SHABBAT)

Mincha is *davened* a bit earlier than usual, in order to recite “*Seder Korban Pesach*” before sunset. [If one is late, he should still recite it after sunset.]

Some have the custom to say “*Seder Korban Pesach*” at the kotel.

One does not say Tzidkatecha during Mincha.

Some have the custom to have a second Shabbat Hagadol Drashah.

Mincha time is a special and auspicious time to ask for anything needed.

Some have the custom to read the Haggadah from “*Avadim Hayinu*” until “*L’chaper Al Kol Avonoteinu*” on Shabbat. After Mincha, Some say the “*Seder Korban Pesach*”. [If one is late, he should still recite it after sunset.]

🌀 PREPARATION FROM SHABBAT TO CHAG

One may not perform any preparations on Shabbat for Chag. [However, during Bein Hashmashot, one may instruct a non-Jew to prepare that which would be permissible for a Jew to perform on Chag.]

Some have the custom to change clothing from Shabbat to Chag. It should be done towards evening, some hold even earlier in order to make sure there are no Chametz crumbs in the cuffs of the Shabbat clothing.

One can sleep to prepare for the Seder on Shabbat.

If one is doing the seder at another location, they may not prepare anything to be ready to leave right after Shabbat.

Besides the above, one can not prepare anything for Chag while it is still Shabbat which ends at 7:44pm.

🌀 MATZAH

One should use *Matzah* produced from wheat, and not from other grains (such as spelt), unless there are health concerns.

Many, including Chabad, have the custom to use only round hand-made *Shmurah-Matzah* during *Pesach*.

Some do not use Egg-*Matzot* on *Pesach*.

If a *Matzah* folded over during baking, or it has a large bubble, one should not eat of that area or its perimeter (at least 2cm).

Many, including Chabad, have the custom not to eat “*Gebrochts*”. One is extremely meticulous to ensure that the *Matzah* does not become moistened.

For those particular regarding “*Gebrochts*,” the *Matzot* on the table should be covered to prevent liquid spilling on them, as well as to prevent *Matzah* crumbs from falling into liquids. Before pouring liquid into a vessel, one ensures that there are no *Matzah* crumbs in it, and any vessel that came into contact with *Gebrochts* is set aside and not used until *after Pesach*.

During *Pesach*, one does not pass his wet hand over his lips at *Mayim Achronim*, out of the concern that there might be *Matzah* crumbs remaining on his lips.

🌀 KITNIYOT

Kitniyot (legumes) are not eaten by Ashkenazim and some Sephardim on *Pesach*. Common examples include rice, millet, buckwheat, corn, peas, beans, lentils, sesame seeds, mustard, chickpeas, peanuts, soy and soybeans, tofu, sunflower and poppy seeds. It is best to avoid quinoa, as their status is unclear.

Commonly, you will find on Israeli products the term ליפתית. ליפתית – lupine is also *Kitniyot*.

Kitniyot derived oils are not used, such as canola, corn, peanut, safflower, sesame, sunflower, soybean (often labelled as vegetable oil) or rapeseed (flaxseed) oils. The status of cottonseed oil is debated, but it is generally regarded as non-*Kitniyot*.

Kitniyot may be used when necessary for the sick, infirm or babies (e.g. infant formulas and nutritional supplements). However, designated utensils should be used, and they should be kept separate from the rest of the *Pesach* utensils.

One may own and derive benefit from *Kitniyot* on *Pesach* (such as feeding pets).

If *Kitniyot* **inadvertently** fell into another food item on *Pesach*, it is nullified if the mixture contains more non-*Kitniyot* than *Kitniyot*. Such a mixture can be consumed even if it has a pronounced taste of *Kitniyot*, as long as no piece of *Kitniyot* is visually discernible. Nevertheless, it is common practice not to eat any item containing even a trace of *Kitniyot*.

🌀 PREVALENT CHUMROT

The *Arizal* stressed the importance of observing *Chumrot* on *Pesach*. The following practices are prevalent mainly in *Chabad* circles, the specifics of which may vary from family to family:

- Some peel or shell all fruits, vegetable and nuts before use.
- Some do not eat leafy vegetables which can't be peeled (besides romaine lettuce).
- To have a special pot exclusively for boiling eggs.
- To boil and strain sugar before *Pesach*.
- Some do not eat commercially prepared foods (besides *Matzah*, wine, meat and/or oil).
- Some do not use spices.
- Some use coarse salt and not fine salt.

- Some do not eat garlic and radishes.
- Not to use food that fell on the floor. (If peelable, one may peel it).
- To thoroughly wash any utensil that fell on the floor, or to set it aside and not use it until the following *Pesach*.
- Some do not drink any alcoholic beverages other than wine.
- Not to eat food prepared outside one's own home.
- Some do not eat dairy foods.
- Some do not drink tea or coffee.
- Some do not use potato starch.

To cook as much as possible prior to *Pesach*, since a speck of *Chametz* that is inadvertently mixed in becomes nullified then, unlike on *Pesach* itself.

🌀 FIRST NIGHT OF PESACH

Shabbat ends at 7:44pm. Maariv (and Kiddush) should not begin before this time, nor should tasks and preparations required for Chag be conducted before this time.

Vatodienu is recited during the Amidah of Maariv. [If one forgot to do so, he does not correct his mistake, but should say Baruch Hamavdil Bein Kodesh L'Kodesh before doing anything forbidden on Shabbat but permitted on Chag. The same applies to a woman who will not be davening Maariv.]

The candles should be kindled with a pre-existing flame, and only after Shabbat ends (7:44pm). The Brachot are L'Hadlik Ner Shel Yom Tov followed by Shehecheyanu.

Candles must not be waxed into place, nor may the wicks be twisted. When necessary, one may remove the wax from the previous night in a way that it falls directly into the garbage.

On Chag, one may not relight a candle that extinguished for the first time on Shabbat.

When a man is required to light candles, he does not recite Shehecheyanu, as he will be doing so in Kiddush. [Therefore, it is best that he lights candles right before Kiddush, so that his Shehecheyanu is linked to both.]

If conducting the Seder elsewhere, one must derive some practical benefit from the candles after nightfall.

🌀 HALLEL

Many communities say the entire *Hallel* on the first night and day of *Pesach* during *Davening* (and the second night and day for those keeping two days). Some only say *Hallel* by the *Seder* and by day. Half *Hallel* is recited on the rest of the days of *Pesach*.

Hallel is recited standing (unless one is feeble or infirm).

When reciting the entire *Hallel*, one may not interrupt it – other than for those things that one may respond to during the *Brachot* of *Kriat Shema*. [I.e. If the *Chazzan* recites *Kedushah*, one responds *Kadosh*, *Baruch* and *Yimloch*. When the *Chazzan* says *Ha'E-l Hakadosh*, one answers *Amen*. When the *Chazzan* says *Modim*, one answers the three words *Modim Anachnu Lach*. When the *Chazzan* recites *Kaddish*, one answers *Amen Yehei Shmei* etc, and *Amen* to *d'amiran b'almah*. One also answers *Barchu* and *Amen* when the *Brachot* are recited before and after an *Aliyah* or *Haftorah*.]

When reciting half *Hallel*, one may respond *Amen* to any *Brachah*, but not *Baruch Hu u'Varuch Shmo*. One may also respond to *Barchu*, *Kaddish* and *Kedushah*.

It is preferable to recite *Hallel* with the *Minyan*. If one is not up to the *Minyan*, this creates a dilemma; on the one hand it is appropriate to recite *Hallel* with the congregation (if he hasn't yet begun *Baruch*

She'omar), and on the other hand, it is appropriate that one *davens* in the correct order. For this reason, many Rabbanim are punctilious about being up to *Hallel* when the *Minyan* recite it on *Chag*.

If one forgot to recite *Hallel*, he should recite it with a *Brachah* as soon as he remembers; the night *Hallel* may be recited until dawn, and the day *Hallel* may be recited until sunset.

If one mistakenly recited half-*Hallel* on the first night or day of *Pesach*, he must repeat the entire *Hallel* (without a *Brachah*).

🌀 FORGOT TO PREPARE THE SEDER ITEMS

If one forgot to prepare any of the items for the *Seder*, one can prepare only what is necessary for that night.

If one forgot to prepare the *Zeroah*, one may use a cooked chicken-neck instead. One may also roast a chicken-neck provided that he consumes its meat the following day (i.e. while it is still the same day of *Chag*). [This, in spite of the fact that the *Zeroah* is generally not eaten, as explained further.]

One may not grind horseradish on *Chag*. If it was not done on *Erev Chag*, one may chop it coarsely. Alternatively, one can suffice with romaine lettuce.

If one forgot to wash and check the romaine lettuce for bugs, it can be done on *Chag*.

If one forgot to prepare the *Charoset* on *Erev Chag*, one may grate it on *Chag* with a *Shinui*, such as by holding the grater backwards or grating directly onto the tabletop.

If one forgot to prepare the salt-water on *Erev Chag*, it may be prepared as usual on *Chag*.



Itche, the Hero of Ger

By Rabbi Yechiel Spero

Throughout his life, the Imrei Emet, Rav Avraham Mordechai Alter of Ger, was particular that no one should touch his clothing. He was so concerned that his clothes not be affected by impurity, that he even chose his tailor very carefully. There was one person, however, who was allowed to touch his clothing. He was neither a Rebbe nor a learned individual, nor did he come from a prestigious background. Itche Greinemos was a rather simple fellow. However, because of one amazing day in his life, he had the privilege of helping the Rebbe don his Kittel on Pesach night.

At the time of the story, the Sfat Emet, Rav Yehudah Aryeh Leib, stood at the helm of Ger Chassidut. One day, word began to spread that a plague had broken out in the city. Immediately, everyone ran to their homes and tried to protect themselves against the deadly plague. But it was too late; the plague spread quickly and mercilessly, claiming the lives of many, especially children. By the time daybreak had arrived, the streets were littered with the bodies of lifeless children. The authorities, desperate to get the situation under control, decreed that these bodies should be cremated to prevent the plague from spreading any further. The heartbroken families, who wanted so badly to give their children a proper final farewell, watched helplessly from inside their homes, since they knew that they were risking their lives by going outside.

The Sfat Emet was beside himself. There was really nothing anyone could do, as no one was prepared to risk his own life. After much thought, the Sfat Emet issued a declaration: Anyone who was prepared to bury one of the dead children would be guaranteed a portion in the World to Come. Families heard about the Rebbe's promise, but the streets remained eerily empty, until suddenly, one towering figure emerged. It was Itche Greinemos. With a shovel in his hand, he bent down next to a small child in the middle of the street and wrapped him in a tallit. Then he went to the cemetery and buried the boy. At the end of the day, he showed up at the doorstep of the Sfat Emet.

The Rebbe had heard about his act of selfless dedication and promised him that he would receive a special portion in the World to Come, for his Mesirat Nefesh. But Itche just stood there at the doorstep, exhausted and filthy. "Rebbe, what you promised was based on someone burying one child. I just came from the cemetery. Rebbe, I buried 16 children!"

The Sfat Emet looked incredulously at the broad-shouldered fellow. He could hardly believe what he had just heard. "Sixteen children?" The Rebbe contemplated the immeasurable comfort that Itche had provided to those 16 families. Instead of their children being reduced to ash, they now had a final resting place of dignity, where the parents could come visit them and pray.

"So what can I possibly give you as a reward?" the Rebbe asked.

Itche did not hesitate for a moment. He knew exactly what he wanted. It was neither riches nor monetary rewards he was seeking. Nor was he interested in honor or glory. Instead, he asked the Rebbe if he could have the privilege of helping him put on his Kittel every year at the Seder. Immediately, the Rebbe agreed, and so it was. Every year, after they came back from davening, the Sfat Emet allowed Itche to help him with his Kittel, a privilege that was allowed to no one else.

The obvious connection was never spoken about. While Itche had risked his life to prepare the 16 children he had buried and to dress them in their **תכריכים** (burial shrouds), the Rebbe had given him the privilege of dressing him in his Kittel, a special garment reserved for the Seder, and used later for burial.

In the last year of the Sfat Emet's life, as Itche helped him with his Kittel, he let out a krechtz (a sigh of pain), "Oy! There are thousands of Jewish soldiers who have written to me asking that I daven on their behalf. All they want is that they should be Zocheh (Merit) to receive a **קבר ישראל** (a proper Jewish burial). How can I begin my Seder with this enormous burden on my shoulders? Who can carry such a burden? I can't do it anymore. I just can't do it."

Anyone who was in the room at that time was greatly moved by the Rebbe's cry, but perhaps no one was more moved than Itche, who had risked his life to bring so many children to Jewish burial.

After the Rebbe's passing that year, Itche continued to perform his yearly practice with the Imrei Emet, the son of the Sfat Emet. Although the Imrei Emet was particular about

who touched his clothing, Itche was more angel than man.

Years later, on the first day of Sukkot, as he stood in the Gerrer Beit Midrash holding his Lulav and Etrog, Itche breathed his last breath. With thousands of people in the surrounding area, Itche was taken out of the Beit Midrash. The following day, he was brought to his final resting place, in one of the largest funeral processions the city of Ger had ever seen. Of course, the Imrei Emet was in attendance, as well.

Itche was buried right near the children he had buried years before.

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*Editor's Note: My fellow dear medical personnel, my fellow dear Chevra Kadisha members, we are going through a very bad and tough time, people are dying all over the world from all different things. The Chevra Kadisha all over the world and especially the soldiers in Miluim in the Shura Camp are working tirelessly, following in Reb Itche's footsteps to make sure that every Jew gets brought to **קבר ישראל** (a proper Jewish burial). I am so proud to be involved in this big Mitzvah. You are the ones who put on Klal Yisrael's kittel Seder night. You are on the forefront of saving Klal Yisrael, you are the ones who have put yourselves and your entire being into making sure that Klal Yisrael gets a Refuah and for those who can not be saved, a Kever Yisrael. Your zechutim (merits) are great, your Brachot are great, **הקב"ה ישלם שכרם** (may Hashem protect you, may Hashem strengthen you, may Hashem save you, and your families. Klal Yisrael owes you a tremendous debt of gratitude..... Thank you.*

Two Nights, Two People, Four Solo Seders

By Steve Lipman

“Steve, my dear,” my mother, calling my office in Manhattan from her home in Buffalo several years ago, began an uncomfortable conversation, “we love you dearly, but”

The “but” had me worried. That conjunction usually leads to the crucial part of a sentence.

“But please don’t come to us for Passover anymore.”

“Us” were Mom and Dad, who were still alive.

Dad, who had grown up in an extremely secular home in Berlin, knew nothing about attending a Seder, let alone leading one. Mom, from an Orthodox home, is from the generation where a wife would not upstage her husband; she would not feel comfortable leading the Seder. So from the time I was in elementary school (attending a few times a week after-school Hebrew program), I led our family Sedarim - sometimes for just us, sometimes for a smattering of guests.

My proficiency in this improved as an adult, after I joined the ranks of ba’alei teshuvah. It was a responsibility I truly enjoyed, engaging in months of research beforehand. I tried to make the Seders interesting, “relevant.”

But it was to be no more, Mom told me.

After I had studied the various halachot of preparing one’s home for a kosher Pesach, and married a strictly religious young woman, the mounting demands of Jewish law and tradition made Mom nervous. While she did her best to accommodate me and make me feel at home on the Festival of Freedom - shlepping cartons of dishes for Chag from the attic, kashering pots in the weeks before the holiday began, looking for kosher l’Pesach items at the local supermarket, trying to accept my way of making Pesach - finally it was to no avail. I was disinvited.

I would miss Pesach with my mishpachah but was free to spend the holiday with friends who invited

me, by then divorced and single, to be their guest. And, later, to start the tradition that became my standard practice for nearly two decades - leading Seders in far-flung places, for small Jewish communities largely unfamiliar with the richness and beauty of a true Seder.

Then Covid came. No traveling. Just a solo Seder in my Queens apartment.

Then last year, my sister, who lives a mile away from Mom in the Houston area, asked me to come down and help take care of Mom. For social distancing reasons, Mom could not attend my sister’s Seder, as she had done since she moved to Texas fifteen years ago, following Dad’s death.

I would be with Mom for the Seders. Four of them. Because of her age (she turned 100 a month before this past Pesach) and her health (she tired easily, by early evening), Mom decided that she would do her own Seder - while it was still light outside, before the chag actually started.

But no Seder (even if only a scaled-down version) was no option; Mom would do her best. “I didn’t think I’d make it to this Passover,” she told me gratefully during Chol Hamoed.

In her small apartment, I set the living room table with a dark blue plastic tablecloth, laid out Mom’s ceramic Seder plate and a plastic cup for her grape juice (at her age, no wine), and a new, large-print Haggadah I had found online.

Finally, I set out three pieces of matzah on an acrylic serving tray that one of Mom’s granddaughters had made (Mom saved it for Pesach), put on my Shabbat uniform of a well-ironed white shirt and black pants, and sat at the other end of the table, answering Mom’s basic questions about the Seder traditions, pouring her cups of grape juice, serving her meals and making sure she did not feel alone.

Mom wore a long green print dress, and read from an old, juice-stained Maxwell House Haggadah she

found preferable to the large-print one I had procured; she had used a Maxwell House version as long as she could remember. Besides, the large-print Haggadah contained paragraphs of commentary and explanations she found distracting from the plain text.

She read slowly, haltingly, some blessings in Hebrew, the rest in English; she recited every word, straining to see in the fading late-afternoon light. We were serenaded by the quacking of ducks on the man-made lake outside the window.

Three hours later, at the proper time, I sat down at my place at the table, a Lubavitch Haggadah with the expected learned commentaries at plate-side. My kind of Haggadah. Mom was in bed by then. My meal was some cold chicken and kugel from a local shul.

No one hid or found the afikomen. I was the sole participant. L'Shanah Haba'ah in a world without Covid.

The second night, Mom's blood pressure was high; she felt ill and tired. A few minutes of a Seder sufficed.

I missed my accustomed style of Seder - the table full of adults and children, the creative explanations of readings and rituals, the theatrics to engage the kids' interest, the prizes and awards and photocopied sheets to be handed out.

On one hand, last year was very frustrating.

On the other hand, it was very fulfilling.

Despite Mom's earlier Seder disinvitation, I got to spend another Pesach with her. This time, she did not object.

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The Power of the Rebbe's Shabbat Hagadol Sermon

By Rabbi Dovid Caro

A Jew in a village near Kolbisov, Poland, made his living as an innkeeper, renting the inn and the privilege to run it from the local Poritz who owned all the land of the village and the surrounding area. At first, everything went as he had hoped. The local peasants drank and paid for the large amounts of hard liquor they consumed, so he was always able to pay the rent on time to his landlord and still make a reasonable profit.

Time passed and business at the tavern took a downturn. Many of the regular customers stopped coming. The innkeeper began to be late in his seasonal payments. The first few times the village landlord was somewhat tolerant of the delay. But when it started to become a regular pattern he lost all patience, and finally told his tenant in a rage, "I won't listen to any more excuses. The next time you are late to pay me, I'll send some of my men down; they know very well how to deal with the likes of you."

Unfortunately, it did not take long for his threat to come to fruition. The next due date fell on a Shabbat. That morning, most of the family was still in bed as the innkeeper prepared to go to Shul. Suddenly, a group of drunken peasants burst through the front door. With a glint of hatred in their eyes, they began to wreck the house. They broke, they shattered, they smashed whatever they could put their hands on, they destroyed. Not even the hot cholent on the Shabbat stove was spared, that was dumped all over the floor in the midst of the rest of the wreckage.

The unfortunate family looked on helplessly in shock as their home was destroyed in front of their eyes. It was clear that these thugs had been sent by their landlord. As the peasants slammed the door in satisfaction upon their departure, the innkeeper's wife and children finally broke down in bitter tears. He himself tried to restore a little

order from the mess, did his best to comfort the others, and then hurried off to Shul.

It was very difficult for the innkeeper to maintain any spirit of Shabbat. During the whole davening he was deeply worried about what would be. He knew this was just the beginning; he still didn't have the money, so he could expect an even worse follow.

But then it was time for the Rabbi, Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel to give the special Shabbat Hagadol sermon. He didn't get to hear too much, nor did he understand what he heard. But he managed to follow the last part of the sermon. Two different blessings mention the redemption of Israel.

One, Ga'al Yisrael, is in past tense "Blessed are You...who redeemed Klal Yisrael." This we say every morning just before starting Shmone Esrei and on Seder night at the end of Magid before the second cup of wine. It refers to the redemption from Egypt, a past event.

There is also a blessing, Go'el Yisrael, in the present tense "Blessed are You...who redeems Klal Yisrael ." We say it three times every day in the Shmone Esrei. It begins, "Please behold our affliction and wage our battle."

At this point the Tzaddik gave a small sigh, raised his eyes towards the entrance of the Shul where the anguished tenant had just come in, and then returned to his talk. "This blessing is expressed in the present tense because it refers to the Divine redemption that takes place at every moment. Therefore, even if there is a Jew in a village who is unable to pay his rent on time and the landlord sends Cossack bullies to wreck havoc in his house, the Master of the Universe will arrange redemption and salvation for this Jew too."

The innkeeper, an unlearned Jew, did not understand all that the Rebbe said, but these final words penetrated his heart. He knew well that it was he who the Rebbe was referring to. When he arrived home, he was full of joy. He tried to encourage and cheer up his still grieving family,

even though he couldn't remember the Rebbe's exact words.

"The Rebbe said 'Go'el Yisroel"! The Rebbe said 'He redeems Klal Yisrael!'" he kept happily repeating to his bewildered family. They just couldn't understand his remarkable reversal of mood.

Late that Motzei Shabbat, the Duke sent his henchmen again, to keep up the pressure on the Jew and see if he had learned his lesson properly. They were astonished to see their victim singing and dancing in vigorous joy. "He is acting like someone who found a hidden treasure," they reported back to their disbelieving master.

"Bring him to me immediately" he ordered. The tenant bounded in to the castle with a beaming face. The Duke gave him a fierce look and demanded his money, but the empty-handed Jew, confident in the Rebbe's blessing, just grinned even wider and friendlier.

The Duke, startled, began to wonder. Could it be that from all the suffering and pressure his tenant's mind had snapped? It certainly seemed like it. How could he act so carefree and happy when his situation was so desperate? But it had never been his intention to do any permanent damage to the Jew. He just wanted his money as, he stared at the grinning Jew and pondered the situation, he began to feel sorry for the poor bemused innkeeper. "Listen to me, Moshke," he addressed his tenant in a more gentle voice, "Why are you such a failure at the inn?"

Look at you, you are impoverished, you can't pay your debts, you can't even afford to replenish your stock of liquor so that maybe you could turn a little profit."

"So what should I do?" asked the innkeeper, shrugging cheerfully.

"I'll tell you" replied the Duke. "Go to the wholesaler. I'll give you a note telling him to sell you several crates of bottles on credit. You can make good business with them at the tavern. Just

be careful to put money aside to pay off the purchase and of course to pay me what you owe me!”

What a deal! The innkeeper took his landlord’s offer cheerfully. In a relatively short period he was able to pay all his debts. After that he made large profits. The whole while he was clear in his mind that his sudden turn of fortune and

everything connected with it was in the merit of the Rebbe’s blessing.

After some time, when he was able to return to Kolbisov to see the Rebbe, he brought with him a pouch filled with silver. He presented it to the Tzaddik, saying, “Rebbe, here is ‘Go’el Yisrael’ money.”

Reprinted from an email of Inspired.

Kol Dichfin – Everyone Is Welcomed

By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon

I am posting the following story, I recently heard from Rabbi Chaim Mentz, shliach of the Rebbe in Bel-Air California.

It was one erev Pesach in the late 1960’s, and our neighbor Rabbi Kasriel Kastel of Lubavitch Youth in Brooklyn, called our house. “Rabbi Mentz,” he said to my father, someone just called if we can put him up for the two sedorim, can he stay by you?”

“Yes, it will be our pleasure,” my father replied. And a half hour before Pesach, a Jew with long hair got off his motorcycle and rang our bell. As he entered the house, we could smell that he was on the road for a few days and my father, gave him a clean towel and informed him where the shower was.

While he was in the shower, we went to shul, and to our shock as we were returning home there was my mother standing on the street corner.

“What happened,” my father inquired somewhat concerned?

“Our guest is a drug addict,” she replied, “and we can’t have him in the house. It is just too dangerous. You have to send him off.”

“But tonight, we say kol dichfin – whoever is hungry is invited,” my father replied, “I never heard that kol means everyone, besides the one I don’t want. We invite everyone, and our guest is included.”

“But Binyomin, he is dangerous,” my mother said. “However, if you insist to allow him to stay, it is your responsibility to remain up and be on guard the entire night.”

“Yes,” replied my father, “I will have to watch him.”

Entering the house, my father wished our guest a good Yom Tov, and made some small talk. Then pointing to the containers, he asked, “Is that your medications?”

No, replied our guest. “I sometimes take them to relax.”

In his gentle voice, my father said, “Tonight is Passover, and as you noticed some cabinets are covered or taped, as we worked very hard to take out all chometz – leavened items, from our house. It is possible that some of those items you have are also chometz, so if you don’t mind, especially as you said you don’t need them, can you please place them in the seat bucket of your motorcycle. This way in case they are leavened they won’t be in our house.”

“Sure, no problem,” he replied and he took all of his pills and placed them in his motorcycle.

This individual was extremely inquisitive, and at the seder he peppered my father with questions about the Seder, Pesach and Judaism in general, with the conversation going on into the wee hours of the morning, way after the meal had concluded

(after all my father promised he will stay awake). The following morning, when we went to shul and when we returned, our guest was in a deep sleep and he slept almost the entire day.

During the second Seder, he once again asked relevant and irrelevant questions until late in the morning and slept the entire day. When he awoke in the late afternoon, my father informed him that shortly he will be saying the Havdalah, and at that time the holiday comes to an end. He remained until after Havdalah and then thanked us and off he went on his motorcycle.

Some eight to ten years later, I was walking with my father on Kingston Avenue, when a Jew with a kapota and long beard stops us and greets us in a friendly fashion, “Rabbi Mentz, Sholom Aleichem, how are you?”

“Baruch Hashem,” my father replied, “and who are you?” His facial expression showing he has no clue who this individual is, and was somewhat surprised that the person knows him and greeted him like an old acquaintance or friend.

“You don’t recognize me?” the person replied. “I was your guest almost ten years ago, for the first two nights of Pesach. Just then I arrived on a motorcycle.”

“Yes, yes, I recall that Pesach,” my father responded.

“Well now, thanks to you and some other wonderful individuals who I had the honor of meeting,” the person happily said, “I am religious and I am a sofer (scribe) in Eretz Yisrael.”

So, if you want to see the power of one encounter, here it is. Yes, you might not see the benefits of it for a while, or you may never realize what you accomplished. But a good deed produces positive fruit and results. However, you don’t have to wait for the Seder to make that connection and inspiration, one phone call, one compliment, one act of friendship, can make the difference.

Do yours today and every day!

Reprinted from an email from Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon.

An Alternative Route

By Yehudah Chitrik

A number of Jewish servicemen were based at a Russian army camp located near the city of Lubavitch. This location enabled them to maintain a reasonable level of Jewish practice, obtain kosher food, and pray with a quorum on Shabbat from time to time.

Much to their dismay, they learned that their unit would be transferred. To add to their distress, the transfer would take place in direct proximity to the Passover holidays. According to their commanding officer’s plan, during Passover they would be in the midst of a march deep in the Russian mainland, far away from any Jewish community.

Distraught, the soldiers decided to seek the advice of the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi

Menachem Mendel, and one of them was dispatched as a messenger to Lubavitch. He explained their plight to the Rebbe, emphasizing in particular the difficulties they would have observing the Passover laws during their journey.

“I suggest you approach your captain with an alternative route for the journey,” said the Rebbe. “Explain that the route he has planned has many disadvantages. Since the cities on his itinerary are more than a single day’s journey apart, the unit will be compelled to camp out at night in the wilderness.

“Suggest an alternative route - to pass through White Russia, stopping at Orsha, Shklov, Kopust, and Mohilev. The shorter distances

between these towns will make the journey far more convenient for everyone. And you, of course, will gain access to the Jewish communities there.

“I also have a personal request. Most probably, you will be in Shklov on the first two days of the festival. When you go to synagogue on the eve of Passover, you will be invited home by one of the people. Accept his invitation for the Passover festive meals. However, if he invites you to sleep over, excuse yourself and spend the night in the synagogue known as the ‘Green Synagogue.’

“On the last days of Pesach you will be in Mohilev. There too, accept any invitation for the festival meals, but insist on sleeping in the communal guesthouse.”

The Rebbe concluded his instructions and gave the soldier a parting blessing. Returning to his base, the soldier related the Rebbe’s advice to his comrades.

One soldier’s response expressed the feelings of the entire group: “It is very sound advice, but how can we dare suggest it? The captain will be deeply offended if we so much as hint that his plan is less than perfect.”

The soldiers discussed the matter for days. They hesitated to approach their short-tempered captain until the imminence of their departure date finally compelled them to act. Hoping that the Rebbe’s blessing would guard them, they presented the alternative plan to the captain.

Surprisingly, he was both impressed and willing. “Your suggestion is very good. How did simple soldiers like you come up with such an idea?” he asked in disbelief.

“To tell you the truth, sir, it was not our own idea, but rather the advice of a great scholar, Rabbi Menachem Mendel,” they answered.

Following the new plan, the troop indeed found itself in Shklov on the eve of Passover. The Jewish soldiers were given the next two days off, and hurried to the local synagogue to seek arrangements for the holiday. They were all graciously invited to different homes and went off with their hosts.

After the Passover meal, the soldier who had been given instructions by Rabbi Menachem Mendel prepared to leave. Despite the protests of his generous host, he excused himself and made his way to the Green Synagogue where he settled himself in a cozy corner to sleep. As he dozed off, he was suddenly awakened by sighs and moans coming from the far end of the synagogue. Only then did he notice an elderly man hunched over the table in obvious distress. The soldier approached him and gently asked, “Why are you so upset? Can I help you?”

“How can you help me?” the man answered bitterly. “Go back to sleep and just ignore me.”

The soldier backed away, respecting the man’s desire for privacy. When, however, the older man’s anguished groaning continued and prevented the soldier from sleeping, he approached him again. “Please share your troubles with me,” he said sympathetically. “Perhaps I can ease your sorrow.”

The man was touched by the soldier’s sincerity and told his story: “I am a widower who married a woman much younger than myself. What I thought would be a peaceful marriage turned out to be a nightmare. We had been married only a few weeks when a traveling orchestra came to town. One of the musicians became friendly with my wife, and before I knew it, the two stole all my money and ran away.

“I have no income, no home, and am at a total loss as to what to do. This is why I sleep here in the synagogue,” the man concluded.

“One never knows,” the soldier said in an attempt to console him. “Maybe I can be of help to you. Our troop is on a long trek into the inland reaches of Russia, and we will be passing through many towns and villages. Describe your wife and the musician to me; perhaps I will come across them while we’re on the road. I promise to do my best to help you.”

The man readily described the two, and, calmed by the soldier's compassionate interest, he finally fell asleep.

The soldiers continued their journey during the next week, and, just as Rabbi Menachem Mendel had foreseen, they arrived in the town of Mohilev on the eve of the latter days of the holiday. Again, the Jewish soldiers were given leave and they accepted invitations to the local people’s homes.

Once again, the soldier excused himself for the night and went to sleep in the communal

guesthouse as instructed. During the night, a loud commotion roused him from his sleep. He got up and saw that a band of people had arrived to spend the night there. Much to his surprise, one of the men and a woman fit precisely the description he had been given by the old man in the town of Shklov.

Early the next morning, before the latecomers had arisen, the soldier hurried to the house of the local rabbi and pounded on the door. “I am so sorry to disturb you, Rabbi, but there is an urgent matter which I must discuss.”

He quickly related the sorry plight of the man from Shklov. “I believe that I have found his runaway wife and her friend,” he suggested.

The rabbi immediately contacted the authorities and the two were arrested. The stolen money and valuables were traced, and after the holiday, the Rabbi arranged for a divorce.

Reprinted from Chabad.org.

Open Seders Will Open Hearts

By Rabbi Yaakov Shapira

My father, Rabbi Avraham Shapira, served as the Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel from 1983 until 1993, while Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu served as the Sephardic chief rabbi. During their tenure they traveled to the United States three times for the purpose of visiting the central Jewish communities in America and getting to know their leaders. They met with the most highly regarded religious authorities and heads of yeshivot to discuss important matters of mutual concern.

I served as my father’s right-hand man and I was privileged to join him on these trips. This is how it happened that I was present each time – in 1983, 1986, and 1989 – when the two chief rabbis met with the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Each meeting with the Rebbe lasted about three hours and involved a lively discussion which I found fascinating. The Rebbe spoke a very correct and clear Hebrew which he used during these meetings to accommodate Rabbi Eliyahu, who did not speak Yiddish.

Their conversations were far ranging – they debated a wide variety of questions in all realms of Torah law; they spoke about activities of the Israeli Rabbinate and the state of Yiddishkeit in Israel; and they discussed the prophecies concerning the coming of the Mashiach and the Final Redemption. They went from topic to topic, without pause, and their conversations were recorded, transcribed and later published.

During the first visit in 1983, the Rebbe asked the chief rabbis how they felt being outside of Israel. My father said that he had never left the Holy Land before, and that the time away was very difficult for him.

To bring him comfort, the Rebbe expounded on the Torah verse, “Jacob lifted his feet and went to the land of the people of the East,” pointing out that while Jacob’s departure from the Land of Israel was a spiritual descent, later it turned out that this descent was for the sake of a greater ascent. All Jacob’s sons – who would give rise to the Twelve Tribes of Israel – were born outside the Land. This is why the great 11th century Torah commentator, Rashi, reads the phrase “lifted his feet” as meaning Jacob “moved with ease” because G-d had promised to protect him and bring him back home. Indeed, Rashi goes so far as to say that “Jacob’s heart lifted his feet” – that is, his joy wasn’t just in his heart, but went down all the way to his feet. Based on this interpretation, the Rebbe concluded that even if one must leave Israel temporarily, one should be joyful, since a great ascent would come from this descent.

Later in the conversation, the Rebbe asked my father – who was a Kohen, a descendant of the priestly tribe – what he was doing about reciting the Birchat Kohanim, the Priestly Blessing. In Israel, the Kohanim bless the public every day during prayers, but in the Diaspora this is done only on Passover, Shavuot, Sukkot, and the High Holidays. My father responded that the Jewish Syrian community in the Diaspora practiced the Israeli custom, so he found a Syrian synagogue, Shaare Zion, where he would pray whenever possible. When he wasn’t able to go

there, he very much missed giving the Priestly Blessing.

The Rebbe remarked that, although he had lived in New York for forty years, he didn’t know that they gave the Priestly Blessing at Shaare Zion every day, and he was glad to learn of this, adding: “When the Kohanim give this blessing, they are also blessed in all their affairs.”

This first meeting lasted about two hours and, at its conclusion, the Rebbe asked to speak to the two chief rabbis privately, without their entourage, apologizing to those present as he did so. The private meeting lasted another forty-five minutes, and then the Rebbe escorted the rabbis out until the entrance of the building.

Afterwards, I remember my father speaking of the Rebbe with great admiration and remarking how extremely well versed the Rebbe was with everything that was going on in Israel. As well, the Rebbe’s endeavors in the field of spreading Yiddishkeit had made an enormous impression on him, so much so that he declared: “To achieve these results, he must be able to produce electricity like a big generator or a power plant – a regular battery wouldn’t be enough.”

In subsequent meetings, I noticed that while the Rebbe and the chief rabbis spoke about Torah concepts, the Rebbe always found a way to direct the conversation toward practical applications, so that nothing would remain just talk, but be put to use out “in the field,” so to speak.

For example, the second visit in 1986 took place close to Passover, which led to a lengthy discussion of the Pascal Offering. The Rebbe connected that to the Torah commandment,

“And you shall tell your son...,” urging the chief rabbis to spur Israeli rabbis to hold open seders in order to ensure that all Jews who weren’t planning to make a seder would have a chance to participate.

My father responded that most Israelis, even those who are not religious, do hold family seders, to which the Rebbe replied, “Hopefully, that will indeed be the case this Passover, but if – Heaven forbid – it is not, I see no other way to fix it ... From what I hear about Israel, there are many children who don’t participate in a seder.”

My father maintained that there were already public seders for those who have no place to go, but the Rebbe was not mollified.

“That is not enough,” he insisted, “because people are embarrassed to say they have no place to go. The solution I am proposing is that the local rabbi hold his own seder – with his students and his family – in the center of the city, inviting all the residents to join him. And then many people will come.”

The Rebbe devoted a great deal of time to explaining how it should work – how local rabbis should publicize these seders, making it clear that one and all are welcome, especially the children. “Whoever is interested should know that they can come and receive matzah and wine,” the Rebbe said, “without being required to pay anything and without being required to stay all the way to the end.”

The Rebbe acknowledged that such an initiative would cost money, and he offered to make a financial contribution, and even to persuade others to join in funding it.

He smiled as he said this, joking that every Jew is a natural businessman. “And the profit that I want to make from this business is that, as a result of these seders, people will get to know each other, and their children will get to know each other, and that, after Passover, they will continue to be drawn closer to Torah.”

The Rebbe was completely serious about it; he wasn’t just talking. Although the meeting ended at a late hour, we were surprised – as we left our hotel for prayers very early the next morning – to be greeted by a man who said, “I was sent by the Rebbe,” and who handed us a check, the Rebbe’s first contribution toward these open seders.

This was the Rebbe’s style – to get things done within hours. Our meeting ended shortly after midnight and only six hours later his commitment had already been fulfilled!

For the past thirteen years, Rabbi Yaakov Shapira has served as the Rosh Yeshivah of the Merkaz HaRav yeshivah in Jerusalem, and as a member of the Chief Rabbinate Council of Israel. He was interviewed in March of 2010.

Mesirat Nefesh of Keeping Pesach in a Siberian Prison

By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

The year was 1951; the war had ended in Europe but in Russia Josef Stalin, perhaps the most vicious mass murderer of all time, ruled the minds, souls and bodies of the U.S.S.R. through his propaganda, spies and secret police; the dreaded KGB.

Deep at night when people were wrapped in cocoons of warm sleep oblivious of the fear and murder around them, the KGB would strike!

As they did to the Koblanov family.

The Koblanov family certainly took precautions to hide their religious practices the rest of the year but tonight was Passover, Holiday of Freedom. They were sitting, as Jews had done for over 3,300 years, around a simply 'decorated' Passover table celebrating the 'Holiday of Liberation.

This night they weren't afraid. But it wasn't easy to feel happy either.

Three of them were missing. Their father Reb Eliezer had been taken away by police in the middle of the night a few months earlier, for 'anti-revolutionary activities'. Then their eldest sister Chaya, (leaving behind her husband and a small baby) and finally their mother Elka, were arrested weeks later, and taken to the fearsome Spolkeri Prison to await 'trial'. Only a miracle would bring them back, but the Jews lived on miracles.

Who knows when the next arrest would occur? It was hanging over their heads like a sharp sword. But what good would being afraid or getting depressed do? Their only hope was G-d.

They remembered the words of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and his father before him: "Our enemies can control our bodies, but nothing can control the Jewish soul."

And the words of Rabbi Akiva, some 2,000 years earlier, who defied the Roman prohibition of teaching Torah, and when someone tried to talk him into compromising, he replied; 'Once a hungry fox tried to convince a fish to leave the stream saying, he'd be safer on dry land, 'Fool' replied the fish, 'If I'm not safe here where I'm supposed to be, for SURE I won't last in a place I'm not created for.' A Jew without Judaism is like a fish out of water!"

So the five that were left; two sisters Liba and Sterna, their younger 20 year old brother Kerpil, their older brother Mendel and his wife, tried to be as happy as possible and even managed to sing a few songs of redemption at the Seder.

But a few hours after the Seder when the family was asleep it happened. The house shook, the windows rattled. The KGB broke in, took away Kerpil and a few hours later at the crack of dawn returned and took his two sisters. Then a month later Mendel was taken. Now the entire family of seven was gone.

A few months later the seven of them met again. But this time all in chains standing before the judge. At first, each was happy to see that the others were alive, but when they heard their sentences, they almost wished they were dead.

Their father, Reb Eliezer, received ten years at hard labor in Siberia and the rest of the family got eight (very few people survived even the first year). Within the hour each was on a different train, each headed for a different 'work' camp of the thousands scattered throughout vast Mother Russia.

Kerpil took it hard. He totally lacked the stamina necessary for the twelve-hour shifts, meager, bread diets and sub-zero weather. After a few

months he was sure that he wouldn't be able to hold out.

But then two miracles occurred. The first; because he sat two months in medical school before he was arrested, he was unexpectedly appointed to the position of camp doctor, which gave him slightly more freedom.

Then came the bigger miracle; one of the patients he treated turned out to be a Jew who, as a sign of gratitude, took a folded piece of newspaper from his pocket, carefully opened it on a table to reveal a piece of Matza (that he probably carried with him the entire year), broke off a small piece and put it in Kerpil's hand.

It was still several months before Passover but as soon as this small treasure was in his possession, he felt plugged in to a new source of life.

That Passover he found an empty room in the work camp, put the Matza before him, recited what he remembered of the Haggadah by heart, gave thanks for being a Jew, cried tears of joy and renewed his vow to always keep Passover no matter what!

But five years later it seemed he would have to break his vow. For four years he had survived hunger, fatigue, danger and cold and kept Passover religiously. But this year as the holiday approached, he felt very ill and every day weaker and colder until he was really worried.

For the rest of the year the bread kept him going, and usually on Passover he only ate vegetables that he cooked in a small pot he had secured. But this year he was sure he wouldn't make it on such a meager diet. He felt as though he would pass out any moment, or worse.

And to make matters worse, he had to work. If he didn't do his job he would be demoted, punished, beaten, even killed! But somehow, he dragged himself to work every day for seven days and

almost finished the holiday in one piece! But he was finished. Outside of Israel, Passover is eight days and he knew he couldn't last another day.

Then on the last day of Passover, a soldier came to him with an order to appear immediately before the dreaded chief doctor of the camp; a middle-aged woman with mean, narrow eyes who was known as an anti-Semite and a bloodthirsty sadist to boot.

Kerpil's knees knocked as he dragged himself to her office. If she decided to fire him he would have to return to hard labor, which meant sure death. He stood before her, pale as a ghost, certain that this Passover would be his last. She gave him a startled look and said, "You don't look good. I think you have to get out of here." Kerpil couldn't believe his ears she was talking like a human being!

"You look terrible. Don't tell anyone I told you this" she continued, "but soon a group of officials will visit here to review all the prisoners. Since Stalin died (in 1953) things are changing. Just tell them that you regret your past deeds and I'm sure they will free you. You look terrible."

It seems that the poor diet of Passover was exactly what saved him!

A few months later the officials did arrive and over a half a year later, just a week before the next Passover, Kerpil was freed!

But imagine his joy, when he returned home to discover, that just days before, his entire family had unexplainably also been freed; all were alive and all miraculously had their sentences shortened in time to be home together for the holiday of Passover!

That year at the Passover meal there were a lot of stories about self-sacrifice and G-d's miracles.

Reprinted from email of Chabad.org.

A Combat Officer's Passover In the Sands of Kuwait

By Nicole Bauke

Capt. Sanford Cohen counts down the end of his deployment in Kuwait by the number of Shabbats, rather than days.

“It’s a lot more manageable,” said Capt. Cohen, 38, from Staten Island, N.Y. “I’m going to quote one of my ... soldiers on this: The Friday-night service is what he looks forward to in his week. It completes his week. It pains him when he can’t make it. It pains him.”

There is not a single Jewish chaplain at Camp Buehring Army Base - let alone in all of Kuwait - but despite this, Capt. Cohen’s religious observance has remained at the forefront of his priorities, so much so that he has become a volunteer lay leader endorsed by the Jewish Welfare Board.

“When you don’t know if the bullet that’s being fired has your name on it, the ability to do more mitzvot takes precedence over other projects,” said Capt. Cohen. Counting down by Shabbats is easier for his three sons - ages 3, 6 and 9 - to grasp, too. While they only have a chance to speak to him on Sundays due to the time change and differing schedules, they always tell him what they did over Shabbat.

“It’s something they get,” said Capt. Cohen. “I’ll take an article from Chabad.org or Aish on the week’s parsha, and send it to my oldest son with, ‘hey, I thought you’d like this ’ He reads it, and they discuss it on Friday night.”

And for Capt. Cohen, a Brigade Ammunition Officer of the 35th Combat Aviation Brigade, the end of Passover marks his 40th (and last) Shabbat of his nine-month deployment. But for now, he is busy preparing for and organizing Passover on base, expecting about 20 people to attend the Seders.

“I’m not going to be with my family, but I’m going to be with my Army family,” said Capt. Cohen, whose family back in the States will be spending the holiday with his in-laws at a Chabad-run resort hotel in South California.

As a lay leader, Capt. Cohen orders kosher MREs (shelf-stable Meals Ready to Eat), leads Friday-night services and organizes holiday celebrations for his fellow troops. Their Passover supplies would not be the same without the support of Jewish organizations such as the Aleph Institute, which provide items that cannot be ordered through the military.

“The only way to have a connection is through organizations like Aleph Institute and Kosher Troops. They are what keeps us connected when there is no synagogue, or kosher restaurant,” said Capt. Cohen.

The Aleph Institute sends religious materials throughout the year - Torah scrolls, menorahs, hamantashen, military camouflage siddurim (prayer books) and other Jewish books. For Passover, they send whatever is needed to complete a seder meal, such as Haggadot, seder plates, charoset and shmurah matzah, benefiting approximately 1,000 soldiers on about 60 bases worldwide.

“This campaign was started by the Lubavitcher Rebbe [Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory] in 1941 or ‘42, and he oversaw it personally,” said Rabbi Menachem Katz, director of military and prison outreach at the Aleph Institute. “It’s something that goes back hundreds of years - back to every Lubavitcher Rebbe in Russia, where they took care of the Russian Jewish soldiers in the Russian Army and made sure they had matzah for Pesach and so on.”

The Aleph Institute also helps connect Jewish troops with the visiting Jewish chaplain so that more Jews are able to participate in holiday celebrations and religious observations, according to Capt. Mendy Stern, chaplain for the 312th Military Intelligence Battalion.

Capt. Stern, stationed at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, is preparing for deployment to serve as the rabbi for troops in Afghanistan during Passover. This will be his second Passover deployment and his sixth deployment overall.

“This opportunity to serve those who serve our great country is an absolute honor and privilege,” wrote Capt. Stern over email. “Since joining the Army, I’ve encountered many Jewish troops whose lives were touched by the mere presence of a Jewish chaplain or the opportunity to observe a mitzvah in an otherwise Jewish religious desert.”

His Passover preparations are complicated, to say the least. Usually, chaplains on the ground, who are usually not Jewish, request kosher-for-Passover MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) and “Seder Kits,” which provide the basic items, according to Capt. Stern. Everything must be arranged and shipped far in advance, and, traditionally, more people than expected tend to show up. During his previous Passover deployment, more than 60 Jews attended the Seders.

“As there are so few Jewish chaplains, we must rely heavily on the chaplains on the ground to advertise and help spread the word of the upcoming services,” wrote Capt. Stern. “We rotate for holiday coverage to locations where there is no Jewish chaplain. We arrive a few days before Pesach, and we set up the Seder, while still

visiting the troops, providing counsel and [offering] support to the mission.”

The lack of Jewish chaplains is a real issue for Capt. Cohen, who wishes that more rabbis would bring their religious outreach to the U.S. military. He became a lay leader after traveling two and a half hours to Camp Arifjan last Fall for Rosh Hashanah - the closest location for prayer services - forcing him to miss several days of work at his own base. There are “dozens” of chaplains at Camp Buehring, but no rabbis.

“There aren’t enough rabbis as chaplains in the military, so guys like me have to step up,” said Cohen. “This is the place—the Army, the military—to do the most good, the most Kiddush Hashem, not just for the Jews but for the non-Jews.”

Even though there are about 5,000 Jewish-affiliating soldiers in the military, Rabbi Katz estimates, there are only 12 active-duty Jewish chaplains in the Army, and less than 50 in the entire military. Where there isn’t a rabbi, lay leaders like Capt. Cohen fill the role as best they can. But both Capt. Stern and Capt. Cohen agree: It may be more complicated than a holiday at home, but it’s a shlichut that is well worth it.

“On one hand, there’s a bittersweet feeling of being away from family during the holiday, having to imagine the children asking the ‘Mah Nishtanah’ [‘Four Questions’] and celebrating thousands of miles away from home. On the other hand, the feeling that I’m embarking on a shlichut [emissary] mission, to celebrate Passover with servicemen and women who are far from home ... it’s an adventure which I wouldn’t pass up.”

Reprinted from an email of Chabad.Org Magazine.

How We Baked Matzah In a Nazi Labor Camp

By Asharon Baltazar

Three men, all prisoners, could think of nothing but the imminent festival of Passover. As thousands of Jews - including their own relatives - were being sent to their



deaths on a daily basis, Yaakov Friedman, Moshe Goldstein, and Rabbi Yekutiel Halberstam (the Klausenburger Rebbe) had the bravery and presence of mind to secure matzah for Passover 1945.

Here is Moshe Goldstein's account of the amazing turn of events that afforded them the ability to observe the Festival of Freedom amidst abysmal suffering and death.

In the days preceding Passover, the war was nearing its end. The relentless droning of American aircraft filled the German skies, followed by the whistling hail of bombs that pounded the Mühldorf railway complex into rubble.

Spared of destruction were the nearby forced labor camps where we toiled under the harshest conditions. We prisoners celebrated this mighty display of Allied destruction, but the anxiety of our German overseers ran high. The railway was vital to the war efforts, and orders were issued to immediately repair the damage. The Germans decided to send a group of 12 Jewish slaves to begin the cleanup.

I volunteered to go. I knew the work would be excruciating but I hoped that perhaps I would find some food amidst the rubble.

We arrived at a scene of utter devastation. Freight cars lay on their sides, smoke rising from gaping holes. Stretches of railing were ripped off the ground and tossed aside in twisted heaps. Nearly

every building suffered extensive damage. It was clear some of the cars were unrepairable.

I managed to disappear between the rows of trains that were still upright. It took a while, but I eventually found a boxcar from Hungary loaded with wheat in burlap sacks. Wheat! And so close to Pesach! G-d had granted us a good start, but how could I possibly smuggle the wheat into the camp?

A faint groan from amid the wheat sacks caught my attention. There, in a dark corner of the boxcar, lay a man, crushed by the enormous weight of the grain. The man mumbled something more, which I recognized as Hungarian, my native tongue. I saw he wore the gray uniform of an SS officer.

“What happened?” I asked.

The SS officer moaned weakly about being pinned under the sacks. “I understand. Let me help you.”

As I approached, I noticed the officer’s boots, deep black in color and luxurious in appearance. On my own were bits of tattered leather, barely held together.

“I’m going to take off your shoes,” I said. “That way, you’ll feel less restrained, and then we’ll see what we can do.”

Once I had undone the laces, I slipped the heavy boots off. Then, wielding whatever strength and hate I could muster, I swung at the man's head. I took the boots and continued my search.

I knew I did not have much time and I needed to think of a way to bring in as much wheat as possible without the guards knowing. Lugging the sacks through the main gates didn't even occur to me; the wheat would be confiscated and I would be shot without a second thought.

I rummaged around some more, and discovered two pairs of pants. I put them on and cinched the bottoms around my ankles with some rope. I was then able to pour a quantity of wheat into the space between the two pairs of pants. Once my legs were filled with as much wheat as I dared carry, I began the long walk back to the camp.

The bombings left the Germans rattled and fearful, and for the initial days following the air raid, the inspection of prisoners at camp gates was enforced almost half-heartedly. I was thus able to smuggle in a fairly large amount of wheat. We had wheat, but now what?

Reb Sender Drenfeld, a fellow inmate and a Belzer Chassid, offered to hide the wheat, and amazingly, he managed to keep it away from prying German eyes.

Later, an old mill was procured from somewhere. We ground the wheat in the dead of night, and using a clean piece of cloth, sifted the flour from grit.

Next we needed fuel for a fire.

During one stint in the field, I asked everyone to find a stick and carry it back to the camp.

The branches were conspicuous and caught the attention of a German guard. He motioned me over.

"Why is everyone with a stick?"

"What difference does it make? People want to walk around with a stick," I answered.

We had flour and we had fuel. We were ready to bake matzah.

One night just before Passover, we set about baking matzah. Near the barrack door stood a prisoner, standing guard with fearful eyes.

We lit a fire under a metal can which functioned as our oven, and the Matzah baking - under Nazi noses - began. The Rebbe, Reb Yaakov, and I mixed the flour and kneaded the dough. We worked quickly, not only because of the strict 18-minute limit, but also because of the ever-present danger of being caught. We ended up with 20 small matzahs.

On Pesach eve, after returning from work, our small group sat down for the Seder. On wooden slats around us lay sleeping bodies, exhausted from the relentless work. For those celebrating, the hardships of the Holocaust and daily camp life melted away, as we experienced the Biblical redemption from Egypt. Unable to sit for long, we each ate an olive-sized piece of matzah, the taste of tears mingling with the matzah crumbs in our mouths.

We could not sit leisurely and recite the Haggadah, but in those moments we each prayed - more fervently than ever before or ever since - the words that still ring in my ears: "Next year in Jerusalem."

Reprinted from email of Chabad.org.

The Rebbe Does Not Make a Mistake

By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon

Every Chassid has his special day or Chag which he spends with his Rebbe. With some it is Rosh Hashanah, when he can hear the Rebbe's Tekiat Shofar (blowing of the shofar), and with others it is Simchat Torah, when he can participate in the Rebbe's Hakafot.

In Lubavitch, Shavuot was known as Chag Hama'tzot, as that was the Chag for which Rabbanim (who are called moreh tzedek, the acronym of which is ma'tzot) would be able to come to Lubavitch.

The Chassid of our story, whom we will call Shimon, would come to his Rebbe every year for Pesach. (Perhaps this was because as an innkeeper who ran a tavern, this was the only time of the year when he closed his doors, as all of his whiskey was chametz.)

In addition to participating generously in his community's maot chittim (fund for the poor), he would take a sizeable amount of money to give to the Rebbe to distribute as he saw fit. He would begin cleaning his house early enough so that it would be ready for Pesach when he left. His married children would lead the seder for his family, and he would be in seventh heaven, spending Pesach with the Rebbe.

Every year, shortly after Maariv on the first night of Pesach, the gabbai would enter the shul and read a list of twenty visitors who were invited to participate as the Rebbe's guests at his seder. There were a number of people who were always among the honored individuals, and Shimon was one of them. Everyone knew that Shimon was one of the Rebbe's devoted Chassidim who gave extremely generously to the Rebbe's causes.

On the second night of Pesach, another group of twenty people would be invited. Shimon would

join the seder that had been arranged for all of the Chassidim who had not been invited to the Rebbe's seder. Shimon would review for them the thoughts, insights, and stories that the Rebbe had related at the seder on the first night. In addition to being quite wealthy, Shimon was also a Talmid Chacham and he had a wonderful way of explaining the Rebbe's teachings and insights.

After Pesach, he would take leave of his Rebbe, and at that time the Rebbe would bless him with longevity and continued success. He would come home invigorated and enriched in his appreciation of his Rebbe's greatness, and he would conduct his life accordingly.

One year, as soon as he arrived at the Rebbe's court as usual, he gave the gabbai an envelope containing his yearly generous participation in the Rebbe's tzedakot (charitable causes). He then went to his friend's house where he was given a room to use for the duration of his stay. He proceeded to help his hosts for Pesach as well, by giving them financial assistance as well as personally participating in preparing for Chag.

The first night of Pesach arrived, and Shimon took a place next to the bimah, waiting for when he would hear the gabbai call out his name. After Maariv, as soon as the gabbai re-entered the beit hamidrash everyone became silent and waited with bated breath to hear who the Rebbe had invited this year. The gabbai ascended the bimah and began announcing the names, reading from the paper in his hand.

Each time a name was announced, the Chassid's face shone with happiness. He had merited to be invited to the Rebbe's seder! Shimon was smiling from the beginning, expecting to hear

his name as usual. However, as the gabbai reached the last few names on the list, he began feeling uneasy. Something was wrong here. There must have been a mistake. The Rebbe always invited him!

The gabbai concluded reading the names of the Rebbe's guests at his seder, and began to leave the shul. Shimon stopped him and asked if he had missed mentioning his name by mistake. "After all," Shimon added, "for the last fourteen years the Rebbe has always included me on his list!"

The gabbai opened the paper and looked at the names again. "No, the Rebbe did not include you on the list this year," he stated. Seeing the look of disbelief written all over Shimon's face, he allowed Shimon himself to look at the paper, which the Rebbe had personally written. To his surprise, he saw that his name indeed did not appear on the list.

Shimon couldn't believe it. "It must be a mistake!" he blurted out.

Before he could continue, the gabbai replied: "The Rebbe doesn't make a mistake. If your name is not on the list, it is because the Rebbe wants you to eat today's seder with all of the other guests who also were not invited."

"Perhaps the Rebbe doesn't know that I am here," Shimon said. "Did you give the Rebbe my envelope and letter?"

"Yes, Reb Shimon," replied the gabbai. "The Rebbe knows you are here. I gave him your envelope and letter and I saw him read it. He certainly knows you arrived. But as I said before, the Rebbe doesn't make a mistake. If he didn't put you on the list, he has a reason for it. The Rebbe knows what he is doing!"

Hearing those words, Shimon was confused. What the gabbai had said was indeed true. He himself would often say those very words to others. The Rebbe is a Malach Elokim, a G-dly

man, and doesn't make mistakes; all of his actions are correct and precise. But it just didn't feel right. Why had the Rebbe excluded him from his seder this year?!

He joined the numerous other Chassidim at their seder, but he did not join them in their joy. They were rejoicing that they had merited to spend this special Chag with the Rebbe, but Shimon was perturbed, lost in thought: "Why wasn't I invited this year? Did I perhaps do something wrong? How can I rectify it?"

After some time, he concluded: "Perhaps the Rebbe plans to invite me to the second seder tomorrow night. Perhaps the Rebbe does certain things on the second night differently than on the first night, and he wants to give me a chance to experience those unique moments."

Convincing himself that this indeed was the reason and confident that he would be invited for the second seder, Shimon forced himself to smile and participate in the singing and joy. Yes, it would be good.

The next day he made sure to stand where the Rebbe would notice him when the Rebbe entered the shul to daven. That way, just in case he wasn't on the written list, maybe the Rebbe would verbally instruct the gabbai to invite him as well.

Once again, after Maariv Shimon stood next to the bimah, except that this time he was apprehensive. Would his name be called out or not? He tried to make eye contact with the gabbai to receive some assurance, but to no avail. The gabbai began reading the list, and once again he was not included.

Shimon was dumbfounded and aghast. Something was definitely wrong. Once again, he went to the gabbai and asked, this time in a subdued tone: "Are you sure I am not on the list?"

The gabbai showed the second list to Shimon, and his world turned dark. Indeed, his name was not on the list! Unable to control his anguish, he once again blurted out: “This must be a mistake!”

The gabbai saw Shimon’s disappointment and grief. Trying to console him, he replied: “Reb Shimon, you know how great our Rebbe is. The Rebbe doesn’t make a mistake. There must be a good reason why you weren’t invited this year. But who are we to understand the Rebbe? The Rebbe sees things that we don’t. Reb Shimon, have a Chag Sameach.”

To Shimon, it was more like Tisha B’av and the deep reflections of Yom Kippur, than Pesach. He concluded that the Rebbe must have seen a gezeirah (heavenly decree) against him, and therefore he didn’t invite him. “It must be,” he thought, “that the gezeirah is so severe that the Rebbe can’t nullify it with his tremendous tefillot. I am doomed. I must do teshuvah (repent)! Maybe Hashem will accept my teshuvah.”

The other Chassidim saved his regular place for him at one of the main tables, where this year he would be able to hear from the lucky individuals what had transpired last night at the Rebbe’s seder. They were hoping that Reb Shimon would elucidate the Rebbe’s teachings, as he has done in the previous years.

However, Shimon wasn’t in the mood of doing so. He sat at a table in the corner of the room, immersed in his painful thoughts. He tried to recall any incident that may have caused this gezeirah to befall him. What terrible thing had he done? Gone was any façade of happiness and joy of Chag. Instead, it was replaced with noticeable apprehension and despair of some impending tragedy.

While the Chassidim were in the midst of reading and discussing the Haggadah, the gabbai

suddenly entered. “Where is Shimon?” he asked frantically. “The Rebbe is calling for him!”

Shimon was so depressed and lost in thought that he didn’t hear the gabbai’s words, until many of the Chassidim began saying loudly: “Reb Shimon, the Rebbe is waiting for you!”

Hearing this, Shimon began to smile. “This must mean that the Rebbe noticed I am not at his seder,” he thought, “and he realizes that I should be there. That is why the Rebbe sent his gabbai to call me!” He got up from his place, and, with happiness in his heart, he swiftly followed the gabbai.

As soon as Shimon entered the room, the Rebbe motioned that he should come over to him. When he came close to the Rebbe, the Rebbe handed Shimon an empty bottle and asked him to hold it. Then, to his shock and horror, the Rebbe began to pour the wine of the eser makkot (ten plagues) into it. When he concluded, the Rebbe took the cap and secured the bottle tightly, saying: “Shimon, keep this with you and safeguard it. You may now return to your seder. Chag Sameach!”

If Shimon was sad and depressed before this, now he was heartbroken and devastated. He thought: “The Rebbe is giving me all of the curses associated with the wine that is poured out from the becher (cup) while mentioning each of the ten plagues. This must mean that there is a real and terrible gezeirah against me!” Returning to his place, he mustered all of his strength to control himself from breaking out in tears on Chag.

After Chag, the Rebbe blessed him with a safe trip and wished him that all should be well. But Shimon was far from relaxed. He felt as if his world was collapsing and that he needed to do teshuvah. However, he resolved to conceal his anxiety from his family as much as possible.

When he returned home, he repeated to his family and fellow Chassidim a few insights and teachings he had overheard or that he remembered from previous years, but he didn't inform anyone that he hadn't been invited to participate in the Rebbe's seder. They all assumed that he had joined in the Rebbe's seder as usual.

When he informed the older members of his family that he was planning to remain in shul every morning for one hour after Shacharit, they thought this was an instruction he had received from the Rebbe. No one realized that it was part of his self-imposed teshuvah regimen.

Shimon then proceeded to focus on the Rebbe's directive to keep the bottle with him and safeguard it. He realized that in order to fulfill this instruction properly, he would need to put the bottle in a place where he alone could access it, but was still considered "with him." It was an unsealed bottle, so if it would be left out in the open, one of his family workers might think that it was useable, and he didn't want to tell anyone that this wine was from the Rebbe's eser makkot.

After giving the matter some thought, he decided to put the bottle on the top shelf in his tavern, where the more expensive bottles were kept behind doors. Moreover, he decided to place it in a small compartment on that shelf which had its own door, and to place a small lock on the door so that no one would take it by mistake.

The next few weeks and months passed by uneventfully. Nevertheless, Shimon intensified his teshuvah, fearing that something harmful would happen to him or to a member of his family.

One very hot summer day, Shimon sat in his tavern, waiting for a customer to come in. Seeing that no one was coming, Shimon began

saying Tehillim. He had almost concluded the entire sefer when three men entered the room.

Shimon took out his regular bottle to serve them, but one of the men said, "We would appreciate wine or whiskey of higher quality." Pulling out a ten-ruble note (which was five times the price of a regular drink), he said, "Please bring us something better."

Shimon was happy to hear this. These three customers might be his only visitors this hot day, but if they would take just a few more drinks, he might earn more from them than what he would usually earn from his regular customers! After sipping from their cups, they called him back and said: "That was good, but we want to enjoy something even better. Here is a twenty-ruble note."

Shimon proceeded to take out a bottle from a higher shelf. After tasting it and paying him for it, they said: "Now please give us your best wine. Don't worry about the cost; we have plenty of money." To prove their point, one of them took a thick wad of bills out of his pocket.

Now Shimon was thrilled. This would indeed be a profitable day! He took a step stool and chose a bottle from among those on the top shelf. As he was pouring from it into their cups, two of the men suddenly stood up and grabbed him. Holding him tightly, they warned him not to scream or he would regret it. They then instructed him to sit down, took out a rope from their bag, and tied him up. Next, they stuffed his mouth with a napkin so he wouldn't be able to scream.

The bandits went behind the counter, and, after emptying the cash register, they began eyeing the bottles on the higher shelves. They then noticed that one of the shelves had a lock on it. Thinking that a very expensive bottle must be behind that door, they broke the lock and removed the bottle.

They sat down next to him and began taunting him. “Aahh, this must be good stuff. Look, only one third of the bottle is left. You must have been saving it for a special occasion. Haha! Are we going to enjoy it!”

One of them brought three clean cups and divided the wine equally among them. Glancing at Shimon, they saw a look of horror on his face. However, they took that as a sign of his anguish over his tremendous loss, proving to them that they had indeed discovered a truly special bottle of wine.

Adding insult to injury, one of them placed his cup next to Shimon’s nostrils and said: “We are good guys. We will share the wine with you. Here, take a whiff!” Shimon recoiled in fear and tried to speak, but his voice was muffled by the napkin in his mouth. After clicking their glasses together, they began to sip the wine, hoping to prolong their savoring of every drop.

As soon as they took their first sip, drowsiness overtook them and they fell into a deep slumber, dropping to the floor. Seeing that they were out cold, Shimon began wiggling around, trying to loosen the rope tied around his body. After a few minutes he succeeded in pushing out the napkin from his mouth and began shouting for help. A

few moments passed, and a passerby heard his screams and entered the tavern. He immediately untied Shimon, and together they took the rope along with additional rope and tied up the three men securely. Then, the passerby rushed out to call the local police.

As soon as the officers saw the bandits, they declared: “These men have been terrorizing the area for some time. There is a large reward being offered for any information that leads to their capture, and you will receive it. But please tell us: How did you manage to catch them by yourself, and why are they in such a deep sleep?”

By then his entire family was informed of the close call and converged upon the inn, asking him how he was feeling.

Shimon related to them the entire story of what had transpired the past Pesach, and then added: “Yes, the Rebbe never makes a mistake. The Rebbe saw that I would be in danger and gave me this wine to save me. Perhaps he also saw that I needed to do teshuvah in order to merit to be saved, and therefore he didn’t invite me this year to his seder. How great is the Rebbe’s vision!”

Reprinted from an email of Rabbi Avtzon’s Weekly Story.

The Three Visits of Elijah the Prophet

By Yaakov Brawer

Twenty eight years ago, I attended a farbrengen(Chassidic gathering) in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn and set eyes on the Rebbe for the first time. The year that followed was truly a year of miracles, not the least of which was a visit by Elijah the Prophet.

On the first night of Passover my family and I, suffused with the wonder of our newly

discovered Chassidism and aflame with inspiration, were seated around the seder table. I had never before experienced a seder with such spiritual delight and longing for redemption.

At the conclusion of the meal, the cup of Elijah was filled and my six year old son, candle in hand, was sent to open the front door, an old fashioned, ponderous wooden

structure that was secured with a heavy iron latch. The door could be seen clearly from where I sat.

However, before my son could take a step, the door unlatched and swung wide open. No one, or at least no one visible, was there. My son dropped the candle and ran to his mother. I hesitantly got up and went to the open doorway. The night was clear and there was not so much as a breeze.

With us that Passover was my parents' housekeeper, a simple, devout, G d fearing Catholic woman. She had come to us a few days before and stayed on to help with the children. During the seder, she stayed in her room, which was at the top of the stairs on the second floor. When she came down the next morning, she told us that during the night, she had heard the front door open and that she was suddenly and inexplicably overcome by an intense, awesome feeling of fear.

My second encounter with Elijah occurred on the following Passover. In the interim, we had moved from Boston to Montreal. As Passover approached and we immersed ourselves in the seemingly endless scrubbing, kashering, buying, and cooking, the exertion was sweetened by anticipations of the seder. Moreover, in light of the experience of the past year, it was not unreasonable to hope that Elijah would visit us, once again, in person.

The night of Passover arrived and the seder was conducted with joy and expectation. In due course, the cup of Elijah was filled and I sent my (now) seven year old and his four year old brother to open the front door. Our home in Montreal occupied the second story

of a duplex, so that the front door was downstairs. I heard the children open the door, and then I heard screams of terror and the sound of their feet scrambling up the steps.

They burst into the dining room, faces white with fear, and they babbled and clung to me as if their very lives were threatened. Although their agitated jabbering was totally unintelligible, I wondered whether Elijah had not appeared this time in visible form. After all, it all made a great deal of sense.

When Elijah had arrived last year, I was not yet worthy to behold his presence. Now, however, after a whole year of studying Tanya, and donning the additional "Rabeinu Tam" tefillin as per Chassidic custom, and after having been to the Rebbe a half a dozen times - perhaps I had reached the state of personal perfection necessary for a full revelation of Elijah.

I disengaged myself from my hysterical offspring and went downstairs to greet the prophet. What I encountered, however, was something else. There, at the entrance, was not the angelic figure of Elijah, but two massive dogs sitting on the front porch. I now understood the children's delirium. My kids would cross the street if they saw a miniature poodle leashed to its owner two blocks away.

At a distance of one block they would begin to tremble and whimper. These two dogs were truly grotesque. They looked like those prehistoric carnivores whose fossilized remains populate the LaBrea tar pits. They placidly sat on my porch contemplating me with mild curiosity. I could not imagine what they were doing there.

I closed the door and dejectedly climbed the stairs. How was I to explain to my family that after six trips to the Rebbe, a year of learning Tanya, and putting on Rabbeinu Tam's tefillin in addition to the regular, requisite Rashi tefillin, I was worthy to be visited on Passover night by a couple of dogs? As it turned out, however, they weren't ordinary dogs.

On the following morning in shul, I was approached by one of the Yeshivah administrators who asked if I could take a guest for the midday meal. One of the supporters of the Yeshivah had a son who was studying law at an American school, and while there, he had become attracted to Torah learning and Jewish observance. He was now home, visiting his parents for Passover, and this administrator thought it would be a good idea if I spoke with him. I readily agreed.

We were introduced, and following the morning prayers, my children, my guest and I set out for home. As we reached my house, my guest became excited and exclaimed "I don't believe it! This can't be real".

I asked him what the excitement was about. My guest told me that he had come to Montreal the day before Passover. With him, were his two pet dogs. Just before the seder at his parents' home, the dogs escaped and ran out into the street. By the time their absence was noticed, they were nowhere to be seen, and my guest took to the streets to search for them. Hours later, he found them, very far from home, in a strange neighborhood, sitting on someone's front porch. That someone was me.

Providence had guided those monsters, his "pets", to my house. The experience left a deep impression on all of us and I felt particularly uplifted. If Elijah did not exactly come in person, at least he sent his dogs.

My guest and I became friends and in time, he embraced Torah completely, married, and raised a wonderful Chassidic family.

The third visit, which occurred the following year and has been repeated ever since, is somewhat less dramatic. Following grace after the meal, the cup of Elijah is filled, and my grandchildren go to the door, candles in hand. The door is opened, the appropriate verses are recited and that's it. Although it would be improper and incorrect to refer to it as a "no show", it is a very low key visit.

In truth, intuition notwithstanding, this third visit is the most momentous of all, but one must know how to appreciate it. Last year, while spending Passover with my eldest son (the six- and seven-year old in the above accounts) he related a story about the Rebbe of Kotsk that puts this third visit in proper focus.

One year the Kotsker Rebbe promised his Chassidim that Elijah the Prophet would be revealed at his seder. On the first night of Passover, the Rebbe's dining room was crammed with Chassidim. The air was electric with anticipation and excitement. The seder progressed, the cup of Elijah was filled and the door opened. What happened next, left the Chassidim speechless. Nothing. Nothing happened. There was no one there.

The Chassidim were crushed. After all, the Rebbe had promised them a revelation of Elijah. The Kotsker, his face radiating holy joy, perceived their bitter disappointment and

inquired as to what was the problem. They told him. "Fools!" he thundered. "Do you think that Elijah the Prophet comes in through the door? Elijah comes in through the heart."

The true light of redemption comes from within. Miracles provide inspiration and cause us to direct our attention and efforts to spiritual truths. The ultimate miracle, however, is not the abrogation of nature, but the transformation of the natural into the G-dly.

Although the redemption from Egypt came from "without" - it was orchestrated and produced entirely by the Almighty, our Sages tell us the future and ultimate redemption will be the product of our own effort. Indeed, the whole point of liberating us from Egypt was to provide us with the opportunity to refine ourselves and the world around us to the extent that Divine Will

which is the hidden source and root of all of existence becomes openly manifest.

This is what we achieve when we struggle to overcome the ego-centric inertia of worldly life. Every small, private, inner step on the path to spirituality and goodness is a step toward the Redemption. The Torah-study, good deeds, and character refinement with which we occupy themselves all year open the door of the heart to Elijah the Prophet and all that he represents.

When the cup of Elijah is filled this Passover and the front door is opened, don't concentrate on the doorway. If you peek into your heart, there's a very good chance that you will behold the holy prophet smiling back at you.

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How Much is a Matzah Worth?

By Rabbi Pinchas Lipschutz

How many advertisements have you seen that claim to "make your Pesach easier this year"? How often have you heard people complaining about the price of matzah?

Every time I hear or see such kvetching, I'd like to remind the person, who likely doesn't know any better, that it wasn't too long ago that Jews paid for matzah with their lives or blood, and how thankful we should be that we live in a time when Jews are free to hold a Seder, drink wine, and eat as much matzah as they want.

Rather than complaining, we should be thankful. Instead of seeing Chag as a difficult period, we should be thankful for the opportunity to have a break from the mundane and live on a higher plane, becoming closer to Hashem, raising our levels of kedusha, and living – at least for a few days – on a more sanctified level.

Not wanting to sound sanctimonious, I usually don't respond when such comments are offered. I know that whatever I say will sound trite and I will be accused of being uncompassionate.

The next time someone complains about the expenses and "difficulties" of Chag, think of this story related by Rav Yaakov Galinsky as told to him by Rav Yitzchok Shlomo Ungar, who served as rav of K'hal Chug Chatam Sofer in Bnei Brak.

Hungarian Jewry was virtually the last to fall into the evil grip of the Nazis. During the last year of World War II, as the German army faced multiple defeats on the battlegrounds of Europe, they tightened their vice on Hungary. One million Hungarian Jews were herded into ghettos. Two months later, they were shipped off to death camps to be annihilated.

The protagonist of this story was one of those Jews. He arrived at the camp with his wife and children. They were sent straight to the gas chambers, while he was declared fit for work, tattooed with a number, and granted life. His bunkmate was a Rebbishe grandchild who used every available moment to learn Torah. He would constantly offer chizuk to our friend and others in the block.

One day, the bunkmate whispered to him that Pesach was coming. There was no shortage of marmor, he said, but he wondered how they would be able to observe the mitzvah of eating a kezayit of matzah.

Our friend discovered where wheat was stored for the camp. Anybody caught taking anything faced being shot dead on the spot, but the Rebbishe Ainikel told our friend that he should be prepared to risk his life for the mitzvah. He began gathering a few wheat kernels at a time and hiding them until he had enough to make flour for two kezaitim of matzah. One day, he found two stones and used them to grind the kernels into flour. He heated a piece of metal, added water to the flour, and baked the mixture on the white-hot piece of metal.

He produced a fist-sized matzah, thick enough for two kezaitim, one for him and one for his friend. He hid the prize under his shirt and held his arm close to his body to keep the matzah from falling. If he'd get caught, he'd be dead in an instant. He got past one check, but at the entrance to his block stood a Nazi, who saw that one arm was held stiffly. He pulled the arm of the hapless man and the treasure fell to the floor.

The accursed Nazi beat the man until he fainted and fell to the floor atop his matzah. The Nazi continued stomping on him until he found another Jew to torture. The man came to, gathered as many of the crumbs and pieces of the matzah as he could, and dragged himself to his cot, where he fainted again.

His friend found him there and waited for him to awaken. When he did, with a wide smile upon his beaten face, he told his friend what had happened. He then opened his hand to reveal his treasure, a kezayit of matzah.

And that was when the dispute broke out.

His friend begged, "Please, let me have the matzah. I never missed having matzah at the Seder."

He answered, "No way. It's my matzah. I almost gave my life for it. I was beaten to a pulp and fainted a couple of times. I'm not giving it up."

And so it went, back and forth, in that awful bunk of the death camp.

"Please. I will recite for you the whole Haggadah from memory, and also the entire Shir Hashirim. You can repeat after me word by word. Just let me have the matzah."

"No."

"I'll give you my whole Olam Haba for that kezayit. I lost my wife. I lost my children. I lost everything. Please, let me have the matzah."

"I also lost everything. But the matzah is mine and I am not giving it up."

Finally, our friend, the one who is retelling the story, could take it no more and gave up. He allowed his bunkmate to eat the matzah and say the Haggadah, but the reward for the mitzvah was to accrue to him. They cried and laughed together, doing their best to relive the deliverance from Mitzrayim, and they prayed, "Leshanah haba'ah b'Yerushalayim," with all their hearts.

The next day, they both went out on their work detail. The Rebbishe Ainikel began davening to himself. He got as far as Hallel and then collapsed and fell to the ground. He stood up and tried to walk, calling out the Brachah, "Asher kideshanu bemitzvotav." A Nazi bullet hit him just then. Hashem yikom damo.

The other man lived. After the war, he moved to Israel, established a new family, and became a member of the Chug Chatam Sofer kehillah.

All this he tells to Rav Ungar by way of introduction to his question.

Then he tells the rest of the story.

"Last night, that man came to me in a dream. He was dressed in white and his face was as bright as the morning sky. He said to me, 'Do you remember

when you let me eat the matzah on the condition that you get the s'char? I came to ask you to please let me have the reward for that mitzvah. I received s'char (reward) for all the mitzvot I performed, except that one. It is the only mitzvah for which I received no reward. Please. I beg you to let me have the reward for that mitzvah.'

"In the dream, I responded to him. I reminded him that it was my matzah. 'I had risked my life for it. I gathered the kernels. I ground them. I baked them. I snuck it into the camp. Each step could have gotten me killed. I was beaten for it. I could have died on the spot. You begged. You cried. I gave you the act of performing the mitzvah. At least I should get the s'char.'

"He knew I was right. He agreed. But he reminded me that he was the one who kept track of the calendar. It was he who knew that Chag was days away. He was the one who had prompted me to bake the matzah. He recited the Haggadah with me. And now he came down to this world from on high to ask for the reward for that mitzvah. It was that important to him.

"I turned him down. His face became extremely sad. He was very upset. And then he disappeared.

"With that, I woke up. My heart and mind were racing. What was I supposed to tell him? It was my mitzvah. I should get the reward. But how can I say no to a holy neshamah? How can I turn down the wish of a dead man?"

He asked Rav Ungar what he should do. Should he let the martyred man have the reward for the mitzvah of matzah or should he keep it for himself?

Rav Ungar told the man that this wasn't a question for a Rav. It was a question for a Rebbe. He sent him to the Machnovke Rebbe and asked him to please return and share the response he receives.

He returned the next day and told Rav Ungar what happened by the Rebbe. He found out that the Rebbe saw people in the evenings and waited with bated breath at the Rebbe's door until he was able to enter. Then he told his story.

The Rebbe told him that by right, he should give the reward to the other man.

"By right?" he exclaimed. "By right it belongs to me! My question is whether I should go beyond what is right and give it to him anyway."

"No," the Rebbe responded. "You need to understand. Every day, you put on tallis and tefillin. You daven three times a day and make 100 brachot daily. There's Shabbat and Chag and so many other mitzvot that you perform. You have children who you were mechaneich (educated) to perform mitzvot, and thus you share in the reward for what they do. It is only fair that you be mevater (relinquish) and let the man have the reward for that mitzvah."

The man conceded.

"Okay," he muttered, "if the Rebbe feels that I have to give him the reward, I will."

"No, not like that," the Rebbe said. "You have to mean it. You have to do it b'lev shaleim."

The Rebbe took a ring of keys from his pocket and gave them to the survivor.

"Here, this key opens the door to the Beit Midrash. There is nobody there. Go inside. With this key, open the Aron Kodesh. Stick your head in there. Pour out your heart to Hashem. Tell Him how you got to know the other man. Tell Him of your friendly relationship. Tell Him of the chizuk he gave you in that awful place. Tell Hashem that he gave you the idea to obtain matzah there.

"Tell Hashem what it was like that Seder night, the last night of that man's life. And when you are done, tell Hashem that b'lev shalem you are mevater on the s'char for the mitzvah performed that night, and you surrender it to the other man, in order to give his neshamah (soul) a nachas ruach (peace of mind) in the olam ha'elyon (Upper World). When you are done, lock up and return to me."

The man did as the Rebbe had told him. He recounted the whole experience in the camp. It took everything out of him. He could barely drag his legs away from the Aron Kodesh. He locked the Beit Midrash, but didn't have the strength to return to the Rebbe. He was drained. He gave the keys to the

gabbai (warden) and asked him to tell the Rebbe that he would return the next day.

He went home, collapsed into bed, and fell asleep. His friend came to him in a dream once again. With a shining face and bright countenance, he said, “Thank you,” and was gone.

The next morning, the man went to daven in the minyan of the Rebbe. After davening, he went over to the Rebbe and told him what happened. The Rebbe was not surprised. He shared with the man a message that he remembered for the rest of his life and that we should take to heart, particularly in this period leading up to Chag. This is what he said: “Think about it. Your friend was a Rebbishe Ainikel. He grew up in a home of Torah and yirat Shamayim (fear of heaven). There is no doubt that he performed many mitzvot. To top it off, he merited to die al kiddush Hashem (sanctifying Hashem’s name). Even if Heaven would have had any complaints against him, they would have been erased. So he was a person who had only mitzvot and no aveirot (transgressions), which is why Chazal (our sages) say that in Gan Eden nobody can come close to people who were killed al kiddush Hashem. They are in the most exalted place.

“Yet, it was worth it for him to leave the bliss of basking in the glow of the Shechinah (Divine Presence of Hashem) to come down here, to come like a beggar, and plead with you to give him the reward of just one more mitzvah. Think about what that tells you regarding the value of a single mitzvah.

“And here we are, with the opportunity everywhere to pick up mitzvot, and we don’t run after them. Every parsha of the Torah, every Mishnah and every page of Gemara contains so many mitzvot, yet we lackadaisically waste time.

“Every time we help someone, when we just say a nice word to someone, we get another mitzvah, yet we ignore other people. Think about it.”

The man returned to Rav Ungar and told him all that happened and what the Rebbe said.

There are so many teachings of Chazal about the value of a mitzvah. There are so many lessons we have come across in our lifetimes about the reward that awaits those who fulfill Hashem’s commandments, but rather than engage in a discussion of them as we usually do in this space, I thought to try something else and instead, transcribed this story.

How can we not be moved by it? Who can complain about the price of a kezayit of matzah after reading this? Who cannot feel proud to be a Jew? Who cannot be excited that Pesach – the Chag of cheirut (freedom), daled kosot (4 cups of wine), Mah Nishtanah and matzah – is almost here?

Let us get our priorities straight and enjoy and appreciate all we have been blessed with.

Reprinted from an email of the Yated Ne’eman

Moishele, the water carrier’s Seder

By Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach

After one Seder with Reb Tzvi Elimelech, the Chassidim got together and said, “Rebbe, there is nobody who makes a Seder like you.” Reb Tzvi Elimelech said, “Let me tell you something. Moishele, the water carrier’s Seder, was the best Seder, in the world this year. I’ll let him tell you tomorrow what he did.

The next day, after davening, the Chassidim went up to Moishele the water carrier, and said, “The Rebbe wants to see you.” Moishele came before the Rebbe, and he began to cry bitterly. He said, ‘Rebbe, I’ll never do it again. I’m so sorry. I don’t know what came over me.’ He was crying. The Rebbe said, “Listen, Moishele, just tell us what you did.”

Now, I always tell my friends, that basically, we Jews are not so much into drinking. But, in every city, there is one Jew, who drinks for all in that city. Then, there is some kind of higher drunkard, who drinks for the Jews of that country. And then, there are some lamed vov drunkards, who drink for all the Jews of that generation. And then, there are some drunkards, who drink for all the Jews, from Avraham Avinu until Moshiach.

Anyway, this Moishe, the drunkard, was a lamed vovnik (one of the 36 hidden Tzadikim). His greatest joy in life was drinking. The saddest thing is, on Pesach you can't drink whiskey. So, he had a tremendous idea. He'll stay up drinking the whole night, erev Pesach, and he'll be drunk for the rest of Pesach. Anyway, he drank, and even a drunkard, who is a religious Jew, knows that ten minutes after nine, on erev Pesach, you stop. He stopped exactly, and he was out.

Seder night, his wife came to wake him up, and said, "Moishele, it's really not fair.

Every Jew has a Seder. Every house has a Seder. We have little children, and we don't have a Seder. So what's going on here?" And, he said, "By then, did I regret that I drank so much last night. Did I regret it! I would have done anything, not to be drunk. But I couldn't help it. I said, 'Please wake me up in an hour. I just can't get it together yet.' Anyway, my wife kept waking me up every hour, every half-hour. Then, suddenly, she came to me and said, 'Moishele, in five minutes, five minutes, it's gone. You didn't have anything, and the children are waiting.' "Gevalt". He said, "was I broken. Here, my children are so holy, and I am such a lousy father, I didn't even give them a Seder. So, I said to my wife, 'Please, call my children.' She called the children in, and I said to them, 'Please, sit very close to me on my

bed. I have to talk to you. I want you to know, children, that I am so sorry that I drank. I am so sorry that I am a drunkard. But, I want you to know, that if my drinking can make me not have a Seder with you, then it's not worth it.' So, I said to my children, 'I swear to you, Seder night, tonight, that I'll never drink again. But, right now, it's Seder night,

I am so sorry, we didn't eat matza, we didn't eat maror. But, let me just tell you the Pesach story, in a nutshell."

Moishele said to the Rebbe, "You know, I was still drunk. But, I tried my best. I said, 'Children, I want you to know, that G-d created heaven and earth in seven days. And, I want you to know, that Adam was thrown out of Paradise the first day. Then everything went downhill. There was a flood, there was a tower of Babel; that was as much as I knew. Then came Avraham. He began fixing the world again. Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov and his twelve holy sons. Then Pharaoh made slaves out of us, and tonight, G-d took us out from Egypt. And, I said, children, I want you to swear to me right now, that you'll always know, that the same G-d who

took us out from Egypt, is still alive. It's the same G-d. Whenever a Jew cries to G-d, G-d always hears our prayers, and takes us out from all our troubles.'" "Rebbe, I'm so sorry. I couldn't say anything more, because I was still drunk. I turned over and I fell asleep again."

So the heilege (holy) Reb Tzvi Elimelech, was crying bitter tears. He said to his Chassidim, "Did you hear that? Did you hear that? I wish that one time in my life, I should be privileged, to give over Yiddishkeit to my children, the way Moishele the water carrier gave it over to his children Seder night."

P PLEASE NOTE: THE FOLLOWING IS ONLY A **PARTIAL** LIST OF PRACTICES RELATING TO THE **SEDER**; THE BASIC DETAILS ARE READILY FOUND IN MOST **HAGGADOT**.

🕊️ PREPARATION FOR THE SEDER

There are five *Mitzvot* specifically for the *Seder*, two are from the *Torah* and three from the *Rabbanan*, eating *Matzah* and to tell over the story of *Yetziat Mitzraim* (the exodus from Egypt) are from the *Torah*, eating *Maror*, drinking the four cups and eating the *Charoset* are from the *Rabbanan*.

Some have the custom to go to *mikvah* prior to the *Seder*.

One should dress in comfortable clothing for the *Seder*.

Some have the custom to give to the young children nuts, fruits and mini snacks so they should see a change and should ask, as well as to keep them awake, some give before the *Seder* and some give before they say **הא לחמא עניא**.

One should make sure that his household should fulfill all the *Mitzvot* of the night, four cups, telling of the story of leaving Egypt, rating *Matzah*, *Maror* and the *Afikoman*.

One should be particular to drink at least most of a *reviit* at least once and the fourth cup they should drink a *reviit* in one gulp.

There are some who say the *Simanei Haseder* (the order of the *Seder*) including *Nirtzah*, in it's correct place and there are some who say them first at the beginning of the *Seder*, and then once again at it's correct place, and there are some who just say at the beginning of the *Seder*.

If the younger children want to eat before the *Seder*, it's ok to give them moderately, so they do not fall asleep before it's time to ask the *Mah Nishtanah*.

The table should be set with the best utensils and finery – even if not actually needed for the *Seder* – as an expression of freedom. All the *Seder* items should be ready for the men to begin arranging the *Kaarah* (*Seder Plate*), as soon as they arrive home.

The *Seder* should begin as soon as possible, but only after the emergence of three stars (7:40pm). This is so that the children should try to stay awake to ask the four questions.

All men and boys (at least over *Bar Mitzvah*) should try to have their own *Kaarah* (*Seder Plate*). Each person arranges his own *Kaarah* immediately after returning from *Shul*.

A cloth, plate or tray is placed under the *Kaarah*. The *Matzot* should be unbroken and concave-shaped, and positioned so that they resemble a receptacle. They are inserted from bottom to top, with a cloth between each of them. Another cloth is placed on top upon which the *Kaarah* items are placed as per the arrangement described in the *Haggadah*.

A woman when she recites her own *Kiddush* should not say *Shehecheyanu*, as she already did so at candle-lighting.

Males lean to the left when drinking the four cups of wine, as well as when eating the *Matzah* at *Motzi-Matzah*, *Korach* and *Tzafon*. [If one forgot to lean for the second cup of wine or at *Motzi-Matzah*, he consumes them again whilst leaning,

without repeating the *Brachah*. One may also drink the first cup if he forgot to lean, as long as he had in mind at the time of *Kiddush* that he might drink more wine before the second cup. For this reason, it is proper to have such an intention during *Kiddush*. If one forgot to lean for anything else, he does not repeat it.]

One should drink red wine for each of the four cups. (White wine is not used at the *Seder* unless it is superior to all available red wines. Even then, one should add a little red wine to color it). If one cannot drink a full cup of wine, he or she may mix it with grape-juice. If even this is impossible, one may use only grape-juice. [One should avoid diluting the wine or grape-juice with water if possible.]

Each of the four cups should be entirely consumed without any pause. If this is not possible, one should keep any pause to an absolute minimum. At the very least, one should drink the majority of the cup, preferably in one swallow. [If even this is not possible, the barest minimum is *Rov Revi'it* (Chaim Naeh is at least 44ml, Chazon Ish is at least 76ml), preferably in one swallow. This applies only to the first three cups, but not the fourth – see further.]

One may drink water or other liquids (other than wine) between the first and second cups of wine. If he intended to do so when he recited *Kiddush*, then he does not make a *Brachah*; otherwise he recites *Shehakol*.

Children who are hungry may snack. However, if they are old enough to understand the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, they should not eat any *Matzah* until after *Maggid*.

Although a *Brachah* is not recited at *Urchatz*, one must still observe all the other *Halachot* of *Netilat Yadayim*. If one by

accident makes the *Brachah*, he must jump to *Motzi Matzah* and then return to *Karpas*.

One dips the *Karpas* before making the *Brachah*, and should have in mind the *Maror* and *Korach* when making the *Brachah*. One should eat less than a *Kezayit* of *Karpas*. After eating the *Karpas*, any remainder is not returned to the *Kaarah*.

At *Yachatz*, the *Matzah* is broken into two whilst covered in the *Kaarah*. [Ideally, the smaller piece should still be a *Kezayit*.] The larger piece is then broken into five, wrapped in a cloth, and put aside. [If the larger piece broke into more than five pieces, any extra pieces are not included in the *Afikoman*.]

Many have the custom for the children to “snatch” the *Afikoman*, to keep the children awake. (The Chabad custom is that the children do not snatch the *Afikoman*).

During *Maggid*, the *Haggadah* should be recited at a reasonable pace, joyously and in a loud voice, whilst sitting respectfully (and certainly not whilst leaning).

When it says in the *Haggadah* to raise the *Kaarah*, many have the custom to uncover the middle *Matzah* instead. Likewise, when it says to remove the *Kaarah*, many have the custom to cover the middle *Matzah* instead.

During *Ha Lachmah Anya*, the stress is placed on the syllable *Ba* in the first instance of *Haba'ah* and on the syllable *Ah* in the second instance of *Haba'ah*.

After the children ask *Mah Nishtanah*, everyone else – including the one leading the *Seder* – recites it quietly as well.

At *V'hi She'Amdah*, the middle *Matzah* is covered before picking up the wine. At its conclusion, the cup of wine is put down before the middle *Matzah* is uncovered.

After the ten plagues, a little wine is also poured out at each of the acronyms *Detzach Adash Be'Acavav*.

One does not pause during the recitation of the fourteen *Dayenu's*.

When reciting *Matzah Zu*, one holds the *Levi* and *Yisroel Matzah* by means of the cloth surrounding them. When reciting *Maror Zu*, one places his hands on the *Maror* and *Chazeret* on the *Kaarah*.

At *Lefichach* (near the end of *Maggid*), the middle *Matzah* is covered before picking up the second cup of wine. The cup isn't raised continuously from *Lefichach* until the *Brachah* concluding *Ga'al Yisrael*. Rather, it is set down for the two intervening paragraphs of *Hallelu-kah* and *BTzeit*.

In the *Brachah* after the first two paragraphs of *Hallel*, as it is *Motzei Shabbat*, some (including *Chabad*), change the order and say, "Min Hapesachim umin Hazevachim" instead of "Min Hazevachim umin Hapesachim".

One should endeavor not to speak unrelated matters from the beginning of *Motzi-Matzah* until the end of *Korach*.

For *Motzi-Matzah*, every person with a *Kaarah* eats two *Kezaytim* of *Matzah*; one *Kezayit* of the *Kohen Matzah* and one *Kezayit* of the *Levi Matzah*. If this is too hard, one may suffice with one *Kezayit* comprised from both of those *Matzot*. The pieces of the *Kohen* and *Levi Matzah* are eaten together, and not one after the other. One without a *Kaarah* is given a bit of the *Kohen* and *Levi Matzah* supplemented by other *Matzah*; they need eat only one *Kezayit* in total. [For *Motzi-Matzah*, one follows the stricter opinion that measures a *Kezayit* as Chaim Naeh 29 grams, Chazon Ish is at least 50 grams.]

The *Matzah* is not dipped into salt.

When eating *Motzi-Matzah*, as well as *Maror*, *Korach* and *Afikoman*, one should try consume them in the shortest time frame possible, ideally within four minutes.

Maror requires one *Kezayit* (combined from both the horseradish and romaine lettuce). [For *Maror*, one may follow the lenient opinion that measures a *Kezayit* at Chaim Naeh 19 grams, Chazon Ish is 33 grams.]

Wine from the bowl under the *Becher* is added to the *Charoset*.

Before making the *Brachah*, one dips the *Maror* slightly and rapidly into the *Charoset* and then shakes it off. One should have in mind the *Korach* when making the *Brachah* on the *Maror*.

Korach is comprised of one *Kezayit* of the *Yisroel Matzah*, and one *Kezayit* of *Maror* (combined from both the horseradish and romaine lettuce). [For both the *Matzah* and *Maror* of *Korach*, one may follow the lenient opinion that measures a *Kezayit* as Chaim Naeh 19 grams, Chazon Ish is 33 grams.]

In order that the *Matzah* does not get wet, the *Maror* (*Chazeret*) should not be dipped into the *Charoset*. Instead, dry *Charoset* should be sprinkled directly onto the *Maror* and then shaken off.

Some have the custom that *Shulchan Aruch* begins with the egg dipped in salt-water or chopped up egg in salt water as an egg soup. At this point, the remainder of the *Kaarah* may be removed from the table. One should not eat the *Zeroah*.

One does not lean when eating the meal. One should eat his fill, but pace himself so that he can eat the *Afikoman* without feeling bloated.

One does not recite a *Brachah* when drinking wine during the meal, as it is

included with the *Brachah* over the second cup of wine. One should not say *L'Chaim*, and should pace his wine intake so as not to disturb the rest of the *Seder*.

For the *Afikoman*, one eats two *Kezaytim* of *Matzah*; one to commemorate the *Korban Pesach* and the other to commemorate the *Matzah* that was eaten with it. As the *Matzah* hidden at the time of *Yachats* is likely less than two *Kezaytim*, it should be supplemented with other *Matzah*.

At this point children who have “snatched” the *Afikoman* will barter it for a toy, a book or something else they want.

Those who do not have a *Karah* are given a little bit of the *Afikoman Matzah* supplemented by other *Matzah*.

If one finds it too hard to consume two *Kezaytim*, one may suffice with one *Kezayit*, but should stipulate that he thereby fulfills whichever commemoration is the primary one. [For *Afikoman*, one may follow the lenient opinion that measures a *Kezayit* as Chaim Naeh 19 grams, Chazon Ish is 33 grams.]

The *Afikoman* must be eaten in one place. Thus, one should not move from table to table, and certainly not from room to room.

Most are particular about eating the *Afikoman* before midnight (12:40am).

One does not eat or drink anything after the *Afikoman*, aside from the last two cups of wine. [Even with the last two cups, if one decided not to finish them because it was too hard, he cannot later change his mind and drink what remains.]

Some have the custom to fill the *Kos Shel Eliyahu* before *Birchat Hamazon*, and some have the custom to fill it after *Birchat Hamazon*.

The householder leads the *Mezuman*. Everyone holds the third cup of wine during the first three *Brachot* of *Birchat Hamazon*.

All the doors between the *Seder* and the public domain (or courtyard) are opened for *Shefoch Chamatchah El Hagoyim*.

Those who open the door take a candle with them and say *Shefoch Chamatchah El Hagoyim* whilst standing at the door, whereas those who stay at the table remain seated. The next paragraph (*Lo Lanu*) is begun only after those at the door return.

Many Chassidic Rebbes said, “During the *Seder*, and especially when the door is opened at *Shefoch Chamatchah El Hagoyim*, the gates to heaven are open and you can ask for your personal requests, and then *Hashem* will help ... One shouldn't request only physical matters; but also spiritual matters!”

When reciting *Hallel*, the householder leads all the participants in the four stanzas of *Hodu* and *Ana Hashem* in the same responsive manner as the *Chazzan* in *Shul*.

During *Hallel Hagadol*, one thinks of the four letters of *Hashem's* name: The letter *Yud* during the first ten stanzas, the letter *Hey* during the next five stanzas, the letter *Vov* during the next six stanzas, and the letter *Hey* during the final five stanzas.

One must drink at least an entire *Revi'it* at the fourth cup of wine, in order to recite the *Brachah Acharonah*. [It is in any case ideal to consume the whole cup without pause.]

At the conclusion of the *Seder*, the wine from the *Kos Shel Eliyahu* is returned to the bottle. [Wine should first be added to the *Kos Shel Eliyahu* before returning it to the bottle, so that the wine in the bottle does not become *Pagum*.]

🌀 YA'ALEH VEYAVO IN BIRCHAT HAMAZON

If one forgets *Ya'aleh Veyavo* in *Birchat Hamazon*, but remembers before saying *Hashem's* name at *Bonei Yerushalayim*, he goes back. If one remembered after that, but before beginning the next *Brachah*, he recites the extra *Brachah* as printed in some *Birkonim*. If one began even the first word of the next *Brachah*, one must begin *Birchat Hamazon* again if it is one of the two required meals of *Chag*, but not if it is a third optional meal, or *Chol Hamoed*.

The *Harachamon* for *Chag* is recited.

🌀 FIRST NIGHT

As Hashem watched over us Seder night, it is therefore called *Leil Shimurim*. On *Leil Shimurim*, some only say the first paragraph of *Kriat Shema* and *Hamapil* before going to sleep.

🌀 PESACH DAY: DAVENING & TEFILLAT TAL

Full *Hallel* is recited, as mentioned above.

After the *Kaddish* right before *Mussaf*, the *Gabbai* announces "*Morid Hatal*". From that point on, one recites "*Morid Hatal*" in the *Amidah*.

If one heard this announcement before *davening Shacharit*, he recites "*Morid Hatal*" in the *Amidah* of *Shacharit* as well. [One should try to avoid such a situation.] This does not apply when one is *davening Shacharit* together with another *Minyan*.

Someone *davening* at home without a *Minyan* should recite *Mussaf* only after he estimates that the *Gabbai* has already made the announcement.

The *Chazzan* recites the special *Tefillah* of *Tal* during the *Chazzan's* repetition. The congregation recites each paragraph that begins with *Tal* before the *Chazzan*.

If one mistakenly said "*Morid HaGeshem*":

- If one realized before saying *Hashem's* name at the end of the *Brachah*, he returns to the beginning of the *Brachah*.
- If one already concluded the *Brachah*, he must return to the beginning of *Amidah*.
- If one did not realize his error until the time for that *Tefillah* passed, he must *daven* the next *Tefillah* twice. [E.g. If he said "*Morid HaGeshem*" at *Shacharit*, he must recite the *Mincha Amidah* twice.] Between the two *Tefillot*, he should wait the span of time to walk four *Amot*, and preferably, he should recite words of supplication between them.

If one is in doubt whether he said *Morid Hatal*, for the first thirty days, he should assume that he did not, and after thirty days he should assume that he did.

In many communities, the *Chazzan* adds a prayer ותעורר before ותחזינה. This is not the *Chabad* custom.

🌀 MOTZEI FIRST DAY

Sefirat Haomer is recited; see page 47.

Some have the custom to learn one *daf* of *Masechet Sotah* each day of *Sefirat Haomer*.

On the first day of *Sefirat Haomer*, one learns the "*Sha'ar Blatt*", as *Masechet Sotah* has 49 pages, starting with page 2.

🌀 V'TEIN BRACHAH

Beginning on the first night of *Chol Hamoed*, we start reciting *V'tein Brachah* in *Barech Alenu*.

If one said *V'tein Tal Umatar*, but realized before saying *Hashem's* name at the end of the *Brachah*, he returns to the beginning of the *Brachah*.

If one already concluded the *Brachah* and has continued with the *Amidah*, he must go back to the *Brachah* of *Barech Alenu*, and continue from there to the end of the

Amidah. If he already began reciting (the second) *Yih'yu L'ratzon*, he must repeat the entire *Amidah*.

- If one did not realize his omission until the time for that *Tefillah* has passed, he must daven the next *Tefillah* twice. [E.g. If one said *V'tein Tal Umatar Livrachah* during *Shacharit*, he must recite the *Amidah* of *Mincha* twice.] Between the two *Tefillot*, he should wait the span of time to walk four *Amot* (approximately two metres), and preferably, he should recite words of supplication between them.
- If one said *V'tein Tal Umatar Livrachah* in *Mincha* of *Erev Shabbat*, he does not repeat the *Amidah* of Friday night.
- If one is in doubt whether he said *V'tein Brachah*, for the first thirty days he should assume that he did not.

🕉️ YA'ALEH VEYAVO IN DAVENING

If one forgets *Ya'aleh Veyavo* in *davening*, but remembers before saying *Hashem's* name at the end of *Hamachazir Shechinato L'tziyon*, he goes back to *Retzei*. If he remembered between the conclusion of that *Brachah* and *Modim*, he recites it at that point, without going back. If he remembers after that point, but before taking three steps back, he returns to the beginning of *Retzei*. If he remembers after taking three steps back, *Amidah* is repeated.

If one is unsure whether he recited *Ya'aleh Veyavo*, *Amidah* is repeated.

If one forgot *Ya'aleh Veyavo* during *Shacharit*, and only realised after *Mussaf*, he does not repeat *Shacharit*.

If one forgot *Ya'aleh Veyavo* during *Mincha* or *Maariv*, and only realised after the *Zman* of *Tefillah* has passed, he must recite an additional *Amidah* in the next *Tefillah*, as compensation. Between the two *Tefillot*, he

should wait the span of time to walk four *Amot* (approx. two metres), and preferably, he should recite words of supplication between them.

🕉️ CHOL HAMOED

On the first night of *Chol Hamoed*, *Havdalah* is recited without *Besamim* and candles. Some hold *V'Yiten Lecha* is not recited and some do say it.

One does not fill the cup to overflow as one does regularly for *Shabbat*.

Mizmor L'Todah is not recited on *Pesach*.

Half-*Hallel* is recited during *Chol Hamoed* as well as on the last day of *Pesach*.

Two *Sifrei Torah* are used each day of *Chol Hamoed*, 3 *Aliyot* from the first and a fourth from the second *Torah*.

On *Chol Hamoed*:

- One should try to wear *Shabbat* or elegant clothing .
- One washes for *Matzah*, eats meat and drinks a cup of wine every day.
- One allocates more time for learning.

Many activities are prohibited during *Chol Hamoed*, including (but not limited to) business activity, trade, moving homes, gardening, sewing, laundering (unless for children who soil their clothing frequently, but only as required), preparing food for after *Chag*, cutting nails (unless it was done on *Erev Pesach* as well) and taking haircuts. One may not instruct a non-Jew to perform these activities for him either.

For the sake of *Chol Hamoed* or the last days of *Chag*, one may professionally repair any item which is directly involved in food preparation (e.g. oven or fridge), or which provides direct benefit to the body (e.g. the plumbing, electricity or air-conditioning), provided that it wasn't practical to fix prior to *Chag* (e.g. it broke on *Chag*).

One should avoid writing. If it cannot be deferred until after *Chol Hamoed*, one should write with a *Shinui*. However, calligraphy and artistic drawing or painting is prohibited.

Unless needed for *Chag*, one should not shop for utensils, appliances or clothing. [One may be lenient if the item is significantly discounted and it cannot be purchased later for a similar price.]

If an employee's job involves activities that are not performed on *Chol Hamoed*, he should arrange to take leave, unless his absence will jeopardize his employment.

Routine medical exams that can easily wait should not be scheduled for *Chol Hamoed*.

One who goes fruit-picking or fishing on *Chol Hamoed* may only collect that which will be used during the remainder of *Chol Hamoed* or on the last day of *Chag*.

One who goes to a farm or zoo may not feed the animals *Chametz*, even if neither the animal nor the *Chametz* belongs to him. [One should also remember the *Brachah* of *Meshane Habriyot* at the zoo when applicable.]

☞ EREV SHVI'I SHEL PESACH

Just like on *Erev Shabbat*, it is preferable to refrain from eating a proper meal once the tenth *Halachic* hour of the day begins (3:54pm), in order to properly enjoy the *Chag* meal at night. However, one may snack in small quantities.

Those who go to Mikva regularly should go after Chatzot (12:38pm)

One gives *Tzedakah* for *Chag*.

Since Shvi'i Shel Pesach is Shabbat, the candles should be kindled at the usual forty minutes (in Jerusalem) before sunset (6:34pm), and certainly not after sunset (7:14pm).

The *Brachah* is Shel Shabbat v'Shel Yom Tov, but Shehecheyanu is not recited. [If one mistakenly omitted either Shabbat or Yom Tov entirely – if she realized within the time frame it takes to say three words, she corrects her mistake. Otherwise, there is a debate whether to repeat the *Brachah*, and how. One should take great care to avoid this dilemma in the first place.]

If eating out, one should ensure that practical benefit is derived from the candles after *Chag* begins.

☞ SHVI'I SHEL PESACH NIGHT

As it is Erev Shabbat, those who regularly say Pasach Eliyahu should recite it before Mincha, but not Hodu.

Kabbalat Shabbat begins with *Mizmor L'David*, and not with *L'chu Neranenah*. Some begin with *Mizmor Shir L'Yom Hashabbat*. In *Lecha Dodi*, some say all the verses and some say only the first and last two.

Some don't say כגונה and some, including Chabad, do say it. Those who usually say במה מדליקין, do not say it.

The *Amidah* is for Pesach, however, as it is also Shabbat, all the Shabbat selections are added. If one did not make any mention of Shabbat in the middle *Brachah*, or he mistakenly davened the regular *Amidah* of Shabbat: If he did not yet finish reciting the second Yih'yu L'ratzon (at the end of the passage of Elokai N'tzor), he should return to the beginning of the middle *Brachah* (i.e. Atah Vechartanu). Otherwise, he must repeat the whole *Amidah*.

After the *Amidah*, the Shabbat selections are recited – Vayechulu, the *Brachah* of Me'ein Sheva and *Mizmor L'David*.

Those who have the custom of avoiding Kiddush between 6:40pm and 7:40pm on

Friday night applies even when it falls on Shvi'i Shel Pesach.

Shalom Alechem and *Eishet Chayil* (as well as all the other selections prior to *Kiddush*) are recited in an undertone.

Yom Hashishi is then recited aloud, followed by Hagafen and the Pesach Kiddush (including the Shabbat additions) Shehecheyanu is **not** recited.

One drinks a cup of wine every day of Pesach. This should be paid special attention by those who did not make their own Kiddush.

🌀 BENTCHING ON SHVI'I SHEL PESACH

If one forgets Retzei and/or Ya'aleh Veyavo on Shvi'i Shel Pesach: If he remembers before saying Hashem's name at the end of Bonei Yerushalayim, he goes back. If he remembered after that, but before beginning the next Brachah, he recites the relevant Brachah printed in the Birkon. [There are three separate Brachot – one if only Retzei was forgotten, another if only Ya'aleh Veyavo was forgotten, and a third when both were forgotten.] If one already began the first word of the next Brachah, one must begin bentching again.

The Harachamon of Shabbat and Chag are recited, in that order.

🌀 SEUDAT CHAG

The joy of *Shvi'i Shel Pesach* is greater than the rest of *Pesach*.

Some have the custom to stay awake and learn the entire night of *Shvi'i Shel Pesach*.

🌀 SHVI'I SHEL PESACH – DAY

All the Shabbat selections are added in the Amidah of Shacharit and Mussaf. [See the section "Shvi'I Shel Pesach Night" for details regarding one who forgot.]

There are some who read Megillat Shir Hashirim at Shacharit before reading from the Torah.

As it is Shabbat, the special selections normally added for Chag when opening the Aron Hakodesh are omitted.

The congregation stands and faces the Sefer Torah while the Shirah is read.

Yizkor is recited before *Mussaf*.

Before Musaf, Yekum Parkan is recited as per a regular Shabbat.

For the daytime Kiddush, all the selections associated with the Shabbat daytime Kiddush

– from Mizmor L'David until Al Kein (inclusive) are recited in an undertone, followed by Eileh Moadei in a loud voice.

After *Mincha* and before sunset, some have the custom to wash for *Matzah* and participate in a *Seudah* (the Chabad custom is to include four full cups of wine). This is called by some the Seudat Ba'Al Shem Tov and by some Seudat Moshiach.

🌀 ISRU CHAG

One should wait a short time after *Pesach* before eating *Chametz*, in order to allow time for the *Rav* to buy back the *Chametz*.

Pirkei Avot is studied between *Mincha* and *Maariv* each *Shabbat* afternoon, starting the *Shabbat* after *Pesach* and ending the *Shabbat* before *Rosh Hashanah*, some only say until *Shavuot*.



Lag b'Omer in Meron...Again and Again

By **Rabbi Elimelech Biderman**

The students in the school in Ramat Gan were astonished. The man wearing the uniform of Hevrat Hashmal - the Israel Electric Company - who had come to explain to them the dangers and safety precautions involved in electricity use, was wearing a black eye patch over one eye. Perhaps they thought he was a wounded war veteran?

But when he gave the same talk a week later in the elementary school of Kfar Chabad, he no longer wore the eye patch. After he finished, one of the teachers, Rabbi Chayim Ben-Natan, invited him to wrap tefillin. The man accepted with alacrity. When he finished saying the Shma Yisrael prayer and removing the boxes and straps with the rabbi's help, Meir (not his real name) offered to tell Ben-Natan his story.

For many years he has suffered from diabetes. Recently, he developed a painful eye problem and a loss of vision in one of his eyes. As this was diabetes-related, the doctors all insisted that no cure is possible. His most recent doctor gave him some salve to put on the bad eye to ease the pain, and a black patch to cover it so as not to compromise the vision of his remaining good eye.

His incomplete vision made it impossible for him to continue working as a technician. Instead, the IEC trained him to give presentations to school children about electricity.

One time he was driving in the Galilee to an appointment at a school in Carmiel. On the way, he called his office to check in and confirm the directions. His supervisor, a religious Jewess, upon hearing his location, recommended that he detour to one of the holy burial sites in the North of Israel and pray there for an improvement in his condition.

"Why not?" he thought to himself. "It can't hurt." And off he went to Meron, to the burial site of the great sage of the Mishna and Zohar, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

As he stood there praying with one hand on the tomb marker (clearly this was not on Lag b'Omer!), he heard a man at a nearby table groaning and repeatedly crying out, "Hashem, G-d, help me, please! In the merit of Rabbi Shimon, help me now!"

When Meir finished his own prayer, he turned away from the tomb marker. The man who had been crying out stared at him in wide-eyed amazement, and suddenly grabbed his arm! "Praise G-d! Give thanks to the Al-mighty. My prayers are answered. Rabbi Shimon sent you to me!"

"What are you talking about?" Meir said calmly. "Nobody sent me here."

"It's true. It's true!" proclaimed Uri (not his real name) loudly, refusing to release Meir's arm. "I have a wife and five children at home and no electricity. I've been praying for hours to get my electricity back, and here you are from the Electric

Company." He pointed to the IEC insignia on Meir's uniform. "Clearly you were sent here to help me. Now give me back my electricity!"

Uri explained that his electricity had been cut off because he owed thousands of shekels in unpaid bills, which he could not afford to pay. He then resumed demanding that Meir give him back his electricity, speaking louder and louder. Meir tried to explain that the nature of his job was in no way related to Uri's problem, not technically, not financially. None of his disclaimers helped. Uri would not relent in his belief that "obviously" Meir had been sent by Heaven and Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai to help him get his electricity restored.

Despairing of ever being able to make Uri be sensible, and in danger of being late to his assignment, Meir finally asked Uri for the number of his account. Uri showed him his most recent bill. Meir said, "Look, let me step outside, and I'll call someone very important in management, check what the situation is, and try to arrange something for you."

Uri grinned in anticipation and stepped back. Meir went out, used his IEC internal communication device to check Uri's account, verified that he owed 2500 shekels...and paid the entire bill with his own credit card number!

Returning inside, he told Uri, "Okay, it is all arranged with the company. You can go home. In two hours you will have electricity." Uri pumped Meir's hand enthusiastically. He couldn't thank him enough. "You see," he said, "I was right that Rabbi Shimon sent you to me."

Meir went to his car, shaking his head in amazement at his own spontaneous kind deed. About ten minutes, later, half way to his destination, he had to pull over to the side of the road. His bad eye was itching so badly he couldn't wait any longer to remove his patch in order to rub his eye. Taking off the patch with his right hand, he moved his left hand towards his eye to massage it, when all of a sudden he realized that he was seeing through the windshield with the eye that had been under the patch. Seeing normally! His vision was fully restored!

The various doctors that Meir had been seeing could not believe their own eyes. "This can only be a miracle," each one proclaimed, even if it was not clear that before this episode they believed in miracles. Meir smiled, understanding the simple formula: If you provide light for another Jew, G-d will provide light for you. And also, as the Talmud states, "Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai can be relied on in desperate situations."

Reprinted from an email from Torah Wellsprings.

🌀 **WHEN**

Sefirat Haomer is performed right after *Tzeit Hakochavim*, and at the conclusion of *Ma'ariv* (right before *Aleinu*).

From half an hour prior to sunset until after one (*davens Maariv* and) counts the *Omer*, one may not eat more than a *K'beitzah* (Chaim Naeh is 55cc, Chazon Ish is 100cc) of bread or *Mezonot*. If, for whatever reason, one began a meal prior to sunset, he is not required to interrupt it when the time of *Sefirah* arrives. However, if one began after sunset, he must interrupt it to count *Sefirat Haomer* as soon as the time arrives.

If one appoints a *Shomer* (guardian) to remind him to count the *Omer*, or he will be attending a later *Minyan* where he regularly *davens*, he may eat prior.

One may not perform manual labor from sunset until after he counts the *Omer*.

If one realized that he forgot to count the *Omer*, he may still count with a *Brachah* the entire night until dawn, but should hurry to do so as soon as possible.

If, for any reason, one counted the *Omer* any time between *Plag Hamincha* and *Tzeit Hakochavim*, he should count again after *Tzeit Hakochavim* without a *Brachah*.

The same applies when one heard someone else counting the *Omer* any time between *Plag Hamincha* and *Tzeit Hakochavim*, even if he had no intention to be *Yotzeh* (fulfil the requirements of a *Mitzvah*) from him, unless he had explicit intention to **not** be *Yotzeh*.

If one must *daven* with a *Minyan* that is *davening Maariv* between sunset and *Tzeit Hakochavim*, he should count along with

them without a *Brachah*, stipulating as follows: "If I forget to count later tonight, then I fulfil my obligation with this count; if I do not forget to count later tonight, then I do not fulfil my obligation with this count". After *Tzeit Hakochavim*, he counts again with a *Brachah*.

🌀 **HOW**

One should stand for *Sefirat Haomer*. In extenuating circumstances (such as infirmity), or after the fact, one is *Yotzeh* even if he was sitting or reclining.

Before reciting the *Brachah*, some have the custom to say *Leshem Yichud*. One should ensure that he knows which night of the *Omer* it is. [Therefore, the congregation recites *Sefirah* only after the *Chazzan* recites it.] Nevertheless, if he recited the *Brachah* without knowing which night of the *Omer* it is, or even if he intended to count the wrong night, he does not need to repeat the *Brachah*.

After reciting the *Brachah*, one should not pause or speak before counting the *Omer*, even to answer *Omen* to someone else's *Brachah*. If one did speak, he needs to repeat the *Brachah* only if his words were unrelated to the counting.

When reciting the actual *Sefirah*, one must know its meaning; otherwise, he does not fulfil his obligation. If necessary, one may recite *Sefirah* in any language that he understands.

The chapter of *Tehillim* that follows *Sefirat Haomer* contains 49 words (excluding the first *Passuk*). The *Passuk* of *Yismechu* in that chapter contains 49 letters. The next paragraph *Anah B'Koach* contains 49 words. When counting the *Omer*, one should have in mind the words and letters corresponding to

that night. [These are printed in the *Siddur* alongside each night's *Sefirah*.]

If one recited the wrong *Sefirah*, he should correct himself as soon as possible. He does not need to repeat the *Brachah*, unless he already diverted his attention from the *Mitzvah* of *Sefirah*.

🌀 WHO

Women are exempt from *Sefirat Haomer*. Even so, they may count with a *Brachah*, and it is customary for them to do so.

Boys from the age of *Chinuch* must recite *Sefirat Haomer*. [If necessary, they may count the *Omer* before *Tzeit Hakochavim*, as long as it after *Plag Hamincha*, and preferably after sunset.]

A child who became *Bar Mitzvah* during the period of *Sefirat Haomer* continues counting the *Omer* with a *Brachah*.

🌀 IF ONE FORGOT

If one forgot to count the *Omer* at night, or is unsure, he should recite *Sefirah* during the day, without a *Brachah*. [For this reason, it is appropriate for a *Shacharit Minyan* to count the *Omer* without a *Brachah* if some of its participants either don't *daven Maariv* with a *Minyan*, or they *daven Maariv* before sunset.]

If one forgot to count the *Omer* over the course of an entire night and day, and didn't remember until the following night, he continues counting all subsequent nights of the *Omer*, but without a *Brachah*.

If one is unsure whether he counted the *Omer* throughout an entire night and day, he continues counting the subsequent nights of the *Omer* with a *Brachah*.

🌀 OTHER LAWS

When one listens to someone else counting the *Omer* before reciting it himself, he should have explicit intention to **not** be *Yotzeh*. If he had no such intention, he may

no longer recite a *Brachah* when reciting it himself. However, when listening to the *Chazzan* (or someone else) recite the *Sefirah* purely in order to verify which *Omer* to count, it is regarded as if he had explicit intention to **not** be *Yotzeh*, and he may therefore recite a *Brachah* when reciting it himself.

If one did not yet perform *Sefirah*, and is asked what night of the *Omer* it is:

- If it is before *Plag Hamincha*, he may answer the question directly.
- If it is after *Plag Hamincha*, he should not answer directly, but should instead state what last night's *Sefirah* was.

If, after *Plag Hamincha*, one answered the question directly:

- If it is before sunset, one may still count the *Omer* with a *Brachah* (after *Tzeit Hakochavim*).
- If it is after sunset, then it depends: If he prefaced his response by saying "tonight is..." or "today is...", then one should count the *Omer* without a *Brachah* (after *Tzeit Hakochavim*).
- If he did not preface his response by saying "tonight is..." or "today is...", then one may still count the *Omer* with a *Brachah* (after *Tzeit Hakochavim*).

One who is reciting *Sefirah* without a *Brachah* (for whatever reason) should try to hear the *Brachah* from another male over *Bar Mitzvah*. The one reciting the *Brachah* should have in mind to be *Moitzie* (include) the listener. The listener should have in mind to be *Yotzeh* the *Brachah*, answer *Amen* (but not *Baruch Hu U'Varuch Shmo*), and count the *Omer* immediately afterwards, without interruption. For this reason, it is appropriate that the *Chazzan* has in mind anyone who cannot make the *Brachah*. Nevertheless, one who needs to

hear the *Brachah* should not take this for granted, but should explicitly ask the *Chazzan* (or someone else) to be *Moitzie* him.

One should not cross the International Dateline during *Sefirat Haomer*, unless it is absolutely unavoidable. If one did, he counts the *Omer* – with a *Brachah* – in line with his personal count. He will therefore be either a day ahead of the people at his destination (if he travelled east), or a day behind the people at his destination (if he travelled west).

Polar flight routes can be more problematic. If it is absolutely necessary to fly such a route, or after the fact, one should seek guidance from a *Rav* familiar with these matters.

🌀 CHADASH

The *Torah* forbids the consumption of new grains (*Chadash*) until after the *Minchat HaOmer* was offered up in the *Beit Hamikdash* on the second day of *Pesach*, or in our times, the third day of *Pesach* in *Israel*, and the fourth day in *Chutz Lo'oretz*. The grains become permissible after this time, and are known as *Yashan*.

One opinion maintains that *Chadash* applies only to grain grown in *Israel*. Another opinion asserts that *Chadash* applies only to grain belonging to a Jew at the time of its harvest. Some *Poskim* disagree and hold that *Chadash* applies even to grains grown outside of *Israel*, and even to those belonging to a non-Jew. Nevertheless, the centuries-old custom is to rely on the lenient view.

🌀 DAYS OF THE OMER

Tachnun is not recited until the 2nd of *Iyar*.

Some have the custom to learn one *daf* of *Masechta Sotah* each day of the *Omer*. On the first day, one learns the “*Sha’ar Blatt*”.

The period of the *Omer* is a time of mourning, commemorating the 12,000 pairs of Rabbi

Akiva’s students who died due to insufficient respect for each other. Obviously, it is an opportune time to emphasise the *Mitzvah* of *Ahavat Yisrael*.

During the period of the *Omer*, one should not recite the *Brachah* of *Shehecheyanu* (other than for a *Pidyan Haben*), unless on *Shabbat* and *Lag Ba’Omer*. Therefore, one should not eat new fruits during the week. [It would appear that someone celebrating a birthday during the period of the *Omer* should eat the customary new fruit on the *Shabbat* prior (or after).]

The following activities are prohibited from right after *Pesach*:

- Regarding weddings, there are various customs. Chabad don’t make Weddings until the second and third nights of the *Shloshet Ymei Hagboloh* except for *Lag Ba’Omer* (see below).
- Haircuts (until *Erev Shabbat 4th Sivan*). Even a *Chattan* or the *Baalei Habrit* should refrain from haircuts. [A woman may groom or wax her eyebrows etc. Similarly, one may remove nasal hair or ear hair.]
- An *Opsheren* (3rd birthday party) should be deferred to the earliest opportunity (i.e. *Lag Ba’Omer* or until *Erev Shabbat 4th Sivan*). However, the other associated areas of *Chinuch* (such as training the child to wear *Tzitit* and to recite *Brachot*, *Shma* and *birchat hamazon*) should not be deferred.
- Listening to music.
- Celebratory gatherings.
- The following activities are permitted: Engagements (even with a feast). Bar Mitzvah Feasts.

🌀 PESACH SHENI

Tachnun is not recited on *Pesach Sheni*, but is recited the afternoon before.

One should eat *Matzah* during the day, to commemorate the sacrifice of the *Pesach*

Sheni. [Some maintain that the *Matzah* should be eaten specifically after midday.]

Some also eat *Matzah* the night after, to commemorate the eating of the *Pesach Sheni*.

🕯️ LAG BA'OMER

Lag Ba'Omer is a two-fold celebration. First, the students of Rabbi Akivah stopped (or paused) dying. Second, it marks the passing of *Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai*, who instructed that the day be celebrated.

The day's celebratory nature begins at night, and not just at day. The *Shul* is lit up brightly.

Tachnun is not recited on *Lag Ba'Omer*, nor the afternoon beforehand.

The *Arizal* was particular not to take haircuts even on *Lag Ba'Omer*, and some hold that custom too. Others do take haircuts on *Lag Ba'Omer*. Nevertheless, the *Opsheren* (3rd birthday party) of any boy who turned three between *Pesach* and *Lag Ba'Omer* is conducted on *Lag Ba'Omer*.

It is customary to light bonfires.

It is customary to eat carobs in order to commemorate how *Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai* and his son were sustained when hiding in the cave.

One should give extra *Tzedakah*.

It is customary to go out to the fields.

It is customary for children to engage in archery to commemorate the fact that no rainbow was seen in the days of *Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai*.

A wedding may be conducted during the day of *Lag Ba'Omer* and continue on into the night. If necessary, a wedding may also be conducted the night prior, but it must not begin before *Tzeit Hakochavim*.

🕯️ SHABBAT MEVARCHIM

Unlike every other *Shabbat Mevarchim*, *Av Harachamim* is recited on *Shabbat Mevarchim Sivan*, in memory of the tragedies that occurred during this month.

