

Rabbinical Alliance / איגוד הרבנים

Pesach 5781: זמן חירותינו

By: Rabbi Yaakov Shulman

Menahel, Igud Harabbanim Beis Din

Dear fellow Jews,

In the Pesach Haggadah we read the following passage, taken from the Talmud (*Pesachim 116b*): "In every generation a person must see himself as if he personally left Egypt." The Hebrew word for Egypt, מצרים, derives from the root word מצר, or boundary. The Jewish people were bounded, imprisoned and constrained within their Egyptian exile, unable to leave and prevented from pursuing their spiritual ambitions. The redemption reversed that situation, giving them both physical and religious freedom; leaving Egypt was clearly expressed to Moshe as remaining incomplete until the nation "serves Hashem on this mountain (Sinai)" (*Shemos 3:12*).

Thus, to personally experience leaving Egypt, as the Talmud prescribes, means to feel both physically set free and spiritually liberated. The two together produce חירות, which we can translate as "freedom with a purpose." Without a spiritual purpose, physical freedom descends into license or anarchy; connected to purpose, though, freedom creates the independence of the human spirit. Hence, Hashem engraved His words on the stone tablets - חרות על לוחות - with Chazal equating the word "Charus" (engraved) with "Cheirus" (freedom), so that the nation's leaving Egypt and release from physical bondage could now be paralleled by their becoming connected to Torah.

Where do we fit in to this? We are now completing one full year of our Golus, the year during which the Corona virus menaced the world. With the recent advent of the vaccines, we are just beginning to emerge from our confinement, not quite fully yet although with the end in sight. Perhaps more than ever we can relate to the idea that we should see ourselves as personally having left Egypt, since we are engaged in that very process, slowly leaving our quarantines and restrictions behind and resuming more of life. In an analogous way, perhaps

an additional spiritual awakening is in order as well, because just as the redemption from Egypt was considered unfinished until Sinai, so will our resumption of normal life lack redemptive quality unless we re-invigorate our spiritual life.

Toward that end, I would suggest that we turn this Pesach into the first step in our ascent upon the ladder of Ruchnius, spiritual growth. We can do this by devoting more time to Torah study and to strengthening our relationships. The fundamental rule of Pesach, namely, getting rid of our Chometz, lends itself metaphorically to this notion: Leavened bread, representing a heightened sense of oneself, needs to give way to Matza, a rather modest, unpretentious, humble kind of food. The trait of modesty serves as a prerequisite for both Torah learning (think Moshe Rabbeinu) and for getting along with people.

And now for the Halachos. Here is a chronological discussion of what to expect, with a number of differences this year due to the unusual configuration of Pesach falling on a Sunday, known as ערב פסח שחל בשבת.

1. Pesach Cleaning

The Torah mandates that we not possess Chometz during Pesach; the goal, therefore, is to rid the house of Chometz. Many times, though, people clean and scrub much more than is required; indeed, the Poskim even record the practice of scouring the very walls. We should preferably focus on the actual obligation to eliminate Chometz, leaving spring cleaning for another time. A reasonable amount of sweeping and vacuuming will be sufficient. In a room that is not used for eating or storing Pesach food, cleaning is only needed to eliminate significant pieces of Chometz; cleaning out crumbs is not Halachically required.

2. Selling the Chometz -- מכירת חמץ

If you prefer, you may sell your Chometz in person; alternatively, you may appoint your Rav as your agent (Shaliach) to sell your Chometz either by filling in the Power of Attorney form attached at the end of this message or by informing him, even over the phone, that you wish to appoint him as your agent.

Place all Chometz that you intend to sell in identifiable locations that are out of plain sight over Pesach, e.g., in particular cabinets or closets.

3. Siyum Bechorim -- סיום בכורים

Ta'anis Bechorim usually takes place on Erev Pesach; this year, though, Erev Pesach falls on Shabbos and one may not fast on Shabbos. Nor do we push it back one additional day, to

Friday, because we don't initially set up a fast day on Friday either. The Ta'anis therefore lands on Thursday, March 25th, the 12th of Nisan, which is two days earlier than usual.

If a Bechor makes a Siyum on an entire מסכתא, or listens to someone else making a Siyum, he may participate in the סעודת מצוה and is not required to fast. Listening remotely, such as via Zoom, is permitted only in the case of a שעת הדחק. Thus, although we allowed it last year, that coincided with the complete lockdown that we experienced at that time. This year, if at all possible, a Bechor should endeavor to participate in person.

4. Bedikas Chometz -- בדיקת חמץ

This occurs on Thursday evening, March 25th, on the evening preceding the 13th of Nisan, again because we could not schedule it on its usual night-before-the-14th because that would place it on Friday night. All Halachos remain the same as every year, including saying the Bracha. The Bedikah begins at nightfall (צאת הכוכבים); in New York, at approx. 8:00 pm.

5. Destroying the Chometz -- ביעור חמץ

This year we will destroy the remaining Chometz, which is not sold, in a different manner than most years. Usually, we burn the remainder on Erev Pesach; this year, though, since Erev Pesach falls on Shabbos, we will follow a two-stage procedure:

1. On Friday, March 26th, the 13th of Nisan, we will burn the bulk of what remains, leaving over only three small Challos. These will serve as the Challos for the Shabbos Seudos (see below). The burning should take place, as in other years, prior to the end of the 5th Halachic hour, which works out to 11:58 am (NY time).
2. On Shabbos morning, after completing the Seudah, if any Challah still remains, it should be flushed in the lavatory by 11:58 am.

6. Shabbos, Erev Pesach

A number of constraints will be operating on this very special day. First, we may not eat Chometz after the fourth hour (10:32 am NY time). Second, we may derive no benefit from it after the fifth hour (11:58), thereby effectively rendering the Chometz Muktzah at that time. Third, we eat no Matza on Erev Pesach. Fourth, we still need to eat three Seudos this Shabbos, just as every week. The question now arises: How are we to accomplish eating Shalosh Seudos, when we cannot wash for Hamotzi, neither on Matza nor on Chometz?

A number of options exist, each of which have merit. You can "divide" the morning Seudah in half, to use the language of the Poskim, which means eating one small meal, bentching, waiting a half-hour, and then eating a second meal. This gives you two bona fide, Lechem-

based Seudos on Shabbos morning which, added to the Friday night meal, completes your three Seudos. On the other hand, the timing here needs to be rather carefully planned. Davening on Shabbos morning will begin much earlier than usual, and should be timed to complete by about 8:30 am. The first Seudah will need to conclude no later than 9:30 am, because to justify bentching and immediately washing for Hamotzi again we need at least a half-hour break, or Hefsek. Thus, the second Seudah can then start at 10:00, while all consumption of Chometz must end by 10:32.

Is this doable? Yes, provided that the timing can be adhered to and all family members are aware of the time constraints. If this proves too difficult to plan or to carry out, you can adopt the second option. Namely, that you eat one regular Seudah in the morning, consuming your Challah then, and then eat a non-Hamotzi Shalosh Seudos in the afternoon. This would include, preferably, fish or meat, which, in the absence of Hamotzi or Mezonos, is considered a “higher” level of Seudah than fruits or vegetables.

A third option: If your family eats “gebrokts” and you have a Mezonos available, such as kneidlach or Matzah-meal-based cake, you can eat that on Shabbos afternoon for your Shalosh Seudos. Here, though, another time element comes into play: You must finish all Mezonos food on Erev Pesach by the start of the 9th hour, approx. 4:00 pm, so that you can eat by that night’s Seder בתיאבון – with an appetite.

Even if you do the first option, dividing the morning Seudah, it is still advisable to perform one of the other two, because some opinions hold that you cannot eat Shalosh Seudos prior to Chatzos, or about 1:00 pm. Thus, you should eat some fish or meat, or perhaps a kneidel, on Shabbos afternoon.

7. The Seder

The Seder must not begin until after nightfall (צאת הכוכבים). Since the first Seder will take place on Motzoei Shabbos, we recite יקנה”ז, which is an amalgam of the Yom Tov Kiddush and the Shabbos Havdalah. For the Bracha on the Ner, i.e., the Havdalah Licht, we do not light an additional candle; instead, we recite it to the light of the Yom Tov Licht. The Afikomen should be eaten before Chatzos (Halachic midnight) at 1:00 am; according to the Ram”a, the Hallel should be completed by then as well.

In the merit of keeping this special Yom Tov in this special year, we ask Hashem to give us life, grant us health, and bring speedily the future redemption, amein.

בברכת חג כשר ושמח,

Rabbi Yaakov Shulman

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מכירת חמץ MECHIRAS CHOMETZ 5781 POWER OF ATTORNEY

Instructions

Fill in the form below, sign and date, and give to your Rav.

I, the undersigned, fully empower and permit Rabbi _____,
to act in my place and stead and on my behalf to sell all Chometz possessed by me
knowingly or unknowingly, as defined by Torah and Rabbinic law, and to lease for the
duration of Erev Pesach and Pesach all places in which Chometz owned by me may be
found, especially at:

Home Address _____

Business Address _____

Print Name _____

Signed _____

Date _____, '21