

CUSTOMS OF PESACH- 5783

NISAN

The custom is to refrain from eating any *matzah* from *Rosh Chodesh Nisan* (Thursday, March 23rd) until *Pesach*, so that the *matzah* eaten on the first *seder* night will be welcomed as something novel. *Tachanun* (*Prayers of Supplication*) is omitted all of *Nisan*.

SHABBAT HAGADOL, April 1st

The Shabbat preceding *Pesach*, our Festival of Liberation, is called Shabbat Hagadol (the Great Shabbat) for our redemption from Egypt which had its beginning on the Shabbat preceding the Exodus. After *Mincha*, it is customary to recite the first half of the *Hagaddah*.

PREPARATION FOR PESACH

Unique to *Pesach* is **a)** The stringent prohibition against owning or benefiting from any *chametz* (leavened bread or any food containing leaven) and **b)** the obligation to eat *matzah*, baked especially for *Pesach*.

SELLING THE CHAMETZ

A Jew is not permitted to own any *chametz* during the eight days of *Pesach*, nor to derive any benefit from it. Therefore, *chametz* that one is unable to consume or dispose of before *Pesach* must be sold to a non-Jew prior to *Pesach*. This year, the legal sale of *chametz* to the gentile must be completed by early Wednesday morning, April 5th. All arrangements delegating the sale should therefore be completed no later than Tuesday night, April 4th. **The “Sale of Chametz Form” should be returned to shul as soon as possible.**

THE SEARCH AND ANNULMENT OF CHAMETZ Tuesday, April 4th (in the evening)

A thorough house cleaning is usually undertaken in preparation for the *Pesach* festival. A formal search for *chametz* must take place on the night preceding *Pesach* right after nightfall, this year, Tuesday, April 4th after 8:36 p.m. The search for *chametz* is done with a candle, and a bag or box in which to collect the *chametz*. A blessing is recited beforehand. Every room, and any place where *chametz* may have been entered, must be searched. This includes the basement, garage, automobile, store or business office, desks, closets, pockets of clothing (especially of children) etc. When the search is completed, we recite “*Kol Chamira*” (declaration of the annulment of *chametz*). Everything collected in the search is put in a conspicuous place, to be burnt the following morning. *Chametz* to be eaten or sold the following morning should be put aside and covered for the duration of the search. People leaving home before the eve of *Pesach*, must conduct this search for *chametz* on the evening preceding their departure without a blessing.

MATZAH-SHMURAH

One should have hand-baked *Shmurah-Matzah* at least for the *Seder* nights. Each person at the *Seder* should eat at least a “*kazayit*” of *matzah* (approx. one ounce). The word *Shmurah* means “watched” or “guarded,” and implies that the wheat has been guarded against contact with water from the moment it was harvested until it was prepared as dough for this *matzah*.

Erev Pesach, Wednesday, April 5th

FAST OF THE FIRST BORN

On Erev *Pesach*, first-born males fast to commemorate the first-born Jewish males being spared when the Egyptian first-born died. This year, the fast occurs on Wednesday, April 5th. However, when participating in a *Seudat Mitzvah* (festive meal occasioned by a special *mitzvah*) such as a *Siyum* which concludes the study of a sacred text, one may break his fast. **A siyum will take place after Shacharit on Friday April 5th. Chametz may not be eaten after 11:20 a.m. and all remaining chametz must be destroyed (burned, etc.) before 12:24 p.m.**

BURNING AND NULLIFYING THE CHAMETZ

On Wednesday Morning, April 5th we burn the *chametz* and say the final “*Kol Chamira*” (declaration of the annulment of *chametz*). This must be recited even if we find ourselves away from home and/or have no *chametz* in our possession. The declaration of the annulment of *chametz* should be said in any language one understands. The declaration follows:

“All leaven or anything leavened which is in my possession, whether I have seen it or not, whether I have observed it or not, whether I have removed it or not, shall be considered naught and ownerless as the dust of the earth.”

One may not eat *matzah* all day until the *Seder*. Also, this day it is customary not to eat any ingredients used for the *maror* and *charoset*.

Wednesday, April 5th - Eruv Tavshilin The Torah permits us to cook, bake, and prepare food on Yom Tov proper, in order to eat the prepared food on that day of Yom Tov. One is not permitted to prepare from one day of Yom Tov for the second day of Yom Tov or for after Yom Tov. This prohibition of preparing from one day of Yom Tov to the next, presents a problem when the second day of Yom Tov falls out right before Shabbat. To deal with this issue our Rabbis instituted a procedure known as eruv tavshilin. The process of eruv tavshilin works in the following manner. On Erev Yom Tov, a member of the household should set aside a baked item such as matzoh, and a cooked item such as meat, fish, or egg. He or she should then recite the blessing of "*Baruch atah hashem elokeinu melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav al mitzvat eruv*" and the following proclamation, both found in the Siddur. This proclamation is as follows: "*Through this eruv, may we be permitted to bake, cook, insulate, kindle flame, prepare, and do anything necessary on the festival for the sake of shabbat*". It is now viewed as though meal preparations for Shabbat have already begun before Yom Tov and Shabbat meal preparations may continue on Friday.

15th of NISAN – PESACH The Seder

One should follow the *Seder* procedure as set out in the *Haggadah*. First Seder should begin after 8:37 p.m. Begin Second Seder preparation after 8:38 p.m. A few reminders:

1. The "**Zeroa**" (usually a roasted neck or wing of chicken) is not to be eaten during *Seder* nights.
2. "**Maror**" (Bitter herb, usually horseradish and or Romaine lettuce) must be consumed in the size of a *kazayis*: If using pure, grated horseradish, two slightly rounded tablespoons; for Romaine lettuce, enough leaves to cover an area of 12 x 10 inches. **[Special caution must be taken before the Seder, to remove any insects attached to the lettuce-leaves!]**
3. "**Wine**" - each family member over *Bar Mitzvah* or *Bas Mitzvah*, must drink at least the greater half of the 4 cups of wine (or grape juice) at the *Seder*; with each cup size of the minimum capacity of 3.5 liquid oz.
4. "**Matzah**" - the *matzah* eaten during the *Seder*, as well as the *Afikoman Matzah* with which we end the *Seder*, should each be at least a *kazayit* (approx. 2/5 of a *Shmurah Matzah* or 2/3 of a *Machine Matzah*) and eaten preferably in less than 6 minutes.

FIRST DAY OF PESACH –Thursday, April 6th

On the first day of *Pesach*, at the *Musaf* services, the *Tefillat Tal* (Prayer for Dew) is said. From this *Musaf* prayer onward, until the *Shacharit* of *Shemini Atzeres*, we must no longer say *Mashiv Haruach* (nor on weekdays *Tal u'matar*).

SECOND NIGHT OF PESACH – Thursday night, April 6th

On the second night of *Pesach*, we begin *Sefirat Ha'Omer* - counting of the fifty days between *Pesach* and *Shavuot*. We count every night following the *Maariv* prayers until the night before *Shavuot*. *Havdalah* is made during *kiddush*.

CHOL HAMOED PESACH – Shabbat-Tuesday, April 8-11

During *Chol Hamoed* (intermediate days) of *Pesach* one should avoid non-essential work and remember the festive character of these days. *Tefillin* are not donned during these days.

7th AND 8th DAY OF PESACH Wednesday, April 12th and Thursday, April 13th

Shvi-i Shel Pesach - the Seventh day of *Pesach* commemorates the miracle of the "Splitting of the Red Sea" which completed the redemption from Egypt.

On *Acharon Shel Pesach* - the Last day of *Pesach*, *Yizkor* is recited after the Torah reading.

Passover ends at 8:47 p.m. After 10:00 p.m., chametz dishes, etc. may be taken out and chametz may be eaten.

CHAPTERS OF THE FATHERS It is customary to study one chapter of *Pirke Avot* (Chapters of the Fathers) on each *Shabbat* between *Pesach* and *Shavuot* after *Mincha*, thus completing the whole tract before *Shavuot*. Some continue this study throughout the summer until *Rosh Hashana*.