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PESACH

SELECTED LAWS AND CUSTOMS

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I. THE SEARCH FOR CHOMETZ

1. The search for *Chometz* begins at 8:10 p.m. on Tuesday, April 7th. At this time one must desist from any work or studying until the *Bedika* (search) is completed.
2. The search may be conducted by candlelight or with an electric flashlight.
3. The *Beracha* (blessing) "*Al Biur Chometz*" is recited prior to the search. The master of the house recites the *Beracha* and thereby frees all other members of the family engaged in the *Bedika* from reciting it. The one *Beracha* suffices for a search of more than one house on this evening.
4. All rooms of the house must be searched except those where one is absolutely sure that no *Chometz* was used during the year.
5. Included in this obligation is one's automobile, truck, trailer, etc. - as such places are often used in consuming or storing *Chometz*. If this poses great difficulty, one may rely on a thorough cleaning of these vehicles. (They should be cleaned by 8:10 p.m.)
6. It is customary to place 10 pieces of bread in different areas of the house before the search. However, one should attempt to search all the premises carefully. Only in extenuating circumstances should one rely on the search and discovery of the 10 pieces of bread.
7. The *Chometz* found on this evening should be put in a safe place in such a manner as to prevent its accessibility to members of the household. This *Chometz* is held until Wednesday morning. (See III, 3.)
8. After the search one must verbally annul the *Chometz* ("*Bitul Chometz*"), which may be in his property and did not find - and relinquish his ownership over it. The Aramaic text of the *Bitul* is found in most *Siddurim* and *Haggados*. It is mandatory that one understands what he is saying in order for the *Bitul* to be effective. Thus, one who does not understand the Aramaic text should recite it in the vernacular.
9. The obligation to search also applies to property one rents, providing it was rented prior to the night of the 14th of *Nissan*. The tenant must also annul the *Chometz*, after the search.
10. One who is leaving his home over *Pesach* within the 30-day period before the 14th of *Nissan*, i.e. after *Purim*, is required to search for *Chometz* on the night prior to his departure. This search is conducted in the same fashion as the one on the eve of the 14th of *Nissan*. However, the *Beracha* "*Al Biur Chometz*" is not recited. The *Bitul* is recited after the search. The *Chometz* which one finds may be discarded. It does not have to be taken to the place where one will spend *Pesach*. The second *Bitul* is recited *Erev Pesach* wherever one may be.
11. One who is leaving home and will not return during *Pesach*, nor will any Jew be entering the house during *Pesach*, is not required to clean the house for *Pesach*. In such a case all the *Chometz* in the home will be sold and the entire premises rented to a non-Jew. However, in order not to depart from national observance of *Bedikas Chometz*, one must still choose one room in which a search will be made.

II. THE SALE OF CHOMETZ

1. It is forbidden to keep *Chometz* or its mixtures or derivatives in one's possession during *Pesach*. It is important to understand the procedure of selling *Chometz*. The Rabbi is appointed as an agent of the seller of the *Chometz* to sell it to a non-Jew. Not only does one sell the *Chometz* in his possession, but he also sub-leases to the non-Jew the place on which the *Chometz* is located. The non-Jew is allowed free access to the *Chometz* he purchases.
2. For those going abroad for *Pesach* (to Israel or Europe), the Rabbi in your home area should be instructed to sell the *Chometz* prior to the onset of *Pesach* in the time zone you will be in. Otherwise the *Chometz* should be sold through a Rabbi in that area. If you will be in Israel, the Rabbi must be told that you observe *Yom Tov Sheyni* (the eighth day of *Pesach*).
3. If you find *Chometz* in your house during *Chol Hamoed*, you should burn it at that time. If one finds it on *Yom Tov* or on *Shabbos Chol Hamoed*, then handling it is prohibited, since it is *Muktzeh*. One should cover the *Chometz* with a vessel until the conclusion of *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov* - and then burn it.
4. A Jew is prohibited from deriving any benefit after *Pesach* from *Chometz* which has been kept in the possession of a Jew during *Pesach*. Therefore, care should be taken to obtain *Chometz* after *Pesach* from someone who has sold his *Chometz* prior to *Pesach* (*Chometz* sold to a non-Jew before the sixth hour on *Erev Pesach* and resold after *Pesach*). If the *Chometz* is not sold properly it is considered "*Chometz She'Ovar Alav HaPesach*". If in doubt in a particular case, one should wait before buying from a Jew until reasonably certain (a 30 day period for many items) that a new stock of *Chometz* has been acquired. This *Geizera* (ordinance), however, does not extend to *Kitniyos*.

III. THE MORNING OF EREV PESACH

1. *Chometz* may be eaten until 10:22 a.m. on Wednesday, April 8th. After this time all left over *Chometz* should be locked up and sold, burned or otherwise destroyed by the time of *Biur Chometz*, 11:39 a.m..
2. Any leftover *Chometz*, except for the *Chometz* which is to be stored away and sold, should be burned by 11:39 a.m. on Wednesday. In case one is unable to do so (due to a fire hazard, city regulations etc.) the *Chometz* may be disposed of in a number of other ways, e.g. converting the *Chometz* into crumbs and throwing it into a river or flushing them down the toilet.
3. The second *Kol Chamirah* is then recited: "All kinds of Leaven in my premises, visible and invisible to me, which I removed or perhaps did not remove, shall be considered null and void, and my ownership forfeited as the dust of the earth." One must complete the disposing of the *Chometz* and the saying of *Kol Chamirah* before 11:39 a.m.
4. ALL preparations for the first seder should be completed before candle lighting time (7:10 p.m.) on Wednesday Preparations for the **second** seder may not start before 8:16 p.m. on Thursday.

5. For those who use romaine lettuce for Maror (bitter herbs), it is absolutely necessary to examine the lettuce to make sure that there are no worms or bugs on the leaves. The checking should be done before Yom Tov. On the second night, the checking must be done after nightfall.
6. The *Charoses* (the mixture of apples, nuts, cinnamon and wine) must be prepared before Yom Tov. On *Yom Tov* night one is not permitted to grate the nuts unless it is done in a way different from the way one does it on a regular weekday. The Zroah – The shankbone also must be roasted before sunset.
7. One should not over-eat after 4:00 p.m. in a way that would spoil the appetite, so that the eating of *Matzoh and meal* at the *Seder* table will be enjoyable.
8. Children who can be told about the importance and significance of the Exodus from Egypt, and understand what they are told, are not permitted to be given *Matzoh* the whole day. However, very small children who do not comprehend the story of *Pesach* are permitted to be given *Matzoh* on *Erev Pesach*.

IV. TA'ANIS BECHORIM

1. The fast of the *Bechor* (first born) on *Erev Pesach* commemorates the tenth plague- *Makas Bechoros* - specifically highlighting the proximity to death of the Jewish first born and their survival on the night of the Exodus. The fast is geared to imbue awareness upon the first-born of the Divine *Chessed* of their salvation, and should motivate *Teshuva* and self-improvement (as reflected by fasting) indicating that it was through this merit that the Jews were redeemed from Egypt.
2. Although this fast is not Rabbinically legislated, it is obligatory by longstanding custom. Participation in a festive occasion celebrating a *Mitzvah* releases a *Bechor* from the need to fast. The *Minhag* (custom) developed for a *Bechor* to conclude, or to witness the conclusion of, a Talmudic tractate so as to be released from fasting. Similarly, a *Bechor* may attend a *Bris* or *Pidyon Haben* and participate in the *Seudah* (meal) thereby fulfilling this obligation.
3. If a *Bechor* was unable to witness and participate in a *Seudas Mitzvah*, he must fast on *Erev Pesach* until nightfall. Nevertheless, if one becomes ill or weak, e.g. intense headaches, the fast may be broken.
4. Those required to fast are the first born of the mother or the first born of the father. Women are not required to fast.
5. A *Bechor* below 13 years of age is not required to fast. However, the father (although he is not a *Bechor*) must fast or attend a *Siyum* in place of his *Bechor*. This *Halacha* - recorded in the *Shulchan Aruch* - is explained by the Vilna Gaon to be rooted in the *Mitzvah* of *Pidyon Bechor* (redemption of the first born) commanded to the people in Egypt. The *Mitzvah* reflects the father's appreciation of his son's salvation. Consequently, he is also obligated to fast a *Ta'anis Bechorim*.
6. If one cannot attend a siyyum they may join in listening to the siyyum by telephone/ cell phone etc..

V. CANDLE LIGHTING

1. On the first night of *Pesach* (Wednesday evening) the text of the *Beracha* over the candles is: "*Lehadlik Ner Shel'Yom Tov.*" The candles must be lit before 7:10 pm
2. On the second night of *Pesach* (Thursday evening) the candles cannot be lit until after nightfall – 8:16 p.m.
3. The text of the *Beracha* over the candles is: "*Lehadlik Ner Shel Yom Tov.*"
4. The *Beracha* of "*Shehecheyanu*" is recited on both nights.

VI. SELECTED HALACHOS OF THE SEDER

1. One should begin the *Seder* immediately upon coming home in order to complete as much of the ceremony as possible before the children fall asleep.
2. The obligations of the reading of the *Haggadah*, drinking of the four cups of wine, and eating of the *Matzoh* and bitter herbs, are equally incumbent on the women as they are on the men. However, it is customary that the women do not recline when fulfilling these *Mitzvos*.
3. It is mandatory that the participants in the *Seder* understand the text of the *Haggadah*. Thus, the one who is conducting the *Seder* should explain at frequent intervals the sections previously recited for those who are not familiar with the Hebrew.
4. Required amounts of ritual foods and beverages for the *Pesach Seder* were compiled by the *Kollel Beth Medrash L'Torah V'Horoah*, founded by Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, zt"l. The amounts are:
 - A. WINE:

each of the four cups	2.9 fluid ounces
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 - B. MATZOH:

for <i>Hamotzi</i> and <i>Afikomen</i>	7x6.5 inches
for <i>Korech</i>	7x4 inches
 - C. MARROR:
 1. If you use pure grated horseradish

for <i>Marror</i>	1.1 fluid ounces
for <i>Korech</i>	.7 fluid ounces
 2. If you use romaine lettuce leaves

for <i>Marror</i>	8x10 inches
for <i>Korech</i>	8x10 inches
 3. If you use romaine lettuce stalks

for <i>Marror</i>	3x5 inches
for <i>Korech</i>	3x5 inches
5. Some *Poskim* (authorities) are of the opinion that grape juice should not be used in place of wine for the *Arba Kosos* (4 cups of wine), except where wine could be harmful to one's health. However, the wine may be diluted with grape juice. They do not consider grape Juice to be "*Derech Cheirus*" (Expression of Freedom). However, most *Poskim* permitted grape Juice (and one may certainly dilute the wine with grape Juice).

6. The *Matzoh* for the *Seder* from which one will eat to fulfill the *Mitzvah* should be *Shemurah*, i.e. made from wheat watched for fermentation from the time of its cutting. Most boxes of this type of *Matzoh* will be labeled "*Shemurah*". If no mention is made, then it is to be assumed that it is not *Shemurah*, and should not be eaten to fulfill the *Mitzvah* at the *Seder*.
7. An Orthodox Rabbi should be consulted if one's health does not permit eating *Matzoh* in its ordinary form.
8. The *Matzoh* and the bitter herbs should preferably be eaten in a period of 2 minutes, but de-facto, no longer than a period of 9 minutes.
9. The most recommended type of bitter herbs are romaine lettuce stalks. Since worms or bugs are often found within these stalks, the lettuce should be soaked and checked carefully before the *Seder*. (See item 5 in section III)
10. The *Afikomen* should preferably be eaten before "mid-night", i.e. 1:00 a.m. After this time one may not eat any food or drink flavored beverages for the rest of the night (except the remaining two cups of wine of the *Seder*). If one is unable to eat the *Afikomen* before mid-night it may still be consumed until dawn.