

Rabbi Schuck's Notes to the RA Passover Guide:

Baking Pans: In the section on *Kashering* of Kitchen Appliances and Utensils, the Guide notes that metal baking pans and sheets require *libbun* at very high temperatures which may warp the vessel. In my experience, metal baking pans can rarely be cleaned well enough to *kasher* them for *Pesah*. I do not recommend koshering baking pans and sheets for *Pesah*.

Electric Ranges: The Guide says that "Smooth, glass top electric ranges require koshering by *libbun* and *irui* (pouring boiling water over the surface of the range top)," and then offers instructions on how to do this. In my experience, the *irui* process they recommend can be harmful to glass topped ranges. I suggest/cleaning the stovetop thoroughly using special products intended for use on these ranges and then heat as hot as possible for 40 minutes.

Glass Bakeware: The Guide says that "Issues regarding glass bakeware are complex." I do not recommend koshering glass (Pyrex, etc.) bakeware or cookware for *Pesah*.

Dishwasher: In the past, most authorities said that porcelain or plastic lined dishwashers could not be *kashered*. Recently, several authorities including the OU have said that these appliances can be *kashered*. Those who chose to *kasher* their metal, porcelain or plastic-lined dishwashers using the method suggested in the Guide (or the slightly different procedures suggested in other places,) can rely on the authorities who permit this. Those who chose not to *kasher* their dishwashers also have authorities on which they can rely.

Refrigerators: Refrigerators and freezers should be defrosted, cleaned and scoured. Include all walls, shelves and baskets. Some people cover shelves with shelf paper or foil during *Pesah*, and though this custom often "feels significant," it is unnecessary if you thoroughly clean it with detergent. If there are places where food can get stuck, then you should cover that area. (If you do use foil to cover all of your shelves, make sure to allow for good air circulation in by punching holes in the paper or foil. If you don't, the thermostat will be inaccurate and the motor may run constantly and kill the refrigerator).

Dishtowels and tablecloths can be kashered by washing with soap.

Quinoa: Regarding Quinoa, the Guide says: Where specially marked kosher for Passover quinoa "is not available, purchase Bolivian or Peruvian quinoa,

marked "gluten free" before Pesah. Please make certain that quinoa is the sole ingredient in the final packaging."

The situation is a bit more complex than this. For starters, according to the FDA website, not all things labelled gluten free are without oats. The website states, "Do oats have to be certified as gluten-free to be labeled gluten-free? No. However, as with any other non-gluten-containing grain, oats that are labeled gluten-free must contain less than 20 ppm gluten." In other words, something can be labeled gluten free but have oats in them, and if cooked in water on Passover, that would be chametz.

In addition to this, I did some research in calling some companies that sell quinoa and learned that some of the quinoa is stored with grains covering the quinoa as a way to keep the quinoa dry after it is shipped here in the US from Bolivia. In such a case, depending on the quantity, I am not certain that it would be batel b'sheesheem if bought before Passover.

My conclusion is that unless the package of quinoa is marked kosher for Passover (and there is quinoa marked KP), I would not use it during Passover.

Kitniyot—The Rabbinical Assembly Guide includes links to two teshuvot, rabbinic response, regarding eating kitniyot (legumes, etc.) One new teshuva permits eating kitniyot. Another maintains the Ashkenazi prohibition. In 2017, I sent a letter to Beth El outlining my position on this, the conclusion of which is as follows:

Responding to the Rabbinical Assembly change, a group of Conservative Rabbis wrote, "Customs endure because religion is not always rational; visceral, emotional attachments to practice are an important part of the religious experience. Not eating kitniyot on Pesah...has been part of Pesah observance for Ashkenazi Jews for centuries...Without a compelling ethical reason to change it, we think this practice should continue." I agree with this position.

For Ashkenazi Jews on a very restricted diet for health or ethical reasons, it makes sense to add rice, beans, and lentils to one's diet on Passover. But generally speaking, I find the argument to maintain this custom compelling, not because of the sources that justify the legal position, but rather, because that is what my mother and grandmother taught me to do during these eight days. Though there is strong halachic justification for Ashkenazi Jews to eat kitniyot on Passover, and for those who do I believe they are permitted to do so, short of a compelling reason to abandon this tradition, I will be refraining from kitniyot in my home once again this year.

Our shul will continue to follow the traditional Ashkenazi prohibition.

The Guide offers guidance for those eating kitniyot.

Download the RA's full Passover Guide here:

https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/final_pesah_guide_5779.pdf

Resources for Your Seder

A Guide To Jewish Practice: Volume 2- Shabbat and Holidays

Pesach Theology: Spiritual Dimensions of Pesach, by Richard Hirsch
Pesach is one of three festivals (along with Sukkot and Shavuot) that comprise the *r'galim*, festivals of the biblical calendar when Israelites were expected to make a pilgrimage on foot (*regel*) to Jerusalem.

Pesach, Sukkot, and Shavuot orbit around the Jewish master story of the Exodus as told in the Hebrew Bible and expanded upon by later rabbinic tradition in lore, law, and liturgy. Pesach is the core narrative, inaugurating the larger Israelite (later, "Jewish") story of the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian servitude. Shavuot emerges in later Jewish tradition as the festival commemorating the revelation of the Torah at Sinai although the Hebrew Bible does not make this association, seeing Shavuot solely as an agricultural festival of first fruits. The Hebrew Bible links Sukkot to the story of the Exodus, since the booths (*sukkot*) were interpreted as symbols of the 40 years of desert wandering between the Exodus and the arrival in the Promised Land. The *sukkot* are then said to represent the transient shelters one might imagine being used during such a trek.

Of these *hagim* (holidays), Pesach is the core holiday, in terms of historical, spiritual and theological significance, as well as in terms of narrative, liturgy and frame of reference for much of Jewish tradition. Pesach is the most widely observed of these three, primarily through the ritual meal of the Seder. The Haggadah (Seder manual) is among the most widely interpreted of Jewish liturgical works, with multiple medieval and modern versions in circulation.

Each of the *r'galim* also has a place in the agricultural cycle. Sukkot is linked to the fall harvest, Shavuot to the summer grain harvest, and Pesach to the coming of spring-to planting and beginning anew. One of the names for Pesach *Hag Ha'aviv*, the holiday of spring, which ties annual agricultural renewal to the rebirth of the Jewish people through their escape from Egyptian slavery. The centrality and ubiquity of Pesach make it an exceptionally rich resource for contemporary spiritual exploration.

My People's Passover Haggadah: Traditional Texts, Modern Commentaries
Vol. 1

Defining Sacred Time (Kiddush and the First Cup), Urchatz (The first washing- without a blessing), Karpas (Eating Greens), and Yachatz (Breaking the middle matzah and the Afikomen)

Art Green

"Holy Occasion" The word mikra derives from the root koof. Reish. Alef, "to call." As a mikra kodesh, the festival is literally a "holy calling," as though the day itself calls forth to us to respond to it. Each of the festivals has its own "call." On Pesach we are called to freedom. The sense of call makes for a different type of freedom than that of simply breaking all restraints. We respond to it by examining our own enslavements and asking how we can become more free and bring others more freedom. As Jews we understand that "more free" means "more free to live in God's presence" or less subjugated to those forces--whether they be social, economic, political, or even "religious"--that keep us from God. Pesach calls out to us to renew our commitment to freedom on these most profound levels, both for ourselves and for others.

"First cup" This is the first of the Seder's four cups of wine. Most Haggadah commentators relate the four cups of wine to four terms used for redemption in the Exodus narrative. But that is wholly internal coordination of symbols and does not really tell us much. The kabbalists refer to them to four rungs of "shell" or defilement that the Israelites had to overcome in order to be redeemed. Their years in Egypt had taken them down to the lowest of spiritual rungs. They needed to be purified step by step before they could be taken forth.

But my favorite interpretation of the four cups is found on an old glass goblet I treasure. Made in Bohemia in the 18th century, it is inscribed arba kosot neged arba imahot: "four cups standing for the four mothers." This interpretation is already found, it turns out, in the Haggadah commentary of the Maharal of Prague, who lived two centuries earlier. I wonder what it was about those Bohemian Jewish mothers that inspired such thought!

Playing it out, we can understand how the first cup represents Sarah. This is the cup of hospitality, welcoming guests, the way Mother Sarah kept the flaps of her tent ever open to welcome sojourning strangers. The second cup is that of Rebekah, who switched her sons before Isaac's blessing. The cleverness, even trickery, she showed also protected Israel's sons in Egypt

and allowed them to leave, deceiving Pharaoh and his armies both in Egypt and at the shore of the sea. Sometimes liberation requires trickery. But how about Leah and Rachel? How do the last two cups apply to them? I leave that for conversation around your Seder table.

David Arnow

“Washing without a Blessing” In the days of the Temple, priests washed before offering sacrifices on the altar. That would have been true for the pesach offering as well. After the Temple was destroyed, the Sages likened one’s table to the altar, making the stipulated symbolic food of the Seder meal the equivalent of the missing pesach. Symbolically, beginning the Seder by washing thus makes sense. We wash here also because the Talmud (Pesachim 115a) requires washing prior to touching anything dipped in liquid (i.e., parsley dipped in salt water). Numbers Rabbah (2:15) provides a parable linking washing to reconciliation with God: “A king sent his son to school, but instead, the boy went to play in the street. His father found out and scolded him. Afterwards, however, the father said, ‘Wash your hands and come and dine with me.’” Israel is the wayward son, and God the king; by washing we prepare ourselves to be worthy of our annual dialogue with God on the question of redemption.

“Eating Greens” Although many use parsley here, the ninth-century prayer book of Amram Gaon lists a variety of acceptable spring vegetables: radishes, lettuce, arugula, cilantro, and parsley. Folkloric associations relating to each of these doubtless augmented their significance on the Seder plate. According to the Talmud, radishes are good for fever and help dissolve food (Avodah Zarah 28b). Lettuce seen in a dream portends either rapid growth or bitter decline of business (Berachot 56a). Arugula benefits the eyes (Shabbat 109a). Eating cilantro produces stout children, and eating parsley guarantees beautiful ones (Ketubot 61a)!

Neil Gilman

“Yachatz” The Haggadah quickly introduces the theme of brokenness. Its trajectory will take us from brokenness at the outset to wholeness at the end. In the words of the Mishnah (Pesachim 10:4), when we instruct our children, we “begin with the disgrace and end with the praise.” That trajectory is expressed verbally throughout the Haggadah, but frequently, in Judaism, theological reflections are also articulated in another language, ritual behavior. Here, we echo the opening words of the Haggadah--“This is the bread of affliction...”--by the ritual of breaking the middle matzah. It will eventually be made whole again through the act of eating: the first half at

the beginning of the festive meal, and the other half at its conclusion, for the afikomen.

The Jonathan Sacks Haggada

Maggid (Recounting the Story)

What Makes This Night Unlike All Other Nights? (Pg. 27)

The Torah speaks of children asking questions of Pesach. "And if your children should ask you, 'What is this service to you?' you shall say..." (Exodus 12:26). From this, tradition inferred that the story of the Exodus from Egypt must be told, wherever possible, in response to the questions asked by a child.

The Torah has two words for inheritance, *yerusha* and *nachala*, and they represent the two different ways in which a heritage is passed on across the generations. The word *nachala* comes from the root *nahal*, which also means "river". It represents an inheritance that is merely handed down, without any work on the part of the recipient, as water flows in a river. *Yerusha*, by contrast, means active inheritance. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch pointed out that *lareshet*, the verbal form of *yerusha*, sometimes means "conquer" or "capture". It means actively taking hold of what one has been promised. An inheritance for which one has worked is always more secure than one for which one has not. That is why Judaism encourages children to ask questions. When a child asks, he or she has already begun the work of preparing to receive. Torah is a *yerusha*, not a *nachala*. It needs work on behalf of the child if it is to be passed on across the generations.

The history of *Ma Nishtana* is fascinating. The text itself goes back some two thousand years. It is recorded in the Mishnah and was almost certainly the form of words used in Second Temple times. Everything else about it, though, was different. It was said not before the meal but afterward. It was said not by the child but by the parent. And it was not a set of questions but a set of statements. How so?

In Temple times the meal was eaten first. The sanctity of the moment was palpable. Families had traveled from all parts of Israel to bring their sacrifice to the Temple and eat their meal in the precincts of Jerusalem. The questions of the child arose naturally from acts done that night that were done at no other point in the year. If the child was too young to ask, the father would prompt him by saying, *Ma nishtana halayla hazeh*, meaning not "What makes this night different?" but "See how different this night is from all other nights." He would then enumerate the differences, encouraging the child to ask, "Why?"

One of the most remarkable achievements of the sages was to preserve the continuity of Jewish life through a series of tragedies--the destruction of the Temple, the end of the Paschal sacrifice, and the loss of the entire atmosphere of collective celebration in Jerusalem. The narrative was moved from after the meal to before it, so that words would do the work of place: the Jewish people no longer had Jerusalem, but we still had the story. And instead of children asking spontaneously, each in his or her own words (the "four sons" of the Haggada), the Ma Nishtana became a standard formula that every child could learn. Old words took on new function. A ritual once celebrated in the vicinity of the Temple became a ceremony that could be observed throughout the world without losing its original character. Everywhere Jews gathered to celebrate Pesach, became a fragment of Jerusalem. The city, the land, and the sacrificial order lay in ruins, but the words remained.

Avadim Hay'yinu (We were Slaves)

We Were Slaves To Pharaoh In Egypt (pg. 28)

The Mishna states that in telling the story of the Exodus we must "Begin with the shame and end with the praise" (Mishnah Pesachim 10:4). A Jewish story begins in sadness and ends in joy.

What, specifically, does this mean on Pesach? The Talmud records two views, those of Rav and Shmuel, two sages of the third century. According to Shmuel it means saying, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord our God brought us out." According to Rav it means saying, "In the beginning, our ancestors were idol worshippers. But now the Omnipresent has drawn us close in His service." Out of respect for these two views, we say them both, beginning with the answer according to Shmuel.

The two opinions reflect different approaches to the Exodus. According to Shmuel the central fact is physical redemption. Our ancestors were slaves who were liberated by God. According to Rav the essential theme is spiritual redemption. Our ancestors were idolators who found, and were found by, God.

There is a difference, too, in their approach to history. Shmuel focuses on the immediate event in Egypt, slavery and redemption. Rav places the event in a wider context--the whole history of the Jewish people from Abraham to Joshua and the conquest of the land. For Rav, Pesach is a part of a larger drama, from founding father to the birth of a nation in its own land.

Maimonides draws a third distinction. There are two elements to the seder service: there is the story we tell our children, and the story we tell

ourselves. Shmuel focuses on the story as told to a child. Rav speaks of the story as an adult reflection. Children can understand the drama of slavery and freedom together with the many miracles that were involved. It takes an adult to understand the journey from polytheism to monotheism, from myth to faith.

The Chassidic Haggadah: An Anthology of Commentary and Stories for the Seder

Arami Oved Avi

Reb Yerachmiel Yisrael of Alexander (The Yismach Yisrael) pg. 57
An Aramean sought to destroy my father-This and the following verses are quoted from the statements of praise recited by the Jews upon bringing bikkurim (the first fruits) [to the priests at the Temple]. There is a common element joining the two together. Both bikkurim and the Seder express our thanks to God for His generosity. The connection between the two is deeper. When we bring bikkurim, the Torah commands us "to respond and declare," to raise our voice in praise of God. Similarly, the Seder expresses the concept of peh sach, "the mouth speaks," the use of our powers of speech in praise of God

Pesach, Matzah, and Maror

Reb Yehoshua of Belz (The Mitteler Rav) pgs. 86-87
Pesach...Matzah...Maror- On the surface, the order of the mitzvot mentioned by Rabban Gamliel should be reversed. Maror, reminiscent of the hardships of exile, should be mentioned first. Afterwards should follow matzah, symbolic of the poor man's bread of Egypt, but also matzot eaten after the redemption. Pesach, the sacrifice of the redemption, should be mentioned last [since it did not take place until after the Israelites left Egypt].

However, Rabban Gamliel intended to show how redemption from Egypt is the source for future redemptions as well. Therefore, he begins with the Paschal sacrifice, which the Jews offered as a symbol of redemption even while they were still in Egypt. Afterwards, he mentions the matzah, for the Jews were able to appreciate its connection with redemption on the day they left Egypt.

The maror is left for last. Ultimately, even bitterness will be transformed to good. However, at present, this transformation is not apparent. Only in the Messianic age, will we be able to understand how all the bitter difficulties

and trials we have been forced to suffer are part of the process of redemption.

Reb Yehoshua lived in a time of intense hardship for the Jewish people. In his drash, he encourages his hasidim to transform their suffering through the lens of the Passover Seder. He wants them to experience the world "as if" their suffering isn't in vain, that is, it is somehow a reflection of a greater redemptive process. Though this theology is difficult for us today, Reb Yehoshua recognized the value in maintaining one's sense of optimism in the midst of immense pain. Bitterness is a part of redemption. Sometimes it takes us a little longer than we may like to see the value in it.

Rachtzah

Reb Dov Baer of Mezeritch (The Maggid) pg. 98
The Maggid of Mezeritch interpreted Rachtzah as a reference to the prayer, Bei Anah Racheitz (In Him I put my trust) [from the Shabbat Torah service]. Trust in God is a necessary preparatory step for the spiritual service of eating matzah.

Motzi Matzah

The Zohar refers to matzah as the "food of faith" and the "food of healing." Reb Shneur Zalman of Liadi declared: "On the first night, it is the food of faith. On the second night, the food of healing." His son and successor, Reb Dovber, explained those statements: "When healing leads to faith, it implies that a person becomes sick, he is healed, and then thanks God for his recovery. Healing that comes as a result of faith implies that one will never suffer any disease." He continued: "The above applies to both material and spiritual matters. For a Jew, there is no difference between the material and the spiritual. His material affairs come about as a result of his spiritual service, and he transforms their material aspects into spirituality."

Both the Alter Rebbe and his son recognize that it is impossible to separate ourselves from "earthly" matters. Matzah, the bread of our affliction, is a prime symbol of the material world and as such it contains within it spiritual relevance. All material things that exist in the universe have the potential, with the appropriate kavanah, to be transformed into a vessel of spirituality. Matzah is meant to elevate us to a higher spiritual rung- it brings us one step closer to our own spiritual redemption.