

## **Message from Rabbi Citron**

### Chapter 1: Buying food for Pesach

Generally speaking, non-processed produce that is not from one of the five grains that are considered *chametz* would be automatically kosher for Passover. Ashkenazim avoid things like beans and corn, but the vast majority of fruits and vegetables are completely fine for Passover, so it's ok to stock up on these things early. The same is true for kosher meat and chicken. Regular meat and chicken that are non-processed (not made into something else) are kosher for Passover even if not specifically labeled as such. Dairy products, such as cheese and yogurt, generally need a "Kosher for Passover" symbol. Go to a kosher store or check if your local grocery has kosher for Passover dairy products. Milk contains no actual *chametz* and can be purchased early (before erev Pesach) even if it doesn't say "Kosher for Passover."

### Chapter 2: Your Pesach Kitchen

If you are planning on cleaning and kashering your kitchen and bringing out your kosher for Passover dishes, here are some helpful tips:

**The stove:** To kasher a gas stove, turn on the burners to the highest setting for about one to two hours each. Do only one burner at a time, so you don't overheat the kitchen. Always remember, safety first. For an electric stove or a glass top, you only need a few minutes – just until it gets really hot.

**The oven:** If your oven has a self-clean feature that used heat, just run a self-cleaning cycle for at least three hours. Unlike most things, a self-cleaning oven does not have to be left untouched for 24 hours before it can be kashered. There are opinions that you can kasher a non-self-cleaning oven just by turning it on high for two or three hours. This is based on the opinion of Rav Ahron Kotler of Lakewood, who allows kashering non-self-cleaning ovens. It's best not to kasher your oven and stovetop at the same time, because that can get too hot.

**The sink:** If your sink is stainless steel, it can be kashered. Heat water in a kettle, and when it boils carefully pour the boiling water over the sink and any metal parts connected to it. Then run some cold water over it. You can also use a pot, though a kettle is safer and therefore preferable.

**The counters:** We generally kasher metal and granite stone countertops like we do sinks, by pouring boiling water over them followed by cold water. Another option, just as viable and probably safer, is to cover the countertops with something like tinfoil. In fact, many people prefer this method over attempting to kasher the

countertops. Rav Moshe permitted kashering formica, but a word of caution: as soon as you pour the hot water, mop it up right away so that it does not get underneath the countertop and ruin the glue. While kashering, please use towels to ensure you don't burn yourself or get too much hot water on places that don't need kashering.

Dishes: Take a pot that hasn't been used in at least 24 hours and boil water in it. Then you can submerge things in that boiling water, such as utensils and smaller pots. If something is too big to submerge all at once, you can rotate it, making sure that each part is in the boiling water for four to five seconds. Things that are small enough to be completely submerged can be dropped in last. To kasher a big pot, put it in the sink and boil water in another pot. Then pour the boiling water into the pot in the sink, until the water comes up over the sides of the pot. Pans are hard to kasher, so buy disposable pans instead. To avoid having to kasher all of these things every year, most people keep a separate set of kosher for Passover dishes and utensils.

### Chapter 3: *Bedikat Chametz*

When night falls on the last night before Pesach begins, gather ten small pieces of bread and a candle. Hide the pieces of bread around the house so that they can be found during the search – carefully, so you do not leave crumbs behind. Hold the lit candle and make the blessing – *al biyur chametz* – and then begin the search. According to Rav Moshe Feinstein, once you have started searching you should blow out the candle and use a flashlight instead. That way you can do a proper *bedika* without the risk of setting a fire. Any area of the house that never has any *chametz* does not need to be checked. Our custom is to look over those areas very lightly. After the search, recite the *kol chamira* declaration to nullify any *chametz* you missed.

While there is a mitzvah to look for *chametz* to get rid of it, the Talmud also understands this search to have a mystical significance. The verse tells us, “The human soul is G-d's candlelight, in which He searches out all of our inner being.” In other words, we should use the opportunity of looking for the *chametz* to not only physically search for anywhere it might be hidden, but also to search the inner places in our lives, the cracks that conceal our own *yetzer hara*, so we can examine ourselves and improve ourselves. This should be one of our intentions as we are searching for *chametz*.

Secure all the *chametz* you find in a bag, in a safe place. Whatever *chametz* you're planning to have for breakfast the next morning should also be kept in a safe place, separate from your Passover items. All *chametz* that you are selling to a non-Jew should be clearly marked as off-limits. Seal off those areas with heavy tape or something similar, so that you don't accidentally go into them.

You must do a check of any property you own, including offices or warehouses, and sell the *chametz* and make the *kol chamira* declaration for those locations as well. Consider including in your *chometz* sale contract the rental of that space for the duration of the holiday to a non-Jew.

#### Chapter 4: Fast of the Firstborn

This year, the *siyum* allowing the firstborn not to fast will take place on Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### Chapter 5: *Eruv Tavshilin*

This year you will need to make an *eruv tavshilin* on Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup>. Prepare two food items, one baked and one cooked. We recommend using a piece of matza and a piece of chicken or a hard-boiled egg. Lift the items and recite the blessing and the declarations, which you can find in the siddur. Some have the custom to give the items to a family member to accept on behalf of the household. While the designated family member holds the items, the head of the household recites, “I grant a share in the *eruv* to anyone who wants to be included and depend on it.” Then the head of the household takes the items back and makes the blessing and the declarations found in the siddur.

The *eruv tavshilin* is required because it is forbidden to cook on Yom Tov for the following day, which means that normally it would be forbidden on Friday, the second day of Yom Tov, to prepare food for Shabbat. But since we cannot prepare food on Shabbat itself, we need to create an exception to the rule that will allow us to prepare food on Friday for Shabbat. The *eruv tavshilin* creates this exception. Other reasons are also given. The custom is to eat the food used for the *eruv* on Shabbat.

#### Chapter 6: The Seder

Set out three matzas – it’s best to use *shmura* matza – and a seder plate with the following items:

1. *Zeroa* (Usually a chicken neck or a chicken wing that is roasted – either cooked directly on top of the fire or roasted in the oven and then grilled on the fire.)
2. Egg (Some have a custom to wrap it in tinfoil and roast it in the oven.)
3. *Maror* (horseradish)
4. *Charoset* (A mixture of apples, nuts, vinegar, and wine. Some people put in strips of kosher for Passover cinnamon bark, to resemble straw. Tosfot says to put in dates, figs, almonds, and pomegranates.)

5. *Karpas* (for example, parsley, potato, or radish)
6. *Chazeret* (romaine lettuce)

Many have the custom to begin the seder by reciting the order of what we are about to do: *Kadesh, urchatz, karpas...*

*Kadesh* – Make kiddush

*Urchatz* – Wash the hands

*Karpas* – Eat the *karpas*

*Yachatz* – Break the middle matzah

*Magid* – Recite the story of the Haggadah

*Rachtzah* – Wash the hands, this time with a blessing

*Motzi matzah* – Make the blessings and eat the matza

*Maror* – Eat the bitter herbs

*Korech* – Eat a sandwich of matza and *maror*

*Shulchan orech* – Eat dinner

*Tzafun* – Eat the *afikomen*

*Barech* – Recite the blessing after the meal

*Hallel* – recite the Hallel

*Nirtzah* – Conclude the seder and ask G-d to accept our prayers

**The seder should begin at approximately 7:49 PM.** It is okay to begin a little earlier – perhaps 7:20 PM, with kiddush at 7:49 PM.

For each of the four cups of wine, use a cup approximately 3½ to 4 ounces and try to drink a little more than half the cup. Wine is preferred, but if somebody is sick and can't drink wine then grape juice is permitted. If possible, that person should mix some wine into their grape juice or use low-alcohol wine instead. All kosher wine is kosher for Passover. If someone wants to drink wine but is unable to have too much, they can use 1/3<sup>rd</sup> or 1/4<sup>th</sup> wine and the rest grape juice.

Begin the seder by making kiddush. Recline on the left side, even if you are a lefty, while drinking the first cup. Our *minhag* is to stand for kiddush, though some people sit. Wash your hands, then dip the *karpas* in salt water, make a *ha'adama* blessing, and eat it. Some recline for the *karpas* and some do not. Split the middle matza and put away the bigger half – this will become the *afikomen*. Leave the matza uncovered, lift the broken matza, and begin the recitation of *magid* with the proclamation *ha lachma anya* – “this is the bread of our affliction; let anyone who needs come and eat.” It sounds like simply an open invitation for anyone to come to the seder, but it has a deep spiritual meaning: if someone is searching for spiritual nourishment, the matza in the seder will provide insight. Then push aside or cover the seder plate, fill the second cup of wine (which you won't be drinking for a while), and recite the *ma nishtana*. Traditionally the youngest member of the household asks the *ma nishtana* questions. If it's a one-person seder, that one person asks the questions to Hashem. It is not necessary to have multiple people at the seder to use the question-and-answer format.

After the questions have been asked, the answer begins with a little bit of our history: we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but G-d took us out with a mighty hand. If He hadn't, we and our children would still be slaves. The beginning and the end of the Haggadah have the same theme: we would still be enslaved if not for the redemption of Passover. Now we are no longer subjugated, and we can make ourselves free not just from a physical pharaoh, but from things like addiction and anxiety. We all have things from which we need to free ourselves, so let us look at the story of the Exodus and find meaning for our own circumstances.

During the section of *magid* describing the plagues, many people have the custom to dip a finger into the cup at the words *dam, va'eish, v'simros ashan*, as well as each of the ten plagues and the acronym *detzach adash be'achav*. Others have the custom to pour a bit of wine out of the cup at these words. Then refill the cup and continue with *dayenu*. After that comes a section based on Rabban Gamliel, who says there is a requirement to mention three things – pesach, matza, and *maror* – on the night of the seder. This part of *magid* concludes by saying that in every generation we have to show ourselves as if we personally left Egypt. Even if you're alone for the seder, you should experience it as if you personally are going free, and you must show and feel that you are free. Finally, recite the beginning of Hallel, and then lift the cup of wine and make another blessing, about the uniqueness of the night, concluding with a *hagafen* blessing. Sit for this one, then recline and drink.

Wash your hands again and make the blessing *al netilat yadayim*. Dry your hands and make two blessings: *hamotzi*, and *al achilat matza*. Then eat matza from the top two matzas. You should have at least half a piece of shmura matza. The Zohar calls this the bread of faith. Then make the blessing on *maror*, dip some of your horseradish or

romaine in the *charoset*, and eat. Next comes *korech*, the sandwich of matza, *maror*, and *charoset*, along with the declaration that this sandwich is *zecher lemikdash keHillel* – in remembrance of what Hillel used to do in the Temple. After this it is time for dinner, starting with an egg dipped in salt water. After dinner, eat the *afikomen*. Pour the third cup of wine, say *birkat hamazon*, and drink the wine. Then open the door for Elijah and recite the passage *shfoch chamatcha al hagoyim*, then go back to your seat and recite the rest of Hallel, resuming from where you stopped at the end of *magid*. Finally, drink the fourth cup of wine and conclude the seder with *nirtzah*: singing a few special songs and saying *leshana haba'ah*.

Note for seders that include children: the seder should be focused on entertaining and involving the children as much as possible. One way to do that is to buy fancy little chocolates and give them out throughout the reading of the Haggadah. The adults in the room can also partake.

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