



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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KOSHER FOR PASSOVER ROOMMATE

Zippy Abramson from Nashville, TN
< untitledpr@hotmail.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My city has a small Jewish population, which means it's highly unlikely I'll find a Jewish roommate who also keeps kosher. I think I've figured out how to make the kosher kitchen work (though I'm always open to suggestions from people who have been in my place before), but what do I do about Passover? Is it enough to ask one's roommate to keep her chametz on her side of the kitchen, contained in a receptacle?

Dear Zippy Abramson,

If you must room with a non-observant roommate, the ideal would be to talk to her about the possibility of keeping kosher while in the apartment. You'd be surprised to find how many Jews are actually willing to keep kosher if merely presented with the idea. At the very least the apartment should be kept kosher for the eight days of Passover. It shouldn't be too hard to find a Jewish roommate willing to make this compromise; because most Jews anyway observe Passover in some form or another. (And besides, I wonder: Would you want to room with someone not willing to compromise for one week?)

However, Jewish law does not recommend sharing a kosher kitchen with someone who does not keep kosher. For one, there's the question of the person's knowledge of the kashrut laws. Second, when push comes to shove, how reliable can we assume a person to be if they themselves don't fully subscribe to the idea of keeping kosher? If she's cooked all day for the dinner-party you two are planning for a bunch of friends, and 10 minutes before the guests arrive, she realizes she's cooked all the meat in dairy pans, will she tell you? Or will she think, "Is it really such a big deal if just this once the meat was cooked in dairy pans? I mean, the pans were totally clean, and what Zippy doesn't know won't hurt her."

Such kashrut mistakes are quite common, so you need a kitchen partner whom you know you can rely on 100 per cent of the time to inform you if something's gone wrong.

For further reading, see the book "After the Return" by Rabbi Mordechai Becher and Rabbi Moshe Newman, Feldheim Publishers.

SEEK AND DESTROY

Yehuda (Joel P.) Wiesen, Ph.D. from Newton, MA

< Wiesen@personnelselection.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have a quiz for you: What mitzvah do you do just once a year but do not say shehechianu? Well, one answer is destroying our chametz (leavened food) the day before Pesach. My question is: Why don't we say shehechianu on the mitzvah of destroying our chametz?

Dear Yehuda,

Good question. *Shehechianu* is the blessing we say upon experiencing the joy of reaching a new season in life. For example, we say *shehechianu* when eating a new fruit, putting on a brand-new suit, and when doing a mitzvah that comes around once a year.

So why don't we say *shehechianu* on the once-a-year mitzvah of destroying our *chametz*? Because, although we feel the joy of performing a mitzvah, we are also aware of the fact that we are engaged in an act of destruction.

Another explanation is simply that there is no need to say *shehechianu* at the time of destroying our *chametz*, because we rely on the *shehechianu* blessing that we say at the Pesach Seder.

Sources:

- Ta'amei Haminhagim 487-8

MIDDLE RIDDLE

Neil Reznik from Valley Forge, PA
< nreznik@ccp.cc.pa.us > wrote:

If you have E-Mail and a question, you can submit it to Ask The Rabbi for possible inclusion in a future edition. Just write your question using your E-Mail program, set the subject to "Ask The Rabbi" and send it to info@ohr.org.il. Or use our form at <http://www.ohr.org.il/ask/page/ask.htm>. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.

Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, Rabbi Reuven Subar, Rabbi Avrohom

Lefkowitz, Rabbi Mordechai Becher and other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

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☎ 22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

☎ 972-2-581-0315

☎ 972-2-581-2890

☎ info@ohr.org.il

☎ 38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

☎ 1-212-213-3100

☎ 1-212-213-8717

☎ RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com

☎ 613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

☎ 1-905-886-5730

☎ 1-905-886-6065

☎ Somayach@MSN.com

Dear Rabbi,

Why is the afikomen taken from the middle matzah during the Seder rather than from the top or bottom matzah?

Dear Neil Reznik,

On the first night of Pesach, we say two blessings over the matzahs.

The first blessing, *hamotzi*, is the usual blessing we say when eating bread. Since this blessing is always best to say on a whole "loaf," we therefore put an unbroken matzah on top of the stack.

The second blessing, *asher kideshanu*, is the special blessing we say for the commandment to eat matzah on this night. This blessing applies especially to the broken matzah, because this matzah symbolizes our broken, impoverished state as slaves in Egypt. Since this blessing is second, the broken matzah is second in the stack.

The third matzah is just there to complete the idea of *lechem mishneh*, which means that on Shabbat and festivals we use two whole loaves instead of just one, so it goes on the bottom. According to widespread custom, this bottom matzah is let slip from the hands before the second blessing is said. (According to some, no third matzah is used at all.)

Sources:

- Mishnah Berurah 473:57, 475:2

WHAT FOUR?

Ron Sadoski from Fort Smith, AK <r.sadoski@data-tronics.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Please tell me the meaning of each of the cups that are used during the Seder meal. I know they have a meaning but I cannot find a good answer to satisfy my inquiry.

Dear Ron Sadoski,

The Torah uses four expressions to describe our redemption from Egypt: G-d said to the Jews in Egypt (*Exodus 6:6-8*):

- "I will take you out from under Egypt's burdens — *Vehotzeiti*"
- "And I will save you from their servitude — *Vehitzalti*"
- "And I will redeem you — *Vega'alti*"
- "And I will take you as My nation — *Velakachti*"

We didn't go from a slave nation to being the Chosen People at Mount Sinai overnight. There were different stages of redemption. The above phrases described these different stages. Each cup of wine represents one of these levels.

There's actually a fifth expression of redemption, "*Veheveiti*" (and I will bring you into the Land of Israel). This is seen as a reference to the future redemption, to be announced by Elijah the Prophet, when G-d will gather the Jews from the "four corners of the earth" and return them to their Land. This level of redemption is represented by the fifth cup, called "Elijah's cup," which we pour but we do not drink.

MYSTICAL WAVES

Deb Wiener <Debisabel@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Hi, Rabbi, and Happy Pesach. I'm aware of a cassette Ohr Somayach offers called "The Parting of the Waves: Moses and the Red Sea — The mystical meaning of the splitting of the Red Sea," by Rabbi Mordechai Becher. I'm fascinated and would like to find out about this. Thanks for any help you can give me.

Dear Deb Wiener,

Here's a brief idea from the class. The world contains "form" and "matter." Matter is pure material that is not formed into a shape and has no purpose as yet. Form is the goal, purpose and shape that is given to matter. Water symbolizes matter, because it has no form and takes on the shape of whatever vessel it's placed in. On a symbolic, mystical level, by splitting the waters of the Red Sea, Moshe showed that no matter or material force can stand in the way of the Jewish people's "form" or destiny.

To find out how to order this or other tapes, please check out www.ohr.org.il/a/tapeidx.htm on the Ohr Somayach Interactive Website.

BREWER'S YEAST

Eliyahu Shiffman <sarash1@netvision.net.il> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I like to keep my sale of chametz to a non-Jew on Pesach to a minimum, so we're already timing carefully our purchase of foods that contain chametz that we buy in bulk. My question: We buy dog food in big sacks, and I've checked the ingredients for chametz. The only suspect ingredient is "brewer's yeast." Since I understand that not only can I not eat chametz, but neither can my dog, can you tell me if brewer's yeast is chametz?

Dear Eliyahu Shiffman,

A kashrut expert told me that nearly all brewer's yeast is made from beer production and is *chametz*.

The reason you can't give your dog *chametz* on Pesach is that you are not allowed to own *chametz*, or to derive benefit from it.

ORDER A PLATE

Joshua Tree <Hawkjoe@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Almost every Seder Plate I've ever seen arranges the six items in a circle, in a specific order that seems to be nobody's minhag (custom). I've asked Rabbis and looked at various Haggadahs and nobody seems to have the minhag to arrange them the way all the plates are made, not Sephardim, not Ashkanazim, not Litvaks and not Chassidim. How come?

Dear Joshua Tree,

Funny you should ask. Just the other day I went to a *mikveh* to immerse a new vessel, and I bumped into a friend who was immersing a Seder Plate he had just bought in Jerusalem's Meah Shearim neighborhood. His Seder Plate was engraved in Hebrew letters with the name of each item and its place on the plate. With a wry grin, my friend showed me the message printed on the back of the box that his Seder Plate came in: "Made in China!"

Anyway, there are three major customs regarding the placement of the items on the Seder Plate. My friend's Seder Plate correctly followed one of them, the custom of the Arizal.

Perhaps the plates you've seen were made by artists with an eye more for aesthetics than tradition.

Yiddle Riddle

I have fulfilled a Rabbinical commandment when I was not yet commanded to fulfill a Torah commandment. Therefore, I can no longer fulfill the Torah commandment when I am commanded to fulfill it. How is this possible?

Answer: A minor who became an adult between Pesach and *Pesach Sheini* (a month later, Iyar 14). In such a case in the time when the Holy Temple stood, he is responsible for eating the *Pesach* offering on *Pesach Sheini*. But if he was included in the *Pesach* offering on Pesach itself (and thus fulfilled eating the *Pesach* offering only on a Rabbinical level), he is exempt from fulfilling it again on *Pesach Sheini* (even though it would now be a Torah commandment since he is an adult).

Source:

- Rambam, Laws of Korban Pesach 5:7

Riddle courtesy of Mordechai Perlman

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