

Selected Laws & Customs of the Haggadah

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Bedikat Chametz

- One should perform *bedikat chametz* in the beginning of the night on the fourteenth of Nisan. (*Shulchan Arukh* 431:1)

Mishnah Berurah (431:1) writes that according to the *Shulchan Arukh* one should check after *tzeit ha-kochavim*. The Gr"a (431:1) cites the opinion of the *Ra'avad* who says that one should begin while there is still light outside. Nonetheless, Rabbi Eliyahu Spira in *Eliyahu Rabbah* (431:5) explains that even the Gr"a agrees that one shouldn't begin until *tzeit ha-kochavim*, however, at that time there still is a little bit of light outside.

- The *minhag* is to scatter ten pieces of bread around the house in order to ensure that one finds *chametz*. (*Rama* 432:2; *Mishnah Berurah* 432:10)

Rama (432:2) quotes one opinion who says that the *minhag* to leave pieces of bread around the house is to ensure that one finds *chametz* to prevent a *berakhah* of *biur chametz* being said in vain. However, the *Rama* concludes, that it is not necessary since one's intent in the *berakhah* is to destroy the *chametz* that one finds. *Taz* (432:4) discourages this *minhag* because one may misplace one of the placed pieces. On the other hand, Rabbi Yaakov Reischer in *Chok Yaakov* (432:13) defends the *minhag* and argues that putting out pieces encourages one to do a thorough check and not abandon the job if *chametz* is not found immediately.

Biur Chametz

- The *minhag* is to burn one's *chametz* on Erev Pesach prior to the end of the fifth halakhic hour (*Shulchan Arukh* 434:2; *Rama* 445:1).

Even though the *Shulchan Arukh* (445:1) rules that one may dispose of *chametz* in any fashion, *Rama* writes that the *minhag* is to specifically burn it in order to satisfy all opinions.

Theoretically, one may burn one's *chametz* until halakhic midday (*Mishnah Pesachim* 11b); however, *Mishnah Berurah* (434:12) writes that in order to perform *bitul chametz* after *biur chametz*, one must burn it before the end of the fifth hour. Rabbi Hershel Schachter (*B'ikvei HaTzon* p. 76) writes that since some Rishonim hold that one does not fulfill *biur chametz* by selling one's *chametz*, one should make sure not to burn *chametz* prior to when one's local rabbi sells the *chametz*. Rabbi Mordechai Willig (*Am Mordechai Moadim* pp. 152-3) defends the *minhag* of those who burn the *chametz* in the morning prior to the sale of the rabbi.

Kadesh

- One should drink a *reviyit* of wine for each of the four cups, however, if this is difficult one may drink a majority of a *reviyit*.

The *Shulchan Arukh* (472:9) writes that each of the four cups must hold a *reviyit*. *Mishnah Berurah* (472:30) explains that preferably one should drink the entire *reviyit*, however, if one drank a majority of a *reviyit* one fulfills the obligation. Some noteworthy opinions about the size of a *reviyit* are: Rabbi Mordechai Willig who holds that a *reviyit* is 2.5 fl oz, Rav Ovadyah Yosef who writes that a *reviyit* is 2.7 fl oz, and Rabbi Dovid Feinstein (*Kol Dodi Haggadah*, 5730 edition, p. 4) who writes that a *reviyit* is 3.3 fl oz.

- One must lean while drinking the four cups of wine. If for any of the cups one did not, according to Sephardim, one should drink the cup again. According to Ashkenazim, only for the second cup should one drink the cup again.

One must lean to the left side when drinking the four cups. If one did not lean while drinking any of the four cups, the *Shulchan Arukh* (472:7) writes that one must drink the cup again. *Yalkut Yosef* (472:13) agrees. *Rama*, however, comments that one must only repeat for the first two cups. *Mishnah Berurah* (472:21) notes that in general one should not repeat the first cup because doing so will require one to make another *berakhah*. Preferably, one should have in mind that one may drink in between the first and second cup and then if one drinks the first cup without leaning, one would be able to drink it again without a *berakhah*.

- It is preferable to use red wine for the four cups.

The *Shulchan Arukh* (472:11) holds that it is preferable to use red wine. *Mishnah Berurah* (472:38) explains that the idea of having red wine either reflects the verse “Do not look at wine when it is red” (Mishlei 23:31) or serves as a symbol to remember Pharaoh slaughtering the babies of *Bnei Yisrael* and bathing in their blood. *Rama* (472:11) comments that if the white wine tastes better, one may use that instead. *Mishnah Berurah* (320:56) cites a dispute whether it is permissible to mix red wine into white wine to color it or one should avoid this.

Urchatz

- One should wash one’s hands without a *berakhah*.

Before dipping the *karpas* in the salt-water, the *Shulchan Arukh* (473:6) writes, that one must wash one’s hands without a *berakhah*. The practice of the Gr”a, noted by the *Shaar HaTziyun* (473:70), was to recite a *berakhah* on this washing. Although technically one can talk after washing, Rav Ovadia Yosef in *Chazon Ovadia* (*Pesach* p. 136) writes that one should not talk in between washing and the eating of *karpas*, in order to juxtapose the washing and the *berakhah*.

Karpas

- One should take less than a *k'zayit* of *karpas* and dip it into salt-water. Prior to eating, recite the *berakhah* of *ha’adama* and have in mind to cover the *maror* as well. One does not have to lean for *karpas*.

Rashbam (*Pesachim* 114b s.v. *pehshita*), writes that the *ha’adama* on *karpas* exempts the *maror*. This is why the *Tur* (473:6) writes that according to Rashbam one should not recite *borei nefashot* after *karpas* even if one did in fact eat a *k'zayit*. Tosafot (*Pesachim* 115a s.v. *hadar*), however, writes that *maror* is exempted by the *hamotzei* on the matzah. The *Tur* explains that according to Tosafot, one would recite *borei nefashot* if one ate a *k'zayit*. To avoid this dispute, Maharil (*Responsa* #25) writes that one should eat less than a *k'zayit* of *karpas*. The *Shulchan*

Arukh (473:6) follows the Maharil. Rav Hershel Schachter (“[Inyonei Pesach 4](#)”, min 54-5) says that if a person is very hungry one may continue to eat *karpas* in a way that there’s no mental break between the *karpas* and *maror*, avoiding the dispute about reciting *borei nefashot*.

Yachatz

- The head of the household breaks the middle matzah, leaving the bigger piece for *afikoman*.

The *Shulchan Arukh* (473:6) writes that after *karpas* the head of household breaks the middle matzah into two parts. Some Rishonim, including the *Smag* (*Asin* #41), hold that one should break the top matzah based on the rule of *ein ma’aviren al ha-mitzvot* - not passing over a ready mitzvah. However, Rosh (Pesachim 10:30) and *Tur* (673:6) argue that one should break the middle matzah in order that the top one remains whole for the *berakhah* of *hamotzei*. The *Shulchan Arukh* (473:6) agrees with Rosh. He adds that the larger part should be saved for use as the *afikoman*, while the smaller part is placed in between the other two matzot. It is noteworthy to include the opinion of Rambam (*Hilkhot Chametz U-Matzah* 8:6) who holds that one only needs two matzot with the bottom one being broken.

Maggid

Mah Nishtanah

- There is a positive mitzvah from the Torah to explain the story of the Jewish people leaving Egypt on Pesach night. (Rambam, *Sefer Ha-Mitzvot Mitzvot Aseh* 157)

Rambam (*Hilkhot Chametz U-Matzah* 7:1-2) explains that reading the Haggadah is a positive commandment from the Torah of telling the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. The central part of the mitzvah, continues Rambam, is for a father to tell his or her children the story. If there are no children present there still exists a mitzvah upon every Jew to tell the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. *Rama* (473:6) adds that is permitted to read the Haggadah in one’s native tongue so that one understands what is being read.

- Prior to *Mah Nishtanah*, some say that one should remove the Seder Plate from one end of the table to the other. However, the common *minhag* is not to remove the Seder Plate. (*Shulchan Arukh* 473:6; *Be’ir Hei-tev* 473:22)

The *Shulchan Arukh* (473:6) writes that after we break the middle matzah, we remove it from the table in order to perplex the children to ask the meaning behind this. *Mishnah Berurah* (473:66) explains that if the children ask why we remove the matzot, the father should answer that we remove it to show that we can’t eat yet because we still have to tell the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. The *Be’ir Hei-tev* 473:22 writes that nowadays the common practice is not to remove the Seder Plate because the children know that the food on the Seder Plate is for show and not to be eaten.

Avadim Hayinu

- The matzot should be exposed for the duration of the Maggid, which is considered the primary recital of the Haggadah. (*Shulchan Arukh* 473:7)

The Gemara (Pesachim 115b) explains that the matzah is called *lechem oni* since it is bread that we speak about, *onin alav*, during the Seder. Accordingly, *Maharil* (cited by *Beit Yosef*

473:7) writes that we leave the matzah exposed for the recital of the Haggadah since it should be present as we speak about *Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim*.

Vehi She'amdah

- During *Vehi She'amdah* and *Lefikakh*, one should raise the cup of wine and cover the matzot. (*Shulchan Arukh* 473:7)

The *Tur* (473:7) writes that the Ashkenazic *minhag* is to raise the cup of wine at *Lefikakh* so Hallel can be said over a cup of wine. The *Shulchan Arukh* (473:7) agrees. *Shl"ah* (Pesachim, ch. "Ner Mitzvah" n. 41) writes that one should raise the cup of wine while saying *Vehi She'amdah* because *Vehi She'amdah* is a praise to Hashem for saving us time and again. This is cited by *Mishnah Berurah* (473:73). Rabbi Yaakov Landau in the *Agur* (cited by the Beit Yosef 473:7) writes that while the cup is raised, the matzot should be covered to not "embarrass" the matzah that it is being consumed only after the wine is drunk (See *Mishnah Berurah* 271:41).

Makkot

- For each word of *dam*, *aish*, *ve-timrot ashan*, the ten plagues, and its corresponding acronym, the custom is take a drop of wine out of the cup. (Rama 473:7)

Rabbi Moshe Isserles in *Darkhei Moshe* (473:18) explains that the custom to remove a drop of wine for each of the *makkot* and its related phrases kabbalistically represents the vengeance Hashem took against Egypt. For this reason, he writes that one should use the pointer finger, *etzbah*, in accordance with the verse *etzbah Elokim hiy* (Shemot 8:15). The *Shaar HaTziyun* (473:81) writes that obviously if a person is fastidious and will be disgusted to drink the rest of the cup of wine, and will have to spill it out, one should simply pour from the cup for each *makkah* and not use his finger to minimize a waste of wine. Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* p. 152), however, cites the opinion of the Rabbi Chaim Benveniste in *Pesach Me'ubin* (n. 261) who writes that under all circumstances, one should pour out the remaining wine, for after all the *makkot* were said over this wine.

Pesach Zeh

- While saying "*Pesach Zeh*" one should not pick up the shank bone. (*Mishnah Berurah* 473:72)

The Gemara (Pesachim 116b) writes that when one reaches *matzah zeh* one should raise the matzah, when one reaches *maror zeh* one should raise the *maror*, but when one reaches *pesach zeh* one should not raise the cooked meat set aside to represent the Pesach, to prevent the impression that one has made that animal a *korban* outside the *Beit Ha-Mikdash*. Rashbam (s.v. *tzarikh le-hagbihah*) writes that the reason we raise the matzah is in order to display it and make the mitzvah more dear to those present at the Seder. The *Tur* and the *Shulchan Arukh* (473:7) codify this as halakhah.

Rachtzah

- One should wash one's hands with a *berakhah* and one should not talk in between washing and eating the matzah.

The *Shulchan Arukh* (475:1) writes that even though we wash before *karpas*, we must wash again before eating matzah and make a *berakhah*. *Mishnah Berurah* (475:1) explains that we

wash again because it is likely that our hands have touched something dirty over the course of the Seder. The *Bi'ur Halakhah* (475 s.v. *yitol yadav*) explains that if one were to have specific *kavanah* or intent to keep his hands clean, then he would wash at Rachtzah without a *berakhah*. The *Bi'ur Halakhah* concludes that one who knows that his hands are clean should make sure to make his hands *tameh* or impure so that one can recite the *berakhah*. The *Chatam Sofer* (cited by *Mikraeh Kodesh* p. 283 n. 5) had a *minhag* to have others wash his hands for him to symbolize freedom.

Motzei Matzah

- The head of the household takes the three matzot including the previously broken one which sits between the two whole ones. While holding all three matzot, one should recite *hamotzei* and after placing the bottom matzah down, one should recite *al akhilat matzah*. (*Shulchan Arukh* 475:1, *Mishnah Berurah* 475:2)

Mishnah Berurah (475:2) explains that the reason we take three matzot for *hamotzei* is because we are trying to satisfy two different approaches. The two whole matzot serve as *lechem mishnah*, the requirement of having two whole loaves of bread on Shabbat or Yom Tov. The third matzah, or the broken piece of matzah, represents the poor man who does not have a complete piece of matzah. In developing this further, the *Shulchan Arukh HaRav* (475:4-5) explains that for *al akhilat matzah* one should place the bottom matzah down since *al akhilat matzah* applies to the top matzah or the middle broken piece.

- The head of the household should break off a *k'zayit* from the top matzah and a *k'zayit* from the middle matzah and eat them. (*Shulchan Arukh* 475:1)

Mishnah Berurah (475:9) explains that one needs to eat a *k'zayit* from both the whole matzah as well as the broken one because some argue that the *berakhah* of *al akhilat matzah* applies to each of these matzot. Accordingly, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Halichot Shlomo* ch. 9, n. 40) writes that if the three matzot that the head of the household is using does not suffice for everyone to have two *kezaytim*, each person should just have a piece from the top matzah and then supplement it by eating other available matzah up to the necessary *k'zayit*. He explained that according to *Mishnah Berurah*, if one isn't eating from the head of the household's matzot, there exists no doubt as to which matzah the *berakhah* of *al akhilat matzah* applies.

Alternatively, Rav Hershel Schachter (*Eretz HaTzvi* p. 40-1) explains that the reason to require two *kezaytim* of matzah is to satisfy a) the mitzvah of matzah, b) the mitzvah of *seudat yom tov*.

Maror

- At this point, one should eat a *k'zayit* of *maror* after dipping it in *charoset*. One should wipe off the *charoset* in order not to totally mitigate the bitter taste of the *maror*. (*Shulchan Arukh* 475:1).

Mishnah Berurah (475:13) writes that some dip the *maror* completely in *charoset*, while others only dip it in partially.

- One does not lean while eating the *maror* because the *maror* serves to commemorate the servitude, while leaning is a symbol of freedom.

Magen Avraham (475:6) writes that if one did indeed lean while eating *maror* one nonetheless fulfills his obligation. Rabbi Shmuel Loew in *Machatzit Ha-Shekel* finds support for this from the fact that Hillel must have leaned while eating *maror* since he ate it together with the matzah.

However, *Mishnah Berurah* (475:14) writes that if one so desires one may lean while eating the *maror*. Rabbi Hezekiah Silva in *Pri Chadash* (475:1) defends this approach by arguing that leaning is not a contradiction to slavery, for after all even the matzah and the first two cups of wine serve as partial symbols of slavery and are nevertheless leaned for.

Korekh

- One should take a *k'zayit* of matzah and a *k'zayit* of *maror*, dip it into the *charoset*, and eat them together.

The *Shulchan Arukh* (475:1) writes that one should take a piece of the bottom matzah and a piece of *maror*, and dip them into the *charoset*. *Mishnah Berurah* (475:16) writes that the obligation commemorates the practice of Hillel who ate the matzah and *maror* together. *Mishnah Berurah* (475:16), *Kaf HaChaim* (475:30), and *Chazon Ovadia* (1:42) all write that one should eat a *k'zayit* of matzah and a *k'zayit* of *maror* in the *korekh*.

Rambam (*Hilkhos Chametz U-Matzah* 8:8) and Rosh (Pesachim 10:27) write that one should dip the *korekh* into *charoset*. *Ravyah* (cited by *Tur* 475:1) argues that one should not dip for *korekh*, since we only dip twice, namely for *karpas* and *maror*, as mentioned in the *Mah Nishtanah*. *Shulchan Arukh* (475:1) follows Rambam as does *Mishnah Berurah* (475:19). However, *Mishnah Berurah* (ibid.) notes that those who have the practice not to dip the *korekh* into *charoset* should continue their practice.

- One should try to keep the conversation related to the mitzvot themselves. (*Shulchan Arukh* 475:1)

Rabbi Avraham ben Natan in *Sefer HaManhig* (*Hilkhos Pesach* 84, cited by the *Tur*) writes that since the *berakhot* of *al akhilat matzah* and *al akhilat maror* cover the *korekh* as well, one should not speak about topics unrelated to the matzah or *maror* between *motzei matzah* and *korekh*. *Shulchan Arukh* (475:1) codifies this as halakhah. Rav Sobolofsky (Shiur entitled "[Brocha on Korech](#)") explains that the reason we do not recite a *berakhah* on *korekh* is because its matzah and *maror* have already been covered through previous *berakhot*. Nonetheless, *Mishnah Berurah* (475:24) and *Yalkut Yosef* (p. 405) agree that if one did in fact speak about unrelated topics, a *berakhah* would not be required.

- Most have the practice to recite "*zekher le-mikdash ke-hillel*" before eating *korekh*. The *Shulchan Arukh* (475:1) says that one should say "*zekher le-mikdash ke-hillel*" before eating *korekh*. *Bi'ur Halakhah* (s.v. *viomer*) questions this practice based on the *Shulchan Arukh*'s statement that one shouldn't talk about unrelated things, and recommends saying "*zekher le-mikdash ke-hillel*" after the eating. Rav Yosef Ovadia (*Yechaveh Da'at* 1:19) defends the original practice to recite "*zekher le-mikdash ke-hillel*". *Piskei Teshuvot* (475:6) says that even Ashkenazim have the *minhag* to say it. Rav Soloveitchik (cited by *Harerei Kedem* 2:93) explains that in truth *korekh* isn't part of the obligations for matzah and *maror*; it is just an independent expression of remembering the Temple and there would then be no problem of a break. However, Rabbi Genack (cited by Rabbi Howard Jachter in an article entitled "[Zekher Le-mikdash Ke-hillel](#)") reports that Rav Soloveitchik would recite it after he completed *korekh*.

- One should lean for *korekh*.

The *Shulchan Arukh* (475:1) holds that one should lean for *korekh* since it contains matzah which is eaten while leaning. *Kaf HaChaim* (475:36) adds that if one forgot to lean, and he finds it difficult to eat *korekh* again, one may be lenient.

Shulchan Orekh

- There is a custom to eat an egg at the beginning of the meal following *korekh*.

Rama (476:2) mentions this custom as a symbol of our mourning in two ways: a) The first night of Pesach falls out on the same night of the week as Tisha B'av and b) We mourn over the fact that nowadays we can't bring the *Korban Pesach*. *Mishnah Berurah* (476:11) quotes the Gr"a (*Maaseh Rav* 187) that the egg has nothing to do with mourning but rather serves to remember the *Korban Chagigah* which was brought along with the *Korban Pesach*. *Yalkut Yosef* (English Edition pg. 262) writes that many Sephardic Jews have the custom to eat the egg after Kiddush. *Kaf HaChaim* (476:26) points out that based on the Gr"a, some have *minhag* to say "zekher le-korban chagigah". *Mishnah Berurah* (476:13) based on *Chayei Adam* (130:9) warns that since this is just a custom and not an obligation, one should be careful not to be fully satiated so one can eat the *afikoman*.

- Though it isn't obligatory, one who leans during the entire meal is praiseworthy.

Rama (472:7) based on Rambam (*Hilkhos Chametz U-Matzah* 7:8) writes that ideally one should lean for the whole meal. *Chazon Ovadia* (v. 2 p. 103) and *Mishnah Berurah* (472:23) write that it is praiseworthy to lean during *Shulchan Orekh*, but there is no obligation to do so. *Chazon Ish* (recorded by *Orchos Rabbeinu* v. 2 p. 59) and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Halichos Shlomo* ch. 9, n. 135) did not lean for *Shulchan Orekh*.

Tzafun

- Everyone should eat a *k'zayit* from the *afikoman* which was hidden away earlier in the Seder. The *afikoman* should be eaten while leaning. (*Shulchan Arukh* 477:1)

Mishnah Berurah (477:1) writes that it is preferable to eat two *kezaytim*, one symbolizing the *Korban Pesach* and the other for the matzah eaten with the *Korban Pesach*. *Mishnah Berurah* (477:4) explains that after the fact if one ate the *afikoman* without leaning and it is difficult to eat it again, one doesn't have to eat it again.

- The *afikoman* should be eaten before *chatzot* - halakhic midnight. (*Shulchan Arukh* 477:1)

Bi'ur Halakhah (477:1 s.v. *veyehe*) writes that there is a major dispute in the Rishonim whether the halakhah follows Rabbi Akiva who holds that one may eat the *afikoman* all night or Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah who says that one may only eat the *afikoman* until *chatzot*. Additionally, there is a third approach amongst the *Rishonim* that holds even according to Rabbi Akiva it is preferable to eat the *afikoman* before *chatzot*. For this reason, the *Shulchan Arukh* (477:1) writes that one should be careful to eat it before *chatzot*. In any event, *Mishnah Berurah* (477:6) notes that if one didn't eat it before *chatzot*, one should still eat it afterwards.

Barekh

- Before *Birkhat HaMazon*, one should fill the third cup of wine, and say *Birkhat HaMazon* over it. After *Birkhat HaMazon*, one should recite *ha-gefen* and drink while leaning. (*Shulchan Arukh* 479:1)

Chazon Ovadia (*Haggadah Shel Pesach* p. 99) writes that one should recite *Birkhat HaMazon* while holding the cup of wine. Presumably, this is based on the *Shulchan Arukh* (183:4) which states that when making *Birkhat HaMazon* over a cup of wine one should raise the cup a *tefach*.

Hallel

- The fourth cup is filled after *Birkhat HaMazon* (*Kitzur Shulchan Arukh* 119:9). One should drink the fourth cup after Hallel.

According to the *Shulchan Arukh* (480:1), one does not say a *berakhah rishonah* on the fourth cup. *Rama* points out that the *minhag* of Ashkenazim is to make a *berakhah rishonah* on all of the four cups. However, a *berakhah achronah* is made only on the last cup. *Mishnah Berurah* (474:1-4) explains that the reasoning of *Rama* reflects the *Rama's* own view that saying Maggid serves as an interruption to the *berakhah rishonah*, or his view that each cup serves as its own mitzvah and consequently requires its own *berakhah*. The *Shulchan Arukh*, on the other hand, maintains that although each cup is its own mitzvah, because one knows when making the *berakhah* on the first cup that there will be a second cup, no *berakhah* is necessary on the second cup. However, even according to the *Shulchan Arukh*, one makes a *berakhah* on the third cup because *Birkhat HaMazon* is an interruption between the *berakhah* on the first cup and the drinking of the third cup.