

A Pesach Primer

Rabbi Avi Baumol
Office of the Chief Rabbi of Poland

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Introduction

Our sages gave four names to the holiday:

1. Pesach—the most common name based on the Torah’s describing the events of the night of the Exodus as well as the name of the sacrificed offered that night.
2. Chag Hamatzot (festival of Matza)—based on the most visible symbol of the holiday and the command to eat matzas for the duration of the holiday.
3. Chag Ha’aviv (festival of Spring)—the Torah mentions that the exodus takes place ‘today...in the month of the spring’, intending that the festival always be celebrated during the springtime, perhaps as a symbol of rebirth and rejuvenation.
4. Zman Cheruteinu (time of our freedom)—The rabbis associated a most significant title to this holiday, that of freedom. At the most basic level the story is about slaves being liberated and being able to take their own path, chart their own journey.

Each title represents another dimension of this multi-faceted festival. Is it a story about a nation of slaves becoming freed? Is it a story of a people once connected to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, called Israel, returning to their identity, and their willingness to sacrifice for the God of their forefathers? Is it a battle between God and Pharaoh? Or perhaps Moses and Egypt? Is it the end of a long and arduous epic or the beginning of a challenging yet ultimately triumphant journey? Finally, is the Exodus story about Egypt or perhaps it is really about a return to the Promised Land, to Israel?

The answer, of course, is that all of these are true, and that accounts for the multiple names, multiple themes and many different customs and traditions. As we prepare physically for the upcoming holiday, we must also prepare ourselves mentally and spiritually as this festival is truly the guiding light for many of the holidays which follow. Below is a primer on mainly the laws of Pesach as well as some ideas about the philosophy behind the festival. We begin with two essays about the holiday's importance and then engage in the halacha—the daily obligations and responsibilities concerning this festival.

The Exodus Story: A World of our Own

Exodus is the book of individuals. Contrary to what everyone says about how it is the story of a people, a nation, it is really teaching us about individuals—with a twist.

Genesis is about creation, destruction, saving the world because of one person, creation again, near destruction again, and saving the world again due to one individual. That individual, Abraham creates a concentric circle to which God now sees to worlds. The world He created, and the one created by Abraham. That mini-world called the Hebrews, Israelites, Jews, grows and goes through a process of separation and chosen-ness until we reach Jacob and his children.

In a certain sense the book is about God. Creating a world, destroying it, until He finds the right guy to focus on, until He creates a mini-world which will ultimately serve as the lifeline for the larger concentric circle called the world.

God tests the forefathers, and mothers, He appears to them, comforts them, and ultimately guides them in His land promised to them and watches the grow into a clan.

At the end of Genesis the transition begins. The story veers away from God and His servant, to friction and fratricide in the chosen people. This leads to exile, and although Joseph exhibits the old Genesis type of personality, the brothers have taken on a different role, an Exodus persona.

Which leads us to Exodus. It is a book not about God and how He chose His world, but about man and woman and how they destroy, create, ruin, or save their world.

For this reason, it is significant that it starts with several stories about individuals. First there is a mass of 'the children of Israel' which grows uncomfortably to Pharaoh's and our own eyes. This (certainly according to the Netziv) might be a reference to the beginning of the downfall of these great individuals as they lose their identity and connection to the forefathers.

Right away Pharaoh wants to get rid of the 'nation of Israel'.

But if there is a mass which leads itself towards disaster, there are great individuals who pave the way for the ultimate savior—Moshe to act as the representative of God and bring on the redemption.

It starts with the midwives. Who were they? Big debate. Were they Hebrews? Egyptians? The language sounds like Hebrews, the story sounds like Egyptians. I think they were in fact both! That Shifra and Puah were Yocheved and Miriam the Midrash says, but it does not answer the questions of how Pharaoh appointed them, spoke to them, conspired with them, and did not kill them upon learning of their defiance.

What if they were Hebrews who infiltrated into the Egyptian midwifery system, knowing that there would be a time when it would be ugly for the Hebrews. They assumed Egyptian names and identities, and rose in the ranks of Midwifery. When Pharaoh came to conspire, he chose the two who were Egyptian, but they were also Hebrew themselves. The perfect plan and great irony, fitting in with the rest of the irony of the redeemer growing up in the house of Pharaoh, Pharaoh chooses the parent and sister of the redeemer to destroy him, but they give him life.

We see individuals acting on behalf of righteousness and honor and mercy and saving the children. God, a passive presence, keeps them alive and rewards them with houses (of Priesthood and Levites).

It is quite appropriate for this story to preface the beginning of chapter two, a marriage in the house of Levi. The Midrash is correct in teaching us that Miriam championed the cause and persuaded her parents not to destroy the people but to continue to give life (albeit half) to the Hebrews. Her parents listened to her and as a result, participated in creating the redeemer.

Once again, the Torah makes mention of individuals' roles in the story, without God. They send Moshe down the Nile in a Teiva not dissimilar to Noah's. The difference is that in our story the same people who were the cause of the demise are the initiators of the process of the redemption. In Genesis that is not the case. There, God is the one who sees the wickedness and plans to destroy it, then He commands Noah to build the Teiva and put it and himself in the waters.

In Exodus, Man (or really woman) is the champion of his own destiny. It is a story of how individuals can make a difference in the lives of millions. It is a statement that when diluting your distinct personality the consequences are dire, but when shining and sacrificing God rewards you and you affect others.

There is Bat Paro, and her kindness, there is also Paro himself who has pity on the boy. All these stories introduce us to the theme of the sefer, Man controls his destiny, to his detriment, or to his favor. God allows for man to decide the terms of His future. No more tests, just living in a world thrust upon you that you yourself may have created.

In a word, Genesis has God creating worlds for Himself and for man. Exodus has Man creating worlds for himself and for God.

Pesach: A National, Historical, and Experiential Holiday

Pesach is a Jewish holiday. This statement must be act as a preface to any discussion on festivals and holy days because we should understand that God created the world for all humanity. Indeed, part of Shabbat is realizing that we are connected with the entire world in acknowledging God as the supreme creator and Him having rested on that day.

We might assume that while Shabbat contains a motif of universality, the Moadim—the Jewish festivals—are solely nationalistic. Yet we find that Sukkot has many universal allusions. Seventy animals are sacrificed equal to the seventy nations, the Bet Hamikdash was open for all to see, and the eschatological vision is to see the world rejoice in Jerusalem during the Sukkot holiday. This being said, Pesach, and Shavuot are on the other extreme, they represent a wholly Jewish experience.

The story of Exodus is the story of the Jew. Estranged, ostracized, embittered, enslaved, tortured, killed, and yet managing to survive. It is a sad history, stemming from a sad experience of Avdut עבדים היינו לפרעה מצרים— Rav Soloveitchik sees this first sentence as relating to many different experiences of the Jew in his lowly state:

First and foremost is the notion of slavery. The concept of being a slavery can and should be seen in a vacuum-- once a slave there is no need to analyze the master, the circumstances, or the surroundings. To the slave what is the difference who what or where? In this case the psychological toll on the slave is deafening.

The Rav talked about slaves as not possessing 'I awareness' –the dumbness of the slave. A slave does not suffer, he feels pain, but suffering is an experience reserved for those with a spiritual reality, and when he loses his existential dignity or security he suffers. A slave is without voice. כי אתא משה אתא קול, when Moshe arrived on the scene, a voice appeared. Until Moshe they did not peep, they did not need freedom, dignity or a painless existence, Moshe brought a voice ויאנחו בו"י ויצעקו ותעל שועתם אל אלהים (they groaned and called out to God, their voice went up to the heavens)

Understanding this aspect of mind-numbing slavery is essential for the experience of our people. Before we begin to recite two words it is our obligation to analyze and appreciate the deafening dumbness of slavery, and the philosophical black hole it represents.

But our Pesach story moves on. The concept of a slave was not enough, in addition there was פרעה. The Egyptian Pharaoh who first 'forgot' the old stories of the benevolent Joseph אשר לא ידע את יוסף (who did not know Joseph), he was the same one who dealt 'wisely' with the Israelites הבה נתחכמה לו פן ירבה, and the same one who first called them a nation—הנה עם בני רב ועצום (behold the nations of Israel...) realizing their threat before there existed one.

The next Pharaoh in line was ready to fight with God, and he had no mercy in dealing with the Israelites--גם תבן לא נתן (also straw would not be given to them). This one had audacity to say I don't know this God and even if I did I would not send out His children.....לא ידעתי את ה וגם את בני ישראל לא אשלח (I don't know this God and I will not send out the Israelites). This same Pharaoh was the one whom Chazal say considered himself a deity—what type of person are you to consider yourself a God? This person was the master of their slavery. עבדים היינו לפרעה (we were slaves to Pharaoh)

“במצרים” (In Egypt)

We were slaves, not only slaves but to פרעה, and not only to him, our slavery took place in מצרים—in Egypt. What is Egypt? Two points to note:

1) Its proximity to home. For over 200 years slaves just hours away from their homeland, the longing, the palpable taste of home, and yet they were strangers. Even if they were not forced to labor, the experience of wandering, being estranged, unwanted, and to boot knowing that home, comfort, safety is a few miles away. This adds to the sadness of the story.

2) Worse, the extent to which they were able to assimilate, to feel at home *in Egypt* was assimilation! There was no fear of God in Egypt. פרעה outright denied this Jewish God, what type of effect did that have on the Israelites immersed in Egyptian culture? Any Israelite who rose in the ranks of Egyptian social culture fell in Jewish spirit. There was no place to go. There was nothing to do.

פסח=קרבן פסח Pesach means the Pesach sacrifice

Against this dismal backdrop comes a message of redemption which manifests itself in the name and symbolism of the Korban Pesach. Right in the

middle of the plagues we receive a list of commandments concerning the offering and eating of a Paschal Lamb--. הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם. (this month is for you).

During the plagues the Israelites were passive in the process of redemption. With the commandment of Korban Pesach the tides changed, and the time to act arrived. Redemption began in Egypt with the taking of the lamb and with the following of a set of rules and regulations which aim to reflect the distinctiveness of the people. To separate, elevate, to remove the 'slave consciousness' from within them, and to begin their journey towards intellectual and emotional freedom. The mental exodus takes place before the physical one. The next day, seeing the first born of Pharaoh himself brought down, they began their triumphant march out of the grip of Pharaoh, out of the lion's den.

Finally, with their voice, their elevated feelings of independence, their witnessing the demise of Pharaoh and all he represented, and their journey out of the chains of Egyptian slavery, Benei Yisrael, led by Moshe their prophet begin their journey home. The problem is that while they have left Egypt, we are not entirely sure if Egypt has departed from them. The fear of 'mitzrayim' still rings in their minds, the horror of the past, haunting them as they run away, it leads them to dialectical feelings: safety and security with Moshe and God, and panic and irrational fear when they hear of reports that Egypt and Pharaoh are catching up to them.

The final stage is kriyat Yam Suf, when the feeling of nervousness subsides and a fully empowered and spiritual nation sings a song to God. This song represents the culmination of the entire experience, as they channel their energy not to frivolity and self-centeredness, but to praising God and preparing for the next stage in their lives. Onwards to Matan Torah and Eretz Yisrael as the journey will finally come to a close and a prophecy five hundred years old will finally come to fruition.

Pesach is the beginning of our journey; it continues with at Matan Torah and returning to Israel. On Pesach, the spring of our lives we celebrate a birth of a nation but not without experiencing the muteness of the slave, the suffering of a people in motion and the sense of holding on to the thread of Judaism in an unwanted land, amongst strangers.

Laws of Chametz

What does Chametz represent?

While one of the names of Pesach is certainly 'chag hamatzot' (the festival of Matza), the mitzvot in the Torah related to chametz appear four times more than matza! It is interesting that in addition to there being a positive

commandment, to eat something special, there is also a negative commandment to refrain from eating something else. While the Torah tells us the symbolism of the Matza it does not share with us the reason for the prohibition of eating 'chametz'. The Torah chooses to reveal the symbolic nature of some of the mitzvot while others it leaves for our interpretation. As a result many suggestions have been offered as to the meaning of chametz—arrogance, wealth, sin, missed opportunity—to name a few.

Perhaps analyzing two verses can help to explicate our mystery of the chametz.

וַיֵּשֶׂא הָעָם אֶת-בְּצֻקוֹ טָרֵם יִחְמֵז מִשְׁאֲרֵתָם צָרְרַת בְּשִׂמְלֹתָם עַל-שִׂכְמָם: וַיֹּאֲפוּ אֶת-הַבֶּצֶק אֲשֶׁר הוֹצִיאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם עֵגֶת מִצּוֹת כִּי לֹא חָמֵז כִּי-גִרְשׁוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם וְלֹא יָכֻלוּ לְהִתְמַהֵמֵה וְגַם-צָדָה לֹא-עָשׂוּ לָהֶם:

So, the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls wrapped in their cloaks upon their shoulders...And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had taken out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, since they had been driven out of Egypt and could not delay; nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.
(Exodus 12:34,39)

In the evenings the dough was customarily made and left to rise through the night so that in the morning bread could be baked. But the Exodus occurred in a quickened state such that early in the morning the Israelites had to leave Egypt without having their dough rise. Instead, they took the unleavened dough with them in their clothing and began their hurried journey only to make matzas on the way instead of bread. This state of 'hurriedness' is part of the Pesach story such that it explains the commemoration of both the inability to properly eat bread and the necessity of having to eat matza. Therefore 'chametz' is prohibited and matza obligated.

This is one of the dichotomies of Pesach, reflecting a certain dialectic in the Passover story—the long, drawn out slavery, and then the quick miraculous events of the Exodus culminating with the final plague of the first born; the command to spend the whole night in the house, celebrating leaving Egypt even while still in the land, yet the rushed final moments not allowing the dough to rise. All of this is meant to give us pause as we celebrate the night of Pesach and try to recreate both of these contradictory motifs.

Chametz, then, is that grain which went through a process of leavening, it is the rejection of the 'hurried motif', an expression of lavishness, of 'having all the time in the world', of tranquility. It is the opposite of matza, it is prohibited more times than matza and its punishment is quite severe.

What Actually *is* Chametz?

As to the definition of Chametz, Rabbi Melamed in his remarkable work on Halacha called *Peninei Halacha* presents the explanation in the following way:

The *hametz* that is prohibited by the Torah on Pesach is any one of the five species of cereal grains that came into contact with water and fermented. The five species are wheat (*hitta*), barley (*se'ora*), oats (*shibolet shu'al*), rye (*shifon*), and spelt (*kusmin*). These species are used to make bread, the staple food of mankind. The Sages ordained a special blessing to be recited before eating bread – “Who brings forth bread from the earth” (“*ha-motzi lehem min ha-aretz*”). After eating bread, the Torah commanded us to recite *Birkat Ha-mazon*. So that bread will be tasty and easy to digest, its dough is fermented and made to rise.

There are two types of leaven products: *hametz* and *se'or*. Both are produced by mixing flour and water. *Hametz* is the regular leavening of dough to bake bread and cakes. The fermentation is accomplished by leaving the dough at rest without handling it. If one wants the leavening to be faster and of higher quality, one mixes *se'or* (sourdough) into the dough. *Se'or* is the second type of leavening. It is produced by leaving *hametz* for a long time, so that it continues to effervesce and ferment, until it tastes so sour that people cannot eat it. As noted, the purpose of *se'or* is to hasten and improve the quality of the leavening process of various types of dough, for the preparation of breads and cakes. More specifically, *hametz* is intended for eating while *se'or* is a leavening agent in preparing *hametz* foods. The Torah prohibited both, and the law is the same regarding both. One who leaves a *kezayit* of either of them in his possession during Pesach violates *bal yera'eh* and *bal yimatzei* (*Beitza* 7b).

But if flour of the five cereal grains is mixed with water, kneaded rapidly, and put it into an oven immediately, then the dough will not have enough time to rise. This is the matza that we are commanded to eat on the first night of Pesach, as a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt, as is written, “And the people picked up their dough before it fermented” (Shemot 12:34). Thus, specifically those species of grain that may become *hametz* are the species from which one makes matza for the mitzva (*Pesachim* 35a)¹.

From the Torah it is only these five grains which comprise chametz and only when mixed with water. Rice and millet, buckwheat, soy, Humus and many other types of flour produced today are not biblically chametz, however some of them are prohibited from the rabbis as we will learn.

Additionally, when referring to the biblical chametz it must refer to food which is edible or if inedible by human standards, can still help with the leavening

¹ (<https://ph.yhb.org.il/en/04-02-03/>)

process. Foods that lost their stature and are inedible even to a dog are not considered chametz.

An important practical application of this law is the question of medicine on Pesach. Obviously, anyone in a life and death situation it is a mitzvah for them to eat chametz, however if the case is more mild, then the laws of chametz apply.

The general rule is that any medicine that has a bad, bitter taste we assume is not worthy of being eaten even by a dog and therefore is permitted on Pesach. If it tastes good, it is a sign that they coated the medicine with some glaze which might include chametz. As a result, for those types of medicine, syrups, lozenges, chewable pills, one must check the ingredients to make sure there is no chametz. If one has a doubt as to the nature of the good-tasting medicine one should be strict and not use it on Pesach. If one has a doubt about the foul-tasting or neutral-tasting medicine one may take it on Pesach.

With regard to cosmetics, they are the subject of much debate. There are two categories worthy of considering: those which are absorbed into the skin and those which are ingested through the mouth. When creams and oils are absorbed into the skin, some rabbis are concerned that it is a form of eating and therefore are strict that no lotions, inks, creams, shampoos, ointments and stick deodorant be used unless kosher for Pesach. However, a major group of rabbis believe that even if these products do have traces of chametz they are certainly inedible to a dog and therefore all are permitted.

Rabbi David Brofsky writes² that “many are accustomed not to use liquid deodorants, hairsprays, perfumes, colognes, and shaving lotions that contain denatured alcohol (which appears in the ingredients as “alcohol,” or “SD” [special denatured], or “SDA” [special denatured alcohol]). The use of lipsticks, mouthwashes, and toothpastes that are not under Pesach supervision is also subject to debate, and some refrain from using them as well”.

Kitniyot

Because of the severity of the mitzvah of chametz, in certain communities throughout history stringencies have been accepted in order to remove any concern of sinning with chametz. One such stringency in the Ashkenaz world dating back a thousand years is the minhag not to eat kitniyot. Originating in France and then spreading to Germany and eventually Poland and Russia, the custom was to refrain from eating seeds, which bare a resemblance to flour--corn, rice, lentils, peas, millet, buckwheat, chickpeas, mustard, various beans, and other seeds. The concern was that the seeds looked like grains and they would be mixed up in people’s minds, or that some legumes would be made

² <https://www.etzion.org.il/en/laws-pesach-medicines-and-cosmetics>

into breads and would confuse the public. The custom developed to stay away from these kitniyot for the duration of the holiday.

Practically it means not eating rice, corn, mustard and beans during Pesach, or any products which contain those types of ingredients. Every Kashrut organization will have a list of products which contain kitniyot and those should be refrained from eating in Ashkenaz circles. There is a tendency to add more and more products such as soy, and quinoa and other new grain-looking items, however many are lenient saying only those seeds and legumes which were originally extant at the time of the decree are prohibited. Therefore, there is room to be lenient with regard to canola oil, soy products, quinoa, lecithin often found in chocolates and others; some, nevertheless, remain strict in all types of seeds and legumes for fear of mixing them with grains.

In general, one may not only not eat chametz on Pesach but also one may not derive any benefit from the chametz. Therefore, one may not own pet food which contains chametz over Pesach. However, pet food that contains kitniyot may be given to the animals over Pesach.

Kitniyot is a custom of stringency and should be adhered to in all traditions of Ashkenaz, however, in cases of the ill or elderly that strict position need not be applied. Therefore, throughout history, rabbis have permitted kitniyot for children, people who have very little else to eat, or people who were extremely poor. If you feel you need to eat kitniyot consult your rabbinic authority for guidance.

Gebrochts (crushed)

An even more strict, Hasidic custom emerged in the last few centuries concerning the status of matza that was soaked or crushed and used as flour commonly known as 'matza meal'. This process allows many more foods to be eaten on Pesach such as Matzah balls, pastas and cakes and cereals made from crushed matzah and others. There are even stricter traditions in Hasidic circles concerning buttering one's piece of matza or putting matza pieces in one's soup. All this is done to try and be as punctilious as possible when it comes to Pesach. In Hasidic circles this custom is in full force; in other Orthodox circles this custom is not followed as many rabbis note that nowadays no such concern arises with regard to our matzas.

[Koshering Utensils in the Kitchen for Pesach³](#)

³ These laws are based on the work of Rabbi Eliezer Melamed, Peninei Halacha: <https://ph.yhb.org.il/en/category/pesah/11-koshering-the-kitchen/>

Because of the severity of the prohibition of chametz it is generally accepted in the Jewish observant community to have a second set of dishes and pots and pans for Pesach. The reason for this is that the Torah records in Numbers 31:23 that when acquiring the cooking materials of other nations during a battle they must first undergo a koshering process before being used. The Torah says:

כָּל־דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר־יָבֵא בָאֵשׁ תַּעֲבִירוּ בָאֵשׁ וְטָהַר אֵף בְּמֵי נֹדֶה יִתְחַטָּא וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָבֵא בָאֵשׁ תַּעֲבִירוּ בַּמַּיִם:

any article that can withstand fire—these you shall pass through fire and they shall be clean, except that they must be cleansed with water of lustration; and anything that cannot withstand fire you must pass through water.

The rabbis understood that when cooking foods with hot liquids the taste of the food gets absorbed into the pot, knife and dish. For this reason in order to use the non-kosher pots and cutlery they need to be 'kashered', if by fire, if by boiling water, if by rinsing—all depending on how they were used. This is the basis of having two sets of dishes, for milk and meat.

On Pesach we are extremely concerned that the taste of chametz was absorbed into the pots and pans, cutlery and dishes. Therefore, they must undergo a kashering process in order to be used for Pesach. The rabbis followed the Torah's description in kashering the item in the way it was used; thus, if it was used with fire, fire must be used to cleanse it. If it was used in boiling water, then one must in turn boil it in water to cleanse it. If it was used in cold water, then in theory it cannot become not kosher and may be used interchangeably (however the common practice is to have an entire set of Pesach dishes).

In most Jewish communities there are individuals or organizations who engage in kashering before Pesach. One should coordinate with those individuals and prepare the items for kashering (usually called hagala). In general, the items kashered are: pots, pans, metal bowls, metal cutlery, barbecue grates, silver kiddush cups as well as items made from wood (that had contact with hot food). Ashkenazic custom is not to kasher the following items: glass (although some are lenient), earthenware such as china, clay and ceramic utensils, as well as porcelain (although some are lenient). Plastic is also generally not kashered although other permit it and in case of need it may be kashered.

Koshering the Kitchen

In addition to utensils which need kashering, the kitchen itself, which throughout the year has been completely filled with chametz (and if you are gluten free you have *much* less to do!) must be kashered for Pesach. There are the countertops, the refrigerator, ovens, sinks, closets, microwaves, gas ranges and various electrical appliances. Clearly having a separate set of all that is prohibitive, so all observant Jews engage in 'Pesach cleaning' in the weeks or

days before the holiday. Koshering the kitchen is different from 'spring cleaning', one need not spend weeks scrubbing every corner of the house; rather, one must learn the laws of what exactly needs to be 'koshered' and make sure there is no chametz before Pesach.

Countertops

Since countertops come in contact with hot chametz items the custom is not to use those same countertops during Pesach unless they can be koshered. In general glass, and formica countertops cannot be koshered, better to buy some covering for them, while metal or granite or marble can be koshered. The method to kasher the metal or granite is to clean the surface thoroughly and be sure to start the koshering process only after 24 hours since the last piece of chametz touched the surface, then to pour boiling water over the surface in strips so that each part of the counter gets the boiling water. It is a bit messy and requires at least two people but it is doable and allows you to have your counters on Pesach. The alternative is to cover the counters with aluminum foil or contact paper.

Sinks

The same rules apply to sinks. Stainless steel or metal should be throughout cleaned and then (after 24 hours) boiling water should be poured in strips over the sinks. Formica sinks or glass and porcelain may not be koshered and an alternate form of insert should be found. If this is difficult one can rely on the lenient position and kasher them with boiling.

Gas burners, oven tops

Generally we use our stove ranges for meat and milk and are not concerned that hot liquid will spill because the fire burns anything that comes into contact with it. Therefore, on Pesach we can rely on the fact that the burners themselves and the place around the burners can be koshered by turning on all the gas or electric burners for a half hour after cleaning them thoroughly.

Ovens

Modern ovens have a self-cleaning function in which they heat themselves to over 500 degrees during that process. That is considered koshering and nothing else need be done. Ovens that do not have that function should be cleaned well, and set to the highest setting for one half hour. Baking trays are problematic. Ideally, they should be cleaned by fire (either left in the oven during self-clean) or using a blowtorch), but since they may get ruined during this process it is advisable to have a second set of baking trays for Pesach.

Platas/Hotplates

Hotplates used every Shabbat often have oil and grime on them. Ideally they should be cleaned as much as possible and then covered with aluminum foil for Pesach.

Microwaves

Rav Melamed suggests a four-step process: 1. Clean the microwave thoroughly. 2. Wait 24 hours. 3. Heat up a glass of water for three minutes. 4. Place a barrier between the food and the turntable.

Dishwashers

While some are strict, prohibiting koshering of dishwashers, Rav Melamed is lenient in the following way: first the dishwasher must be cleaned thoroughly including the filter where food usually collects. Then, after 24 hours of no usage, the dishwasher should be run on the hottest, highest setting.

Dining room tables/Refrigerators/Cabinets

If one placed hot chametz on the dining room table then the custom is to cover the table for Pesach with contact paper making a separation between the Pesach dishes and the table. The refrigerator and cabinets should be cleaned thoroughly but do not have to be covered.

Electrical appliances—mixers/blenders

Machines that are used to chop and mince foods are very tricky to make kosher for Pesach. The first problem is that the chametz has a way of getting into crevices that are hard to clean. If that is the case, they must be cleaned as much as possible and stored for Pesach. Even if they are clean if they were used for hot chametz or even for cold with spicy foods, one must perform hagala (koshering by boiling water) on the areas that came in contact with the food. In general, it is best to try to minimize usage of chametz electrical appliances for Pesach.

Bedikat Chametz (Searching for the Chametz)

The Torah records a special mitzvah to remove chametz from the home on the day before Pesach:

שבעת ימים ממצות תאכלו אף ביום הראשון תשביתו שאר מבתיכם כי | כל-אכל חמץ ונקרתה הנפש שהוא מישראל
מיום הראשון עד-יום השבעי:

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the very first day you shall remove leaven from your houses, for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day to the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. (Exodus 12:15)

The law of ridding oneself of chametz seems at least as important as the mitzvah of matza! Not only do you not fulfill a positive mitzvah of getting rid of your chametz if you don't, but you also violate two other negative mitzvot—"you may not see it, you may not find it in your house". For this reason, Jewish families throughout history have been scrupulous in checking their homes and cleaning them from all the chametz. While cleaning may take place for weeks before Pesach, the actual mitzvah, however, takes place on the night of the 14th of Nisan, the night before Pesach.

Halacha states that one must check in one's house anywhere a kezayit (literally an olive size) of chametz might have been taken, in order to search for leftover pieces and remove them. Other than in the kitchen, one need not remove crumbs but meticulous people do it anyway. Before Pesach it is proper to go through every room and look for leftover pretzels, bagels, cookies, etc, especially in a house with kids and pets. The removal of the chametz from the home is a biblical positive commandment, throwing it in the garbage in the days prior to Pesach is appropriate, however on the night before Pesach a different custom emerged.

Searching at Night

The night of the 14th is determined to be the appropriate time to engage in the ritual of 'bedikat chametz'. Ideally one should perform this mitzvah at the beginning of the evening so as not to get distracted and end up missing out on the mitzvah. The mitzvah is actually to burn the chametz the following morning but it begins by searching and collecting the chametz the night before. For this reason the blessing that is made is on the burning rather than searching:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל בִּיעוּר חָמֵץ

Baruch at Ado-nai Eloheinu Melech haolam asher kidshanu bemitzvotav ve'tzivanu al biur chametz
(Blessed are you God king of the universe sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to burn the chametz).

This bracha should be recited prior to beginning the search for chametz. Ideally one should not speak while performing the mitzvah, from the time of the recitation of the bracha until the final paragraph recited at the end of the search.

A Candle

The Talmud Pesachim states that the searching for chametz should take place with a candle in order to light up any dark corners of the rooms. A torch or large flame is not accepted, rather a single candlelight to have the most ideal sight. Of course, if one is truly interested in searching properly, why not use a flashlight? The answer is that one may use a flashlight, but tradition of thousands of years has the bedikat chametz with a simple candle and that is still what governs our practice today (although one does not have to turn off the electric lights before starting the Bedika). There is also a custom to use a feather and a wooden spoon to sweep up the chametz into a bag to be burned the following morning.

Additionally, Rema writes that there is a custom to leave out ten pieces of bread to be collected that night—though one should be careful to place them in very visible areas and remember where they were all placed. This practice is done probably to engage the children in the education of searching for the chametz. If no chametz is found because the house had been cleaned for weeks before it takes out some of the excitement of the process. If, however, one does not place these ten pieces and does not find any chametz it is still an appropriate bracha and process. (Nevertheless, in keeping with the tradition families always have a small bag of leftover chametz that wasn't thrown out and will be burned the following morning.)

Bitul (relinquishing)

Because the mitzvah is not only to find and remove the chametz that one sees, but also a prohibition against *having* any chametz in one's house which one owns, the rabbis used a halakhic principle called bitul which means relinquishing or giving up one's possessions. I can relinquish my rights to any possession and it no longer belongs to me, someone may come along and claim it as their own. Through the action of bitul of all of my chametz, I can biblically fulfill my responsibility of getting rid of my chametz before Pesach!

Doing that, however, was not enough for the rabbis in the Talmud, they were concerned that if I just recited one line and relinquished my ownership over my chametz I might then encounter a nice cookie or cake over Pesach and be tempted to eat it even though it doesn't belong to me. For this reason, both bedika (searching) and bitul (relinquishing) were proscribed. At the end of the process of bedikat chametz—which involves going throughout each room in the house and checking by candlelight if there is any chametz—the following Aramaic proclamation is made, though it should be recited in the language understood:

ומיד אחר הבדיקה יבטלנו ויאמר: כָּל חֲמִירָא וְחֲמִיעָא דְאִיכָא בְרִשְׁוֹתֵי, דְלֹא חֲזִיתִיהּ, וְדִלָּא בְעֵרְתִּיהּ, לְבִטְלָא וְלִגְוֵי הֶפְקֵר קְעַפְרָא דְאַרְעָא

Kol chamira vechamiya de'ika birshuti, delo chaziteh udelo biarteh,
libatel ve'lehevi hefker keafra de'ara

(All the chametz that is in my possession, that I have not seen and not destroyed let it be relinquished and ownerless like the dust of the earth)

Leaving the House for the Holidays

The rabbis proscribed bedikat chametz for the family that is living in the house and staying there for Pesach. If, however, the entire family is leaving for Pesach then it depends: if they leave 30 days before Pesach no bedikat chametz is required; if they leave within 30 days then one should do bedikat chametz the night before leaving, but without a bracha. Both scenarios however require that the paragraph of bitul (kol chamira...all the chametz...) be recited before Pesach.

Mechirat Chametz (Selling your Chametz to a non-Jew)

A 2-3rd century compilation of rabbinic legal writings called the Tosefta includes the following scenario found in the second chapter of Pesachim:

ישראל ונכרי שהיו באין בספינה וחמץ ביד ישראל ה"ז מוכרו לנכרי ונותנו במתנה וחוזר ולוקח ממנו [לאחר] הפסח ובלבד שיתנו לו במתנה גמורה.

An Israelite and a non-Jew traveling on a boat together and the Israelite has chametz in his possession (and needs to get rid of it before Pesach), may sell it to the non-Jew, or give it to him as a gift, and go back and take it from him after Pesach, as long as the acquisition was complete.

The Rabbis of the Mishnah already thousands of years ago recognized that there might be circumstances where getting rid of one's chametz entirely is not possible or practical. Thus, in certain conditions they used common laws of acquisitions and gifting to circumvent the prohibition of owning chametz during Pesach while still being able to retrieve the chametz after Pesach (provide the non-Jew was willing to sell or gift the chametz back). This method was not used originally for common circumstances, rather exceptional ones.

Over a thousand years later Rabbi Yosef Karo, author of the Shulchan Aruch codified this into law:

חמץ של ישראל שעבר עליו הפסח אסור בהנאה אפי' הניחו שוגג או אנוס ואם מכרו או נתנו לעכו"ם שמחוץ לבית קודם הפסח אע"פ שהישראל מכירו לעכו"ם ויודע שלא יגע בו כלל אלא ישמרנו לו עד לאחר הפסח ויחזור ויתננו לו מותר ובלבד שיתננו לו מתנה גמורה בלי שום תנאי או שימכרנו לו מכירה גמורה בדבר מועט אבל מתנה על מנת להחזיר לא מהני:

If Chametz of an Israelite was not destroyed before Pesach, then after the chametz is prohibited and must be destroyed without any benefit. However, if before Pesach that chametz was sold or given to a non-Jew, even if they know each other, and the Jew knows that the non-Jew will not touch any of the chametz but rather guard it until after Pesach and give it back to the Jew, nevertheless it is permitted! This is only on the condition that the gift was absolute or the sale final, without any caveats or stipulations.

Throughout Jewish history rabbis have come out for, or against the leniency of selling one's chametz before Pesach. For many generations it was considered less ideal but done to save shopkeepers much lost inventory, or even homeowners from having to throw out all of their expensive alcoholic beverages. However, today with the longer storage methods of food products, many more people have excessive amounts of chametz in their homes before Pesach and it has become standard for all observant Jews to sell their chametz prior to the holiday.

A debate has ensued about the type of chametz that one sells: some believe that once the sale is legitimate in halacha then anything can be sold, any type of chametz and any amount; others, however, are stricter and limit the sale to that which is not 'chametz gamur' (actual chametz vs. mixtures with chametz ingredients). Ideally one should try and finish all their 'actual' chametz before Pesach and sell the remaining foods, those which are expensive to get rid of and those that are ingredients in medicines and other products. Typically, the rabbi in each community prepares forms one can fill out before Pesach and each family sells their chametz through the rabbi as their agent. Alternatively, there are even websites today that one can access to sell one's chametz.

Matza

Introduction

Bread is tasty, flavorful, rich, pleasurable; matza, is not! Matza is bland, basic, tasteless, simple... Why are we commanded on our 'day of freedom' to eat this food? There are some wonderful tasting matzas—egg matza, chocolate covered matzas, onion matza—but for some reason they are not permitted on Pesach, certainly not the first night for the seder why? Instead, it must be flour and water, nothing else. No additives, no preservatives, no taste.

In fact, much of the seder and the foods that we eat on Passover in general, are made from pure, unadulterated, ingredients. Unmodified Matza, Marror, wine, even the dressings surmount to salt and water. What is it about this necessity

for purity, taintlessness, these natural and basic ingredients in our diets on Passover?

We live in a modified world. We look around we see ‘what was once’ a tree, a rock, sand, water, fire. We are a creative people, we build, invent, innovate. And clearly that is what we were destined to do after God created Man and charged him with guarding and working the land. Man succeeded and continues to innovate, develop, find cures, and use earth’s natural resources and reach for the stars; but sometimes that comes with a cost, a cost on the world and a cost on mankind. The danger is that with all our creations, we forget about God and begin to think of ourselves as gods.

With all the mixtures and the modifications, and the creations we come up with, perhaps we need a moment, or a holiday, to reflect on the world in its simplicity. Like the simple son in the Hagadah, we ask what is the cause of everything around us—‘ma zot?’ (What is this?), and we must respond, it is God who has given us this incredible gift called our minds. But with this gift we cannot let it inflate; we cannot be guilty of mixing in on God’s turf when it comes to things like creation, or exodus from Egypt, or the rationale in the Torah.

There comes a time when we must revert to the simple ingredients in our lives. Our bodies and souls, our world and God’s.

At the time of Exodus, each Israelite began this journey a bit tainted, a bit immersed in Egyptian culture. It even produced an air of arrogance, inflated egos perhaps. After all, they built the cities of Pitom and Ramses and they were proud of it, the pyramids were there through the ingenuity of man. It was this attitude that they brought with them out of Egypt. And it was the attitude that cluttered their minds, and clouded their belief in those early days on their journey to Mount Sinai.

Pesach began a process; it began a journey to rid ourselves of any doubt. Any admixture in our minds, to filter out our inflated thoughts, and to emerge with an unadulterated view of man in God’s world. Matza, then, is the champion of the day, in its simplicity. Ultimately, it is about recognizing the flour and water in each of us, that throughout our lives we build, create, mix together ideas and think independently, and then comes Pesach which says, slow down, refocus, reassess, eat some matza, enjoy the simple, natural things in the world.

[Source of Matza](#)

The Torah mentions matza in the Exodus story in the context of leaving Egypt, when they didn’t have enough time to let the dough rise, and also the Torah

mentions eating matza together with the Pesach sacrifice during the nighttime meal before they left Egypt. The actual commandment to eat matza on Pesach is found in Exodus:

שבעת ימים מצות תאכלו אך ביום הראשון תשביתו שאר מבתיכם כי כל-אכל חמץ ונכרתה הגפוש שהוא מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל מיום הראשון עד-יום השבעי... ושמרתם את-המצות כי בעצם היום הזה הוצאתי את-צבאותיכם מארץ מצרים ושמרתם את-היום הזה לדורותיכם חקת עולם: בראשון בארבעה עשר יום לחדש בערב תאכלו מצות עד יום האחד ועשרים לחדש בערב:

Seven days you shall eat Matzot; on the very first day you shall remove leaven from your houses, for whoever eats Matzot from the first day to the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel... You shall guard the Matzot, for on this very day I brought your ranks out of the land of Egypt; you shall guard this day throughout the ages as an institution for all time. In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat Matzot until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. (Exodus 12:15, 17-18)

Shmura Matza

Matza plays a prominent role on Pesach and it, as unleavened bread, contrasts the prohibition of eating leavened bread during the holiday. For this reason, the Torah adds another component to the matza, ‘guarding’ the matza, or more accurately according to the rabbis, guarding the grain which turns into flour and then gets mixed with water. The rabbis called this heightened guarding of the grain to prevent against any premature encounter with water, thereby making it rise faster and become chametz—Shmura matza.

Shmura matza is flour that is guarded from the point already of the grain being harvested in the field. A second level is guarding the wheat from the time of grinding, that is also acceptable as Shmura matza. An even lower level but still acceptable in certain circumstances is to ‘watch’ the flour only from the time of preparing the dough for baking into matzas. Practically however, the accepted practice for the Seder night is to use matza that has been stamped ‘Shmura from the time of harvesting’ and is under kosher guidance, while for the rest of Passover any matza that is kosher for Pesach is acceptable.

Machine vs. Handmade

There is a debate about what type of Shmura matza is acceptable to be used for the Seder night—machine made (square ones) or hand made (circular ones). Over the years different rabbis have supported one and rejected the other, turning this question into a major dispute. In truth, however, both are acceptable for the Seder table as both have major Halakhic authorities supporting each version of the matza. Generally, Hasidim and ultra-orthodox opt for the handmade matza while many in the orthodox population (myself

and my rabbis included) suffice with the machine made. As long as a reputable kosher company produces the matzas, one should choose whichever they want and are fulfilling the mitzvah properly.

Egg Matza

Egg matzot are matzas made with added ingredients such as oil, eggs, juice, wine, all in order to give it a better taste. They are not chametz (as long as they are certified kosher) but they are not acceptable for use at the Seder table. According to the Asheknaz custom egg matzot are not eaten by healthy people over Pesach but elderly and infirm who have trouble with digesting regular matza are permitted to eat it other than for the seder.

Erev Pesach (The Day before Pesach)

The day before Pesach (the 14th day of Nisan) has a special status both in terms of the historical events occurring on this day and in the traditions and obligations we engage in as a result. What took place on the 14th of Nisan? First and foremost it is the day of the slaughtering of the Korban Pesach (Pesach sacrifice). The Torah states that during the day each family in Egypt slaughtered the lamb by their home:

וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת עַד אַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַתְּחִלַּת הַגָּזֶה וְשִׁחֲטוּ אֹתוֹ כָּל קֵהֶל עֲבֹדֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בֵּין הָעֶרְבָיִם: וְלָקַחוּ מִן-הַדָּם וַיַּגִּתּוּ עַל-שְׁתֵּי הַמְּזוּזוֹת וְעַל-הַמַּשְׁקוּף עַל הַבָּתִּים אֲשֶׁר-יֹאכְלוּ אֹתוֹ בָּהֶם: וְאָכְלוּ אֶת-הַבֶּשֶׂר בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה צְלִי-אֵשׁ וּמִצּוֹת עַל-מַרְרִים יֹאכְלֶהוּ:

You shall keep watch over it until the fourteenth day of this month; and all the assembled congregation of the Israelites shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they are to eat it. They shall eat the flesh that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs. (Exodus 12:6-8).

The lamb which they took on the tenth of the day was slaughtered on the 14th in the afternoon and then the blood was taken and smeared on the doorposts, saving their lives from the destroyer. This day, then, is imbued with holiness as it represents the essential day of the Pesach sacrifice⁴.

Another event taking place on this day is the eradication of chametz from the house. The Torah states explicitly that the day before Pesach begins is the time to destroy one's chametz in order to prepare for the weeklong matza existence:

⁴ Much has been written about the two seemingly different holidays of 'Pesach' and 'Matzot'. See here for one perspective from Rabbi Menachem Leibtag in his seminal website Tanach.org: <https://tanach.org/shmot/bo/bos1.htm>

שבעת ימים מצות תאכלו אף ביום הראשון תשביתו שאר מצותיכם כי כל-אכל חמץ ונקרתה הגפוש ההוא מישראל
מיום הראשון עד-יום השביעי:

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the very first day you shall remove leaven from your houses, for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day to the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

Prohibiting Work on Erev Pesach

The prohibition of eating chametz on erev Pesach, already from the sixth hour of the day (around midday) dates back to the Talmud which derives this from a verse in the Torah. Some maintain that eating chametz on erev Pesach is a biblical prohibition while other maintain it is rabbinic; either way once again we see that erev Pesach is significant in our practice.

One final tradition is the fast of the firstborn, as a reminder of the plague of the firstborn which took place the very night between the 14th and the 15th of Nisan. As a result of their salvation a custom emerged for firstborn Jewish males to fast on Erev Pesach.

For all the reasons above, erev Pesach takes on a more serious complexion than a regular day. Our sages noted this by creating a rabbinic prohibition of doing *melacha* (work) on erev Pesach, beginning when the Pesach sacrificed was able to be offered—midday. The ban on work was meant to prepare us to focus on the mitzvot of the day and the preparations required for that evening. The melachot from which one should refrain relate to full-fledged work, professional artisan work, professional repair work etc.

There are several exceptions to this prohibition: non-professional work, work to prepare for the festival, preventing substantial loss, work done for a public mitzvah, work by a poor person who does not have enough food for the holiday.

The Fast of the Firstborn

As mentioned, a tradition dating all the way back to Masechet Sofrim (a 9th century Israeli compendium of laws, dates, and history) that firstborn fast on erev Pesach. That custom was originally adopted by the firstborn but not universally at first thus it is viewed as a lower-level fast day. For this reason, it is quite popular in synagogues throughout the world to have a 'siyum masechet' (someone who joyously finishes a tractate of the Talmud and makes a celebration) and those participating are able to partner in that joy and eat a festive meal following the ceremony. Once they eat that meal the fast no longer applies and they may continue to eat for the remainder of the day (until it is no longer allowed as we shall see).

The Prohibition to Eat Matza on Erev Pesach

The Talmud records that one is prohibited from eating Matza on erev Pesach so as to anticipate the mitzvah of eating matza Pesach night. In fact, some extend this prohibition to Rosh Chodesh Nissan and some for thirty days before Pesach! The Talmud cautioned us against premature excitement of the matza before eating it as part of the Pesach seder. Matza balls do not count in this prohibition as once cooked they lose their matza status. Additionally, egg matzas are not in the prohibition—it only refers to matza with which one can fulfill one's obligation on Pesach.

The Prohibition to have a Meal Close to Pesach Night

The first Mishnah in the tenth chapter of Pesachim states a prohibition to eat 'close to mincha' on erev Pesach so that one should have an appetite for the mitzvah of eating matza. This creates a strange day of eating on erev Pesach since: 1. One can no longer eat chametz by the 4th hour of the day (nor should they eat kitniyot). 2. One cannot eat matza at all. 3. One must refrain from eating anything by the 9th hour of the day (around 3 pm). What then does one eat that day? This question was posed by Tosafot who respond that one may still eat fruit, vegetables, meat, fish, and various cakes that are kosher for Passover but contain no matza meal. All this until the ninth hour when eating should be kept to a bare minimum as Pesach night approaches.

Bedikat Chametz/Biur Chametz/Bitul

As we learned the 14th at night is a time for bedikat chametz and the recitation of bitul (the paragraph about relinquishing one's ownership over the remaining chametz). The schedule therefore should be: As evening comes one engages in bedikat chametz. Afterwards one may still eat leftover chametz and do melacha. The following morning by the 4th hour of the day (starting roughly from 6am) one should refrain from eating chametz.

One should burn the chametz in the subsequent hour, outside of one's home, rendering the remaining chametz inedible. (It is important to throw out the burned chametz in a public garbage—the fear is that the burning did not totally consume the chametz and it remains on one's property thereby violating 'owning chametz' on Pesach! After burning one recites bitul (the paragraph of kol chamira) and one is removed from all of one's chametz. On that morning the rabbi will have orchestrated the sale of chametz and the 'chametz free' week of Pesach gets under way.

Finally, after preparing oneself, bathing, cleaning, preparing food etc. like with any Shabbat or Yomtov, one reaches the ninth hour (around 3 pm) and begins

to diminish intake of food so as to prepare for the impending Seder which takes place once the stars come out and Pesach is upon us.

Special Laws when Pesach Falls out on Saturday Night

Usually Erev Pesach (the 14th of Nisan) and Pesach (the 15th of Nisan) and their halakhic applications are adjacent to each other and all the laws of preparation for Pesach occur on the day preceding it. However, every so often the 15th of Nisan falls out on Saturday night and Sunday, which presents certain challenges to the preparation of Pesach on the days preceding.

The proper day to do bedikat chametz with a candle and to burn the chametz would be on the 14th at night and day, however since it is Shabbat that is a problem. Another challenge relates to Shabbat itself: do we eat bread on that day? We should have two challot at every meal like every Shabbat, but we already cleaned the entire house from chametz! Additionally, the 14th of Nisan is usually a fast day for all firstborn males, which presents a problem because in this case it is on Shabbat!

Fast of the Firstborn

The rabbis resolved these issues in generally by preponing the events on the 14th to the 13th, the Thursday before. On Thursday the fast of the firstborn takes place; however, if they are in the synagogue and hear a siyum masechet (conclusion of a tractate of the Talmud which is a joyous occasion requiring a festive meal) they are exempt from fasting that day.

Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Rimon in his book on the topic relates the specific laws to this special year: Thursday night is the proper time this year for bedikat chametz (searching the house for Chametz) and it should be done with a bracha of 'al biur chametz' (for the burning of the chametz). After the bedikat chametz, one should recite the paragraph of bitul (relinquishing one's ownership over the remaining chametz that hasn't been burned yet) in the original Aramaic and ideally in a translation one understands.

Friday morning one should burn the chametz (even though it is a day before erev Pesach) but one does *not* recite the final paragraph of bitul (kol chamira) until the following day, on Shabbat itself before the 5th hour of the day (around 10 in the morning).

Lechem Mishneh

The main question revolves around eating Shabbat meals and requiring 'lechem mishneh' (two whole loaves) for every meal like every Shabbat. How is this done on the day before Pesach? Rav Rimon relates to the two possibilities,

each fraught with issues and challenges: using two matzas, or using two loaves of bread. The problem with using matza is that one should not eat matza the day before Pesach; one should be excitedly waiting for the night of Pesach to eat matza. The problem with bread is that...it's bread!! You just spent so much time ridding your home of bread, how will you have it for the meals right before Pesach?

Solution #1: Use Egg Matzot! You are not actually eating matza because egg Matzot are not acceptable for the Seder night. They are only to be eaten according to Ashkenaz custom by the elderly or infirm on Pesach. Therefore, some suggest using two Egg Matzot for the meals of Shabbat prior to Pesach.

Solution #2: Use Challa bread but *very carefully!* Some are uncomfortable with eating any type of matza right before Pesach and therefore choose to eat bread on Shabbat despite the anxiety it brings and the challenges that come with it. All of our pots and pans are 'Pesachdik' (ready for Pesach) and we have searched the house and even burned the remaining bread on Friday! Nevertheless, if we are careful, we may fulfill the two (or even three) meals of Shabbat with lechem mishne. How? Carefully!

The meal at night should be completely chametz free *except for the challa*. That should be eaten, ideally completely consumed (perhaps a single roll for each member who eats it entirely) and no other food should be chametz. There is still a problem of the dishes, chametz? Pesach? The answer should be—disposable plates and cutlery so as not to make any of the Pesach plates not kosher. Some people go even further and eat the entire meal outside of the house on the terrace perhaps. Others just eat the bread outside and the rest of the meal inside. This might present a problem though with the blessing after the meal. The best solution is to have each roll carefully wrapped up and each person will eat it all up and any crumbs they will quickly throw down the toilet to remove any chametz from the house.

The second meal is more complicated because according to Jewish law one must cease from eating any chametz by the end of the 4th halakhic hour, which is around 10 am this year. So, the best thing to do is pray early and have the second meal including lechem mishne, finishing before 10 a.m. Rabbi Melamed in Peninei Halacha suggests this as the best option.

Seuda Shlishit

The final obstacle is the third meal, seuda shlishit. If eating it in the later afternoon, that is not possible with bread because then the prohibition of eating chametz on erev Pesach already applies. One solution is to have an even earlier third meal, though that would seem unpalatable since the second one must be finished early in the morning. Rav Melamed quotes the Shulchan

Aruch (OC 444:1) who says that eating meat and fish or various fruits suffices for the third meal.

Havdalah at the Seder

As we begin our Pesach seder with kiddush we must remember that it is also the end of Shabbat. As such, the Talmud instructs us to incorporate Havdalah for Shabbat together with Kiddush for Pesach. It is called YAKNEHAZ which is an acronym for yayin—a blessing on the wine; Kiddush—a blessing on the holiday of Pesach; Ner—a blessing on a candle normally recited on Saturday night at Havdallah; Havdallah—the blessing of Havdallah; Zman—the blessing of Shehechyanu, thanking God for giving us life and bringing us to this celebratory moment.

Because of the importance of Pesach and the severity of the prohibition of eating chametz, our rabbis tried to find the best solutions to a Pesach which comes out right after Shabbat and the efforts we make in trying to find the right balance will certainly be rewarded.

With the blessings of a happy, healthy and kosher Pesach!

Chag Sameach.

Pesach Seder

The Pesach Seder

Jews for millennia have been attending and participating in a seder, which actually means a specific order of ritualistic events. The rabbis (in the centuries following the destruction of the second Temple) who constructed the seder had a specific order in mind to reach an experiential goal. This idea is based on the Torah's desire for us to not only celebrate Pesach but to feel as if it is happening to us right now. This sentiment is expressed clearly in the Haggadah (the prayer book created specifically for the seder night): "In every generation all must see themselves as if they had left Egypt as it says And you shall explain to your son on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I went free from Egypt.'" (Exodus 13:8)

Since the Torah says the word 'me' instead of 'my forefathers' the rabbis understood this clearly as a directive for future generations. For this reason, the Pesach seder takes on the mission of inculcated the values and experience of Exodus to every generation. The Haggadah has fourteen different sections which are sung together at the very beginning:

Kadesh—make kiddush

Urchatz—wash your hands
Karpas—eat a spring vegetable
Yachatza—break the middle matzah
Magid—tell the story
Rachtzah—wash your hands for matzah
Motzi-matzah—the mitzvah of matzah
Marror—the mitzvah of marror
Korech—eating the Pesach, matza and marror
Shulchan Orech—enjoying the meal
Tzafun--hiddenness
Barech--blessings
Hallel—praise and thanksgiving
Nirtzah—acceptance

The Four Components of the Pesach Seder

I believe there is a way to categorize the Seder into four essential motifs. Each one contributes to the overall impact of what Seder night is trying to achieve:

1. Wonder
2. Recollection
3. Application
4. Gratitude

Each one is a building block. The first, wonder, is not only about keeping the children awake, much more. Once wonder is engendered, the story must be told. The Mishnah is very clear that a story must be told and even directs us how to tell that story. It is not enough, though, to recall an ancient event and thus the third element of the Seder night must be applying that story to our daily lives. Finally, once we have engendered wonder, told our story and applied it to our lives, we should be filled with awe, joy, and most of all gratitude to God for that great event then and its resonance throughout history.

1. Wonder--Almost every aspect of the 'seder' (including having a seder) is made to engender wonder. This is expressed in the famous depiction of 'four sons', having your four different types of children be curious and ask about the events taking place. These four types are based on four verses found in the Torah, each one focusing on a different perspective of a question and answer:

כֹּה וְהָיָה כִּי־תֵבְאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יִתֶּן יְהוָה לְכֶם פֶּאֶשֶׁר דַּבֵּר וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת: (כו) וְהָיָה כִּי־יֹאמְרוּ אֲלֵיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם מָה הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם:

(25) And when you enter the land that the LORD will give you, as He has promised, you shall observe this rite. (26) And when your children ask you, ‘What do you mean by this rite?’ Exodus 12:25-26

יד והיָה כִּי־יִשְׁאַלְכֶם בְּנֵי בְנֵי מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר מַה־זֹּאת וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיּוֹ בְּתוֹנֵק לֵד הוֹצִיאָנוּ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים:

(14) And when, in time to come, your son asks you, saying, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘It was with a mighty hand that the LORD brought us out from Egypt, the house of bondage. Exodus 13:14

כ כִּי־יִשְׁאַלְכֶם בְּנֵי בְנֵי מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר מַה־הַעֲדַת וְהַחֲקִים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתְכֶם:

(20) When, in time to come, your children ask you, “What mean the decrees, laws, and rules that the LORD our God has enjoined upon you?” Devarim 6:20

ה והיָה כִּי־יִבְיֹאֲךָ יְהוָה אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַחֲנִי וְהַיְבוּסִי אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר לְךָ אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ וְעַבַדְתָּ אֶת־הָעַבְדָּה הַזֹּאת בְּתוֹדֵשׁ הַיָּהּ: 1 (שְׂבַעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל מַצֹּת וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי תֵג לַיהוָה: 2) (מִצוֹת יֹאכַל אֶת שְׂבַעַת הַיָּמִים וְלֹא־יִרְאֶה לָּךְ חֶמֶץ וְלֹא־יִרְאֶה לָּךְ שָׂאֵר בְּכֹל־גְּבֻלָּךְ: 3) (וְהַגַּדְתָּ לְבְנֶךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בַּעֲבוּר זֶה עָשָׂה יְהוָה לִי בְצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם:

(5) So, when the LORD has brought you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall observe in this month the following practice: (6) “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a festival of the LORD. (7) Throughout the seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten; no leavened bread shall be found with you, and no leaven shall be found in all your territory. (8) And you shall explain to your son on that day, ‘It is because of what the LORD did for me when I went free from Egypt.’ Exodus 13:5-8

This theme of asking questions and exploring the ideas relating to the Seder and the holiday finds expression in many rabbinic sources. The first is the Talmudic instruction for all to stay up during the Seder night, even young children:

The Sages taught in a *baraita*: All are obligated in these four cups, including men, women, and children. Rabbi Yehuda said: What benefit do children receive from wine? They do not enjoy it. Rather, one distributes to them roasted grains and nuts on Passover eve, so that they will not sleep and also so they will ask the four questions at night. They said about Rabbi Akiva that he would distribute roasted grains and nuts to children on Passover eve, so that they would not sleep and so they would ask. It was taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Eliezer says: One grabs the *matzot* on the nights of Passover. One should eat them very quickly on account of the children, so that, due to the hasty consumption of the meal, they will not sleep and they will inquire into the meaning of this unusual practice. Talmud Pesachim 108b

An additional source relates to the notion of extra dipping of foods which takes place during the seder night. Rashi notes that this unusual addition has one purpose—that the children will be curious and ask.

There are many activities we do at Seder night to promote this goal:

Wearing white at the seder

Giving out nuts to kids at beginning of seder

Singing the order of the seder

A Seder plate

ורחץ Washing without a bracha

כרפס Eating a random vegetable

יחץ Breaking one of the matzas

Having three matzot instead of two

הא לחמא עניא—the whole paragraph forces us to ask

Four cups of wine

Bracha of geula

מרור Eating bitter herbs

כורך making a marror sandwich

אפיקומן eating matza at the end of the meal

נרצה singing strange songs at the end of the Seder

Maimonides in his chapter on the Seder relates the same message:

(3) On the first night of *Pesah*, one should introduce some change at the table, so that the children who will notice it may ask, saying: "Why is this night different from all other nights?" And he in turn will reply: "This is what happened." In what manner, for example, should he introduce a change? He may distribute parched grain or nuts to the children; remove the table from its usual place; snatch the unleavened bread from hand to hand, and so on. If he has no son, his wife should ask the questions; if he has no wife, they should ask one another: "Why is this night different?"—even if they are all scholars. If one is alone, he should ask himself: "Why is this night different?"

If the directive is only about teaching your child why does the Rambam go out of his way to include all members of your household? even yourself? Clearly he is influenced by the Talmud and the Haggadah itself!

פסחים קט"ז א:ח'

גמ' תנו רבנן חכם בנו שואלו ואם אינו חכם אשתו שואלתו ואם לאו הוא שואל לעצמו ואפילו שני תלמידי חכמים שיודעין בהלכות הפסח שואלין זה לזה:

Pesachim 116a:8

GEMARA: The Sages taught: If his son is wise and knows how to inquire, his son asks him. And if he is not wise, his wife asks him. And if even his wife is not capable of asking or if he has no wife, he asks himself. And even if two Torah scholars who know

the *halakhot* of Passover are sitting together and there is no one else present to pose the questions, they ask each other.

This is found in the Haggadah as well:

Pesach Haggadah, Magid, We Were Slaves in Egypt

We were slaves to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt. And the Lord, our God, took us out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched forearm. And if the Holy One, blessed be He, had not taken our ancestors from Egypt, behold we and our children and our children's children would [all] be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt. And even if we were all sages, all discerning, all elders, all knowledgeable about the Torah, it would be a commandment upon us to tell the story of the exodus from Egypt. And anyone who adds [and spends extra time] in telling the story of the exodus from Egypt, behold he is praiseworthy.

It is incumbent on all of us, not only children, to experience the wonder that is engendered by this holiday. The enormity of the events: the unlikely leader; the near-extinction; yet the uncanny capacity to hold on to their names, their identities, their connection to God; the battle against Pharaoh and against Egypt--all these factors form the foundation for our engaging in this mitzvah. Our Sages, in making the Pesach Seder wholly unique, different from any other holiday, heightened our awareness of these differences and prepared us for the next stage--to tell the story!

2. Recollection

פסחים קט"ז א:ד'

ולפי דעתו של בן אביו מלמדו מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח ודורש מארמי אובד אבי עד שיגמור כל הפרשה כולה :
Pesachim 116a:7

And according to the intelligence and the ability of the son, his father teaches him about the Exodus. When teaching his son about the Exodus. He begins with the Jewish people's disgrace and concludes with their glory. And he expounds from the passage: "An Aramean tried to destroy my father" (Deuteronomy 26:5), the declaration one recites when presenting his first fruits at the Temple, until he concludes explaining the entire section.

פסחים קט"ז א:י"א

מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח: מאי בגנות רב אמר מתחלה עובדי עבודת גלולים היו אבותינו [ושמואל] אמר עבדים היינו
Pesachim 116a:11

It was taught in the mishna that the father begins his answer with disgrace and concludes with glory. The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of the term: With disgrace? Rav said that one should begin by saying: At first our forefathers were idol worshippers, before concluding with words of glory. And Shmuel said: The disgrace with which one should begin his answer is: We were slaves.

How does one tell a story? Start with shame and end with praise. The problem is that while the Gemara offers two options for who's shame (Rav--originally we were idol worshipers; Shmuel--we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt), we are not told of the moment of praise or the subject! Whose praise?

In reality, there are two subjects (Israel or God) and two variables (shame and praise). All variables give us the following:

Shame of Israel, end with praise of Israel מתחיל בגנות ישראל ומסיים בשבח ישראל
Shame of God, end with praise of God מתחיל בגנות ה' ומסיים בגנות ה'
Shame of Israel, end with praise of God מתחיל בגנות ישראל, מסיים בשבח ה'
Shame of God, end with praise of Israel מתחיל בגנות ה', ומסיים בשבח ישראל

The open nature of the Gemara's question leaves it to us and our own interpretation as we explore the 'story' that we are so clearly commanded to retell.

Rav and Shmuel each had a different perspective on when the story began.
Rav--a spiritual story
Shmuel--a physical one

In the end, the Haggadah presents us with both!!

הגדה של פסח, מגיד, עבדים היינו ב' עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים, ויציאתנו ה' אלהינו משם ביד חזקה ובזרע נטויה. ואלו לא הוציא הקדוש ברוך הוא את אבותינו ממצרים, הרי אנו ובנינו ובני בנינו משעבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים. ואפילו כלנו חכמים כלנו נבונים כלנו זקנים כלנו יודעים את התורה מצנה עלינו לספר ביציאת מצרים. וכל המרבה לספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משבח.

Pesach Haggadah, Magid, We Were Slaves in Egypt 2

We were slaves to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt. And the Lord, our God, took us out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched forearm. And if the Holy One, blessed be He, had not taken our ancestors from Egypt, behold we and our children and our children's children would [all] be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt. And even if we were all sages, all discerning, all elders, all knowledgeable about the Torah, it would be a commandment upon us to tell the story of the exodus from Egypt. And anyone who adds [and spends extra time] in telling the story of the exodus from Egypt, behold he is praiseworthy.

הגדה של פסח, מגיד, מתחילה עובדי עבודה זרה היו אבותינו א' מתחלה עובדי עבודה זרה היו אבותינו, ועכשיו קרבנו המקום לעבדתו, שנאמר: ויאמר יהושע אל-כלהעם, פה אמר ה' אלהי ישראל: בעבר הנהר ישבו אבותיכם מעולם, תרח אבי אברהם ואבי נחור, ויעבדו אלהים אחרים.

Pesach Haggadah, Magid, In the Beginning Our Fathers Were Idol Worshipers 1

From the beginning, our ancestors were idol worshipers. And now, the Place [of all] has brought us close to His worship, as it is stated (Joshua 24:2-4), "Yehoshua said to the whole people, so said the Lord, God of Israel, 'Over the river did your ancestors dwell

from always, Terach the father of Avraham and the father of Nachor, and they worshiped other gods.

3. Application

The Haggadah's agenda is to make sure we apply the lessons of the past to the challenges of today

הגדה של פסח, מגיד, מתחילה עובדי עבודה זרה היו אבותינו ה' והיא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו. שלא אהד בלבד עמד עלינו לכלותנו, אלא שבכל דור נדור עומדים עלינו לכלותנו, והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילנו מידם.

Pesach Haggadah, Magid, In the Beginning Our Fathers Were Idol Worshipers 5

And it is this that has stood for our ancestors and for us; since it is not [only] one [person or nation] that has stood [against] us to destroy us, but rather in each generation, they stand [against] us to destroy us, but the Holy One, blessed be He, rescues us from their hand.

הגדה של פסח, מגיד, פסח מצה ומרור ז' בקל-דור נדור סוב אדם לראות את-עצמו כאלו הוא יצא ממצרים, שנאמר: והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר, בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים. לא את-אבותינו בלבד גאל הקדוש ברוך הוא, אלא אף אותנו גאל עמם, שנאמר: ואותנו הוציא משם, למען הביא אותנו, לתת לנו את-הארץ אשר נשבע לאבותינו.

Pesach Haggadah, Magid, Rabban Gamliel's Three Things 7

In each and every generation, a person is obligated to see himself as if he left Egypt, as it is stated (Exodus 13:8); "And you shall explain to your son on that day: For the sake of this, did the Lord do [this] for me in *my* going out of Egypt." Not only our ancestors did the Holy One, blessed be He, redeem, but rather also us [together] with them did He redeem, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 6:23); "And He took us out from there, in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers."

הגדה של פסח, מגיד, כוס שניה ב' ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר גאלנו וגאל את-אבותינו ממצרים, והגיענו הלילה הזה לאכל-בו מצה ומרור. כן ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו גיענו למועדים ולרגלים אחרים הבאים לקראתנו לשלום, שמחים בבנין עירך וששים בעבודתך. ונאכל שם מן הזבחים ומן הפסחים אשר גיע דמם על קיר מזבחה לרצון, ונודה לך שיר חדש על גאלתנו ועל פדות נפשנו. ברוך אתה ה', גאל ישראל.

Pesach Haggadah, Magid, Second Cup of Wine 2

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who redeemed us and redeemed our ancestors from Egypt, and brought us on this night to eat matsa and *marror*; so too, Lord our God, and God of our ancestors, bring us to other appointed times and holidays that will come to greet us in peace, joyful in the building of Your city and happy in Your worship; that we shall eat there from the offerings and from the Pesach sacrifices, the blood of which shall reach the wall of Your altar for favor, and we shall thank You with a new song upon our redemption and upon the restoration of our souls. Blessed are you, Lord, who redeemed Israel.

The final component is a result of the previous three. Once the story is told and applied, we should be overcome with an overwhelming sense of...

4. Gratitude

הגדה של פסח, מגיד, דיינו א' ב'

כמה מעלות טובות למקום עלינו! אלו הוציאנו ממצרים ולא עשה בהם נפטים, דינו .

Pesach Haggadah, Magid, Dayenu 1-2

How many degrees of good did the Place [of all bestow] upon us! If He had taken us out of Egypt and not made judgements on them; [it would have been] enough for us.

הגדה של פסח, מגיד, דיינו ט"ז

על אחת, כמה וכמה, טובה כפולה ומכפלת למקום עלינו: שהוציאנו ממצרים, ועשה בהם נפטים, ועשה באלהיהם, והרג את־בכוריהם, ונתן לנו את־מזונם, וקרע לנו את־הים, והעבירנו בתוכו בחרבה, ושקע צרנו בתוכו, וספק צרפנו במדבר ארבעים שנה, והאכילנו את־המן, ונתן לנו את־השבת, וקררנו לפני ה' סיני, ונתן לנו את־התורה, והכניסנו לארץ ישראל, ובנה לנו את־בית הבחירה לכפר על־כל־עוונותינו .

Pesach Haggadah, Magid, Dayenu 16

How much more so is the good that is doubled and quadrupled that the Place [of all bestowed] upon us [enough for us]; since he took us out of Egypt, and made judgments with them, and made [them] with their gods, and killed their firstborn, and gave us their money, and split the Sea for us, and brought us through it on dry land, and pushed down our enemies in [the Sea], and supplied our needs in the wilderness for forty years, and fed us the manna, and gave us the Shabbat, and brought us close to Mount Sinai, and gave us the Torah, and brought us into the land of Israel and built us the 'Chosen House' [the Temple] to atone upon all of our sins.

הגדה של פסח, מגיד, חצי הלל ב'

לפיקד אנחנו חייבים להודות, להלל, לשבח, לפאר, לרומם, להדר, לברך, לעלה ולקלס למי שעשה לאבותינו ולנו את־כל־הנסים האלו: הוציאנו מעבדות לחרות מגוון לשמחה, ומאבל ליום טוב, ומאפלה לאור גדול, ומשעבוד לגאולה. ונאמר לפניו שירה חדשה: הללויה .

Pesach Haggadah, Magid, First Half of Hallel 2

Therefore we are obligated to thank, praise, laud, glorify, exalt, lavish, bless, raise high, and acclaim He who made all these miracles for our ancestors and for us: He brought us out from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to [celebration of] a festival, from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption. And let us say a new song before Him, Halleluyah!

הגדה של פסח, מגיד, חצי הלל ג'

הללויה הללו עבדי ה', הללו את־שם ה'. יהי שם ה' מברך מעתה ועד עולם. ממזרח שמש עד מבוא מהלל שם ה'. רם על־כל־גוים ה', על השמים כבודו. מי כיי אלהינו המגביהי לשבת, המשפילי לראות בשמים ובארץ? מקימי מעפר דל, מאשפת ירים אביון, להושיבי עם־נדיבים, עם נדיבי עמו. מושיבי עקרת הבית, אם הבנים שמחה. הללויה .

Pesach Haggadah, Magid, First Half of Hallel 3

Halleluyah! Praise, servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. May the Name of the Lord be blessed from now and forever. From the rising of the sun in the East to its setting, the name of the Lord is praised. Above all nations is the Lord, His honor is above

the heavens. Who is like the Lord, our God, Who sits on high; Who looks down upon the heavens and the earth? He brings up the poor out of the dirt; from the refuse piles, He raises the destitute. To seat him with the nobles, with the nobles of his people. He seats a barren woman in a home, a happy mother of children. Halleluyah! (Psalms 113)

הגדה של פסח, נרצה, לשנה הבאה א'
לשנה הבאה בירושלים הבנויה.

Pesach Haggadah, Nirtzah, L'Shana HaBaa 1

Next year, let us be in the built Jerusalem!

הגדה של פסח, נרצה, אדיר הוא א'
אדיר הוא יבנה ביתו בקרוב. במהרה, במהרה, בימינו בקרוב. אל בנה, אל בנה, בנה ביתך בקרוב.

Pesach Haggadah, Nirtzah, Adir Hu 1

Mighty is He, may He build His house soon. Quickly, quickly, in our days, soon. God build, God build, build Your house soon.

In Judaism gratitude is essential in recognising God's hand in the world. But we don't simply end with praising God, that in turn engenders a request, a yearning for more divine intervention, for God to save us today from our crises and for Him to help us build our ideal future--returning to Jerusalem and rebuilding of the Bet Hamikdash.

The Seder Plate

Before discussing each component of the seder we must first set up our 'seder plate'⁵. In ancient times the Seder plate was actually a small table that was brought to the individual with various foods on it—some of the foods were eaten, others were discussed. Today, we all eat on one table (although a great activity would be to go back to Roman times and have the seder on the floor or on couches and have 'servants' bring tables once again) and therefore a symbolic Seder plate is prepared with all the foods for the Seder, some of which are eaten, others are dipped into, and yet others are there just for the symbolic factor. The food on the Seder plate **is not eaten**; rather it is a symbol of all the foods that will be brought to the table during the course of the Seder.

This is the makeup of the Seder plate:

- Three **matzas** (they must be whole, must be 'shmura' and can be either machine made square or hand-made round).

⁵ Once again, my resource for these laws is 'Peninei Halacha', the amazing Halacha compendium of Rabbi Eliezer Melamed. It can be found in English at the following site: <https://ph.yhb.org.il/en/category/pesah/16-seder-night/>

The reason there are three matzas is because one of the descriptions of matza is 'poor man's bread' which a poor man usually breaks and saves for later. Since we do that and still need 'lechem mishne' (two whole loaves or matzas) we have three at the Seder.

- **Marror**—this is lettuce, usually Romaine lettuce or endives, some customs use horseradish (I have both). The marror should taste bitter, if it does not you are not using the right food.
- **Zeroa**—shankbone. In the times of the Temple people ate two kinds of cooked foods—the korban Pesach (roasted) and another type of meat called a chagigah. After the destruction of the Temple we only have a reminder to the two cooked foods by having the shankbone of a chicken and a **Beitzah**, a cooked egg.
- **Karpas**—is a spring vegetable we eat as an appetizer to the meal, usually boiled potatoes, celery, and some use parsley. It is dipped in **Saltwater** which also increases the curiosity of the children.
- **Haroset** is a mixture of various foods (apples, raisins, nuts, figs, cinnamon, juice or wine) which combine to form a texture the rabbis considered like clay to remind us of the mortar when they had to make the bricks for Pharaoh.

All these are placed in a circle on the Seder Plate with the Matzas underneath covered by a matza cover which will be covered and uncovered throughout the seder. We are now ready to begin the Seder, but first we need wine!

How much wine to drink?

It is an obligation to drink four cups of wine during the Seder, an expression of the joy of celebration and the feeling of freedom from slavery. The bible states that 'wine gladdens the heart' (Psalms 104) and therefore wine is used to fulfill the mitzvah. The intoxicating and refreshing nature of wine was a staple for the wealthy in ancient times, therefore we are expected to drink wine even if it is not enjoyed by many. For those who really find it difficult to drink wine, grape juice may be used to fulfill the obligation.

The rabbis felt that it was important to have a 'full cup' of wine each time drinking and therefore one should ideally find a glass which is closest to the minimum required to have in a cup (75 milliliters) so that the entire cup can be drunk. If one cannot drink the whole amount each time or one has a larger glass (always fill up each glass to the top) one should try and drink at least 75 milliliters (2.5 fluid ounces) and if one can't drink that much the minimum to drink is the amount which fills up one's inflated cheek in one's mouth (a majority of a reviit).

One should drink the wine leaning their body to the left and try to finish the allotted wine within 6-7 minutes.

Heseiba-Reclining

As for the laws of reclining—the mitzvah is to recline to the left while drinking the four cups of wine, eating the matza and the korech. Rabbi Melamed suggests that all women from all communities should try to recline just as men. Thus if one is preparing the seder table make sure to have enough pillows or comfortable spaces for both men and women, sons and daughters.

Kadesh—make kiddush

This is the kiddush recited for holidays. It begins with the blessing on wine (unless it is Shabbat, then it begins with the introductory paragraph about Shabbat) and then speaks about the unique position of being chosen by God from all the nations to accept His Torah and fulfill His mitzvot. Also it recognizes the particularistic holiday of Pesach (though it is formulaic such that it is the same kiddush on other festivals with a different inserted title and description for the day) called ‘zman cheruteinu’-our time of freedom.

In general everyone at the Seder makes kiddush and reclines, however, often in a family the ‘leader of the seder’ will recite kiddush and the rest will answer ‘amen’ and drink straight away.

On a usual Pesach three brachot are recited: a blessing on the wine, a blessing on the day of Pesach, and a blessing of Shehechyanu. When Pesach falls out on Shabbat the same three brachot are recited however additional words are inserted to include the holiness of Shabbat. However, when Pesach falls out at the end of Shabbat then five brachot (additional one on a candle and a second one on Havdallah) are recited because we make Havdallah as well as Kiddush.

Urchatz—wash your hands

After Kiddush, we wash our hands, and our children anticipate receiving a piece of challah after handwashing as is customary for every Shabbat and holiday. However, though we do wash our hands, we do not mistake a bracha and we do not then eat the matza, rather we eat a spring vegetable—karpas. There are several reasons for the insertion of karpas and washing our hands before it, but the simplest one is a current refrain—which is the opinion of Rashi on 114a—so that the children will ask why they are eating vegetables before the meal.

Karpas—eat a spring vegetable

Engaging the children is done several ways throughout the Seder, eating a vegetable is one of them. The rule is that one should make a bracha on the vegetable (bore pri ha'adamah—God creates the fruit of the ground) and have in mind that this bracha will count on the eating of marror as well. Rabbi Melamed follows the position of cautioning against eating too more than a kezayit (olive size) of the vegetable for fear of the uncertainty involved in making a bracha achronal (after-eating blessing). If one does eat more than a kezayit one does not have to make an extra bracha because we are generally lenient.

Yachatz—break the middle matzah

The sages described matza as 'poor man's bread' aiming to convey to us the dichotomous emotions we should feel regarding the matza: on the one hand it represents liberation, on the other hand it represents hurriedness and unimpressive baked items. In order to reflect this the rabbis prescribed three matzas and told us to break the middle one right before we begin to tell the story of Passover (magid). The breaking of the matza literally forces us to break our wholeness and save the larger piece for a later time. For this reason, when we break the middle matza we don't break it evenly but 60/40 so that we can take the bigger piece and hide it for the Afikoman.

Each individual who has three matzas on their plate, breaks the middle one and leaves half of the middle one to be eaten during other parts of the Seder. The notion that some of the broken matza should be used together with whole ones speak to the multiple understandings of the symbol of matza.

Magid—tell the story of Exodus

It is a positive biblical commandment to tell a story on Pesach night. What satory? Well, that is the subject of a famous debate in the Talmud The Mishna in Pesachim states as follows:

משנה מסכת פסחים פרק י

משנה ד

מזגו לו כוס שני וכאן הבן שואל אביו ואם אין דעת בבן אביו מלמדו מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין חמץ ומצה הלילה הזה כולו מצה שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין שאר ירקות הלילה הזה מרור שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין בשר צלי שלוק ומבושל הלילה הזה כולו צלי שבכל הלילות אנו מטבילין פעם אחת הלילה הזה שתי פעמים ולפי דעתו של בן אביו מלמדו מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח ודורש מארמי אובד אבי עד שיגמור כל הפרשה כולה:

They prepared the second cup of wine and here the child asks his father, and if he has no knowledge, then the father teaches him, "what is the difference between this night and any other? On all other nights..." and according to the knowledge of the child the father teaches him. He starts

the story with shame and ends with praise. And he expounds from 'Arami oved avi' until he finishes the entire parsha.

Two Talmudic giants, Rav and Shmuel debate a most fundamental question about the 'story'. The Mishna says "Begin with shame and end with praise", the Talmud asks:

What is shame? Rav says 'our forefathers were idol worshippers'.
Shmuel says, 'avadim hayinu'.

We expect and totally understand Shmuel's answer. After all, when we speak about Exodus we conjure up images of Israelite slaves building the pyramids and when we think of the end of that story it is either with the plague of the firstborn and the ensuing exodus from Egypt, or perhaps with the splitting of the sea. Shmuel gives us the seemingly right starting point of our story and we are meant to conclude with our own ending point, praising God.

But Rav throws us a bit. What does Pesach have to do with 'originally our forefathers were idol-worshippers'? The answer relates to a fundamental aspect of the Exodus story. God performs the miracles and wonders in Egypt not only to punish Pharaoh but so that all in the land will (once again) know the name of God. God's name had been lost due to time, polytheism, and that His ambassadors, the children of Israel, were in servitude rather than calling out in God's name in the Promised Land. According to Rav the real Exodus story is a return from a state of the disappearance of God to a universal reconnection to God as the creator of the heavens and the earth.

Who's version of the Exodus story is right, Rav's or Shmuel's? The fascinating answer of the Haggadah is BOTH! The rabbis writing the Haggadah in the centuries following the destruction of the Temple were aware that the Pesach story included two distinct themes of 'shame to praise', two trajectories, one physical, the other spiritual.

At first, we begin with Shmuel's version as the physical slavery and freedom comes to mind when thinking about the story. Therefore, right after the 'four questions' we begin with the words: עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt... The Haggadah continues to tell the story of slavery to redemption but interrupts it with another narrative:

מתחלה עובדי עבודה זרה היו אבותינו, ועכשיו קרבנו המקום לעבדתו, שנאמר: ויאמר יהושע אל-כָּל־הָעָם, פֹּה אָמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: בְּעֵבֶר הַנְּהָר יָשְׁבוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם מֵעוֹלָם, תָּרַח אָבִי אֲבָרָהָם וְאָבִי נָחוֹר, וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וְאָקַח אֶת־אֲבִיכֶם אֶת־אֲבָרָהָם מֵעֵבֶר הַנְּהָר וְאוֹלָדָה אוֹתוֹ בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, וְאֲרָבָה אֶת־יָרְעוּ וְאָתְמוּ לוֹ אֶת־יִצְחָק, וְאָתְמוּ לִיִצְחָק אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת־עֵשָׂו. וְאָתְמוּ לַעֲשׂוֹ אֶת־הַר שְׁעִיר לְרִשְׁתָּהוּ, וַיַּעֲקֹב וּבְנָיו יָרְדוּ מִצְרָיִם בְּרוּד שׁוֹמֵר הַבְּטָחָתוֹ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּרוּד הוּא. שֶׁהַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּד הוּא חֹשֵׁב אֶת־הַקֶּץ, לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּמוֹ שְׁאָמַר לְאֲבָרָהָם אֲבִינוּ בְּבְרִית בֵּין הַבְּתָרִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַיֹּאמֶר לְאֲבָרָם, יָדַע תִּדַע כִּי־

גַּר יִהְיֶה וְרָעָה בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם, וְעַבְדִּים וְעַנּוּ אֹתָם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה. וְגַם אֶת־הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲבֹדוּ דָן אֲנִי וְאֶת־רִיבֹן יִצְחָק בְּרַכְּשׁ גָּדוֹל.

From the beginning, our ancestors were idol worshippers. And now, the Place [of all] has brought us close to His worship, as it is stated (Joshua 24:2-4), "Yehoshua said to the whole people, so said the Lord, God of Israel, 'Over the river did your ancestors dwell from always, Terach the father of Avraham and the father of Nachor, and they worshiped other gods.

And I took your father, Avraham, from over the river and I made him walk in all the land of Canaan and I increased his seed and I gave him Yitzchak. And I gave to Yitzchak, Ya'akov and Esav; and I gave to Esav, Mount Seir [in order that he] inherit it; and Yaakov and his sons went down to Egypt."

Blessed be the One who keeps His promise to Israel, blessed be He; since the Holy One, blessed be He, calculated the end [of the exile,] to do as He said to Avraham, our father, in the Covenant between the Pieces, as it is stated (Genesis 15:13-14), "And He said to Avram, 'you should surely know that your seed will be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and they will enslave them and afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation for which they shall toil will I judge, and afterwards they will go out with much property.'"

The Haggadah maintains that there are two stories to be told in ancient times and there are still two stories to be told today. As we sit at our Seder tables and tell the story of Exodus, Shmuel's version is as old as time—there will always be those who are trying to persecute, subjugate or even destroy us. God will help us survive and thrive.

The second story is very much alive today in the modern era with so many denying the existence of God in the world. The spiritual Pesach story needs to be emphatically retold and reviewed. Today the children of Israel have returned to the Promised Land and therefore should once again take upon themselves the role of ambassadors of Godliness in the world, reminding all 'for there is none other than God in the land'.

Activities During the Seder

At some points we uncover the matzas, reminding ourselves of the symbol of the day; at other points we cover the matzas. Sometimes we lift our cup of freedom; other times we point to different parts of the Seder plate. All this in order to involve our children and pique their curiosity. There is a Sephardic tradition that the leader of the Seder dons tattered clothing and packs a sack of clothing and matza and 'journeys' around the Seder table reminding the kids of the trials and tribulations pre-Exodus and even Post.

There is a custom to spill out a bit of wine when reciting the ten plagues and the acronym of the ten. Some do it with a finger and some spill it from the glass. The glass should be refilled before reciting and drinking the second cup at the end of the magid.

It is wise to prepare BEFORE the Seder and appoint different people at the Seder to discuss different aspects of the story so that all can be engaged and a fruitful discussion can ensue. Most time should be dedicated to the 'magid' section as immediately following the meal begins and people tend to get tired after eating all the matza and food.

Rachtzah—wash your hands for matzah

This is the standard law of washing one's hand before eating bread, in this case, fulfilling the mitzvah of eating matza.

Motzi-Matzah—the mitzvah of matzah

It is not often that we get to fulfill a positive biblical commandment of the Torah. Eating Matza on the first night of Pesach is an important one. For this reason we are strict in the amount of Matza we eat, the time we take to eat it, and the additional times we eat 'obligatory matza' during the Seder.

The Torah doesn't specifically say how much matza is to be eaten however the rabbis considered the definition of eating as minimum eating an olive size piece of matza. How much practically is an olive size? That is the source of a great debate amongst the rabbis. The conclusion according to many is to be strict when fulfilling the mitzvah of Matza and lenient regarding the other times eating matza (korech and Afikoman).

The accepted practice in many circles is to eat two thirds of a machine made matza (and equal amount for the handmade) for the mitzvah of matza, while one third suffices for the other times of the meal. If one finds the two thirds amount too difficult, stick to the one third of the matza which is achievable for most. One should be careful to eat the allotted matza in 6-7 minutes, ideally not speaking in between to have no distractions and of course reclining to the left.

The procedure is as follows:

After washing hands one takes all three matzas and recites the bracha of 'hamotzi' (God brings bread from the earth). Three matzas are held because as we mentioned one of the matzas is broken so we need the other two for lechem mishne. Once that bracha is recited the bottom matza is dropped and one recites an additional bracha (al achilat matza' on the mitzvah of eating matza)

on the whole and broken one, representing two forms and two messages of matza. Then a third is taken from the top one and a third from the broken one and they are eaten together.

Marror—the mitzvah of marror

It is generally accepted that while it is a biblical commandment to eat marror together with the korban sacrifice, without the Temple the mitzvah of marror is from the rabbis. We do not recline because this is about experiences some of the pain and suffering of slavery. The general custom is to use lettuce or endives and one can guess the size of a kezayit (olive size) by basically using their hand as a way to measure the size required. The marror is dipped in Haroset and the blessing of 'al achilat marror' is recited.

Korech—eating the Pesach, matza and marror

A custom emerged as a reminder of a tradition of Hillel who would eat the korban Pesach together with matza and marror (like a shwarma?) and fulfill the biblical command to eat the korban 'al matzot umerorim' (with matza and vegetables). Today we continue the tradition just eat matza, marror without the meat, we dip it into Haroset and recline while eating. It is enough to have one third of the matza together with the marror for this mitzvah.

Shulchan Orech—enjoying the meal

At this point the first part of the Seder comes to a close and a festive meal ensues. It is customary to begin the meal with hardboiled eggs. There are various reasons for this custom from a commemoration of the korban chagigah to a reminder of mourning customs. There is also an accepted practice to NOT eat roasted meat at the Seder meal. Grilled or smoked meats should not be consumed as well according to many positions. This is because there is not korban Pesach and if people would eat roasted meat it would look like they were slaughtering the korban Pesach outside of the walls of Jerusalem.

One should 'eat, drink and be merry', as it is a festive meal; however, one should not overeat because we must still have some room left over for the Afikoman, which is the last piece of matza at the end of the meal.

Tzafun—hiddenness

At the end of the meal the Afikoman is eaten. A commemoration of the Korban Pesach which was eaten on a full (but not too full) stomach because they felt that was the most desirous time to eat. The entire night of Pesach led up to the

Afikoman and the piece of the matza which was hidden earlier in the evening is brought out and the strict position is to eat two thirds of the matza to fulfill the mitzvah, one may be lenient and eat only one third. And if one needs to be more lenient, they can eat only one fifth of the matza and fulfill their obligation.

Barech—blessings

Birkat Hamazon for Pesach is like any other holidays with a reminder to insert the special paragraph of 'yaale veyavo' (let it rise) and to insert the Pesach appellation 'chag hamatzot'. At the end of Birkat the blessing on the third cup of wine is recited with the after-blessing on the wine immediately subsequent.

Hallel—praise and thanksgiving

The penultimate stage is the continuation of Hallel recited earlier in the Seder. The conclusion of the Hallel comes with its own special blessing followed by the final cup of the night.

Nirtzah—acceptance

This is the last part of the Pesach Seder with several songs recited together by the whole table. The law is that one may not eat anything after the Afikomen and even drinking wine is prohibited after the meal as well. Coffee and tea are permitted according to some authorities.

The Second Day of Pesach

The second day of Pesach outside of Israel is celebrated exactly as the first day with all the mitzvot and prohibitions attached to it. The reason for the sanctity of the second day relates back to ancient times when the new moon was determined by sight and there was uncertainty as to whether those Jews living outside of Israel would be able to receive the news in time. For that reason, they celebrated a second day 'just in case'. For two thousand years, however, the calendar has been determined mathematically and despite the fact that there is no uncertainty, 'the tradition of our forefathers stays with us' and that is why there is a second day of Yomtov.

At night, after the stars come out (so as not to infringe on the sanctity of the first day of Pesach), women light Yomtov candles and recite the bracha of Shehechyanu once again.

The rest of the seder is just like the first night except for an important addition at the end of the Seder—Sefirat haomer!

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כִּי־תָבֹאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וּקְצַרְתֶּם אֶת־קְצִירָהּ וְהִבֵּאתֶם אֶת־עֹמֶר רֵאשִׁית קְצִירְכֶם אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן: וְהִגִּידוּ אֶת־הָעֹמֶר לַפְּנֵי יְהוָה לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם מִמִּחַרְתֵּי הַשַּׁבָּת יִנְיָפוּ הַכֹּהֵן: וַעֲשִׂיתֶם בַּיּוֹם הַגִּידְתֶּם אֶת־הָעֹמֶר כַּבֵּשׂ תְּמִים בְּיַד־שְׂנֵיתוֹ לַעֲלֹה לַיהוָה: וּמִנְחָתוֹ שְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרִים סֹלֶת בְּלוּלָה בַשֶּׁמֶן אִשָּׁה לַיהוָה רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ וְנִסְכָּה גֵן רְבִיעֵת הַקֵּיץ: וְלָקַחְם וְקָלִי וְכַרְמֶל לֹא תֹאכְלוּ עַד־עֲצֹמֵם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עַד הַבִּיאְכֶם אֶת־קָרְבַּן אֱלֹהֵיכֶם תִּקַּח עֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בְּכֹל מִשְׁבַּחְתֵיכֶם: וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמִּחַרְתֵּי הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאְכֶם אֶת־עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שֶׁבַע שַׁבָּתוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה: עַד מִמִּחַרְתֵּי הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִת תִּסְפְּרוּ תְּמִשִּׁים יוֹם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַיהוָה:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving to you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the first sheaf of your harvest to the priest. He shall elevate the sheaf before the LORD for acceptance in your behalf; the priest shall elevate it on the day after the sabbath. On the day that you elevate the sheaf, you shall offer as a burnt offering to the LORD a lamb of the first year without blemish.

The meal offering with it shall be two-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD; and the libation with it shall be of wine, a quarter of a hin. Until that very day, until you have brought the offering of your God, you shall eat no bread or parched grain or fresh ears; it is a law for all time throughout the ages in all your settlements. And from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering—the day after the sabbath—you shall count off seven weeks. They must be complete: you must count until the day after the seventh week—fifty days; then you shall bring an offering of new grain to the LORD. (Leviticus 23:9-16)

The Torah records the mitzvah of counting the Omer on the day following the first day of Pesach and lasting until the holiday of Shavuot. It is difficult not to see the connection between the two holidays as we are obligated to count the 49 days from one special day to the next. Pesach is the holiday of no chametz, one must eradicate the chametz and the chametz existence; Shavuot is the holiday of 'shte'i halechem' (two loaves of bread)! It would appear that Pesach and Shavuot represent a process not only from physical slavery to redemption but also from spiritual poverty to the rich, multi-faceted dimensions of a Torah existence.

The Torah obligated each individual to bring the first sheaf to the priest, a gift to the Temple recognizing the new harvest of wheat, while at the same time the obligation is to count each day leading up to the holiday of Shavuot.

Today, without the Temple though the mitzvah of harvesting and bringing the first sheaf to the Temple is not done, the counting still continues and according to some it is still a biblical law. The mitzvah entails standing up, making a blessing and counting each day and week of the 'omer' period. The blessing and the first count on the second night of Pesach is as follows:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על ספירת העומר :

Baruch ata Adon-ai eloheinu melech haolam asher kidshanu bemitzvotav ve'tzivanu al sefirat haomer

Blessed are You, our God, King of the universe, Who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to count the Omer.

ט"ז ניסן. היום יום אָחַד בְּעוֹמֵר Today is one day of the Omer

Special Prayers for Pesach

Pesach is a Yomtov which means that the prayers are a little more special than a regular Shabbat. The tunes are different and there are additional prayers to be inserted in the Amidah as well as additional prayers to be added on the day.

The amida for all of Yomtov is the same seven blessings—three introductory and three conclusionary with one blessing in the middle called 'kedushat hayom' (sanctity of the day). On Pesach we insert twice the name of the holiday, once, chag hamatzot (festival of matza) and a second time the description as zman cheruteinu (time of our freedom).

Every day of Pesach we recite the special prayer of Hallel which consists of an introductory and conclusionary blessing and psalms 113-118 in the middle. On the first day (first two days outside of Israel) the entirety of the six psalms are recited, while for the remaining days a shortened version of the Hallel is recited.

Every day of Pesach a different, special, Torah reading is recited, each one focuses on another time Pesach is mentioned in the Torah.

On the last day of Pesach a special prayer is recited called 'Tal' (dew). It represents the transition from the winter months of rain to the summer months.

The final special prayer is Yizkor. In it we ask God to remember the souls of our loved ones who have passed on with the hope that they be bound up in the bond of eternal life together with other righteous men and women who reside in the Garden of Eden. This prayer is recited by orphans (those who lost a mother or father or both (though the custom is not to recite it in the first year of one's passing). At this time the congregation recites special prayers for those victims of the holocaust, terror victims as well as those who fell in battle serving in the Israeli army.

There is a general custom that those who are not orphans leave the Synagogue for the short time it takes for the others to solemnly remember their loved ones, and then all return and continue services.

This year, due to Covid, many people will not be attending Synagogue. For them the prayers still work. Start your holidays with a special personal meditation to God; in the morning sing the hallel with you and your family. Torah reading is not possible without a minyan; kaddish and kedusha neither. But they represent a fraction of the plethora of prayers available to Jews during this festival. You can access Pesach prayers in 'machzorim' special siddurim for the festivals, or with the regular siddur you have in your home.

Despite the pandemic Jewish practice and traditions continue. So, engage your family in the poetry and majesty of Jewish prayers. I assure you your voices will rise up to the heavens!