

Erev Pesach Which Coincides With Shabbat: A Guide for the Perplexed (5781/2021)

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This year, 5781/2021, the Pesach Seder is held on Motza'ei Shabbat, a phenomenon which last occurred thirteen years ago and creates several halachic conundrums and which yields many ramifications. Notwithstanding the plethora of opinions in the vast sea of Torah literature, I have taken the liberty of putting together a small digest of laws, customs, protocols, and procedures for the days leading up to the Pesach Seder. I have observed that, specifically because of the multitude of opinions, the circumstances specific to this year have led to a certain confusion among many which only serves to compound the usual anxieties associated with even ordinary Pesach preparations.

As such, below you will find a step-by-step guide, in chronological order, beginning with the Thursday before Pesach through the Seder night. It should be noted that all laws conform to the customs of Sephardic Jewry as interpreted by the glory of our generation, the revered Rishon Le'Zion, ***Maran Rabbeinu Ovadia Yosef zt"l***, as codified in his works (especially Chazon Ovadia- Pesach) and as understood by his illustrious sons, the great Rishon Le'Zion ***Hagaon Rabbeinu Yitzchak Yosef Shlit"a*** (in his Sefer, Yalkut Yosef) and my former Rosh Bet Midrash, ***Hagaon Rabbeinu David Yosef Shlit"a*** (in his lectures and works). As always, all are advised to consult with their own Rav/Posek for a definitive ruling on these and all other halachic matters.

Thursday- 12 Nissan/March 25th

The Fast of the Firstborns

On regular years, *Ta'anit Bechorot* or the Fast of the Firstborns would be held on Erev Pesach, the 14th of Nissan. This year, however, when Erev Pesach coincides with Shabbat and fasting is forbidden, according to the Sephardic tradition of following the rulings of Maran Ha'Shulchan Aruch, *Ta'anit Bechorot* is not applicable at all. Nevertheless, in reverence to the opinions that rule that this fast is indeed observed on the Thursday preceding Pesach, it is preferable to find a *Seudat Mitzvah* in which to participate on Thursday morning to exempt one from fasting, such as *Berit Milah*, *Pidyon Ha'Ben*, or, most notably, a *Siyum Masechet*. (**Note:** Although delaying a *Siyum* to exempt one from this fast on other years is ill-advised, a postponed *Siyum* on Masechet Pesachim, which will G-d-willing be concluded by members of the Daf Yomi cycle on the preceding Monday, may be used to exempt the congregation from the fast this year.) If one cannot find a *Seudat Mitzvah* to attend on Thursday morning, one is completely exempt from this fast.

The Search for Chametz

Although on regular years, the customary search for Chametz is held on the night of the 14th of Nissan (the night before the Seder), this year, this will not be plausible and thus, our Sages enacted that on a year like this, the search for Chametz is to be held on Thursday night, the 13th of Nissan. The blessing upon the search is recited at this time. The most preferred time for this search is at nightfall, which is at approximately **7:30 PM**. One is prohibited to eat a meal of a settled character or even begin studying

Torah from a half-hour before this time until after the search is complete. One should preferably pray Arvit before the search.

Following the search, one must renounce the Chametz in one's possession by reciting the following:

“Any Chametz (leaven) in my possession which I have not seen and I have destroyed is hereby nullified and should be like the dust of the earth.”

The pieces of bread collected during the search in addition to any other Chametz one plans on eating on Friday and/or Shabbat should be sealed and placed in a safe location so it will not disperse, for this would necessitate another search.

Friday- 13 Nissan/March 26th

Burning and Selling Chametz

Although the usual Erev Pesach time constraints do not apply on this day since it is not actually Erev Pesach, it is advisable to burn one's Chametz by the same end-time as one would any other Erev Pesach so as to avoid confusion during other years. This means that one should burn one's Chametz by the end of the fifth seasonal hour of the day, i.e., by approximately **11:40 AM**. Nevertheless, if one has not done so by this time, one may certainly do so for the duration of the day until shortly before the onset of Shabbat.

If one does not plan on eating/handling any more Chametz after this point, one should recite the following renunciation after the Chametz has been burned:

“Any Chametz (leaven) in my possession which I have seen or I have not seen, which I have destroyed or which I have not destroyed is hereby nullified and should be like the dust of the earth.”

For those who plan on eating Chametz on Friday and Shabbat, this renunciation should be saved for Shabbat morning after having disposed of the remnants of one's Chametz.

The sale of Chametz to a non-Jew is customarily held on Friday morning as well.

Those who plan on eating Chametz on Shabbat should make sure to leave over the bare minimum necessary for two Shabbat meals per person and no more. Similarly, one should use only bread which does not crumble, such as pita and the like, so as to minimize the chances of leaving over traces of Chametz.

The Shabbat Meals

In spite of the impending Pesach holiday, the Shabbat of Erev Pesach is a Shabbat like any other and must be treated as such. The Shabbat meals (at least the first two) must be fulfilled with double-bread or any other *Hamotzi* item in observance of the Mitzvah of *Oneg Shabbat*. However, due to Chametz concerns and time constraints, there are a few points we must take into consideration. As a word to the wise, it would be prudent to make sure that all foods served during the Shabbat meals are completely kosher for Passover. All dishes, utensils, flatware, and cutlery should be that of Pesach or disposable to avoid residual Chametz that cannot be washed off because of the prohibition of *Hachana* (preparing on Shabbat for any other day). Even if one plans on consuming bread during the Shabbat meals, extreme caution should be taken to avoid cross-contamination between the bread and the Passover foods. The following is a list of

alternatives for how to correctly navigate the Shabbat meals in a halachically-sound and practical manner. Before continuing our discussion, let us briefly explain some terms which will arise in the context of the Shabbat meals:

- **Cooked Matzah** refers to a whole sheet of regular or Shmura Matzah (round or square) which is dipped into a boiling pot of soup (or even plain hot water) until it absorbs the taste of the soup. Preferably, the Matzah should be left in the pot until the broth cools down, however, if there is concern that the Matzah may start falling apart or disintegrate in the soup, even immersing it for several seconds will suffice. This process may even be done on Shabbat.
- **Fried Matzah** refers to a whole sheet of regular or Shmura Matzah (round or square) fried in oil. It can likewise first be basted with egg and then fried in oil, similar to French Toast. (*Pro Tip:* Soaking the Matzah first for a few minutes in cold water helps make it pliable and much easier to manage in the frying pan.) This process may only be done before the onset of Shabbat.
- **Egg Matzah** refers to Matzah baked without any water in the dough. It is typically made from a mixture of flour, eggs, and apple cider. This is NOT a regular Matzah.

The Friday Night Meal

As mentioned above, the first two Shabbat meals must contain a *Hamotzi* item in order to fulfill one's obligation of *Oneg Shabbat*. To that effect, one may choose from the following options:

- **Pita Bread:** If one wishes to eat Chametz at this meal, this is certainly permissible. However, as mentioned above, one must be exceedingly careful about cross-contamination between the bread and the Pesach foods. A special disposable tablecloth should be used to eat the bread on and when finished, one should wash one's hands, dispose of the tablecloth, and then proceed with the meal. (*Pro Tip:* To avoid crumbing and cross contamination, many people who wish to eat bread for the Shabbat meals tend to do so outside in the back yard or balcony. When this is done, *Kiddush*, *Hamotzi*, and *Birkat Hamazon* should be recited outdoors and then the family should enter the house and continue eating the other foods, with new beginning and after blessings.)
- **Regular Matzah:** Although the blessing on Matzah for Sephardic Jews throughout the year is customarily *Mezonot*, the blessing on Matzah on this specific Shabbat is *Hamotzi* and *Birkat Hamazon*. This applies to both regular and Shmura Matzah. It is permissible to consume regular Matzah for the Friday night meal (as opposed to Shabbat day, see below). One would need to consume a *Kezayit/Kebeitza* (either a half or whole square of Matzah, approximately) as one would with bread any other Shabbat.
- **Cooked/Fried Matzah:** The blessing on such Matzah is likewise *Hamotzi* and *Birkat Hamazon*. One would need to consume the same amount as regular Matzah, see above.
- **Egg Matzah:** This is a far less practical alternative since the blessing on this kind of Matzah on this Shabbat, throughout Pesach, and all year long, is *Mezonot*. Thus, in order to justify reciting the *Hamotzi* blessing on such Matzah, one would need to consume four *Kebeitzim* (an approximate volume of 216 grams, i.e., between 3-4 squares of egg Matzah) in order to achieve this feat. Good luck.

Shabbat- 14 Nissan/March 27th

Shabbat Morning Prayers

The prevalent custom among most Jewish communities around the world is that when Erev Pesach coincides with Shabbat, Shabbat morning services are held at an early hour, i.e., *Netz* (sunrise) so that those who wish to eat bread during the Shabbat morning meal will have ample time to do so before the end-time for eating Chametz. Sunrise on Shabbat morning is at **6:46 AM** and prayers should be scheduled accordingly. Likewise, the prayers and Torah reading should move at a brisk pace; *Hashkavot* and *Mosifim* should be kept to a bare minimum.

The Shabbat Morning Meal

In order to fulfill one's obligation of this meal, one may choose from one of the following options:

- **Pita Bread:** See discussion and tips above. If one chooses this option, one must be cognizant of the end-time for eating Chametz which is at **10:28 AM**. One must finish eating all Chametz by this time. One must carefully sweep the floor and surrounding areas with special attention placed on crumbs and the like. If one has leftover Chametz, if the pieces are less than a *Kezayit* (crumbs), one may discard them in one's own trash can and rely on the renunciation text recited later (see further). For bigger pieces, one should dispose of these pieces in a public trash can (where there is a valid Eruv) or flush them down the toilet; one should not leave them in one's possession. After disposing of the Chametz, the renunciation text mentioned above (refer to Friday morning, paragraph entitled, "Burning and Selling Chametz") should be recited. Even those who had renounced their Chametz on Friday morning and have not since handled Chametz may do so again on Shabbat. All Chametz must be eliminated and the renunciation must be recited by **11:44 AM**.
- **Cooked/Fried Matzah:** See discussion above. Same applies here.
- **Egg Matzah:** See discussion above. Same applies here.

Regular Matzah is not a viable option for the Shabbat day meal since there is a rabbinic enactment prohibiting the consumption of Matzah on Erev Pesach so that one will be able to eat it heartily at the Seder. **Cooked/Fried Matzah** does not fall under this category since it cannot be used at the Seder for the Mitzvah of eating Matzah and thus, it may be eaten on Erev Pesach. As mentioned, it still retains the *Hamotzi* blessing and *Birkat Hamazon*.

Seuda Shelishit/The Third Shabbat Meal

According to Halacha, one is obligated to eat *Seuda Shelishit* on this Shabbat just like any other. The earliest time for *Seuda Shelishit* this Shabbat is at **1:33 PM**. At this point, however, regular Matzah and bread are not viable options since they are both prohibited for consumption by this time. Thus, the only alternatives are, as follows:

- **Cooked/Fried Matzah:** See discussion above. Same applies here.
- **Egg Matzah:** See discussion above. Same applies here.

Bear in mind though that once the beginning of the tenth seasonal hour of the day arrives, i.e., at approximately **4:00 PM**, if one has not yet eaten *Seuda Shelishit* by this time, one may not eat more than a *Kebeitza* (a little less than one square of Matzah) of either of the above options (each with its respective blessings) so that this does not prevent one from eating Matzah at the Seder with appetite.

As many people have asked me, please be aware that when Erev Pesach coincided with Shabbat, the custom of Maran Rabbeinu Ovadia Yosef zt"l was to use Cooked/Fried Matzah for all three Shabbat meals, thus avoiding having to handle and deal with Chametz issues at all on this Shabbat.

The *Muktzeh* Status of Matzah on Shabbat Erev Pesach

Matzot specifically designated for the purpose of fulfilling the Mitzvah on the Seder night (generally Hand Shmura Matzah) are deemed *Muktzeh* and therefore may not be moved on Shabbat. However, this only applies if one is particular not to give such Matzah to children (under the age of *Chinuch* who may eat Matzah on Erev Pesach) who ask for it on Erev Pesach. On the other hand, if one has an abundance of Hand Shmura Matzah, such that even if these Matzot were earmarked for the Seder, if a child asked for it, the father would give it to him, these Matzot are not considered *Muktzeh* and they may be moved. Regular Matzah not designated for the Seder is not *Muktzeh* at all.

Furthermore, even when the Matzah is considered *Muktzeh*, if there is a need to move it on Shabbat (such as, with regards to soft Matzah stored in the freezer which must be adequately thawed by the time the Seder begins), one may place any food item onto the box of Matzah and carry the box along with the food item to wherever one wishes to place it.

Preparing for the Seder

It is forbidden to prepare anything for the Seder night on Shabbat, such as, setting the table, preparing foods, and the like, as this would infringe on the honor of Shabbat. One must wait until approximately twenty minutes after sunset on Motza'ei Shabbat (**7:35 PM**) to begin preparations (but not actual work though).

If there is a great need to begin Seder preparations before this time, such as, if one has many guests, one may begin Seder preparations at sunset, **7:15 PM**.

Lighting Yom Tov Candles

Once Shabbat has ended (Geonim/Rabbeinu Tam respectively, whatever one would do any other Shabbat), before lighting Yom Tov candles, the woman of the house should recite the following: "*Baruch Hamavdil Ben Kodesh Le'Kodesh*" and only then light the candles.

I hope that this article finds everyone in the best of health. I would like to take this opportunity to wish our members and the entire Jewish nation a wonderful, joyous, healthy, calm, meaningful, and kosher Passover holiday. May we all merit celebrating Pesach in the holy city of Jerusalem with the arrival of our righteous Mashiach and the building of the Third Bet Hamikdash, Amen!

Tizku Le'Shanim Rabbot Ne'imot Ve'Tovot!