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GUEST CONTRIBUTOR



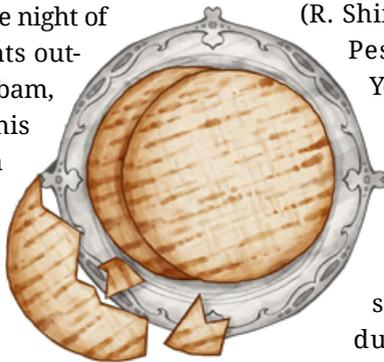
The Mitzvah of Matzah

In the following summary, we will discuss some of the primary halachot related to the mitzvah of eating matzah at the Seder.

There is a Torah mitzvah to eat at least one *k'zayit* of matzah on the night of the Seder (two Seder nights outside of Eretz Yisrael) (Rambam, Chametz Umatzah 6:1). This mitzvah applies to both men and women. Children who have reached the age of *chinuch* (education), approximately six years old, should likewise be trained to fulfill this mitzvah (Ibid., 6:10; see also R. Moshe Harari, Mikraei Kodesh, Leil Haseder 7:39). One should have in mind to fulfill the mitzvah when eating the matzah during “*motzi-matzah*” (Mishnah Berurah 475:34).

The procedure for eating the matzah is as follows: The leader of the Seder picks up all three matzot and recites the *beracha* of “*hamotzi*” over them, in order to fulfill the requirement of *lechem mishneh* (two loaves) according to all opinions (some hold that on Pesach, the broken matzah should serve as one, while others hold the

bottom whole matzah is the second one). The leader then puts down the bottom matzah and recites the second *beracha* of “*al achilat matzah*” over the top two matzot, which are used for “*motzi-matzah*” (Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 475:1 and Mishnah Berurah 475:2). The matzah is then distributed to all participants, ensuring that each person receives at least a *k'zayit* (see below). If necessary, the required amount may be completed using additional matzah



(R. Shimon Eider, “Halachos of Pesach,” p.274; R. Ovadia Yosef, Chazon Ovadia, p.65).

There are numerous opinions regarding the precise measurement of a *k'zayit*. In addition, some maintain that one should eat two *k'zeitim*, due to uncertainty as to whether the halachic size of an egg (which is used as a reference measure) has changed over time (see Shulchan Aruch 486:1 and Mishnah Berurah 486:1). Although the details and various opinions are beyond the scope of this summary (see, e.g., https://halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Required_Amount_of_Matzah_and_Wine_for_the_Seder for a range of opinions), eating at least approximately 48 cc fulfills the mitzvah according to many opinions. This amount satisfies one *k'zayit* according to many stringent opinions, and two *k'zeitim* according to some of the more

lenient opinions (R. Yosef Zvi Rimon, “Leil Haseder: Halacha Mimekorah, p.151).

The *k'zayit* is generally calculated by volume (length x width x height) among Ashkenazim (R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Halichot Shlomo, Pesach 9:8; R. Simcha Rabinowitz, Piskei Teshuvot 210:1), and is approximately three-quarters of a standard machine matzah (60 cc), which is often a bit less than half of a whole hand matzah (though sizes and thickness of hand matzot vary, so one should measure using a standard-size machine matzah). Many Sephardim, however, measure the amount by weight, which results in a larger required amount (Kaf Hachaim, O.C. 168:46; R. Ovadia Yosef, Yechaveh Da'at 1:16).

The *k'zayit* of matzah should ideally be eaten within the time frame of “*kedei achilat peras*” (the time it takes to eat half a loaf of bread) (Mishnah Berurah 475:9). This is often estimated at approximately four minutes (V'zot Habracha, p.6), while some allow for up to six or seven minutes (Chazon Ovadia, p.66).

Many poskim maintain that one fulfills this requirement by eating in a normal, continuous manner, even if it takes longer than this time to complete the *k'zayit* (R. Rimon, p.128).

One who is ill, or for whom eating the amount of matzah discussed previously may pose a medical concern, should consult a competent halachic authority. In such cases, one may be able to rely on more lenient opinions and suffice with approximately 30 cc of matzah, or even less if necessary (see R. Moshe Mordechai Karp, Hilchot Chag B'chag, end; R. Rimon, p.148;

see also <https://www.star-k.org/articles/articles/seasonal/15813/pesach-shiurim/>).

One who has celiac disease but is able to tolerate oats should endeavor to obtain kosher oat matzah, as in cases of need, matzah may be made from any of the five grains (Chazon Ovadia, p.76; R. Yaakov Ariel, as cited in Oholei Halacha, p.265).

Ideally, the matzah for *motzi-matzah* should be eaten on its own in the normal manner of eating. One who has difficulty chewing may crumble the matzah (Biur Halachah 461:4). If necessary, it may be slightly softened by minimal soaking in water prior to eating (Chazon Ovadia, p.72).

Regarding using salt with matzah, Sephardim generally dip the matzah in salt, as is done with challah throughout the year, whereas Ashkenazim generally refrain from doing so, since matzah is considered *lechem oni* (poor-man's bread) (Shulchan Aruch and Rema 475:1; Mishnah Berurah 475:4).

One should eat the matzah while reclining, in fulfillment of the mitzvah of *haseibah*. If one ate the matzah without reclining, one should eat another *k'zayit* while reclining; however, the *berachot* are not repeated (Shulchan Aruch and Rema 472:7, 475:1).

Sephardic women who forgot to recline need not eat again, as although they generally are obligated to recline, after the fact they may rely on the opinion that women are not obligated in *haseibah* (Chazon Ovadia, p.68; R. Mordechai Elyahu, cited in R. Harari, p.161). Ashkenazi women, who according to most poskim are not obligated to recline, certainly need not eat the matzah again if they did not recline,

although some recommend them reclining *lechatchilah* for all parts of the Seder where men recline (see Rema 472:4; Kaf Hachaim 472:28; Peninei Halacha, Pesach 16:12)

It is forbidden to speak in between the *berachot* recited on matzah until one has eaten a *k'zayit*. If one did speak, the *berachaot* are not repeated (Chazon Ovadia, p.68). Ideally, one should avoid unnecessary conversation until the end of *Korech*, as this, too, is considered a continuation of the mitzvah of matzah (Shulchan Aruch 475:1 and Mishnah Berurah 475:24; see further below).

In situations where an interruption may be necessary, e.g., a pre-warning currently given in Israel after a missile launch from Iran a few minutes before the missile arrives, one should, if possible, delay beginning *motzi-matzah* briefly in order to avoid interruption when moving to the shelter or safe room. If a siren for an incoming missile is heard in the middle of *motzi-matzah*, one may take the remainder of the matzah to the shelter or safe room and continue to eat there in the proper manner. If that is not possible, one may return and eat a new *k'zayit* within the proper time frame.

In all such cases, one may speak as

needed for safety purposes, though unnecessary conversation should still be avoided until the mitzvah has been completed (for further discussion of missile alerts during the Seder, see R. Elchanan Printz, “*Azakah B’leil Haseder*,” available on request).

During “*Korech*,” one eats an additional *k'zayit* of matzah (taken from the bottom matzah, supplemented as needed) together with a *k'zayit* of maror, in accordance with the opinion of Hillel, who held that matzah should be eaten together with *maror* (Shulchan Aruch 475:1).

Since *Korech* is a rabbinic enactment, one may rely on a smaller measure of approximately 30 cc of matzah, which is about half of a standard machine matzah, and a bit more than a quarter of an average hand matzah, but as noted above, sizes of hand matzot vary (R. Rimon, p.152). Before eating the *Korech*, one recites the paragraph of “*Zecher L’mikdash k’Hillel*,” as printed in the Haggadah. One should recline when eating *Korech*. If one did not recline, one need not eat it again, as reclining for *Korech* is not obligatory (Shulchan Aruch 475:1; Shulchan Aruch Harav 475:18-20).

The *Afikomen* is eaten after the meal in commemoration of the Korban Pesach, which was eaten when one was already satiated (Shulchan Aruch 477:1). It should be taken from the larger broken matzah, though additional matzah may be used if needed or if the original *Afikomen* is lost (Rema 477:2). Since some opinions consider this eating to fulfill a Torah-level mitzvah, one should ideally eat the same amount as for *motzi-matzah*. However, one

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may rely on a smaller amount if necessary – preferably at least 40 cc, which constitutes two *k'zeitim* according to some opinions (two-thirds of a machine matzah, a bit more than one-third of average hand matzah), or less in cases of difficulty (R. Rimon, p.195). One should recline while eating the *Afikomen* (Shulchan Aruch 477:1). If one forgets to recline and it is difficult to eat more, one need not eat again (Mishnah Berurah 477:4).

Ideally, one should retain a slight appetite for the *Afikomen*. If one is already entirely full, one nevertheless fulfills the mitzvah; however, one who is so satiated that one is repulsed by food does not fulfill the mitzvah (Mishnah Berurah 476:6)

One should ideally eat the *Afikomen* before *chatzot* (halachic midnight, 12:42 am in Jerusalem and 12:59 am in New York). One who was unable to do so may still eat it afterward (Shulchan Aruch 477:1). However, if even the initial eating of matzah took place only after *chatzot*, the *berachot* on matzah should no longer be recited at that point (Mishnah Berurah 477:6).

It is forbidden to eat any food after the *Afikomen* (Shulchan Aruch 478:1). With regard to drinking, some prohibit all beverages aside from the third and fourth cups, while others permit non-intoxicating drinks, and some are lenient to allow all beverages after *chatzot* (Mishnah Berurah 478:2; Chazon Ovadia, p.112; Piskei Teshuvot 478:1).

The *afikomen* must be eaten all in one room. Moreover, the entire thing must be eaten at the same table (Rema 478:1; Mishnah Berurah 4). Therefore, if one receives

a pre-warning for a missile launch, one should avoid having to interrupt eating the *afikomen* in the middle to move to a shelter or safe room, such as by waiting until after the all clear notification is given, even if this is after *chatzot*. However, if needed, one may rely on more lenient opinions that permit eating the rest of the *afikomen* in a second location (Chazon Ish, O.C. 124; see article of R. Printz referenced above). ■

Rabbi Eli Ozarowski serves as editor of the *Tzurba M' Rabanan* English Series, an innovative, systematic learning program covering hundreds of major topics in the Shulchan Aruch from Tanach through modern-day halachic application. He is also the author of the OU's Torat Imecha Halacha Series. Rabbi Ozarowski received semicha from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and holds an M.A. from the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration. He lives in Mitzpeh Yericho with his wife, Zemira, who serves as Director of Women's Programming at OU Israel, together with their nine children.

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