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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

On the Air with Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

Rav Aviner answers questions of Jewish Law and faith on the radio in Israel on Tuesday & Thursday nights (To listen: www.kimizion.org/shiur/shut.html). On the Air presents a sample each week.

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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim wishes you a Kosher and Happy Pesach

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Saving a piece of the afikoman

Q: Some people have the custom of saving a small piece of the afikoman for a segulah (good luck). I heard that people eat it on Purim, or at least before the next Pesach. Is this correct?

A: These types of "segulot" are not mentioned in the Torah, not in the Mishnah, not in the Gemara, not in the Rambam and not in the Shulchan Aruch. To someone who is searching for segulot, I suggest even greater segulot: Do not speak "lashon ha-ra," learn Torah, love other people and repent.

Purchases during Sefirat Ha-Omer

Q: Is it permissible to receive something I ordered for my house during Sefirat Ha-Omer?

A: The issue during Sefirat Ha-Omer is not buying new items, but reciting the blessing of "Shehechyanu." This is not a good time of the year (since 24,000 of Rabbi Akiva's students died during this period), how then can one say "Blessed is Hashem...Who has granted us life, sustains us and has brought us to this time"? Who is happy during this time? The Shulchan Aruch does not mention the practice of not reciting "Shehechyanu" during Sefirat Ha-Omer, but mentions not reciting it during the period of "Bein Ha-Mitzarim" (the Three Weeks before Tisha Be-Av) (Shulchan Aruch, Aruch Chaim 551:17). Righteous people have the custom not to recite "Shehechyanu" during the Three Weeks, but this practice did not transfer to the period of Sefirat Ha-Omer. We therefore have a double stricture: 1. During the Three Weeks, this practice is not obligatory, but an act of piety. 2. It is mentioned in the Shulchan Aruch during the Three Weeks, but not during Sefirat Ha-Omer. It was only mentioned by later authorities. Nonetheless, it is not even a question in our case, since you are buying items for your home. When you buy items for a group – such as for you, your husband and your children – you do not recite the blessing of "Shehechyanu," but the blessing of "Ha-Tov Ve-Ha-Meitiv" (Hashem is good to me and does good for others). This means that it is not that there is a question and this is the answer, but there is no question at all.

Fast for the First-Born

Q: Rav Kook ztz"l mentions in his instructions given on Shabbat Ha-Gadol, printed in his commentary on the Siddur "Olat Re'iyah" (vol. 2, p. 243), that a first-born who is healthy and knows that he will not be prevented from fulfilling the mitzvot of Pesach night should fast on Erev Pesach, and not rely on the completion of a tractate of the Gemara to eat. Do the students of Rav Kook follow this ruling?

A: It is true that our Rabbi, Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook, included this practice when he organized his father's teachings, but the Mishnah Berurah decided that one may rely on the completion of a tractate (470:10). When our Rabbi, Rav Tzvi Yehudah, was shown this ruling of the Mishnah Berurah, he said that one could follow it, since the Mishnah Berurah is accepted as a great authority. Thus, one who wishes to be strict – may a blessing come upon him, and one who wishes to be lenient has an authority on whom to rely.

Perfume on Pesach

Q: Does perfume require kosher certification for Pesach?

A: Yes, perfume requires kosher certification for Pesach. An item which is inedible for a dog, such as makeup (besides lipstick – see below) does not require kosher certification for Pesach, but perfume is edible. It is possible to drink perfume. I don't even know how to

drink wine, but people who are accustomed to drinking ninety-proof alcohol have no problem drinking perfume. People who have nothing to drink – such as strong alcoholics – can certainly drink perfume. Ultra-Orthodox cosmetic stores have kosher for Pesach perfume.

Kosher for Pesach makeup

Q: Does makeup require kosher certification for Pesach?

A: No, because makeup is inedible for a dog, besides lipstick which is edible. While people do not sit around and eat lipstick, it is still edible and therefore requires kosher certification for Pesach.

Bird food on Pesach

Q: What can I feed my bird on Pesach?

A: It is forbidden to possess and benefit from chametz on Pesach. You must therefore feed your bird kosher for Pesach food. An Ashkenazi Jew may feed kitniyot (legumes) to his bird, since the bird is not Ashkenazi. It is forbidden for an Ashkenazi Jew to eat kitniyot, but it is permissible to derive benefit from it and he does not need to include it in the sale of chametz. He may possess kitniyot and give it to the bird, and he does not need to sell the bird to a Sefardi Jew.