



From the teachings of the
Rosh Yeshiva of Ateret Yerushalayim
Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

Parashat Pesach 5769

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Reciting a Blessing on the Haggadah

[From Rabbi Aviner's Commentary on the Haggadah]

Question: Why didn't our Sages establish a blessing on reciting the Haggadah, "Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us regarding the Haggadah"? The basis of reciting the Haggadah after all is a Torah mitzvah, counted among the 613 commandments, as the Rambam writes: "To relate the miracles and wonders that were performed for our ancestors in Egypt on the night of the fifteenth of Nisan" (Rambam, Hilchot Chametz U-Matzah 7:1).

Answer: Many answers have been suggested for this question:

- a. The Rosh wrote: "And regarding the question of why we do not recite a blessing on reciting the Haggadah, The Holy One, blessed be He, commanded us to perform many acts as a remembrance of the Exodus and we do not recite a blessing on them." According to his opinion, there is not an independent mitzvah to recite the Pesach Haggadah. Only if someone asks you about the Exodus must you explain it to them, but if no one asks, there is no need to say anything. In such a case, you perform all of the acts of that night, i.e. eating matzah, etc..., and through these acts you will remember the Exodus. A difficulty on the Rosh's position: It is written in the Mechilta (a text which derives laws from the Torah) that even if no one asks you, you are still obligated to relate the story of the Exodus. A rejection of this difficulty: The Rosh explains that the Mechilta is discussing a rabbinic obligation, but connects it to a verse in the Torah.
- b. The responsa "Besamim Rosh" explained that we do not recite a blessing on blessings and praises, just as we do not recite a blessing on the Birkat Hamazon (the blessing after eating). The Haggadah is composed entirely of praises. A difficulty on the position of the "Besamim Rosh": We recite a blessing on Hallel even though it is filled with praises.
- c. Rabbenu Yerucham: The blessing on the Haggadah is included in Kiddush when we say, "a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt."

d. Rashba: We do not recite a blessing since this is a mitzvah which has no known limit. One can fulfill his obligation with one statement, and the more he relates the story of the Exodus, the more praiseworthy he is.

e. The Meiri: We do not recite a blessing since after we recited the Shema in Ma'ariv, we said "Emet Ve-emuna – True and Faithful" which ends "Blessed are You, Hashem who redeemed Israel," and this serves as the blessing. A difficulty on the last three answers: Since the mitzvah is reciting the Haggadah and relating the story of the Exodus, we do not fulfill our obligation by recited Kiddush or with a mere statement.

f. Shibulei Ha-leket: The blessing on the Haggadah is the blessing we recite before eating the matzah, which begins "'Who has redeemed us.'" The Rabbis placed this blessing at the end of relating the Exodus, since if we said "Who has redeemed us" at the beginning of the Seder, we would not go back and discuss the enslavement.

There are additional explanations. The Meiri actually quoted an opinion that we do recite a blessing at the beginning (See Ha-Moadim Be-Halachah by Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin, p. 279 and Talmudic Encyclopedia vol. 8, p. 179).



Text Message Responsa



Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a week. Some appear in the parashah sheets "Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshu'ah" and "Olam Ha-Katan." Here's a sample:

Q: Does someone who will be away from his house all of Pesach have to clean his house?

A: No. He should include everything in the sale of chametz and fulfill the mitzvah of searching for chametz in the place he will be for Pesach.

Q: Do we have to check every book, page by page, for chametz?

A: No, since the crumbs are smaller than a ke-zayit (volume of olive), but you should not place them on the table where you eat.

Q: Is quinoa considered kitniyot and forbidden for Ashkenazim?

A: Some authorities permit it, but one should not be lenient. It is permissible for Sefardim.

Q: Is Canola oil permissible for Ashkenazim?

A: It is permissible.

Q: Is it permissible to make a siyum for the Fast of the First-Born on one of the books of the Tanach?

A: Yes, with the condition that you learned it seriously.

Q: Can an Ashkenazic Jew be a guest at a Sefardic Jew's home on Pesach?

A: Yes, but he should not eat kitniyot. If some kitniyot fall into a dish and they are unrecognizable, it is nullified by the majority.

Q: If an Ashkenazic Jew marries a Sefardic Jew, whose family custom is followed regarding kitniyot?

A: The husband, and the same applies for other matters.

Q: I am a soldier in Tzahal and there is no chametz for a few days before Pesach. What should I do about placing the pieces of bread around for Bedikat Chametz?

A: There is no need. The blessing is on the search (and not the finding).

Q: Is it permissible to search for chametz with a flashlight?

A: Yes, but a candle is preferable. Do not do so in a car.

Q: Is it permissible to sell chametz on the phone? What about the "kinyan" (act of acquisition)?

A: Yes, appointing an agent does not require a "kinyan." It can also be done by letter, internet or text message.

Q: Is the Redemption coming since "Birchat Ha-Chama" (the blessing for the sun returning to its original location during Creation at the same day of the week it was created, which is only recited every 28 years) is occurring on Erev Pesach?

A: This is not a unique occurrence, and no one knows the future.

Q: Is it permissible for Ashkenazim to eat the soft matzah made by the Sefardim?

A: Yes, it is not chametz or kitniyot.

Q: Can one fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah if it is wet?

A: Yes, but not (re-)cooked.

Q: Is there something special this year since we are reciting "Birchat Ha-Chama"?

A: No, we should always thank Hashem for the sun even if it is not a special year.

Q: Is it permissible to remove bottles from the recycle bins that the city puts out and return them for the deposit?

A: No, it belongs to the municipality.

Q: Can a Rabbi promise me that if I donate to an organization which aids people with certain illness, I will not be stricken with that illness?

A: He can give you a blessing, but only a prophet knows the future.

Stories of Rabbenu — Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

After the Six-Day War, students approached our Rabbi and quoted the words of Rav Tzvi Hirsch Kalisher in the introduction to his book "Derishat Tzion" which repeats a tradition recorded in the name of the Vilna Gaon that if we will only leap and sacrifice one lamb, then everything will be ready for Redemption – then perhaps it is worthwhile to sacrifice one Pesach sacrifice? When our Rabbi heard this he became enraged: "We need to strengthen the Kingdom of Israel and return the Torah to those who learn it in Israel; to bring great repentance, and we will then ascend to the Temple Mount from the midst of this prophecy." He said these words emphatically and forcefully. Once, students brought him a book of research which contained measurements of the Temple Mount. He disassociated himself from it and hid the book. The Mishnah (end of Massechet Berachot) forbids spitting on the Temple Mount all the more so (than wearing shoes - since if wearing shoes, which is not disrespectful, is forbidden than spitting, which is disrespectful, is forbidden all the more so). He added that scientific research and halachic clarifications are included in

"spitting all the more so." (From an interview with Rav Tzvi Tau in Sefer Le-Mikdashech Tuv of Rav Aviner p. 180).



Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

A Ba'al Teshuvah (newly-repentant Jew) and Kitniyot

Q: I am Sefardic and I am having a guest coming for Pesach who is Ashkenazic and a Ba'al Teshuvah who was influenced to become religious by Sefardic Jews and so he eats kitniyot. Can I serve him kitniyot?

A: You may serve it to him. He knows what he is doing and asked a Rabbi what is the correct way to act. I was once at a Rabbinic conference and Ha-Rav Mordechai Eliyahu – the Sefardic Chief Rabbi of Israel – was there and someone asked him a similar question: Chabad Chasidim have influenced many Sefardic Jews to become religious and they are now Sefardic Jews who have all sorts of Ashkenazic practices. Is this a problem? Ha-Rav Eliyahu responded: May it be Hashem's will that all Israel repents even if they become Ashkenazic!

Cleaning agents

Q: Do cleaning agents need to be kosher for Pesach?

A: No, since chametz which is inedible to a human being and a dog is not considered chametz. Therefore, cleaning agents are not chametz. We have the custom to use dish detergent which is kosher for Pesach. It is not necessary according to the basic Halachah, but we certainly do it anyway since it comes in contact with the dishes, utensils, pots and pans.

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