

THE PESACH SEDER GUIDE

+ The Halachot Of Sefirat HaOmer & Chol HaMoed

*Following the rulings of Morenu Maran Ovadia Yosef zt"l
and other contemporary Sephardic poskim.*



A PROJECT OF



HALACHA MOMENT

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ד"ר ירושלם ת"ו ט' דלת' תשפ"ג

Dear Friends,

The Halacha Moment broadcast and website is the work of my dear friend Rabbi Netanel Aminov, a musmach and member in good standing of our Kollel here in Yerushalaim with the intent of spreading accurate halacha in many areas to all who are interested.

Rabbi Aminov is well versed in all sugyot of halacha that he teaches and is careful to source each halacha.

I encourage you to make the time, sign up and develop a knowledge in the world of halacha like never before!

May Rabbi Aminov continue to serve Klal Yisrael with his wisdom and talent for many years to come.

ברקוביץ, ד"ר
יצחק שמואל

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ט"ס

	Berachah	Shiur/Amount	Leaning	Did not Lean	Kavanah/Intention	
First Cup	Recites " <i>Boreh Peri HaGefen</i> ".	<i>Revi'it</i> which is 81 grams/2.7 fl oz. If that is hard one may <i>Bediavad</i> Drink most of a <i>Revi'it</i> (42 grams)	Needs to Lean.	Did not fulfill his obligation, needs to lean, and drink again without a <i>Berachah</i> .	Should have intention to exempt the second cup.	The Arba Kosot Four Cups of Wine
Second Cup	No <i>Berachah</i> is Recited.	<i>Revi'it</i> which is 81 grams/2.7 fl oz. If that is hard one may <i>Bediavad</i> Drink most of a <i>Revi'it</i> (42 grams)	Needs to Lean.	Did not fulfill his obligation, needs to lean, and drink again without a <i>Berachah</i> .	-----	
Third Cup	Recites " <i>Boreh Peri Hagefen</i> ".	<i>Revi'it</i> which is 81 grams/2.7 fl oz. If that is hard one may <i>Bediavad</i> Drink most of a <i>Revi'it</i> (42 grams)	Needs to Lean.	Did not fulfill his obligation, needs to lean, and drink again without a <i>Berachah</i> .	Should have intention to exempt the fourth cup.	
Fourth Cup	No <i>Berachah</i> is Recited.	One should try to drink a full <i>Revi'it</i> to recite a " <i>Al Hagefen</i> "	Needs to Lean.	Did not fulfill his obligation, needs to lean, and drink again without a <i>Berachah</i> . [1]	-----	



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בס"ד

	Berachah	Shiur/Amount	Leaning	Did not Lean	Kavanah/Intention	
"Motzi Matzah"	Recites "Hamotzi" & "Al Achilat Matzah".	Best to eat 2 Kezayot (54 grams) (If that is difficult, one can eat 1 kezayit ie. 27 grams). Should be eaten between 4-7.5 minutes per kezayit. [4]	Needs to lean.	Did not fulfill his obligation, needs to lean, and eat again without a Berachah.	Should have in mind to fulfill the <i>Mitzvah to eat Matzah on Pesach</i>	M A T Z A H
Korech (Sandwich)	-----	Kezayit of Matzah & Kezayit of Maror.	Needs to lean.	Fulfilled his obligation. Does not need to eat again. [2]	-----	
Afikoman	-----	Ideally, one should eat 36 grams, if it is difficult one can eat 27 grams. Should be eaten between 4-7.5 minutes per kezayit. [see footnote 5]	Needs to lean.	Fulfilled his obligation. Does not need to eat again. [3]	Should have the <i>Korban Pesach</i> in mind and the <i>Matzah</i> that was eaten with it.	
Karpas	Recites "Boreh Peri Ha'adama".	Less than 18 grams.	No need to lean but may do so.	-----	Should have in mind to be exempt from the <i>berachah</i> on the <i>Maror</i> .	
Magid	-----	It is praiseworthy for one to spend as much time as one can speaking about Yetziyat Mitzrayim	One who wants to lean has on who to rely on.	-----	Should have in mind to fulfill the biblical mitzvah of "והגדת לבנך" Saying over the Pesach Story	



	Berachah	Shiur/Amount	Leaning	Did not Lean	Kavanah/Intention
Maror	Recites "Al Achilat Maror"	Kezayit which is 27 grams.	Does not lean.	-----	Should have in mind to fulfill one's obligation to eat Maror.
Shulchan Orech (The Meal)	-----	One should properly pace himself in order to leave room for Afikoman	One who leans is praiseworthy. [6]	-----	-----
Birkat Hamazon	Recites "Birkat Hamazon" One should be careful not to forget "Ya'aleh Veyavo" [7]	-----	One should not lean rather sit upright.	-----	Should have in mind to fulfill the biblical obligation of "Birkat Hamazon"

Sources & Footnotes:

Women are obligated in all the Halachot mentioned above just like men (Shulchan Aruch 472:14). However, if she did not lean after the fact, she has fulfilled her obligation (See Chazon Ovadia, Pesach, vol. 2, pg. 6)

[1]. Regarding reciting a Berachah if one still has wine in his cup one should just refill it and drink again while leaning. However, one who does not have any wine left in his cup should refill the cup and recite "Boreh Peri Hagefen".

[2]. However, one who is stringent and eats again is praiseworthy.

[3]. Nonetheless, if one did not recite Birkat Hamazon yet and it is not hard for him to eat again he should eat again. However, if one already recited Birkat Hamazon one does not need to eat again.



[4]. One who eats from the *Matzot* of the seder should eat two *Kezaytot*. Only one who eats Matzot which is not from the table may eat one *Kezayit*. Regarding the time one needs to eat by see *Shu"t Chazon Ovadia, Siman 24; Chazon Ovadia, Pesach*, vol. 2, pg. 66 (It seems that Maran retracted from what was written in *Yechaveh Da'at* 1:17).

[5]. Some are stringent to eat 2 *Kezaytot*. 18 grams for each kezayit is sufficient (which is the amount of a *Kezayit* according to the Rambam *Eruvin* 1:19) which means one who wants to be stringent may eat 36 grams.

[6]. *Rama* 472:7 based on *Rambam* in *Hilchot Chametz Umatza* 7:8 which writes that ideally one should lean for the whole meal. See also *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach*, vol. 2 pg. 103 and *Mishnah Berurah* 472:23 which say that it is praiseworthy to lean during Shulchan Orech, but there is no obligation.

[7]. If one completely forgot to recite "*Ya'aleh Veyavo*" needs to recite *Birkat Hamazon* again with a cup. (See *Yalkut Yosef, Moadim*, pg. 410.)

Arba Kosot/The Four Cups:

- 1) It is especially praiseworthy to recite Kiddush over red wine, even if one has white wine that is of better quality. ¹ The reason we use red wine is because it commemorates the Plague of Blood and the merits of the blood from the mitzvot of *brit milah* and *Korban Pesach*.²
- 2) One who finds it difficult to be stringent and drink wine for all four cups may drink grape juice instead even though it does not contain alcohol. This is especially true for women who find it difficult to drink wine. For Kiddush and Havdalah, though, there is no need to be stringent at all, and one may use grape juice. ³
- 3) One may use concentrated wine or grape juice as long as there is less than fifty percent of water content, to ensure that the taste of the grape content remains. One who does not know if his wine contains more than fifty percent of actual wine may not recite *HaGefen* on it. Instead, one must make a *SheHakol* and may not use it for the four *kosot*. ⁴

¹ *Shulchan Aruch* 472:11. For all the Halachot see *Laws of The Holidays* - Nacson

² *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 11, *halachah* 12. The Taz §9 states that the reason for using red wine is to remember the blood of the Jewish babies in which Pharaoh would bathe himself to rid himself of leprosy. *Chazon Ovadia* says that because the wine at the Seder is meant to remind us of good things, which is why we lean while drinking it, it is more probable that the reason we drink red wine is to commemorate the mitzvot that were done with blood, such as the *Korban Pesach* and *brit milah*.

³ *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 13; *ibid.*, Responsa, p. 99. *Orchot Maran*, vol. 2, p. 640, which states that Chacham Ovadia Yosef himself would use grape juice for the arba kosot since wine would make him tired, and he would otherwise not be able to stay up that night and continue to learn about *yetziat Mitzrayim*. See also *Haggadah shel Pesach Yechaveh Daat*, pages 34 & 80; *Teshuvot HaRishon LeTzion* 1:51; and *Shema Shlomo*, vol. 4, O.C. 11.

⁴ *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 13; *ibid.*, Responsa, vol 1., *siman* 6, p. 79. *Yabia Omer*, vol. 9, O.C. 92:7. See also *Yalkut Yosef, Shabbat*, vol. 1, book 3, pages 583-600, which discuss this subject at length. See *Teshuvot HaRishon LeTzion* 1:51.



- 4) One's cup must hold at least a *reviit* (81 ml. 2.7 oz) of wine. One should preferably drink the entire cup all at once, even if it contains more than a *reviit*. However, one may drink in sips if he does not wait more than a few moments between each sip. If one's cup is extremely large and one cannot drink even most of the cup, he should drink at least a *reviit*, and does not have to finish the rest of the cup. Furthermore, if one's cup can hold more than one *reviit*, more than one person may drink from the same cup. However, one should only do this if there are no other cups that may be used.⁵
- 5) One should give his children treats to keep them awake and attentive to what is going on during the Seder.⁶
- 6) One should be especially meticulous to fulfill the mitzvot of drinking the *arba kosot* and eating the matzah in the best way possible. One who does so merits many blessings throughout the coming year.⁷

Hasebah - Leaning

- 7) One who leans without supporting oneself on something has not fulfilled his obligation of *hesebah*.⁸
- 8) *Hesebah* must be performed by leaning on one's left side. If one leaned on his right side, it is as if he did not lean at all.⁹
- 9) Even a left-handed person must lean to the left. However, if he accidentally leaned on his right side, he does not have to drink again,¹⁰
- 10) If one forgot to lean during the first cup, he should pour himself another cup of wine and drink it without reciting another berachah. If one remembers that he did not lean by the first cup, and is about to drink the second cup (after the berachah of *Asher Gaalnu*), he should drink the wine with the first cup in mind, wait a moment, and proceed to drink a second cup while leaning.¹¹

⁵ See *Shulchan Aruch* 472:9; *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 16; and *ibid.*, Responsa 1:12.

⁶ *Shulchan Aruch* 472:15; *Ohr LeTzion*, vol. 3, 15:7, in the footnote.

⁷ *Kaf HaChaim* 472:72 cites *Orchot Yosher*, ch. 11 and *Yafeh Lalev*, vol. 2, §7 that one who does so merits health, and will not have to take medication throughout the year. *Kaf HaChaim* §73 also cites from *Iyun Yaakov, Pesachim* §23 that it atones for the sins that could have been punished for with *arba mitot bet din*.

⁸ *Ohr LeTzion*, vol. 3, 15:1.

⁹ *Shulchan Aruch* 472:3; *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 9, *halachah* 8. The *Mishnah Berurah* §10 points out that there are essentially two reasons why one must lean to the left as opposed to the right: One reason is because one might choke on his food, as the windpipe is open when leaning on the right side. Another reason is because one needs to hold the matzah, *marmor*, and the four cups in his right hand, and this can only be done if he is leaning to the left.

¹⁰ *Rama* 472:3. The *Mishnah Berurah* §11 points out that even though he will not be able to hold the matzah, four cups, etc. in his stronger hand, which is his left hand, it is nevertheless preferable that he lean to the left since the danger of choking overrides the preference of holding the mitzvot in one's stronger hand. See also *Kaf HaChaim* §23; *Ohr Letzion*, vol. 3, 15:1; *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 9, 9; and *ibid.*, Responsa 1:15.

¹¹ *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 11; *ibid*, Responsa, p. 309, in the footnote. This is unlike the view of the *Magen Avraham*. See also *Mishnah Berurah* 480:8.

Kadesh - Kiddush

- 11) One should stand while reciting Kiddush.¹² If the night of the Seder is on *motzai Shabbat*, Havdalah should be recited while standing.¹³
- 12) One should wash out his cup before using it. If it has already been rinsed and is clean, one does not have to rinse it out again before Kiddush. However, if one can, he should rinse it out anyway, for Kabbalistic reasons.¹⁴
- 13) One should ask the person sitting next to him to pour him his wine since this is a sign of freedom.¹⁵
- 14) One should preferably drink a *reviit* of wine after reciting Kiddush so that his Kiddush will be in the place of his meal. At that point, one may then recite the Haggadah without concern that there is a long pause before washing for *achilat matzah*. If one only drank most of a *reviit* after Kiddush, the recitation of the Haggadah is still not considered an interruption.¹⁶
- 15) The proper order for the berachot is: the berachah on the wine, the Kiddush itself, and then *SheHecheyanu*. If Pesach is on *motzai Shabbat*, the order for the berachah is: the berachah on the wine, Kiddush, the berachah over the fire, Havdalah, and then *SheHecheyanu*. If Pesach is on Friday night, one begins with reciting *Yom HaShishi*.¹⁷
- 16) One who makes a mistake on pesach which falls out on *motzai Shabbat* and says *hamavdil ben kodesh lechol* instead of saying *hamavdil ben kodesh lekodesh* does not have to repeat Havdalah.¹⁸

The general custom is to follow the opinion of the Arizal when setting up the Seder plate. It is set up as follows:



¹² *Kaf HaChaim*, vol. 5, 271:61, in the name of the Arizal, *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 10; *Yalkut Yosef, Pesach*, vol. 1, p. 789.

¹³ *Yafeh Lalev*, vol. 2, 2; *Kaf HaChaim* §20, in the name of the Arizal. This is unlike the custom brought in the *Mishnah Berurah* 53, which states that Havdalah should be recited while sitting.

¹⁴ *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 15, *halachah* 22; *Ben Ish Chai, Bereshit* 2:21; *Kaf HaChaim*, vol. 1, 183:4

¹⁵ *Rama* 473:1; *Chayei Adam, siman* 130, 19:2; *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* §1; *Mishnah Berurah* §9; *Kaf HaChaim* 531. See also *Taharat HaBayit* 2:12, pages 183-185, which adds that a woman who is a niddah may pour the four kosot for her husband and leave the cup in front of him. See also *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 15.

¹⁶ *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 17; *ibid.*, Responsa 1:11.

¹⁷ *Shulchan Aruch* 473:1; *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 23.

¹⁸ *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §1, p. 272; *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 29.

*The chazeret is essentially the marror, such as romaine lettuce, or a type of marror, such as endives, that one will be using for korech,



The Seder Plate

- 17) The Seder plate consists of: three *matzot*, *marror*, *charoset*, *karpas*, vinegar or salt water, and two cooked foods.¹⁹
- 18) It is customary to use a shank bone with some meat on it (known as the *zero'a*, corresponding to the *Korban Pesach*) and a hard-boiled egg (corresponding to the *Korban Chagigah*) as the two cooked foods,²⁰
- 19) One who does not have a shank bone may use any other type of meat instead,²¹

Maggid Reciting the Haggadah

- 20) There is a positive mitzvah from the Torah to explain the story of the Jewish people leaving Egypt (*Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim*) on Pesach night as it says in the Pasuk "והגדת לבנך" - "And you shall tell your son..."²². That being said, one should spend as much time as one can discussing *Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim* (the story of leaving Egypt).
- 21) One should not begin reciting the Haggadah until after *tzet hakochavim*. This is because the Haggadah must be recited while one is obligated to eat matzah and *marror*, which is at night. If one recited the Haggadah during *ben hashmashot*, he has not fulfilled his obligation, and must recite at least part of the Haggadah again.²³
- 22) One may listen to the recitation of the Haggadah by another person and fulfill his obligation through his recitation. **However**, one may not just read the Haggadah without verbalizing it.²⁴
- 23) Women are also obligated to perform the mitzvah of *sipur yetziat Mitzrayim* (saying over the story of *Mitzrayim*) and must read the Haggadah to themselves. If a woman is unable to read, she should listen to someone else read and have in mind to fulfill her obligation through the other person's recitation, while the other person, too, has in mind to fulfill her obligation through his recitation²⁶

¹⁹ *Shulchan Aruch* 473:4; see also *Ben Ish Chai*, *Tzav* 1:30.

²⁰ *Shulchan Aruch* 473:4; *Kaf HaChaim* §45.

²¹ *Mishnah Berurah* 473:27; *Kaf HaChaim* §60.

²² See *Sefer HaChinuch Mitzvah* 21; *Rambam, Hilchot Chametz U-Matzah* 7:1-2 explains that reading the *Haggadah* is a positive commandment from the Torah of telling the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. "And you shall tell your son," does not mean exclusively one's son; but rather even with anyone. See *Gemara, Pesachim* 116a.

²³ *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 47; *ibid.*, *Responsa* 1:23.

²⁴ *Kaf HaChaim* 473:135; *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 48; *ibid.*, *Responsa* 1:21, in the footnote.

²⁵ *Shulchan Aruch, O.C.* 472:14; *Mishnah Berurah* 472:45. See also *Igrot Moshe*, vol. 5, O.C. 20:33, which states that a woman may read the Haggadah on behalf of a man. **However**, *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 52, states that she should preferably not do so.

²⁶ *Biur Halachah* 472, "Shelo KeSeder"; *Kaf HaChaim* 473:135.



- 24) If a person does not understand *Lashon HaKodesh*, he should listen to the *Haggadah* in a language that he understands. If one can, he should at least say the words *Pesach*, *matzah*, *u'morror*, and the reasons for why we eat them.²⁷
- 25) Not only is it permitted to let a child under the age of bar mitzvah read parts of the *Haggadah* out loud for those present, it is even a mitzvah to let him do so.²⁸
- 26) One may choose to recite *maggid* while leaning or sitting upright.²⁹

Question:

What is the proper way to recite *Maggid* (the story of leaving *Mitzrayim*)?

Answer:

During *maggid*, one should try to only expound the miracles that happened to us in *Mitzrayim*. It is especially important to take care not to talk about irrelevant topics. The *Zohar* states, "Anyone who speaks about the exodus from Egypt on the night of Pesach, and does so with happiness, will eventually merit to enjoy the presence of the *Shechinah* in the World to Come. In fact, Hashem rejoices so much when his children speak of *yetziat Mitzrayim* that he calls all of the heavenly luminaries and angels and tells them, 'Come and see what My children are saying about Me, and how happy they are in their salvation. Come and hear their praises! Then, all of the Heavenly angels gather around one's table and listen to the *sipur yetziat Mitzrayim*, rejoice in the salvation of *Bnei Yisrael*, and thank Hashem for saving the holy nation..." Therefore, one should not hurry the recitation of the *Haggadah* or rush through the words without pronouncing them correctly. One should be especially careful when approaching the end of the *Haggadah*, since one's enthusiasm at the end of Seder is a true testimony to what one's real intentions were all along. While one should certainly try to expound as much as he can, if there are elderly people or children at the table who are becoming tired, one should try to proceed quickly so that they will stay awake for the remainder of the Seder. Whatever one does, it should be with the proper intentions and for the sake of Heaven.³⁰

Tzafun — Eating the Afikoman

- 27) After finishing the seudah, one eats the *afikoman* to commemorate the korban Pesach that was eaten at the end of the seudah. One should eat the *afikoman* by itself, without any other food.³¹
- 28) Some people are stringent to eat two *Kezaytot* of matzah for the *afikoman*: one *kezayit* is to commemorate the *Korban Pesach*, and one *kezayit* is to commemorate the matzah that was eaten with it. However, strictly speaking, one only has an obligation to eat one *kezayit*.

²⁷ *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 52; *ibid.*, Responsa 1:20; *Yechaveh Daat* 2:65. *Chazon Ovadia* also says that when reciting the *Haggadah* in a language other than *Lashon Hakodesh*, one must be sure to recite the *berachot* in *Lashon Hakodesh*.

²⁸ See *Halichot Shlomo, Pesach*, p. 263; *Ki Va Moed, Pesach*, vol. 2, p. 56, footnote 329, in the name of Chacham Ovadia Yosef.

²⁹ *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 56.

³⁰ See *Kaf HaChaim* 473:152; *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 56.

³¹ *Shulchan Aruch* 477:1.



One who wants to eat a second *kezayit* (with an appetite for it) may rely on those opinions that say that a *kezayit* is only 18 grams.³² ת"ס

- 29) The *afikoman* should be eaten with an appetite and while leaning. If one has to force himself to eat the *afikoman* because he is so satiated to the point that he is sickened from eating, according to some opinions he has not even fulfilled the mitzvah of *achilat matzah* for that night. One should therefore be wary, and ensure to save room for at least a *kezayit* of the *afikoman*.³³ If one is full but not sickened by eating more, he may fulfill his obligation, but this is not the best way to fulfill the mitzvah of *afikoman*.³⁴
- 30) If one forgot to lean and has not yet recited *Birkat HaMazon*, he must eat the *afikoman* again. **However**, if it is too difficult for him to eat it again, he may rely on those opinions that state that one may fulfill his obligation without leaning.³⁵ Similarly, if one already recited *Birkat HaMazon*, and then remembered that he did not lean while eating the *afikoman*, he does not have to eat the *afikoman* again.³⁶
- 31) If there is not enough *matzah* for everyone at the table from the *matzah* set aside for the *afikoman*, the one leading the Seder should distribute one *kezayit* from the *afikoman* *matzah* to everyone until it runs out, after which he may distribute *matzot* that were not on the Seder plate.³⁷
- 32) If the *afikoman* that one set aside at the beginning of the Seder was lost, one may eat from another *matzah* instead.³⁸
- 33) One may not eat anything after eating the *afikoman* so that he does not lose the taste of the *matzah* from his mouth.³⁹ However, one may drink water, coffee, tea, and other non-alcoholic drinks after finishing the *afikoman* to help him stay awake later and expound yetziat *Mitzrayim*. One who will not stay up after the Seder should be stringent to refrain from drinking anything other than water.⁴⁰

³² According to the Shulchan Aruch 477:1, it is sufficient to eat one *kezayit*. However, the *Mishnah Berurah* 477:1 mentions that it is praiseworthy to eat two *Kezayot*. See also Ben Ish Chai, Tzav 1:35; Ohr LeTzion, vol. 3, 15:14; and *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 106. *Chazon Ovadia* discusses this at length in Responsa 2:44.

³³ *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 107; *ibid.*, Responsa 1:17.

³⁴ *Magen Avraham* 477:2; *Mishnah Berurah* §6; *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 108, end of footnote 2.

³⁵ *Mishnah Berurah* 477:4. See also *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 108.

³⁶ *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 108; *ibid.*, Responsa 2:45, p. 806; *Yabia Omer*, vol. 10, 35:24.

³⁷ *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, pages 67 & 108; *ibid.*, Responsa 1:25, p. 370.

³⁸ *Rama* 477:2; *Chazon Ovadia, Pesach* §2, p. 109, in the name of the Bet Yosef.

³⁹ *Shulchan Aruch* 478:1; *Mishnah Berurah* §1.

⁴⁰ *Mishnah Berurah* 481:1; *Moreh BaEtzba* §211; Ben Ish Chai, Tzav 1:35; *Kaf HaChaim* 481:4. *Chazon Ovadia* states in *Pesach* §2, p. 112 and at length in Responsa 2:50 that one may even add sugar to his coffee and tea if this is the way he normally drinks them. See also Ohr *LeTzion*, vol. 3, 15:23.



CHAZAK



HALACHA MOMENT

Summary Halachot Of Sefirat HaOmer

During the days of the omer, many customs have been adopted to commemorate the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva who passed away during this period. The Gemara speaks of 12,000 "pairs" of students and not of 24,000, ostensibly in order to stress the lack of unity of which they were guilty. The students of Rabbi Akiva were punished for not giving the correct respect to their fellow peers. It is upon us during this time period to be extra cautious with how we treat our fellow Jewish brothers and sisters. Treat them the way YOU would want to be treated. Similarly, the Mishnah states that this is a time of judgment. Furthermore, the Taz adds that there was also a custom in Europe to refrain from getting married during the omer period because there was a plague during this period of time. Another reason for the many customs that apply to these days is brought in the Chok Yaakov, which states that since there is a judgment on the wheat produce for the coming year from the time of Pesach until Shavuot, we should focus on repenting and minimizing joy.

1. The Mitzvah of Counting the Omer

The Torah commands us to count **forty-nine days from the second night of Pesach until Shavuot**.

A major discussion among the poskim is:

- Is **Sefirat HaOmer one long mitzvah** extending throughout the entire forty-nine days?
- Or is **each day its own separate mitzvah**?

Because of this dispute among the poskim, practical halacha is affected when someone forgets to count. Since there is doubt, we follow the principle of **Safek Berachot Lehakel**, meaning that when there is doubt regarding a blessing, we do not recite it.

2. When the Omer Is Counted

The mitzvah is to count **every night after nightfall (Tzet HaKochavim)**.

The custom is to count **after Arvit**.

The blessing recited is:

ברוך אתה ה' אלוהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על ספירת העומר

Then one states the correct day of the Omer.

Examples:

Day 5: היום חמישה ימים לעומר

Day 14: היום ארבעה עשר יום שהם שני שבועות לעומר

3. Standing During the Counting

One should **stand while counting the Omer**.

However, if someone counted while sitting, he **still fulfilled the mitzvah**.

4. If Someone Forgot to Count at Night

If someone forgot to count during the night but **remembers the next morning**, he should count **during the day without a berachah**.

Meaning he simply states the day number.

Because he counted during the day, he **may continue counting with a berachah the following nights**.

One may always continue counting with a berachah at night **as long as he counted at some point during the previous day**, even if this happened for several days in a row.



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5. If Someone Missed a Full Day

If someone **forgot to count both the entire night and the following day**, he may no longer continue counting with a berachah.

However, he should **continue counting without a berachah** so that he completes the entire forty-nine-day count.

6. If Someone Made a Mistake in the Count

If someone **made a mistake in counting the days or weeks** and did not realize until the following night, it is considered as if he **did not count at all**, and he may no longer count with a berachah.

However:

- If he realized the mistake **immediately**, even after several seconds, he may correct it.
- If he realized **the next morning**, he should count again **without a berachah**, and then continue counting **with a berachah that night**.

7. Mourning Customs During the Omer

During the Omer, we observe mourning because the students of **Rabbi Akiva** passed away during this period.

According to the Sephardic custom, the mourning period lasts until the morning of the 34th day of the Omer.

This means:

Forbidden during this time:

- Haircuts
- Shaving
- Weddings
- Music. **Nonetheless**, one may dance and listen to music at a seudat mitzvah (for example, a sheva berachot, bar mitzvah, brit milah, pidyon haben, siyum mesechet, or hachnasat sefer Torah

These restrictions remain in place **through Lag BaOmer (day 33)**.

They become permitted **on the morning of the 34th day of the Omer**.

8. Women and Sefirat HaOmer

Since Sefirat HaOmer is a **time-bound mitzvah**, women are not obligated.

According to many Sephardic authorities and customs influenced by the Mekubalim, **women generally do not count the Omer at all**.

If a woman began counting with a berachah, she should **stop immediately**.

Practical Summary

- Count the Omer **every night with a berachah**.
- If you forgot at night → count **during the next day without a berachah**.
- If you counted during the day → you may **continue with a berachah that night**.
- If you missed **both the night and the day** → continue counting **without a berachah**.
- A mistaken count not corrected until the next night is treated like **missing a day**.



The Halachot Of Chol HaMoed

INTRODUCTION:

The **Rambam** explains that Chol HaMoed is designated as a holy gathering, referred to in the Torah as "**Mikra'ei Kodesh**" (sacred convocations), during which the **Korban Chagigah** was offered in the **Bet HaMikdash**. As a result, melachah (labor) is prohibited to emphasize that Chol HaMoed is distinct from ordinary days devoid of sanctity. However, unlike Yom Tov, not all forms of labor are forbidden on Chol HaMoed which will be discussed below. The primary goal of these prohibitions is to ensure that Chol HaMoed does not resemble a typical weekday.

Additionally, there is an obligation to honor Chol HaMoed and treat it differently from a regular weekday. This includes having special food, drinks, and clothing that are nicer than what one typically has during the week, elevating the sanctity and joy of these days.³

The **Gemara states**, "One who treats the festivals with scorn is comparable to an idol worshipper."⁴ Similarly, the **Mishnah** teaches, "One who treats the festivals with scorn has no share in the World to Come."⁵ **Rashi** explains that this refers to someone who desecrates Chol HaMoed by performing **melachah** or treats these days as if they were ordinary weekdays in terms of eating and drinking. Such an individual, believing that these days are not as stringent as Yom Tov, fails to observe them properly.⁶

As **Bnei Yisrael**, who have been blessed with these special days of rejoicing with Hashem, it is our duty to treat Chol HaMoed with the respect it deserves, recognizing its immense gift and potential.

Being Happy On Chol HaMoed

- 1) There is a requirement of **Simcha** (joy) on Chol HaMoed, similar to the obligation on Yom Tov. This mitzvah of **Simcha** extends to the intermediate days of the festival, reinforcing the idea that these days are not ordinary weekdays but are imbued with a unique sanctity and purpose. The joy of Chol HaMoed is manifested through various practices that enhance the festive atmosphere and bring happiness to individuals and families.⁷

On Chol HaMoed, this **Simcha** is expressed in several ways.

One is through the consumption of special meals that include better food and drinks (wine) than one would typically have during a regular week. This means preparing and enjoying festive meals with more elaborate dishes, finer ingredients, and an overall uplifted dining experience to reflect the joy of the holiday.

¹Vayikra 23:4; Chagiga 18a; Mechilta, Parshat Bo 9; Rambam, Hilchot Yom Tov 7:1.

² Rambam, Hilchot Yom Tov 7:1.

³ Magen Avraham 530:1, Mishnah Berurah 530:1

⁴ Makkot 23a; Pesachim 118a. See also Chiddushei Maharal as to why this is compared to idol worship.

⁵ Avot 3:11. See also Sanhedrin 99a.

⁶ See also the Me'iri on Makkot 23a and the Zohar, Tzav 29b, which state that one who profanes the moadim is as if he denied one of the main beliefs of Judaism. The Midrash in Vayikra Rabbah, Behar 34 adds that observing the days of Chol HaMoed is included in the words of the pasuk in Yeshayah 58:13 of me'asot derachecha, honoring the day by not engaging in one's own affairs.

⁷ Rambam, Hilchot Yom Tov 6:17; Shulchan Aruch 529:2

The Halachot Of Chol HaMoed

- 3) Another way to fulfill the requirement of **Simcha** is through wearing nicer clothing. It is customary to dress in garments that are more elegant and festive than regular weekday attire. This outward change in appearance serves as a reminder of the sanctity of the days and enhances the festive mood.⁹
- 4) Initially, one is encouraged to have two meals with bread each day of Chol HaMoed, one in the evening and one during the day. However, this practice is not an absolute obligation. The focus is on enhancing the meals to reflect the festive nature of Chol HaMoed, but if circumstances make it difficult to have two such meals daily, there is leniency in this regard.¹⁰

1. Categories of Permitted Work (Melacha)

A. Davar Ha'aved (Preventing Financial Loss)

- Work is permitted only if failure to do so will result in a **significant** financial loss. Example: A store owner can do business if shutting down would cause a major loss (*Moed Katan* 13b, *Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 537:1).
- **However**, it is prohibited to take on unnecessary work **just to increase profits**.

B. Tzorchei HaMoed (Work for Holiday Needs)

- Any labor needed for **enhancing** the holiday is permitted.
- Example: Cooking, baking, food preparation, repairing essential clothing or utensils (*Moed Katan* 10b, *Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 533:1).
- If the task could have been done before Yom Tov but was delayed without reason, it may be prohibited

C. Ma'aseh Hedyot vs. Ma'aseh Uman (Unskilled vs. Skilled Labor)

- **Unskilled labor (Ma'aseh Hedyot)** is generally allowed.
- **Skilled labor (Ma'aseh Uman)** is generally forbidden unless required for Chol HaMoed or to prevent loss.
- Example: Fixing a button (unskilled) is allowed, but professional tailoring (skilled) is prohibited (*Moed Katan* 12a, *Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 540:1).

⁸ Yalkut Yosef, Moadim p. 502; Pesachim 109a; Shulchan Aruch 529:2.

⁹ Pesachim 109a; Shulchan Aruch 529:2.

¹⁰ Yalkut Yosef Moadim p. 502.



The Halachot Of Chol HaMoed

D. Tzorech Rabim (Work for Public Benefit)

- Work that benefits the community is permitted.
- Example: Fixing roads, repairing water systems, or any necessary public service (*Moed Katan* 5a, *Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 544:1).

E. Po'el She'ein Lo Mah Le'echol (A Worker Who Has No Food)

- A person with no means of financial support may work to afford food.
- Preferably, they should do so in a discreet manner (*Moed Katan* 13a, *Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 545:3).

2. Specific Halachot of Chol HaMoed

A. Writing

Regular writing is generally prohibited.¹¹

Permitted cases :

- Writing needed for the holiday.¹² (e.g., Torah learning, shopping lists, schedules).
- Business records etc to prevent a financial loss.¹³
- Writing for community needs.¹⁴
- Taking notes if failure to do so will ruin a grade.
- Writing Divrei Torah as there is no greater loss than forgetting one's Torah learning.¹⁵
- Typing is permitted and not considered writing.¹⁶

B. Laundry

- Washing clothes is prohibited to encourage people to prepare before Yom Tov. This includes having the clothing washed by a non-jew.¹⁷

Exceptions

- Clothing for young children who soil their garments frequently.¹⁸
- Soiled undergarments may be washed, provided that one only washes what he needs for the moed.¹⁹

¹¹ Shulchan Aruch 545:1

¹² Shulchan Aruch 545:4; Mishnah Berurah 545:18.

¹³ Shulchan Aruch 545:4; Chazon Ovadia, Yom Tov, p. 203.

¹⁴ Mishnah Berurah 545:5.

¹⁵ Yabia Omer, vol. 8, 48:2; Ohr Letzion, vol. 3, 24:7; Yalkut Yosef, Moadim, p. 521, 40.

¹⁶ Yabia Omer, vol. 8, 48:5. See also Igrot Moshe EH 4:73:4

¹⁷ Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 543:1; Birkei Yosef §1; and Chazon Ovadia, Yom Tov, p. 200.

¹⁸ Shulchan Aruch 534:1; Mishnah Berurah 534:11; Ohr Letzion, vol. 3, 24:1.

¹⁹ Chazon Ovadia, Yom Tov, p. 198.



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- Spot cleaning is permitted provided that one only cleans what was soiled. Preferably, one should wait to do so until after the holiday.²⁰
- Ironing clothing that will be worn during the moed is permitted.²¹
- If one has no clean clothing due to unexpected circumstances.

C. Haircuts and Shaving

To properly honor the moed, one should get a haircut and shave before Yom Tov. To prevent delaying these preparations until Chol HaMoed, the Chachamim prohibited haircuts and shaving during Chol HaMoed.²²

Exceptions:²³

- Someone who was released from prison on Chol HaMoed.
- A mourner whose seventh day of mourning was on erev Yom Tov
- One traveling with a delayed arrival on Chol HaMoed, or who has only just arrived without enough time to prepare beforehand. In all other instances, even if one was unable
- to cut his hair or trim his beard for reasons that were out of his control, he may not cut his hair on Chol HaMoed.
- Cutting hair is permitted for medical reasons.²⁴
- One may trim his mustache on Chol HaMoed, particularly if it interferes with eating.²⁵
- Cutting a child's hair is permitted.²⁶
- Women's body hair removal is permitted.²⁷

D. Shopping & Business Transactions

- **Buying** is allowed only for Yom Tov needs.
- **Selling** is permitted if it prevents a loss or benefits the community (*Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 539:1).

E. Travel and Transportation

- Driving is permitted.²⁸
- Traveling for leisure or visiting family is allowed.

²⁰ Igrot Moshe, O.C., vol. 5, 36:1; Chazon Ovadia, Yom Tov, p. 200.

²¹ Ohr Letzion, vol. 3, 24:4; Chazon Ovadia, Yom Tov, p. 195.

²² Mishnah in Moed Katan 13b and Gemara 18a; and Shulchan Aruch 531:1-4

²³ Shulchan Aruch 531:4.

²⁴ Igrot Moshe, O.C. 1:163.

²⁵ Shulchan Aruch 531:8.

²⁶ Shulchan Aruch 531:6; Chazon Ovadia, Yom Tov, p. 193.

²⁷ Shulchan Aruch 546:5

²⁸ Shulchan Aruch 536:1.



The Halachot Of Chol HaMoed

F. Marriages & Engagements

Marriage: Forbidden, as it would detract from the simcha of the holiday.²⁹

Engagements (without Kiddushin): Permitted.³⁰

G. Funerals and Mourning

- Funerals may take place, but eulogies are limited unless for a great Torah scholar.³¹
- Mourning laws (**aveilut**) are modified or postponed.

This Booklet Has Been Dedicated Anonmously

Gold:

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²⁹ Moed Katan 8b; Shulchan Aruch 546:1

³⁰ Taz 546:2, Chol HaMoed KeHilchato 1:32; Chazon Ovadia, Yom Tov, p. 207-208

³¹ Shulchan Aruch O.C. 547:1.

About Halacha Moment

ת"סב

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