

Day 29: Pesah Wrap – Should I force my son to eat Matzah?

Dear readers,

Thank you for your dedication and input throughout our Pesah series. Your comments, inquiries, and feedback were extremely important. I would like to conclude the Pesah series by addressing a question referred to me after I explained that the minimum amount of wine for each cup is 3.8 cc and that if even that is too much, one can rely on the person who conducts the Seder. Following that Pesak (ruling), a concerned parent wrote to me that his son now refuses to eat more than a morsel of Matzah, and I promised to write, so here goes.

How many quantified portions of Matzah?

The majority opinion is that one has to eat at least three portions. Those three correspond to the blessing for eating Matzah, the blessing on the bread – HaMotzi,¹ and the Aphikomen.

The Mishnah Berurah comments that the Maror and Matzah wrap is also considered a portion which has to meet a minimum quantity requirement,² but it seems that the Shulhan Arukh is not of that opinion.

Maimonides, however, mentions only two portions. For him, the blessing on the Matzah and the HaMotzi are one and the same. The reason for that is that on Maimonides' Seder table there were only two Matzoth and not three. The blessings were recited in the following manner: first HaMotzi on both Matzoth, and then על אכילת מצות ומרורים – for eating Matzah and Maror. The broken Matzah served for both blessings.³

Later generations felt uncomfortable saying HaMotzi over broken Matzah so they added a third Matzah, split the blessings into three: HaMotzi, Matzah, and Maror, and created a situation of three portions, the third of which is of a dubious status.

The minimum number of portions needed, according to that, would be two – HaMotzi and Aphikomen. But when there is a problem with having even only two portions, for example at war, when people do not have enough food, the second portion, the Aphikomen, is skipped. R Yechiel Michel Epstein, who discusses this situation, explains that the HaMotzi is more important since it is a biblical commandment, while the Aphikomen is just a symbolic act.⁴

How much is each portion?

Each of the mandatory portions should be a KeZayit. While there are many different opinions regarding what is KeZayit, the minimum size of KeZayit is 15cc, which is approximately the size of the upper half of an adult's thumb.

Can one be forced to eat Matzah?

In the case of a child, whether a minor or an adult, who refuses to eat too much matzah for reasons of diet, health, or disenchantment with tradition, it is recommended not to try and force that child to eat. Doing so will achieve the opposite result and will cause resentment and animosity.

Additionally, if the child eats because the parents forced him or her to do so, the eating does not count as a Mitzvah, because it is considered אכילה גסה - or abnormal eating.⁵

We should also remember that educating our children, no matter at what age, to do the right thing, usually does not mean forcing them to do what we think is right. Unless their lives or health are in danger if they do not heed our advice, we should learn to take a back seat and let them navigate on their own. The concepts of Pesah, as well as those of Shabbat and any other Mitzvah, should be internalized and fulfilled out of love and dedication and not because of an external force.

Conclusion:

- The minimal size of a Matzah portion is 15cc or the equivalent of an adult man's upper half of the thumb.
- If possible, three such portions should be consumed, two for HaMotzi and Matzah and one for Aphikomen.
- If that is difficult, one could eat less Aphikomen.
- If even that is difficult, one should at least to have one portion of KeZayit of the HaMotzi.

Under no circumstances could a child or adult be forced or coerced into eating or into meeting a certain requirement.

לעילוי נשמת מו"ז ח"ר שאול פתייה זצ"ל בן הרה"ג המקובל האלקי ח"ר יאודה משה ישועה פתייה זצ"ל

I'd like to conclude by dedicating the Pesah series to the memory of my grandfather:

At my grandfather's Seder table there was never tension. He would not remind anyone how much wine or matza they must consume. When we washed for Karpas, there would be mountains of celery to dip in a mix of lemon and orange juice, fresh boiled fava beans in their shells, fluffy Persian rice, sliced cucumbers and hard boiled eggs (which we dipped, of course, in the sour-sweet juice).

We were never hungry during the Haggada, which we sang through, taking turns, translating the fun parts to Arabic and just basking in the beauty of the moment. We would and cherish the unforgettable experience of being with someone who embodied the covenant and felt that he is the Moses to our Israelites, ushering us into the covenant.

My grandfather was the model of my Seder. A passionate Zionist, a living Bible, a poet and philosopher who, despite having a rabbinic ordination and being a descendant of eight consecutive generations of

rabbis, dedicated his life to help the physically and mentally ill, to education, and to social activism. He was a man of the world, and his Sephardic tradition and roots, of which he was so proud, enabled him to become a religious leader who knew how to listen to people's problems and to find solutions.

He left us more than three decades ago, but his image is still with me at the end of the Seder, as he would put his head between his hands, and sing with us, the grandchildren who were still awake, a traditional Babylonian Piyyut:

נכון לבו, איש הוא ירא, כל נתיבו מצות בורא

נאמר בו, כתוב אשרי, כל חוסי בו אשרי שומרי

The pure of heart is the one who reveres God, whose life leads to his Creator

It is regarding him that it is written: all those who trust in HaShem are joyous

As he sang it, I knew, deep in my little kid's heart, that the poem was written about him, and I pray to HaShem that I would be able to make my grandfather proud by teaching his Torah and his wisdom.

Pesah Sameah

רבי יוסף קארו, שולחן ערוך, אורח חיים, הלכות פסח סימן תעה: יטול ידיו ויברך על נטילת ידים, ויקח המצות כסדר שהניחם, הפרוסה בין ¹ שתי השלימות, ויאחזם בידו ויברך המוציא ועל אכילת מצה. ואחר כך יבצע מהשלימה העליונה ומהפרוסה משתייהן ביחד, ויטבלם במלח. ויאכלם בהסיבה ביחד כזית מכל אחד, ואם אינו יכול לאכול כשני זיתים ביחד, יאכל של המוציא תחלה, ואחר כך של אכילת מצה... ואחר כך נוטל מצה שלישיית ובוצע ממנה וכורכה עם המרור וטובלה בחרוסת

רבי ישראל מאיר הכהן מראדין, משנה ברורה, סימן תעה סעיף קטן טז: וכורכה עם המרור - וצריך כזית מצה וכזית מרור. ועיין שער הציון ² שם שמציין את המקור לשערי תשובה בשם תשובת שאגת אריה, וכן מסיק בספר מאמר מרדכי בשם כמה ראשונים

רמב"ם, הלכות חמץ ומצה, פרק ח, הלכה ח: ואחר כך מברך על נטילת ידים ונוטל ידיו שניה שהרי הסיח דעתו בשעת קריאת ההגדה, ולוקח ³ שני ריקיין וחולק אחד מהן ומניח פרוס לתוך שלם, ומברך המוציא להם מן הארץ. ומפני מה אינו מברך על שתי ככרות כשאר ימים טובים משום שנאמר "לחם עוני", מה דרכו של עני בפרוסה אף כאן בפרוסה. ואחר כך כורך מצה ומרור כאחד ומטבל בחרוסת, ומברך ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על אכילת מצות ומרורים ואוכלן. ואם אכל מצה בפני עצמה ומרור בפני עצמו מברך על זה בפני עצמו ועל זה בפני עצמו.

רבי יחיאל מיכל הלוי אפשטיין, ערוך השולחן, אורח חיים, סימן תעז: מיהו בשני בני אדם... וזה פשוט שאם יש להם שני זיתים יאכל כל ⁴ אחד כזית להמוציא שהיא עיקר המצוה ולא יאכלו אפיקומן שהוא לזכר בעלמא

רבי יוסף קארו, בית יוסף, אורח חיים, סימן תעז: כתב הרוקח (סי' רפג) שלא יהיה לו אכילת אפיקומן לטורח, דאמר בניזיר (כג.) אכל מצה ⁵ לשם אכילה גסה [עליו נאמר] (הושע יד י) ופושעים יכשלו במ