

PESACH Q & A's

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WHAT IS CHABAD'S GENERAL APPROACH TO PESACH CHUMROS AND HIDDURIM?

Let's distinguish between the two words themselves: chumra and hiddur. While the terms are used interchangeably, nonetheless for the purpose of our discussion it would be worthwhile to establish a distinction. Chumra means stringency, with connotations that it is challenging, difficult, strict, and narrow. Hiddur, in contrast, means the beautification of a mitzvah.

There is an old vort about the three different approaches to mitzvos. One can view them as 613 different segulos, i.e. "what's in it for me," or, worse, as 613 problems to contend with. The third – and ideal – way is to think of the mitzvos as 613 opportunities to connect with Hashem. Of course, this is the authentic Torah approach and is particularly highlighted in Chassidus. The added stringency or beautification then enhances our connection.

Still, when taking on a chumra or hiddur, it is important to understand the historical background and halachic discussions involved. A sefer entitled *Sh'ailos Uteshuvos Min Hashamayim*, written in the early 13th century, by Rabbi Jacob of Marvège (which incorporates responses he received from Shamayim to various halachic questions), discusses this subject. The author (actually, the Author with a capital A) writes that since avoiding chometz on Pesach was one of the very first mitzvos the Jews accepted from Hashem, therefore, our ancestors embraced it with *ahavah, chibah v're'us*: love, affection, and warmth. Because of that tremendous initial enthusiasm, they were quite machmir, and the special care and attention paid to Pesach has only grown over the generations. In fact, some tzadikim have said that when the mitzvah of Pesach was given, there was uncertainty as to the parameters, since it was before mattan Torah, but due to their love for the mitzvah, the Yidden formulated their own chumros.

There are several practical reasons for stringency as well. Chazal have taken a different attitude toward chometz on Pesach than toward any other mitzvah, since the Torah itself is extremely stringent regarding chometz. The Torah tells us that not only may we not eat chometz; we must go so far as to declare it ownerless or, alternatively, search for it and destroy it. Chazal went a step further and added that we must always perform the mitzvah of bedikah. Strictly speaking, from the Torah perspective, one may declare the chometz ownerless in a process called bittul – and that would have been sufficient. Chazal have insisted that we search for the physical chometz on the night before Erev Pesach in order to burn it on Erev Pesach. After the bedikah, we destroy it in our thought (bittul), and we verbalize that it has been destroyed and declared ownerless.

Furthermore, Chazal say we are not permitted even a mashehu of chometz in a mixture, unlike other mitzvos where a tiny amount of the forbidden might be allowed in a mixture, in some cases, as determined by a Rav.

One of the reasons for all these extra safeguards regarding chometz is due to the fact that chometz is permitted year-round, unlike traife, which is always forbidden. The extra care we take regarding Pesach serves as a margin of safety as we separate ourselves from what is otherwise allowed.

In later times, more Rabbinic prohibitions were added. Kitniyos (beans, legumes, rice, etc.) is an example of food which is not chometz but which Ashkenazi poskim have forbidden on Pesach. Of course, all of Ashkenaz Jewry has accepted the prohibition of kitniyos on Pesach, and even some Sefardim have taken upon themselves this issur. Even in times of severe famine, the Tzemach Tzedek (among other Poskim) treated kitniyos almost as serious a prohibition as actual chometz (except for the infirm or for children). It's important to always keep our focus on the fact that the Jewish people's becoming increasingly machmir through the ages stemmed from our love for this mitzvah.

In addition to all the above, we have the spiritual dimension. It is quoted in the name of the Arizal that one who is careful about a speck of chometz on Pesach is protected from sin year-round. Because chometz represents the yetzer hara and the ego, we need to work full force against it (as per Responsa from the Radbaz). There are only three other things which the Torah forbids b'mashehu, even a minute amount: anger, arrogance and avodah zarah. Chometz is symbolic of all of the above. However, here is a crucial caveat: If being machmir on Pesach enhances our ego (engendering a "holier than thou" attitude toward others who are less machmir) or leads to anger in the household, we are defeating the purpose and allowing our chumros to become a stumbling block.

In being machmir on Pesach, people sometimes violate an explicit din in Shulchan Aruch (Alter Rebbe 469:5) because they say, "How difficult this Pesach is for me!" Such an expression sounds like the words of the rasha in the Haggadah, "What is this work to you?" The reality, however, is that people do feel this way and therefore they express it. The Alter Rebbe was melamed zechus on such people by pointing out that the rasha in the Haggadah was referring to the avodah of the korban Pesach exclusively, whereas today's Jews are complaining about all the extra chumros. Nevertheless, if we fall into the trap of complaining, we are defeating the purpose.

DOES THAT MEAN WE SHOULD BE LESS EXACTING ON OURSELVES?

Not necessarily. Another perspective on Pesach chumros, from the Shulchan Aruch (Alter Rebbe 442:30), is that *Yisroel kedoshim heim* – the Jews are holy: they scrape their chairs and walls. Even though the tasks are not necessary according to the letter of the law, the Rishonim tell us – and Shulchan Aruch quotes this – that the Jews are considered a holy nation for performing them. The Shulchan Aruch adds (O.C. 442:6): Yesh lahem al mah she'yismochu – they have a basis to rely upon. This turn of phrase is generally reserved for discussing a leniency, since normally we would not be halachically lenient, unless there was a real halachic basis. Why is this expression used here when discussing a chumra? The Maadanei Shmuel brings the following explanation from Reb Yaakov Yosef of Ostra (and a similar thought is also found in Mishna Berurah on this halachah): Here



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we learn an important perspective that our chumros must also have a basis, a real source backing it up. The chumros should not be a *chassidus shel shtus* – a foolish piety... An individual cannot simply add his own made-up stringencies to the list. All chumros must stem from an actual halachic source, or at least from a specific community minhag or family mesorah.

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN HALACHAH AND CHUMRA?

It is important to distinguish, because there are clear differences. This is one of the many reasons offered (see Derech Pikudecha Mitzvah 12) as to why we all eat matzah shruyah on Acharon Shel Pesach: if other Torah-true Jews are eating it throughout the Yom Tov, it surely is halachically permissible after all. In order that we don't create any notion that others are eating something which might be chometz, chas v'sholom, we go out of our way on the last day of Pesach to drop this particular chumra. (Of course, other reasons are offered why we eat shruyah specifically on Acharon Shel Pesach and why we don't take this approach with other chumros.) Reb Michel Zlotchover's son, Reb Binyomin Zev, was exceedingly machmir on Pesach and of course always ate matzah shmurah. At one occasion, he noticed his followers humiliating a Yid for eating matzah that was only guarded from the time of grinding. He stood up and said: "You think that so many Yidden who aren't machmir on shmurah are eating chometz on Pesach? Chas v'sholom. Certainly, these matzos are very kosher." He then asked for some only-from-time-of-grinding matzah and ate it in the presence of all the chassidim.

Relying on Hashem and maintaining proper humility and respect for others on Pesach are the themes of this eye-opening story which the Rebbe told at a farbrengen on Shabbos Parshas Ha'azinu 5722. (While the story is not printed in the transcript of the sichos, and some have doubted the veracity of the story as it appears in other sources differently, my father-in-law, Rabbi Berel Lipskier, zol gezunt zein, testifies that he heard it personally from the Rebbe): A certain chossid of the Tzemach Tzedek was extremely careful in his Pesach preparations, doing everything himself including baking his own matzos. He wouldn't use the regular water in his house obtained by the water carrier, preferring to draw water from a covered well behind his home. He didn't want to eat in the Tzemech Tzedek's house, so he only visited the Tzemach Tzedek on the last day of Pesach. At that time the Tzemach Tzedek told the chossid, "I want you to know that you had chometz the entire Yom Tov. Check the well behind your house." The man ran to the well and discovered a loaf of bread floating on the surface. Distraught, he ran back to the Tzemach Tzedek and said, "I have three questions: Why did I receive such a serious punishment when I was so careful to avoid chometz? Why did the Rebbe not warn me? What is my tikkun?" The Rebbe replied, "I didn't see you all Pesach so I couldn't warn you. What occurred is not a punishment, but a direct result of your own actions – you relied only upon yourself and forgot about siyata d'Shmaya." The Rebbe then gave the man a tikkun.

SO, IF ONE WISHES TO OBSERVE EXTRA CHUMROS FOR PESACH, WHAT IS THE PROPER APPROACH?

Simchas Yom Tov, celebrating Pesach with joy, is a mitzvah from the Torah for men, women and children. Hiddurim, on the other hand, are just that – hiddurim, not obligations. If Pesach puts someone in a Tishah B'Av mood, hiddurim are out of place (see *Chassidim Mesaprim* I:637). People need to approach a Rav or mashpia with any questions. They may learn that some of their so-called "hiddurim" have no basis whatsoever in halachah or minhag.

The Rebbe quotes (in his account of Pesach 5692 with the Frierdiker Rebbe) in the name of the Rebbe Rashab that one should not take on extra chumros on Pesach, so that one will not be making a neder. On a different occasion, the Rebbe Rashab said after selling his chometz, "I'm very scared of chumros." This is difficult to understand; the Alter

Rebbe brings from the Arizal that one should "follow all chumros regarding chometz." Indeed, the Rebbe Rashab himself observed many extra chumros beyond the norm on Pesach. One lesson we can learn from the Rebbe Rashab's strong language is the importance of taking on our Pesach hiddurim "bli neder."

Not all hiddurim are suitable for all people. A person has to be *makir es mekomo:* to know whether a practice is suitable to take on or whether it is beyond their level. Discuss this with a mashpia or Rav. And when one decides to keep a particular hiddur, one should do so with both simchah and humility, recalling that many people of the highest spiritual caliber did not keep such hiddurim. The great chossid Reb Noteh of Malastirchina never ate shmurah matzah in his life. (Keep in mind, in earlier times all matzah was hand-made, but most was guarded from contact with water only from the wheat-grinding stage, not from the time of harvest. Today all hand-made matzah is shmurah matzah, guarded from harvest.) Reb Noteh would say, "I don't know when I should begin [observing this hiddur]." Of course, nowadays we all insist on eating only shmurah. (This stringency became the norm in the time of the Rebbe Maharash.) Whether or not we keep a particular minhag or hiddur, it's vital to emphasize the importance of not undermining, chas v'sholom, any minhag Yisroel practiced by others.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IF A PERSON REALIZES THEIR PESACH HIDDUR IS BEYOND WHAT THEY ARE CAPABLE OF DOING?

There is always the option of doing hataras nedarim when one realizes a certain practice cannot be kept any longer. Consult a Rav who is a *moreh hora'ah b'poel* (an experienced Rav) if necessary.

CAN THE RAV DISCUSS HALACHAH AND HIDDUR IN CLEANING FOR PESACH?

When cleaning, some people overdo Pesach hiddurim in an inappropriate way. People often confuse Pesach cleaning with spring cleaning, saying, "I might as well..." However, if one runs into a time management problem, one can develop a negative attitude toward Pesach altogether. It is important to separate Pesach cleaning from spring cleaning, as was famously said, "Dirt is not chometz, and children are not the korban Pesach." If one wants to do spring cleaning, one may do so as long as one realizes it is extra work and has nothing to do with Pesach. As mentioned, if one wants to perform extra hiddurim, one should appreciate that this is a hiddur, done out of a love for the mitzvah and not complain about the difficulty. And really, why not wash curtains and windows before Shavuos? Or in honor of Rosh Hashanah?

Pesach cleaning today is often much harder than it was centuries ago. We have larger houses and far more possessions. In addition, we do not have many maids and servants – plus a grandmother and extended family living with us – as did our ancestors with small homes. It is critical to keep in mind the halachah, "A place into which one doesn't bring chometz does not require bedikah." We have a halachic definition of such a spot: In the middle of a meal, you would not get up from the table and take things from that place. Of course, in a house with young children, many additional areas must be checked because children don't necessarily follow such rules. But one need only check places where children can reach, not the high shelves they cannot access or places like the boiler room or meter room, where they will not go. In addition, according



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to the Tzemach Tzedek, a place that is being sold does not require bedikah or cleaning beforehand.

Remember: One need not dispose of a piece of chometz smaller than a k'zayis which is slightly soiled. If the chometz is larger than a k'zayis, then only in a case where it's entirely soiled, e.g., it is soaked in bleach, is it okay to leave it. Of course, as mentioned, *Yisroel kedoshim heim*– the Jews are holy and go beyond the letter of the law, if they can.

AFTER ALL MY CLEANING, BEDIKAS CHOMETZ FEELS LIKE A WASTE OF TIME. ANY SUGGESTIONS?

The purpose of all our cleaning is in order to make a proper bedikah. Traditionally, people swept their earthen floors on the 13th of Nissan in order to prepare properly for the bedikah at night. People certainly didn't start cleaning for Pesach in Adar Rishon. My grandfather z"l used to say, "In Rozhvodov [Galicia] they took a broom, and it became Pesach." We do the bedikah after sweeping because the broom might not reach into all the nooks and crannies where chometz could be lodged. Today, however, many people have confused the priorities: "sweeping" (cleaning) has become the overriding issue, while the bedikah, over which we make an actual brachah, is sometimes not treated so seriously and may be given minimal time and attention. As we know, the Alter Rebbe had only one room, but he spent all night doing bedikas chometz there. Our Rebbe has said that we always do bedikas chometz after Maariv because our custom is to do a very long bedikah and thus one might come to forget to daven Maariv.

On the emotional level, we can understand people's feelings about bedikas chometz. The kitchen is particularly difficult: it is usually already Pesachdik on the night of bedikas chometz and people don't even want to walk into it with chometz, or with the bedikas chometz paper bag. Also, there are very few actual cracks and crevices in the home today. A proposal which the Rebbe Rashab suggested to Rabbi Yaakov Landau of B'nei Brak is worthwhile for us to adopt. Before we make a room Pesachdik, the husband can do bedikas chometz in that room with a candle (or flashlight), any night before Pesach, so long that it is within 30 days of Pesach. This bedikah should be done without a blessing. In this way, the mitzvah, broken into smaller segments, is done carefully and properly. It also becomes extra-meaningful for the woman, who usually cleans the home in preparation for the bedikah: it accentuates all her hard work in preparing each room, and not only the husband's carrying out the final bedikah, thus fostering sholom bayis. Of course, some areas must be left for the night of Erev Pesach bedikah, to be done with the blessing.

WHAT ARE THE BASIC CHABAD MINHAGIM FOR PESACH, IN CONTRADISTINCTION TO CHUMROS/HIDDURIM?

We do not eat matzah shruyah – wet matzah, or gebrokts. Chassidim in general keep this custom, dating back to the time of the Maggid of Mezeritch, and some non-chassidim do, as well. The Alter Rebbe wrote a lengthy teshuvah explaining the halachic rationale for this chumra.

In the Haggadah, our Rebbe says that we not only avoid wet matzah, but we keep the matzah covered at the table while eating. This is the source for the matzah tash (holder) of cloth, paper or plastic (ziplock bag). Another option not mentioned by the Rebbe: Some people move their chairs away from the table while eating matzah, rather than covering it.

Before we pour water into a container, we check to make sure that no matzah crumbs are in that vessel.

We do not pass our wet fingers over our lips during mayim acharonim in order to avoid wetting any remaining matzah crumbs.

There is a halachic dispute as to whether machine-made matzah is permissible, and many poskim maintain that it is not. The Chabad position is to follow those poskim and eat only handmade matzah, not machine-made matzah.

Chabad chassidim follow those poskim who have forbidden the use of Pesachdike mashkeh.

In the Haggadah, the Rebbe notes that according to our custom, two ingredients of the original charoses – cinnamon and ginger – were dropped due to a concern over chometz. If an individual harvests his own and personally ascertains that it is chometz-free, these ingredients would probably be permissible on Pesach.

WHAT, EXACTLY, IS CONSIDERED WET MATZAH?

In a teshuvah of the Alter Rebbe – who was one of the very first poskim to discuss matzah shruyah – he specifies that matzah shruyah is defined as matzah that came in contact with water. In the case of mei peiros, fruit juice, the Alter Rebbe writes, "Peshitah," it is obvious that we don't have to be machmir

at all. The Rebbe in his commentary on the Haggadah also writes that shruyah applies only to matzah that came in contact with water, or with liquids that contain water. The Rebbe Rashab was so strict regarding matzah shruyah that he would only use a spoon and not use a fork at all on Pesach (in case the matzah that was in his mouth came in contact with the fork!), and he wiped his mouth after every bite. A possible explanation for this is because it is relatively easy to know that a spoon is 100 percent clean, but a fork is much harder to clean perfectly. Even so, he hardly ate soup on Pesach out of concern over matzah shruyah. Yet we know the Rebbe Rashab ate matzah with milk. The expression used in the Frierdiker Rebbe's sichos is "shmurah milk", i.e. milk which has been watched from the time of milking to ascertain that it contains no water. Today, many people will not eat matzah with milk or other liquids because they can't be sure no water was mixed into the liquid.

Some won't even eat matzah with food that they know with certainty is water-free, not to confuse their children and families, or they don't want matzah on the table altogether. Likewise, some might have a family minhag to follow the view of those poskim who are equally stringent regarding shruyah with mei peiros, fruit juice, as with water. Thus, there is room for the chumra of not wetting matzah with other, water-free liquids.

Regarding the chinuch of children, the Rebbe distinguishes between machine-made matzah and wet matzah. He says never to give machine-made matzah to children, whereas he permits wet matzah for them. Nonetheless, as mentioned elsewhere in sichos, children who have already reached the age of chinuch should also be educated not to eat wet matzah.

SO, AVOCADO AND FRESH LEMON JUICE MAY BE EATEN WITH MATZAH?

One may do so if one is careful that the knife has no water on it. One would want the plate and knife to be of disposable plastic in order to avoid issues with washing them afterwards. Remember that not everyone is capable of being cautious in this area.

IF ONE USED REAL (NOT DISPOSABLE) PLATES AT THE TABLE, MUST THEY BE TAKEN TO THE SINK ONE BY ONE IN ORDER TO AVOID GEBROKTS, OR MAY THEY BE STACKED ONE ON TOP OF ANOTHER?

There is no official Chabad custom regarding stacking plates. Some people who are exceedingly machmir about matzah shruyah –and have a particular family minhag about this – might avoid stacking.

WHAT IS THE CHABAD MINHAG REGARDING BOILING SUGAR?

Not eating sugar on Pesach is a custom of the Rebbeim, and not all their chassidim took it upon themselves. In fact, the Rebbe Rashab was unhappy when others imitated him in this matter. The original source for this chumra is a din in Shulchan Aruch that one shouldn't eat sugar on Pesach due to a concern – which was relevant in those days – of a mix-up with flour. However, there are many poskim who state clearly that sugar which was made in a manner which is kosher for Pesach is permissible. Nonetheless, our Rebbeim have decided to adopt this chumra (not eating any sugar on Pesach) even nowadays. While we can never know their true reason, it should be noted that some respected Halachic sources also mention such a chumra even nowadays. There are also other circles where sugar wouldn't be used on Pesach even with a Pesach hechsher. When our Rebbe was asked directly why this custom wasn't incorporated in Sefer Haminhagim, he replied (among other explanations) that he was unsure whether this custom of the Rebbeim is a custom for everyone. The Rebbe explained that if one makes sure that the sugar is permissible to use for Pesach, one should be allowed to use it. Others boil the sugar with water before Pesach, which is a custom in some families and not mentioned in sources as an official Chabad custom. Still others avoid sugar altogether, as per the custom of the Rebbeim.

The reasoning behind boiling sugar is as follows: Chometz may be nullified before Pesach in certain specific circumstances (beyond the scope of this interview), whereas during Pesach it can never be nullified. If a cracker or chometzdik matzah has been inadvertently mixed with many pieces of matzah before Pesach (referred to as a mixture of yavesh b'yavesh), it would never be completely nullified because when Pesach arrives the bread will always, as it were, stand on its own and announce, "I'm here." This concept is called in halachah chozer v'neur (it has reawakened). There is a second type

of mixture addressed in halachah called lach b'lach, referring to ingredients mixed together wherein the chometz and Pesach-permissible ingredient are totally indistinguishable from one another forever. In this case, the chometz ingredient has become totally nullified (b'shishim, i.e. the chometz ingredient comprises 1.6% or less in the mixture) before Pesach, as it will never stand alone as a chometz item. It is for this reason that matzos are baked always before Pesach; just in case there is some wheat which has sprouted (rendering some of the flour chometz) it will become nullified when all the flour is mixed together as one unit in the baked matzah. Back to our case of sugar, once sugar (prechecked for chometz) is combined and boiled with water, even if there were a miniscule grain of chometz in the sugar, it would never again be distinct from the permissible ingredients. Any possible minute amount of chometz in such a mixture may be nullified l'chatchilah before Pesach. In his Shulchan Aruch, the Alter Rebbe says regarding real chometz in a mixture that has been fused into a single entity and totally nullified (lach b'lach), that if one wishes, they may be machmir not to rely on the nullification of chometz, even though it is lach b'lach, but not to be machmir with others on this.

Bottom line, there is no formal Lubavitch custom regarding sugar on Pesach.

IS PEELING ALL FRUITS AND VEGETABLES A CHABAD MINHAG?

There is no known halachic source for peeling fruits. Nonetheless, this is an accepted custom among chassidim and many others. It is no different than not using food that touched the floor (explained below). The minhag could be seen as more relevant nowadays when many fruit are sprayed.

Whatever fruits and vegetables we cannot peel, we do not use. Indeed, contemporary poskim state that even in the year of shmittah where one may not waste any part of the shmittah fruit, one may dispose of edible peels on Pesach.

CAN THE RAV EXPLAIN THE CUSTOM OF SOME TO USE SEPARATE KNIVES FOR PEELING AND CUTTING AND TO KEEP THESE AWAY FROM OTHER KITCHEN UTENSILS?

This is similar to the minhag of having a separate pot for eggs (mentioned in *Eshel Avrohom*), since they are cooked in their peels. However, I don't know if this can be fully explained, as the peeling knife usually ends up touching the actual fruit anyway. Nonetheless, if one has a mesorah of this minhag, it shouldn't be disregarded, as there were Gedolei Yisroel who practiced it. It could be that the idea was to aid in establishing a clear distinction between the peels and the fruit.

LETTUCE CANNOT BE PEELED, BUT SINCE WE DO EAT ROMAINE LETTUCE AT THE SEDER (WASHED, CHECKED AND DRIED), CAN WE ALSO EAT IT AT THE MEALS (ALSO WASHED AND CHECKED) IN SALADS? IF NOT, WHY NOT?

Technically, it is permissible to have a salad made from the checked Romaine lettuce as long as the outer leaves have been removed. This is a question of family minhag. (Parenthetically, it should be noted that a bigger issue than the fact that it can't be peeled is the real concern of bugs in the lettuce. If the lettuce is not checked properly it can be the cause of many serious Torah prohibitions both on Pesach and at other times.)

The fact that we eat lettuce at the seder is not a contradiction to those following the minhag of not eating lettuce on Pesach; at the seder, it's a mitzvah of maror. Similarly, there were great tzadikim who avoided matzah as much as possible on Pesach (after all, the biggest concern for chometz exists with matzah!), though many poskim advised against this chumra. However, no one would consider avoiding eating matzah at the seder.

It is worthwhile to note that people sometimes contradict themselves in a different way regarding the peeling custom. They peel all fruits and vegetables in their homes, even for cooking, before Pesach, yet they drink wine and grape juice or other juices made of unpeeled fruit. (Yes, juices made of peeled fruit do exist.) The point is not to stop peeling fruit on Pesach: the point is to avoid being critical of others, because there is nothing wrong according to the strict halachah with peels on Pesach.

WHAT IS THE REASON SOME PEOPLE ONLY EAT PEELABLE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES THAT WERE AVAILABLE IN RUSSIA IN THE 1930'S?

To label the custom this way is an old joke; the practice has nothing to do with life in Russia.

The reason some limit themselves to potatoes, yams, beets, carrots, onions, lemons, apples, bananas, oranges and pears (did I leave anything out?) on Pesach is because certain people hold a very broad

definition of, and fervent wish to avoid, kitniyos. Some definitions are quite extreme. There is a machlokes as to whether coffee and cocoa are kitniyos. The Pri Megadim mentions those who had a minhag not to eat potatoes and the Chayei Adam actually forbade potatoes, categorizing them as kitniyos. However, Klal Yisroel has long settled this issue in favor of potatoes. A modern-day machlokes over cottonseed exists, but most authorities rule that there is no question of kitniyos in cottonseed oil. Some people became so extreme that if a vegetable or fruit contains many seeds, they removed it from their Pesach shopping list. However, the halachic definition of kitniyos (in the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch) does not rule out any of the above foods.

Nonetheless, there happens to be some truth to the joke. The Belzer Rebbe, Reb Aron, wouldn't eat cucumbers on Pesach because his ancestors didn't eat them. He explained that since even a minute amount of chometz is forbidden, we need extra siyata d'Shmaya. "Whereas for the potatoes my ancestors already davened, this needs new tefillos; thus, I'd rather go on the paved road." However, the Belzer Rebbe also didn't fly on airplanes for the same reason...

The Tzemach Tzedek said not to eat radishes on Pesach, without giving a reason. There is an ancient minhag not to eat garlic on Pesach; the Pri Megadim writes that he does not know the reason for it. In his Shulchan Aruch, the Alter Rebbe brings a case where garlic is used on Pesach, and from the context we can perhaps infer that the Alter Rebbe had no problem with its use. Some have testified that in the city of Lubavitch garlic was used on Pesach. Nevertheless, there are many Lubavitchers who do not use garlic on Pesach.

IF FOOD IS DROPPED ON THE FLOOR, MAY IT BE WASHED AND USED? WHEN MY BEST FOUR PEELERS FALL ON THE FLOOR, DO I REALLY NEED TO WAIT UNTIL NEXT YEAR TO USE THEM AGAIN?

A common but not official Chabad minhag (practiced by many others as well) is not to use any food that touches the floor. The same applies to utensils as well. If necessary, one may wash and immediately use a utensil that fell on the floor. This does not present a halachic problem. However, common custom is to put away the utensils until the following year. While this custom is not mentioned outright in halachah, some narrow support can be found in respected Halachic sources, and it's very similar to the minhag of peeling vegetables and fruits.

WHAT IS THE HALACHAH IF I MARRY A MAN WITH FEWER CHUMROS THAN I WAS RAISED WITH? DO I HAVE TO KEEP MY CHUMROS FROM MY PARENTS' HOUSE, OR CAN I DROP THEM? WHAT IF I MARRY SOMEONE WITH MORE CHUMROS, AND HE DOESN'T WANT TO MOVE IN TO MY PARENTS' HOUSE FOR YOM TOV BECAUSE THAT WOULD MEAN DROPPING HIS CHUMROS?

Virtually all poskim agree that the woman follows her husband's chumros after the wedding, whether they are more lenient or more strict than the way she was raised. If the husband is less strict than the wife's family, the wife is permitted to keep the chumros from her parents' home if her husband does not mind. If there is any conflict, one should get advice from an experienced Rav or mashpia. Regarding chumros, the effect on sholom bayis must be taken into consideration. A family can fall apart chas v'sholom because of a couple's lack of respect and appreciation for each other, not because of religious differences.

However, it should be pointed out that this is being written for a women's magazine. Any man reading this should think carefully and consult with a mashpia or Rav before insisting that his wife add chumros that he was raised with. 1) Is it a real minhag with a sound basis? 2) Is it going to make his wife "call out to Hashem because of the work"? 3) Is he presenting it to her as a suggestion with room for her input, i.e. not "I insist," but rather, "This is really important for me, I hope it won't be too difficult for you"? 4) Is he sure that he is as strict and demanding on himself as he is on his wife?

Some people have a family hiddur not to use dish soap on Pesach, only salt water mixed with lemon juice. A husband who wishes to incorporate this hiddur might consider offering to wash the dishes and pots himself.

DO I NEED TO BUY BRAND NEW SIDDURIM EVERY YEAR FOR PESACH?

There is no need to buy new siddurim each year for Pesach, so long as last year's Pesach siddurim were stored away from the chometz. You may also use siddurim that were

not stored away if they were never used by the table throughout the year and have been checked to ensure that they are totally clean from chometz. It should be noted however that the Rebbe once spoke (*Sefer Hasichos* 5748 I:343) about buying the children new siddurim for Yom Tov, to make them happy.

REGARDING BUYING FRUITS, VEGETABLES, OR MEAT ON CHOL HAMOED: IF THE ITEM IS PURCHASED FROM A LOCAL FRUM STORE WHOSE OWNER SOLD HIS CHOMETZ PROPERLY BEFORE PESACH, IS THERE ANY POTENTIAL PROBLEM IN BUYING THERE?

There is certainly no halachic problem in buying things that are needed for Yom Tov – for example, a bag of potatoes, or clothing an adult needs to wear on Yom Tov – if there is no chometz in the store. The Rebbe Rashab once needed to buy certain materials for medical purposes to use on Pesach, and he requested that they be purchased before Pesach from a store which contained no chometz. This was his personal conduct. Some people will not buy these items in a store in which there is actual chometz, even if it has been sold properly. Nevertheless, according to halachah, it is permissible to buy items needed for Yom Tov on Chol Hamoed from a store owner who has sold his chometz properly. (According to the laws of Chol Hamoed, shopping for items not needed for Yom Tov is highly questionable altogether.)

AM I ALLOWED TO SMELL CHOMETZ ON PESACH?

It is forbidden to smell chometz on Pesach even if it belongs to a gentile (unless one has no choice and it's unintentional). The Alter Rebbe brings this halachah clearly in his Shulchan Aruch. In the case of smelling perfume, there are other considerations and factors permitting one to be lenient.

DO COUNTERS NEED TO BE BOTH KASHERED AND COVERED?

According to basic halachah, if one covers, one does not need to kasher, and if one kashers, one does not need to cover. Why do people both kasher and cover, despite the fact that both are not required? This is all part of the spirit of undertaking extra chumros. One reason is due to a concern (which was common in the wooden counters that were prevalent in days of old) that the area wasn't sufficiently cleaned and a minute amount of real chometz might have remained somewhere on the counter. Also, some counters are made of materials which not all agree can be kashered. The halachah is that areas that became chometzdik through fire cannot become Pesachdik by kashering with water alone. These areas might need a higher level of kashering, such as blowtorching, but then, blowtorching might destroy the surface. In such a case (which isn't very common with kitchen surfaces), after kashering with water, people would cover the area. In addition, kashering with water is supposed to be done in a pot, a kli rishon. Pouring the water over a stone onto the surface is a second-choice solution. Since this is not the preferred practice, people cover the surface. Finally, it is a hiddur not to rely on kashering chometzdik items altogether and to purchase new utensils especially for Pesach. The Shulchan Aruch says to buy new knives, and some apply this ruling to all vessels and to covering their counters as well.

Why would people not simply cover their surfaces without kashering? First, the halachah is that chometzdik utensils are supposed to be locked away. Accordingly, we are not satisfied with merely covering the chometzdik counters, rather we kasher them first. Second, in case the covering tears or moves, there could be a chometz problem. Third, heat might pass through the covering into the surface below and then back above. Especially problematic is a case where liquid penetrates the covering. Therefore, in order to be extra careful, many people both kasher and cover surfaces.

AFTER THE WALLS NEAR THE STOVE ARE WASHED, DO THEY HAVE TO BE COVERED AS WELL?

There is no real reason to cover walls, since we don't eat from our walls. People may cover their walls if they wish. In case one is concerned that a hot chometz pot has touched the backsplash or a wall near the stove, and then a Pesachdik pot would touch the same spot, there is room in halachah to say to cover the area.

AFTER THE REFRIGERATOR AND FREEZER SHELVES, DOOR, ETC., ARE THOROUGHLY WASHED, MUST THEY BE COVERED IN ADDITION? IF SO, WHAT COVERING MATERIAL IS BEST?

Covering the inside of the refrigerator has a real, practical reason, since chometzdik food is actually put there. Because we are not allowed even a mashehu of chometz on Pesach, and because it is very hard

to clean every crevice of the refrigerator, people cover it to be safe. In days of old, when they stored food in wooden closets, the Maharil cautioned to cover those closets used during the year for chometz, even though they were cleaned for Pesach. Covering with foil may lead to transgressing the important halachic prohibition of bal tashchis since foil is known to cause refrigerators to break. If a refrigerator breaks down during Yom Tov and all the food spoils, this greatly compounds the issue. Therefore, plastic refrigerator lining is a good choice for covering.

IF CLOTHING HAS BEEN WASHED IN DETERGENT OR DRY CLEANED, DO POCKETS NEED TO BE CHECKED BEFORE PESACH?

There is no need to check the pockets of clothing which has been washed in soap or dry cleaned before Pesach (rendering all possible chometz inedible). This only applies to clothing which was not worn afterwards, so that there wasn't a chance to put fresh chometz into the pockets after cleaning.

IN WHAT CASES MAY I DO LAUNDRY DURING CHOL HAMOED? SOME DON'T AT ALL, BUT I CAN'T AFFORD TO BUY 8-9 YOM TOV OUTFITS FOR MY CHILDREN. THE CLOTHING THEY WEAR TO THE SEDORIM, AND ON CHOL HAMOED, GETS DIRTY?

The Torah mandates that we wash ourselves and our clothing before Yom Tov so that we should be clean and fresh for the holiday, and not in a state of "menuval," i.e. filthy and contemptible. Shulchan Aruch forbids doing laundry on Chol Hamoed, even if done by a non-Jew, in order that we should be extra particular to enter Yom Tov with fresh, clean clothing. The exceptions include clothing for small children who soil themselves very often: one may do any amount of laundry for them, as there is no limit to how many changes of clothing they will need in a day. For older children who soil themselves but not as frequently, one may only wash what they need to wear right now, not what might be needed in a few days. One must wash only what is immediately needed at the time it is needed. There is no reason to buy 8-9 outfits for each child in order to avoid doing laundry for them. For an adult, however, it is preferable to buy new clothing on Chol Hamoed rather than to resort to washing dirty clothing.

IS IT IMPORTANT FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN TO WEAR YOM TOV CLOTHING, RATHER THAN ROBES, AT THE SEDORIM? DURING THE WEEK I ALWAYS WEAR AN APRON, AND ON SHABBOS A DARK ROBE, BECAUSE EVERY TIME I AM AROUND FOOD, MY CLOTHES GET DIRTY. AM I GIVING SUFFICIENT KAVOD TO YOM TOV?

As long as the robes are appropriate for Yom Tov and are totally tzniusdik, there is no problem for women and girls to wear robes to the sedarim and in the house. Tznius and Yom Tov suitability are high priorities for women's clothing at home. There is no halachah that one must wear outdoor clothing in the house on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

SHAMPOOS, MAKEUP, VITAMINS: IS IT REALLY PERMISSIBLE TO USE ONLY THOSE IN THE "LIST"? WHY WOULD THEY BE CHOMETZDIK, SINCE THEY'RE NOT EDIBLE AT ALL?

According to halachah, if chometz is *nifsal mei'achilas kelev* (unfit for canine consumption) it is not considered chometz. Such chometz is considered, in the words of the Gemara, "mere dust." If it is fit for canine consumption, even though it is inedible for a human, it is no different than yeast which is specifically forbidden by the Torah on Pesach, since it has the ability to ferment bread.

The definition, however, of nifsal is not that straightforward. The fact that contemporary norms render something inedible doesn't mean that halachah would treat it the same. Some things are considered in halachah fit for human consumption, though nowadays people would be repulsed by the thought of eating them.

Many products, such as perfume, contain pure denatured alcohol. Some opinions consider denatured alcohol suitable for consumption, since some alcoholics would drink this with slight additions. Poskim also address the fact that in today's day and age it can be restored to regular drinkable alcohol through the addition of certain chemicals. However, it should be noted that some products cannot be reconstituted as drinkable alcohol, especially products using completely denatured alcohol (CDA). Examples include nail polish, hand lotion, shoe polish and paint.

Another consideration is the minority view that the exemption of nifsal applies only to items that are normally consumed, not an item that has initially been produced

as a non-food item. Alternatively, since dogs would not consume even conventional drinkable alcohol, we should not apply the regular exemption of nifsal to alcohol, according to this view. All of this applies primarily to medications, cosmetics or toiletries that are in liquid form such as perfume, hair spray and deodorants. Another issue with perfume specifically: Some poskim are of the view that although the product itself is nifsal, it can't be classified as such, since the fragrance added to the base product is fit for consumption and the primary purpose of perfume is to exude a fragrance.

While the consensus of Acharonim seems to be lenient about some of these issues, the common custom has been to follow the more stringent views regarding Pesach. It should be pointed out, however, that at times the alcohol contained in many products is from corn or synthetic (not from grain, therefore not a problem for Pesach).

WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO ARE MACHMIR EVEN WITH CREAMS AND SOAP CONTAINING CHOMETZ?

The fact that anointing can be considered a form of drinking is the basis for being machmir. For a variety of reasons which are beyond the scope of this interview, mainstream halachah doesn't recognize this issue as a legitimate concern. (Even if the hand-cream might touch Pesachdike food, it would also not be a serious issue, since the intention isn't to eat the inedible cream. The halachah, mentioned in the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch as well, is that one may use on Pesach ink which contains chometzdik beer since the ink was rendered inedible before the z'man on Erev Pesach. One need not be concerned with the fact that one might accidentally place the quill of ink in the mouth, as even so nothing would be wrong with that, since there is no actual intention to eat the chometz.) Nonetheless, *Yisroel kedoshim heim,* and a common minhag exists to be extra scrupulous in these issues.

All agree that it is recommended to use a fresh stick of lipstick for Pesach, since it is often inadvertently ingested when eating [chometz] food during the year and can come in contact with real edible chometz. Indeed, this applies to any items that are normally placed in the mouth such as a toothbrush used throughout the year. It is common practice to be machmir with all items that are taken orally, such as vitamins, natural remedies, mouthwash and toothpaste.

DOES THIS MEAN THAT MEDICINE SHOULDN'T BE TAKEN UNLESS IT HAS BEEN VERIFIED TO BE CHOMETZ-FREE?

It depends. If an ingested medicine contains chometz but doesn't have a good taste, whenever possible, one should rather use an alternative medication which is chometz-free. If a chometz-free medication is not available, a sick person may take the medication, provided it has no good taste. However, flavored medications, chewable pills, or pleasant-tasting cough syrups are generally considered edible food and should not be taken on Pesach, unless one's life is in danger or may be in danger, or it has been determined that the medicine is chometz free. (Examples of potential sakanah include: abnormal blood pressure, heart condition, depression, a woman in active labor or within seven days after birth, or even regular infections.) Any medication taken on a regular basis for chronic conditions should not be discontinued on Pesach without first consulting with the doctor. It should be noted that individuals who are in a state of potential sakanah should not switch medications without express approval from one's Rav and from one's doctor. As a general rule, one should not refrain from taking any required medication even if it does contain chometz, without first consulting one's physician and Rav.

REGARDING A PESACH PRODUCT I USE, SUCH AS DISH SOAP OR TOOTHPASTE, MUST I BUY THE JEWISH BRAND IF IT DOESN'T DO A GOOD CLEANING JOB OR IS DISTASTEFUL, WHEREAS THE NON-JEWISH, BUT CERTIFIED FOR PESACH, BRAND WORKS WELL?

This issue is relevant year-round. It is a mitzvah to support a fellow Jew unless his product is extremely expensive or not practical. When it comes to Pesach, is the Jewish brand better to buy on Pesach – is it more kosher? Being that both brands are certified for Pesach, unless you know specific differences, it is difficult to say one is more kosher than the other and you are permitted to use the non-Jewish brand, if it's more convenient and more practical.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO USE ONLY SCHMALTZ AND DO WITHOUT OIL?

According to the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch, on Pesach one is permitted to use oil. The issues here are chumra and minhag. First, many

people don't want to use any processed food. Regarding processed food, some only use the bare minimum, and some consider oil to be in the category of bare minimum. Also, take into account that some foods are more processed than others (more about this later). The Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch states that oil made of kitniyos is forbidden. There is a debate whether, since kitniyos oil was forbidden, all non-kitniyos oil should be forbidden as well so that people will avoid confusing the two. The Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch states clearly, in parentheses, that this is not the case. In America before the nesius, our Rebbe was asked which oil Anash use for Pesach. The Rebbe wrote in a telegram in English (reprinted and translated in Hebrew in *Igros Kodesh* XXI:96), "Anash use Nutola [name of a company] fat." Some have a tradition not to use oil, but we cannot say it is forbidden.

IS IT IMPORTANT TO AVOID MILK AND DAIRY PRODUCTS ON PESACH?

Some avoid dairy on Pesach because of the processed foods issue. Additionally, there is a halachic discussion regarding milk from cows that ate chometz on Pesach, especially if they were milked within 24 hours of the time they ate chometz. Today this issue is usually not relevant because the milk we receive is from cows milked before Pesach. Furthermore, at many cholov Yisroel dairies, workers stop feeding the cows with chometz for a period of time before Pesach. Nevertheless, some people continue to keep the old minhagim despite technological changes today. As we said earlier, it is written in sichos that the Rebbe Rashab drank milk on Pesach.

WHY DO SOME PEOPLE AVOID EATING PROCESSED FOOD ON PESACH? IS THIS CONNECTED WITH NOT EATING OUTSIDE ONE'S OWN HOME?

The custom not to eat in others' homes on Pesach is a minhag mentioned in many sources, including the writings of the Sefardi ga'on, Rabbi Chaim Palaggi (who passed away over 150 years ago). Some link this with the korban Pesach where only "members" who were "subscribed" in advance were permitted to eat from the korban of each group. In fact, the Gemara mentions that everyone brought their own knife! The prevailing Chabad custom dating from the Alter Rebbe (described in Hayom Yom) is not to offer visitors food on Pesach, but to allow them to help themselves. The Frierdiker Rebbe explains that we do not put any pressure on the visitor because he might have hiddurim. He may be willing to eat at one home but not at another, and we don't want to offend anyone, host or guest. The Rebbe once wrote to someone that it is not recommended to travel away from home for Pesach because it is difficult to be mehader in someone else's home.

Our Rebbe's bris took place on Chol Hamoed Pesach at the home of his grandfather, Rabbi Meir Shlomo Yanovsky, Rav of Nikolayev. A chossid, Reb Asher Grossman, didn't want to eat at the bris. The Rav told him, "You really deserve a serious telling off for refusing to eat at the home of the Rav, but I can't give it to you because you saved my life." When Rav Meir Shlomo was deathly ill with typhus, Reb Asher stood outside the door and read aloud one particularly inspiring chapter of Tanya (Iggeres Hakodesh Ch. 11) day after day, giving the Rav the spiritual strength to continue fighting for his life.

Clearly, the Rebbe's grandfather felt this chossid was being unduly machmir under the circumstances. We can learn from it the importance of striking the proper personal balance in our conduct on Pesach.Pesach is a family holiday when people are home. Moreover, the mitzvah from the Torah for a father to teach his son about Pesach is achieved more successfully at home than away.

The question of eating outside one's own home is compounded in the case of processed food (depending on the product and hechsher). Processed food has not only been made outside of our home; it has been processed in a commercial setting. When a sh'ailah arises on processed food, a serious financial loss can sometimes occur for the company, and thus a Rav might have to be lenient according to halachah due to the monetary loss. Of course, this issue is equally relevant, or even more relevant, to those who participate in the Pesach getaways at hotels. Kashering a hotel is a complicated process and a very high level of vigilance and supervision is required if everything produced in the premises is to be totally acceptable.

Some processed foods are so clean that one almost can't go wrong in buying them. In fact, sometimes the processed food has less chance of being chometzdik than the home-made version. Other foods,

if processed, theoretically could involve serious potential sh'ailos of chometz mixtures, especially in a non-dedicated Pesach factory. One example is the use of unprocessed schmaltz on Pesach versus the commercially produced oils available on the market. Schmaltz can come from chickens that were surrounded by grain at the chicken farm. Those who use schmaltz should always ensure that it's grain-free. In fact, many families make sure to cook or fry the schmaltz before Pesach – and some do this with all their chicken bought for Pesach – so that any potential chometz would be nullified before Yom Tov (as we discussed earlier in relation to boiling sugar).

IS GIVING PROCESSED FOODS TO CHILDREN PERMISSIBLE, OR A GOOD IDEA?

There is a difference in halachah between adults and children, and we do not necessarily inconvenience children with adult chumros. Of course, we do not give them gebrokts l'chatchilah. Still, it is good for their chinuch, and a practical lesson in iskafya and bittul, when they do not eat every type of treat they receive throughout the year. Then what do we give them? The answer to this varies according to the individual family and its culture. While we don't want to overindulge the children, we also don't want to deprive them to the point that they rebel in an opposite, undesirable direction. When coming to a decision about nosh for children, we adults might ask ourselves a question: Why do we need to eat all that garbage, anyhow?

WOULD THE RAV LIKE TO SHARE ANY CLOSING THOUGHTS?

The Shulchan Aruch discusses the mitzvah mid'Oraisa of simchas Yom Tov, whereby a husband needs to make his wife and children happy on Yom Tov. He accomplishes this by buying clothing and jewelry for his wife, and treats for the children. The Rebbe suggested (on Purim 5747) that we buy new Haggados containing beautiful pictures for the children. This is a chassidishe, ruchniusdik version of treats for children.

We wish each other a kosheren, freilichen Pesach; we need to realize that it's important that our Pesach contains both aspects. It should be 100% kosher and it should bring us true simchah. If we work overly hard on one, it might come at the expense of the other. A proper balance between kosher and freilich is the key.

B'gashmius, it's almost impossible to be protected from a mashehu chometz. The reason we are successful is because Hashem provides us with an extra measure of protection provided by the malachim (See Ohr LaShamayim Parashas Tzav). All the chumros we do are our keli to merit that special siyata d'Shmaya. May Hashem give us a true kosher and freilich Pesach, with the ability to wrap our lettuce and matzah with real lamb from the korban Pesach, with the coming of Moshiach, now mamash!

THANK YOU VERY MUCH, RABBI BRAUN!

Bais Chaya Mushka Seminary wishes Mazel Tov to our graduates and staff on their recent Simchas.

Marriage

Yamna Haziza to Meir Dahan
Haya Asseraf to Chneor Assouline
Naomi Cohen to Levi Farouz
Leah Aber to Yisroel Noach Teitlebaum
Sheindel Hellinger to Leib Wexler
Chaya Silberstein to Bentzy Brook
Shevy Guitta to Yosef Wolko
Mushky Andrusier to Eli Posner
Tsvia Cabessa to Yoel Edelman

Baby

Moshe & Simcha Siev (Peer) – boy
Mendel & Sarah Wilhelm (Paris) – boy
Yosef & Ruth Weingarten (Levitas) – girl
Shterna & Zalman Lewis (Engel) – boy
Yankel & Miriam Osdoba (Steifel) – girl
Mendy & Chana Birman (Tawil) – girl
Uriel & Shevy Vigler (Lew) – girl
Baruch & Chani Steinmetz (Teitlebaum) – girl
Choni & Kayla Kazen (Perlstein) – girl
Mendy & Chanie Cohen (Kohn) – girl
Levi & Musya Krinsky (Rabiski) – boy
Gavriel & Nechama Dina Benayon (Benayan) – boy
Mendy & Esti Gutnick (Biston) – boy
Yisroel Meir & Baila Rodal (Hyams) – girl
Getzy & Chana Rubashkin (Yusevitz) – boy
Yoel & Mussy Chazan (Perlstein) – girl
Shaya & Bayla Lesches (Lurie) – girl
Shmaya & Rivkah Krinsky (Gutnick) – boy
Lev & Dassy Cotlar (Dubinsky) – boy
Ashi & Dini Hecht (Schmukler) – boy
Yerachmiel & Devorah Leah Gorelik (Gansburg) – girl
Sholom & Chaya Kramer (Altein) - girl
Yossi and Sarah Wenger (Demercure) boy
Shloimy and Mussy Dalfin (Rosenblum) - boy
Shmuel and Shterna Pinson (Cohen) - girl

Mazal Tov to Rabbi & Mrs. A. Cohen on the marriage of their son
Mazal Tov to Rabbi & Mrs. A. Aisenbach on the birth of a granddaughter and the birth of a great grandson
Mazal Tov to Rabbi & Mrs. H. Benshimon on the birth of a son
Mazal Tov to Rabbi & Mrs. A. Benshimon on the birth of a grandson
Mazal Tov to Rabbi & Mrs. M. Altein on the birth of a granddaughter

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