

# Fast of the First Born - 12 Nissan 5781

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The Torah actually describes two distinct Festivals collectively referred to as Passover, although they are often thought of as a single holiday. First is the festival of *Pesaḥ*, referring specifically to the Festival surrounding the Paschal lamb, which is offered on the afternoon of the fourteenth day of Nisan and consumed later that night. This parallels the events immediately preceding the exodus from Egypt. Distinct from this is the festival of *Matzot*, the weeklong Festival beginning on the fifteenth of Nisan and characterized by the prohibitions against consuming or possessing leaven throughout the week, and the obligation to eat *matza* on the first night. This commemorates the actual exodus. There is a confluence of these two Festivals on the evening of the fifteenth, when the Paschal lamb is eaten and the festival of Passover begins.

Tractate *Pesaḥim*, which deals with both Festivals, is classically divided into two sections. The first, tractate *Pesaḥ Rishon*, discusses the laws of the festival of *Matzot*, including the prohibition of leaven, its elimination from one's possession, and the mitzva to consume *matza*. The second, tractate *Pesaḥ Sheni*, deals with the festival of *Pesaḥ* and the laws of the Paschal lamb. Some suggest that it is for this reason that the tractate as a whole is entitled *Pesaḥim*, the plural of *Pesaḥ*, since it includes within it these two tractates of *Pesaḥ*.

Tractate *Pesaḥim* deals with

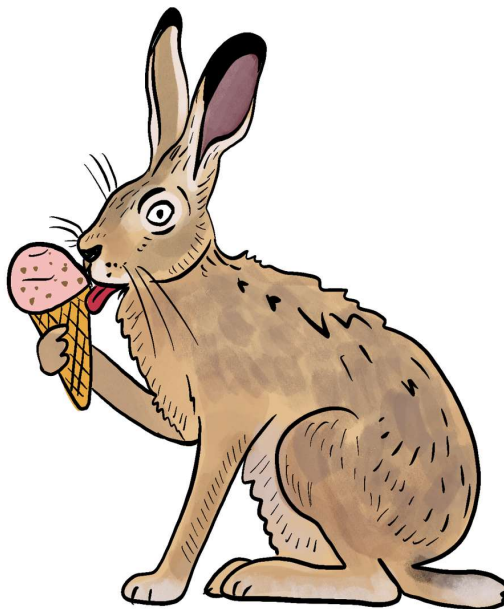
- the search for leaven and its elimination,
- prohibitions against eating and deriving benefit from leaven,
- the laws pertaining to the mitzvot of matzot and bitter herbs,
- The time and the manner in which the Paschal lamb is offered,
- the special case in which the fourteenth of Nisan occurs on Shabbat (like this year),
- the manner in which the Paschal lamb is roasted,
- for whom a Paschal lamb may be sacrificed and some of the *halakhot* pertaining to registering in a group for a Paschal lamb,
- the rules of who fulfills his obligation with the first *Pesaḥ* and who is considered unable to do so and must postpone his fulfillment to the following month with the second *Pesaḥ*, as well as the *halakhot* of the second *Pesaḥ*, and
- finally in Chapter Ten we get to the details the *halakhot* of the seder and the various practices involved, including the recitation of the Haggadah and its associated songs and praises.

**Mishnah Pesachim 1:1**

(1) **On the evening [or] of the fourteenth** of the month of Nisan, **one searches for leavened bread** in his home **by candlelight**. **Any place into which one does not typically take leavened bread does not require a search**, as it is unlikely that there is any leavened bread there. **And with regard to what** the Sages of previous generations meant when they **said** that one must search **two rows of wine barrels in a cellar**, i.e., **a place into which one typically takes some leavened bread**, the early *tanna'im* are in dispute. **Beit Shammai say** that this is referring to searching the first **two rows across the entire cellar**, and **Beit Hillel say**: There is no need to search that extensively, as it is sufficient to search **the two external rows, which are the upper ones**. This dispute will be explained and illustrated in the Gemara.

**Mishnah Pesachim 10:1**

(1) **On the eve of Passover, adjacent to *minḥa* time, a person may not eat until dark**, so that he will be able to eat *matza* that night with a hearty appetite. **Even the poorest of Jews should not eat** the meal on Passover night **until he reclines** on his left side, as free and wealthy people recline when they eat. **And** the distributors of charity should **not give** a poor person **less than four cups of wine** for the Festival meal of Passover night. **And** this *halakha* applies **even** if the poor person is one of the poorest members of society and receives his food **from the charity plate**.



*Be vewy, vewy quiet ... we're hunting wabbits! (At the seder?)*

There is a long Jewish tradition of creating richly illuminated haggadot for the Passover seder, and many from medieval Ashkenaz depict a rabbit hunt. Wait a minute! There are no rabbits in the exodus story, so why this persistent theme?

The Gemara asks what happens when a festival begins at sundown on Saturday and therefore immediately follows Shabbat. That's right, we're exploring the challenges that arise when the 14th of Nisan coincides with Shabbat, like this year.

Havdalah, the ritual that concludes Shabbat, ordinarily includes the following blessings: a blessing over wine (*yayin*), one over spices (*besamim*), another over a multi-wicked candle (*ner*), and a blessing of separation between the sanctity of Shabbat and the ordinary time that is experienced the rest of the week (*havdalah*). When Saturday night coincides with the start of a festival, the spices are omitted (the festival itself provides the spice). Havdalah is performed with a cup of wine, and so is Kiddush for the incoming festival. In the spirit of the Gemara's inquiry over whether two sanctifications can be performed on one cup, the question becomes: how do we correctly merge these two rituals?

The Gemara records eight different proposals for this merger. Each rabbi presents their view as an acronym, using the first letter of the names of the blessings:

- *kuf* (ק) = Kiddush (sanctifying the festival)
- *yod* (י) = yayin (wine for Kiddush and Havdalah)
- *nun* (נ) = ner (Havdalah candle)
- *heh* (ה) = havdalah (separation between Shabbat and the rest of the week)

The Gemara accepts Rav's opinion (*yod, kuf, nun, heh*) which interposes the Kiddush right next to the blessing over the wine that is said as part of Havdalah (two sanctifications, one cup).

But we're not done! The Gemara now presents a further disagreement about when the blessing for festive occasions (*Shehechyanu*, which the rabbis call *zeman*) is inserted. A new set of acronyms is presented, this time with the letter *zayin* representing Shehechyanu.

**Abaye said that the proper order is *yod, kuf, zayin, nun, heh*.**  
**Rava said the order is *yod, kuf, nun, heh, zayin*.**

And, the Gemara concludes: **The *halakhah* is in accordance with the opinion of Rava.**

Yup, it doesn't always happen, but in this case we have a winner: *yod, kuf, nun, heh, zayin*. When sitting down for a festival meal (Passover or

otherwise) on a Saturday evening at the conclusion of Shabbat you can simply say the acronym “YaKNeHaZ” to remind yourself of the correct order of blessings.

Hang on, you might be muttering to yourself, *what about the rabbits?* It turns out that not only is YaKNeHaZ hard to pronounce, it can also be hard to remember. That is where the rabbits come in. You see, there is a phrase in Old German, *jag den has*, and no, it’s not a brand of delicious ice cream. It means “hunt the hare,” and sounds a bit like YaKNeHaZ. These pictures of hare-hunting scenes often appear in the haggadah near Kiddush. As the theory goes, the illuminations of rabbit hunts in these medieval haggadot were meant to jog the memory of those leading the seder about the order of the blessings.

Luckily for those of us who don’t speak Old German and who also can’t remember the acronym, most of today’s haggadot contain instructions about what to do when the seder falls on a Saturday night.

### Mishnah Pesachim 10:2

(2) The *tanna* describes the beginning of the Passover seder. The attendants **poured** the wine of **the first cup** for the leader of the seder. **Beit Shammai say: One recites the blessing over the sanctification of the day**, i.e., the *kiddush* for the Festival: Who blesses Israel and the Festivals, **and thereafter he recites the blessing over the wine**: Who creates fruit of the vine. **And Beit Hillel say: One recites the blessing over the wine and thereafter recites the blessing over the day.**

### Mishnah Pesachim 10:3

(3) The attendants **brought** vegetables **before** the leader of the seder prior to the meal, if there were no other vegetables on the table. **He dips the *hazeret*** into water or vinegar, to taste some food **before he reaches the dessert of the bread**, i.e., the bitter herbs, which were eaten after the *matza*. **They brought before him *matza* and *hazeret* and *haroset*, and at least two cooked dishes** in honor of the Festival. The *tanna* comments that this was the practice, **although eating *haroset* is not a mitzva** but merely a custom. **Rabbi Eliezer ben Tzadok says: Actually, it is a mitzva to eat *haroset*. And in the period when the Temple stood and they offered the Paschal lamb, they brought before him the body of the Paschal lamb.**

### Pesachim 114b

The Gemara asks: **What** are these **two cooked foods** mentioned in the mishna? **Rav Huna said: Beets and rice.** The Gemara relates that **Rava would seek beets and rice** for his meal on Passover night, **since** this ruling **came from Rav Huna’s mouth.** Although Rava realized that Rav Huna was merely citing examples and did not mean that one must eat those specific foods, he wanted to fulfill the statement of his teacher precisely.

**Pesachim 114b**

**Rav Ashi said: Learn** incidentally another *halakha* **from** this statement of **Rav Huna**, that there is **no one who is concerned about that** statement of **Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Nuri**. **As it was taught in a baraita: Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Nuri says: Rice is a type of grain** in all regards; **and one is liable** to receive *karet* **for eating it in its leavened state on Passover; and one fulfills his obligation with it on Passover**, if it was properly baked into *matza*. It can be inferred from Rav Huna's suggestion to use cooked rice, that rice cannot become leavened.

**Mishnah Pesachim 10:4**

(4) The attendants **poured the second cup for** the leader of the seder, **and here the son asks his father** the questions about the differences between Passover night and a regular night. **And if the son does not have the intelligence** to ask questions on his own, **his father teaches him** the questions. The mishna lists the questions: **Why is this night different from all other nights? As on all other nights we eat leavened bread and matza** as preferred; **on this night all our bread is matza. As on all other nights we eat other vegetables; on this night we eat bitter herbs**. The mishna continues its list of the questions. When the Temple was standing one would ask: **As on all other nights we eat either roasted, stewed, or cooked meat, but on this night all the meat is the roasted meat of the Paschal lamb**. The final question was asked even after the destruction of the Temple: **As on all other nights we dip** the vegetables in a liquid during the meal **only once; however, on this night we dip twice. And according to the intelligence and the ability of the son, his father teaches him** about the Exodus. When teaching his son about the Exodus. **He begins with the Jewish people's disgrace and concludes with their glory. And he expounds from the passage: "An Aramean tried to destroy my father"** (Deuteronomy 26:5), the declaration one recites when presenting his first fruits at the Temple, **until he concludes explaining the entire section**.

**Pesachim 116a**

**GEMARA: The Sages taught: If his son is wise and knows how to inquire, his son asks him. And if he is not wise, his wife asks him. And if even his wife is not capable of asking or if he has no wife, he asks himself. And even if two Torah scholars who know the halakhot of Passover** are sitting together and there is no one else present to pose the questions, **they ask each other**.

**Mishnah Pesachim 10:5**

(5) **Rabban Gamliel would say: Anyone who did not say these three matters on Passover has not fulfilled his obligation: The Paschal lamb, matza, and bitter herbs**. When one mentions these matters, he must elaborate and explain them: **The Paschal lamb is brought because the Omnipresent passed over [pasah] the houses of our forefathers in Egypt, as it is stated: "That you shall say: It is the sacrifice of the**

**Lord's Paschal offering for He passed over** the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses" (Exodus 12:27).

Rabban Gamliel continues to explain: The reason for *matza* is **because our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt, as it is stated: "And they baked the dough that they took out of Egypt** as cakes of *matzot*, for it was not leavened, as they were thrust out of Egypt and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual" (Exodus 12:39). The reason for **bitter herbs is because the Egyptians embittered our forefathers' lives in Egypt, as it is stated: "And they embittered their lives** with hard service, in mortar and in brick; in all manner of service in the field, all the service that they made them serve was with rigor" (Exodus 1:14).

The *tanna* of the mishna further states: **In each and every generation a person must view himself as though he personally left Egypt, as it is stated: "And you shall tell your son on that day, saying: It is because of this which the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt"** (Exodus 13:8). In every generation, each person must say: "This which the Lord did for me," and not: This which the Lord did for my forefathers.

The mishna continues with the text of the Haggadah. **Therefore we are obligated to thank, praise, glorify, extol, exalt, honor, bless, revere, and laud [lekales] the One who performed for our forefathers and for us all these miracles: He took us out from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to a Festival, from darkness to a great light, and from enslavement to redemption. And we will say before Him: Halleluya.** At this point one recites the *hallel* that is said on all joyous days.

#### **Mishnah Pesachim 10:6**

(6) **Until where does one recite hallel? Beit Shammai say: Until "Who makes the barren woman dwell in her house as a joyful mother of children, halleluya"** (Psalms 113:9). **And Beit Hillel say: Until "Who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a fountain of waters"** (Psalms 114:8). **And one concludes this section of hallel with a blessing that refers to redemption. Rabbi Tarfon says that although one should recite: Who redeemed us and redeemed our forefathers from Egypt, one who did so would not conclude with the formula: Blessed are You, Lord. Rabbi Akiva says that one recites a different version of this blessing: So too, the Lord our God and the God of our forefathers will bring us to future holidays and Festivals in peace, happy over the building of Your city and joyous in Your service. And there we will eat from the Paschal lamb and other offerings, etc., until: Blessed are You, Lord, Who redeemed Israel.**

#### **Mishnah Pesachim 10:7**

(7) **They poured for the leader of the seder the third cup of wine, and he recites the blessing over his food, Grace After Meals. Next, they pour him the fourth cup. He completes hallel over it, as he already recited the first part of hallel before the meal. And he also recites the blessing of the song at the end of hallel over the fourth cup. During the period between these cups, i.e., the first three cups established by the Sages,**

**if one wishes to drink more he may drink; however, between the third cup and the fourth cup one should not drink.**

### **Mishnah Pesachim 10:8**

(8) **One does not conclude after the Paschal lamb with an *afikoman*. If some of the participants at the seder fell asleep, thereby interrupting their meal, they may eat from the Paschal lamb when they awake. If the entire company fell asleep, they may not eat any more. If they all fall asleep, this is considered a complete interruption, and if they were to resume their meal it would be akin to eating the offering in two different places. Rabbi Yosei says: If they dozed they may eat from the Paschal lamb when they awake, but if they fell fast asleep they may not eat from it.**

#### **Pesachim 120b**

**GEMARA:** We learned in the mishna that **Rabbi Yosei says: If they dozed they may eat from the Paschal lamb, but if they fell asleep they may not eat from it.** The Gemara asks: **What are the circumstances of dozing? Rav Ashi said: One is asleep but not asleep, awake but not awake, when, if they call him, he will answer, but he is unable to provide a reasonable answer. And when they later inform him of what happened, he remembers it.**

#### **Pesachim 120b**

The Gemara cites a related episode: **Abaye was sitting before Rabba, and he saw that Rabba was dozing off after he had begun to eat the final obligatory piece of *matza*. He said to him: Is the Master sleeping? Rabba said to him: I am dozing, and we learned in the mishna: If they dozed, they may eat from the Paschal lamb, but if they fell fast asleep they may not eat from it.**

### **Mishnah Pesachim 10:9**

(9) The Sages further said: **The Paschal lamb after midnight renders one's hands ritually impure, as it becomes *notar*, an offering that remained after the time when they may be eaten has expired; and the Sages ruled that both *piggul*, offerings that were invalidated due to inappropriate intent while being sacrificed, and *notar* render one's hands ritually impure. If one recited the blessing over the Paschal lamb, which is: Who sanctified us with His mitzvot and commanded us to eat the Paschal lamb, he has also exempted himself from reciting a blessing over the Festival offering. The blessing for the Festival peace-offering of the fourteenth of Nisan is: Who sanctified us with His mitzvot and commanded us to eat the offering. However, if he recited the blessing over the Festival offering, he has not exempted himself from reciting a blessing over the Paschal lamb. This is the statement of Rabbi Yishmael. Rabbi Akiva says: This blessing does not exempt one from reciting a blessing over this one, and that blessing does not exempt that one, as there is a separate blessing for each offering.**

**Pesachim 121b**

The Gemara discusses another case concerning the order of the blessings: **Rabbi Simlai attended a redemption of the firstborn son.** The celebrants **raised a dilemma before him** with regard to the blessings. First they noted that it is **obvious** that the blessing **over the redemption of a firstborn son**, which is: **Who sanctified us with His mitzvot and commanded us over the redemption of the firstborn son**, is certainly **recited by the father of the son**, as he is the one obligated to redeem his son. However, with regard to the second blessing: **Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has given us life [sheheḥeyanu], sustained us, and brought us to this time**, does the **priest recite** this blessing, **or does the father of the son recite it?**

**Pesachim 121b**

The Gemara explains the two sides of the dilemma. It can be suggested that the **priest recites the blessing, as he benefits** from the five *selā* he receives when the boy is redeemed. The blessing of *sheheḥeyanu* is generally recited by the one who receives the benefit. **Or, perhaps the father of the son recites sheheḥeyanu, as he is the one who performs the mitzva.** Rabbi Simlai **did not have** an answer readily available, and he **went to ask this question in the study hall.** The scholars **said to him** that **the father of the son recites the two blessings:** Over the redemption of the son and *sheheḥeyanu*. The Gemara concludes: **And the halakha is that the father of the son recites two blessings.**

פסחים קכ"א ב

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