**Chut Shel Chessed**

**By Rav Shalom Arush Shilita**

**Practices and Halacha for Seder Night**

Everything starts with Emuna. A person prepares himself as well as he can and prays as much as he can and he has a desire that everything will go ok, but Hashem has his plan and therefore everything begins with Emuna that ‘everything is for the best’ and ‘this is the way Hashem wants it to be’. When Rabbenu wrote that there is a concept of “lo b’seder” (not ok/not in order), it means that there is ‘seder’ (things are ok/things are in order) from the point of view of Hashem, but from the point of view of man, it seems that things are not b’seder (not ok) and that person needs to accept it with Emuna.

1. **The Seder Plate**

One should arrange the table and the seder plate on erev Chag, during the day. We arrange the seder plate is according to the Ari (that means in the shape of two ‘segolim’ [a Hebrew vowel with three dots]). We place the three matzot (representing the sefirot – chachma, bina and daat) and place over them a nice cloth, and on the plate we place the zeroa (shankbone) on the right side (representing the sefira of chessed), the egg on the left side (representing the sefira of gevura), the maror that we bless on under the two of them in the middle (representing the sefira of tiferet). The charoset goes below the shankbone (representing the sefira of netzach), the carpas (parsley) goes below the egg (representing the sefira of hod) and the maror that we use for ‘corech’ goes below the two of them in the middle (representing the sefira of yesod) (and the plate itself represents the sefira of malchut); as follows:

 Egg Shankbone

 Maror (for bracha)

 Parsley Charoshet

 Maror (for corech)

1. A person should be careful to eat and sleep on erev Pesach in order to be awake for Seder night. Especially children whose comfort is the most important thing on Seder night (because the main mitzvah is ‘to tell it to your children’). It is therefore appropriate that children stay awake until at least the end of ‘magid’.
2. After the Ma’ariv prayer of Yom Tov, when you return home to prepare the seder, all the married men (including a newly married man in his first year) should wear a kittel (white cloak) and put his steimel or hat on and keep it on for the whole seder. Bachurim over the age of bar mitzvah should wear their ‘bekesha’ and wear their hat for the whole seder. (A person can remove their hat during eating the meal).
3. Before beginning the Haggadah, everyone should say together: “I hereby bind myself in this Pesach Seder, in the Kiddush, in the eating of the parsley, in the Haggadah, in the eating of the matzah, in the eating of the maror, in the korech, in the meal, in the eating of the afikoman, in the birkat hamazon, in the saying of Hallel, in the piyutim, in the divrei Torah, in the singing of Shir HaShirim – to all the true Tzaddikim of the generation, and to all of the true Tzaddikim resting in the dust, the Holy ones resting in the ground, and especially to our Holy Rabbi the Tzaddik and foundation of the world, the flowing stream and source of wisdom, Rabbenu Nachman ben Simcha ben Feige, whose merit should be upon us and on all Israel, Amen.”
4. **Kaddesh**

Before making Kiddush, the leader of the seder should inform everyone: “I will have the intention to fulfil the obligation on your behalf in all of the blessings on the wine, on the Kiddush and on the Shechechiyanu. It is your obligation to intend that the blessing of shechechiyanu should cover the mitzvahs of eating the matza and on the entire Pesach itself. Also, after making Kiddush, everyone should drink while leaning to the left.” Everyone should say the “l’shem yichud…” (“for the sake of the unification…”) which appears in most Haggadahs and also say the prayer for preparing oneself to drink the four cups of wine [which appears below – at the end of this sheet].

1. Ideally (l’chatchila) one should drink only red wine, (it doesn’t matter if it is sweet or dry wine and it’s also permitted to drink pasteurised wine and one doesn’t need to be careful to drink only ‘fresh’ wine (yayin chai)). The amount to drink is 86 ml (in our community we don’t follow the measures of the Chazon Ish, whether for strictness or leniency, and whether d’rabban or d’oraita). For someone who finds it difficult to drink just wine, he should mix 86 ml of wine with grape juice (it doesn’t matter how much grape juice he adds, because he juice comes only to weaken the taste of the wine). If this is also difficult for a person, he can mix less than 86 ml of wine with grape juice, and he should drink 86 ml of this mixture. If even this is difficult for him, and he knows that even the minimum amount of wine will ruin his seder night, he can drink just grape juice.
2. When pouring the cup, each person should pour for another, and not pour for himself as this shows the way of freedom.
3. At the time of drinking wine, one should lean (we lean when drinking the four cups and also when eating the matza and eating the corech/sandwich). The way of leaning is to be careful to lean with the body to the left side and also to support ones left arm on the armrest of a chair. Also women need to lean in every place that men need to lean.
4. **Urchatz**

One should explain to the children that there is a halacha that if a person eats something dipped in a liquid, one should wash his hands before eating it. Even though the whole year we are lenient not to follow this law, on seder night we are strict on this in order to cause the children to ask questions and to stay interested.

1. **Carpas**

One should take care to specifically buy the vegetable called ‘carpas’ (ie “celery”) because there are important kabbalistic issues in this (and one should be careful to buy vegetables that are grown free of worms!). The leader of the seder should remind everyone that eating the carpas is a preparation for eating the maror and his intention should be that his bracha “…borei peri ha’adamah” that he makes on the carpas also covers the maror. A person should not eat more than a kazayit of carpas in order not to obligate himself to make an ‘after bracha’. (If he erred and ate more than a kazayit, he does not make an after bracha). Also, we do not lean while eating the carpas because it teaches about the bitterness of the slavery and leaning is a sign of freedom. One should leave a little of the carpas on the seder plate because according to the kabbalah the seder plate should remain complete until after eating the matza and maror.

1. **Yachatz**

Before breaking the middle matza, the leader of the seder should announce in a loud voice in order that everyone hears: “Just like we break the matza, Hashem split the sea into twelve parts when we left Egypt.” This matza should be split into two pieces, the larger piece into the shape of the Hebrew letter “vav” and the smaller piece into the shape of the Hebrew letter “dalet” or into a square shape.

1. The smaller piece should be returned to the seder plate to its place between the other two complete matzahs, and the larger piece in the shape of a “vav” should be used for the afikoman. One should hide it, in order to stimulate interest in the children, and to cause them to remain awake until eating the afikoman which is towards the end of the seder. If a child finds the afikoman and asks for a present to give it back, it is on the father to give him whatever he asks for (unless there is an educational or halachic problem with giving him his request).
2. **Magid**

Before reading the Haggadah (ie ‘magid’) one should read the passage from the Zohar that appears in some Haggadahs, which explains the importance of the Haggadah. The Haggadah is read together out loud by all those present and with ‘crying out’ as described by Rabbenu [see Likutei Moharan, 20:10] and there are sections that are sung together (like “Ha Lachma Anya” etc, and each family should follow its own customs in this regard). We read a section together and then stop and explain that section (sometimes explaining the section beforehand, and the entire seder should follow the same pattern, in a way comfortable for you). One should be careful however not to overly lengthen the explanations. In principle, one should explain the section of Rabban Gamliel “anyone who did not say these three things on Pesach did not fulfil his obligation, and these are Pesach, Matza and Maror. Pesach which are forefathers ate at the time the Temple stood for what reason… Matza which we eat for what reason… Maror which we eat for what reason…”

1. One should remember that the main reason for reading the Haggadah is for the children (“Ve’hagadata levanecha”) therefore it is on the father to prepare the Haggadah before seder night and to think about which points will awaken the children. There are midrashim on the Haggadah which are very stimulating which are able to add newness and interest for children.
2. When we reach the questions in the Haggadah, meaning “Ma Nishtana”, one can give each child a section to say, and not only to the youngest child, and when the children ask any questions on seder night, it is a mitzvah to answer them immediately and not to wait until later, because this is the principle mitzvah. If the children have midrashim and chiddushim to tell on the Haggadah and on leaving Egypt, one should encourage them as the main mitzvah of the Haggadah is for the children. In any event, it is recommended to save the chiddushim for during the meal, in order that the reading of the Haggadah does not continue on too long.
3. When we pour out drops of wine when we say “dam, v’aish, v’timrot ashan”, and for the ten plagues etc (a total of 16 drops), we take a broken pottery dish or disposable plastic cup and the leader of the seder only pours out the 16 drops from his cup into this dish/plastic cup, and with him at the same time his neighbor pours 16 drops of water (this is in remembrance of the plague of blood that within one vessel there was blood from the side the Egyptian drank and water from the side the Jew drank; and also that wine hints to the dinim (judgements) and water hints to the kindnesses and we do this in order to sweeten the judgements). Once all the drops have been poured out we throw away the broken vessel/plastic cup used.
4. There is a custom in some communities that when we say “in every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he was coming out of Egypt…” the lady of the house lifts up the seder plate and waves it in a circle over the heads of each of those present and blesses each of them as she wishes.
5. **The Second Cup**

Before drinking the second cup of wine, the leader of the seder should remind all present (including men) to drink the wine while leaning. All should say together the “l’shem yichud” that appears in Haggadahs and also the special prayer before drinking the four cups [as written out at end of this article]. There are those that follow the Shulchan Aruch not to make a bracha on the second cup and those that follow the Rama who says to make a bracha.

1. **Rachtza**

Before washing the hands, the leader of the seder should remind those present that the only mitzvah d’oraitta (Torah commandment) that we still have on seder night since the destruction of the Temple (that it should be rebuilt speedily in our day) is the mitzvah to eat matza. The rest of the mitzvot are only Rabbinic nowadays. Therefore everyone should intend to fulfill the mitzvah of eating matza for the sake of the Torah commandment “ba’erev tochlu matzot” (“in the evening you shall eat matza”).

1. **Motei Matza**

The matza for seder night for the mitzvah of eating matza should be handmade shmura matza (meaning guarded from the time of harvesting). (One who wants to eat ‘soft matza’ has on whom to rely. However, the custom is to eat hard matza). The matza used for the ‘corech’ can be machine-made matza, and so too the matza used for the rest of the days of Pesach should also be machine-made matza particularly. [This is explained by the Yalkut Yosef for two reasons, firstly there are those who believe that machine matza is more ‘mehudar’ and secondly as handmade are more expensive, there is no need to spend the extra money – and if a person has money to spend he is advised to buy the less expensive machine made ones and give the saving to the poor].

1. The leader of the seder should give out matza to all present in order that it is in front of them before reciting the bracha. The seder plate and the matza should remain by the leader of the seder and there is no need to give each person matza from the seder plate, rather he should give each person from other matza which is on the table. For the purpose of eating the Mitzvah Matza each person should be given an amount of two kazaytim (each kazayit is 27g for Sephardim who go according to weight, or the volume of a matchbox according to Ashkenazim who go according to volume). Therefore machine made matza which is generally around 32-33g, for Sephardim one would take approx 85% of a sheet of matza for each kazayit (those machine matzahs which are made at 27g each would mean a whole sheet for each kazayit). For Ashkenazim who go after volume, the amount would be approx a third of a sheet of matza for each kazayit.
2. Before eating the matza, one should say the ‘l’shem yichud” which appears in the Haggadah. After making the bracha, dip the matza in salt and also in charoset. One should eat the matza while leaning and without stopping, but meaning to eat in a natural not rushed way and without simply swallowing down the matza. One should not look at the clock at all! Because the main thing in eating continuously is to eat in a normal way, and therefore there is no need to be concerned about how much time it takes as to eat normally certainly fulfils one’s obligation. And we know the words of Rabbenu who told us that it is not our way to follow strictures, even on Pesach.
3. **Maror**

For the purpose of Maror, one should take lettuce leaves for each one of those present (and be careful to buy vegetables grown free of worms). Before eating the maror, dip it in charoset and shake off the charoset from the leaves in order not to cancel out the taste of the maror. Say the “l’shem yichud” which appears in the Haggadah, and eat the maror without leaning. The way of eating it should be the way one normally eats lettuce, comfortably and without pausing, and without looking at the clock at all.

1. Charoset should be made from the following ingredients: dates, nuts, apples, ginger and wine.
2. **Corech**

For the purpose of corech, one can use machine made matzot. One should take a kazayit of matza from the bottom piece and a kazayit of maror (if there is not enough matza in the bottom piece for all those present, one can take other shmura matza) dip them in charoset (and now there is no need to shake off the charoset), say the section in the Haggadah “Zecher lemikdash ke’Hillel” and eat while leaning, without a bracha. The way of eating should be relaxed and without pausing and without looking at the clock at all.

1. One shouldn’t speak between washing his hands for matza (Rachtza) until after eating the corech. After the fact, if one did speak after eating the matza, he doesn’t need to make a new bracha.
2. **Shulchan Orech**

There are those who have a custom to eat eggs at the beginning of the meal. At the meal, we do not each sharp (charif) food, instead only sweet food. (Therefore also the meat or chicken on this night should be marinated in sweet sauce, for example honey etc). One should not eat roasted meat at this meal, even roasted chicken. A wise person will not eat too much in order that he will have an appetite for the afikoman and not eat it on a full stomach.

1. **Tzafon**

One should be careful to eat the afikoman before midnight (halachic chatzot). However, Hallel can be said after chatzot. Ideally (l’chatchila), one should give to all present a small piece of matza from the afikoman and if there is not enough matza he should take from other shmura matza, and one can also use machine made matza. One should eat a kazayit of matza while leaning (including women), for the purpose of the afikoman in memory of the korban Pesach, and there are those who are strict to eat an additional kazayit of matza that was eaten at the time with the korban Pesach. Those who are strict to do so will be blessed. Before eating one should say the “l’shem yichud” appearing in the Haggadah. The way of eating should be relaxed and continuous and without looking at the clock at all. After eating the afikoman, one shouldn’t eat anything else and it is permitted only to drink the final two cups of wine, and water, in order that the taste of the afikoman should remain in one’s mouth.

1. **Barech and the Third Cup**

Before birkat hamazon, the leader of the seder should remind those present (including women) to drink the wine while leaning. Before drinking the third cup, everyone should say together the “l’shem yichud” and also the prayer prepared for drinking the four cups.

1. After birkat hamazon and drinking the third cup, pour the cup of wine for Eliyahu Hanavi, and make sure the cup is large and nice (mehuderet). Afterwards, open the door and say “Baruch ha ba Eliyahu Hanavi zachor la tov” and “Shefoch Hamatech” (as appears in the Haggadah).
2. **Hallel**

The Hallel should be sung like they sing it in Chut Shel Chessed, and when you get to the place where it says “Hodo Lashem Ki Tov, Ki Leolam Chasdo” and also “Ana Hashem Hoshia Na” one should say it like we do in prayers, meaning the leader says it out loud and the others reply, in the usual way).

1. **The Fourth Cup**

Before drinking the fourth cup of wine, the leader of the seder should remind those present (including women) to drink the wine while leaning. Before drinking the fourth cup, everyone should say together the “l’shem yichud” and also the prayer prepared for drinking the four cups. There are those who follow the Shulchan Aruch not to make a bracha for the fourth cup, and there are those who follow the Rema to make a bracha. After drinking the fourth cup, one should not eat anything and not drink anything other than water.

1. **Nirtza**

After saying the prayer “Chasal Seder Pesach”, one should sing all the piyutim and songs written in the Haggadah whose foundations are the heights of Holiness.

1. After completing the Haggadah, sing Shir HaShirim together.
2. A person is obligated to study the laws of Pesach and Yetziat Mitraim and to tell stories of the miracles and wonders that Hashem did for our forefathers until sleep overcomes him. And all that increase the telling of Yetziat Mitzraim is very praiseworthy and Hashem is glorified by him, as it says “Israel in whom I glorify myself”.
3. If a person performs the seder as set out, he is assured of being “ratzui” (desirable) before Hashem, and he will merit (B’ezrat Hashem) to rebuild the Beit HaMikdash, and to eat from the sacrifices and the Pesach offering, and will merit a sweet and pleasant long life with the complete redemption, Amen.

**Prayer Before Drinking the Four Cups of Wine**

**[Note: Insert the appropriate wording for each of the four cups.]**

Behold, I hereby bind myself in the positive obligation of drinking four cups of wine, on this festival of Pesach, to all the true Tzaddikim of our generation and to all the true Tzaddikim who rest in the dust, the Holy ones who rest in the ground, and in particular to our Holy Rabbenu, the foundation of the world, the flowing stream and source of wisdom, Rabbenu Nachman the son of Simcha, the son of Feige, whose merit shall protect us and all of Israel, Amen.

For the sake of the unification of the Holy One Blessed Be He and the Shechina in awe and love, and in love and awe, to unify the Holy name of Havaya, the letter yud and the letter hei and the letter vav and the letter hei, in a complete unification for the sake of all Israel. I hereby prepare myself to fulfill the will of Hashem to fulfill the mitzvah of drinking the **[first / second / third / fourth]** cup from the four cups, which corresponds to the letter **[yud / first hei / vav / last hei]** oftheHoly name Havaya which is **[Chochma / Bina / Tiferet / Malchut]**.

May it be Your will, Hashem, my G-d and G-d of our forefathers, that I merit through drinking this cup to “the one who merits will be made a head” that I merit to rectify my mind, for wisdom, for an expanded mind (mochin d’gadlut). And that I merit through drinking this wine that my mind is uplifted and my intellect expanded until I rise up to the root of intellect (daat), which is an aspect of the root of Torah and mitzvot, through which I will merit to desire and strengthen myself to fulfill the Torah completely, and save me from “the one who does not merit will be made poor”, save me from a contracted mind (mochin d’katnut) and from sadness.

That I merit from drinking this wine to “the one who merits will be happy” that I merit wine that makes one happy, and merit great happiness and very great joy, and through this to increase in telling stories of leaving Egypt, and save me from “the one who does not merit will be made desolate” and save me from wine which causes drunkedness, and that I will merit from drinking this wine to clarify and rectify the imagination completely, which is Holy Emuna. And that I merit by drinking this wine to wake up from sleeping in materiality and spirituality, meaning that I merit to be bound to Hashem always and guard me that I do not fall into sleeping in materiality and spirituality, and that I merit in drinking this wine to rectify the blemish of Adam HaRishon that drank the wine which Chava squeezed for him.

Master of the Universe, make it that by drinking this **[first / second / third / fourth]** cup of wine, that I merit **[complete faith / prayer / miracles / the Land of Israel]**, that I merit the Holiness of the Land of Israel completely, and that now already the Holiness of the Land of Israel shall be revealed. And nullify from me completely the husk of **[the “storm wind” / the “great cloud” / the “blazing fire” / “Noga”]** and nullify from me completely **[the spirit of foolishness / the spirit of licentiousness / the spirit of arrogance / the spirit of impurity]**.

This cup shall correspond to the language of redemption of **[“v’hotzaiti etchem” (I took you out) / “v’hitzalti etchem” (I saved you) / “V’ga’alti etchem” (I redeemed you) / “v’lakachti etchem” (I took you out)]**. And may it be Your will my G-d and G-d of my forefathers that you take all of Your people Israel from all four corners of the world and bring them quickly to the Land of Israel, and bring our righteous Moshiach and build our Holy Temple and reveal Your Kingship completely, Amen.

May the pleasantness of the Lord our G-d be upon us, and the work of our hands establish for us, and the work of our hands establish it (“va yehi noam Hashem Elokenu alenu umaaseh yadenu konnena alenu unmaaseh yadenu konnenehu”).