

HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's (and next week's) question:

At the *Pesach seder*, someone is so full that he cannot eat anymore. He has not eaten *afikoman* yet. Midnight is approaching. Should he force himself to eat *afikoman* before midnight? Should he rather wait until he feels he has room to eat it without feeling sick, but miss eating it before midnight? Should a child under *bar-* or *bas-mitzvah* be told to eat it in these circumstances, to wait until later, or not at all? Should the child be told to eat a smaller amount than the minimum requirement?

The issues:

- A) *Afikoman*
- B) The timing of this *mitzvah*

Next week:

- C) *Achila gasa*, eating on a full stomach
- D) *Chinuch*, training a child in *mitzvah* performance, in this case

A) *Afikoman*

The word *afikoman* is not originally Hebrew. It appears in the *Mishna*, and the Talmud debates its meaning. The *Mishna* states that one does not create a situation in which one does '*afikoman*' after eating the *korban Pesach*. In one opinion it is a contraction of two Aramaic words, *apiku mana*, that mean remove the utensils. According to this view, the meaning is that one may not leave the location where he ate the *korban Pesach*, and go to another location. *Korban Pesach* must be eaten as part of a predesignated group. Each group eats it in a defined location. One may not eat it at two groups. If one has already eaten his *korban Pesach*, and then takes his utensils and relocates to another group to eat other food there, he might come to eat from their *korban Pesach* as well. This view permits eating other food at the original location even after eating the *korban Pesach*.

The other view maintains that the word *afikoman* is a variation of the Greek word for dessert snacks. Alternatively, it was used colloquially to describe the last item eaten at a meal. Many Greek words had become popular in Talmudic times, especially if it was the best word to describe it. The Aramaic contraction can also mean 'remove the used utensils of the main course', and bring the dessert. According to this view, the concern is not about eating *korban Pesach* at another location at all. Rather, even at this location, no dessert may be eaten after eating the *korban Pesach*.

There are a few explanations for the latter view. The Talmud says that the *korban Pesach* meat must be eaten when the person is somewhat satiated. One reason for this is that the Torah forbids breaking the bones of the *korban*. If people are hungry, they are liable to break the softer bones to eat the marrow. They might also break them in their haste to eat the meat. Therefore, they should eat the other food first, and leave the *korban*

Pesach to be eaten last. Also, *korban Pesach* is like food eaten from the 'table' of Hashem, since it is part of an offering. It is inappropriate to leave the table of one's lord feeling hungry. Thus, to force one to eat other food before the *korban Pesach*, the Rabbis forbade eating anything after it.

The Talmud implies a second reason, though not exclusive of the first. The taste of the *korban* should linger in the mouth afterwards. Therefore, apart from the final two cups of wine, one should not eat anything else. One explanation is that in temple times, the *korban Pesach* was eaten in cramped quarters. After having eaten it in small groups, the people would leave their cramped quarters and go up to the wide empty spaces on the flat rooftops to recite *hallel*. If people would be allowed to eat other food after the *korban*, they might forget about *hallel*. Therefore, the Rabbis made a requirement to retain the taste of the *korban*, to indirectly force people to recite *hallel* right away.

Some commentaries add that the ideal is to enjoy the *korban Pesach*. In order to really enjoy it, one should not be famished, but somewhat satiated. In temple times, another *korban* was prepared to be eaten first. Some say that the entire meal, the *orech*, is eaten as a *hachanah*, preparation for the *mitzvah* at the end.

When they had the *korban Pesach*, it was eaten together with matzo. In one view it was actually sandwiched with *matzo* and *maror*. Nowadays, we do not have *korban Pesach*. The *mitzvah* to eat *matzo* still applies independent of the *korban*. [*Maror* is not a separate Scriptural obligation, but is part of the *mitzvah* of *korban Pesach*. Nowadays it applies Rabbinically as a reminder of the temple times.] The Talmud debates whether the same *afikoman* idea should apply to *matzo*. It is not a *korban*, so those reasons do not apply to *matzo*. However, it is a *mitzvah*, and perhaps the taste should linger in the mouth.

There is a reference to permission to eat non-*matzo* foods, but to eat a *kezayis*, olive-sized piece, of *matzo* at the end. This could mean that one may not eat anything after *matzo*. This means that one must indeed keep the lingering taste. Or it could mean that the ideal is to eat the *matzo* first, when one feels hungry. One might think that one may not eat other food first, so that when he eats the *matzo* he is not overfull and eating like a glutton. Therefore, the Talmud says that as long as one leaves some space, he may eat the other food first, though it is not ideal. We follow the first opinion, and require the lingering taste. Therefore, *matzo* must be eaten at the end of the meal.

According to this, the *matzo* eaten at the end of the meal is the real *mitzvah*. In temple times, this was the *matzo* eaten together with the *korban Pesach*. Nowadays, we try to fulfill the *mitzvah* in the way it was performed in temple times. Any *matzo* eaten earlier than this is to feel somewhat satiated. This raises a question about the *brocha*. Since one could not reasonably eat one's fill of *matzo* and then recite a *brocha* on the last *kezayis*, the *brocha* is recited at the beginning, having in mind the final *kezayis*.

Another view maintains that the *matzo* eaten at the beginning is the real *mitzvah*, especially nowadays. The *matzo* eaten at the end is to leave a lingering taste in the mouth. Some say it is also eaten as a reminder of the *matzo* eaten with the *korban Pesach*. The Talmud means that one who has only one *kezayis* should save it to eat it at the end. Thus, he satisfies both requirements. This person performs the *mitzvah* at the end of the meal.

Another view maintains that the entire eating of the *kezayis* at the end of the meal is

to substitute for the *korban Pesach*. This is the meaning of the Talmudic debate. The first opinion maintains that there must be a lingering taste, since it commemorates the *korban*. The second view maintains that there is no need to eat matzo at the end to commemorate the *korban*. We follow the first view.

Finally, there is an opinion that even in temple times, the *korban Pesach* was eaten at the beginning of the meal. One *kezayis* was saved for the end. If there were many members of the group, and only enough for one *kezayis* for everyone, it would be eaten at the end. According to this view, the *matzo* eaten at the end is really a reminder of the way the *korban* was eaten in those days. The real *matzas mitzvah* is eaten at the beginning.

In practice, all agree that one must eat a *kezayis* at the end. In one view, this is the main *mitzvah* of *matzo*. In the other views, it is either a reminder of the *matzo* eaten with the *korban Pesach*, or a reminder of the *korban*. Therefore, many suggest as an ideal to eat two *kezaysim*. One would satisfy the opinions that it is the main *mitzvah* and that it recalls the *matzo* eaten with the *korban*. In addition, one should have this *kezayis* in mind when he recites the *brocha al achilas matzo* at the beginning of the meal. The second recalls the *korban* itself. However, if two *kezaysim* are difficult to eat, one must at least eat one full *kezayis*. In certain pressing situations [see below], one could rely on the *matzo* eaten during the meal for the main Scriptural *mitzvah*. However, this does not fulfill the additional requirements that we have listed here.

In post-Talmudic times, the *kezayis* (or two *kezaysim*) eaten at the end has come to be called *afikoman*. It is eaten as the 'dessert' in many ways. It is *tzafun*, hidden away or saved, at the beginning of the *seder*, when the middle *matzo* is broken. This is also *she-mura*, guarded, for this purpose, since there is a requirement to guard the *matzos*. [See Psachim 119b-120a, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 475:1 477-478, commentaries.]

B) The timing of afikoman

The Talmud debates the timing of the *mitzvah* to eat *korban Pesach*. This is based on how one interprets the language used by the Torah, and comparing the words to others used in similar context. The context would be that of the night of the *geulah*. The Torah states openly that anything left over until the morning must be burned. Thus, we know that it must be eaten before the morning. In one view, it must be eaten by midnight. Any left past this time may not be consumed. In the other view, it may be eaten until dawn. This view also prefers its being eaten by midnight. This is a Rabbinical requirement to prevent the possibility of missing the *mitzvah* totally, by waiting past dawn. However, if one did not manage by midnight, he still has a Scriptural obligation to eat it until dawn.

The Talmud then relates the timing of *matzo* to *korban Pesach*. The Torah juxtaposes the two *mitzvos*. Therefore, the view that requires *Pesach* to be eaten by midnight would also require *matzo* to be eaten by midnight. In temple times, this was obvious. The two had to be eaten together. However, even nowadays, that the *mitzvah* of *matzo* is based on the independent requirement, the juxtaposition also applies for the timing. One could still eat it later, but he will not have fulfilled his obligation. According to some, the more lenient view also considers it a Rabbinical obligation to eat it before midnight.

The poskim debate which view to follow. In practice, we try to follow the stringent view. Therefore, if one is unable to eat *matzo* until after midnight, he should not recite

the *brocha al achilas matzo*. Since, according to one school of thought, the *mitzvah* no longer applies, the *brocha* is in vain. He should still eat the matzo, since the other school follows the view that the *mitzvah* still applies. The same applies to *maror*.

The *Afikoman* either represents the *korban Pesach*, or the matzo eaten with it, or it is the main *mitzvah* of matzo. Accordingly, one must also try to eat the *afikoman* before midnight. Furthermore, some poskim maintain that one should ideally finish *hallel* with the final *brocha* before midnight. We try to satisfy this view as well. A number of poskim maintain that one need not hurry to eat the *afikoman* before midnight, especially as this can sometimes lead to less attention to other *mitzvos* of the night.

Midnight is also the subject of debate. It does not depend on the conventional clock, but on the astronomical time. Some say it is calculated by halving the time between sunset and sunrise, while others say it is calculated using the interval between nightfall and dawn. Yet others use a combination of these. Another view calculates six hours after nightfall. The easiest view to follow calculates it as twelve hours after midday. Some consider this time to be a constant throughout the year, while others calculate it as the midpoint between sunrise and sunset each day. Another view calculates midnight as the midpoint between midday of the preceding day and that of the following day.

If one sees that midnight is approaching fast, he should try to eat the *afikoman* as soon as possible. What if he foresees missing the deadline? Is there a way to satisfy both views? There is a novel suggestion, albeit somewhat controversial. The Talmudic view that *korban Pesach* must be eaten by midnight would not forbid eating food after midnight. What is the purpose of retaining the taste of the *korban Pesach*? This view bases the obligation on the moment of midnight, which is when Hashem passed through Egypt killing the firstborn. How can one eat the *Pesach* and *matzo* at the moment of midnight? Therefore, the *mitzvah* is fulfilled by eating it before midnight, but having the taste in one's mouth at the moment of midnight. Accordingly, this view would permit eating other food after midnight. Therefore, one may take a *kezayis* of *matzo* and stipulate the following: If the *halacha* follows the view that *Pesach* and *matzo* must be eaten by midnight, let this *kezayis* serve that purpose. According to that view, we may continue eating, after midnight passes. If the *mitzvah* applies until dawn, let this be plain *matzo*. The *afikoman* will be the last piece of *matzo* eaten at the very end of the meal. [See Psachim 120b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 1:2 233:1 477:1, commentaries. Igros Moshe OC:II:20. Avnei Nezer OC:381.]

... to be continued ...

On Parshas Hachodesh ... and you will experience no plague by the destructive force [12:13]
The Torah says that no Jew shall leave the entrance of his home until the morning. If Hashem only passed through at midnight, or 'until' midnight, why could they not leave after midnight? Perhaps this shows that '*balayla hazeh*' referring to Hashem's destructive force includes the entire night. The whole night would then be included in eating the *Pesach* '*balayla hazeh*'.

Sponsored by Hersh and Gila Dlinn in memory of her father Mordechai ben Gedalia Hachohen,

a"h, whose *yahrzeit* is on the 3rd of Nissan. ❧

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