



VAAD HARABANIM OF GREATER WASHINGTON

THE BULLETIN

PESACH 5776 · APRIL 2016

VOLUME 4.1

4 Letter from the President

PESACH

5 Matzo Baking: *A Dying Art*

10 On Freedom: *A Personal Opportunity*

12 Appreciating Pesach In Light of Erev Pesach:
A Halachic and Hashkafic Presentation

15 Cleaning for Pesach:
A Practical How-to Halachic Checklist

16 Quick Pick Guide to KFP Medications

17 Quick Pick Guide to KFP Personal Care Items

18 Products Not Requiring KFP Supervision

19 Guide to Chametz After Pesach

GEIRUS

20 For You Were Strangers In the Land of Egypt:
A Giyores' Journey to Her First Pesach As a Jew

22 The Salvation of God is Like the Blink of an Eye:
The Short Story of My Thirty-year Journey to Judaism

KASHRUS

24 AIPAC Policy Conference

25 Vaad Certified Establishments



Wishing you a Chag Kasher V'sameach

לעילוי נשמות
הרב הלל בן הרב יהושע ז"ל

This Bulletin is dedicated in memory of
HaRav Hillel Klavan zt"l,

Honorary President
of the Vaad HaRabanim
of Greater Washington

Introduction

We are pleased to present issue 4.1 of The Bulletin of the Vaad HaRabanim of Greater Washington. This issue contains informative, practical, educational, and inspirational articles and lists for Pesach 5776. We thank the Star K for granting us permission to re-print their quick-pick list of approved medications, personal care items, and products that do not require Passover supervision.

As the recently established Beis Din L'Giyur of the Vaad HaRabanim has been privileged to complete the conversion of a number of outstanding converts, we have been most inspired by the journeys of faith which these individuals have traveled. In an effort to share our inspiration with the broader community, we have asked two recent converts to share their personal stories to Judaism with us.

As we go to print, we find ourselves in the Shloshim mourning period for Rabbi Hillel Klavan zt"l, Honorary President of the Vaad HaRabanim of Greater Washington. Rabbi Klavan's public and private contributions and accomplishments in his Rabbinic work for over half a century in Greater Washington are incredible. Rabbi Klavan's splendid personality, infectious smile and warm handshake coupled with his ironclad dedication and impassioned commitment to the Greater Washington Jewish community will be sorely missed. May his memory be a blessing in our communal work, and may Rebetzin Klavan and the entire Klavan family be comforted among the mourners of Tzion.

Much thanks to Mrs. Adina Moses for her outstanding job, as always, with the graphic design and layout of the Bulletin.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the Bulletin.

Chag Kasher v'Sameach,

Rabbi Moshe Walter

Director, Vaad Harabanim

rabbimwalter@gmail.com



Rabbi Yosef Singer
Cong. Young Israel Ezras Israel
President

VAAD HARABANIM
THE RABBINICAL COUNCIL
of GREATER WASHINGTON

Rabbi Moshe Walter
Woodside Synagogue Ahavas Torah
Executive Director

Dear Members of the Greater Washington Jewish Community:

The Vaad continues to make great strides in all of its operational areas. We have recently commissioned a new website (<http://www.capitolk.org/>) which provides insight into the Vaad's services as well as a resource for members of the community to access those services. On March 13, we invited the community to participate in a series of interactive seminars which dealt with *kashrus* supervision, and *beis din* for the administration of Jewish divorce, arbitration of financial disputes and conversions. Our *kashrus* operations are running smoothly and reliably and our *batei dinim* are respected both here and in Eretz Yisroel. We endeavor to be responsive to the needs of our community and, at the same time, remain faithful to the precious *mesora* that has been entrusted to us.

The *Talmud* in *Eruvin* 13b states: *Amar Rebbe Hai d'michadadna m'chavrie d'chazisei l'Rebbe Meir machorei*. Rebbe said – "That I achieved greatness was due to the fact that I saw Rebbe Meir from the back." Rabbi Beryl Wein provides a beautiful allegorical interpretation of this *gemora*. Rebbe Meir was among the last of the generation of *Tennaim* and Rebbe had the *zechus* to see the unique embodiment of the passion for Torah, *ahavas Yisroel*, and closeness to Hashem that that generation possessed. He drew inspiration from that vision which, for the rest of his life, helped him make his seminal contributions to the Jewish people. The recent passing of Rabbi Hillel Klavan zt"l also represents the end of an era for the Greater Washington Jewish Community. Those of us who are left behind know full well that we are incapable of achieving his levels of compassion, concentration in davening, commitment to serving the klal, and mastery of Torah. In particular, we on the Vaad have lost a role model as well as a source of practical advice and encouragement. Rabbi Klavan was a quintessential professional who treated everyone with respect whether that person was a kosher proprietor or someone going through the painful process of a Get. It for us to now follow Rebbe's example and draw inspiration and *hadrocha* from the lessons of Rabbi Klavan's life. In so doing, we look to the future and renew our commitment to continuing his holy work in the service of our beloved community.

A heartfelt *yasher koach* to Rabbi Walter and all the contributors to the Bulletin.

A Chag Kosher v'Sameach

Yosef Singer

Rabbi Eliezer Kreiser
Ezras Israel Cong.
Vice President

Rabbi Mordechai Rhine
Southeast Hebrew Cong.
Treasurer

Rabbi Yehoshua Singer
Am HaTorah Cong.
Secretary

13217 New Hampshire Avenue, Suite 10142, Silver Spring, MD 20914
Phone: 301-770-0078 Fax 301-770-1117

Matzah Baking

A Dying Art

Rabbi Zvi Holland

Director of Field Operations – Capital K

Pesach, with the numerous and sundry preparations required to fulfill its various *mitzvos*, occupies much more of our personal and spiritual “bandwidth” than seems reasonable for an eight day holiday in the spring. This accounts for the annual rise in kosher food purchases (with some reports of a 40% rate of increase in revenue from *Pesach* related kosher food sales), the estimated \$250+ million boon to the hotel industry, as well as the costly investment in “*Pesach* Kitchens” with its massive storage areas and dining rooms. There is much truth to the proverbial story of a family that went out after *Pesach* to buy *chometz* and returned home to a sign posted on the stairway of their upstairs living space, “No *chometz* upstairs ... *Pesach* is coming!” The role that *Pesach* plays in our fundamental national and spiritual identity, as well as the *Torah* mandated *mitzvos* that comprise its observance, more than justify its importance. In fact, extreme *halachic* stringency is considered normative and positive only with respect to *Pesach*.

Long gone are the days when the *mitzvah* of *matzah* occupied the hearts and minds of Jewish families throughout the course of the year. Yet, it is the very act of baking one’s own *matzos* for *Pesach* that serves to imbue us with the significance of this *Torah* mandated staple. *Matzah* production serves as a unifying activity for everyone involved. In Europe, the integration of many Jewish communities was often facilitated by their collective investment in a communal *matzah* oven that was located in a designated area of a synagogue. In other communities, most notably Yemen, *matzah* was made at home even during *Pesach*.¹ However, this activity was so fraught with the *halachic* risk of *chometz* production and ownership on *Pesach* that it was abolished hundreds of years ago by the vast majority of Jewish communities worldwide.²

Today, the Chabad Model Matzah Bakery provides a unique *matzah* baking experience through an educational program, founded by Chabad Lubavitch, designed to introduce this age old practice to a new generation. It should be noted, however, that any *matzos* baked in this facility are considered *Chometz matzos*. While virtually indistinguishable from Passover *matzos*, they are *halachically* different and may be not used on *Pesach*.³

Most Jews come into direct contact with *matzah* baking only through experiencing the ubiquitous Chabad Model *Matzah* Bakery, an educational program spread throughout the globe by Chabad Lubavitch emissaries to synagogues, schools, and community centers each year. Ironically, they warn participants that

¹ This is because they made thick soft *matzos* and without refrigeration they would go stale almost immediately. This necessitated baking fresh *matzos* daily, except of course on *Shabbos*.

² This is also the reason modern *matzos* are thin and crispy, as they don’t get stale and are longlasting allowing ample time for pre-*Pesach* production. Today, in most cases commercial *matzah* bakeries are producing Kosher for Passover *matzos* beginning from as early as *Chanukah*.

³ The mere ownership of a *Chometz matzah* on *Pesach* is a transgression of the *Torah* prohibition, and its willful consumption carries the punishment of *Kares*. *Chometz matzah* is defined by its not conforming to the 18 minute accepted baking standard, as well as the use of bleached flour that was neither harvested at the proper time nor stored correctly. Furthermore, use of *chometz* utensils and ovens preclude the use of these *matzos* on *Pesach*.

the *matzah* being baked is considered *chametz* and is absolutely NOT Kosher for Passover.⁴

While the detailed requirements for *matzah* baking fill a large section of *Hilchos Pesach* in the *Shulchan Aruch*, the basic steps are simple enough. The following is a short overview of Kosher for Passover *matzah* production.

Lishmah – Declared Intent for the Mitzvah

At every stage of the *matzah* baking process, especially *Shmurah matzah*, a verbal declaration is required to state its purpose as the fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of eating *matzah* on *Pesach*. All *matzah* bakeries require their Jewish employees to articulate their declaration prior to beginning work. In many bakeries, one can hear the constant refrain, “*Lshem matzos mitzvah*”, intermingled with the typical sounds of a production facility. It is this very exhortation which transforms the *matzah* from an ordinary mundane object into one infused with the special significance of a *mitzvah*, resulting in the thrilling experience associated with *matzah* production.

Harvesting

There are a few different categories of *matzah* referenced in *halachic* literature. All *matzah* requires diligence, *shmirah*, to ensure that it does not become *chometz*; the only question is at what point does the actual *shmirah* begin? The highest standard that is required ensures that once the grains are ready for harvest, they do not come into direct contact with water. While most assume this refers to the actual harvest, *halacha* states that once the grains are sufficiently dried in the field and are no longer considered to be “growing”, no water should come into contact with those grains. Farmers typically wait until the moisture content of the grain is low enough to be stored without the fear of spoiling. In truth, farmers could actually let the grains dry even more before harvesting.⁵ When wheat is harvested for *matzah shmurah*, the moisture is carefully measured to ensure that the harvest is scheduled before this becomes an issue.⁶

Storing

Upon its harvest, the wheat must be stored in a place where true *shmirah* can be achieved. This means the storage is accomplished responsibly, in a manner in which one can reasonably assume that there is no risk of water or moisture buildup on the grain. Despite all of these efforts, many sources of grain must rely on *Bitul*, *halachic* nullification, due to the presence of kernels that sprouted either in the fields or while in storage.

Grinding

From the time of grinding, *shmirah* is in place for all *matzos*. The mills used for *matzah* flour must either be dedicated solely for this purpose or completely cleaned in an acceptable manner. Generally, any facility that uses flour experiences challenges with its containment to a specifically designated area. Therefore, preparing a mill for *Pesach* is a serious and intense activity.

Drawing Water

Up until the actual baking procedure, *shmirah* is all about keeping the grain and flour perfectly dry. Once the baking process begins, the focus is on Timing and Temperature. This is crucial, as serious mistakes can result concerning the *Torah* based prohibition of *chometz* once the water has been added

4 There are many pockets of people in Israel and around the world who bake their own *matzos* every year, often either renting time or space in commercial bakeries or gathering in shuls, homes, and storage facilities that are carefully prepared each year with specialized equipment and ingredients. These groups are called “*Chaburos*”, described in more detail at the end of this article.

5 Waiting is often required based on the rental schedule of the combine equipment, which is not only a shared enterprise but generally spread over many states and growing areas in order to better manage the high costs of modern harvest equipment.

6 US *matzah* bakeries tend to harvest at about 14% moisture

Halachah defines what to avoid with regard to preparing the dough. This includes keeping the dough out of direct sunlight and away from the heat of the oven until it is ready to be baked. Not allowing the dough to “rest” by constantly working it, even within the 18 minutes, retards the leavening process indefinitely. One active requirement in keeping the dough as cool as possible is the use of “*Mayim Shelanu*”, water that has rested overnight. Water is ideally drawn at or just after sunset (when the water is cool), and used the next day after having been stored overnight in closed containers.

Timing

Although the *Shulchan Aruch* declares the maximum timing for *matzah* baking to be 18 minutes, this is not the universally accepted time frame. In fact, 18 minutes based on the amount of time it takes to walk a *mil* which is usually 22.25 minutes, according to others including the *Mogen Avraham* and the *Gr”a*. Although we are used to seeing “18 minute” *matzos*, this is not a 100% accurate statement. If one were to follow the *Shulchan Aruch* exactly, the factory would shut down every 18 minutes so as to clean away all dough and flour residue in order to preclude the possibility of *chometz*. However, in factories that produce “regular” machine *matzos* with no special designation, only the mixing bowls are cleaned regularly. They rely on the fact that as long as the dough is constantly being worked, no *chometz* can form. In *shmurah* runs of machine *matzos*, as well as all hand *matzah* bakeries, the equipment is cleaned somewhat regularly. In most bakeries, even those claiming to be 18 minutes, they count from the time the kneading is done – which is not to exceed 22.5 minutes. Once the kneading is complete, a straight 18 minutes is counted. The exception to this is when either the consumers or the *hechsher* expressly demand a true 18 minute count, from beginning to end, following the exact stipulations as set by the *Shulchan Aruch*.

Kneading & Forming

The *Shulchan Aruch* discusses the maximum size for effective kneading as the same as that of *Challah*. While this is adhered to in hand *matzah* productions, latter day *poskim* permit the production of much larger amounts of dough when using machines due to the increased capacity for effective kneading when using a powerful commercial mixer. The “recipe”, which is the ratio of flour to water, must be exact so that the *matzos* are not too dry or too wet. Every *matzah* bakery tests its formula each year to confirm that the wheat being used (which is sometimes a mixture from different sources) is balanced correctly for effective *matzah* baking. They keep the water in a separate room away from the flour, while the flour is kneaded in isolation. This keeps every step of the process as protected and controlled as possible. Large clocks count down the 18 minutes, and the kneading must not outpace production of flat *matzos* that are ready to go into the oven. Once kneaded, the dough is worked until it is completely uniform and is separated into a specific number of pieces which are handed over to a corresponding number of bakers, who then roll them out until they are almost ready to be baked. The dough is then passed on intermittently to a worker(s) called a *gomer*, the one who finishes the *matzah* so that it is constantly being worked. Upon completion, the dough is given to the “*reydler*” who uses a rotating wheel to make holes in the *matzos* to ensure they remain flat; the *matzah* is now finished. In a *matzah* machine, all of these steps are performed by different parts of a machine that is specifically engineered for efficiency and *kashrus*.

Baking

While a *matzah* machine’s conveyer belt runs straight into the oven, skilled hand *matzah* bakers are challenged to bake the flat, supple *matzah* so it does not form any folds that are considered unacceptable in kosher *matzos*. The raw *matzos* are draped on wooden poles and deftly rolled flat into an extremely hot oven. The *matzos* are then baked in approximately 15 minutes and removed from the oven to cool.

Checking the *Matzos*

Once baked, the *matzos* must be removed for “*Kefulos*” and “*Nefuchos*”, folded and bubbled *matzos*. Since these *halachos* are very specific and detailed, a *matzah* bakery with the proper *hashgochah* must employ an expert member on its staff to carefully assess the *halachic* acceptability of every *matzah*. Another concern in some bakeries is “*Vasser matzos*”, water *matzos*, which are soft and wet and not accepted by certain groups out of concern that should they be tested they would not be fully baked inside, which results in *chametz*. Reliable and efficient staff with experience, knowledge, and *Yiras Shomayim* are designated to render these types of *halachic* decisions.⁷

Taking *Challah*

The custom has always been to wait until after baking before taking *challah*, in order to safeguard against the likelihood of *chometz*.

Cleaning

Once baking is completed, *chometz* begins to form and the entire bakery is cleaned. In modern bakeries, this means using high pressure water or compressed air and vacuum cleaners. The need for very diligent professional staff to operate commercial bakeries is vital, as many of these bakeries become Kosher for *Pesach* after *Sukkos*! Often, innovative systems with interchangeable and disposable pieces are used to speed up the changeover time required in order to minimize production downtime in the bakery.

Different Kinds of *Matzah*

- Hand *matzah* – *matzah* made by hand. Many prefer this *matzah* because the process allows for personal involvement in the requirement of *Lishmah*, which impacts the cost of these types of *matzos*. All commercial hand *matzos* are both *Shmurah* and “18 minute” *matzos*.
- Machine *matzah* - *matzah* made by machine. Many prefer these *matzos* not only for their taste and reduced price, but because the use of machines in *matzah* production drastically reduces the possibility of *chometz*.⁸ These *matzos* are available as *Shmurah*, “18 Minute” and regular *matzos*.
- “*Chaburah*” *matzah* – group *matzos*, referring to the widely known practice in Israel (and to a lesser extent the U.S.) of arranging a group to bake *matzos* in a commercial facility utilizing some or all of the staff. The *chaburah* rents the facility for a specific amount of time, and whatever they produce belongs to them. During that time, they establish the *halachic* standards for the bakery according to their own dictates. As the kosher consumer became more sophisticated, “*Chaburah*” *matzah* became a commercial standard and is valued at a significantly higher price per capita. This generally refers to using the strict 18 minute time limit, as opposed to the 22.5 minute modified 18 minute calculation.

In addition to adhering to a classic 18 minute timetable, below is a list of some *chumros* practiced by *chaburo*s worldwide.

- *Rachayim Shel Yad* – Hand-grinding the wheat. This is an extension of the preference of hand *matzah* over machine *matzah* to the actual grinding, despite the fact that the

⁷ Defining a *kefula* and *nefucha* is more of an art than a science, and many opinions abound. It is the opinion of this author that in addition to competency in the *halachic* literature, personal face-to-face training is required in order to be able to apply these *halachos* practically; anything less will likely result in either inappropriate stringency or leniency.

⁸ When the first *matzah* machine was brought to *Yerushalayim*, it is said that the inhabitants led by their *rabbonim* went out to the village of Motza dressed in *Shabbos* clothes to meet the machine. Many Jerusalemites, including *Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach* and *Rav Yosef Sholom Elyashiv, zt”l*, ate machine *matzos*, exclusively for much of their lives.

matzah production is far removed from the harvest. Some rare *chaburos* actually harvest their wheat by hand, as well.

- *Matzah, matzah* one *matzah* at a time – With increased production comes the increased likelihood of errors. Consequently, some *chaburos* bake only one *matzah* at a time. This, of course, increases the cost astronomically as this process is impacted by the rental of a commercial bakery.
- *Tanur Rishon* – The First Oven. Since the *matzah* oven is extremely hot, it basically “self-kashers” itself each time it is restarted. Those who get the *Tanur Rishon* get an oven perfectly *kashered*, untainted by the errors of those who preceded their *chaburah*.

Matzos Mitzvah

While technically all of the categories of certified commercial *matzah* are kosher for fulfilling the unique *Torah* obligation of eating *matzah* on the *Seder* night, in our day and age most observant families are careful to use *Shmurah matzah* as it is *halachically* preferable and readily available. There is also a custom that is practiced parsimoniously using “*Matzos Mitzvah*” for the *Seder*. *Matzos mitzvah* are baked on *Erev Pesach* after midday. This coincides with the time the *Korban Pesach* was brought, as well as when *chometz* is prohibited. Obviously, the baking of this *matzah* is fraught with *halachic* challenges and, therefore, many do not recommend this practice. However, there is much joy associated with this ritual as demonstrated by the custom to recite *Hallel* during the actual baking process; in some communities, it is even recited with a *brochah*.

While most of us will not actually bake our own *matzos*, by becoming more familiar with the process we can achieve a greater appreciation for our *matzos* as true *Matzos Mitzvah*.

On Freedom

A Personal Opportunity

Rabbi Levi Shemtov

The SHUL of the Nation's Capital
Chabad Lubavitch Center, Washington, DC

As is the custom in the Washington diplomatic community, I found myself one day in a “receiving” line waiting to be greeted by the ambassador of Ukraine, who was hosting their national Independence Day. Every embassy celebrates annually with a similar event during which they showcase their strengths and cultures, and it is common to find prominent American and other public figures of the embassy’s nationality or ancestry in the crowd. As I am fortunate to represent colleagues in over 80 countries, this was rather routine for me, until..

I was startled as I turned to return a greeting of “good evening” by the one standing right behind me, only to find it was the ambassador of Russia (probably not something that would happen this year). “How interesting to see you at this event”, I said, given the irony of the countries of host and guest, to which he replied “why not? we even have our own such event.” “Now, Ukraine is celebrating its freedom and independence from you”, I answered, “but from whom do you celebrate freedom or independence?” The ambassador’s response is one I am so often mindful of. “I don’t know” he responded, and after pondering a moment, exclaimed “perhaps from ourselves!” Freedom from one’s self. How very powerful a notion!

As we approach the great festival of Pesach (Passover) we are reminded of freedom’s true meaning. At the seder table everywhere, Jews repeat the words of our sages and forbears uttered in so many varied circumstances over millenia: “This year we are here (in the Diaspora), next year we will be in the Land of Israel. This year we are slaves next year we will be free.” Now, we still say the phrase about aspiring to freedom even as we live in the freest country in the world. And those living and celebrating in Israel, even in Jerusalem, proclaim “next year we will be in the land of Israel.” Why?

Because freedom does not mean merely the absence of slavery or servitude. Freedom is a proactive pursuit. One can sit in the holy city of Jerusalem and still yearn to really “be there” and one can sit free of the oppressions of times bygone and still feel like a “slave”.

Though over time it has been shown that freedom can be curtailed by fellow men, the opportunity for inner, spiritual freedom is granted by G-d alone. And it is then up to every individual to avail themselves of it and nurture it for the greatest purposes.

One of the most fascinating concepts in the Torah is the piercing of a voluntary slave’s ear at the doorway. Why the ear? Because “that ear who heard you are servants unto me, should not have allowed themselves to become a servant to their fellow man”. Does servitude mean I must shine someone’s shoes? Or does it perhaps mean I must comply with their latest whim or social adjustment? To whom do I give the servitude

over which I am my own master? Do I work diligently to serve Hashem, or do I serve - and allow myself to be enslaved to - the trends and directives of the latest cultural phenomenon? Do I remember “that which I heard at Sinai?” or do I hearken to the latest “ping” from the cacophony of social and other media? Would my “ear” get “pierced” at the doorway as in the days of old as a result of my choices?

After the turmoil of the middle of the last century, as the ugly racial tensions began to subside and sensitivity and repair began to take hold, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, of blessed memory, expressed deep dissatisfaction with the lack of emphasis on education and training for minorities who had just finally been able to overcome the indignities of segregation. The Rebbe saw great damage to the newly gained freedom of so many if there wouldn't be accompanying, appropriate guidance and professional opportunities. For new freedom is very intense, it like anything potent can easily be wasted and even become harmful if not properly channeled and grounded. And we now see sorry results of a basically cheated generation, many more of whom could have achieved what so many before them only dared dream of.

And a similar sad result, more spiritual in nature, plagues our very own Jewish community. Whereas our predecessors may have struggled with too many barriers to social acceptance, our generation and the one presently rising perhaps struggle with too much of it. Literally nothing is closed in this era to an observant Jew who displays competence and commitment, and almost anywhere on Earth, a Jew can now do as they please. But the Yetzer Harah (evil human inclination) is nothing if not a pernicious gravity. It causes one, if not careful, to slowly and even unwittingly shed their protective shell of intense Jewish commitment and protection from the beckoning forces of freedom, which can literally erode one's Yiddishkeit, sense of Jewishness, which we so urgently need reinforced in these times. The tug of war within the person, between servitude to what we see and is immediate and that which is above what we see and is actually our special calling as a *goy kadosh*, a holy nation, is so intense.

Pesach literally means to jump, or skip, hence the words “pass over” reminding us of the time the Angel of Death “passed” over the Jewish homes in the final plague against the Egyptians before the miracle of Yetzias Mitzrayim (exodus) occurred. Even as the Jewish people were hurriedly approaching their end of slavery, Hashem ordered their Pascal sacrifice, a lamb (and an Egyptian deity, no less!) to be posted to their beds for a few days as they prepared to leave, as the demonstrated transformation from fearing their masters to openly defying them in freedom, albeit in “new” servitude - to G-d - was so powerful. But once the freedom became realized, the need to “jump” to the new level was imminently important.

So, this year, we should think through our freedoms; the ones we have, as well as the ones we should and could have, and let's make them real. Let's listen to the calling of our soul, and allow it to pierce the greatest and deepest levels of our hearts, minds and lives, so that we would not have our ear “pierced” as we hearken to the words we merited at Sinai.

May this be the year in which we merit to sit at the Pesach Seder “in Jerusalem” and be “truly free” as we experience the ultimate redemption with the Righteous *Moshiach*.

Appreciating Pesach In Light of Erev Pesach

A Halachic and Hashkafic Presentation

Rabbi Moshe Walter

Woodside Synagogue Ahavas Torah

The excitement, anticipation, anxiety, and myriad responsibilities in the days leading to Pesach is palpable. I vividly recall, with some nostalgia, an incident when our family attempted to take a cab in Yerushalayim right before Pesach. As the driver kindly placed the stroller into the trunk of his cab, he noticed a box of cookies in the area under the stroller. The driver's face turned white as a ghost and he yelled "Chametz, Chametz", and sped away, as if a time bomb was ticking. The punch line is, that the driver was not wearing a Yarmulka, and appeared not to lead a Torah observant lifestyle.

The principle of neither owning nor not eating Chametz on Pesach is a well-known concept to many of our fellow Jews. Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev recounted the following story to make this very point.

It was Erev Pesach, and Rav Levi Yitzchak was walking in the streets of the Jewish quarter and looking for local Jewish smugglers. From one smuggler he asked for a quote on contraband tobacco, and from another he requested a quote on fine textiles. Rav Levi Yitzchak then requested of the same group of smugglers some black market whisky, and bread. Shocked by the Rebbi's request, the smugglers who had previously proved so accommodating responded: Rebbi, are you trying to insult us? The *Seder* will be starting in just a few hours and no Jew has even a speck of *chametz* left in his possession. No matter the price offered by the Rav Levi Yitzchak, not one merchant was able to come up with a crumb of bread, or drop of alcohol as the Jewish quarter was completely *chametz-free*.

Thrilled with the results of his failed request, the Rebbi looked up to heaven and declared: Gd Almighty, look down with pride at your people. The Czar has border guards and tax-commissioners dedicated to his commands. The police and the courts are devoted to tracking down and punishing smugglers and black-marketers, and yet, anything one could possibly want is available. Contrast this with the faith and fidelity of your Jewish people. It has been over three thousand years since you have commanded us to observe Pesach. No police, no guards, and no courts enforce this edict, yet every Jew keeps your laws to the utmost. *Mi kamcha Yisrael* – Who is like your nation of Israel!

This beautiful story sheds light on a penetrating insight of none other than Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev himself, who asked why the Torah calls the holiday "Chag Ha-Matzos", whereas we Jews call the chag, "Pesach"?

Rabbi Levi Yitschak of Berdichev explained that the Pasuk in Shir HaShirim, (Perek 6 Pasuk 3) "I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me", refers to the expression of love between the Jewish people and God who love and praise each other. As such, explained the Berdichiver Rebbi, the Jews call the holiday Pesach in order to praise God, and express our love to Him for sparing his people by passing over their homes, when afflicting the first-born Egyptians. God, on the other hand calls the holiday Chag Ha-Matzos in

order to praise the Jewish people for their trust in Him. The Jews were satisfied with eating Matzos on leaving Egypt and did not wait for the bread to rise. The Jewish people immediately took their dough on their shoulders and followed Moshe into the desert with complete faith that G-d would continue to provide for all their needs.

In short, we call the holiday Pesach to praise God for his devotion to his beloved nation, while God calls the holiday Chag HaMatzos as his form of praise for his beloved nation who were satisfied eating Matzah alone while staying far away from consuming any Chametz.(end of Tosfos Chadashim to Mishnayos Pesachim Perek 1 Mishnah 1)

While we prepare on Erev Pesach to rid our possessions of Chametz, we at the same time, prepare for the significant amount of positive Mitzvos which we will have the opportunity to perform on Seder evening. The Vilna Gaon understands that while we commonly think that the Mah Nishtanah is composed of four questions, in truth there are really five questions. The Gra explains that the words “Mah Nishtanah Halayla Haze M’kol Haleilos”-which is translated as “why is this night different than all other nights”, is really a question in and of itself. Why is this night full of Mitzvos when we never find any other evening on the Jewish calendar that specifically and uniquely requires the performance of a particular Mitzvah?(Hagadas HaGra V’talmidav- Feffer)

Clearly, the Yom Tov of *Pesach* is replete with both the positive and negative, Biblical and Rabbinic, *Mitzvos* and *Minhagim*, (customs). At the same time, the day of Erev Pesach contains an incredible number of Mitzvos and Minhagim, specifically intended to ensure that we are adequately prepared for the forthcoming eight days of Pesach. The importance of preparing for Pesach on Erev Pesach is noted by the Gemara which recounts the incident regarding Rav Akiva who never said “it’s time to leave the Beis Medrash, except for when he left the Beis Medrash on the busy days of Erev Pesach and Erev Yom Kippur.”(Maseches Pesachim 109a. See interpretations of Rashi and Tosfos ibid.) Similarly, Rashi and Tosfos (Maseches Pesachim 50a explaining the first Mishnah in the fourth Perek of Maseches Pesachim) explain that the reason for the custom not to work on Erev Pesach is in order to ensure that individuals have the time to properly prepare for the numerous upcoming Mitzvos of Pesach.

As Erev Pesach is replete with a variety of Mitzvos and Minhagim, the following is a Pre- Pesach checklist intended to serve as a reminder to focus on the multiple obligations and to channel these into awesome opportunities. In turn, these opportunities become the catalysts for the birth of the season of freedom-Zman Cheirusenu. (The below Piskei Halchah are based upon the Shulchan Aruch, Rama, and Mishnah Berurah Hilchos Pesach. Please consult further with your Rav.)

The Evening of the 14th of Nissan

- ❑ At the beginning of the evening, the Mitzvah of Bedikas Chametz (search of one’s home and possessions for Chametz) is performed. The custom is to scatter ten carefully secured pieces of bread around the home to be found during the course of searching the home. A flashlight may be used for the search. The Berachah “al biur chametz” is recited prior to beginning the search of Chametz. Following the bedikah, one is required to nullify any unknown chametz. (The Berachah and nullification can both be found at beginning of the Haggadah) If the nullification is not understood in Hebrew, it should be recited in English. The ten pieces of bread and any other Chametz are burned the next morning.

The Morning of the 14th of Nissan

- ❑ Make sure that you have sold your Chametz through your Rav

- ❑ From daybreak, it is prohibited to eat Matzah so that one may fulfill the Mitzvah of Matzah at the Seder. (Some have a custom not to eat Matzah from Rosh Chodesh Nissan) Children under the age of Chinuch (child who has minimal to no understanding of the story of the Exodus) may eat Matzah all day. One who has a medical need should speak with one's Rav regarding eating egg Matzos.
- ❑ All first born males attend a Siyum Bchorim (completion of a Talmudic tractate or seder of Mishnayos) and partake of food at the Siyum in order not to be required too fast as a commemoration of the miracle of being saved from the "plague of the firstborn". If the child is below the age of Bar- Mitzvah, the father fasts in his stead, regardless if the father is a firstborn or not.
- ❑ Chametz may not be eaten after the end of the fourth Halachic hour. During the fifth hour one may derive benefit from the Chametz, and beginning of the sixth hour eating and deriving benefit are both prohibited.(Most Shul calendars and the like should have the exact time's posted)
- ❑ Any remaining Chametz must be burnt (completely charred) to fulfill the Mitzvah of Biur Chametz, while any Chametz that was previously sold should be stored in a place that is clearly separated, and marked as not for Pesach use. This should all take place during or before the fifth Halachic hour.
- ❑ Following the burning of the Chametz "Kol Chamira" should be recited. This is an annulment of any and all ownership of Chametz. If "Kol Chamira" is not understood in Hebrew, it should be recited in English.
- ❑ All Kashering of utensils should be completed before the beginning of the fifth hour of the day.
- ❑ It is a Mitzvah to shave and take a haircut in honor of Yom Tov.

The Afternoon of the 14th of Nissan

- ❑ From the beginning of the fourth Halachic hour following Midday one should not eat a large meal in order to be excited and hungry to eat the Matzah, Maror, and Seder delicacies. One should however eat sufficiently (but moderately) so that one does not enter the Seder famished. Fruits, vegetables, chicken, meat, and fish are all examples of permitted foods to eat.
- ❑ One should not do Melachah (work) from Midday, following the similar laws of prohibited and permitted work on Chol HaMoed. If one did not yet take a haircut in honor of Yom Tov, one may do so by a non- Jewish barber.
- ❑ Some have a custom to recite the laws of the Korban Pesach as a commemoration of the fact that it was at this time that the Korban Pesach was offered when the Beis HaMikdash stood. (This can be found in the beginning of the Hagadah)
- ❑ The making of the Maror, Charoses, Zroah, Karpas and all other parts of the Seder plate, and Seder meal should be completed.
- ❑ The Seder table and chairs should be set and arranged beautifully to express our status as "bnei chorin"- free people, and in order to be ready to commence the Seder at the beginning of the evening.
- ❑ It is a Mitzvah to bathe and or shower in honor of Yom Tov.
- ❑ Parents and children should rest and take a nap in order to be fully alert, and appreciate the Seder.

Cleaning for Pesach

A Practical How-to Halachic Checklist

The following are a number of contemporary examples of locations that should be cleaned and searched for *Chametz* that the *Shulchan Aruch*, *Ramo*, *Achronim*, and contemporary *Halachic* authorities have penned.

- Kitchen and all eating areas** – must be cleaned thoroughly as they are certainly considered places unto which *chametz* is brought.
- Living room, bedrooms, basement** - do or do not have to be cleaned of *chametz* based upon the house rules as to where food is brought. If one never brings food into these areas then they do not have to be cleaned and searched for *chametz*. If one snacks and/or brings food into these places from time to time then they require a thorough cleaning. Children's bedrooms and or a home with children changes the rules since there is a strong assumption that children carry, store, or move food around the home. As such, many places that may have ordinarily been deemed as being "*chametz* free" are redefined and must be carefully checked.
- Closets, drawers, and bookshelves** should be handled and treated as articulated in #2 above.
- Floors** – As we don't have earthen floors with deep cracks in them, it is sufficient for tiled floors or covered floors to be swept and washed with a household floor cleaner. Cracks and spaces between tiles do not have to be checked after.
- Toys** – should be checked for *chametz*, but need not be scrubbed incessantly.
- Clothes** that have pockets, knapsacks, lunchboxes, etc. where one (especially children) has placed *chametz*, or may have placed *chametz* should be checked for *chametz*.
- There are differences of opinion regarding whether **books and sefarim** are required to be checked for *chametz*.
- Backyard, patio, and open porch** do not have to be checked for *chametz* because it is assumed that local animals and birds have disposed of whatever *chametz* may have existed.
- Cars** must be cleaned and checked for *chametz* as they are classified as places unto which food has been brought.
- Shul and Beis Medrash** are required to be cleaned of *chametz* followed by *bedikas chametz*.
- Any area of a home (i.e.: food pantry, kitchen utensils, particular room, etc....) that will be **sold to a non-Jew** does not have to be cleaned for *chametz* provided that it is properly closed off and sealed for the duration of the holiday.

2016 QUICK-PICK MEDICINE LIST

A SAMPLE OF *CHOMETZ*-FREE AND KOSHER MEDICINES LISTED BY CATEGORY. FOR USA ONLY
 PRODUCTS MAY CONTAIN *KITNIYOS*

For a full list of *chometz*-free medicines, see the complete 2016 Passover Directory and Medicine Guide

Cold, Allergy & Decongestants

Allegra- 24 hr. Tablets (Regular Only), 12 hr. Tablets
Allegra Children's- Oral Suspension
Allegra-D- 12 hr. Tablets
Claritin – 24 hr. Allergy Tablets (Dairy)
Claritin Children's- Chewable Grape Tablets (NOT Redi-Tabs)
Claritin-D – 12 hr. Tablets (Dairy), 24 hr. Tablets
Singulair- 4mg Oral Granules, 10mg Tablets (Dairy), 4mg & 5mg Chewable Tablets

Gastrointestinal Remedies

Alka-Seltzer- Original Tablets
Dramamine- Original Formula & Less-Drowsy Tablets (Dairy), For Kids Chewable
Kaopectate Liquid- Cherry, Vanilla, Peppermint, Extra Strength Peppermint
Konsyl Powder Original Formula- Unflavored (no kitniyos)
Metamucil- Original Coarse Powder (no kitniyos)
Metamucil- Orange Coarse Powder, Orange Smooth Powder (Regular & Sugar-Free)
Miralax Powder
Pepcid AC- Original & Max Strength Swallowable Tablets
Pepcid Complete (Dairy)- Chewable Tablets (Berry, Cool Mint)
Pepto Bismol Liquid- Original
Phillips' Milk of Magnesia Liquid- Original
Rolaids- Regular Strength Tabs (Mint), Extra Strength Tabs (Mint, Assorted Fruit)
Senokot- Tablets, Senokot-S Tablets
Tums- Regular Tabs (Assorted Fruit), Extra Str Assorted Tabs (Berries, Fruit, Tropical Fruit) & Ultra Assorted Tabs (Berries, Fruit, Tropical Fruit)

Pain Relievers

Advil- Caplets [Reg- NOT film coated] & Tablets [Reg- NOT film coated]
Advil- Children's Suspension [All Flavors], Infants' Drops
Aleve- Tablets & Caplets
Bayer Aspirin- Genuine Tabs, PM Caplets, Low-Dose Chwbl. 81mg (Cherry, Orange)
Motrin- Children's Susp (Berry- Reg & Dye-Free), Infant Drops (Berry- Reg & Dye-Free)
Tylenol- Regular Strength Tablets, Extra Strength Caplets
Tylenol- Children's Suspension (Cherry Blast), Infant Drops (Cherry, Grape)

Sleeping Aid

Unisom- PM Pain Sleep Caplets, Sleep Tabs

FOR PASSOVER 2016 ONLY

2016 QUICK-PICK PERSONAL CARE LIST

A sample of *chometz*-free personal care products listed by category.

Antiperspirants/Deodorants

Arrid- Antiperspirant/Deodorant- Clear Gel, Solid, Spray, Cream
Dry Idea- Antiperspirant/Deodorant- Aerosol, Roll-on, Stick, Gels [All]
Lady Speed Stick- Deodorant [All]
Mennen- Speed Stick Deodorant [All], Speed Stick Antiperspirant [All]
Old Spice- Original Deod. & Antiperspirant, Pure Sport Deod. & Antiperspirant
Right Guard- Antiperspirant/Deodorant- Gels, Sticks, Aerosols [All including Xtreme]

Creams & Ointments

A & D- Ointment
Chapstick- Classic Original, Classic Strawberry, Medicated, Moisturizer, Overnight
Desitin- Max Str. Original Paste, Rapid Relief Cream, Multi-Purpose Ointment
Coppertone- Lotions - Spf 4-70+, Cont. Spray Spf 15-70+
Tinactin- (Liquid & Powder Sprays, Cream)
Vaseline Petroleum Jelly- Original
Vaseline Intensive Care- Advanced Repair Unscented

Mouthwash

Listerine- Advanced Citrus, Antiseptic (Gold), Cool Mint, Fresh Burst, Soft Mint, Total Care Zero, Zero Scope [All]

Shampoo and Conditioner

Head and Shoulders- Classic Clean (Shampoo, Conditioner, 2 in 1)
Pantene Pro-V- Daily Moisture Renewal Nourishing (Shampoo, Conditioner),
 Beautiful Lengths (Shampoo, Conditioner), Classic Clean (Shampoo, Conditioner),
 Sheer Volume (Shampoo, Conditioner), Daily Moisture Renewal 2-in-1
Prell- Classic Clean Shampoo
Suave- Ocean Breeze (Shampoo, Conditioner), Tropical Coconut (Shampoo, Conditioner)

Soap/Washes

Dial- Bar Soap [All], Liquid Hand Soap, Body Wash [All except Oatmeal], Antibacterial Foaming Hand Wash [All]
Ivory Bar Soap- Regular, With Aloe
Irish Spring- Bar Soap, Body Wash [All]
Palmolive- Bar Soap [All]
Softsoap- Body Wash [All], Liquid Soap [All], Shower Gels

Toothpaste

Aim [All]
Close Up [All]
Colgate [All] [All use Vegetable Glycerin]
Pepsodent [All]
Ultradent [All] [All use Vegetable Glycerin]

FOR PASSOVER 2016 ONLY

2016 PASSOVER PRODUCTS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE ADDITIONAL PASSOVER CERTIFICATION

with the conditions noted under each category

- **Aluminum Foil Products-** Disposable
- **Baking Soda**
- **Cocoa-** Domestically produced 100% Pure
- **Coffee**
 - Folgers- Regular & Decaf- Unflavored Instant
 - Nescafe Tasters Choice- Regular Unflavored Instant
 - Trader Joe's- Regular Unflavored Ground
- **Dishwashing Soap** (with year round certification)
 - Ajax
 - Cascade
 - Dawn
 - Joy
 - Palmolive (Regular, Ultra)
- **Frozen Fruit-** unsweetened additive-free, without syrup, citric acid, ascorbic acid, Vitamin C, and that do not have an issue with insect infestation (e.g. Peaches, Melon)
- **Frozen Juices-**100% pure white grapefruit or orange frozen juices without sweeteners, additives, preservatives or enrichments (e.g. calcium) added
- **Lemon Juice** (with year round certification)
 - Realemon Juice (Reconstituted)
- **Meat (beef, lamb, veal), Packaged-**The following raw meats (not ground) are approved by the STAR-K without additional Passover symbol:
 - 7Mile Market
 - Alle/Meal Mart
 - Alony/Ameriprime
 - Kol Foods
 - Glatt Mart
 - Glatt Ranch
 - M&D Glatt
 - Solomon's
- **Nuts, Raw-** Whole or Chopped Raw Nuts (e.g. almonds, pine nuts, walnuts, etc.) without preservatives or other additives, such as BHT or BHA in corn oil, are approved for Passover. If label states that it is processed in a plant that processes kitniyos or chometz, then it requires a reliable KFP certification. Note: Many consider peanuts as kitniyos, which are not permissible on Pesach. Also, dry roasted nuts and ground nuts require reliable KFP certification. Whole and half pecans do not require KFP certification; however, pecan pieces and midget pecans must bear a KFP symbol.
- **Oven Cleaner**
 - Easy Off
- **Paper Napkins**
- **Plastic Bags**
- **Plastic Plates**
- **Plastic Wrap**
- **POULTRY, PACKAGED-** Fresh raw poultry bearing reliable kosher certification may be used on Passover. However, all ground poultry products required KFP certification.
- **Salt-** Non-Iodized, that does not contain Dextrose or Polysorbates
- **Scouring Pads/Sponges-** without soap
- **Seltzer-** Unflavored
- **Silver Polish**
 - Goddard's
 - Hagerty
 - Weiman
 - Wrights
- **Sugar, Granulated-** All pure cane or beet sugar with no dextrose added.
- **Tea**
 - Lipton Tea Bags- Reg Unflav, Decaf Unflav
 - Nestea- Reg Unflav Instant Powder (not Decaf)
 - Tetley Tea Bags- Reg Unflav
- **Wax Paper**
 - Reynolds Cut-Rite

Chametz after Pesach 2016

It is prohibited *Rabbinically* to purchase *Chametz* after *Pesach* from a Jew who maintained *Chametz* in his possession over the course of the holiday of *Pesach*. This is referred to in *Rabbinic* literature as *Chametz She Avar Alav HaPesach*

The definition of *Chametz* is any product that consists of the five major grains including wheat, barley, oat, rye, or spelt in a significant concentration.

There is no prohibition to purchase *Chametz* from a non-Jew who was in the possession of *Chametz* over *Pesach*.

The list below consists of establishments where one may, and may not purchase *Chametz* after *Pesach*. The stores listed which one may purchase from immediately following *Pesach* are either because there is no Jewish ownership, or because a valid sale of *Chametz* by the Jewish owner to a non-Jew under the auspices of a Rabbi was executed.

The stores listed where one may not purchase *Chametz* immediately after *Pesach* are either Jewish owned or supplied.

The list below is the most current as we go to print. Please understand that new information may become available as *Pesach* approaches.

We suggest that you please contact your *Rav* for any further clarification or understanding relating to the issue of *Chametz* after *Pesach*

Chametz may be purchased from the following stores immediately after Pesach 2016

All Capitol K establishments and caterers.

National stores

B.J.'s, Costco, C.V.S., Food Lion, K-Mart, Mars, Petco, Petsmart, Royal Farms, Rite-Aid, Sam's Discount Warehouse, Save A' Lot, Shopper's food, Trader Joe's, Walmart, Wegmans, Walgreens, Win Dixie

Stores in our community

Aldi's, H-Mart, Harris Teeter, Mom's, Shop Rite of White Oak, Whole Foods

Chametz may only be purchased from **Snider's** beginning **four weeks** after *Pesach*.

Due to possible *Chometz* distributed by a Jewish company, if one has an option of purchasing *Chometz* from other stores, it is commendable not to purchase *Chometz* from **Giant**, **Safeway**, and **Target** until four weeks after *Pesach*.

For You Were Strangers in the Land of Egypt

A Giyores' Journey to Her First Pesach as a Jew

It has been a little over nine years since I first became interested in Judaism. At the time, I was 19 years old and a sophomore in college, on a quest to find truth and meaning. I was raised in mainstream liberal Christianity, which I had found up to that point to be long on warm fuzziness but short on doctrine or anything compelling that made me want to stick with it. But I also didn't know it very well, so I decided that if I tried to be more 'hard-core' and really studied the theology, I would find truth and a connection with G-d. So I began to read.

It didn't end up working out that way. As it turned out, the more I learned, the less sense anything made. I finally had to acknowledge after a few frustrating months that none of it hung together and that burying my head in the sand and trying to ignore all the inconsistencies would not change that. So I started looking elsewhere for answers.

I realized that a number of my growing problems with Christianity related to it seemingly having mangled and distorted Jewish ideas to make itself fit. I realized that as I was learning, I was easily accepting the truth of the Jewish explanations over the contradictory Christian claims. But why? The next obvious step was to look more closely at Judaism and figure out why it seemed to resonate so much.

Over the next couple of years, I started learning about Jewish beliefs and practices intensively on my own, and the more I learned, the more excited I became. Here was something that made sense and in which I found deep meaning. I loved how Judaism imbued meaning into every action in life, no matter how seemingly mundane, and made it a tangible way to get closer to Hashem. I loved how no letter of Torah, no detail, was insignificant or glossed over. The world we live in is so complex, I thought, and it seemed obvious that only a religion as complex as Judaism could fit with it. I realized, finally, that I believed that Hashem gave the Torah to *klal Yisroel* at Har Sinai and that Orthodox Judaism contained the truth about Hashem and how the world worked. Once that basic premise was accepted, everything else fit together.

But what to do with this newfound knowledge? I was still in college, broke and not near any Jewish resources, so I decided I would have to keep learning on my own and daven for courage and guidance about what to do. Ideally, I wanted to convert, because I couldn't imagine living my entire life knowing that Judaism was the truth and sitting on the outside, but it was not a path to rush into even if I had been in a position to do so at that point.

It took me several years to settle into a career and be able to afford to live near an Orthodox community. Which was fine, because it also took that long to gather up the courage to start attending an Orthodox shul and speak to a rabbi about converting to Judaism. I was a bundle of nerves the first Shabbos I approached a synagogue door, worrying that I would stick out like a sore thumb or be hopelessly lost in the service, certain that I would be standing by myself at kiddush trying not to appear too awkward. B"H, nothing of the sort happened. When I entered the women's section, I sat listening to the jumble of murmured words

around me for a few minutes, trying to figure out what was going on. Suddenly, I heard, “Yishtabach shim-cho lo’ad malkeinu. . .” and was filled with relief—I knew where that was! I found my place in the siddur and followed along (more or less). At kiddush, there was, chasdei Hashem, no standing awkwardly in a corner--people wanted to be friendly to the newcomer, and soon I had been invited to lunch by someone who had met me only five minutes earlier. I had also been introduced to the shul’s rabbi.

Speaking to the rabbi about my interest in converting was the next big step. He had seemed friendly enough at that first kiddush and had not suddenly lost interest in talking to me when I revealed that I wasn’t actually Jewish, but I was unsure what sort of reaction I would get when I asked about conversion. I sent an email asking if we could meet and talk, then spent the next few days begging Hashem that he should respond favorably. When I received a reply that he would be happy to meet with me, I was elated. I went for Shabbos lunch the following week and told him my story, and B”H, he agreed to help me. Pretty quickly, he connected me with Beis Din of the Vaad HaRabanim of Greater Washington.

It was a few months before I was ready to meet with the full Beis Din. In the meantime, I was zoche to begin learning what Jewish community is really about. B”H, I felt warmly accepted almost from the beginning. One particular family became like a second home, inviting me to stay with them for Shavuot despite having only known me for a month at that point, having me at their table for almost every Shabbos, helping me make other connections in the community, and answering all of my questions. After a while, I started having dreams in which I’d done something assur like bring muktzeh to shul on Shabbos. I would wake up sweating and panicking, only to realize first of all that it was Tuesday and I hadn’t done any such thing, and second of all that if I was having such dreams, Jewish life had become part of my subconscious and I was finally fully immersed. I almost enjoyed those nightmares. Finally, I was really living and breathing Yiddishkeit, and it felt like coming home.

My first meeting with the Beis Din came right before the Yomim Noraim. I was very anxious going in and davened for chizuk that I should be able to convey how strongly I felt about joining the Jewish people without tripping over my tongue. I had labored for hours beforehand filling out the Beis Din’s conversion application and was relieved when the meeting started off with questions from that, but then the quizzing on Halacha and Mitzvos started. I had believed that to be part of the last meeting before the Mikvah, not the first one, so I was caught off guard, but tried to mentally switch gears. B’ezras Hashem, it turned out that I did know most of the answers. I left that meeting feeling less anxious and hoping I had been judged worthy of continuing the process. I was elated to receive a call from one of the members of the Beis Din that evening telling me that the Beis Din received a very favorable impression, and that the Beis Din would contact me soon.

“Soon” turned out to mean almost exactly that. B’chasdei Hashem, a bit longer than I had hoped when I started my Jewish journey nine years earlier but sooner than I had imagined when finally entering the formal process with a Beis Din, I had a Mikvah date. I thought I had been nervous before, but it was nothing compared to the feelings leading up to that date. I went into the water as one person and came out another. It was a long road with a good bit of running in place along the way, but it was precisely on Hashem’s timeline and I have never wished to change a single inch of it. I am thankful for the very positive experience I had with the rabbis of the Va’ad of Greater Washington and their responsiveness and support throughout the process.

This will be my first Pesach as part of *klal Yisroel*. The words of daily davening have already taken on profound new meaning for me since coming out of the mikvah—when I say *Yisroel*, I think, “That includes me, now. It’s talking about me, too.” And now I, too, am part of the nation that merited *yetzias Mitzrayim*, a stranger no longer. So I can only imagine how this Pesach will be. *Lshana haba b’Yerushalayim!*

The Salvation of God is Like the Blink of an Eye

The Short Story of My Thirty-year Journey to Judaism

“*Yeshuas Hashem k'heref ayin* - The salvation of G-d is like the blink of an eye.” Jarred by this quotation, I could only think, “How can the blink of an eye take 30 years?”

These 30 years allude to the time that elapsed between questioning the meaning of life as a teenager, and the Orthodox conversion I very recently completed under the aegis of the Beis Din of the Vaad Harabanim of Greater Washington.

From a very early age I recall sitting in my grandmother's living room imagining what it might have been like to live in the time of Noah, Moses or King David. As a shy and introverted child, pondering the great heroes of the Bible brought me comfort and taught me to pray and speak to G-d as they did. My Christian grandmother had begun to read Scripture to me as soon as I was born, and she never ceased to model a life of faith, prayer and good deeds. My introspective nature, however, longed for a truth it could not grasp, and eventually I was not able to believe as she did. As I matured, my thirst for this truth was never satisfied, whether through music, astronomy, mathematics, or science—none of these disciplines had the totality of what I desired. Then one day during a rehearsal I caught a glimpse of a Magen David that hung from the neck of one of the orchestra volunteers. Days later my English class began reading the *Diary of Anne Frank*, and I began then to learn some of what that Star signified. The more I read, the more I wanted to know, and before long I had read all the books in the library about Judaism.

I was 15 years old by this time and had kept all of this a secret. I did finally summon enough courage to approach the lady who wore the Magen David and ask her if we could talk. She was eager to answer my questions, but at the same time, understood impressionable teenagers! Not long after we became friends our family moved away to a big city, and it was there that I began attending a synagogue and studying Judaism on a regular basis. After public high school I enrolled in a secular university, devoid of even a Hillel or Chabad. I had no clue at that time that living and growing as a Jew was not something I was equipped to do alone. As the months passed, I found that attempting to keep Shabbos and Kashrus was impossible for me as a freshman in a dormitory. I grew despondent and powerless to keep the Commandments of the Torah while living in a completely secular environment and without the support of an observant Jewish community. As time went on, I simply tried to forget all that I so desperately longed to be a part of.

Fast forward 30 long years to a spring day in 2014, which I later discovered had been one of the days of Pesach. Late one afternoon as I sat working in my office, suddenly I heard the summons, “Arise my beloved, my fair one, and come away. For behold, the winter has passed; the rain is over and gone” (*Shir haShirim*).

The response to this call came not from my mind but from the depths of my soul, which less poetically

responded, “It’s okay, you can try.” My soul had heard its voice and granted me permission after so many years to once again follow Hashem. “*K’heref ayin* - In the blink of an eye,” I knew I was on my way to becoming an Orthodox Jew.

In a rapid series of events, and with an abundance of *siyata dishmaya*, I found a job and an apartment in the greater Washington area. I packed my car, and moved more than 1400 miles across the country. Within one week of my arrival, I had set up a kosher kitchen and was able to walk to Shul on Shabbos. I had taken the first steps necessary to surround myself with a community of Torah observant Jews who could help mold, and nourish my *neshama*. After 3 months I found a welcoming Rabbi who listened to my story, and offered to help in any way possible. It was he who set in motion what would soon be my first encounter with the Beis Din of the Vaad Harabanim of Greater Washington.

In all the meetings I had with the Beis Din, great kindness was always shown to me. From the outset, the information, expectations and benchmarks given to me by the Rabbonim were extremely clear, and they always kept to their promised schedule. These traits were a reassurance that my conversion was being handled with the utmost professionalism.

Between meetings I was blessed to learn on a regular basis with a truly selfless and amazing teacher, which continues to this day. I davened at one Shul and sought day to day guidance from my sponsoring Rabbi. As was recommended by the Beis Din, I began attending *shiurim*, eating Shabbos meals with members of the community, and continually increasing my knowledge of Torah, *Lashon ha’Kodesh*, davening, *hilchos Shabbos*, *kashrus*, *brachos*, and the cycle of the Jewish calendar.

Finally, the day came when the Beis Din (and I!) agreed that I was ready to become a full-fledged member of Klal Yisroel. I was thrilled that the Beis Din recognized that the time was right, that I had the knowledge, tools, and most importantly, a supportive Jewish community—all paramount to living a Torah life. By this stage in the process the Beis Din understood and knew me quite well.

The day of my conversion was of indescribable beauty, and I was accompanied to the mikvah by my teacher, whose guidance and support and familiarity with the mikvah put me at ease. The ritual immersion was conducted with all the dignity and *kedusha* imaginable. Engulfed by the waters of the mikvah, the Rabbonim asked me a series of questions about my willingness to observe all of the *Mitzvos*. With every “yes” that I answered, my resolution strengthened. I knew I had the *koach* of Klal Yisroel and that I was no longer alone. At last I was entirely submerged beneath the water. When I arose, it was to the sound of three separate voices, each saying, “kosher,” which meant I was finally a halachic Jew. The “*Yeshuas Hashem*” that had taken 30 years to realize, had arrived, at last, “*K’heref ayin*”.

As a full-fledged member of Klal Yisroel I have never been happier. Not only are the *Mitzvos* not difficult to practice, rather, they are easy, and with each one comes great joy and a peace that nothing on this earth can give. As a Jew, I have never had more friends, nor have I had so much kindness shown to me. I have found the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, and with an entire Nation stand shoulder to shoulder in solidarity awaiting the coming of *Moshiach*.

AIPAC Policy Conference

Rabbi Dovid Rosenbaum

Young Israel Shomrai Emunah

I had the great privilege of participating in the AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington, DC, which took place March 20-22 2016. There were over 18,000 participants, with Jews across the religious spectrum. These were days of Jews with different religious outlooks and political bents uniting around our support of the State of Israel. In addition to this exhilarating feeling, my heart swelled with pride for a different reason. For these three days the food provided to the thousands of AIPAC attendees was kosher under the supervision of our Vaad.

Rabbi Walter told me in advance of the conference that he had visited the Kashrus program of the Washington convention center and Marriot Marquis hotel to oversee the preparations that were underway, and was thoroughly impressed. At the time, I didn't appreciate what that meant until I arrived and began walking around.

Did you ever think all the food provided at an event at the Verizon Center would be kosher? How about all the room service at the Marriott Marquis? Our Vaad, thanks to the remarkable creativity, determination, and organizational skills of Rabbi Zvi Holland with the assistance of Rabbi Tzvi Shaul Goldberg and Rabbi Binyamin Steinmetz and a total of 55 dedicated mashgichim made it happen. In total, the Washington convention center, Marriot Marquis hotel, and Verizon center were all under our kosher supervision, along with the FedEx field kitchen being used as a major food preparation space. All told, Kashrus supervision was in place working with four different caterers, spreading out over ten kitchens. Beginning to end, all of this kashrus work happened over a span of five days, with weeks and months of planning and preparation before hitting the ground.

I had the pleasure of spending part of the Policy Conference with Rabbi's Holland and Goldberg. Through detailed planning and frequent communication with mashgichim they had a strong sense of what was taking place throughout these locations. Their warm and professional rapport with the service providers and mashgichim was quite apparent and clearly evident. A closer look at their faces revealed their sleep deprivation over the previous days!

The AIPAC Policy Conference was a remarkable experience. The sight of kippos on heads wherever one turned over these days was heartwarming. If kosher food were to have not been provided at all, or an option which one had to make special arrangements for, how many fewer observant Jews would have been in attendance for the conference? We as a community should be very proud of our contribution, and grateful to the remarkable kashrus professionals who worked tirelessly to make this possible.

Vaad Certified Establishments

For the benefit of community members and visitors who are meticulous to eat Cholov Yisroel, Pas Yisroel, or Yoshon, we have additionally provided the information as to which establishments maintain such a Kashrus standard

KOSHER FOR PESACH

Candyman
Char Bar
Moti's Market and Moti's Grill
Shalom's Kosher
Signature Catering
Soupergirl I & II

NEW ESTABLISHMENTS

Café Sunflower
6101 Executive Boulevard
Rockville, MD 20852
Phone: (301) 321-3280
*Dairy, Pas Yisroel, and Yoshon
(except for items with oats)*

Char Bar
2142 L St NW
Washington, DC 20037
Phone: (202) 785-4314

Gold Standard Catering
Phone: (443) 908-1090

Olivia Macaron - Dairy
Tyson's Corner Center Kiosk
1961 Chain Bridge Rd
Tysons Corner, VA 22102

Olivia Macaron - Dairy
3222 M Street NW
Washington DC 20007
Phone: (202) 965-1000

Tovavi Falafel and Catering
Olney and Bethesda Farmer's
Markets (Sundays)
Phone: (301) 503-5002

DAIRY RESTAURANTS

Ben Yehuda Cafe and Pizzeria
1370 Lamberton Drive
Silver Spring Maryland 20902
Phone: (301) 681-8900
Cholov Yisroel, Pas Yisroel, Yoshon

Goldberg's New York Bagels
4824-6 Boiling Brook Parkway
Rockville, MD 20852
Phone: (301) 816-9229
Cholov Yisroel, Pas Yisroel

Goldberg's New York Bagels II
9328 Georgia Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Phone: (240) 450-4177
Cholov Yisroel, Pas Yisroel

Goldberg's New York Bagels III
7731 Tuckerman Lane
Potomac, MD 20854
Phone: (240) 404-1210
Cholov Yisroel, Pas Yisroel

Kosher Pastry Oven
1372 Lamberton Drive
Wheaton, Maryland 20902
Phone: (301) 592-8844

Nut House Pizza
11419 Georgia Avenue
Wheaton, MD 20902
Phone: (301) 942-5900
*Pizza and Calzones are
Cholov Yisroel*

Siena's Pizzeria
12303 Twinbrook Parkway
Rockville Maryland 20852
Phone: (301) 770-7474
*Cholov Yisroel, Pas Yisroel,
Pizza is Yoshon*

MEAT RESTAURANTS

(All Glatt Kosher)

Cafe Shawreen
188 Rollins Ave.
Rockville, MD 20852
Phone: (301) 770-3003

Max's Place
2311 University Blvd West
Silver Spring, MD 20902
Phone: (301) 949-6297

Moti's Grill
4860 Boiling Brook Parkway
Rockville, MD 20852
Phone: (301) 231-0839

**Royal Dragon Glatt Kosher
Restaurant**
4840 Boiling Brook Parkway
Rockville, MD 20852
Phone: (301) 468-1922

BAKERIES

Breadsmith of Potomac LLC
7937 Tuckerman Lane
Potomac, MD 20854
Phone: (301) 983-6033
Pas Yisroel

Goldberg's New York Bagels
4824-6 Boiling Brook Parkway
Rockville, MD 20852
Phone: (301) 816-9229
Pas Yisroel

Goldberg's New York Bagels II
9328 Georgia Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Phone: (240) 450-4177
Pas Yisroel

Goldberg's New York Bagels III
7731 Tuckerman Lane
Potomac, MD 20854
Phone: (240) 404-1210
Pas Yisroel

Kosher Pastry Oven
1372 Lamberton Drive
Wheaton, Maryland 20902
Phone: (301) 592-8844
Pas Yisroel, Yoshon

Krispy Kreme Doughnuts
14919 Shady Grove Road
Rockville MD 20850
Phone: (240) 453-0334

Krispy Kreme Doughnuts
1350 Connecticut Ave NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 463-0414

Moti's Market
4860 Boiling Brook Parkway
Rockville, MD 20852
Phone: (301) 468-0400
Pas Yisroel (Yoshon only as listed)

Shalom Kosher Market and Bakery
1361 Lambertson Dr
Silver Spring, MD 20902
Phone: (301) 946-6500
Pas Yisroel

Sunflower Bakery
8507 Ziggy Lane
Gaithersburg, MD 20877
Phone: (240) 361-3698
Pas Yisroel, and Yoshon except for items with oats

LOCAL CATERERS

Carmel Caterers
Phone: (301) 744-9504

The Kosher Kitchen Catering Co.
Phone (703) 227-7142

The Pastry Oven Catering
Phone: (301) 592-8844

Potomac 18 Caterers
Phone: (301) 294-8445

Shalom Strictly Kosher
Phone: (301) 946-6500

Signature Caterers
Phone: (301) 949-6297

Wrap2Go "Gourmet Sandwiches and Fine Catering"
Phone: (301) 328-1418
Wraps and Salads are Cholov Yisroel

Seven Layer Catering
Phone: (202) 638-9128

HOTELS

Grand Hyatt
1000 H Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: (202) 637-4928
Glatt Kosher

Park Hyatt
24th and M Street NW
Washington, DC 20037
Phone: (202) 955-3871
Glatt Kosher

OTHER

Cold Stone Creamery (Ice cream shop)
7314 Baltimore Avenue
College Park, Maryland 20740
Phone: (301) 277-2229

The Candy Man
1351 Lambertson Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20902
Phone: (301) 681-1100

Soupergirl I
314 Carroll Street, NW
Washington, DC 20012
Phone: (202) 609-7177

Soupergirl II
1829 M Street,
NW Washington, DC 20036
(Between 18th and 19th Streets)
Phone: (202) 733-4401

COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS AND SHULS

Am HaTorah Congregation
Beth Sholom Congregation
Beth Joshua Congregation
CESJDS Middle School
CESJDS Lower School
Charles E. Smith Life Communities (Hebrew Home)
Ezras Israel Congregation
Lubavitch of Washington DC
Kemp Mill Synagogue
Keshar Israel Congregation
MJB Hebrew Academy
Maryland Hillel
Ohev Shalom Congregation of Olney
Southeast Hebrew Congregation
Young Israel Shomrai Emunah
Young Israel of Potomac
Woodside Synagogue

If you are interested in advertising your business,
or dedicating an upcoming Bulletin
in the name of a loved one, or to mark a simcha
please contact
Rabbi Walter at rabbimwalter@gmail.com



Vaad Harabanim of Greater Washington

Rabbi Yosef Singer, *President*

Rabbi Moshe Walter, *Director*

www.capitolk.org

301-770-0078

13217 New Hampshire Ave.

Suite #10142

Silver Spring, MD 20914

The Vaad Harabanim of Greater Washington is an organization of Orthodox rabbis that provides the Greater Washington Jewish community with critical services such as *kashrus* supervision, a *beis din* for the administration of Jewish divorce, a *beis din* for arbitration of financial disputes, and a *beis din* for conversion. In addition, the Vaad, also known as the Rabbinical Council, acts as a rabbinic resource, and supports vital communal service organizations, such as the *Chevrah Kadisha*, *Bikur Cholim*, *Yad Yehuda* and the *Mikvah Emunah* Society. Members of the Vaad Harabanim are dedicated to serving the broader Jewish community in whatever way possible and appreciate the opportunity to do so.