

# *Halachos of Pesach and Sefiras Ha'Omer 5784*

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## **HECHSHER KEILIM -- KASHERING SMALL KEILIM (UTENSILS)**

These laws are quite intricate and extensive. What follows is a very brief synopsis of them. There are different methods of *kashering* depending on the nature of the item and its use. Many utensils are either extremely difficult or are simply not permitted to be kashered. Items For items that need both kashering and tevillah, *kashering* should be done first and then immersion in the *mikvah*. ***This year kashering at the Yeshiva of Minneapolis will be Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup> from 4-8 PM. No Drop-offs permitted. The cost is \$25 for a fair number of items, \$36 for a larger amount.*** Checks should be written to Congregation Bais Yisroel. **All utensils undergoing *kashering* should be completely cleaned — free of all dirt and palpable rust — and not used with heat or hot items for 24 hours prior to the *kashering* process.** Only utensils manufactured from wood, stone, metal and natural rubber may be *kashered*. These include *Kiddush* cups, pots, silver trays and serving pieces, silverware and various utensils. Graters, grinders and sieves, as well as frying pans and skewers, may not be kashered through *Hagalah*.

For those who would like to kasher at home, it may be done in a clean chometz pot. First boil a full pot of water, spill it out, and then refill the pot and bring to a boil. After each item is inserted for koshering, make sure the water is again at a boil before inserting the next item. All utensils should be rinsed with cold water after kashering. —Kashering may also be done in a Pesach pot. Since we only kasher utensils that haven't been used for 24 hours, there is halachically no need to re-kasher the Pesach pot for Pesach use. However, some have the custom of doing so.

## **KASHERING APPLIANCES**

**OVENS:** —R' Aharon Kotler held that if the oven is not a *ben yomo* (i.e., hasn't been used for 24 hours) then *libun kal* is sufficient. It should be cleaned well with Easy-off (including the inside of the door), then left on broil for two hours. According to R' Shmuel Kamenetzky, one hour is sufficient. —R' Moshe Feinstein held *libun chomur* is needed. This means to blowtorch each spot for a few minutes. This method helps without any prior cleaning, even if it is a *ben yomo*. The door, though, should be cleaned and covered with foil. —If an oven insert is used, all agree there is no need to kasher the oven, but many have the custom to do *libun kal* before placing the insert inside. —If you have a self-cleaning oven (not a steam-cleaning oven), running a full self-clean cycle is sufficient (whether it is the equivalent of *libun chamur* or not). No prior cleaning is necessary and there is no need to wait 24 hours. The inside of the door should be covered with foil for Pesach. Alternatively, the inside of the door may be cleaned with ammonia or something similar that will invalidate the chometz from being fit to be eaten by a dog, prior to running the self-clean cycle. —The outside of the door, and all knobs and handles should be cleaned well. (It's advisable here also to clean with ammonia or the like.) Many have the custom of also covering the knobs with foil. —If the broiler tray under the oven was used for chometz, it may only be kashered with a blowtorch. —If chometz was placed directly on the oven racks, they need *libun chamur*. (Leave them in the oven during the self-cleaning cycle.) Otherwise, according to R' Aharon, *libun kal* would suffice. **STOVETOPS:** —Electric grates are kashered by turning the coil onto its hottest temperature for 15 minutes. —Gas grates are kashered by placing a blech or large pot (even a chometz one, if clean), or even heavy-duty foil over the burners and turning on the highest flame for 15 minutes. (For safety it may be advisable not to do all four at once!) Alternatively, the grates may be placed into the oven during the self-clean cycle. The actual metal source of the gas flow need not be cleaned. —For stovetops with a flat glass top (with the electric coils under the surface) turn all the burners on (the highest setting) for 30 minutes. *Do not cover them*, as that may cause it to break. —All areas of the stovetop should be cleaned well and (except for the glass-top ones) covered with foil. —The oven hood should be cleaned well and covered with foil. **SINKS:** Enamel or ceramic sinks cannot be kashered, and

a sink insert should be used. Some cover the sink with contact paper before placing the insert inside. — Stainless steel sinks can be kashered. The sink should not be used for hot 24 hours before kashering. It should be cleaned well, including all cracks and crevices. (Again, ammonia is advisable.) Boiling water is then poured from a pot which was heated on the fire (*kli rishon*) directly onto every spot in the sink. Extra attention should be given to the drain, as sometimes something can be stuck down there. Ammonia or the like should be poured down, too, to invalidate any food residue. This should be done even if you are using a sink insert and not kashering the rest of the sink, since sometimes the drain can back up and water from the drain will end up in the sink. —The faucet should be turned on hot, and when the water reaches its hottest temperature, boiling water should be poured on the outside of the spigot. The aerator and filter should preferably be replaced for Pesach. Otherwise clean it very well and pour boiling water over it. The hot & cold knobs should be cleaned well and covered with plastic. **COUNTER-TOPS**: Granite, smooth marble (but not grooved marble), metal and smooth wood counters can be kashered, by pouring boiling water from a *kli rishon* on every spot. If the granite has been coated with a protective polyurethane or plastic finish, it cannot be kashered. —Other types should be cleaned well and covered well, with a thick covering that won't tear over Pesach. The backsplash should also be cleaned and covered. **MICROWAVE OVENS**: Most today have plastic or enamel and should not be kashered for Pesach. **DISHWASHERS** should be cleaned and sealed and not used on Pesach.

### **RELATED TO KASHERING**

—One who has **fillings** in his teeth should stop eating *hot* chometz 24 hours before the latest time for eating chometz. —One who has **braces** must clean them extremely well and should not eat hot chametz 24 hours before the time. Some hold that because food can get stuck, *no* chametz should be eaten during that period. Those braces that are removable should be removed, and if possible (without ruining them) hot water should be poured over them. —**False teeth** should also be cleaned, and hot water should be poured over them if possible. No hot chometz should be eaten 24 hours before. —Any oral insert (e.g., some **bite plates** or **retainers**) that may be ruined if boiling water is poured on them, should be cleaned well and not used with hot chometz for 24 hours before the time.

### **OTHER RELATED ITEMS**

—**Tables and chairs** must be cleaned of all chametz. (Again, ammonia or bleach is a good idea.) The table must then be covered well. Some are careful to have at least one layer of covering that is waterproof. —**Refrigerator**. Shelves should be removed to clean well of all chametz, and then should be covered well. (Be careful not to cut off the airflow inside.) —**Highchairs** should be cleaned well, especially the tray. The tray should then be covered well, so as not to rip. —**Hand towels and bibs** that were cleaned well in the wash may halachically be used for Pesach, but many have the custom of purchasing separate ones for Pesach. —**Tablecloths** may be used for Pesach but must be washed extremely well. Here, too, many will purchase separate ones for Pesach.

### **TEVILAS KEILIM**

New dishes or utensils sold or manufactured by a non-Jew must be immersed in a kosher *mikvah* prior to use. Remove all stickers, adhesives and labels prior to their immersion. Some utensils such as those made of metal or glass need a *Bracha*, others are immersed without a *Bracha*. Most chinaware, earthenware, and wooden utensils do not have to be *toiveled* at all. When in doubt, ask. **B”H we now have a dedicated Keilim Mikva in the basement of the Kollel**, which can be accessed through the side door off the alley. **Please do NOT use the 28th St. Men’s Mikva for tevilas keilim.**

### **MECHIRAS (SALE OF) CHAMETZ**

Any time after *davening*, individuals may sign a *Shtar Harsha'ah*, a contract authorizing me to sell their *Chametz* to a non-Jew. To be included this must be done no later than 9:00 A.M. Monday morning, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, *Erev Pesach*, but **PLEASE** try not to wait until the last minute!! **Please make your checks payable either to Rabbi Greenberg or to Bais Yisroel Tzedaka Fund.** You may also pay using the website or this link: <https://members.baisyisroel.org/payment.php> In the drop-down menu for "Type" choose

Chametz Sale.

### **SHABBOS HAGADOL DRASHA**

The traditional *Shabbos Hagadol drasha* will be given on Shabbos, *Parshas Metzora*, April 20<sup>th</sup>, before Mincha, on *Inyanei Pesach*.

### **BEDIKAS CHAMETZ: SEARCH and DESTROY**

*Pesach* is a unique *Yom Tov* in that *Chametz*, which is permitted year-round, is strictly forbidden during the eight-day holiday. In fact, there are two separate prohibitions concerning seeing and finding *chametz* in one's possession. We are also very concerned with inadvertently finding and eating *chometz* on *Pesach*. Therefore, there is a *Mitzvah* not just to destroy *chametz* but to search for it as well. This is referred to as *Bedikas Chametz*. This year the *bedikah* takes place Sunday evening, prior to the 14th of *Nissan*, April 21<sup>st</sup>, beginning at 8:58 P.M. Do not begin a meal, start any work, or even learn Torah half an hour prior to the time of the *Bedikah*. The *minhag* is to have a family member put out ten pieces of *chametz* before the search. Make sure they are rather small so as not to equal a *kezayis* and wrap them up so as not to allow crumbs to break off. Keep a list as to where they were placed. Recite the *bracha*; no talking is permitted between the *bracha* and the start of the search. Family members may help with the search. Preferably, the only talking during the search should concern matters relating solely to the *Bedikah*. Use a candle with a single wick. A flashlight may be used in places where a candle is inadequate or dangerous. This is not merely a ceremony but a thorough search. Search all rooms especially in a home where there are younger children. A less thorough search may be done in areas that were cleaned earlier. Pockets and cuffs of garments should be checked for *chometz*. The car, telephone, baby carriages, highchairs, tables, chairs and benches are all high priority. One should check behind appliances if they are easily movable. *Seforim* and books that have been used at the table during the year need *Bedikah*, and they should not be used at the *Pesach* table. Benches used at the *chometz* table should be put away for *Pesach*. Businesses and offices must also be searched. After the *Bedikah* recite the *Kol Chamirah* nullifying all unknown *chometz* and relinquishing it from your ownership. *Kol Chamirah* must be said in a language you understand.

*Chometz* found during the *Bedikah* should be put away in a secure fashion and place until it is burned the next day so that crumbs will not be scattered throughout the house.

### **BEDIKAS CHAMETZ FOR TRAVELERS**

These *halachos* are numerous, but we will try to cover several common cases. — One who is leaving home for the duration of *Yom Tov* and leaves his home within 30 days of *Pesach* (but before *erev Pesach*), must do a *bedika* the night before he leaves, without a *bracha*. If he leaves home more than 30 days before *Pesach*, he need not do a *bedika* at all and may rely on *bittul*. — If one is moving out of his home before *Pesach*, it depends on the following: If he's moving into his new home before *Pesach*, his obligation of *bedika* is only on the new home. If, though, he's not moving into a new place until after *Pesach*, then, if the old home is owned by a *frum* Jew, it's the owner's obligation to do *bedika*. Otherwise, the one who moved out must do the *bedika*, unless someone *else* is moving *in* before *Pesach*. — *Bochurim* returning home from *Yeshiva* must do a *bedika* on their dorm rooms before they leave. — Those going to hotels for *Pesach* must do a *bedika* in their hotel rooms, with the following guidelines: If one arrives at the hotel before the night of *erev Pesach*, a regular *bedika* with a *bracha* should be done. (If the room was cleaned well by the hotel staff, as one would expect, one should eat a *chometz* meal in the room beforehand to be able to say the *bracha* before checking.) One who arrives on *erev Pesach* (or on *Chol Hamo'ed* for a 2<sup>nd</sup>-days stay) must still do a *bedika* unless the owner is a *frum* Jew who himself did a proper *bedika*. — Married children who are staying with their parents for *Pesach* may do a *bedika* with a *bracha* in the room that they will be staying in for *Yom Tov*.

### **EREV PESACH**

Monday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>. At *Shacharis*, *Mizmor L'Sodah*, *Keil Erech Apayim* (before *Laining*) and *Laminatzayach* are omitted from *davening*.

After *chatzos* (midday), **which is 1:12 PM**, *melacha* (work) is not allowed, and the halachos are like those of chol hamo'ed. Therefore, haircuts and nail cutting should be completed before that time. The Mishna Brura says that if it was not done earlier, it may be done after chatzos.

### **SIYUM BECHORIM**

All first-born sons are required to fast *Erev Pesach* in gratitude for and commemoration of the Jewish firstborn who were saved during *Makas Bechoros*. This year any *Bechor*, or someone whose son is a *Bechor* and still a minor is obligated to fast on Monday, the 14th of Nissan, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, beginning 5:03 AM. The first born of either parent is required to fast, including *bechorim* of *Kohanim* and *Leviyim*. A *Bechor* born after a miscarriage (*Rchm"l*) should also fast, even though he did not have a *Pidyon HaBen*. There is a custom to end the fast by participating in a *siyum*, a festive meal celebrating the conclusion of a *Mesechta*. To be released from the obligation to fast you must be present in Shul, when at the conclusion of *Shacharis*, a *siyum* on a *Mesechta* will take place. To be considered a participant, you must eat something from the *Seudah*.

### **BIY'UR CHAMETZ**

*Chametz* may not be eaten after 10:29 A.M. The burning of the chometz must be completed on Monday, before 11:50 A.M. Do not saturate the chometz with lighter fluid or the like prior to burning it; this may render it inedible before the burning, thereby rendering it ineligible for the fulfillment of the mitzvah of burning. Some have a custom to add the *hoshanos* and *aravos* of *Succos* and wicks from *Chanukah* to the fire. The chometz should be burned until it is completely charred. AFTER the chometz is completely burned, the *bitul* is recited nullifying and relinquishing ownership of all remaining *chametz*. The entire process must be completed before 11:50 A.M. There are differing opinions whether one should acquire a piece of chometz to burn if he no longer owns any by Erev Pesach. The Mishna Berura holds that one should try to do so.

### **PREPARATIONS FOR THE SEDER - FIRST NIGHT**

Although during the year we refrain from displaying our nicest silver, china and linen all at one time, in memory of the destruction of the *Bais HaMikdosh*, on the night that we celebrate our freedom, the night of the *Seder*, the table should be set with our finest and most elegant possessions. The *minhag* is not to eat roasted meat or poultry. Most *Poskim* prohibit even meat roasted in a pot with no liquid added. The entire Seder table should be prepared in advance on Monday, so that the *Seder* can begin immediately after nightfall, and to avoid any possibility of violating prohibitions of Shabbos or *Yom Tov*.

All wine bottles that will be needed for the Sedorim should be opened before Yom Tov. The Zeroah and Beytza should be roasted before Yom Tov. The salt water should be prepared before Yom Tov as well as the marmor leaves or stalks which must be carefully checked for bugs before Yom Tov begins. The horseradish should be grated prior to Yom Tov. The charoses should be prepared before Yom Tov. —If one neglected these preparations until Yom Tov, the following guidelines may be used: The Zeroah and Beytza may be roasted on Yom Tov, but they must then be used that day. (The zeroah can't be eaten until daytime.) The charoses may be ground with a shinui (change, e.g. onto the table instead of on a plate). The mixing is OK without a shinui, since kneading is allowed on Yom Tov. Only a small amount of saltwater should be made, no more than is needed for that night. Its ingredients, too, should be combined with a shinui (e.g. put the water in first and then the salt). The horseradish for marmor may be ground with a shinui (see above, charoses). Marmor leaves may be checked for bugs on Yom Tov, but only as much as is needed for that night.

The Yom Tov candles are lit 18 minutes before sunset at 7:50 P.M. Some have the custom to light later, before the seder begins. When lighting Yom Tov candles, the Bracha should be said first and then the candles lit, unless your custom is the opposite. Even though we normally are allowed to recite Kiddush before nightfall on *Leyl Yom Tov*, Kiddush on Seder night must be recited after nightfall. Kiddush is counted as the first of the Arba Kosos and therefore is connected to the Haggadah. The obligation of Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim begins only after nightfall. Also, the mitzvah of matza and marmor coincide

with the eating of the Korban Pesach, which may only be eaten at night. Therefore, Kiddush may only be recited at night, when eating the matza is permitted. Therefore, the Seder should absolutely not commence until after nightfall at 8:59 P.M.

### SECOND SEDER

Tuesday night. One is prohibited from preparing anything on the first day of Yom Tov for the second day of Yom Tov. All preparations, including setting the table, seating and pillow arrangements, must be done after nightfall. Do not light candles or begin any preparations before 9:00 P.M. The horseradish may be grated the night of the second Seder so as not to lose its sharpness. It should be grated with a shinuy (in an unusual manner), either by holding the standing grater upside down, by grating the horseradish with the left hand, if one is right-handed, or by grating the horseradish over a tablecloth or counter instead of a bowl. If this is difficult to do on Yom Tov it can be grated on Monday, Erev Pesach as long as it is well sealed in a Tupperware-type container. The charoses should be prepared on Monday. If, however, one neglected to do so, it may be prepared with a *shinuy*.

### THE SEDER PLATE

Below is one widely used arrangement (*Ari Zal*); there are other customs, too:

*egg zeroah*  
*marror*  
*karpas charoses*  
*chazeres*

### KIDDUSH AND THE FOUR KOSOS

Both men and women are obligated to perform this *Mitzvah* correctly. Have the intention to fulfill two *mitzvos*, *Kiddush* and the first of the four *Kosos*. Drink the *Kos* reclining. Women need not recline. The *Kos* must contain a reviyis of wine, for which 2.9 oz. is sufficient. Preferably one should drink the entire amount in the *kos*. If unable to do so, drink *rov reviyis*, (most of the contents) and you are *yotzeh* -- you've fulfilled the requirement. The fourth *kos* should be finished to enable you to recite a *Bracha Acharona*. It is preferable to drink wine for the *kosos* as the alcohol adds the necessary dimension of *cheyrus* -- freedom. The wine should be red, uncooked and without added sugar. If not available, any kosher red wine may be used. The order of preference for the *Arba Kosos* is as follows: **1.** Wine. **2.** Wine with grape juice. **3.** Wine with water. **4.** Grape Juice. **5.** Grape juice with water. **6.** Chamar Medina (popular beverage).

### MATZAH

*Shmura Matzah* must be used for the *Sedorim*. Everyone is obligated in this *Mitzvah* with the following amounts: **Motzi-Matzah:** approximately 3/4 of a machine *matzah*, or 2/5 of a hand *matza* for a *matza* of average thickness (7-8 matzos per pound). For thicker *matza* (6 per pound) only 1/3 of the *matza* needs to be eaten, while for a thinner *matza* (9 per pound) 1/2 of the *matza* should be eaten. **Korech:** approximately 1/2 of machine *matza*, or 1/4 of a hand *matzah* of average thickness, 1/3 of a thin hand *matza* and 1/5 of a thick hand *matza*. **Afikoman:** same as Motzi Matza. Some are more lenient: approx. 3/10 of a medium hand *matza*, 2/5 of a thin one and 1/4 of a thick one, or 3/5 of a machine *matzah*. The *matzah* should preferably be eaten in 2 to 4 minutes (and in extenuating circumstances, no longer than 9 minutes). The meal should be completed early enough to allow the eating of the Afikoman before *chatzos* (1:11 AM). (Women are also required to recite the entire *Haggadah* and eat the *Afikoman*.)

The most accurate way to measure the exact requirement is by **weight**. Mechanical scales may be used for this even on Yom Tov, but if using digital scales all measurements must be performed before Yom Tov. The following measurements are based on Sefer Moznay Tzedek: **Motzi-Matzah:** L'chumra (2 Kezeisim), hand *matza* 29 grams, machine 31 grams. L'kula (1 K'zayis), hand *matza* 26.1g, machine 27.9g. **Korech:** hand *matza* 11.2g, machine 12g (L'chumra, hand 16.7g, machine 17.9g). **Afikoman:** (more lenient Shiur) hand *matza* 21.9g, machine 23.4g. (Note: There are numerous opinions here and in

extenuating circumstances there are smaller amounts that one can be Yotze with. Please speak with the Rov if necessary.)

### **MARROR**

Do not completely coat the *Marror* in *Charoses*, as it is supposed to taste bitter. If you use Romaine lettuce leaves, the amount for both maror and korech is an amount covering an area of 8x10 inches. If you use stalks, either 2 large stalks or four small stalks would be sufficient. If you are measuring by **weight**, use 28.8g. For *korech*, preferably use the same amount as for marror, but a more lenient shiur would be 19.3g. If you are brave and use fresh pure grated horseradish for marror, use 1.1 fluid ounces; for *korech*, the more lenient shiur is 0.7 fluid ounces. Eat in a span preferably of 2-4 minutes (up to a maximum of 9 minutes).

### **SIPPUR YETZYIAS MITZRAYIM**

The Haggadah. The highlight of the Seder is the re-living and retelling of the miraculous exodus from *Mitzrayim*. Involve the children; make it real for them. As each of us sits at our *Seder* and recites *Leshana Haba'ah BeYerushalayim*, may we all be *zocheh* to the *Geula Amitis* -- the true redemption. *BeNisan Nigalu UveNisan Asidin Lehigael*. May it come speedily in our time.

### **SOME PERTINENT HALACHOS**

Gas flames on the range (**but not electric**) may be raised on Yom Tov (only; not on Shabbos!!) but NOT lowered. If there is food on the flame that will burn, it may be lowered then but NOT shut.

As with any Yom Tov, many will be leaving their gas ovens/ranges on for a long period of time. It is advisable to leave windows/doors open a bit to avoid Carbon Monoxide buildup, and *please* ensure that you have working Carbon Monoxide detectors with fresh batteries.

Havdala after Yom Tov consists only of the Bracha on wine and the Bracha of Hamavdil. No fire or spices are used.

### **PLEASE REMEMBER TO BE GOOD NEIGHBORS!**

1. Drive responsibly on Joppa Ave at shul and TA: don't speed, stop fully at STOP signs, and don't park within 5' of a driveway. 2. While walking to and from shul, do not block the street to passing cars. Use the sidewalks! 3. It would be advisable to wear some type of reflector when walking at night. **THANK YOU** for helping us make a Kiddush Hashem!

***Please DO NOT park while blocking the shul's garbage bin. It can cost the shul money for a special pickup.***

### **CONCLUDE RECITAL of MORID HAGESHEM**

The first day of Yom Tov we stop mentioning Mashiv Haru'ach Umorid Hageshem. The procedure for one who mistakenly adds it is as follows: **1)** If one did not yet say the name of Hashem at the Bracha's conclusion, he should go back and start the Bracha again (from "Ata Gibor"), this time omitting Mashiv Haru'ach. **2)** If one had already said Hashem's name, he should say the words "Lamdaynee Chukecha" and then start the Bracha again. **3)** If one already completed the Bracha of Mechayei Meisim, he must start Shemona Esrei over. **4)** If one isn't sure whether he said it, if it's within 30 days he must go back, but after 30 days he may assume that he said it correctly. (There is a question whether the requirement is 30 full days or only 90 Tefillos, which would be fewer days because of Mussaf on Shabbos and on Yom Tov. Therefore, beginning from Mincha on Friday 11 Iyar one would not repeat if he were in doubt.) One who wishes to avoid such a doubt may say 90 times (or according to some 102) "Mechayei Meisim Ata Rav L'hoshi'a, Michalkel Chayim B'chesed," thus familiarizing himself with it as if 30 days had passed.

### **BEGIN RECITING V'SAYN BRACHA**

On Chol Hamo'ed (i.e., Motza'ei the first days of Yom Tov) we begin saying V'sayn Bracha in the Bracha of Bareich Aleinu. The procedure for one who mistakenly said V'sayn Tal Umatar is as follows: **1)** If one did not yet say the name of Hashem at the Bracha's conclusion, he should go back and start the Bracha again (preferably from the beginning, but OK if he just started from V'sayn Bracha. **2)** If one had already said Hashem's name, he should say the words "Lamdaynee Chukecha" and then start the Bracha again. **3)** If one already completed the Bracha and is further along in Shemona Esrei (but hasn't yet said the final "Yihyu L'ratzon"), he should go back to the Bracha of Bareich Aleinu. **4)** Once one has said the final "Yihyu L'ratzon" he must repeat Shemona Esrei again. **5)** If one isn't sure whether he said it, if it's within 30 days he must go back, but after 30 days he may assume that he said it correctly. (Here too there is a question how to calculate. Beginning Tuesday 16 Iyar he would not need to repeat if in doubt.)

### **COUNTING SEFIRAS HA'OMER**

There is a Mitzva to count the Omer every night from the second day of Pesach until Erev Shavuos. Ideally one should count while standing.

The Magen Avraham and others say that women are not obligated, but if they wish to, they may count even with Bracha just as they do with Shofar, Lulav and other Mitzvos. The Mishna Berura says that today women are not accustomed to count, for two reasons: They will most likely forget at some point and not make it all the way through to the end, and they don't understand what they are saying. Today by many the Minhag is that women **do** count, because with all the charts and ubiquitous electronic reminders it is easy to remember, and women today are more learned than back then, and most **do** understand the meaning of the words.

Once the time to count Sefira arrives, one may not eat a meal, do any engaging work, or go to sleep until he counts. Appointing a Shomer to remind you is sufficient. One who accepts Shabbos early should be sure to start the Seuda early enough so as not to run in to a problem of having to wait to count Sefira. (This concern is true for Kriyas Shema also and is not unique to the weeks of Sefira.)

The Mishna Berura cites differing opinions as to whether one can be Yotze (fulfill his obligation) by listening to someone else counting Sefira, as with other Mitzvos, or perhaps this is different, and one must count on his own. (The Bracha certainly may be heard from another.) R' Chaim P. Scheinberg explained that the whole purpose of the counting is to show excitement for the upcoming Kabalas Hatorah, and that can't be shown through a Shaliach (emissary).

One who forgets to count at night may count during the day without a Bracha, and then continue counting on following nights with a Bracha. If he also forgot to count all the following day, then on following nights he should still count, but without a Bracha. It would be preferable to hear the Bracha from someone else and be Yotze, and then recite the Sefira count on his own. One who is B'safek (in doubt) as to whether he counted a previous night (even though he did not recite the count during the day) **may** continue to count with a Bracha.

One should be careful not to mention what night of Sefira this is (for example in answer to a friend's query) until after counting properly with a Bracha, lest he put himself in a situation where he may no longer be able count with a Bracha. There **are** some cases which certainly will not cause this issue, such as saying "Today is the first day (or last day) of the Omer," or saying, "Today is Lag Ba'omer." Also, one who asks, "Is today the ninth day of the Omer?" may still count with a Bracha. The Mishna Berura lists numerous other examples, but there are those who disagree so one should be careful.

One should know before he begins the Bracha which day he is planning to count and not start to figure it out after the Bracha was already said.

### **AVEILUS (MOURNING PRACTICES) DURING SEFIRA**

The Gemara says that during this period the students of Rabbi Akiva died in 33 days, and therefore we practice certain customs of Aveilus (mourning). There are two main customs as to when to keep these 33 days: either from the start of Sefira (second day of Pesach) until Lag Ba'omer, or from Rosh Chodesh Iyar (most begin with the first day Rosh Chodesh) until the Shloshes Yemei Hagbala (three days before Shavuot), with a one-day break on Lag Ba'omer. There are also some who have the custom of keeping the Aveilus of Sefira during the entire period of Sefira.

The Halacha says that one may not get married during these days. (A "vort" to celebrate an engagement would be allowed, without singing or dancing.) The Minhag has become not to have any singing, dancing or music (including recorded music) during this time. Since the idea is to minimize Simcha, this includes any type of music, even without instruments such as a-cappella. Many Poskim would allow a kumtitz for Hisorerus, but not one that would bring to Simcha. In many cases where the purpose is not to bring Simcha it would be allowed. For example: Music lessons are OK. Rebbeim and Moros may dance with children when it's called for. One may exercise to a musical beat. One may listen to music to stay awake at the wheel. If a non-Jewish worker is in your home and would like to play music while he works, that is OK. There is no need to change cell phone rings to less-musical tones. There is no concern with sitting in a waiting room that has music playing in the background. Any case where the music is secondary, such as story tapes with background music, or even the intermittent song, is OK. Even Chazunas with *accompanying* music is OK, as the music isn't the Ikar. ("Pray tell me," you may ask, "who in the world listens to Chazanus anymore?!" Well, this IS a real question that has been asked of me!) On a long car trip, it would be OK to play music to quiet the kids in the car. Playing a baby mobile is OK. Music for a Sheva Brachos would be allowed, but not for a Bar Mitzva.

During this time period a man may not take a haircut, shave or trim his beard, or cut any other hair on his body. This Minhag is that women also do not take haircuts, however it is allowed if needed for Tevila or Tzniyus (e.g., hair is protruding from their head-covering), or to look pleasing to her husband. The Minhag for a woman applies only to the hair on her head; other areas are permitted, such as plucking eyebrows or eyelashes and doing electrolysis. For Ketanim (minors) the Minhag is also not to give haircuts, but in a case of need one may be lenient.

A man may trim his mustache if it hinders his eating. Anything required for health reasons is permitted. R' Moshe Feinstein held that if not shaving will cause a loss in one's business activities, then he may shave. This is allowed only as often as needed and only if it will cause a loss. This leniency does not apply to one who is merely concerned that he will be made fun of but won't incur any losses.

When a Bris takes place during Sefira, the father, Mohel and Sandik (but not the Kvater) may take a haircut, even the day before, and even on Friday for a Sunday Bris. However, for a Pidyon Haben one may not shave. A Choson during Sheva Brachos should not shave (however there are some who permit it). A Bar Mitzva boy during Sefira should plan ahead and take a haircut beforehand, but if he forgot to, he may cut his hair. An Upsherin during Sefira is OK, although many will wait for Lag Ba'omer.

Lag Ba'omer is a quasi-Yom-Tov; Tachanun is not recited, haircuts and shaving are permitted, couples may marry, and one may listen to music. If a Chasuna begins by day, music may continue into the night even for one keeping the second half of Sefira. It is questionable whether these are already permitted from the night before. The Minhag is not to be lenient, except for a Mitzva such as a Chasuna. Many with Chasidic leanings consider the Hilula D'Rashbi a Simcha Shel Mitzva and will therefore celebrate with music. Haircuts should only be by day unless there is a very pressing need. This year Lag Ba'omer is on Sunday, so haircuts may be taken on Friday in honor of Shabbos (whichever half of Sefira one is keeping). Ideally one should wait until Friday, but if he won't be able to, then he may have a haircut even on Thursday night. On Motza'ei Shabbos, however, it is no longer L'kavod Shabbos, therefore it's no more lenient than the night before Lag Ba'omer in any other year.

New clothing may be worn and the Bracha of Shecheyanu may be recited during Sefira (although there are some who do have a Minhag otherwise).