

Sermon by Rabbi Eliezer Hirsch

Vayikra 21 “Shabbat Meals on Erev Pesach”

Gut Shabbos. Shabbat shalom. First, I'd like to acknowledge that this week's sermon is sponsored by Mekor member Jonathan Schehr, in honor of his engagement to Rebecca Bandler. Mazal tov!

Officially, Shabbat Hagadol is next week, but this year we move up the Shabbat Hagadol sermon to this week, because erev Pesach falls out on Shabbat. This is a rare event, which occurred only 11 times in the entire 20th century, won't happen again until 2025, and then not again until 2045.

In such years, the reason we move the sermon back a week is because there is no time for long speeches on Shabbat erev Pesach since, as we will see, the custom is to begin services early next Shabbat to give us time to eat our Shabbat meal, which we are required to finish before 11:02 am in Philadelphia. Moreover, one purpose of Shabbat Hagadol is to give a speech about the laws of Pesach, so it doesn't make sense to wait until erev Pesach, when there is so little time left before the holiday begins.

To help with the additional complications this year, I published a new edition of my book *Pesach Without the Pain* and added a chapter about how to handle the special issues which arise when erev Pesach falls on Shabbat. One of those concerns is what to serve as the bread for the Shabbat meals, because this year we are permitted to eat chametz through Shabbat morning. There are 3 possibilities: make the meals with bread; make them instead with regular matzah; or make them with egg matzah.

The reason some opinions hold to make the meal on bread is that you're not allowed to eat matzah for some period of time prior to the Pesach seder. Some say that time period is 30 days before the seder, some say not after Rosh Chodesh Nisan, some say the time period is 24 hours prior to Pesach, and some say 12 hours prior. Regardless of which time frame you use, matzah would be prohibited at the Shabbat meal on erev Pesach morning. However, using bread is problematic, because we must stop eating Chametz at 11 am and get rid of all chametz by 12 am on Shabbat, so eating bread on Shabbat can bring serious complications.

My advice is to keep things simple. Begin Shabbat totally kosher for Pesach and don't use any bread at the meals, because that way, you don't have to worry about the crumbs and getting rid of chametz when you don't have much time left.

So, what kind of matzah should you use? One possibility is egg matzah since it is not usually treated as bread in halacha; it's placed in the category of pat habaah b'kisnin, cake or cookies and the like, over which we say mezonot not hamotzei. Rav Moshe Feinstein explains that although ordinarily egg matzah is not treated as bread, since you are using it for your Shabbat meal, you are in a sense designating the egg matzah as bread, so you may say Hamotzi over it. He concluded that you may use egg matza as bread for your Friday night and Shabbat morning meals. Just remember, it must be kosher for Pesach egg matzah.

However, I think it is better to use regular non-shmura matzah on Friday night. There are opinions that say that it is permissible to eat non-shmura matzah any time before the seder, and there are opinions who say that the Rama holds you may even eat **shmura** matzah on the night before the seder, so eating **non-shmura** matzah on Friday night is a safe bet. But on Shabbat morning, one should eat egg matzah for the meal.

This year also presents questions about how to fulfill the 3rd meal. There are 3 possible ways to handle this. Some split the morning meal into 2 parts, eaten back-to-back. If you take that option, you would wash, make hamotzi, eat at least a kezayit of egg matzah and recite birkat hamazon.

Then take a short break and then have your next meal in the same manner, making sure that you finish before the end of the 4th hour or 11:02 am in Philadelphia.

Another possibility is to eat one meal in the morning, and then eat the 3rd meal in the afternoon at its usual time. It is permissible to eat a baked or cooked matzah meal product (for example, kosher for Pesach cake or cookies, or a matzah ball) and/or meat, fish, or produce. It is preferable to complete this meal before the end of the 9th hour or around 4:12 pm in Philadelphia.

The third custom is to combine the first 2 options – eat 2 meals in the morning back-to-back and then eat the 3rd meal in the afternoon.

As always, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me by emailing me directly or emailing the shul. Shabbat shalom, and wishing everyone a chag kasher v'sameach!