Handmade Matzot vs. Machine Made Matzot

ALL MATZOT ARE MADE EQUAL

in terms of their composition (flour, water, and a process that takes less than 18 minutes) and for centuries all Matzot were made by hand. This changed in 1838 when Isaac Singer invented the first machine for making Matzot. By the middle of the 19th century there was a great debate among European Rabbis. Some opposed the machine made Matzot arguing that it was impossible to clean the getting rid even of the slightest remaining of dough between one production and the other. This meant that for Rabbi Shlomo Kluger and others, machine-made Matzot were not be Kosher for Pesach! On the other hand, other rabbis argued that machine-made Matzot had a Kashrut standard higher than the handmade Matzot, machines would decrease the possibility of human errors, like leaving a portion of the dough unattended, that could lead to some accidental fermentation (Ketab Sofer and others).

This controversy lasted for a few years. But at the end most rabbis concluded that by establishing certain guidelines for cleaning thoroughly the machines, the Kashrut of machine-made Matzot was indisputable.

HUMAN VS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

There is another point of debate that continues to this day. It is the subject of “intentionality” or kavana. To explain this point, I’ll have to elaborate a little more widely.

When a religious article is manufactured this article, and its accessories, must be done with the specific intent to be used for this particular Mitzva. Example: we cannot use a piece of leather, originally manufactured to make shoes, belts, furniture, etc., for making a Tefillin or its straps. Why?

Because Jewish law requires that the leather used to make Tefillin has to be processed "explicitly" for the purpose of being used for the Mitzva of Tefillin. For this reason, before beginning the production of the leather to be used for the Tefillin, the person in charge says: "*leshem mitzvat tefillin*" ["I am processing this leather to be used …] for the Mitzva of Tefillin." Intentionality in the production of a religious article is a Halakhic requirement. The same principle applies, for example, for the threads of the Tzitzit (the fringes of the Talit). They must be made from the beginning for this specific purpose. If you have threads which were manufactured with a different purpose in mind, to produce curtains, or even without a specific purpose, these threads are not suitable to fulfill the Mitzva of Tzitzit. The same applies to the other Mitzvot.

Back to our subject: the Matzot that we consume during the first two nights of Pesach are "Matzot Mitzva" and must be made with the explicit purpose of fulfilling the Mitzva of eating Matza. And the question that arose when the machines to produce Matzot were invented was: can we assume that the "human intentionality" required for the production of any religious item is transferred from the man who activates the machine saying "*leshem matzot mitzva* to the machine itself? Or, should we assume that the intentionality is disrupted when a non-human factor gets involved in the process? This fascinating debate still remains. And it affects not only Matza production but many other areas of Jewish law, for example, many people would only use a Tzitzit with threads elaborated by hand.

FOR TWO NIGHTS ONLY

In the case of Matzot, we must clarify that this discussion applies only to the Matzot that are used during the Seder, when we say the Berakha *'al akhilat Matza* and we need to have Matzot Mitzva. Some rabbis would say that machine made Matzot (there is also machine made Matza Shemura!) can be used for

the first two nights, while other rabbis including Rabbi Obadia Yosef z”l, would recommend, when possible, using handmade Matzot for the first two nights of Pesach. For the rest of Pesach any Matzot could be used.

Hasidim (Chabad and many other Hasidic groups) are very strict on this issue, and they would use exclusively handmade Matzot throughout Pesach.

Sometimes, there might be an economic issue involved in this matter. Handmade Matzot are more expensive than machine-made Matzot. Thus, in the case of a family that cannot afford the cost of the handmade Matzot, many rabbis would approve the use of machine made Matzot even for the two night of the Seder, relying on the less stringent views.

How to differentiate between handmade Matzot and machine made Matzot?

1. *Handmade Matzot are significantly more expensive.*

2. *Machine made Matzot are square and of a standard size. Handmade matzot are circled, and with a more rustic look*.



Machine Matzot Handmade Matzot