When Pesach’s Eve Falls on a Shabbat

A SINGULAR YEAR

This year, the celebration of Pesach will be a bit more special because the Pesach Seder will take place on a Saturday night, April 12. This means that the eve of Pesach will fall on Shabbat—it will begin on Friday night, April 11. The last time this happened was in 2021. It will happen again in the future in 2045.

When this occurs, we make some adjustments—on the one hand, to preserve the sanctity and honor of Shabbat regarding the meals, and on the other hand, to uphold every detail of the Halachic requirements of Pesach.

Let’s mention the main changes for this year.

FAST OF THE FIRSTBORN

According to various rabbinic opinions (Shulchan Aruch, OH, 470:2), when the eve of Pesach falls on Shabbat as it does this year, firstborn males are exempt from fasting. However, it is meritorious to participate in the completion of a Talmudic tractate (Siyum), as we do every year, to avoid this fast with a celebratory meal in honor of the event. The Siyum should take place on Thursday morning, April 10.

FINAL INSPECTION FOR CHAMETS

Normally, we perform the final inspection for Chamets (bediqah) to ensure no Chamets remains in our home on the night before the Seder. However, when Pesach eve falls on Shabbat, the final inspection must be done two nights before the Seder—that is, on Thursday night, April 10. All other rules of Bediqat Chamets remain the same as every year.

BURNING AND SELLING THE CHAMETS

On Friday, April 11, one must get rid of any leftover Chamets by burning it or discarding it before the end of the fifth hour of the day (in NY, this is approximately 11:00 a.m.). Even though technically this year one might have more time, in practice, it is advisable to follow the usual schedule as every year. The same applies to the sale of Chamets for those who follow that custom.

CANDLE FOR HAVDALAH

One must also remember to light a 24-hour candle before Shabbat to have a preexisting flame for Havdalah at the Seder on Saturday night.

TO EAT OR NOT TO EAT BREAD THIS SHABBAT?

One of the ways we honor Shabbat is by having festive meals—that is, reciting Kiddush, HaMotzi, and afterward Birkat HaMazon. Normally, we use two challot (lechem mishneh) for HaMotzi. The question is: What should we do when Pesach eve falls on Shabbat, regarding reciting HaMotzi and Birkat HaMazon?

There are actually two traditions, and both are halachically valid.

TRADITION 1: HAMOTZI WITH BREAD

According to this first approach, one may eat bread on Friday night, April 11, and on Shabbat morning until the end of the fourth hour of the day (10:00 a.m. NY time—see here for exact local times), since the prohibition of eating Chamets only begins at the end of the fourth hour on Pesach eve.

If one follows this option, note the following:

√ All food prepared and eaten for this Shabbat must be kosher for Pesach, except for the bread (it is recommended to use pita-type bread to minimize crumbs) used for HaMotzi on Friday

night and Shabbat morning before the end of the fourth hour.
√ It is advised to use disposable plates, tablecloths, cutlery, etc.
√ On Shabbat morning, April 12, one must pray earlier than usual, recite Kiddush, and finish the meal with bread before 10:00 a.m. (or the equivalent local time).
√ After the Shabbat morning meal and before 11:00 a.m. (or local equivalent): One must discard all Chamets leftovers in a permitted way for Shabbat (consult your rabbi).
Do the *Bitul Chamets* (kal chamira)—a verbal declaration renouncing ownership of any Chamets that might remain in one's possession.

Most Ashkenazi Jews and many Sephardic Jews follow this first option.

TRADITION 2: REPLACING BREAD WITH MATZAH

According to this second approach, and in order to avoid handling Chamets during Shabbat, it is advisable to treat Friday, April 11 (13 Nisan) as if it were already Pesach eve (14 Nisan). Therefore, Chamets consumption should stop on Friday before 10:00 a.m. (NY time). Likewise, before 11:00 a.m. (same):

- Chamets should be burned (Bi'ur Chamets)
- Chamets should be sold (Mechirat Chamets)
- One should verbally renounce any Chamets that may have remained in one's possession (Bitul Chamets / Kal Chamira).

Once Chamets is eliminated, we must resolve the following: how do we replace bread and recite HaMotzi at the Shabbat meals?

FRIDAY NIGHT, APRIL 11

Obviously, all food prepared for this Shabbat must be kosher for Pesach.

Regarding the replacement of bread with Matzah, there are three options:

- Use regular Matzot
  It is prohibited to eat regular Matzah on the day before the first Seder, so that one will enjoy its taste during the Seder night. However, this restriction only begins in the morning. Therefore, on Friday night, one may replace bread with regular machine-made Matzah. One regular Matzah per person is more than enough (halachically measured by volume: 1/3 of a machine-made Matzah is a *kazayit*).
  These Matzot do not need to be *shemurah* or handmade.
- Use Fried Matzah
  Many families have the custom of not eating Matzah from the beginning of Nisan. In this case, one may recite HaMotzi over fried or cooked Matzah (frying is preferable to keep it whole), which has a different taste and therefore is distinguished from the Matzah of the Seder, but still qualifies for HaMotzi. The amount should be similar to the previous case.
  The fried Matzah should be fried in oil, without egg or other additives, and must be whole.
- Use Egg Matzah (*Matzah Ashirah*)
  This Matzah is made with fruit juice, or egg, etc., and without water. Its status (berakhah) is *mezonot* and it is not valid for the Seder. However, just like during the rest of the year, if one eats a significant amount of *mezonot* in place of bread (*kovea seudah*), one recites HaMotzi and Birkat HaMazon. Therefore, one should eat at least two of these Matzot to fulfill the requirement (some opinions are more lenient).
  Matzah Ashirah is also known as egg Matzah.

SHABBAT LUNCH (SATURDAY, APRIL 12)

As explained earlier, regular Matzot may not be used. The remaining options are:
Option 2: use fried (or cooked) Matzah,
Option 3: use *Matzah Ashirah* in the required quantity as explained above.

SEUDAH SHELISHIT

Usually, the *seudah shelishit* is held closer to sunset. But in this case, we must reserve our appetite for the Pesach Seder at night. Therefore, this meal should be held earlier than usual (in NY, around 2:00 or 3:00 p.m.). For this meal, one may use *Matzah Ashirah* in a smaller quantity (at least half a Matzah, following volume-based criteria), reciting the *mezonot* blessing. Alternatively, one may skip Matzah and instead have a lighter meal with fish, meat, vegetables, or fruit.

Please consult your community rabbi regarding which tradition to follow.