

# HALOCHOSCOPE



**This week's question:**

**Must a child recline while drinking the four cups and eating the *matzo*? What if the child is left-handed and has difficulty eating or keeping his cup steady while drinking with his right hand? Should a child drink a full *revi'is* for each cup, and eat a full size *kezayis* of *matzo*? Should he finish eating it within the required time of *kedai achilas pras*?**

**The issues:**

- A) *Hesaibah*, reclining; left handed people
- B) *Kezayis* and *revi'is*, the minimum amounts of *matzo* and wine
- C) *Kedai achilas pras*, the maximum time to eat *matzo*
- D) *Chinuch*, training children in *mitzvah* performance

## **A) *Hesaibah***

The requirement to recline at the *seder* on *Pesach* night is Rabbinical. However, it is essential to proper fulfillment of the *mitzvos*. Ideally, one should recline throughout the *seder*, except when eating the *maror*. At a bare minimum, one must recline for the four cups of wine and the *matzo*.

The commentaries say that the word *hesaibah* comes from the Hebrew to circle. When convening for a formal meal together, people arranged themselves in a circle. Reclining is a sign of freedom. In earlier times, a free man showed his liberty by reclining at his table. Some say that it is a sign of lordship. Kings and princes would recline. Reclining during a meal meant that one had a bed-like chair, which allowed one's upper body to recline with his feet on the floor. These are the 'gold and silver beds' mentioned in *Megillas Esther*, that were provided at the feast of *Achashveroah*. The Persians were known to be the most proficient in this table manner in the ancient world.

On *Pesach* night one must view himself as though he was personally liberated from Egypt. Some say that some of the Scriptural *mitzvos* of the night, such as not breaking bones of the *Korban Pesach*, are meant to reinforce this feeling. In addition, reclining while eating allows one to focus on his food. This way, he is able to eat more quickly, without being distracted by matters that might grab his attention were he in an upright position. A minority view maintains that, based on the first reason, there is no point in reclining nowadays. It is not the practice of royalty in the countries in which we live. This opinion is invoked in pressing circumstances, in conjunction with other factors, to relax the obligation on some people.

Especially when eating, one must recline to the left. This allows one to eat freely with his right hand, the normal hand used for eating. In addition, if one reclines to the right he might close his passages for swallowing, open the breathing passages, and risk choking. According to the first reason, a left-handed person should recline to his right,

freeing his dominant left hand. According to the second reason, he should recline left. In practice, he should recline left, but if he reclines right, he fulfills his obligation.

The poskim debate whether a woman reclines, and various details apply to other people's obligation or lack thereof. Our question applies to training a left-handed child who is clumsy with his right hand, to recline. If so, should he be trained to recline right or left? [See Shmuel I:16:11, commentaries. Brochos 41a 42a-b 46a Pesachim 99b 108a Sukah 6a Negaim 13:9, poskim. Tur Sh Ar 472:2-7 475:1 477:1, commentaries.]

### **B) *Kezayis and revi'is***

To be considered eating, one must consume a minimum of an olive sized piece. This applies to most *mitzvos* that involve eating, both positive and negative. Olives come in many sizes. Eggs of chickens are much more standard, notwithstanding the range that we are used to. An egg usually means an average egg, corresponding to modern-day large eggs. Therefore, the Talmud and commentaries give the size of a *kezayis* as a fraction of an egg. We follow the view that an egg is the same as two *kezaysim*. There is a view that it is three *kezaysim*. We follow this view in pressing circumstances. An egg is also used for liquid measures. A *revi'is* is a quarter of a log. A log is six eggs. Therefore, a *revi'is* is one-and-a-half eggs. The Talmud also gives a linear measurement: 2 fingers (thumbs) x 2 x 2½ + 1/5. One posek compared the two measurements, using his own thumb and found a discrepancy. He concluded that the size of eggs has become reduced by half over time. Accordingly, he maintained that a *kezayis* is really the size of a standard modern day egg.

This viewpoint is contested by many others. They maintain that the measurements have been kept standard over the generations, without using egg sizes of the times. Therefore, it is difficult to assume that universal changes were made. Rather, the egg sizes that are compatible with the old standards are likely to be correct. [This has since been backed by archaeological findings.] In addition, many of these measurements are based on coinage, that has been regulated by Middle-Eastern traders. They have remained steady since the times of the *Mishna* and through the times of *Rambam* until today, or very recently. Some suggest that the posek who tested it had large thumbs, the smallest of linear measurements.

In practice, many follow their original custom. Others follow a compromise. They use a large *kezayis* for Scriptural obligations, and the old standard for Rabbinical obligations. At the *seder*, the first two *kezaysim* of matzo represent the *kezayis* for regular *motzie*, or the required bread based meal of a *Yomtov*, and the Scriptural *mitzvah* to eat *matzo* on this night. If one has difficulty eating two, he may get by with one *kezayis* to satisfy both requirements. Since *matzo* is a Scriptural requirement on the first night, one who is stringent should use the double sized *kezayis*. However, the second *kezayis* is Rabbinically required. Therefore, some say that using one large *kezayis* (equaling two small) satisfies both requirements. For *korech* a *kezayis* of *matzo* is eaten together with *maror*. For *afikoman*, a *kezayis* of *matzo* is eaten as a *zecher*, reminder, of the *korban Pesach* that was and will be eaten when the *Bais Hamikdash* stands. *Matzo* is eaten with the *Pesach*, so ideally, one should eat a second *kezayis* with the *afikoman*. All of these are Rabbinical requirements. Nonetheless, for *afikoman*, many stringent practitioners insist of the larger

*kezayis*. Again, since it equals two small *kezaysim*, it satisfies the ideal of two as well.

The first of the four cups, *kiddush*, is associated with a Scriptural *mitzvah*. Many insist on using the larger *revi'is*. Others say that while the *mitzvah* of *kiddush* is Scriptural, the *mitzvah* to use wine is debated. Therefore, one may use the smaller measurement.

The old standards are also debated. Some maintain that a *revi'is* (3 *kezaysim*) is 75 grams [though some have a tradition as low as 66grams]. Others say it is 86 grams. The larger *revi'is* is assumed to be 150 grams, but some say 170 grams.

One should drink the entire cup, and at least his cheek-full. This is assumed to be the majority of a *revi'is*. Some say that one must always drink the majority of the cup, and if it is less than his cheeks full, he must drink more. Others say that one need never drink more than a cheek-full. Thus, there is some debate on whether this is a relative or an average standard, and whether this applies the same way for all *mitzvos*. [See Yuma 79a-80b etc. many sources in Talmud. Tur Sh Ar OC 271:13 486, commentaries. Shiurei Torah 2. Chazon Ish OC 39. Nitei gavriel Pesach II:73:3. *Kezayis* {Bodner} p.93, notes.]

### **C) *Kedai achilas pras***

The minimum time within which the *kezayis* must be eaten is the time it takes to eat a larger amount, so that if one ate it slowly he could combine his nibbles. The amount used is a meal of a half loaf. This loaf size, given in the Talmud, is debated. Half of it is thus equivalent to either three or four eggs. The Talmud details the way this time span is to be measured. One would be eating in a reclining position, wheat bread, as opposed to barley, and with a side dish. Most poskim maintain that this is stringent. It is easier to eat this way and one finishes more quickly. This definition is *Siniatic*. However, it refers to a specific *mitzvah*. The poskim debate two issues with regard to applying this to other *mitzvos*. Does it apply uniformly to all people, or does it vary according to the person's mouth and throat size? We have said that cheek-fulls depend on the person, at least according to some. To resolve this, many quote the Talmud referring to young children nursing. There the same definition is used. A child of this age could never eat a *pras*. Evidently, the Talmud ties it to the average man. The second issue is whether the same standard applies to all foods equally, or whether each food is measured according to how quickly one eats it. Some say the absence of a parallel easily measured time shows that it should to be a variable. Each food would need to be tested by an average man.

There is a large variation in the actual time in modern measurements. Some say it is as short as two minutes, while others give a nine minute time. Some maintain that the times are given for the small size *kezayis*. If the *kezayis* is doubled, the time should be expanded accordingly. The poskim also debate whether the same time limit applies for a *revi'is*, whether a *revi'is* has its own, longer time, or whether it has a shorter time, because drinking does not require chewing. [See Eruvin 82b Yuma 80a-b Kerisos 12b-13a, Poskim. Rambam Maachalos Asuros 14:8 (Orah Vesimchah). Tur Sh Ar 612:3, commentaries. Minchas Chinuch 313. Sdei Chemed, Achila 3. Shiurei Torah end of 2, 3. Chazon Ovadia 24. IGM YDI:7. RJJ Journal 5733. Achilas Matzos Beyisroel 6.]

### **D) *Chinuch***

The *mitzvah* of *chinuch* is Rabbinical. Children must be trained in the observance of

*mitzvos* when they reach the age that they understand them, or, in some cases, the age that they can physically perform them. *Chinuch* applies to the *mitzvos* of *Pesach* especially. The Talmud debates whether it applies to the four cups. It definitely applies to *matzo* and *maror*. Our question is to what extent? Must the child eat the same amounts as adults do, and in the same time period, and must he recline, even if he is left-handed?

In terms of amounts, the Poskim say that he need not drink the majority of a cup, but may drink his cheek-full. Furthermore, some poskim permit using the third-egg amount for his *kezayis*. Since *chinuch* is Rabbinical, the smaller *kezayis* should be sufficient. However, some say that once the child is old enough, he should be educated about the differences between Scriptural and Rabbinical *mitzvos*. If he has too much difficulty eating his *kezayis* within *kedai achilas pras*, some say that he has evidently not yet reached the age of *chinuch* for this *mitzvah*. If one follows more than one view of this time, depending on the severity of the *mitzvah*, he evidently has not made up his mind. Therefore, he may use the smallest acceptable time for *chinuch*.

There is little discussion about *chinuch* on reclining. At a young age, reclining might be uncomfortable, and not 'royal'. Some say that one should train a child when he is old enough to feel comfortable. Some say that the *mitzvah* applies to the parents, while others say that the Rabbis actually obligated the child. Some say that the goal of *chinuch* is to train the child in the performance of the *mitzvah*, while others contend that it is to actually obligate him as though he was an adult. If an adult would be exempt based on his abilities, a child with the same factors might be obligated according to the former view. A left-handed adult must recline to the left, due to danger. If he reclines to the right, he fulfills his obligation. Furthermore, adults who are still clumsy would certainly feel a lack of royalty. They might need to rely on the opinion that nowadays we do not recline. Generally, by the time they are adults, they have learned to steady their right hands. Accordingly, the child should be told that at this point he is exempt from *hesaibah*. [See Psachim 108b-109a Sukah 42b Chagigah 2a 6a, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar 472:15, commentaries. Moadim Uzmanim III:157. Nitei Gavriel 78:24, notes.]

In conclusion, children should be trained to comply with lenient standards until they are old enough to observe the stringent standards. A left-handed child who is too clumsy with his right hand should be taught that for the time-being he is exempt from *hesaibah*.

***On the Parsha ...*** *He who lies down in the house .. who eats in the house .. (defiles his clothing) [14:47] This is not specifically one who sleeps or eats. It is a time period for one who is in the house. One who stays in the house long enough to eat in reclining position. [Rashi etc.]* Why does the Torah use these measurements for this time period? Clothing dignifies a person. Perhaps the defilement of ones clothing is a defilement of his dignity. It is given that ones clothing is not defiled simply due to his presence, but only after spending some time. Accordingly, a time period is given that demonstrates dignity and royalty, *hesaibah* for a meal! And the meal must be of quality bread, with a side-dish!

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