



RABBI KWASS ON SHMURA MATZA

Matza is More Than Just Unleavened Bread)

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The matza we are commanded to eat on the Seder night must be more than just unleavened bread. The Torah's commands us (Shemot 12:17) to, "Watch the matzot," ("Ushemartem et hamatzot"), requiring some input beyond just checking that the dough has not leavened (the Talmud gives us the physical signs of leavening). What does this extra requirement entail?

Two Types of Shmira

First, matza must be **specialy protected from leavening** (shmira meichametz). Ideally, (Shulchan Arukh Orach Chayim 453, based on Pesachim 40a) from the moment the wheat is harvested, care should be taken that it does not come in contact with water. The standard requirement of "shmira" entails watching it at least from the time it is ground into flour. However, rules the Shulchan Arukh, in extreme situations, one can "buy flour from the market place" as long as he specially watches it while it is being kneaded and baked.

There is a second aspect to "watching the matzot" besides special protection from leavening. The matza must also be **made "for the sake of the mitzva of matza"** (shmira lesheim mitzvat matza). [The matza bakers actually declare this before beginning work to solidify their intention.]

The basis for this in the Talmud is a passage concerning using sacrificial matzot for the seder night. There were a number of grain offerings brought in the Beit Hamikdash that included unleavened bread. The Korban Todah, a thanksgiving offering, included both leavened and unleavened bread. The Mishna tells us that a piece of unleavened bread made originally for a Korban Todah cannot be used to fulfill the mitzva of eating matza on the first night of Pesach. Rava (Pesachim 38b) claims that the source in the Torah for this rule is the verse commanding to, "Watch the matzot." They are to be watched

specifically for the purpose of the mitzva of matza and not for any other reason. They are to be made "for the sake of the mitzva of matza."

This is probably the source of the Shulchan Arukh's ruling (Orach Chayim 460), based on statements of the Geonim (see Rosh Pesachim, Chapter 2, section), that matza made by a child or a non-Jew is invalid. They will not make it "for the sake of the mitzva of Matza."

There are, then, two aspects to "shmura matza." It must be specially protected from leavening – ideally from the time of harvesting, at least from the time it is ground into flour, and, the most basic level, when it is kneaded and baked – and it must be made for the sake of the mitzva of matza.

Hand-made and Machine-made Matza

Matza Shmura can be either handmade, "matzot yad," or machine-made, "matzot mekhona". When the matza machines first came out in the 1800s, a number of halakhic objections were raised. Some focused on points in the production process that could lead to leavening (dough getting caught on the conveyer belt, dough heating up before it reaches the oven, etc.), but others claimed that the matzot could not be properly made for the sake of the mitzva of matza. In other words, they could not become shmura matza in the second sense we spoke about above. Why, they asked, is a machine any better than a child or a non-Jew? Others countered that the machine could be run "for the sake of the mitzva of matza" in order to fulfill this requirement. There are still different schools of thought on the issue. [In modern times the matza-production process has been perfected to alleviate many, maybe all, of the worries about leavening. Even the stringent approach does not consider machine-made matza as chametz.]

Of course, the first meaning of "shmura," protected from contact with water from the time of harvest, grinding, or kneading, applies equally to both handmade and machine matza. (See Rav Rabinowitz's Piskei Teshuvot on Shulchan Arukh Orach Chayim 460 for references and a summary and history of the machine-matza controversy.)