



Reprinted from *Living the Halachic Process* by Rabbi Daniel Mann - Eretz Hemdah, with their permission [www.erezhemdah.org]

Eating Shmura Matza¹ All of Pesach

Question: Should I eat only shmura matza all of Pesach? This seems to be becoming an increasingly popular practice. Is this halacha, a worthwhile minhag, or neither?

Answer: There are certainly halachic elements to the question, but family and local minhagim should play a major factor in deciding what to do.

The gemara¹ says that one can eat on Pesach “dough of non-Jews” that has been checked for signs of leavening, as long as he eats (on the first night) a k’zayit² of matza (i.e., shmura matza) at some point. We see from here that the basic requirement of eating shmura matza is fulfilled at the Seder with a k’zayit. (Nowadays, the practice is to have five k’zeitim, but that issue is beyond our present scope).

What is shmura matza? The grain/flour/dough from which shmura matza is made is watched over to preclude the possibility of leavening. The main opinions of Rishonim are that the supervision is either from the time of cutting of the stalks or from the kneading, when the flour is first exposed to water, and there is a compromise position that it starts at the time of grinding.³ The Shulchan Aruch⁴ rules that it is proper that the matza intended for use at the Seder should be guarded from the time of cutting, and this is the common practice.

The simple reading of the gemara⁵ is that this vigilance must be carried out in conjunction with the intention of making the matza fit for the mitzva of eating it on Seder night. The Rif’s⁶ version of the text, however, does not require intent for the mitzva, but that the watching simply be for the purpose of making matza, i.e., taking steps to ensure that the product does not come in contact with water prematurely. It is noteworthy that even what we refer to as non-shmura matza is shmura according to many Rishonim, as care is

¹ *Pesachim* 40a.

² The size of an olive.

³ See *Beit Yosef, Orach Chayim* 453.

⁴ *Orach Chayim* 453:4.

⁵ Op. cit.

⁶ *Pesachim* 12a in his pages.

taken that it not become chametz from at least the time of kneading.

The gemara⁷ derives from p'sukim that other than on the night of the Seder, the eating of matza on Pesach is a reshut (optional). The question remains whether eating matza is only a neutral option or whether it is the fulfillment of a non-obligatory mitzva. While most posit the former, the Ba'al HaMaor,⁸ Chizkuni,⁹ and the GR"A¹⁰ argue that it is a positive mitzva to eat matza throughout Pesach. However, even if one maintains that there is an optional positive mitzva throughout Pesach to eat matza, it is not clear that one must go out of his way (or spend significant money) in order to fulfill it.¹¹ It is also unclear whether shmura matza is required in order to fulfill it. Perhaps this weaker extension of the mitzva beyond the Seder does not depend on the element of shmura, and regular matza is therefore sufficient.¹²

The Rambam¹³ discusses the concept of shmura, not in the context of how to make matzot but as a Rabbinic stringency to avoid the possibility of chametz, and he does not differentiate between the first night and the rest of

Pesach. The Aruch HaShulchan¹⁴ says that the Rambam holds that shmura is preferable because one should l'chatchila¹⁵ go beyond normal steps to ensure that the matza is not leavened, not because of the opportunity to fulfill a further mitzva. (This is consistent with the Rambam's apparent agreement with the Rif that the vigilance does not require intention for the purpose of the mitzva.) The Chayei Adam¹⁶ attributes this approach to the GR"A. Although the Torah may insist upon this level of vigilance only on Seder night, it is logical that it should apply on some level throughout Pesach, as the transgression of eating chametz is identical for all seven days.

A possible practical difference between the reasons to prefer shmura matza is in regard to machine matza. Some authorities demand hand-made matza for the Seder because a machine cannot possibly have positive mitzva-intent. These opinions should not require hand matza throughout Pesach according to the Rambam's

⁷ *Pesachim* 120a.

⁸ *Pesachim* 26b in the Rif's pages.

⁹ *Shemot* 12:18

¹⁰ *Ma'aseh Rav* 185.

¹¹ See discussion in *Moadim U'Zemanim* III:267.

¹² See *Ma'aseh Rav* op. cit. and 186; *Meishiv Davar* II:77.

¹³ *Chametz U'Matza* 5:8.

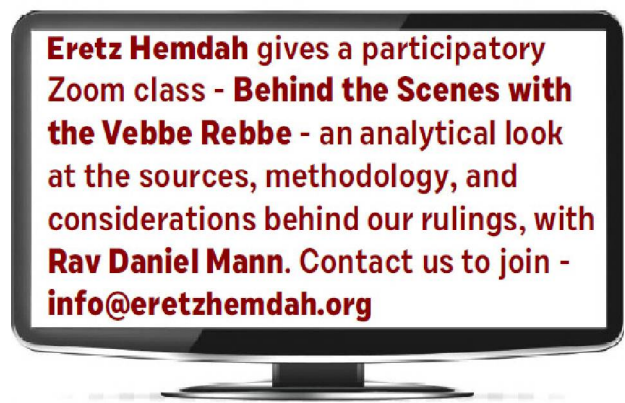
¹⁴ *Orach Chayim* 553:20-21.

¹⁵ The proper way to do something.

¹⁶ II:128:30.

approach.¹⁷ Another difference is whether one should eat some shmura matza or make sure that all the matza he eats is shmura. Whether the stringent practice applies only to matza or even to foods made from matza meal also depends on the two reasons. Finally, according to the mitzva-element, there is something to gain by eating matza throughout Pesach, whereas if we are concerned about chametz, one who avoids eating matza actually decreases the risk.

In summary, the stringency of using shmura matza throughout Pesach is not frivolous. On the one hand, since people spend money on all sorts of Pesach delicacies, why not spend some on shmura matza also? However, there are dangers in creating family minhagim without knowing how things will end up. Do we want our children, who may not be able to afford the higher price of shmura matza, to feel compelled to buy it, when their grandparents did not? Will people refuse to eat at others' homes because they use regular matzot? Thus, while eating shmura matza for all of Pesach is a reasonable chumra, it is questionable whether one should adopt the minhag.



¹⁷ There are different views as to whether there are more problems of possible leavening with *matza* made by machine or by hand. Of course, the matter could depend on the specific factory involved. In any case, the element of the Rambam's concept of *shmura* can be accomplished by machine.