

But I Thought...

By Rabbi Ephraim Nisenbaum

Common Misconceptions & Little-Known Halachos & Facts

1 ASSUMPTION: The mitzvah of reclining requires a person to lean over to the left.

Clarification: Reclining does not mean merely tilting one's head to the side, or even leaning one's body unsupported to the side. One who does this has not fulfilled the obligation of reclining. The mitzvah of reclining requires leaning one's body on something, such as a cushion or an armrest.[1] One may even lean on his friend's lap. [2] Incidentally, one must begin to recline before he begins to drink.

2 ASSUMPTION: It is prohibited to see chametz during Pesach.

Clarification: The pasuk says: Chametz may not be seen in your possession...[3] The Rosh understands the prohibition to mean that one's own chametz may not remain in a place where it may be seen, and it is really a metaphor for the fact that it may not be owned by the person.[4] The Kesef Mishnah, however, posits that the transgression of owning chametz only applies if the chametz is visible;[5] if it is hidden one only transgresses the prohibition of leaven may not be found in your houses...[6] Everybody agrees that there is no prohibition in one merely seeing other people's chametz, or his own chametz which he has sold to a non-Jew.

3 ASSUMPTION: Dough will always become chametz 18 minutes after water is added to flour.

Clarification: The Shulchan Aruch rules that if a dough is being worked on continuously, it will not become chametz even after many hours.[7] The 18-minute rule only applies to dough that is unattended. The Rema adds that that we are careful to bake the matzos very quickly because even small lapses may combine for the 18 minutes, or the heat may quicken the leavening process to occur in fewer than 18 minutes. The Shulchan Aruch also adds that once the dough has been worked with, it may become heated by the hands and become chametz very quickly if left unattended.

4 ASSUMPTION: On Yom Tov, one may perform all melachos needed for food preparation.

Clarification: The Torah says that no work may be performed on Yom Tov, except for work associated with the preparation of food.[8] The Talmud, however, excludes certain melachos from this dispensation.[9] It is beyond the scope of this work to clarify exactly which melachos are permitted, but here are a few examples of melachos that many people mistakenly think are permitted on Yom Tov:

A Assumption: Squeezing fruit is permitted on Yom Tov.

Clarification: The Shulchan Aruch rules that squeezing juice from fruit is prohibited on Yom Tov, just like it is prohibited on Shabbos.[10] Some poskim permit squeezing the types of fruit on Yom Tov that are primarily meant to be eaten as food and not squeezed for their juice, but there is no conclusive consensus.[11] Obviously, these types of fruit,

such as lemons and oranges, which are only Rabbinically prohibited to squeeze on Shabbos, and are thus permitted to squeeze into a solid food, such as a salad or sugar, on Shabbos, may certainly be squeezed into a solid food on Yom Tov.[12]

B Assumption: Borer, separating bad food from good, is always permitted on Yom Tov.

Clarification: The Shulchan Aruch rules that separating is only permitted if it is done in a manner that minimizes unnecessary burden; for example, one must remove whatever is easier to remove. Furthermore, if the separation could have been done before Yom Tov without affecting the quality (for example, sorting silverware), it is only permitted on Yom Tov with a shinui, such as by taking each piece individually and putting it in its place rather than separating all the spoons, forks, etc.[13]

5 ASSUMPTION: One may carry a needed object at any time during Yom Tov.

Clarification: Rav Akiva Eiger suggests that it may be prohibited to do any melachah during bein hashmashos on Yom Tov. He bases this on the fact that every moment of bein hashmashos is a safeik in halachah; it is possibly a part of the first day or part of the second day. Thus, one who carries during bein hashmashos may be carrying during a moment of the first day for the purpose of the next moment, which could be the following day.[14] The Chazon Ish and the Steipler were therefore stringent not to do any melachah during bein hashmashos Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach suggests that one should be stringent regarding Torah laws, such as carrying in a public domain, but he may be lenient regarding Rabbinic law, such as carrying in a semi-public domain.[15] Elsewhere, Rav Shlomo Zalman is quoted as being lenient in all instances.[16] Rav Moshe Shternbuch is also lenient.[17] 

[1] See Aruch Hashulchan 472:4 and Seder He'aruch 40:1-2. [2] Pesachim 99b. [3] Shemos 13:7. [4] 1:9. [5] Chametz U'matzah 1:3. [6] Shemos 12:19. [7] 459:2. [8] Shemos 12:16. [9] Beitzah 2b and 23b. [10] 495:2. See Pri Megadim, Mishbetzos Zahav 504:1. [11] Shu"t Chelkas Yaakov (vol. 2, 85) permits squeezing fruits that are generally eaten and not meant for juice, such as oranges. Shu"t Be'er Moshe permits squeezing oranges or lemons if they could not have been squeezed before Yom Tov. Ben Ish Chai (vol. 2, Yisro 6) similarly permits squeezing under the same circumstances. [12] The Laws of Yom Tov (p. 48) permits squeezing grapes and olives, which are generally prohibited by Torah law, into a solid food. [13] Shulchan Aruch 510:2; Rema 495:1. [14] Orach Chaim 495:1 and in chiddushim (Nedarim 69b). [15] Yom Tov Sheini K'hilchaso, p. 321. [16] Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasa 28, fn. 159. [17] Teshuvos V'hanhagos vol. 2, 325.

