HALACHIC AND HASHKAFCIC ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

209 - SOFT MATZA
OU ISRAEL CENTER - SPRING 2021

Very few ‘Jewish’ foods are better known than matza. In Jewish tradition there is absolute agreement on its ingredients - flour and water - but considerable discussion as to what it is actually meant to look like. There are many different things one can make with flour and water and different minhagim around the Jewish world as to how to bake matzah.

Most people are familiar with ‘Ashkenazi matza’ being very thin and brittle, and are aware there is an alternative ‘Sefardi matza’ which is softer and thicker. In this shiur we will look briefly at the evidence in the sources - historical and halachic - for what matza was, and address the question of whether Ashkenazim can choose the softer thicker option for their Seder table¹.

A] WHAT IS MATZA?

1. א] מה זה מצה? - 맛 זה מצה?

The Torah includes a mitzva to eat matza for 7 days and links this with the prohibition of eating chametz for 7 days.

2. ב] מה זה מצה? - מה זה מצה?

The Torah also includes an obligation to eat on the first night,

3. ג] מה זה מצה? - מה זה מצה?

The Chizkuni² write that, although there is no obligation to eat matza for the full 7 days (and perhaps not even a specific mitzva to do so), someone who does so has ‘fulfilled the meaning of the verse’.

4. ד] מה זה מצה? - מה זה מצה?

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5. ה] מה זה מצה? - מה זהמצה?

The Vilna Gaon rules that there IS a Torah mitzva to eat matza all 7 days of Pesach, albeit no obligation to do so.

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². R. Chikzkiah b. Manoch - 13C France.

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The Mishna specifies 5 types of grain which one can use for matzot. ‘Chita’ is wheat and ‘secora’ is barley. The others are less clear. ‘Kusmin’ is usually understood to be spelt, ‘shifon’ to be rye, and ‘shibolet shual’ to be oats.

The Shulchan Aruch rules that any of the 5 grains will be acceptable to make matzot. However, other grains such as rice and other kitniyot are NOT kosher for matza, even though they are not chametz. The Rema adds that the Ashkenazi custom is only to eat matzot made from wheat.

B] WHAT IS WHEAT?

A kernel of wheat is made up of three components: the bran, germ, and endosperm. Bran is the outer layer of the edible kernel. The germ is the embryo with the potential to sprout into a new plant. The endosperm is the germ’s food supply should it grow, and it is composed primarily of carbohydrates and a small amount of protein. Glutens are one of the proteins in wheat, and when flour and water are mixed, the gluten is responsible for making the dough sticky and elastic. In dough, the carbohydrates, or complex sugars, found in the wheat, are broken down into simple sugars. Natural yeasts in the flour begin to use that sugar and break it down into two components, carbon dioxide gas and alcohol. As the gas is produced, it is trapped by the sticky gluten and as gas bubbles develop, the gluten holds them and expands, hence the rising of the dough. The alcohol evaporates out and is thus not found in the final product. Typical bread and soft, laffa-like matzah made by Yemenites has a crust that differs from the inside, known as the crumb. The crust is hardened and brown due to the intense heat that leads to the Maillard reaction in which the amino acids and sugars in the bread combine to form 6-Acetyl-2,3,4,5-tetrahydroxypyridine. This seals the inside, permitting it to retain some of its moisture. Thin matzah is made with less water and baked uniformly, drying out inside and out such that there is no crust and it is completely dry.

C] THE 3RD INGREDIENT - TIME!

The Shulchan Aruch rules that if the dough is left for 18 minutes it will become chametz. If it kept in constant motion this time can in principle be extended since fermentation will not occur due to the movement. However, the Rema is strict to speed up the process as much as possible in case heat (including friction from hands) speeds up the process of chumitz.

There are other more lenient opinions that the halachic mil is 22.5 or even 24 minutes, but the 18 minute psak is to be followed unless there are exceptional circumstances.
D] HOW CAN THERE BE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MATZA?

• Since the ingredients of wheat matza are always identical - flour + water7 + <18 mins, how can there be different types of matza?

• The other three variables are (i) type of oven - metal vs earthenware and large vs small; (ii) baking temperature; (iii) flour–water ratio.

When discussing the method of baking matza, R. Akiva points out that it is hard to set universal rules since different bakers, different fuel and different ovens produce different results with the same ingredients8.

D1] FLOUR-TO-WATER RATIOS

• Generally speaking, the less water one introduces to the dough, the harder and dryer the matza will be. Here are typical flour-to-water ratios9 for different types of matza:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matza Type</th>
<th>Water (ml)</th>
<th>Flour (kg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular Ashkenazi machine</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Ashkenazi hand</td>
<td>400-480</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft hand matza</td>
<td>550-830</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E] THIN AND THICK MATZA IN THE TALMUD

The key sugya in the Talmud dealing with the consistency of matza is this discussion about ‘pat ava’ - thick bread. In part [a] the Gemara presents a machloket between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai about the baking ‘pat ava’ on Pesach. Rav Huna learns from a comparison to the Lechem Hapanim in the Mishkan (which were also unleavened like matza) that ‘pat ava’ means matza thicker than 1 tefach (around 8-9 cm). Beit Shammai prohibit this and Beit Hillel permit it. Rav Yosef rejects the comparison with the Mishkan since the circumstances of the Mishkan were far more controlled and likely to avoid chametz, whereas we need to be stricter with individuals baking matza for Pesach.

In part [b] the Gemara presents a completely different understanding of ‘pat ava’ as meaning a large quantity of bread. The problem here is the exhortation involved on any Chag. On this reading, the Gemara is not making any comment on the thickness of matza on Pesach.

• The Rishonim split 3 ways in their understanding of the psak, based on this discussion in the Gemara:
  - The Lenient Position: Some Rishonim10 understood that matza can be any thickness (even more than a tefach) as long care is taken to avoid chimutz.
  - The Middle Position: Many Rishonim11 (mostly Ashkenazim) understand that matza can be made up to a tefach thick.
  - The Stringent Position: Many Rishonim12 (mostly Sefardim) understand that matza should be thinner.

7. Most traditions do NOT add salt to matza, but some Yemenite traditions do. Similarly, most traditions do not dip the matza in salt at the seder, but the minhag of the Ari z”l was to dip the matza in salt.
8. See also source 11 below.
9. Taken from The Halachic Acceptability of Soft Matzah, Rabbi Dr Ari Zivotofsky and Dr Ari Greenspan, Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society Vol LXVIII p 108.
10. The Chitaam Sofer (shu’t OC 127) recommends 1 part water to 4 parts flour. The Chazon Ish writes that the matza should be as dry as possible and recommends under 250 ml water to 1 kg flour.
11. Ba’al HaMichtam (Beitzia 22b). See below that this may be the position of the Rif, Rambam and Tur! See also Machatzit Hashekel and Shulchan Aruch HaRav 460:10 who permits (bedieved) matza even if thicker than a tefach.
12. Meiri, Ra’avan, Ra’anaya, Or Zaruah, Rashbatz and others.
13. Risha, Maharam Chalava, R. Yerucham and others.
F] OTHER INDICATIONS AS TO THE TYPE OF MATZA USED IN THE PAST

F1] KORECH?

As is well known from our seder, Hillel, at the time of the Second Temple, used to make a ‘korech’ of the matza and marror (and some also add the Pesach).

- We normally assume that ‘korech’ means a wrap. However, this is not the only meaning of korech.

The Aruch Hashulchan makes it clear that we sandwich the marror between two pieces of matza.

- In this sense, ‘korech’ is like the kericha (cover) of a book, which surrounds the book but need not wrap it. So too a walled city is called a ‘krach’ since the wall surrounds it.

F2] MOULDY MATZA

The Shulchan Aruch rules a halacha (taken from Pesachim 7a) that, if one finds mouldy bread during Pesach and cannot tell if it is mouldy chometz bread from before Pesach or mouldy matza from Pesach, one can assume it is matza and does not have to destroy it. If it is VERY mouldy, one should assume it is from earlier and is chametz. However, if one made fresh hot matzo every day which could have gone mouldy very quickly, one can assume it is this matza.

- Clearly, the case in the Gemara, which is ruled as relevant by the Shulchan Aruch in the 16th century, assumes (i) that bread and matza look very similar to each other and; (ii) that matza can go mouldy.
- Our matzon look nothing like bread and they NEVER go mouldy!
- It is therefore clear that the matza discussed was soft - more like pita. If this is put into a closed container when still warm it will go mouldy very quickly.
- Modern day Yemenite matza looks very similar their pita, except that the chametz version has added oil, yeast and other ingredients.

The Mishna Berura clarifies that this halacha was only relevant in former times when matza was thicker and looked like bread.

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14. Rashi and Rashbam include the Korban Pesach in their text (see Taz OC 475:9). Rambam indicates otherwise.
15. This assumes that the marror is lettuce, rather than horseradish.
16. This was also the practice of Rav Soloveitchik.
F3] THE 3 MEGA-MATZOT AT SEDER

The Tur quotes in the name of his father, the Rosh (13C Germany), that the minhag in medieval Ashkenaz was to make the 3 matzot for seder from 1 isaron of flour as a zecher to the lachmet todah where 3 loaves were made from 1 isaron. The Rema (16C Poland) also mentions this minhag (OC 475:7).

The Mishna Berura (19C Russia) quotes some views which question the minhag and notes that in some places the minhag has fallen away. Clearly, in other places the minhag was still observed.

- On isaron of flour is 43.2 kebeitzim, which is 86.4 kezayim. This means that each of the three matzot would be just under 30 kezayim. Since an average hand matza today is around 2 kezayim, if we were to make our matzot following this minhag, they would have to be FIFTEEN times their current size. Clearly, this would be impossible to fit into any oven.
- This was possible only if the matzot were much thicker (and probably also the halachic measure of the kezayim was somewhat smaller). An average Yemenite matza today contains around 10 kezayim, compare to 2 kezayim in an Ashkenazi hand-matza.
- This also explains sources which describe giving a kezayim everyone at the seder from one of the 3 matzot. This is impossible today.

The Darchei Moshe (R. Moshe Iserlis - 16C Poland) talks about combining dough to make a bigger middle matza to give a kezayit to all the children in a big family.

R. Moshe Feinstein writes (in 1982) that for over 100 years it has no longer been possible to use the 3 matzot to give out to the family. To make mega-matzot (even if physically possible) would also go against the idea of lechem oni. So he recommends that each person at the seder at the own matzot.

F4] PUSH YOUR FINGER INTO A MATZA

The Shulchan Aruch rules that one knows that a matza is sufficiently baked if it can be pulled apart and threads of sticky dough will not pull from the pieces.

The Mishna Berura suggests an alternative test - stick a finger into the matza and see if it comes out moist. The Chazon Ish points out that, the way we make matzot, even if you stick a finger into the uncooked dough it would come out dry!
The most surprising evidence comes from Yemen. Rav Yosef Kafich wrote that in Yemen the city rabbi would make an eruv on hol ha-moed. He is also reflecting earlier poskim with these concerns— see Shulchan Aruch HaRav 368:4.

The Ba’er Heitiv (R. Yeshaya ben R’ Avraham HaLevi, 18C Amsterdam) quotes the earlier Ashkenazi minhag to hide the afikoman between the pillow and the chair and then to throw it over their shoulder to re-enact the Exodus! If we were to try all this with our had matza today, we would be eating matza meal for afikoman! Clearly, the matza was more robust!

The Rema recommends the yearly matza eruv over weekly eruvin since it is easy to forget to make the weekly eruv and the matza option is also good over Pesach. The weekly option is however also acceptable.

The Mishna Berura is more concerned that the eruv matza would become moldy or wormy and prefers the weekly eruv.

From the Rema and earlier Rishonim, it certainly sounds like they had a matza option which could potentially last a whole year! On the other hand, itsounds from the Mishna Berura that the matzot he had were NOT like ours today, which would never go moldy.

In fact, the Yemenites also used their matza for a yearly eruv! How did they avoid it becoming moldy?
HALACHIC DEVELOPMENT AND THINNING MATZA

RISHONIM

We saw above that the Gemara discusses the halachic status of ‘matza ava’. Based on that sugya, different Rishonim took differing approaches as to whether matza could (or should) be more than a tefach thick, less than a tefach thick, or much thinner.

The Ritva quotes in the name of R. Aharon HaLevi - 13/14C Spain - that, although matzot could bedeived be up to one tefach thick, the Sefardi custom was to make thin matzot specifically for Seder.

If the concern is chametz, why would matzot for Seder be any different from those for the rest of the week? Two answers are given: (i) this gives an extra level of shemirai for the shemura matzot at seder; (ii) there is a concern that thick matzot may not be considered lechem oni, which is required for the mitzva of matza at seder.

The Beit Yosef is very surprised that the halacha not to make matza thicker than a tefach is not mentioned in the Tur.

27. When interpreting illustrations it is critical to have an understanding of the style and approach of the particular school. Were they attempting to portray actual objects, or to communicate a stylized idea or message through the drawing?
28. This practice of making thinner matzot for Sefer is also mentioned by the Talmidei HaRosh in the 14th Century.
29. The Bach (OC 460) learns that many of the key poskim (Rif, Rambam, Tur - who do not mention the tefach limit) understood from the Gemara that, although the comparison with the...
G2] SHULCHAN ARUCH

The Shulchan Aruch rules that matza may not be thicker than a tefach. The Mishna Berura brings the more lenient and the stricter opinions but rules that, believed, as long as the matza is less than a tefach thick and we have checked to ensure there are no indications of chimutz, it will be permitted.

In this halacha (which actually precedes the one above), the Shulchan Aruch rules against that the custom to make matzot with designs of birds and animals since this introduces delay into the process which could lead to chimutz. The Rema then comments that one may make matzot like ‘rekikin’ - crackers. Although he may be commenting specifically on the custom of designed matzot mentioned in this section, many mefarshim understand that he is qualifying the psak of the Mechaber in the section concerning thick matzot which follows.

G3] ACHARONIM

The Rema ruled that the matzot should be ‘rekikin’. However, that does not necessarily mean that his matzot were like our own.

The word ‘rekikin’ need not be translated as thin crackers. Targum Unkelos translates ‘rekikin matzot’ (for the korban mincha) as ‘esfogin petirin’ - spongy matzot. Indeed many Rishonim who had thicker matzot refer to them as ‘rekikin’.

R. Hillel b. Naftali, who lived in Lithuania in the 17C testified that the custom for thin Ashkenazi matzot in his time was to make them the thickness of a thumb of 2-3cm. He explains the history of the disappearance of thick matzot. He implies that at some point before his time there were two types of matzah: relatively thin but not totally hard that was used for eating, and quite thick matzah that was dragged over a rib-eizen (hand grater) in order to make matzah meal. And indeed in those latter matzahs it was not uncommon to find unbaked inner sections, and hence the concern that led to avoiding gebrokhets from matzah meal (although not from dipping the thin matzahs) was logical. However, in his time thick matzahs were not made, and the matzah meal was made by further drying the thin matzahs in the oven and then grinding or crushing them. From this description it is clear that in Poland by the late 18th century all that was being used was thin matzos, and that the assumption is that in days of yore, with no idea how far back, thick matzah was produced. What is particularly interesting is that to make matzah meal, the thin matzah was dried and then ground. This implies that his thin crackerlike matzahs were not fully dry, as ours are, and thus had to be further dried before making matzah meal. It is also not clear if the original thick matzos were soft. It would seem not, because it is difficult to grate a soft item on a rib elizen. On the other hand, the need to further dry even the thin matzahs implies that they were not as hard as crackers.

G4] BAKING MATZOT IN ADVANCE

A critical development in the thinning of matza was the move to bake all matzot BEFORE Pesach so as to ensure that any chametz that may have accidentally been introduced to the matzah was batel beshishim. On Pesach itself chametz is never nullified so baking

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30. See Rashi Bava Batra 19b s.v. rakik: See Rashi Bava Batra 19b s.v. rakik: See Rashi Bava Batra 19b s.v. rakik: See Rashi Bava Batra 19b s.v. rakik:
31. This reflects the psak of many earlier Ashkenazi Rishonim on the question of designed matza - see R. Peretz comments in Smak’s mitzva 222:11.
32. See for instance Rambam Hilchot Chametz U’Matza 6:8.
33. 34. In the Tzetzotkhes article in Hakira, the authors make the following observation: “By mid-18th century it seems that in Ashkenaz there were both thick and thin matzahs. The Adrei Paiz explains that thick matzahs need a hotter oven than do thin ones. Therefore the thick matzah, called ‘rib matzah’ (because it will be grated with a rib-eizen (hand grater) into matzah meal), should be baked first. He concludes by noting that unfortunately, new bakers have started baking the thin matzah first and bake the thick one when the oven has already begun to cool. Again, it is clear that they had more than one type of matzah. ... By the late 18th century thick matzahs clearly existed, as evidenced by the interesting comments of the Sha’arei Teshuva (Rabbi Hayyim Mordechai Margolius; Poland, d. 1818). In a very long discussion (OC 460:10) of the issues surrounding gebrokhets (sherya), he explains the history of the disappearance of thick matzah. He implies that at some point before his time there were two types of matzah: relatively thin but not totally hard that was used for eating, and quite thick matzah that was dragged over a rib-eizen (hand grater) in order to make matzah meal. And indeed in those latter matzahs it was not uncommon to find unbaked inner sections, and hence the concern that led to avoiding gebrokhets from matzah meal (although not from dipping the thin matzahs) was logical. However, in his time thick matzahs were not made, and the matzah meal was made by further drying the thin matzahs in the oven and then grinding or crushing them. From this description it is clear that in Poland by the late 18th century all that was being used was thin matzos, and that the assumption is that in days of yore, with no idea how far back, thick matzah was produced. What is particularly interesting is that to make matzah meal, the thin matzah was dried and then ground. This implies that his thin crackerlike matzahs were not fully dry, as ours are, and thus had to be further dried before making matzah meal. It is also not clear if the original thick matzos were soft. It would seem not, because it is difficult to grate a soft item on a rib elizen. On the other hand, the need to further dry even the thin matzahs implies that they were not as hard as crackers.
35. See Pri Megadim (Eshel Avraham 460:4).
36. There is a halachic discussion as to whether matza for the mitzva must be made within 30 days of the Chag. Although the accepted psak is that it need not (MB 458:1), some poskim rule that it should (see Bach OC 458). R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach would only eat matza made within 30 days of the Chag.

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matzot on Pesach (or even from noon on Erev Pesach) is a higher risk strategy. On the other hand, there is a halachic advantage to baking the matzot once chametz is prohibited\(^{37}\).

- From the time of the Rishonim, there was a minority approach that favored baking all the matzot early for this reason, but this only became a mainstream practice in the 18th Century.
- Clearly, once it became standard to bake matzot well before the Chag it was no longer possible to bake thick matzot; these would be rock hard and inedible by Pesach. As such, wafer thin matzot became standard.

The Chatam Sofer was said to aim for 3 minutes from the mixing of flour and water until the matza emerged baked from the oven! Presumably rib-matza for making matza meal.

- In 1858 a New York magazine was advertising two types of matza - thin (around ¼ cm) and thicker and darker (around ¾ cm)
- The Chatam Sofer writes.
- As such, although one would expect more gebrochts problems in the wetter thicker dough, the real concern was caused by the accelerated kneading process!

The Aruch Hashulchan describes the transition from fresh, warm, thick matzot to cold thin ones. There is a halachic benefit to baking matzot after chametz is prohibited, but this minhag is now rarely practiced, except by the Yemenites\(^{38}\).

G5] GEBROCHTS

- The origin of the modern minhag not to eat gebrochts\(^{39}\) can be found in the teshuvot (siman 6) of the Alter Rebbe of Lubavitch\(^{40}\) at the end of the 18C. He has two concerns: (i) unbaked flour which may remain in the middle of the matza. Although there a dispute whether this is a halachic concern, he recommends being strict. He writes that this became more problematic as people began to bake matzot more quickly; (ii) a second and more serious concern is flour dust which may coat the matzot in the factory. He invokes the injunction of Shabbat.
- Some commentators suggest that the increased speed of kneading coincided with the switch from softer wetter matza, where the dough was very well worked, to harder dryer matza, which was prepared very quickly\(^{41}\) with less kneading.
- As such, although one would expect more potential gebrochts problems in the wetter thicker dough, the real concern was caused by the accelerated kneading process!

G6] THE END OF THE THICK MATZA

- At the start of the 1880s, R. Avraham Danziger was urging bakers to make matzot thinner. His Chayei Adam was published in 1819.

- The Chatam Sofer writes\(^{42}\) that most Ashkenazi communities had issued a ban on thick matzot.
- In 1858 a New York magazine was advertising two types of matza - thin (around ¼ cm) and thicker and darker (around ¾ cm)\(^{43}\).

By the early 20th Century, the R. Ya’akov Sofer writes that both the Ashkenazim and Sefardim in Israel were making their matzot as thin as possible!

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37. Matza must be something that could have become chametz in the baking process. This is only possible after noon on Erev Pesach
38. Rav Yosef Kafich (commentary to Rambam Hilchot Shivat Yom Tov 1:1 (n. 15) and Halichot Tefiman, 1987 ed. p. 19) quotes his grandfather, Rav Yitzy Kapach, as making the following way observation: The Torah prohibited work on Yom Tov and then provided (Shemot 12:16) an exemption for food-related work. In the Torah this exemption is explicitly mentioned only regarding Pesach. Why? He suggested that God knew that later generations would keep adding chumrot on Pesach, until they would totally prohibit baking matzah on Pesach and bake it all before the holiday. The Torah therefore was not only permitting, but mandating to bake and eat fresh “bread” each day of Pesach!
39. For a detailed shiur on the minhag of gebrochts see https://rabbinimanning.com/index.php/audio-shiurim/chagim/
40. Reb Mendel of Vitebske is cited by some early Chasidim as attributing the minhag not to eat gebrochts to the Magid of Mezerich. The Besh’t himself may have eaten gebrochts!
41. The Chatam Sofer was said to aim for 3 minutes from the mixing of flour and water until the matza emerged baked from the oven!
42. Sh’u Ch’tam Sofer OC 121. The Chatam Sofer died in 1840.
43. Presumably rib-matza for making matza meal.
**G7] MACHINE MATZA**

- Once machine matzot were introduced in the mid 1800s, this brought a uniformity to matza size and thickness. Nevertheless, the early matza machines did not necessarily produce the thinnest matzot.

**H] CAN ASHKENAZIM NOW EAT SOFT MATZOT?**

- Even though it is very clear that matzot used to be softer and thicker, it is now many centuries since Ashkenazim (and indeed most Sefardim) ate that type of matza. Can they chose to ignore the more recent practice and return to older traditions?

**H1] PROS AND CONS**

- There is no question that soft thick matzot have a much higher chance of containing unbaked dough than hard thin matzot. Any such matzot must be made under strict hashgacha by experts at this baking style.  
- On the other hand, soft matzot are made much more quickly. There is no rolling or reddling; the dough is simply kneaded and placed into the oven. In this respect, the concerns for chimutz are lessened. 
- Soft matzot also resolve the halacha concern that very thin brittle matzot may not be hamotzi and thus would be invalid for matzot mitza.

**H2] SOFT MATZA OPTIONS IN EARLIER TIMES**

- Although most classic poskim over the last 200 years strongly recommend thin matzot, they nevertheless also include the halachot of how to calculate the volume of soft matza - in particular whether large airpockets in thick matza and small airpockets in spongy matza are included in the volume.  Although all to these poskim almost certainly ate only thin matza, they do not state that softer matzot are prohibited.

**H3] MODERN POSKIM**

- Some contemporary poskim have clearly prohibited soft matzot for Ashkenazim. R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach 

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### Table: Matza Measurements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Shalala: Temach LaErevshet Alef Matzot Chitet</td>
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</tbody>
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Rav Shlomo Aviner permits soft matzot made under proper hashgacha by experts.

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44. For a detailed shiur on machine matzot see [https://rabbimanning.com/index.php/audio-shiurim/chagim/](https://rabbimanning.com/index.php/audio-shiurim/chagim/)

45. This also coincides with the increased urbanization of Jewish communities and centralization of bakeries. Unlike Yemenite communities which retained the traditions of home-made matzot for a family, the large Jewish cities of the 19th centuries mass produced matzah and shipped to smaller towns. This required earlier baking and longer lasting matzot.

46. R. Yosef Eliyahu Henkin (Lev Ira p40) also pointed out a modern problem with soft matzot due to the heat for our ovens. Traditional ovens for baking soft matzah were not as hot as modern commercial ovens. As such, use of modern ovens to bake soft matzah runs the risk that the crust of the matzah will form quickly on the outside, but leave unbaked dough on the inside.

47. Large pockets are not included, but small pockets are. See Shulchan Aruch HaRav 486:2, MB 486:3 and Aruch Hashulchan 486:2. This fascinating discussion is ultimately based around Mishna Uktzin 2:8.

48. Although there were communities in the 19th Century which placed a ban on soft matzot.

49. Halichot Shlomo Chapter 9 note 80.


51. See https://vosizneias.com/2010/03/25/soft-pita-like-matzah-is-not-kosher/concerning Melbourne, Australia. There was considerable controversy in the Australian case about whether Rav Elishav prohibited soft matzah or did not. R. Ze’ev Weitman (Rav of Tenuva) was also involved.

52. [http://shlomo-aviner.net/index.php?title=%D7%9E%D7%A6%D7%95%D7%AA_%D7%A8%D7%9B%D7%95%D7%AA_%D7%9C%D7%90%D7%A9%D7%98%D7%A0%D7%96%D7%99%D7%95_%28%7E97%7E90%7E97%7E96%29](http://shlomo-aviner.net/index.php?title=%D7%9E%D7%A6%D7%95%D7%AA_%28%7E97%7E96%29)
• Rav Herschel Schachter permits soft matzot to Ashkenazim53.
• He argues that the concern in the poskim was not with soft matza but with thick matza. The hardness or softness of the matza is entirely ancillary to the mitzva and is not the subject of a minhag, any more than is the color of the parochet in shul. Hard/soft matzot is no different to a red/blue parochet.

• Rav Asher Weiss54 takes a middle approach. He rules that soft matzot are definitely permitted for Ashkenazim according to the letter of the law, and there was never really a true minhag NOT to eat them. Rather the minhag is to aim for hiddurim in the baking process. Nevertheless, since there were communities that officially banned them, even though those bans were probably only for the local time and community, he is concerned that there may be an element of ‘al titosh torat imecha’. He therefore recommends that Ashkenazim should stick to hard matza, and if someone is sick and cannot eat them, they can be matir nedert to eat the soft matza.

53. R. Schachter later published a clarification: ‘My note written last month regarding Sfardic matzos was somehow taken as an endorsement of some specific matzah plant in Queens. Others understood that I was obviously referring to some specific matzah plant in Petach Tikvah. Let it be known that I am not familiar with either plant, and my note was not intended to endorse any specific matzah manufacturer in the NY area or in any other location. One must take care to use only such food products made under strict Rabbinic supervision and approved by one’s local Orthodox Rabbi, and especially with respect to Pesach products where the laws of kashrus are much more complicated and much more serious.’

54. Shu’t Minchat Asher 3:44-45.