

Letter 15

With God's help, Baden, 11 Nisan, 5653 [March 30, 1893]

My dear, beloved children:

I am writing to wish you a joyful *Pesach*.

We have already received *matzot* and wine, and I have also received *matzot shmurot* from Russia. All that remains is to check the *maror* [to make sure it is clean of insects], and on the day before *Pesach* my son Shmuel will travel to Mattersdorf to bring *matzot shmurot* for the *Seder*.

My beloved son R' Simcha, do your best to observe in your own home the customs you witnessed in your parents' home. God has blessed you with a virtuous wife who will run your household in the spirit you desire. Be very scrupulous about washing and cleaning [foods, to rid them of insects], "and forsake not the Torah of your mother" (Proverbs 1:8). The same goes for checking the house for *chametz*; search carefully every corner, the various rooms, the kitchen, the hallway, the attic, the basement, and even the wine cellar that is separate from the house. Be careful about holes and cracks too. If you cannot check for *chametz* yourself, you can do so via a trustworthy agent. Nonetheless, it is more virtuous for you to check personally than to appoint an agent, and being tired does not justify leniency. Be very careful, for even the smallest amount of *chametz* is forbidden on *Pesach*.

Do your best to overcome fatigue during the *Seder*. Help each other stay alert. Do not doze off, but rather count God's wondrous miracles in joy, happiness, and song.

On the first year you may forgo the *kittel* (white robe) and wear only the *heibchen* (white hat), but hereafter do your best to wear a *kittel* when conducting the *Seder*.

For *maror*, use horseradish again. Use lettuce only if you have somebody who you can entrust with checking it [for insects] in strict keeping with Torah law. Be careful to eat the required amount of *matzah*, *maror*, and *korekh* (the *matzah-maror* “sandwich”), for these foods allude to profound ideas. Furthermore, there is [still] a Torah obligation to eat *matzah* today [even though our Holy Temple is in ruins].

If necessary, you can shorten the *Seder* out of consideration for your wife, but do not hurry through the *Seder* as if it were a burden, heaven forbid. Every word should be translated and explained. Encourage your wife to ask questions. She should request explanation for any matter that is not clear.

Ideally, you should drink the four cups of wine completely. Use only the choicest wine. Invite a learned guest if possible; if not, invite a simple person. But a person who has a home and food of his own is not considered a “guest” in the strict Torah sense of the word.

On the night of the festival, rejoice spiritually, thanking and praising God for performing such miracles and wonders for us and our forefathers. Let there be no sadness, heaven forbid. Tears of joy sometimes have the power to elevate the physical world, and therefore everything should be carried out with pure happiness. Fulfill all this evening's commandments with love and affection, and encourage your wife in this respect as well.

During the course of the *Seder*, do not delve into commentaries, but instead explain matters according to your own understanding.

Cover all of the tables and shelves first with a cloth that will not easily slide off, and then place the tablecloth on top of this. In the kitchen, the best things to use are wooden planks, and these should be nailed down. Do not forget to nullify the *chametz* before 10:00.

May God fill you with the joy of His commandments, gracing you with boundless joy.

May God grant me to see you rejoicing in your love and reverence of Him. May His blessing dwell among you, may He grant you strength and power, and may all who gaze upon you discern that God's holy name is upon you. May your offspring flourish and be praiseworthy. May my ears hear of your happiness and well-being all the days, until the time when we bring gifts to God in the Holy Temple, and may we merit to partake there of the sacrifices and the Passover lamb, speedily in our days.

This is the prayer of your father who hugs and kisses you joyfully and kindheartedly all of the days.

Binyamin Zeev son of Shmuel the Kohen