



## Maos Chitim - Pesach Fundraising

Many if not all of you will be familiar with one or both of the terms *Maos Chitim* meaning money for Yom Tov, or *Kimcha De'pisha* meaning flour for Pesach to raise funds for the needy to provide provisions for Yom Tov.

This custom dates back almost two thousand year to the time of the Talmud when they used to buy wheat and distribute it to the poor and needy in order to make flour to bake Matzos for Pesach, hence the name *Mo'os Chitim* – money for wheat. The custom later developed to purchase and distribute the flour itself for the baking of Matzos, hence the name *Kimcha De'pisha* - flour of Pesach.

Later authorities also add that it goes without saying if the person is so poor that they do not have the funds to actually bake the Matzos itself then this needs to be provided to them too. The amount one gives is as much or as little as they need for the entire Yom Tov and not just for the Sedarim. This has today developed to a stage where we provide not only Matzos themselves (and not just flour) but general food provision as well.

It might have occurred to you or it might occur to you at this stage that we actually have three major festivals throughout the year namely Pesach, Shavuot and Succot yet Pesach is the only one before which we have a long established custom to raise funds for the poor and needy specifically for Yom Tov (this is addition to any regular collections for the poor that there might be).

Ok, so you might justifiably respond that the cost of Pesach is so much more than the others. Whilst you may be correct it does not negate the fact that Yom Tov, like Shabbat, is going to be costly. Surely there should at least be an appeal before Succot as well to help the poor and needy provide for Yom Tov.

The answer to this teaches us a lesson both in Hachnasat Orchim – welcoming guests and in sensitivity to others.

On Succot and Shavuot the extra costs of the meals was defrayed by the poor people being invited out to others which would keep down the cost of the meals on Yom Tov as they would not have to make as many. It was accepted that the wealthier people in the community would invite them to their Yom Tov table for this reason.

On Pesach however this was not possible because the degrees and lengths to which people will go in their preparation for and observance of Pesach is so vastly different even within the same community. This was recognised and accepted even then.

It would have therefore been both difficult and embarrassing if the poor person felt he could not eat on Pesach with someone who he usually would on another occasion. The Rabbi's therefore instituted the custom of *Kimcha De'pisha* and *Mo'os Chitim*. This would save embarrassment whilst at the same time making sure those in need were still provided for.

In many of the Chreidi communities today one does not invite guests for Pesach for exactly this reason instead there is big drive to support the various appeals to provide for the poor and needy in another way i.e. financially so that they can buy their own food.

This is why we only have this type of appeal prior to Pesach.

It is interesting and important to note for this the importance and purpose of inviting guests to ones table on Shabbat and Yom Tov. It is one of the best and least embarrassing ways to provide for those in need and it also teaches how we need to be sensitive to those in need and if we cannot provide in



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one way we look to provide in another.

Wishing you all a Kosher Pesach.

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