

Tikvat Israel *Pesach* Guide

Preparing for *Pesach* can be a daunting task. This guide is meant to make the process less intimidating and to answer common questions about getting ready for the holiday. In cases of doubt, check with Rabbi Israel.

I. Cleaning and the Selling of *Chametz*

A person must remove any edible *chametz* (leavened product) that is the size of an olive or greater from her or his possession; thus, one must clean one's home, car, office, etc. Legumes, corn and rice (*kitniyot*) are not *chametz*, but Ashkenazic custom traditionally forbids them from being eaten on *Pesach*. In 2015, the Conservative Movement adopted the position to permit the eating of *kitniyot* on *Pesach*. Those who refrain from eating *kitniyot* do not need to sell them, but they should be placed in a cabinet that will be closed during the holiday. Only *chametz* that was sold for *Pesach* may be consumed after *Pesach*.



Any room or other part of the house that may have had *chametz* in it at some point during the year should be checked thoroughly. Floors should be swept and cleaned. Kitchen cabinets should be cleaned, but do not have to be covered. Clothes should be checked for food and crumbs (e.g., in pockets). Books that may have come into contact with *chametz* should also be checked (for example, *benchers*) or put away and not used during the holiday. Remember to check backpacks and other bags that may have contained food for *chametz*. In checking for *chametz* it is important to remember to be extremely careful and, at the same time, remember that *chametz* only refers to an item that is in an edible form. *Shmutz* is not *chametz*!

Many dishes, pots, and silverware used during the rest of the year can be *kashered* for *Pesach* – if one is using separate dishes for *Pesach*, however, the year-round dishes should be cleaned and stored away for the duration of the holiday. Any *chametz* that is not disposed of must be placed in a sealed cabinet or container and sold through Rabbi Israel or another *halakhically* appointed agent. Many communities offer this service, and some facilitate appointing an agent on-line.

When selling one's *chametz*, it is customary to make a donation for kosher-for-Passover food for needy Jews (*ma'ot chittim*). You can also fulfill this *mitzvah* by making a donation to the synagogue or online at <http://www.yadchessed.org>.

Following the holiday, one should not make use of any *chametz* that was sold for the holiday until at least 20 minutes after the holiday ends, in order to allow time for Rabbi Israel to reacquire the *chametz* on your behalf. If you will be in a different time zone when the holiday ends, ask when selling your *chametz* about when it will revert to your possession.

II. Kashering

There are four main methods of *kashering* for *Pesach*:

1. *Hag'ala*—immersion in boiling water.
2. *'Iru mi-keli rishon* (or called simply *'irui*)—pouring boiling water from the vessel in which it was boiled onto the object to be *kashered*. This may also be achieved by using a steam iron.
3. *Libun gamur*—applying enough heat to some metal object such that sparks could be produced by hitting it.
4. *Libun kal*—applying enough heat to a metal object such that straw would burn if it touched it.

Different methods are appropriate for various items, as discussed below. All *kashering* should be completed before *zeman issur chametz* (the time when it is forbidden to benefit from *chametz* – check the *Bulletin* for *Pesach* times here in Rockville. If you will be away, exact times are available online at various sites such as *MyZmanim.com*). If you are *kashering* items later that day, consult a trusted *halakhic* authority, as the details will differ somewhat.

III. Countertops

For marble countertops, clean and perform *'irui*. For formica, *'irui* should be performed unless one is concerned about damaging the countertop. If one is concerned about this, the counter should be covered with plastic, tin foil, or something similar. If hot food is NEVER placed on the counter during the year, then the countertop need not be covered.

IV. Oven, Stovetop/Burners, Microwave

As much as possible, remove any remnants of food from the stovetop and oven. If the oven is self-cleaning, then running one self-cleaning cycle with the racks in the oven constitutes *libun* and the oven is *kashered*. If the oven is not self-cleaning, then the oven and the racks should be cleaned thoroughly with oven cleaner. The oven should then be heated to its highest temperature for 45 minutes, thus constituting *libun*. The stovetop and burners should be cleaned thoroughly, making sure



to remove any *chametz* in the corners, cracks, etc. If this is not possible, then one should clean them with soap or another cleaning agent in order to make any *chametz* inedible. Clean the stovetop with cleanser. The burner grills should be cleaned and then turned on to their highest temperature for 15 minutes (whether they are gas or electric burners).

A microwave should be cleaned thoroughly. An uncovered cup or bowl of water should then be placed in the microwave and heated, making sure that the water is brought to a boil. Microwaves with a browning element cannot be *kashered* for *Pesach* and should be cleaned and stored away.

V. Sink

A metal sink should be cleaned and can then be *kashered* by pouring boiling water on it (*'irui*). According to some (including R' Ovadiah Yosef), a porcelain sink can be *kashered* by cleaning and performing *'irui* three times; others say such a sink cannot be *kashered*. If one is following this stricter view, then the sink should be cleaned well and an insert of some sort should be placed in the sink for washing dishes during *Pesach*. One can find specially *Pesach*-marketed sink inserts with built-in drains online, but any vessel that will fit in one's sink is fine. One should use separate sink racks or tubs for *Pesach*. Alternatively, some allow *kashering* plastic sink racks by cleaning them and performing *'irui* on them.

VI. Metal pots

Pots must be *kashered* through *hag'ala*. First clean the largest pot thoroughly – it will be used to *kasher* the others. Remove its handles, if possible, in order to *kasher* them; if they cannot be removed, apply soap or a cleaning agent liberally around the handles in order to make any bits of *chametz* which might be found there inedible. Fill the pot with water and boil it; at the same time, boil water in a clean pot not used for 24 hours, and carefully pour that water into the large pot causing it to spill over without cooling down and thus *kashering* the outside of the pot. Other pots can now be *kashered* by *hag'ala* in this pot. If one is too big to fit in the large pot all at once, then it can be placed in the boiling water bit by bit. Lids should also be *kashered* by *hag'ala*.

Frying pans that can be put into the oven when it is being heated to its highest temperature should be *kashered* this way (after being cleaned thoroughly). Otherwise they should be *kashered* by *hag'ala* – if the pan is scratched, depending on the material, you may need to consult a rabbi or trusted *halakhic* authority.

VII. Silverware

Metal silverware can be *kashered* by cleaning it and placing it in boiling water, thus performing *hag'ala*. If the silverware has plastic or wooden handles (which are not soldered on) and they cannot be removed or cleaned thoroughly, then they should be soaked in soap



in order to make sure that any bits of *chametz* which might be found there are inedible, and then *hag'ala* should be performed.

VIII. Plates

Earthenware plates generally cannot be *kashered*. If one has no feasible alternative for *Pesach*, then china or porcelain that has not been used in a year can be *kashered* by doing *hag'ala* three times.

There are different customs regarding glass. Sefaradim hold that glass simply needs to be washed. The two Ashkenazic customs are that glass is not *kasherable*, or that glass should be soaked in water for 72 hours, changing the water every 24 hours.

Corningware, Pyrex, Duralux, and similar substances are considered by some to be glass and by some to be earthenware (and hence in either case subject to the reservations above about being possibly *unkasherable*). In any case, any such item that is used for baking should not be *kashered* for *Pesach*. Many hold that plastic plates are *kasherable* by *hag'ala* (scratched plates, however, may be problematic because food could lodge in the crack – it is best to consult a rabbi or trusted *halakhic* authority in such cases).

IX. Glasses/Cups

Glasses or cups that are used with cold liquids need only be washed. Glasses or cups that are used with hot liquids need to be *kashered* in the ways outlined for plates above.

X. Tables

Tables should be covered or *kashered*. The most common way of *kashering* a table is through *'irui* after a thorough cleaning. If one does not place hot food directly on the table or the table would be damaged through *'irui*, then the table should be cleaned thoroughly and covered.

XI. Miscellaneous

- A. Baking pans and toaster ovens should not be *kashered* for *Pesach*. They should be cleaned and put away for the duration of the holiday.
- B. The refrigerator and freezer should be cleaned, with all *chametz* removed. If the freezer needs to be defrosted, it should be defrosted before being cleaned. *Chametz* that is being sold can be stored in the refrigerator or freezer, provided it is closed and covered.
- C. Dish towels and tablecloths need only be washed in a washing machine with detergent. Aprons, oven mitts, and cloth napkins should also be washed.
- D. Cabinets to be used during *Pesach* should be cleaned thoroughly. Cabinets used for storing *chametz* that is being sold for the holiday should be labeled and taped shut.

XII. *Bedikat Chametz* (Search for Chametz)

On the night of the 14th of *Nissan* the search for *chametz* takes place. All cleaning should be done before then so that all *chametz* is accounted for, and any *chametz* to be used in the morning should be set aside so it does not get mixed in with other foods.

It is customary to put out ten pieces of *chametz* (e.g. Cheerios or crackers) before the search so that some *chametz* will be found in

the course of the search; also, the lights are traditionally turned off and the search is done with a flashlight or candle. Before beginning the search, the following blessing is made:



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל בִּיעוּר חֵמֶץ
Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh HaOlam Asher Kid'shanu B'Mitzvotav V'Tzivanu
Al Biyur Chametz

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments, and commanded us concerning the removal of *chametz*.

Ideally, one should not talk between making this blessing and finding the first piece of *chametz*, in order to connect the saying of the blessing and the completion of the act for which it was recited – afterwards, talking should be limited to matters relating to the search itself. It is customary to search with a feather and spoon; any *chametz* found should be removed and set aside. Following the search, you verbally relinquish ownership of any *chametz* you might have missed in the search (however, you still keep in mind the *chametz* you did find, which is to be burned or otherwise disposed of the next morning, as well as any *chametz* set aside for breakfast). While the blessing above can be said by one person for all members of the household, everyone should recite the statement at the end of the search that constitutes relinquishing ownership of *chametz*.

Traditionally the following Aramaic text is used, but you should also say this statement in a language you understand:

כָּל חֲמִירָא וְחֲמִיעָא דְאִיכָא בְּרִשׁוּתִי, דְּלֹא חֲמִיתִיהּ, וְדִלָּא בְּעֵרְתִּיהּ,
וְדִלָּא יְדַעְנָא לִיהּ, לְבָטֵל וְלֵהוּי הַפְּקֵר כְּעַפְרָא דְאַרְעָא.

All manner of *chametz* or leaven that is in my possession, that I did not see or remove or know about, shall be nullified and considered ownerless as the dust of the earth.

The following morning, the *chametz* found during the search should be burned or otherwise destroyed. As noted above, various websites will have the exact time before which *chametz* can still be eaten, as well as the last time for disposing of *chametz*. A final statement relinquishing ownership in *chametz* should be made by that time – the text is slightly different from the one used the night before:

כֹּל חֲמִירָא וְחֲמִיעָא דְאֵכָא בְּרִשׁוּתִי דְחֻזְתָּהּ וְדִלָּא חֻזְתָּהּ דְחֲמִתָּהּ וְדִלָּא חֲמִתָּהּ דְבִעַרְתָּהּ
וְדִלָּא בִעַרְתָּהּ לְבִטֵּל וְלִהְיוּ הַפְּקָר כְּעֶפְרָא דְאֶרְעָא.

All manner of *chametz* or leaven that is in my possession, whether or not I recognized it, whether or not I saw it, whether or not I removed it, shall be nullified and considered ownerless as the dust of the earth.

[If you are going to be away from your home at these times (e.g., if you will be traveling for *Pesach* and leaving your home before the time for searching for *chametz*), you should do *bedikat chametz* at night before you leave, but without the preceding blessing. The statements relinquishing ownership of *chametz* are still recited on the usual night and the next morning once the last of the *chametz* is consumed or disposed of, as described above.]

XIII. Siyum Bechorim

It is traditional for those who are first-born (*bechorim*) to fast on the day before *Pesach*, in remembrance of being saved from the final plague in Egypt. According to the *midrash*, men and women alike were affected by this plague, and the *Shulhan Arukh* brings the opinion that therefore first-born men and women should fast on this day. However, the widespread custom is for the first-born to participate in a *siyum* (completion of a major cycle of Jewish learning) on that day, and the *siyum* is concluded with a meal (with *chametz!*). The obligation to eat at a *siyum* supersedes the fast, therefore many synagogues will hold this *siyum* after morning services on that day (when the day before *Pesach* is *Shabbat*, the fast/*siyum* is moved up to Thursday).

Chag kasher v'sameach!

This guide was adapted from the *Mechon Hadar Pesach Guide* www.mechonhadar.org.

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PASSOVER