



Pesah Guide

Preparing for Pesah 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, ask a trusted halakhic authority. [When the first seder is on Wednesday night or Saturday night, please see the appendix for details about cooking for Shabbat.]

I. Cleaning and the Selling of Hametz

A person must remove any edible *hametz* (leavened products) 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 and rice are not *hametz*, but Ashkenazic custom is not to eat them on Pesah, and for those observing this custom, legumes and rice need not be sold, but should be placed in a cabinet that will be closed during the holiday. Any *hametz* that is not sold may not be consumed after Pesah.

Any room or other part of the house that may have had *hametz* 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 *hametz* 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 *hametz*.

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

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

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

II. Kashering

There are four main methods of kashering for Pesah:

- 1) *Hag'ala*—immersion in boiling water
- 2) *'Irui mi-keli rishon* (or called simply *'irui*)—pouring boiling water from the vessel in which it was boiled onto the object to be kashered
- 3) *Libun gamur*—Applying enough heat to some metal object such that sparks could be produced by hitting it
- 4) *Libun qal*—Applying enough heat to some 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 *zman issur hametz* (the time when it is forbidden to benefit from *hametz* – exact times are available on-line 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

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

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 view, then the sink should be cleaned well and an insert of some sort should be placed in the sink for washing dishes during Pesah. One can find specially Pesah-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 Pesah. 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 *hametz* 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 *hametz* 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 Pesah, 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 Pesah. 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

Baking pans and toaster ovens should not be kashered for Pesah. They should be cleaned and put away for the duration of the holiday. 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 Pesah and should be cleaned and stored away.

The **refrigerator and freezer** should be cleaned, with all *hametz* removed. If the freezer needs to be defrosted, it should be defrosted before being cleaned. *Hametz* that is being sold can be stored in the refrigerator or freezer, provided it is closed and covered.

Dish towels and tablecloths need only be washed in a washing machine with detergent. Aprons, oven mitts, and cloth napkins should also be washed.

Cabinets to be used during Pesah should be cleaned thoroughly. Cabinets used for storing *hametz* that is being sold for the holiday should be labeled and taped shut.

XII. Bediqat Hametz (Search for Hametz)

On the night of the 14th of Nissan the search for *hametz* takes place (the search is moved up if the first seder is on Saturday night – see appendix). All cleaning should be done before then so that all *hametz* is accounted for, and any *hametz* 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 *hametz* (e.g. Cheerios) before the search so that some *hametz* 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 יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל בְּעוֹר חֲמִץ
(Blessed are You, Lord our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has sanctified us
with Your commandments, and commanded us concerning the removal of *hametz*)

Ideally, one should not talk between making this blessing and finding the first piece of *hametz*, 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 *hametz* found should be removed and set aside. Following the search, you verbally relinquish ownership of any *hametz* you might have missed in the search (however, you still keep in mind the *hametz* you did find, which is to be burned or otherwise disposed of the next morning, as well as any *hametz* 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 *hametz*.

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

כָּל חֲמִירָא וְחֲמִיעָא דְאִכָּא בְרִשׁוּתֵי דְלָא חֲמַתְהּ וְדְלָא בְעֲרַתְהּ
וְדְלָא יִדְעָנָא לָהּ לְבִטְלָא וְלִהְוֵי הֶפְקֵר כְּעַפְרָא דְאַרְעָא

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

כָּל חֲמִירָא וְחֲמִיעָא דְאִכָּא בְרִשׁוּתֵי דְחֻזְתָּהּ וְדְלָא חֻזְתָּהּ דְחֲמַתְהּ
וְדְלָא חֲמַתְהּ דְבְעֲרַתְהּ וְדְלָא בְעֲרַתְהּ לְבִטְלָא וְלִהְוֵי הֶפְקֵר כְּעַפְרָא דְאַרְעָא

All manner of *hametz* 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 Pesah and leaving your home before the time for searching for *hametz*), you should do *bediqat hametz* at night before you leave, but without the preceding blessing. The statements relinquishing ownership of *hametz* are still recited on the usual night and the next morning once the last of the *hametz* 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 Pesah, 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 *hametz*!). 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 Pesah is Shabbat, the fast/siyum is moved up to Thursday).

Chag kasher v'sameah!

Appendix

When Pesah falls right before or after Shabbat

XIV. Pesah on Erev Shabbat (i.e. first seder on Wednesday night)

Cooking on Yom Tov is permitted for the needs of the day itself; however, when Shabbat starts right after Yom Tov, the rabbis permitted cooking on Yom Tov for Shabbat provided that preparations for Shabbat are begun before the holiday. This is accomplished through an *eruv tavshilin* – before Pesah starts, take a piece of *matzah* and a cooked food (typically a hard-boiled egg), hold them, and recite the following:

בְּרַחֵם אֱתָהּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֶּדֶת הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִצְוֹת עֲרוּב
(Blessed are You, Lord our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has sanctified us
with Your commandments, and commanded us concerning the precept of *eruv*)

בְּהַדְרֵין עֲרוּבָא יְהִי שְׂרָא לְנָא לְאַפּוּי וּלְבִשּׁוּלֵי וּלְאַטְמוּנֵי וּלְאַדְלוּקֵי שְׂרָנָא וּלְתַקְנָא
וּלְמַעֲבַד כָּל צְרָכָנָא מִיּוֹמָא טָבָא לְשַׁבְּתָא לְנָא וּלְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל הַדְרִים בְּעִיר הַזֹּאת
With this *eruv* may we be permitted to bake, cook, keep warm, kindle fire, prepare and do anything
necessary on the holiday for Shabbat, for ourselves and for all Jews who live in this city.

Set the *eruv* foods aside to be eaten on Shabbat. Cooking for Shabbat has now begun, and may be continued during Pesah. (If you forgot to make an *eruv* before Pesah begins, you can rely on those made by others in your area, but ideally you should make your own.)

XV. Shabbat Erev Pesah (i.e. first seder on Saturday night)

When Pesah starts on Saturday night, the usual preparations are moved up slightly, and the restrictions on eating *hametz* make Shabbat meals more complicated than usual.

Thursday: The fast of the first-born is moved up until the preceding Thursday morning, and the search for *hametz* takes place with blessings as usual on Thursday night.

Friday: Even though *hametz* can technically be eaten until the fourth hour on Saturday morning, it is customary to dispose of all *hametz* not being used for Friday or Shabbat meals by the fifth hour on Friday morning. The statement relinquishing ownership of *hametz* is, however, deferred until Saturday morning.

Before Shabbat starts: All preparations for the *seder* should be done before Shabbat, since the *seder* should begin as soon as possible after Shabbat is over, and preparations for the *seder* may not be done on Shabbat itself. In addition, a *yahrzeit* candle (or any other long-burning candle) should be lit on Friday night before lighting Shabbat candles, and the flame from this candle is used on Saturday night to light holiday candles (transferring an existing flame instead of using a match). An additional *yahrzeit* candle may be lit on Saturday night in order to have something to

light from on Sunday night – on both nights this may be unnecessary if your stove has a pilot light you can use to light from.

Shabbat meals: *Hametz* is permitted until early Saturday morning, but all utensils and plates must already be made kosher for Pesah by Friday night. In addition, it is customary to refrain from eating *matzah* on the day before Pesah (*erev Pesah*), in order to ensure that eating *matzah* at the *seder* has a new and exciting quality to it. Hence, although bread could be used for Shabbat dinner, lunch is generally too late in the day to allow for *hametz*, and *matzah* cannot be used for Shabbat lunch since it is *erev Pesah*. Following are some suggestions for how to manage these Shabbat meals in light of these complications:

Friday night: Bread can be used, provided one is very careful about crumbs (pita bread, for example, results in fewer crumbs than *challah*). It may be easiest to simply use paper plates, and then put any crumbs down a disposal in the sink, or flush them down the toilet. Alternatively, *matzah* can be used in place of *challah* on Friday night, since according to most authorities, the custom to refrain from eating *matzah* before Pesah only applies on the day before the *seder* (not the previous night). Egg *matzah* can also be used instead of bread at this meal.

Saturday morning: One cannot eat any *hametz* after four variable hours into the day. Hence, to use bread for Shabbat lunch requires lunch to be eaten much earlier than usual. Alternatively, lunch can be eaten at its regular time provided egg *matzah* is used (relying on the opinion that egg *matzah* is allowed on *erev Pesah*). In any case, regular *matzah* cannot be used for lunch, due to the rabbinic edict forbidding eating *matzah* on *erev Pesah*. By five variable hours into the day, all remaining *hametz* must be disposed of, and the second formula for relinquishing ownership of *hametz* is recited.

Seudah shelishit: By Saturday afternoon, *hametz* cannot be consumed, *matzah* cannot be eaten, and even egg *matzah* is off-limits by the tenth halakhic hour, since the rabbis wanted to ensure that one enters Pesah with an appetite. Hence, *seudah shelishit* (the third Shabbat meal) can be eaten without any bread or *matzah* products at its usual time, or the morning meal can be divided into two meals, separated by *birkat hamazon* and a short break (thus making the second morning meal into *seudah shlishit*), or you can eat in the afternoon using egg *matzah*, provided you finish early as noted above.

Kitniyot: As mentioned above, Ashkenazic practice is not to eat *kitniyot* (legumes) or rice on Pesah. Although these foods are generally stored away during Pesah to avoid confusion, they may be eaten as part of the Friday night meal and (according to some authorities) on Saturday during the day.