

Bedikat Chametz FAQ

Congregation Shomrei Torah, Pesach 5774

1) What is the proper time to perform *bedikat chametz*?

Bedikat Chametz should ideally be performed immediately after nightfall of the 14th of Nissan.¹ This year, that occurs on Sunday night, April 13th. Nightfall is at 8 p.m. If one is unable to perform *bedikat chametz* at that time, it should be performed as soon as one can perform the mitzvah.

2) How thorough must I be during the *bedikah*?

Bedikat Chametz is not just a ceremony where one looks for the ten hidden pieces. One must check all of the places where there may be chametz.² This includes pockets of clothing.³

3) I already cleaned my whole house and I can guarantee that there is no chametz to be found. Do I still have to perform *bedikat chametz*? If so, what am I looking for?

You must perform *bedikat chametz* even the entire house is already checked.⁴

4) I am going to family for Pesach and I am arriving there before the time for *bedikat chametz*. What should I do about *bedikat chametz* in my home and in their home?

There is an obligation to check your home, even if you are not going to be there on Pesach.⁵ The *bedikah* should be performed the night before you leave⁶ and you should not recite a *beracha*.⁷ Additionally, you may participate in the *bedikat chametz* of your host by listening to his *beracha* and performing the *bedikah* in the room that is designated for your Pesach stay.⁸

5) Should I check my office during *bedikat chametz*?

If you own or rent the office, the rules of *bedikat chametz* apply as if it were one of the rooms of the house.⁹ You do not need to recite another *beracha* when you arrive at your office.¹⁰ If the office is far away, you are not required to return to the office. Rather, you should check the office on the 13th of Nissan before leaving the office and then mentally confirm that you checked the entire office during *bedikat chametz*.¹¹

6) Should I check my car during *bedikat chametz*?

¹ *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 431:1 and *Mishna Berurah* 431:1.

² *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 433:3.

³ Rama, O.C. 433:11.

⁴ *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 433:11.

⁵ *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 436:1.

⁶ *Mishna Berurah*, 436:3.

⁷ Rama, O.C. 436:1.

⁸ See note 14.

⁹ *Mishna Berurah* 432:7.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ R. Chaim Linder, *Bedikat Chametz U'Biuro* 4:6. His rationale is based on the fact that one may rely on a *bedikah* that was performed earlier and then use the actual *bedikah* to confirm that those places were checked. As such, in theory, one does not have to be at the actual location in order to confirm that it has been checked.

Yes and you should not use a candle.¹²

7) May I use a flashlight instead of a candle?

It is traditional to use a candle. However, if it becomes counterproductive use a flashlight. If one feels that it is dangerous to use a candle, then you should use a flashlight.¹³

8) Can the task of checking the whole house be split among family members?

Yes. If you do this, one person should recite the *beracha* and then each family member can check a part of the house.¹⁴ It is ideal to include children in the mitzvah.

9) I am going to a hotel for Pesach and arriving a few hours before Pesach. What should I do when I get to the hotel?

If the room was not checked for chametz, you should perform a *bedikah* without a *beracha*.

10) I put out ten pieces and I lost one of them. What do I do?

One should make sure that the ten pieces are approximately the size of macaroni. After one rechecks the house, if the piece is less than the size of a *k'zayit* (an olive), there is no need to recheck.

11) Am I allowed to eat chametz in my house after I perform *bedikat chametz*?

Yes, but you should be very careful to keep track of all of the chametz that is brought into the room.

12) I am leaving my house to go away for Pesach right after *bedikat chametz*. Should I bring my *chametz* with me for *bi'ur chametz* or should I dispose of it before my trip?

It is preferable to perform *bi'ur chametz* in the morning. However, if one will not be available the next morning please drop off your chametz by a friend or drop it off in the shul and it will be burnt in the morning.

13) I am going to be in a place where I can't burn my chametz. Is there another acceptable way of disposing of it?

While it is preferable to burn the chametz,¹⁵ if that is not possible, one can dispose of it by destroying it (flushing it down the toilet; grinding it and throwing it into the wind; grinding it and throwing it into a river).¹⁶ Note: It is preferable to burn your chametz in a communal burning because it is safer and because chametz tends to get toasted rather than burned in a smaller fire.

14) May I recite *bitul chametz* (Kol Chamira) in English?

If you don't understand the Aramaic, you **must** recite it in a language that you understand.¹⁷ The English translations are perfectly suitable.

15) What is the last time to dispose of my chametz?

The latest time to dispose of the chametz properly is five halachic hours into the day.¹⁸ That time is 11:48 am.¹⁹

¹² R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach in *Halichot Shlomo* 5:5. One should not use a candle in any place where there is a concern that one would refrain from checking properly out of concern that it will cause a fire. One should use a flashlight to illuminate the areas that one cannot see.

¹³ R. Ovadia Yosef, *Yabia Omer*, O.C. 4:40, and R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach in *Halichot Shlomo* 5:11.

¹⁴ *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 432:2

¹⁵ Rama, O.C. 445:1.

¹⁶ *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 445:1.

¹⁷ Rama O.C. 434:2, and *Mishna Berurah* 434:9.

¹⁸ *Mishna Berurah* 445:7.

¹⁹ There is a general dispute between *Magen Avraham* and the Vilna Gaon as to how to calculate halachic hours. The most prominent application is with regards to the latest time for reciting *K'riat Sh'ma*. Many of the calendars present *Magen Avraham's* time for the final time for eating and disposing of chametz. According to the Vilna Gaon, the final time for eating and disposing of chametz occurs slightly later.

