

A SHORT DIGEST OF PRACTICAL HILCHOS PESACH 2019 5779

By Rabbi Yaakov Feitman, Kehillas Bais Yehudah Tzvi

Please note that in addition to the zmanim, there are changes in some of the information from past years.

1. Besides studying Hilchos Pesach, there is a less well-known Halacha, to be especially careful when eating or handling Chometz for thirty days before Pesach. This includes not carrying it into places where crumbs will be forgotten and causing it to be difficult to remove when Pesach comes.
2. Conversely, (the good news), when we do dispose of Chometz during this time, many Poskim hold that we are performing a Mitzvah D'oreisa.
3. If a Bechor, a Firstborn, is not making or attending a siyum, he must fast on Erev Pesach, Friday, April 19th beginning at 4:43 A.M. The latest time for eating Chometz on Erev Pesach, Friday, April 19th is 10:08 A.M. The Chometz must be sold, burned and nullified (bittul) by 11:32 A.M. Friday morning, Erev Pesach.
4. We search for Chometz on Thursday night April 18th. In pure Halacha, it is not necessary to move large objects such as ovens, refrigerators, closets etc. to find and dispose of the Chometz. This activity is more "spring cleaning" than searching for Chometz.
5. Also in pure Halacha, crumbs do not count and one need not worry about them. They are generally *boteil*, meaning we do not consider them significant, they are dirty so we will not eat them and we normally do not even encounter them on Pesach. However, there is an obligation to search and get rid of Chometz larger than the size of a cheerio, This is actually a surprising amount, since it is less than a kezais (olive), so what differentiates it from a crumb? The answer is that we are concerned with *chatzei shiur* (half a kezais), although not something totally insignificant such as a crumb.
6. Nevertheless, when we look beyond the letter of the law, at minhag Yisrael and midas chasidus, we find that K'lal Yisroel, being Kedoshim, a holy nation, has always gone beyond the requirements in Hilchos Pesach and tried to find even tiny bits of Chometz. The conclusion of all this is that if one is going to be totally exhausted from searching for crumbs and therefore unable to conduct the Seder and its Mitzvos properly, one should avoid such cleaning. But if this is not a problem, it is certainly proper to rid oneself of every bit of Chometz. It is NOT PROPER to limit the search for Chometz to the ten pieces one prepared.
7. The search should be a real one and should include opening all closets, looking under beds, in cabinets and all accessible places.
8. The Mitzvah of Bedikas Chometz is so great that many have the minhag to wear a hat and jacket when doing the Bedikah, Since we make a bracha on this mitzvah, many Poskim advise not to go into the bathroom with the candle etc. because it would be disrespectful to the mitzvah, but one should make sure to check the bathrooms for Chometz before or after the formal bedikah, Some turn off the lights during the Bedikah so that it is performed only "l'ohr ha'ner" – by candlelight (Piskei Teshuvos) but others (Steipler zt"l) say this is unnecessary. One should do whatever works best. Although the Mishnah and minhag Yisrael dictate the use of a candle, one should use a flashlight in any area where it would be dangerous to bring fire.
9. The majority of Poskim hold that one should start doing Bedikas Chometz right after Tzeis Hakochavim, which is approximately one hour after shkiah (sundown). If one will not be able to start the Bedikah at this time, he should ask members of his family to remind him as soon as he gets home or is able to begin the Bedikah.

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10. Although a number of Poskim hold that we make a Shehechyanu at Bedikas Chometz (Raavad, Baal Haitur and others), the custom is that we do not. One reason is that we rely upon the Shehechyanu we will make on Yom Tov (Be'er Heitev) and that we are not so happy about this mitzvah because it causes us a monetary loss (Rashbah, Avudraham). Some people avoid this problem by making a Shehechyanu on a new fruit before Bedikas Chometz and having in mind the Mitzvah as well (Rav Ovadya Yosef)

11. Although the Satmar Rebbe and the Steipler zichronom livracha put out the ten pieces of Chometz themselves, the majority have the custom that someone other than the bodek puts out the pieces so that the brachah on the search will not be a bracha levatalah.

Those who leave their homes to stay with their parents or others for the entire Yom Tov and sell their entire home to the gentile, should leave out one room which they do not sell so they can perform the mitzvah of Bedikas Chometz properly.

12. Regarding front or back yards, one need not search for Chometz because we assume that birds carried it away. However, if one left Chometz in the yard on Erev Pesach, the yard must be searched. Therefore, one should be careful not to let the children spread Chometz on one's property at breakfast Erev Yom Tov.

13. If one is afraid that there is a substantial amount of Chometz in an area which cannot be reached, such as a crevice in the refrigerator etc., it is best to spray ammonia or something similar on the area to make the Chometz inedible to a dog.

14. Similarly, if one is leaving Chometz on one's property (including the tree lawn) after the time when Chometz must be burned (this year 11:32 A.M.), one should also spray the bags with ammonia so that a dog would not want to eat it. It is best to get all bags with Chometz in them **off** ones property before this zman on Erev Pesach.

15. If one is home for Pesach, all the places where there is Chometz or Chometz utensils must be clearly marked. If one will be away for all of Pesach, this is unnecessary.

However, if people will be staying in the house (which is very much frowned upon by most Poskim), all Chometz and Chometz utensils must be marked and essentially unavailable.

To be very clear, if one is selling the entire house and will be away for all of Yom Tov, ideally no one should be entering the house. In cases of great need, it is permissible for one to enter briefly, get the mail etc. and leave. Regarding housekeepers coming in to clean, we assume the gentile who is renting your home is pleased that the home is being cleaned but even this is subject to disagreement among Poskim.

If one is going away for Pesach (within 30 days of Yom Tov), one must do Bedikas Chometz in his house. If he will be home on the night of Bedikas Chometz (this year Thursday night April 18th), he should do so with a Bracha. If he is leaving earlier than Thursday night, he should do so without a Bracha. Since there is a takanas Chazal (a very important Rabbinic decree) to do Bedikas Chometz in one's home, one should not obviate this rule by selling one's entire house. Therefore, the sale should leave out one room where all Chometz will be removed. That is the room where Bedikas Chometz should take place. Regarding placing the Ten Pieces of bread, some Poskim hold that one should put out the Ten Pieces at home even though he will do the bedikah again wherever he is (i.e. a hotel) on Sunday night. However, others hold that he need only put out Ten pieces wherever he will be on Sunday night. Either way is fine.

16. If one will be in a hotel on Sunday night, Bedikas Chometz should be done there with a bracha. However, one should first eat some Chometz (carefully!) there so that the Bracha is not a bracha l'vatala. If one arrives at the hotel Erev Yom Tov, the time of arrival is crucial. If it is earlier than 10:08 A.M.(the final time to eat Chometz), he should eat some Chometz and then do Bedikas Chometz with a bracha. If it is after 10:08 A.M., the Halacha depends once again. If the room is clean, one should still double check for Chometz but without a Baracha. If the room is dirty, one should make the Bracha and do Bedikas Chometz.

KASHERING – We cannot, in this short digest review all **the laws of Kashering**. However, we will mention some of the more complicated or recent issues in this area. There is a major disagreement between two great Gedolim concerning kashering ovens, which has sometimes resulted in confusion. Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l holds that for all intensive purposes it is **impossible** to kasher an oven and therefore one should use an insert. According to Rav Moshe, the only oven which can *practically* be koshered is a self-cleaning oven. (Please note that some newer self-cleaning ovens employ Aqualift technology that cleans the oven at a low heat. Therefore, the self-clean cycle on those ovens should be considered for Halachic purposes as a **non-self-cleaning oven**. In any case, according to Rav Aharon Kotler zt”l, the oven need only be left for 24 hours without Chometz, easy-offed and turned on to “broil” for two hours. Therefore, for those who follow Rav Aharon (which is what I advise those who ask me), even a self-cleaning oven does not need to go through an entire self-clean cycle. It is certainly preferable to do so, but not necessary Halachically. Also, according to Rav Moshe, the door must be covered with heavy-duty aluminum foil. According to Rav Aharon, it does not. The stove-top electric grates should be cleaned and turned to the highest for 15 minutes. For a gas stove top, the same 15 minutes is sufficient but one must cover each grate with a blech (even a clean Chometzdike blech) or heavy duty aluminum foil for the entire fifteen minutes. For ALL stovetops, the area around the grates must be covered with heavy-duty aluminum foil.

17. **When kashering countertops**, such as granite (not all countertops are kasherable), it is best to do so with boiling hot water from a Kli Rishon, meaning a pot which has just been removed boiling from a fire. It is best **not** to Kasher with a steam machine such as Steam Magic. This is because there is a major disagreement among Poskim if one is permitted to kasher with steam at all. The Poskim in the majority have therefore ruled that if one must kasher with a steam machine, the water emerging from the hose must actually be boiling so that the kashering is being done with Hagalah, not steam. Since this is very difficult to do, on a practical basis, one should try to **avoid** kashering with any steam machine.
18. Regarding microwaves, they should only be koshered for Pesach if they have been used to WARM Chometz foods, not if they have been used for over 20 minutes at a time to actually COOK Chometz foods. If they have only been used to warm up foods, they may be koshered by boiling water (preferably in a Styrofoam or other disposable vessel) in the microwave for 30 minutes. **Please note** that the water may have to be refilled several times and should be done immediately without allowing the microwave to cool down.

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19. Regarding Taanis Bechorim –the Fast of the Firstborn, some Poskim hold that it applies to kohanim and Leviim, as well as Yisraelim (Mishnah Berurah) while others are lenient (Daas Torah). It is best to be strict on this issue.
20. The optimum siyum to exempt a Bechor from fasting is an entire Gemara or a Seder of Mishnayos. However, many Poskim allow a siyum on one Masechta of Mishnayos or an entire sefer in Tanach if it was studied in-depth with Meforshim.
21. What may one eat and drink on Erev Pesach? One should not drink wine or eat Matzah on Erev Pesach. There is a disagreement between the Rama who forbids lettuce if it will later be used for Maror and the Mishneh Berurah who allows it. Some (Shaarei Halacha) also add not to eat any of the foods which will present in the charoses.

Some refrain from eating Matzah for 30 days before Pesach.

22. **THE SEDER** - It is best not to use very large kosos for the seder, since the Halacha insists on drinking the majority or even entire kos. This becomes difficult and a burden if the kos holds 5 or more ounces. This year, all the kosos must hold a minimum 2.9 ounces wine and it is recommended that the kos should not hold much more. This will allow everyone to drink the complete shiur. Of course, some people are more machmir (strict), as follows. The Chofetz Chaim used a cup which held 5 ounces, Rav Yisroel Salanter 4.1 and the Brisker Rov 6.06.
23. It is preferable to drink wine not grape juice for the Four Cups. However, if for medical reasons or a personal difficulty with wine, one may drink grape juice, as did many Gedolei Yisrael such as the Brisker Rov, Chazon Ish and Tshibiner Rov zichronom livracha (Piskei Teshuvos page 224, note 45).
24. Women who have already said a Shehechyanu upon the Yom Tov candles should be careful not to make the bracha again if they are reciting Kiddush along with the Seder Leader. However, they may answer amen to his bracha.
25. There is a machlokes whether or not we dip the Matzah into salt, as we do the challah on Shabbos and Yom Tov. The Rama says that we do but the Ari Zaal says not to dip in salt. Some Poskim try to reconcile this disagreement by dipping and shaking off the salt (Kaf Hachaim).
26. Women are not obligated to lean over (heseibah) but it is preferable that they do so. Even if they do not, they should be sitting, not standing or walking around because this is not Derech cheirus (Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach).

In order to be yotzei the Mitzvah of Matza, one must eat a little more than half of a shemurah matzah for each kazayis required or almost an entire machine matzah. This is for the first kazayis of Matzah and for the afikomen. For Korech, we are more lenient and require one sixth ($1/6^{\text{th}}$) of a shemurah matzah or one third ($1/3^{\text{d}}$) of a machine matzah.

27. Even those who use a somewhat bland vegetable for maror (such as Romaine Lettuce) may put in some chrain to add a bitter taste, but this is not required. If using chrain only, the *shiur* is 1.1 fluid ounces for Maror and .7 ounces for korech. If using Romaine lettuce leaves, the *shiur* for both maror and korech is the amount of leaves covering an area of 8 by 10 inches. If you are using only the stalks (which has the advantage of much less bugs), the *shiur* is 3 by 5 inches. Each act of eating (i.e. Matzah, Maror, korech and the afikomen should preferably be eaten within 2 minutes but worse comes to worse, can span 9 minutes but no more (known as *toch kedei achilas pras*).

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28. When reciting Hallel, the Seder Leader should act as the Sheliach Tzibur (Chazan) does in Shul and everyone else should answer where it is usually responsive in Shul (hodu lashem, ana Hashem etc.)
29. Regarding quinoa, as far as we know, there are several acceptable Pesach Hechsherim: With the OUP symbol: Goldbaum Red and Tri-color, White Chia seeds, Pereg White, Red and Tri-Color, Setton, Labonne, Pereg Quinoa flour, The following are fine with the Star K symbol, no P required: Ancient Harvest, Traditional White Quinoa, Inca Red Quinoa, Tri-Color Quinoa, Setton. Please note there are changes in this list from last year's quinoa list. We are following the opinion of those that hold that quinoa is not kitniyos, so the only issue is whether some other grain has been mixed in. Therefore, even Ashkenazim may eat quinoa as long as it carries one of these hechsherim for Pesach.
30. An Ashkenazi may eat in the home of a Sephardi, even on utensils which have been used for rice etc. as long the Ashkenazi does *not* actually eat kitniyos.
31. Regarding milk, if one is not *makpid* on cholov Yisrael, it is preferable to buy milk with special Pesach supervision since milk sometimes contains vitamins which are chometz. If it is impossible to buy Kosher l'Pesach milk, one *must* buy all milk *before* Pesach because then the small amount of chometz is *bateil* – nullified.
32. Even if one relies upon various opinions that allow the purchase of certain frozen vegetables all year, they are forbidden without Pesach certification because the companies use anti-foaming agents which are chometz. In addition, many of these companies produce pasta on the same equipment. However, these problems do *not* apply to frozen fruit, although one must still check to make sure that there is no corn syrup or other problematic additives.
33. Although the OU allows the purchase of unflavored seltzer without Pesach certification, we recommend following Rabbi Blumenkrantz's opinion that seltzer must have Pesach Hashgocho since the carbon dioxide in seltzer may be obtained as a by-product in the making of yeast. Please also note that iodized salt is processed with corn which is kitniyos, but non-iodized salt and sea salt do not require Pesach Hashgocho.
34. Please also be vigilant about products, such as jelly rings, which suddenly change Hashgochos for Pesach. Some of them do not use gelatin (non-kosher) all year long and do so for Pesach. Buying these, even though they have some rabbinic supervision, would mean that one is significantly lowering one's standards for Pesach, which is the exact opposite of the minhag to be machmir on Pesach whenever possible.
35. The OU takes the position that we do not have to worry about creams, lotions and perfumes even if they contain alcohol. They maintain that most alcohol in these products are not chometz at all since isopropyl alcohol and methanol are not made from grains. Even ethanol is probably not chometz since the vast majority of industrial ethanol in the U.S. is made from corn, which is actually kitniyos and not chometz. Therefore, since these products are not ingested, the kitniyos may be used. Furthermore, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l ruled that creams which contain chometzdike alcohol are permitted because the alcohol was added before Pesach and was *boteil*. In addition, the alcohol is usually denatured and generally contains no chometz at all. Nevertheless, it is our recommendation that when there is chometz gomur in a perfume such as wheat, it should be sold with the chometz.
36. As we have noted, the night of Pesach is similar to Yom Kippur eve, when we are considered on a much higher level than the rest of the year. Therefore, many Poskim stress that we should bless our

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children, as we do on Yom Kippur eve. The source of this is that Yitzchok sought to bless his children on Leil Pesach (Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer 29).

Just as Yaakov Avinu received Berachos which have lasted throughout the centuries, so we are able to bless our children on the night of Pesach.

37. An additional reason for *heseibah* (leaning) at the seder is that on Pesach we work on our bitachon-trust in Hashem and leaning is symbolic of the fact that we know that
 - we rely only upon our Father in Heaven (Haseder He'aruch 2:55).
 38. Although we always hear about the Four Languages of Geulah as the source for the Arba Kosos, many Poskim suggest that we have other Fours in mind as well. These include the four mentions of Kos Paroah in the dream of the *Sar Hamashkim* (Bereishis 40:11-13), the four evil decrees of Paroah (Shemos Rabbah 6:26), which are a) he embittered our lives, b) he ordered the midwives to kill the boy babies. c) he had them thrown into the river. d) he ordered us to work without straw etc; the four generations we spent in Mitzrayim (*Megaleh Amukos*), the four who must give thanks to Hashem (Gra), the four letters of the name of Hashem (Medrash Talpios, page 133), the four worlds, this world, *Yemos Hamoshiach*, *Techias Hameisim*, *Olam Haba (Gra)*, the Four Mothers (*Maharal*).
 39. One should at least mention, some say even to sing each time, the simonim of the Seder, Kadash Urechatz etc. These words and phrases have profound Kabbalistic meanings, which can help in ways we cannot even imagine. One explanation of their significance is that *aveidah chozeres b'simanim* – one can claim and have a lost object returned with the correct signs that it is his. We have lost much which is our heritage and legacy. We can claim it all on Pesach with the simanim of the seder (The Tiferes Ish from Minsk).
 40. In general, there is an ancient custom to be machmir (especially scrupulous) with the Halachos of Pesach. During Elul and Tishrei we do Teshuvah out of fear. On Pesach our Teshuvah is out of love. Therefore, whenever possible we try to show Hashem that we love his Yom Tov, Halachos and the Mitzvos of Pesach. We should never chas v'shalom, imply that they are a burden or we just want to get them over with.
 41. There is an interesting Halacha about enjoying the smell of chometz on Pesach. If one walks by a non-Jewish bakery or pizza shop and enjoys the smell, it may be a prohibition of benefitting or taking pleasure from chometz (Biyur Halacha 443). However, if one is simply walking by these stores and does not *want* to enjoy the smell, he does not have to cross the street or avoid walking by these establishments (Rama Yoreh Deah 142:15). If one is not sure if he will be able to withstand the enjoyable smell, he should indeed avoid walking by these stores.
 42. If one is going to the zoo on Chol Hamoed Pesach, one should be careful not to purchase the animal foods available (especially at the petting zoos), since they are very often chometz. One should not even pick up chometz which has fallen to the floor, since the act of buying or picking up chometz constitutes the prohibition of *Baal Yirah* and *Baal Yimatzei* (*Mishneh Berurah* 448:28).
- In the zchus of properly keeping Hilchos Pesach, may we all have a

Chag Kasher V'sameach and be zocheh to the Geulah Shelaimah b'meheira b'yameinu.