

# How is this Pesach different from all others?

5780 - 2020

15-22 Nisan 5780    April 9-16, 2020

Dear Beth El family,

Pesach is the ultimate home holiday, and in all other years, we as a community strive to make connections between congregants to celebrate a seder, to shop for groceries and Pesach delicacies. This year, we understand we will not be able to do any of that.

This Pesach, “the ultimate home holiday” will be taken to a new level. We’ll all be celebrating at home, and it will look different. And that’s OK. Each of us will strive for the right balance between the seder we love and the accommodations we need to make this year. Included in this guide are the standard guidelines for preparing for Pesach, and some guidance for what you can do to make this modified experience meaningful.

One other note: We may be feeling sad about the chance we won’t get this year to visit with relatives and friends, and even more upset about the possibility of being in our homes alone. Please don’t hesitate to call or email me in the lead-up to talk. This is a big deal.

In planning for this different Pesach, here are a few things to consider:

1. **Shop now, as do as much online as you can.** Most grocery stores will deliver!
  - a. Make your life easier and place an order with Abel Passover catering—food for the meal as well as the ritual foods for the seder. They will deliver to our parking lot, and you can pick up your box outside, at least 6 feet away from anyone else.
2. → → → **What to buy and eat?** The Rabbinical Assembly’s Committee on Jewish Law and Standards’ (CJLS) Kashrut Subcommittee has compiled a guide for Pesach during COVID-19 circumstances. In truth, most of it is a clarification of the things that are always true; many of us are stricter in our own personal practice, and we need not be. [You can read the full guide here.](#)  
Some highlights:
  - a. Please consider incorporating kitniyot/legumes (rice, corn, lentils, beans, peas) into your Pesach menus this year. Read the guide for details on how to purchase and check for actual chametz.
  - b. Unflavored milk, yogurt, cream cheese, and hard cheeses are acceptable with a regular hechsher (kosher symbol) when purchased before Pesach. If you run out this year, you can reliably purchase more, although it’s preferable to stock up before the holiday.
  - c. Fresh or frozen kosher meat (except chopped meat) can always be purchased before or on Pesach without a Pesach hechsher. Chopped kosher meat should be purchased before Pesach.
  - d. Fresh or frozen filleted fish can be purchased before Pesach without a special hechsher.
3. **Consider hosting or attending a seder using technology**—Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, Google Hangouts—if you’re comfortable using technology on the holiday. This is the only safe way to celebrate with others.
  - a. *If you’re open to inviting fellow Beth El members to your seder by video, please let me know ASAP! I’m hoping to do seder matching this way.*
  - b. If you will be sharing a seder using technology, or you don’t have access to your stash of haggadot, I recommend PJ Library’s free downloadable haggadah: <https://pjlibrary.org/haggadah>.
  - c. If you are streaming, please take a look at the [Seder Streaming guidance](#) from the Rabbinical Assembly’s CJLS.

4. **Learn the seder requirements** if you're not already familiar. You might be leading a seder for the first time this year, even for yourself! Join my class on Sunday night, March 29, 8pm to get some guidance. Watch your daily Beth El email for the link.

### What about the synagogue-based parts of Pesach?

We'll be socially distanced throughout the entire holiday, so unfortunately we will need to modify the wonderful synagogue-based parts of Pesach. Here's our plan:

1. **Selling chametz.** This year, we will sell our chametz through the [Rabbinical Assembly's new online platform](#). It is still customary to make a donation at this time, and you are encouraged to Venmo the synagogue and earmark it "Passover donation".
2. **Siyyum for first-borns.** I'll host a siyyum (brief conclusion of Jewish text) over Zoom on the morning of Wednesday, April 8. Minyan at 7:30am, siyyum right afterward. All are (always) welcome; firstborns will be able to eat after the siyyum, but you'll have to provide your own food this time! Sorry! Access this service using the same Zoom link we've been publicizing for morning Minyan.
3. **Disposing of chametz.** [From the Conservative Movement's Law Committee:] It is customary to burn a small amount of chametz, symbolically, on the eve of the holiday. This may still be done if it can be done safely. Usually it is done outside, but a small amount of chametz can be safely burned in a sink. Chametz may also be discarded in the trash if rendered inedible by sprinkling with household cleaner, and then put in household trash, even though the trash may not be collected from one's property until after the holiday begins. Chametz should not be flushed down the toilet because of possible damage to plumbing or the municipal sewer systems.
4. **Yom Tov/Holiday services.** Unfortunately, we won't be able to gather for services on the first 2 days or the last 2 days of Pesach (Thursday and Friday, April 9-10; Wednesday and Thursday, April 15-16). If you like, you can stream services from these synagogues:
  - a. Beth El Fairfield, 10am <https://bethelfairfield.org/worship/live/>
  - b. Sutton Place Synagogue in NYC, 9:15am [www.spsnyc.org](http://www.spsnyc.org) (click on Livestream)
5. **Weekday services.** We will continue to gather over Zoom for morning minyan, including during the intermediate days of Pesach (Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, April 12-14) at 8:00am. Please do join us using the minyan link in your daily emails.
6. **Yizkor.** Yizkor normally takes place on the final day of Pesach. We will hold a Zoom Yizkor service—a brief teaching and service—on Sunday evening, April 12, at 8:00pm. Watch your daily Beth El email for the link.

We know how challenging it is to prepare for Pesach on your own this year. The leadership of our Beth El and I are working on a "Mishloach Matzot" project—each of you will receive a box of matzah and a bottle of grape juice in advance of the Pesach holiday. We look forward to celebrating a little more together next year!

Continue below for the standard guide to cleaning, kashering, and food.

Wishing each of you a *Chag Kasher v'Sameach, a zissen and kosher Pesach*, and a **healthy Pesach**,

Rabbi Ita Paskind

**Pesach Guide 5780 – 2020**  
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**10 Easy Steps to Prepare Your Pesach Kitchen**

1. Set aside a special Pesach area. Empty and clean only the number of cabinets you will need for Pesach food and utensils. Simply clean the outside of the others and tape them closed.
2. Refrigerators should be cleaned, inside and out. Some people also cover the shelves with foil. You should place a piece of foil in one area and keep your chametz food there until the onset of the holiday. Remember to reserve a place on your counters, too.
3. Decide how many days in advance you can do without your oven (what did we do before toaster ovens?). The oven is kashered by a thorough scrubbing and cleaning, followed by placing it on the highest heat for ½ hour. If it is self-cleaning, scrub, then run through a self-clean cycle. Speaking of toaster ovens, simply put them away for the holiday.
4. Stoves may be kashered by a thorough scrubbing, then turned on to the highest heat for 15 minutes.
5. Microwaves may be kashered by a thorough scrubbing, then placing a glass of water in the oven and running it on high for a few minutes until the cavity fills with steam and the water disappears. A microwave that has a browning element cannot be kashered.
6. Dishwashers may be kashered by scouring, not using for 24 hours, and then running it empty through a full cycle.
7. Electrical appliances may be kashered if the individual parts can be removed and kashered in the appropriate way (metal or glass). If the parts that come into contact with chametz cannot be removed, it cannot be kashered.
8. Countertops and shelves that will be used should be thoroughly cleaned. They should be covered with plastic, foil, shelf paper or vinyl tablecloths. If you have granite surfaces, simply clean them and pour boiling water over them.
9. A metal sink is kashered by a thorough cleaning and pouring boiling water over it. A porcelain sink should be cleaned, and a sink rack and dish basin used throughout the holiday, as a porcelain sink cannot be kashered.
10. Put your feet up and relax for a little while

## **Dishes, Utensils, Pots and Pans**

1. Utensils used for baking during the year should be put away for the holiday.
2. Chinaware, enamelware, earthenware, porcelain and plastic cannot be kashered. Only dishes and cooking utensils especially reserved for Pesach should be used, with the following exceptions:
3. Silverware, knives, forks and spoons made wholly of metal can be kashered by a thorough cleaning and immersion in boiling water. Any utensil which is to be kashered should not be used for a period of 24 hours between the cleansing and the actual kashering by immersion.

Here's how:

- a. Bring a Pesach pot of water to a rolling boil
- b. Dip the silverware into the water one piece at a time, until it is totally immersed (or you may do several in a net bag). They're kosher. When you polish them (what would Bubbe think), make sure you use kosher-for-Pesach polish.

### 4. Glasses

There are two acceptable methods:

- a. Immerse the glassware in room-temperature water for 72 hours, changing the water every 24 hours.
- b. Clean them, then run them through a dishwasher cycle (the dishwasher must have already been scrubbed).

Though it is not easy to balance Pesach preparation with chametz meals, it certainly can lead one to creative solutions. Enjoy the warm weather and eat on the deck, porch or a picnic on the lawn. Little things make it fun and keep you from constantly worrying about mixing things together.

## Chametz

*Shemot 12:15: "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the very first day you shall remove leaven from your houses..."*

The Rabbis specified five grains that are the source of chametz: wheat, barley, spelt, rye, and oats. Ashkenazic authorities later added rice and kitniyot (beans, peas, lentils, corn, millet, and mustard).

As one rids the house of the chametz, a few rituals are performed.

### ***Bedikat Chametz—Search for Chametz***

After nightfall on Tuesday, April 7, we search our homes for chametz. Any chametz still to be eaten should be put together in one designated area. You may prepare a candle (or flashlight), a feather or old toothbrush, some newspaper, and a small bag. Place pieces of chametz, (usually pieces of bread) in ten different places around the house. Chametz is hidden so that the searcher will have something to find, and the blessing will not be said in vain. Turn off the lights, and light the candle. In the room in which the search will begin, one should say,

*"Baruch atah, Adonai, Eloheinu melech ho'alom asher kidshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu al bi'ur chametz."*

*"Praised are you God, Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us with the commandments, and commanded us to burn chametz."*

Using the lit candle, search the house for chametz, and use the feather or toothbrush to sweep it into the newspaper. Put all the chametz into the bag. It is fun to divide the responsibilities so that one person handles the candle, another the feather, etc. When all the chametz has been found and gathered, the following is said:

*"Any leaven that may still be in the house, which I have not seen or have not removed, shall be as if it does not exist, like the dust of the earth."*

The next morning, April 8, the chametz that was found in the search is burned. Recite the following before burning or disposing of this chametz:



*"All leaven and anything leavened that is in my possession, whether I have seen it or not, whether I have observed it or not, whether I have removed it or not, shall be considered nullified and ownerless as the dust of the earth."*

Remember, the mitzvah of searching for chametz includes the search on Tuesday night, the renunciation of the ownership of chametz made at night, and the burning or disposing of the chametz on Wednesday morning.

### ***Mechirat Chametz—Selling the Chametz***

As one may not possess any chametz during Pesach, it is customary to rid the house of as much as possible. However, as that is virtually impossible, we sell the remaining chametz to someone who is not bound by this prohibition. Appoint Rabbi Mordy Schwartz of the Rabbinical Assembly to sell your chametz: <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sale-hametz-0>.

Your chametz will return to you at the end of the holiday on Thursday, April 16 at 8:30pm.

- **Last time to eat *chametz*: 10:45am**
- ***Chametz* must be burned/disposed of by: 11:50am**

### ***Fast of the First-Born—Ta'anit Bechorot***

In commemoration of our deliverance from Egypt, first-born children fast on the eve of Pesach until the Seder. However, if a piece of traditional text is completed (called a siyyum) at that time, one is allowed to eat in celebration of the moment, and is not required to fast the rest of the day. Therefore, any first-born present at our Zoom morning minyan and subsequent 10-minute siyyum may eat. Please prepare your own food for this year's siyyum!

חג כשר ושמח!

*Chag Kasher v'Sameach!*