

Pesach in Ten Easy Steps! 5780

Rabbi Elie Buechler

Preparing for *Pesach* can be overwhelming and anxiety-ridden. Use this handy guide to help ease any angst.

### STEP #1: Preparing Your *Pesach* Kitchen

The laws of *kashering* kitchens and utensils are complex.

Appliances:

- **Gas Cooktop:** On a gas range, the metal grates upon which the pots on the range sit may be *kashered* by turning the flame on high for 15 minutes. In order to spread the flame over the entire grate, it is advisable to cover the grates with a *blech*, a piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil, or a pot full of water during the *kashering*. The rest of the range (the area between the burners) should be cleaned and covered with a double layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil. The burners themselves do not need *kashering* or covering, just cleaning. The drip pans should be thoroughly cleaned and need not be *kashered*.
- **Electric cooktop:** One need only turn the burners to the high-heat setting for a few minutes in order to *kasher* them, since the burners come to a glow in a few minutes. The remaining cooktop areas should be covered.
- **Glass Covered Tops:** Please speak with Rabbi Levine.
- **Conventional oven:** Whether gas or electric, the oven must be completely cleaned before *kashering*. Oven cleaner may be necessary to remove baked-on grease.<sup>1</sup> Once the oven and racks have been cleaned, they may be *kashered* by “*Libbun Kal*,” *i.e.*, turning the oven to the broil setting for forty minutes. In a gas oven, the broil setting will allow the flame to burn continuously. In a conventional electric oven, the highest setting (broil or 550°F) *kashers* the oven.
- **“Continuous-cleaning” oven:** One cannot assume that the oven is clean simply because the manufacturer claims it to be continuously clean. A visual inspection is required.<sup>2</sup> The oven should then be *kashered* by turning it to the broil setting for forty minutes.
- **Self-cleaning oven:** The self-cleaning cycle cleans and *kashers* the oven simultaneously. This is true for convection ovens with a self-cleaning feature as well. The oven need not be carefully cleaned beforehand, because everything inside the oven is reduced to ash. The oven door and rubber around the door should, however, be completely clean before the self-clean cycle.
- **Broiler:** The broiler pan and grill cannot be *kashered* by just turning on the gas or electricity. Since food is cooked directly on the pan or grill, they must be heated to a glow (“*Libbun Gamur*”) in order to be used on *Pesach*. An alternate method is to replace the pan with a new pan and *kasher* the empty broiler cavity by cleaning and setting it to broil for forty minutes. If one does not intend to use the broiler on *Pesach*, one may still use the oven, even without *kashering* the broiler, provided that the broiler has been thoroughly cleaned or covered with

---

<sup>1</sup> If a caustic type of oven cleaner (such as Easy-Off) was used to clean the oven and some stubborn spots remain after the caustic cleaner has been applied a second time with similar results, the remaining spots may be disregarded.

<sup>2</sup> Since caustic or abrasive oven cleaners (*e.g.*, Easy-Off) cannot be used without destroying the continuous-clean properties of the oven, a non-abrasive, non-caustic, cleaner must be used. Grease spots will usually disappear if the top layer of grease is cleaned with Fantastic and a nylon brush. The oven should then be turned to 450°F for an hour so that the continuous-clean mechanism can work.

heavy-duty tin foil. Similarly, other cooktop inserts, such as a griddle or a barbecue broiler, would require heating the surface to a red glow before usage (“*Libbun Gamur*”).

- Microwave Ovens: Microwaves whose inside is made of metal may be *kashered* by first cleaning them out thoroughly, then placing a container filled with water in the oven and boiling it until the oven fills with steam. Microwave ovens whose inside is made of plastic present a *kashering* problem. Fortunately, many do not heat up the oven walls enough to cause a real *kashrut* concern. Clean the microwave well, then boil a cup of water on the highest setting for 10 minutes. Quickly insert your hand and touch the oven ceiling: if it is too hot to touch, the microwave should not be used for *Pesach*.<sup>3</sup> If it is relatively cool (or even warm), the oven may be used and has just been *kashered*. The glass plate (if you have one) should be covered with saran wrap or not used.
- Sinks are generally made from china, corian, porcelain, stainless steel, or granite. China sinks cannot be *kashered* at all. Porcelain or corian sinks are treated like china sinks, since there is a controversy whether these materials can be *kashered*. These sinks should be cleaned, not used for twenty-four hours, and completely lined with contact paper or foil. The dishes that are to be washed should not be placed directly into the sink. They must be washed in a *Pesach* dish pan that is placed on a *Pesach* rack. Alternatively, a sink insert can be purchased, allowing for the placement of either milk or meat dishes directly into the sink. Stainless steel sinks can be *kashered* by the following method: clean the sink thoroughly. Hot water should not be used or poured in the sink for twenty-four hours prior to *kashering*. It is recommended that the hot shut-off valve under the sink be turned off twenty-four hours before *kashering*. *Kashering* is accomplished by pouring boiling water from a *Pesach* kettle/pot over every part of the stainless steel sink. The poured water must touch every part of the sink, including the drain and the spout of the water faucet. It is likely that the *kashering* kettle will need to be refilled a few times before the *kashering* can be completed. Granite sinks can be *kashered* like stainless steel.
- Countertops made of granite may also be kashered. Formica countertops should be cleaned and covered with a waterproof material. The same goes for tables with synthetic tops. Wood tables can theoretically be *kashered* with boiling water, but the custom is to clean and cover them.
- Refrigerators should be washed (shelves, walls and compartments).

#### Utensils:

- It is preferred to have utensils reserved for *Pesach* use.
- If one is unable to use special utensils for *Pesach*, many utensils used throughout the year may be *kashered* for *Pesach*. These include metal utensils which are not difficult to clean (a sieve, for example, or a utensil which has parts that are glued together, would not be *kasherable*) and glass utensils that were used strictly for cold food.
- According to Ashkenazic custom, glassware used for cooking, as well as earthenware, pottery, porcelain, pyrex, and chinaware may not be *kashered*. Arcolac, Duralex & Corelle should be treated as glass for *kashering* purposes. Plastic utensils are not kashered. Glass utensils which came into contact with only cold *chametz* should be cleaned with a cleaning solution and then immersed in water for three days, changing the water every 24 hours.
- There are two different procedures for *kashering*:
  1. Metal utensils which came into contact with heated *chametz* in a medium of water (*i.e.*,

---

<sup>3</sup> If it is absolutely necessary to use the microwave during *Pesach*, one may line the inner walls with cardboard and then use it.

utensils in which *chametz* was cooked; pots are a good example) may be *kashered* via the procedure known as *bag'alab*, which involves immersion in boiling water, as explained below.

2. Metal utensils which came into direct contact with heated *chametz* without the medium of water (e.g., a broiler) may be *kashered* by heating them until they are literally “red-hot,” or by placing them in a self-cleaning oven during the self-clean cycle.
- The procedure for *bag'alab* is as follows:
    1. Metal utensils that have been used for cooking, serving or eating hot *chometz* may be *kashered* by cleaning them thoroughly, waiting twenty-four hours, and then immersing them one by one in a large pot (which has not been used for *chametz* within the last 24 hours) full of water which maintains a rolling boil when the vessel is immersed. Note that we do not *kasher* pans coated with Teflon.
    2. The utensils undergoing *kashering* may not touch each other on the way in to the pot. In other words, if a set of flatware is being *kashered*, one cannot take all the knives, forks and spoons and put them in the boiling water together. They should be placed into the boiling water one by one. The process is finalized by rinsing the *kashered* items in cold water. If tongs are used to grip the utensil, the utensil will have to be immersed a second time with the tong in a different position so that the boiling water will touch the initially gripped area. The entire utensil does not have to be *kashered* at once; it may be done in parts.
    3. Please watch out for utensils that are rusty or difficult to clean properly. Silverware made of two parts (a handle and a blade, for instance) should most often not be *kashered*.
    4. A non-Kosher-for-Pesach pot may also be used for the purpose of *kashering*, provided that it is thoroughly clean and has not been used for twenty-four (24) hours. However, the custom is to make the pot Kosher-for-Pesach before using it for *kashering*. This can be accomplished by cleaning the pot, leaving it dormant for twenty-four (24) hours, filling the pot completely with water, waiting until the water comes to a rolling boil, and putting in a hot stone or brick which has been heated on another burner. The hot rock will cause the water to bubble more furiously and run over the top ridge of the pot on all sides at one time. The pot is now *kashered*.

## STEP #2: Cleaning for Pesach

- Although the official search for *chametz* is performed on Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 this year (see Step #4 below), we all begin cleaning well before then.
- Where to clean: Cleaning should extend to every place into which *chametz* is brought (including all rooms into which *chametz* is brought even periodically), pockets in clothing, book bags and briefcases, pocketbooks, *tallit* bags, under and behind furniture, and under and between furniture cushions. Heavy appliances which are not moved during the year, such as stoves and refrigerators, need not be moved in order to clean away *chametz* under them. Special care should be taken if little children live on the premises, since they tend to bring food everywhere. Any *chametz* one owns which is located at one's workplace or in one's car must be either destroyed or sold.
- Note that the goal is to clean away pieces of *chametz* of significant size (larger than an olive's worth); while any *chametz* you find should be destroyed, there is no need to search for crumbs.
- Non-“*Pesachdik*” dishes: Dishes and utensils should be cleaned and stored away in such a

manner that they cannot be accidentally used during Pesach. It is good to tape or tie shut cabinets that contain things you cannot use.

### STEP #3: Maot Chittim

One of the most important ways to prepare for Pesach is through the obligation of giving "Maot Chittim," or funds to allow those less fortunate to prepare for the holiday with dignity. This obligation can be fulfilled through checks made out to the Rabbi Dr. Leo Jung Fund.

### STEP #4: Fast of the First-Born

- On Erev Pesach, first born males fast to commemorate their having been saved from the last and most terrible of the ten plagues of Egypt.
- *Halakhab* provides, however, that if a *bekhor* attends a celebration such as a *siyyum* (a meal following the completion of a Talmudic tractate), he is exempted from this fast. As such, a *siyyum* will take place on Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 online. Details to follow.

### STEP #5: The Search for Chametz

- Time: The usual time for *bedikat chametz* (searching for *chametz*) is the night before the *Seder* night. This year, *bedikat chametz* takes place on Tuesday night, April 7<sup>th</sup> after *tzeit hakochavim* (when it gets dark), which is at 8:09 P.M.
- Ground rules: When the time for the *bedikab* arrives, one should begin immediately, deferring eating and other activities until after the search. The search itself is begun with the *berakhab* (p. 654 in the Artscroll *siddur*), recited by an adult on behalf of all of those participating in the search. Although the blessing mentions destroying the *chametz* rather than searching for it, it is appropriate at this point because searching for the *chametz* is the first step in its destruction. Those who will be leaving the area before Thursday night and returning at some point on Pesach should conduct the search on their last evening home, but without the *berakhab*. One who will not be home at all for *Pesach* and is selling all of his or her *chametz* should speak to Rabbi Levine about conducting the search for *chametz*. The search is conducted silently, other than conversation relevant to the search.
- Lighting: Although *bedikat chametz* is traditionally done by the light of a candle in a dark room, one may use a flashlight to assist in the search.
- Ten Pieces of *Chametz*: There is a custom of long standing to distribute ten pieces of *chametz* to be found during the search.
- "But I've been cleaning for weeks!": One must perform a serious search for *chametz* even if one has previously cleaned one's house and believes that there is no further *chametz*. This search should cover all of the places into which *chametz* may have been introduced (see above, "Where to clean").
- *Chametz* you intend to sell: see below under "The Sale of *Chametz*."
- *Bittul*: At the conclusion of the search, all of the *chametz* is placed in a known location, and a declaration ("*Bittul*") is made annulling all *chametz* which remains hidden. By this declaration, we relinquish ownership over the *chametz* overlooked in the search and state that we consider it worthless. Because this declaration is a legal declaration, it is valid only if one understands what one is saying. If one does not understand the Aramaic version ("*Kol Chamira*"), one should certainly recite the English version ("Any *chametz* or leaven which is in my possession which I have not seen, have not removed or destroyed, and of which I am unaware, should

hereby become null and ownerless as the dust of the Earth”).

**STEP #6: The Sale of Chametz**

- If you own *chametz* which you prefer not to destroy, you may authorize Rabbi Levine to sell these items to a non-Jew for you. Please note that the *chametz* is not sold *to* the Rabbi; one is merely authorizing the Rabbi to sell it for him.
- *Chametz* which you will be selling should be placed in specific locations and sealed off with string, tape, or a lock and a sign indicating that *chametz* is present there.
- After *Pesach*, please allow one hour for the Rabbi to arrange the re-purchase of your *chametz* for you before you begin to use it.
- Please take special care to discuss the sale with Rabbi Levine if you will be in a different time zone for *Pesach*.
- Due to public health concerns, all authorizations will take place through the mail, fax, email, or online. See Chametz Sale Form for more information.
- One may no longer partake of Chametz after 10:47 A.M. on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

**STEP #7: Burning the Chametz**

- *Chametz* is burned on *Erev Pesach* at a specific time during the mid-morning. This year, the final time to burn the Chametz is 11:52 A.M. on Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup>.
- You may bring your *chametz* to The Jewish Center on Monday morning to be burned.

**STEP #8: Preparations for the Seder**

- The shankbone, or “*zero’a*,” is a small piece of roasted meat, placed on the *Seder* plate to commemorate the Paschal sacrifice.
- The roasted egg, also placed on the *Seder* plate, commemorates the *Chagigah* sacrifice which was offered on *Pesach*.
- The *charoset*, usually composed of ground apples, pears, cinnamon, and red wine, is placed on the *Seder* plate in commemoration of the mortar with which our ancestors were forced to construct buildings in Egypt.
- Also on the *Seder* plate should be the *maror*, the bitter vegetable. The most common choices are romaine lettuce and horseradish (unsweetened). Romaine lettuce must be washed and examined carefully for insects. (Take care not to soak the vegetable used for *maror* for 24 hours, since this would compromise its sharpness.)

**STEP #9: Shopping and using sold chametz after Pesach.**

- *Chametz* owned by a Jew during *Pesach* may not be eaten by a Jew even after *Pesach*. Care must therefore be taken after *Pesach* to purchase *chametz* with this issue in view. Stores owned by non-Jews present no problem; products in stores owned by Jews may be purchased if the proprietor sells the *chametz* for *Pesach*, or once enough time has passed that the items owned over *Pesach* have been purchased by other customers and have been replaced by new products from the store’s suppliers.

STEP #10: Next *Pesach* falls out on Saturday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

