

Beth Jacob Pesach Guide 2027

In every generation, every person should feel that she/he/they personally had been redeemed from Egypt - as it is written: "You shall tell your children on that day saying, `It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free out of Egypt, for God not only redeemed our ancestors, God redeemed us with them.'"

The above statement demonstrates how special Pesach is. This holiday reminds us that Jewish history is timeless, that we participated in Jewish life in the past even as we continue to participate in the present. Thus, the re-telling of slavery and liberation is our story, not one of ancient history or a people long since passed from the earth, but the experience we all go through each year, breaking open the narrow places, moving out of tightly-bound spaces, breathing life and possibility into a world sorely in need of redemption.

In order to fully relive the experience, we are invited to observe three important mitzvot:

1. To refrain from eating, owning, and buying or selling **Hametz** (Exodus 12:15).
2. To eat **Matza** (Exodus 12:18).
3. To **tell the story** of our liberation from Egypt (Exodus 13:3).

What is Hametz?

If one of the five grains - wheat, oats, rye, barley or spelt - comes in contact with water after being cut off from the ground, it becomes fermented, or "Hametz." According to tradition, this fermentation takes 18 minutes. Pesadiche baked goods are made from flour that has not been fermented. The term "Hametz " is also applied to dishes and utensils that have been in contact with Hametz food during the year.

What are Kitniyot?

Legumes, Rice, Corn – although these are not among the five species of grain that can become Hametz, some Ashkenazi rabbis forbade their use because, in the past, flour was made from them and they felt that people might become confused and be tempted to use regular flour if they were allowed to use flour made from those plants. To avoid possible confusion, most Ashkenazic rabbis proclaimed that these not be used at all. Sephardic rabbis have permitted eating kitniyot, based on the discussion in the Talmud that only the five species can become Hametz. The Conservative Movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards approved a teshuva in 2015 permitting the eating of kitniyot for Ashkenazim on Pesach.

Why must we clean our houses so thoroughly before Pesach?

The rule against Hametz on Pesach applies not only to the eating but also to the enjoyment of Hametz, and also involves removing all of the Hametz from one's home. A Jewish person is not allowed to have Hametz in their possession during Pesach. To facilitate this cleaning and removal of all Hametz, the following rituals have been established as part of the Passover preparations:

I. Mechirat Hametz

We are not always able to destroy or get rid of our Hametz. It may be economically disastrous. So the Rabbis ordained that a symbolic sale is made of all the Hametz to a non-Jew in the community who then sells it back to us after Pesach. The Hametz is then no longer "in our possession." This is normally done by the rabbi for the entire congregation. The form can be found at Beth-Jacob.org/Hametz and must be completed by 8:00 am on April 21st. It is traditional to send in Tzedakah money for Maot Chittim - which will allow the shul to provide Pesach food for those in need.

II. Bedikat Hametz - Searching for Hametz: Tuesday night, April 20th

Bedikat Hametz is done the night before Pesach. After the house has been cleaned, we search once again for any crumbs of Hametz we may have missed. We use a candle, a feather and a wooden spoon. This symbolizes that all of the Hametz that we could see was removed. The blessing for Bedikat Hametz is recited. The Kol Hamira formula for nullifying unseen Hametz should be recited at this time. The bracha and formula can be found in most Haggadot. We burn the Hametz we found.

III. Bittul Hametz

A formula renouncing any Hametz that we have inadvertently missed is recited, canceling our responsibility for it, thus symbolically removing it from our homes. The formula for Bittul Hametz is recited for the search on Tuesday night, April 20, and Wednesday morning, April 21st. The formula is as follows: "All leaven in my possession, whether I have seen it or not, whether I have removed it or not, is hereby nullified and ownerless as the dust of the earth." Some have the custom of adding the following kavannah (meditation): "Lord, our God and God of our ancestors, just as I have removed all Hametz from my home and from my ownership, so may it be your will that I merit the removal of the evil inclination from my heart." The formula and kavannah can be recited in English, but some have a custom of reciting it in Aramaic. These texts can be found in most Haggadot. The latest time for eating Hametz this year is 10:54 am on April 21st.

IV. Biur Hametz - Burning of Hametz

at home, or in the Beth Jacob Parking Lot
Wednesday Morning, April 21st, 8:30am-12:00pm

On Erev Pesach we perform the removal of all final Hametz. The burning of all Hametz found during the previous night's search should be completed by the fifth hour after sunrise. The stove should by then be kashered for Pesach and all cooking should be done in Pesach pots and only Pesach utensils used from then onward. Beth Jacob will have a fire pit in the parking lot for burning Hametz between 8:30-12:00am.

What Can I Eat on Pesach?

Recognizing that there are a variety of kashrut practices in the homes of members of our community, it can be difficult to develop standards by which everyone can agree. The divergent histories of Jewish communities and their contacts with other cultural influences have distinguished Jewish ethnic groups from one another, giving each a unique way of being Jewish. One of the ways this plays out is in what foods are considered kosher for Pesach – and it’s not just about kitniyot.

Each year the **Rabbinical Assembly** (RA) creates a guide for kashering for Pesach, which primarily follows Ashkenazi customs, even though they permit kitniyot. Here is a link to this year's guide:

Beth-Jacob.org/PesachGuide

(this will be updated as soon as 2027 is availalble)

The Beth Jacob kitchen is thoroughly kashered for Pesach according to these guidelines. The RA guide is also a good place to start for those who want to kasher their own home, especially the guidelines around cleaning/kashering.

The guide does not cover every question, however. It is especially hard to know which foods require Pesach certification in order to be considered Kosher for Pesach. While the general practice is to consult your local rabbi regarding questions of kashrut, we are now living in a time when the diversity of communities like ours might make this impractical. If, for example, the rabbi is Sephardi and the member of the community Ashkenazi or vice versa, it might make more sense to consult a rabbi with a similar ethnic background. It is helpful to have some guidance though. There are a few Sephardic rabbis online who address questions of Pesach kashrut, particularly with regards to purchasing items without a Pesach hechsher, which they consider kosher for Pesach as long as it does not contain actual hametz and is purchased prior to the onset of the holiday. As an Ashkenazi Jew, I don't follow these opinions, but they may be helpful to others. My main advice around using these sources is to be consistent in following the advice of one source rather than "shopping" on the internet for opinions from a variety of sources.

For those in the community who follow Ashkenazi customs, the RA guidelines around what foods are permissible should also be helpful, but over the past few years members of our community have noticed some major omissions. Those have now been dealt with in a Q&A section found on a not-so-easy-to-find page on the RA website. For your convenience, here it is:

Beth-Jacob.org/PesachQA

And finally…please feel free to reach out to me with any Pesach kashrut questions! (If I don't know the answer, I'll find it from a reliable source).

Chag Kasher V'Sameach!!

Rabbi Tamar Magill-Grimm