



בית הוראה Halacha Hotline

of the Five Towns and Far Rockaway Community

Under the Leadership of HaRav Binyomin Forst, שליט"א

PRACTICAL HALACHA

Practical Pesach Pointers – 5786/2026

Preparing for Pesach

1) Although we clean our homes thoroughly before Pesach, we are still required to perform a proper *bedikas chametz* (search for *chametz*; herein often referred to as the *bedikah*) – this year on Tuesday night – in every place in which *chametz* might have been brought (see note).¹ These include all rooms regarding into which there is reason to suspect that one might have brought *chametz* or into which one might have walked during a meal or while snacking.² Closets, shelves, and drawers regarding which there is no reason to imagine that *chametz* was brought in their vicinity do not require *bedikah*. If small children walk around the house carrying *chametz*, one must check all areas accessible to them (even drawers). After rooms have been cleaned for Pesach, children should not be permitted to walk around with *chametz* so that the rooms need not be cleaned again. Until Erev Pesach, one may give children kosher for Pesach macaroons or the like with a *hechsher* (Kashrus supervision) on which one relies during the year even if one would not rely on that *hechsher* on Pesach (due to one's personal Pesach stringencies). Even *Ashkenazim* may also give them Kosher for Pesach egg-matzah – or rice cakes – (until *sof z'man achilas chametz* on Erev Pesach),³ even

¹ See *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 433:3,11 and *Mishnah Berurah* #45-46. See *Dirshu Mishnah Berurah* note on #45 for a discussion of how thorough a *bedikah* is required once the rooms have been cleaned properly. See also *She'arim Metzuyanin B'halacha* 111:3 note 5; cf. *Sha'arei Teshuvah* on *Rema* (ad loc.).

² See *Chok Ya'akov* 433:26.

³ *Sof z'man achilas chametz* is the time after which no *chametz* may be eaten on Erev Pesach, which is at the conclusion of four proportional hours into the day. One proportional hour is calculated by dividing the hours of daytime into twelve equal portions. There is a dispute among the *Poskim* (*halachic* authorities) whether daytime for this purpose is defined as beginning at *alos hashachar* (daybreak) and ending at *tzeis hakochavim* (nightfall – when three medium stars are visible) (*Magen Avraham*), or as beginning at *haneitz hachamah* (sunrise) and ending at *sh'kiah* (sunset) (*GR"A*). See *M.B.* 233:4 (see also *M.B.* 443:8). **(This year – 5786/2026, in the Five Towns/Far Rockaway vicinity, *sof z'man achilas chametz* according to the opinion of the *GR"A* is at approximately 10:52 AM, and according to the opinion of the *Magen***

though – according to Ashkenazic custom – these foods are not eaten on Pesach (except by the infirm – when necessary).⁴

One who will be away from home for Pesach must nevertheless perform a *bedikah* and must, therefore, rid one's home of *chametz*. If doing such is difficult, one may sell the entire house to the non-Jew to whom one is selling one's *chametz*. Note: Even if the house no longer requires *bedikah*, one is required to somehow fulfill one's personal obligation of performing a *bedikah*.⁵ One should discuss with one's Rav whether to exclude one room of the house from the sale to the non-Jew and to perform *bedikah* on that room, or/and perform *bedikah* on the night of *bedikas chametz* at the place at which one will be staying for Pesach.

2) When cleaning for Pesach, one is not required to move heavy appliances such as refrigerators, ovens, or washing machines unless they are easy to move (such as if they are on wheels) or they are usually moved during the year for any reason); see note.⁶ (See note 7 for exception.)⁷ One should merely clean and vacuum under and around such appliances as best as possible. If it is possible to remove the bottom drawer of the oven or the bottom panel of the refrigerator and clean underneath, one should do so (since there might be significant *chametz* underneath, and/or out of concern that some *chametz* might get dislodged on Pesach and make its way into the rest of the kitchen).

3) Since many of our homes are large and are thus difficult to check properly in one night, one may begin *bedikas chametz* several nights earlier, checking one or more rooms each night – without a *b'rachah*. One may certainly use an electric flashlight to check at such time (see note 10). One must make sure to leave over at least one room to check on the night of *bedikas chametz* – which is on Tuesday night this year – at which time the *b'rachah* is recited. After one performs early *bedikah* in a room, one must be careful to keep *chametz* out of the room or one might have to perform *bedikah* again on that room.⁸

Avraham is at approximately 10:28 AM – if calculating with *alos hashachar* as 72 minutes before *haneitz hachamah* and *tzeis hakochavim* as 72 minutes after *sh'kiah*; and approximately at 10:01 AM – if calculating with *alos hashachar* to be when the sun is 16.1 degrees below the horizon and *tzeis hakochavim* to be when the sun is 8.5 degrees below the horizon – following the opinion of the *Ben Ish Chai*.) The *Mishnah Berurah* (443:8) writes that with regard to *sofz'man achilas chametz* one should *l'chatchilah* (initially/preferably) follow the more stringent opinion of the *Magen Avraham* (72 minutes), and not the more lenient opinion of the *GR" A*.

⁴ *Rema O.C.* 462:4.

⁵ *S.A. O.C.* 436:3.

⁶ See *Koveitz Halachos - Pesach* 6:25, based on *S.A. O.C.* Likewise, any piece of furniture that might become damaged or cause damage (to the floor or carpet) by moving it need not be moved for the *bedikah*.

⁷ This dispensation does not apply if one placed the large appliance in that location within 30 days before the night of *bedikah* (see *S.A. O.C.* 436:1). Therefore, if within such time one wishes to place a large appliance in a new location, one should perform a proper *bedikah* on that location before placing the large appliance there (*Koveitz Halachos - Pesach* 6:26).

⁸ *Shulchan Aruch Harav* 433:7; Rav Serayah Deblitsky (printed in *Mevakshei Torah* 5754 pages 454-5); see *Chok Ya'akov* 433:26 and *M.B.* 433:1 with *Sha'ar Hatziyun* #5.

4) On the night of *bedikas chametz*, other members of the family (who are responsible *halachic* adults) may assist the *ba'al habayis*⁹ in the *bedikah* – by having each (the *ba'al habayis* and the assistants) checking one or more rooms. Only the *ba'al habayis* recites the *b'rachah*, and all who will assist must listen to his *b'rachah*; they should not respond *Baruch Hu U'varuch Shemo* but they should (preferably) respond *Amen*. (See note regarding using a flashlight for the *bedikah*.)¹⁰

It is customary to place ten pieces of *chametz* around the house on the night of *bedikas chametz* prior to the *bedikah* (see note).¹¹ It is preferable that they be placed by someone other than the one who will be performing the *bedikah* (see note).¹² However, they should not be placed by young children – who are liable to forget where they placed the pieces – unless an adult (or at least a responsible child) keeps track of where the pieces are placed. Each piece should be less than a *k'zayis* (olive size),¹³ and preferably wrapped up and sealed to prevent the crumbling and scattering of crumbs. Collectively, the pieces should add up to at least the size of a *k'zayis* (see note).¹⁴ One should not place the pieces in unusual places that do not require *bedikah*. If one performed *bedikah* on a room on an earlier night (see #3 above), one should not place any of the ten pieces in that room. (In fact, one should not even enter that room with the pieces of bread, as mentioned above.)

⁹ Literally: the head of household.

¹⁰ In our houses, using a candle often poses a fire hazard. However, the *minhag* (custom), based on the *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 7b-8a) is to use a candle on the night of *bedikas chametz*. It is possible to preserve the *minhag* yet remain safe by reciting the *b'rachah* and beginning the *bedikah* with a candle – in a non-flammable area, and then switching to a flashlight shortly thereafter. *Sephardim* should consult with their Rav as to the permissibility of using a flashlight for the *bedikah*.

¹¹ The main reason is as follows: The purpose of performing a *bedikah* is to search for *chametz*. If one does not find any *chametz*, there is concern that the *b'rachah* on the *bedikah* is a *b'rachah l'vatalah* (blessing in vain). To prevent such a scenario, we put out bread before beginning the *bedikah* so that we are certain to find at least those pieces (*Rema O.C.* 432:2). (Putting out specifically ten pieces of bread is based on the Kabbalistic writings of the *Arizal*; see *Kaf Hachayim* 432:13.) The *Poskim* write, however, that putting out *chametz* before the *bedikah* is actually not required according to *halacha*, since the *mitzvah* is not to find *chametz*, but merely to search for *chametz* (*Rema* *ibid.*; see also *Taz*, cited in *Mishnah Berurah* 432:13). Nevertheless, the *Poskim* write that one should act in accordance with the custom (*M.B.* *ibid.*; see *Dirshu Mishnah Berurah* n.e. 432:13 note 18 for compelling reasons to put out the pieces of bread. See also the end of this note.) [In fact, nowadays that we follow the ruling of the *Rema* (*O.C.* 433:11) that prior to the *bedikah* one should clean one's house well, it would seem that we should be required according to *halacha* to put out the pieces of bread even when doing *bedikah* at home. Indeed, *Sha'ar Hatziyun* (432:12) writes such in the name of the *Eimek Halacha*. See *Dirshu Mishnah Berurah* n.e. note 19 to *Sha'ar Hatziyun* (*ibid.*) and *Koveitz Halachos - Pesach* chapter 5 note 8 for further study.]

¹² See *Dirshu Mishnah Berurah* n.e. 432:12 note 17. Nevertheless, it would seem that one who will be performing the *bedikah* and has no one else to place the pieces may place the pieces oneself.

¹³ *Sha'arei Teshuvah* 432:7.

¹⁴ See *M.B.* 445:10. If one intends to burn only the 10 pieces of bread (see below in the article), perhaps one should make sure either that the 10 pieces add up to the size of an egg, or that one adds extra bread to the 10 pieces before burning so that the total one burns add up to the size of an egg (see note 17).

5) Although nowadays we generally own utensils that are designated specifically for Pesach use, and we use a lot of disposable utensils on Pesach, we nevertheless are likely have to need to *kasher* some items in our kitchens for Pesach, including the stove, oven, sinks, and possibly counters. The guidelines and laws for *kashering* are complex. We refer the reader to chapter 15 in *The Kosher Kitchen (ArtScroll)* for detailed instructions. One point: There are several different types of steam machines available on the market, which people might assume may be used to *kasher* sinks and counters. In actuality, almost all of them may not be used for *kashering*, since only steam comes out of the wand, not hot water. Only those machines that have hot water come out of the wand might be valid for *kashering*. One should consult a Rav who is familiar with steaming machines for guidelines.

6) Burning the *chametz*: We burn the *chametz* on Wednesday morning, on Erev Pesach – before *sof z'man bi'ur chametz* (see note).¹⁵ One should dispose of most of one's *chametz* before Friday morning – either through selling it or throwing in the trash – as explained below. One should make sure that the *chametz* one intends to burn is at least the size of a *k'zayis* (see note).¹⁶ One should not attempt to burn flour, vacuum cleaner bags, bagels, macaroni, or anything wrapped in plastic, since these items are difficult to burn and are likely to not be consumed completely by the fire. Moreover, we prefer *halachically* to destroy the *chametz* specifically through burning; items that are wrapped in plastic might become unfit for consumption (for even a dog) due to the melted plastic – and, hence, rendered destroyed *halachically* – before they are burned.¹⁷ Such items, if remaining, should either be put out for trash pickup (see note)¹⁸ or should be thrown into a public trash bin before one burns the *chametz*.

¹⁵ *Sof z'man bi'ur chametz* is the time before which all *chametz* must be destroyed (preferably burned by fire), sold, or disposed of, and which is at the conclusion of five proportional hours into the day – as defined in note 3 (*S.A. O.C. 443:1*). This year (5786/2026), we rid of our *chametz* before *sof z'man bi'ur* on Tuesday morning before *sof z'man bi'ur*. (This year – 5786/2026, in the Five Towns/Far Rockaway vicinity, *sof z'man bi'ur chametz* according to the opinion of the *GR"A* is at approximately 11:55 AM, and according to the opinion of the *Magen Avraham* is at approximately 11:43 AM – if calculating with *alos hashachar* as 72 minutes before *haneitz hachamah* and *tzeis hakochavim* as 72 minutes after *sh'kiah*; and approximately at 11:24 AM – if calculating with *alos hashachar* to be when the sun is 16.1 degrees below the horizon and *tzeis hakochavim* to be when the sun is 8.5 degrees below the horizon – following the opinion of the *Ben Ish Chai*.) The *Mishnah Berurah* (443:8) writes that with regard to *sof z'man achilas chametz* (the time after which no *chametz* may be eaten on Erev Pesach, which is at the conclusion of four proportional hours into the day) one should *l'chatchilah* (initially/preferably) follow the more stringent opinion of the *Magen Avraham* (72 minutes), and not the more lenient opinion of the *GR"A*. Perhaps the same ruling applies to *sof z'man bi'ur chametz*.

¹⁶ Although all that one is required to burn according to *halacha* to fulfill the *mitzvah d'oraysa* (*Biblical mitzvah*) is *chametz* the size of a *k'zayis* (which is half the size of an egg), perhaps due to the doubt in *halacha* as to the precise measurement of a *halachic k'zayis* (see *M.B. 486:1*), one should burn *chametz* at least the size of an egg.

¹⁷ See *Halichos Shlomo - Pesach* 6:10 with notes 45 and 46; and *Seder Pesach K'hilchaso* 15:4 with note 10.

¹⁸ One may put it in a plastic bag and leave it on the curb for later pickup.

7) One may not eat *matzah* on *Erev Pesach* (**see note**),¹⁹ but one may eat *Pesach kneidlech* (*matzah* balls) until the end of the ninth proportional hour of the day.²⁰ There is a dispute amongst the *Poskim* (*halachic* authorities) whether or not one may eat *Pesach matzah-meal* cakes on *Erev Pesach* before the end of the ninth hour of the day.²¹ *Sephardim* should ask their Rav which *matzah*-like foods may be eaten – and until which time of the day – on *Erev Pesach*.

8) There are different standards regarding the *matzah* one eats on *Pesach*. a) Unless one has a *minhag* (custom) otherwise, *l'chatchilah* (preferably/initially), one should eat only handmade *shmurah* matzah for the *Pesach Seder*. Those whose *minhag* is to use specifically machine *matzah* for the *Seder* must use machine-*shmurah* *matzah*.²² b) There is a worthwhile *chumrah* (stringency) to eat only *shmurah matzah* (hand or machine) the entire *Pesach*.²³ Those who use non-*shmurah matzah* for the remainder of *Pesach* should try to use only “18-minute” *matzah* with a reliable *hechsher*. c) One should note that all products containing *matzah-meal* or cake-meal should be of the same standard as the *matzah* that one eats. Note: Most *Pesach* cakes, snacks, and cereals that contain *matzah-meal* are **not** made from “18-minute” *matzah*.

9) It is preferable to use red wine for the four *kosos*.²⁴ However, one who dislikes red wine may drink white wine (**but see note**).²⁵ Before *Yom Tov*, one may mix white wine with red wine to give the white wine a red color. If one did not mix the wines before *Yom Tov*, the

¹⁹ *Rema O.C.* 471:2. The *Mishnah Berurah* (471:12) rules that the prohibition begins at *alos hashachar* on *Erev Pesach*. Other *Poskim* rule that the prohibition begins on the preceding night. See *Dirshu Mishnah Berurah* (n.e. 471:12 note 7) for an analysis. Many have the custom to not eat *matzah* beginning from *Rosh Chodesh Nisan* (*M.B.* *ibid.*); yet others have the custom to not eat *matzah* beginning from thirty days before *Pesach*.

²⁰ *M.B.* 471:20. (Cf. the opinion of the *GR”A* cited in *Sha’ar Hatziyun* 444:1; see also *Dirshu Mishnah Berurah* note ad loc.). Nine proportional hours into the day translates into three proportional hours before the end of the day (as defined in note 2.) (**According to the opinion of the *GR”A*, nine “proportional hours” into the day on *Erev Pesach* this year – 5786/2026 – is at approximately 4:09 PM in the Five Towns/Far Rockaway vicinity. According to the opinion of the *Magen Avraham* it is at approximately 4:45 PM – if calculating with *alos hashachar* as 72 minutes before *haneitz hachamah* and *tzeis hakochovim* as 72 minutes after *sh’kiah*; and approximately at 4:19 PM – if calculating with *alos hashachar* to be when the sun is 16.1 degrees below the horizon and *tzeis hakochovim* to be when the sun is 8.5 degrees below the horizon –following the opinion of the *Ben Ish Chai*.)**

²¹ See *Rema O.C.* end of 471:2 with *M.B.* #20; see also *Koveitz Halachos - Pesach* 16:7 note 9 at length.

²² See *S.A. O.C.* 460:1 with *Bi’ur Halacha* s.v. *Matzas Mitzvah*. See also *M.B.* 453:25 and *Bi’ur Halacha* s.v. *Tov*.

²³ *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 108:1; *M.B.* 460:2 with *Bi’ur Halacha* s.v. *Matzas Mitzvah*; see also *S.A. O.C.* 477:2 with *M.B.* #13.

²⁴ Cups of wine at the *Pesach Seder*. *S.A. O.C.* 472:11.

²⁵ If one has both red wine and white wine and the white wine is superior to the red wine, one may use the white wine (*S.A. ibid.*). *Sephardim*, however, should consult with their Rav as customs vary by community.

custom is to allow mixing them on the night of the Seder **if** one first pours the red wine into a receptacle and then adds the white wine (but see note).²⁶

In the next article, *IY"H*, we will discuss *halachos* regarding the *Pesach Seder*.

²⁶ *Sh"ut Sheivet HaLevi* 10:56. The reason for this order is as follows: One of the 39 *melachos* (labors forbidden on Shabbos/Yom Tov) is *tzovei'a* ("coloring"). Most *Poskim* hold that there is no prohibition of coloring food on Shabbos and Yom Tov (*S.A. O.C.* 320:19 and *M.B.* 320:56; see *Oz Vehadar Mishnah Berurah* ad loc. note 297 for an in-depth analysis). However, since there are *Rishonim* - early commentators (*Tosafos Rid to Shabbos* 75:5) who hold that there is a prohibition of coloring foods on Shabbos and Yom Tov, when all else is equal we try to avoid doing such. By pouring the white wine into the red wine, many *Poskim* hold that the entire issue is alleviated (*Sha'ar Hatziyun* 318:65), since doing such would be viewed as diluting the red wine, not as coloring the white wine. However, it would seem that it would be worthwhile – if possible – to mix the wines before Yom Tov for several reasons: 1) As mentioned above, some *Rishonim* rule that there is a prohibition of coloring food on Shabbos/Yom Tov (*Tosafos Rid to Shabbos* 75:5); 2) Other *Poskim* agree that there is no prohibition of coloring food on Shabbos/Yom Tov, but hold there is a prohibition of coloring liquids on Shabbos/Yom Tov (see *Sha'arei Teshuvah* 318:14 and *Sh"ut Rav Paolim* 3:11; cf. *ibid.* wherein he suggests that mixing wine is allowed, per *Darkei Moshe* cited in *M.B.* 320:56); 3) Others hold that there is no prohibition of coloring food or drinks on Shabbos/Yom Tov, but only when one's intent is not specifically to color the food/liquid; but if one's intent is to color the food/liquid, doing such is prohibited at least *miderabanan* (by Rabbinic decree), and perhaps even *mideoraysa* (*Pri Megadim - Mishbetzos Zahav* 318:15 and *Nishmas Adam* 2:24:3; cf. *Pri Megadim Eishel Avraham* 320:25); 4) Yet others hold that there is no prohibition of coloring food or drinks on Shabbos/Yom Tov even if one's intent is to color the food/liquid, but that this leniency applies only if the coloring will enhance the appearance of the food/liquid and thereby render it more appetizing (*Kehilas Ya'akov - Shabbos* 40:1; Rav Elyashiv, cited in *Hilchos Shabbos B'Shabbos*, vol.1 page 749, with note 61). In our case, in which the coloring is done to a liquid solely to make it look like red wine and not to make it more appetizing, it would seem that all four of these groups of *Poskim* would prohibit doing such on Shabbos/Yom Tov. (See also *Sh'miras Shabbos K'hilchasah* n.e. 11:39). Furthermore, there are *Poskim* who hold that according to those who rule that the coloring of wine is prohibited, pouring white wine into red wine would also be forbidden (*Ketzos Hashulchan* 146:15 note 12). (See also *M.B.* 320:56 and *Sha'ar Hatziyun* 318:65.) Rav Ovadiah Yosef (*Yalkut Yosef - Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 57666 - 272:6), however, rules very leniently on the entire matter.

DISCLAIMER: Not all details and aspects of the halachic issues discussed can be expressed fully in this limited format, and a small change in circumstances can change the halachic outcome. Accordingly, for one's personal situation, one is advised to ask a Rabbinic authority, and to not rely on the information presented herein.

516.239.2500

	Regular Hours		Emergency Hours (for time-sensitive questions)	
	From	Until	From	Until
Sunday-Thursday	1:30 PM 6:30 PM	2:30 PM 10:00 PM	8:30 AM	11:00 PM
Erev Shabbos/Yom Tov	3 hours before candle lighting	1 hour before candle lighting	8:30 AM	10 minutes before candle lighting
Motzaei Shabbos/Yom Tov	1 hour after Ma'ariv	3 hours after Ma'ariv	1 hour after Ma'ariv	11:30 PM