

# HOW IS PESACH THIS YEAR DIFFERENT THAN ALL OTHER YEARS?

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## Preparing with Joy

The current situation brings a lot of questions regarding preparing for Pesach. It is important to remember that *simchas Yom Tov*, to be happy on Yom Tov, is a mitzvah in the Torah—a *mitzvas aseh deoraisah*. This mitzvah applies to all—men, women, and children, each in their own way. We must ensure that Pesach is a happy occasion for us, our spouses, and our children.

In all the commotion of preparation, we should be conscious of the halachah that a person should never say, “*Kama torach Pesach ze*” “How difficult is this Pesach.” While there are justifications for people who do occasionally say, “*Kama torach Pesach ze*,” saying so defeats the purpose of Pesach preparation. Some *poskim* say this is similar to the *ben rasha*, who wonders, “*Ma haavodah hazos lachem?*” We should instead frame Pesach as a memorable, pleasurable experience.

At this time, our children are constantly with us at home, and they will remember this Pesach for years to come. The long-lasting effects of this Pesach will continue far beyond when we *bez”H* overcome this challenge. What happens now, what happens during our preparations

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\*) Transcribed from Rabbi Braun’s shiurim on Timely Messages podcasts and other Pesach shiurim.

for this Pesach, will have a long-lasting effect, and the most important thing for our children is that their parents are a rock they can rely on at all times. Let us keep that bond strong and remember that it will keep them in good stead always.

### **Worse than Chametz**

Once, at the Frierdiker Rebbe's Pesach *seuda*, there was a guest who was unfamiliar with the customs regarding *gebrokts*, wet matzah, and he dipped his matzah into borscht. A furor broke out, and when the Frierdiker Rebbe inquired what it was about, he was told it was because someone dipped their matzah into the borscht. The Frierdiker Rebbe responded, "It is much better to have red matzah than a red Jew." To humiliate another Jew is much worse. *Chametz* is *assur b'mashehu*—even a minute amount of *chametz* is forbidden. But there are other things that are equally *assur*, like anger. Even a small amount of anger is forbidden. Let us not allow our *chametz* to lead to *kaas*, to anger in our homes. In these trying times, people need all the extra support they can get.

### **Chumros**

Regarding *chumros* on Pesach, *poskim*, including the Rosh and others, use the expression "*Yisrael kedoshim hem*"—Yidden are holy and go beyond the letter of the law. Some things fall under the rubric of *Yisrael kedoshim*, and some are merely extra and unnecessary. Certain *chumros* and behaviors have developed that are not only not required by halachah, they are not even considered *chumros*. Even when it comes to actual *chumros*, in desperate times many *poskim* say we can avoid the *chumrah*—not only do we not need to do them, they don't even require *hataras nedarim*. And certainly, a *milsa yeserta*—something that is totally unnecessary that a person decided on their own, which has no source in halachah—never requires *hataras nedarim*.

The Rashab remarked that he is afraid of the idea of

*chumros* on Pesach. Indeed, there is a lot to fear regarding *chumros* on Pesach. *Chumros* are a balance, containing both positive and negative aspects. One must focus on the *hiddur*, on beautifying the mitzvah, rather than on the *chumrah*, the severity of the mitzvah.

Reb Michal Zlotchever's son was once sitting with his Chasidim and saw an individual eating matzah *shemurah mishaas techina*, which is supervised from the time of grinding, in contrast to *shemurah mishaas ketzira*, which is supervised from its harvest. Many Chasidim were careful to eat matzah *shemurah mishaas ketzira*, as is our custom today. He told his Chasidim, "Don't humiliate him, *chas veshalom*. If a Yid is eating this matzah, then by the Aibirshter it is special." He then requested to be provided with matzah *shemurah mishaas techina* to show that it too is acceptable.

## **Cleaning for Pesach**

When it comes to cleaning for Pesach, it is important to distinguish it from spring cleaning. Some use Pesach as an opportunity to clean the whole house, but that is not what we're supposed to do now. There is a famous saying, "*Kinder zeinen nisht a korban Pesach un shmutz iz nisht chametz*" "Children should not be treated like the *korban Pesach*, and dirt is not chametz." We must ensure our priorities are straight.

## **Halachic guidelines for Pesach cleaning:**

Generally, all the *chumros* are focused on preventing the possibility of eating *chametz*. Accordingly, although we cannot have *chametz* in our possession at all, the bigger focus is on the areas in which we eat: the kitchen, the dining room.

Halachah tells us that a place where *chametz* doesn't normally go doesn't require *bedikas chametz*. A place where someone might go during a meal is considered *makom shemachnisim chametz* and requires *bedikas chametz*. Places one would never enter with *chametz* don't require *bedikas chametz*. Even in a house with

children, who often bring *chametz* to places where there normally wouldn't be *chametz*, high places they can't reach don't require *bedikas chametz*. There is certainly no halachic obligation to wash the wall, scrape the ceiling, or the like. Likewise, there is no need to move the fridge and oven; the areas underneath appliances don't require *bedikas chametz*.

The Tzemach Tzedek rules that areas sold to the non-Jew don't require *bedikas chametz* or cleaning. One can lock up closets and entire rooms and areas that won't be accessed on Pesach and sell it to the non-Jew. Ensure that any place or thing that will be sold instead of cleaned is locked, sealed, or taped and clearly marked as sold. It is our custom to *davka* sell *chametz gamur* to show it's a real sale. Even someone who has the *minhag* to not sell real *chametz*, in the current situation, he could be *mevatel* his *hanhahga*, change his behavior, and doesn't require *hataras nedarim*.

Any amount of *chametz* smaller than a *kezayis*, even bigger than a crumb, that is soiled (meaning, it is usually inedible) may stay in the house over Pesach. Even if it's larger than a *kezayis*, if it is totally *pogum* and inedible, more than just soiled, it is not a problem on Pesach. Therefore, one of the solutions to cleaning hard-to-reach places is to pour a cleaning agent on it and make it *pogum* before *zman biur chametz*. That alone is sufficient.

One can also rely on the help of their children and non-Jewish cleaning help in Pesach cleaning. Just check over and ensure that everything was cleaned properly.

There's an expression that in Galicia the *minhag* to prepare for Pesach was to sweep on the day before *erev Pesach* and "*gemacht Pesachdik*." In the current situation, this might be the only way to prepare. There's no *chiyuv* to mop, no obligation to vacuum; sweeping is sufficient as long as we sweep the entire area and see no visible *chametz*. And if we have clothing, toys, *seforim*,

*bentchers*, etc., that aren't used on Pesach, just lock them away and include them in the sale.

## Selling Chametz

The sale of *chametz* this year might present some difficulties. The Badatz set up a system where people can sell *chametz* online at [www.chcentral.org/mechira](http://www.chcentral.org/mechira)

It is perfectly legitimate in terms of *mechiras chametz* and the sale is binding in all respects. There might be extra room to make a *kinyan*, but it is not necessary. Normally before Pesach we try to go above and beyond, but it is not a requirement, and it's an equally valid sale when done over the internet.

Transactions today are regularly done over the internet. Most certainly when appointing an agent to do a transaction for us—where no *kinyan* is halachically required—doing this over the internet is unquestionably valid.

If one wishes to make a *kinyan*, they can give an object (e.g. pen, watch, cellphone etc.) to an individual over bar or bas mitzvah and tell them to “lift it up for the *rav*, Rabbi Yosef Yeshaya Braun”. The item belongs now to the *rav*. Through this you are giving authorization for the *rav* to be your agent to sell your *chametz*. (After the *kinyan* the *rav* allows you to take the item back.)

## Tevilas Keilim

When there is no access to a *mikveh*, one may take new cookware and give them as a gift to a non-Jew and then ask the non-Jew to borrow the items. It is then considered the non-Jew's item and doesn't require immersion. The *keli* should be given physically, with the non-Jew picking it up. However, this is not a long-term solution. One should make sure not to discard any of the dishes as they belong to the non-Jew. When *toiveling* is once again possible, the items must be *toiveled*, but without a *berachah*. Alternatively, and this is preferable, they can be *toiveled* with another dish that requires a *berachah*.

Another option: many *rabbanim* have set up a *shtar* for *mechiras keilim*, and one could get a hold of the *shtaros* and have the rav sell it on their behalf.

## Social Distancing

People should not visit others on Pesach or host guests, unless they have received medical clearance.

In general, we should respect the official guidelines and not travel to other communities for the Pesach break. During such a time we can apply the statement of R' Eliezer in the Gemara, "I praise the lazy ones who don't leave their houses over Yom Tov and fulfill the mitzvah of rejoicing with their family".

## Kiddush Levana

One should not seek others to recite Kiddush Levana with them, but say it themselves. There is an advantage to reciting it with three people, and if there are three people in the household it is ideal, but one should not seek others due to the current situation.

If one can't go outside, they can say it indoors. Preferably they should open a window or open the door, and if possible, stick out their head. But the window can stay closed if one can see the moon from the window. If there is no one to say *shalom aleichem* to, omit it.

## Biur Chametz

Since there are no public fires and it is difficult to arrange a private fire, one can burn a little bit (a kezayis) of *chometz* in a *chometzdike* toaster or (gas or charcoal) grill. The custom of burning *chometz* possesses the power of breaking the Divine aspect of *din*, (severity and judgement) and silences the *mekatrgim* (prosecutors). If this is difficult, it is sufficient to flush the *chametz* down the toilet. It is also sufficient to put the *chametz* in the garbage and make sure the garbage is removed before Pesach. Another option is to pour bleach or another cleaning agent over the *chametz*, rendering it *pogum*, as outlined earlier.

## **Siyum**

It is a good idea to start learning now to be able to make a *siyum*. One can learn a short *mesechta*; a short *mesechta Mishnayos* like *Avos* is fine. This is the preferred option, but if that is not possible, one may rely on hearing a *siyum* over the phone and partake of the “*seudah*” for the *siyum* in their own home.

## **A Message to Those in Need of Assistance**

If you need it, do not hesitate to ask for help. By you asking for help, you are doing a mitzvah and giving an opportunity to increase in *ahavas Yisrael*. *Kol Yisrael areivim ze la-ze*—Yidden are guarantors for one another: we are *areivim*, sweet to one to another, and *areivim*, mixed with one another. Although now we are having difficulty with *areivim*, mixing, and we are practicing social distancing, that doesn't take away from the *arvus*, the feeling of responsibility toward another Yid. Let's exercise our *ahavas Yisrael*, and proactively reach out to help other people, and reach out to ask for help.

## **Bentching Gomel**

People who experienced symptoms of coronavirus do not need to *bentch* Gomel when they recover. However, if someone was in bed for three days straight, and certainly if admitted to the hospital due to breathing difficulties, they should *bentch* Gomel when they recover completely. Obviously, this can only happen when minyanim are back in session.

## **Public Events**

Since public *sedarim* are cancelled, people should make sure others have their own matzah and make their own *sedarim*.

Yud Alef Nisan *farbrengens*, Shabbos Hagadol *derashos*, and the like will take place via phone conferencing, etc.

## **Simchas yom tov**

*Simchas yom tov* is achieved by wine, new clothes, and

sweets for children. If stores are closed and one can't buy new clothes, one should use other ways to show their appreciation and help their spouse fulfill *simchas yom tov*. It is recommended, if possible, to order new toys for kids for Yom Tov to help in their *simchas yom tov*, particularly during this difficult time where we need to use every opportunity to increase in *simcha*.

### **Haircuts**

If it's not possible to receive a haircut before Yom Tov, it will have to wait until Lag Ba'Omer.

### ***Maos Chitim***

Extra *maos chitim* should be given this year, as many people are experiencing financial difficulties during this trying time. One should go out of their way to help people with their Pesach needs this year. Additionally, there is a mitzvah to include others in our *simcha* over Yom Tov (such as inviting guests etc.). Due to the difficulty in arranging this now, we should make sure to set up arrangements for them before Yom Tov.

### ***Maariv Erev Yom Tov***

*Maariv* is said before *bedikas chametz* even when davening *biyechidus*.

### ***Chametz Sanitizer***

One must ensure soaps or hand sanitizers don't contain alcohol. All sanitizers not containing alcohol may be used on Pesach. Even if it does contain alcohol if its not denatured ethyl alcohol or if its made in North America it may be used on Pesach. However, if nothing else is available, one may be lenient regardless due to the current circumstances and be careful to rinse their hands with cold water before touching food.

### ***Eruv Tavshilin***

If a person forgets to make an *eruv tavshilin*, they may rely on the *eruv tavshilin* made by the *rav*. This



applies only if they forgot because they were very busy. However, if one forgets to make an *eruv tavshilin* due to laziness, it is considered negligence and he may not rely on the *eruv tavshilin* made by the *rav*. Nonetheless, he can still make it with a *tnai* on the first day of Pesach as follows: They take matzah and food, recite the *berachah* and then say as follows: "If today is *yom tov*, tomorrow is considered a weekday, and no *eruv tavshilin* is required and if today is weekday and tomorrow is *yom tov*, this *eruv* allows us to bake and cook..." (the rest of the text is printed in the siddur 'לאפויו ולבשולי וכו'), and that becomes the *eruv tavshilin*.

If one forgot to make an *eruv tavshilin* on the first day of *yom tov*, then on the second day they can only cook whatever they need for *yom tov*. *In such a case, all* the cooking must be complete before the *yom tov* morning meal. They can make extra of what they are making for that day, as long as it doesn't require extra work, and use the leftovers for Shabbos.

Regarding lighting Shabbos candles without an *eruv tavshilin*, one can light one candle in a dark room without making a *berachah*.

### ***Eruv Tavshilin and Chatzeros***

*Eruv tavshilin* and *chatzeros* require another person, but one should not bring someone in from outside if it's not safe. If there is no other choice, one may rely on his wife or children over *bar/bas mitzvah* and make the *eruv* with them.

### ***Mivkeh***

Regarding *mikveh* on *erev Shabbos*, *erev yom tov* and on Shabbos and *yom tov*, one can take a shower (on Shabbos and *yom tov*, the shower must be cold) for a few minutes or recite Mishnayos Mikvaos instead.

### **Hallel**

The Hallel said the night of Pesach after *maariv* and throughout the entire *yom tov* can be said without a

*minyan*. However, regarding the *pesukim* of *Hodu* and *ana Hashem hoshiah na*, ideally two people should be present to respond, even women or children the age of *chinuch*. Half-Hallel can also be said without a *minyan*.

## Four Cups

People who are not feeling well and cannot drink wine or even plain grape juice may use coffee or tea for the four cups.

## Maror

Someone who does lose his sense of taste shouldn't make a brachah on the **Maror**. If they are able to taste horseradish, they should use that for **Maror** and they make a brachah on it.

## Morid Hatal

Regarding Morid Hatal on the first day of Pesach, we start saying it by *musaf*, and every family can make an announcement that we are switching to "*morid hatal*" and could start saying it by *musaf*.

## Krias HaTorah

*Krias HaTorah* should be recited every day of Pesach and *chol hamoed* individually from a Chumash or siddur.

## Tehillim

In the current situation Tehillim may be recited Shabbos, Yom Tov, day and night. However we must ensure this does not distract from our *simchas Yom Tov*.

## Berachah on Trees in Nisan

One should not leave the house to look for a tree to say the *berachah*. The halachah is that only if a person sees a tree in Nisan should they make a *berachah* on it.

## Counting the Omer

Since there is no *minyan*, it is harder to remember to

count the Omer, and one should be careful to make reminders for themselves to count every day.

## **Washing Contaminated Clothing on *Chol Hamoed***

Clothing that needs to be washed due to contamination concerns may be washed on *chol hamoed*.

## ***Tahaluchah***

When *Tahaluchah* is not possible, one should get the Rebbe's message out to as many people as possible over the phone before *yom tov*.

## **Yizkor**

Yizkor can be recited at home.

## **Seudas Mashiach**

If it cannot be done with a minyan, Seudas Mashiach can be done at home.

## **Simcha**

It is extremely important during this time to stress the importance of being in a state of *simcha*. Many poskim mention that during the month of Nisan the obligation of "*marbin b'simcha*" still applies. Certainly, discussion of the extent of the tragedy is not appropriate during this time. The *halacha* is that one may not share information on Shabbos and Yom Tov about the passing of a relative or a colleague. Specifically in the time of a plague, *sefarim* tell us we are not meant to publicize such information which creates a sense of panic and is at times counterproductive. The antidote to the plague is an increase in *simcha*.

May Hashem provide us with the ultimate true *simcha*, the eradication of all sickness from the face of the earth and the coming of Moshiach now.

ונאכל שם מן הזבחים ומן הפסחים.

לזכות הרב אהרן יעקב שי' בן בוניא לרפו"ש וקרובה  
בתוך שאר חולי ישראל בשכונתנו ובעולם כולו