

To The Brandeis Community,

Many of us have fond memories of preparing for the holiday of Pesach (Passover), and our family's celebration of the holiday. Below is a basic outline of the major halakhic issues for Pesach this year. If anyone has questions they should be in touch with me at heyrrabbi@brandeis.edu. In addition to these guidelines, a number of resources are available online from the major kashrut agencies:

- Orthodox Union: <http://oukosher.org/passover/>
 - a pdf of the glossy magazine that's been seen around campus can be found [here](#)
- Chicago Rabbinical Council: [link](#)
- Star-K: [link](#)

Best wishes for a Chag Kasher ve-Sameach,
Rabbi David, Ariel, Havivi, and Tiffy Pardo

Please note: Since we are all spending Pesach all over the world (literally...I'm selling your chametz for you, I know) please use the internet to get appropriate halakhic times. I recommend myzmanim.com or the really nifty sidebar on <https://oukosher.org/passover/>

I. Maot Chitim

The Rema (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 429) records the ancient custom of *ma'ot chitim* - providing money for poor people to buy matzah and other supplies for Pesach. A number of tzedka organizations have special Maot Chitim drives.

II. Ta'anit Bechorim, Fast of the Firstborns

Erev Pesach is the fast of the firstborns, to commemorate the fact that the Jewish firstborns were spared during *makat bechorot* (the slaying of the firstborns). **This year the fast is observed on Friday April 3 (14 Nissan) beginning at alot hashachar (i.e. very early, wherever you are).** The *minhag* is that any firstborn who attends a *siyum* and thereby become obligated to participate in the *seudat mitzvah* associated with the siyum are exempt from fasting the rest of the day. **Please note: There will be no siyum at Brandeis this year.** If you are around, please make your own arrangements, there are many shuls not so far away.

Also, don't forget about your taxes. I have a guy I can recommend, of course.

III. Chametz

On Pesach, in addition to the prohibition against eating chametz (any leavened product), there is also a prohibition against owning chametz and deriving benefit from it. The Torah therefore mandates that one get rid of all their chametz before Pesach. The prohibition against owning chametz is so

severe that there is a Rabbinic penalty that any chametz that was in a Jew's possession during Pesach cannot be used after the holiday has passed (*chametz she-avar alav ha-Pesach*; see below). All restrictions of eating and owning chametz begin the morning before Pesach begins (Monday April 14). Whatever one is not able to consume or give away before Pesach must be destroyed on Erev Pesach by burning it. We take the prohibition so seriously that we also make a statement declaring all chametz in our possession about which we don't know to be ownerless and akin to the dust of the earth.

Your local Orthodox calendar (or [website](#)) will list a **last time to eat chametz** and a **last time to own/burn chametz**. The former is approximately an hour earlier than the latter.

IV. Mechirat chametz - selling chametz

Recognizing the significant financial loss that the requirement to get rid of and destroy all of one's chametz may impose, the Rabbis came up with a way that the chametz need not be destroyed - selling it to a non-Jew for the duration of the holiday.

Even if you will not be in Brandeis for the entire holiday, if you have chametz that you own, you must either dispose of it or sell it. **Any chametz not appropriately accounted for is considered *chametz she-avar alav ha-Pesach* (see below) and it is forbidden to derive any benefit from it after Pesach.**

It is too late to get in on the JLIC mechira, but your rabbi wherever you are may still be taking sellers on.

If you own the chametz, you should not rely on your parents' *mechira* (sale). They can act as your agent if they treat you as an independent person, but your chametz is not automatically included with theirs.

V. Mitzvah of *Biur chametz* (Getting Rid of chametz)

In anticipation of Pesach we are commanded to get rid of the chametz in our possession. We can do this by eating the chametz, giving it away to non-Jews or disposing of it. No matter how thorough a job we do in the weeks leading up to Pesach, there are additional mitzvot to ensure we have gotten rid of every piece of chametz in our possession.

a. Bedikat chametz - Searching for chametz

The night of the day before Pesach (14th of Nisan) we conduct a search (*bedika*) of the house to make sure all chametz is gone. The *bedikah* is done on the night of the 14th of Nisan, which this year is Thursday April 2, after tzeit hakokhavim. **Everyone is obligated to do a bedika of their room at Brandeis, even if going elsewhere for Pesach. People that live in a suite and/or house with common areas must check the common areas as well as their bedroom.**

If one will not be home/their dorm room on Sunday night, they should do a *bedika* on the final night that they will be there, without a *brakha*.

The chametz found during this *bedikah* should be burned on Friday morning April 3. In such a situation, an additional *bedikah* (search) should be

performed on Sunday night if one is in the location that will be their primary residence for Pesach.

The Bedika should be performed at or after *tzeit ha-Kochavim* (when the stars appear). The search should be a real, thorough search, but only in places where you tend to bring chametz during the year. Rooms where chametz is never brought during the year do not have to be checked. In other words: this is not spring cleaning.

Cars, offices and any other spaces that you have some ownership over and where chametz is brought must be searched,

There is a custom to spread out 10 bread crumbs before the search, to encourage the searcher to keep their eyes peeled. Everyone should do as is his or her custom.

To perform the Bedika, the lights in the home/apartment/dorm room should be turned off. A candle or flashlight should be used to ensure we check in every crack and crevice. A feather and spoon are not required for this procedure. Before beginning the search, we make the following *brakha*:

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על בעור חמץ
Baruch Ata Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha-Olam Asher kidshanu be-mitzvotav ve-tzivanu al biur chametz.

Blessed are You Lord our God, Sovereign of the World, Who has sanctified us by His commandments and commanded us concerning the removal of chametz.

Note: A brakha is only said if performing the search on Sunday evening.

At the conclusion of the search the following declaration is made:

כל חמירא וחמיעא דאכא ברשותי. לדא חמיתה ולדא בערתה ודלא ידענא ליה לבטל ולהוי הפקר
כעפרא דרארעא

Kol Chamira ve-chmi'ah de-ika bi-reshuti de-la chamiteh ude-la bi'arteh ude-la yadana leih. Li-batel ve-le-hevei hefker ke-afra de-ara.

All leaven and leavened products in my possession, which I have neither seen nor removed nor know about shall be deemed of no value and ownerless like the dust of the earth.

The declaration should be said in a language that you understand. Say it in English. It is not a brakha, it is a legal declaration, and nothing is lost by reciting it in translation.

b. Biur chametz - Burning chametz

All chametz must be removed from our possession by the beginning of the 6th hour. As a final act of getting rid of chametz, we burn the chametz that we found during our *bedikah* the previous evening (as well as any other chametz still in our possession). Chametz must be burned by 11:32a in Waltham (please consult myzmanim.com for your own location). This is the time at which owning chametz becomes forbidden. Those who will be home by Friday morning should burn their chametz with their parents' chametz.

If you cannot burn your chametz for whatever reason, then you must either destroy it in some way, or make sure they are totally out of your ownership. Options include:

- flushing down the drain
- throwing in a public trash dump
- dousing in bleach or AJAX
- feeding to animals (must be eaten before the final time)

Note: throwing in your own trash can doesn't help if it is still edible to a dog. Therefore, if you do throw your chametz in your own trash, then douse your trash in bleach or AJAX afterwards.

All utensils one intends to kasher for Pesach should be kashered by that same time, Friday morning.

c. Bitul chametz - Nullifying chametz

In addition to selling, searching for and the burning of chametz, we also make a declaration to nullify any chametz we might have missed. We recite this nullification during the burning of the chametz.

The declaration of *bitul* is:

כל חמירא וחמיעא דאכא ברשותי דחזתה ודלא חזתה חדמתה ודלא חמתה דבערתה ודלא
בערתה לבטל ולוי הפקר כעפרא בעלמא

*Kol chamira ve-chami'a de-ika bi-reshuti de-chaziteh ude-la chaziteh,
de-chamiteh ude-la chamiteh de-bi'arteh ude-la bi'arteh li-batel ve-leheveh
hefker ke-afra de-ara.*

All leaven and leavened products in my possession, whether I have seen them or not, whether I removed them or not, shall be deemed of no value and ownerless like the dust of the earth.

This declaration should be said in a language that you understand. Say it in English. It is not a brakha, it is a legal declaration, and nothing is lost by reciting it in translation.

VI. Eating on Erev Pesach

We do not eat Matzah or anything baked with matzah (including matzah meal products) on *erev Pesach*, Friday April 3, in anticipation of the mitzvah to eat Matzah at the seder. Cooked matzah products (i.e., matzah balls) are permitted. So is egg matzah, or any matzah unfit for the seder. One should eat in moderation on *erev Pesach* in order to have an appetite at the seder.

VII. Candle Lighting

We light candles before sunset Friday evening. **REMEMBER, IT'S ALSO EREV SHABBAT.** Two blessings are said:

(1) ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של **שבת** ויום טוב
*baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha-Olam Asher kidshanu be-mitzvotav
ve-tzivanu lehadlik ner shel Shabbat ve-Yom Tov*

You are the Source of Blessing, Lord our God, Sovereign of the world, Who has sanctified with His commandments and has commanded us to kindle the light of the festival.

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם שהחיינו וקיימנו והגעינו לזמן הזה
Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha-olam she-hechyanu ve-kiymanu ve-higyanu la-zman ha-zeh.

You are the Source of Blessing, Lord our God, sovereign of the world, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

VIIa. It's Shabbat This Year!

Friendly reminder everybody: this year the first night of Seder falls out on Shabbat! Some things to keep in mind:

- None of the leniencies of Yom Tov - cooking, transferring flame, carrying outside the eruv - apply during Shabbat Yom Tov. In other words, they don't apply the first night, they do apply the second night.
- You **should** make an eruv tavshilin for the **last days**, which are Friday/Saturday. One piece of matzah, one egg or equivalent cooked item, and make the brakha found in your local Orthodox machzor. But there is **no point** making one the **first days**, which are Saturday/Sunday, because an eruv tavshilin only helps you *from* Yom Tov *to* Shabbat, not vice versa.
- Therefore, this year, as in all years, you **cannot begin preparing** for the second day of Yom Tov until the first one is over. That's true every year. It's all true this year. For second days this year, if you made an eruv tavshillin, you can begin preparing for the second day *on* the first day *because* you made an eruv tavshillin, and you are preparing for Shabbat.
- **Havdalah** - there is a havdalah ceremony between the Shabbat Pesach and just Pesach, which is said at the second seder. It is in your haggadah. It is said as part of kiddush. I recommend looking it through before doing it. The order is YaKNaHaZ - geffen, mekadesh, borei meorei haesh, hamavdil, shehechyanu.
- There is **seudah shlishit** on Shabbat, even though there is none on yom tov. This may or may not be provided in your shul. There is a debate as to whether this should be timed earlier in the day or whether later in the day is acceptable. You may be lenient.

VIII. Mitzvot of the Seder

The seder should not begin until after tzeit ha-kochavim (appearance of the stars).

On the second night (Saturday April 4), candle lighting is no earlier than tzeit hakochavim. One should not begin ANY preparations for the seder until that time. Prepare accordingly before the holiday begins.

Candles should be lit from an already-existing flame - it is prohibited to light a

new flame on Yom Tov, but transferring a flame is permitted.
The *brakhot* over candles are the same as the first day MINUS SHABBAT.

1) ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של יום טוב
baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha-Olam Asher kidshanu be-mitzvotav ve-tzivanu lehadlik ner shel yom tov
You are the Source of Blessing, Lord our God, Sovereign of the world, Who has sanctified with His commandments and has commanded us to kindle the light of the festival.

2) ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה
Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha-olam she-hechyanu ve-kiymanu ve-higiyanu la-zman ha-zeh.
You are the Source of Blessing, Lord our God, sovereign of the world, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

- A. **4 cups of wine** -- the minimum size of the wine cups is 3.0 fluid ounces.
 - a. Everyone must drink this volume, or at the very least, more than half of this volume.
 - b. The cups should be filled fully for each of the four cups, and should be poured by someone else to demonstrate that we act as free people.
 - c. The Shulchan Aruch rules that it is preferable to drink red wine, but one may drink whatever wine he/she prefers. One may use grape juice if he/she is unable to drink wine, or may mix wine and grape juice.
- B. **Matzah** - there are three times during the seder when matzah must be eaten:
 - i. When we say the Brachot of *hamotzi* and *al achilat matzah*
 - ii. when we make the *korech* sandwich with Matzah, and Maror
 - iii. Afikomen
- b. At each of these times one must eat a *kezayit* (volume of a large olive) worth. This translates to approximately one-half of an average machine made matzah or one-third of a hand made matzah.
- c. Many people will only eat Shmurah matzah at the seder. Eating egg matzah at the seder is categorically **forbidden** for Ashkenazim and Sepharadim alike.
- C. **Maror (bitter herb)** one should use horseradish or romaine lettuce. A *kezayit* worth of maror must be eaten. When using horseradish this translates to 19 grams or .7 fluid ounces. When using lettuce leaves it should be enough to cover an 8" x 10" area. When using stalks of romaine it should be enough to cover a 3"X 5" area.

- a. All of these (Matzah, marror, and korech) should be eaten in a time period of *k'day achilat Pras* (approx. 4 minutes.)
- D. **The Matzah and the Wine should be consumed while leaning to the left.**
 - a. for an optimal fulfillment of this law, lean *on something*, eg rotate your chair so that the back is to your left, and lean on that. Think like a Roman lord chewing on some grapes. You'll thank me.
- E. **Sippur Yetziat Mitrayim - Telling the story of the exodus**
 - a. The goal of telling the story is not simply to relate the details of the story, but to create an experience where everyone feels that they have experienced a personal redemption. The seder is meant to be the ultimate theatre of experiential education. The Haggadah itself tells us "anyone who increases the telling of the story, it is praiseworthy."
- F. **Hallel**
 - a. Our telling of the story of the Exodus should lead to singing the praise of God. The Hallel at the end of the seder is intended to be almost spontaneous. Note that many have the tradition to recite Hallel with a *bracha* as part of Ma'ariv (the evening prayer). (For Sepharadim, this is not a custom but a law.)

IX. Havdallah

At the conclusion of Yom Tov (Sunday night) we recite Havdallah. We only say it over wine (no candle or spices) and we omit the introductory paragraph said on Shabbat.

X. Medicine and Cosmetics

a. Medicine

Any uncoated medicine that one swallows may be taken on Pesach, without checking whether or not they have chametz and/or kitniyot. The reason for this is that these pills are considered inedible, and swallowing them does not constitute eating them.

Liquid and chewable medicines, however, is likely to contain real chametz (or kitniyot). Since they are ingested in the normal way that we eat, these may be problematic. **If you have a serious medical condition it is important to consult with your doctor before discontinuing any medication. It is important to prepare for medical situations in advance by consulting with your doctor and rabbi to find a halakhically and medically effective way to take or not take your medication.** There is always a solution, so don't hesitate to ask.

Further guidelines and lists can be found here:

- <http://oukosher.org/passover/guidelines/medicine-guidelines/>
- <http://www.crcweb.org/OTCMedicineReport.pdf>
- <http://www.star-k.org/cons-appr-medecine.htm>

b. Vitamins and food supplements

Vitamins and food supplements do not necessarily fall under the category of medicine. If they are taken based on a doctor's order for an already existing medical condition (and not as a preventative measure), they should be treated like medicine. If not, they may be problematic to ingest on Pesach if not properly certified for Pesach.

c. Lactose Intolerant

There is a unique concern that comes up for those who are lactose intolerant. Lactaid contains real chametz. However, those who are lactose intolerant may follow these guidelines in order to drink milk on Pesach.

There is a concept in halakhah of *bittul* (nullifying) minority ingredients. Generally if a mixture contains less than 1/60 of the minority ingredients, it is assumed to be null and void. This halakha does not hold true for chametz on Pesach. Even trace amounts of chametz cannot be nullified. HOWEVER, this stringency begins only from the time that owning chametz is prohibited. Thus, if one buys Lactaid milk BEFORE Friday morning the trace amounts of chametz become nullified and remain insignificant when Pesach begins.

One may also buy other dairy products and place lactaid drops in them BEFORE Pesach in order to eat them on Pesach.

There is more of a debate over whether one may employ these procedures for Lactaid chewable pills. Some *poskim* feel that the need to eat dairy is a health need which would make the chewing of Lactaid pills allowable under the guidelines of other medicines described above. Others feel that chewing Lactaid pills is not enough of a medically urgent need.

For more see [this article](#).

d. Cosmetics and Toiletries

All varieties of blush, soap, creams, eye shadow, eyeliner, face powder, foot powder, ink, lotions, mascara, nail polish, ointments, paint, shampoo and stick deodorant are permitted for use on Pesach - regardless of the ingredients they contain.

Many liquid deodorants, hairsprays, perfumes, colognes and shaving lotions contain denatured alcohol and should not be used on Pesach unless they are confirmed to be free of chametz.

You can shave off the topmost layer of your lipstick and use it. Flavored lipsticks contain chametz and may not be used.

XI. Pets

Many pet foods contain chametz. The prohibition against chametz includes a prohibition against owning and benefiting from it - this includes feeding it to one's pets. If you have a pet please see the following on how to properly care for them on Pesach.

- <http://star-k.org/kashrus/kk-issues-pets.htm>

- <http://www.star-k.org/kashrus/kk-passover-petfood.htm>
- <http://www.crcweb.org/pet%20food%20guide.pdf>

It is important to note, that just as we are forbidden to feed our pets chametz on Pesach, we are forbidden to feed them *basar be-chalav* (meat with milk) the entire year. Many popular brands of pet food (especially for dogs and cats) contain meat and milk and should not be used throughout the year.

XII. Quinoa

Ah yes, quinoa, the hyper-essential grain you couldn't pronounce till 3 years ago and you mostly don't care about 357 days of the year, but you can't live without on Pesach. Yes, I like it, too. And it is probably not kitniyot (I don't know how your local Orthodox Pesach program paskens). But you should buy some with a Kosher for Passover symbol.

Here was the [press release](#). Here's what you [need to know](#).

[Here](#) is the Pesach quinoa controversy being covered by NPR, of all places.

And here are some great [recipes](#).

XIII. Chametz she-Avar alav ha-Pesach

In addition to the prohibition against chametz on Pesach, there is also a Rabbinic penalty against chametz that was in a Jew's possession during Pesach. The most common area where this is a concern is in Jewish-owned stores that did not make the proper arrangements to sell their chametz.

The major supermarket chains in the Boston area are not under majority Jewish ownership and thus do not have to sell their chametz. One may safely shop there after Pesach.

See more at length [here](#).

IXX. Kashering

Those who need advice on kashering appliances and utensils for Pesach should contact Rabbi Pardo.

Find a useful guide [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

XX. Chol ha-Moed (Intermediate Days)

No unnecessary work should be done on chol ha-moed that does not directly contribute to our enjoyment of the holiday or our preparations for Shabbat and Yom Tov.

We are allowed to drive, use electricity, shop write, etc. but should maintain the festive nature of the holiday. Wear something nice.

Two rabbinic injunctions must be noted: men cannot shave and one may not do laundry. Both prohibitions were enacted to prevent people from forgetting to do so before the holiday, and just "taking care of it" during chol

ha-moed. These prohibitions are not lifted if you remembered to shave / do laundry.

The prohibition against chametz remains in effect for the duration of the holiday.

There are various customs on wearing tefillin or not during chol ha-moed. If you have no custom, do not don your tefillin. If you are in Israel, you should observe the nation-wide custom to not don tefillin.

Shabbat Chol ha-Moed

There is none this year. Wild, right?

XXI. Liturgical changes

- A full Hallel is said on the first two days of Pesach. On the subsequent days we say a "Half Hallel."
- Sepharadim say full Hallel (with a *brakha*) as part of Ma'ariv on the first two nights of Pesach, and many Ashkenazim have this custom as well.
- *Tal* (dew) During the *Chazan's* repetition of the first day of Pesach we recite a special prayer for dew. From this point on we no longer recite *mashiv ha-ru'ach u-morid ha-geshem* in the *Amidah*. Many have the custom to replace those words with *ve-ten tal u-mattar li-vrakha*.
- *Ve-ten brachah* - Beginning *ma'ariv* at the end of the first days of Yom Tov, we say *ve-ten brachah* in the *amidah*. We no longer recite *ve-ten tal umatar li-vrachah*.
- *Yizkor* - is recited on the 8th day of Pesach.
- *Shir ha-Shirim* (Song of Songs) is read in synagogue on Shabbat Chol ha-Moed.

XXII. Sefirat ha-Omer

We begin counting the *omer* on the second night of Pesach. It is very important to not miss a day, and there are numerous online services as well as apps that will help you remember to count.

There are many practices of mourning that affect this period to commemorate the students of Rabbi Akiva who died during the *omer*.

XXIII. The Last days of Yom Tov

Pesach concludes with two days of Yom Tov, beginning Sunday evening April 20th. When you light candles, the *brakha* is:

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של יום טוב
baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha-Olam Asher kidshanu be-mitzvotav ve-tzivanu lehadlik ner shel yom tov

Blessed are You Lord our God, Sovereign of the world, Who has sanctified with His commandments and has commanded us to kindle the light of the festival.

There is no *brakha* of *she'hechyanu*. Repeat the same *brakha* the following

night.

XXIV. Cooking on Yom Tov

Note the following applies **ONLY** for Yom Tov and **NOT** for Shabbat

When Yom Tov falls out on Shabbat, that day = Shabbat

On Yom Tov we are permitted to perform certain activities that we can't do on Shabbat if they fall under the category of *ochel nefesh* (things that are beneficial to the soul). This broad category includes cooking and preparing food for the Chag, carrying, and other activities. One may cook on Yom Tov with the following restrictions:

- One cannot create a new flame, but must use a fire that was lit before Yom Tov. Similarly, one cannot extinguish a flame on Yom Tov.
- One **CAN** adjust the temperature on an oven or stove as long as there is not digital temperature display or other lights that will be turned on or be adjusted when changing the temperature. Electric stoves in which the heating element turns red when active are also problematic - please consult with a rabbi before using such stoves. Provided one's oven and/or stovetop meet these criteria, it is recommended to leave it on at a low temperature before the start of Yom Tov, and to increase the temperature when cooking. Once you finish cooking you should return the oven/stove to the low temperature. **Extreme care should be taken to prevent fires and accidental burns.**
- One can only prepare food for that day of Yom Tov. It is not permitted to cook on the afternoon of the first day for the next day's meals. If there happen to be leftovers, they can be eaten on the following day.

XXV. Showering on Yom Tov

Some poskim feel that showering on Yom Tov is permitted by the principle of *ochel nefesh* (things that are beneficial to the soul) if a person feels particularly dirty from not having showered. If one decides that he/she needs to shower on Yom Tov, the following guidelines must be followed:

- One should shower in order to clean themselves and not take an overly long or luxurious shower.
- One may not use bar soap as this presents a separate problem of *memareach* (smoothing out the soap)
- One should not use a washcloth in order to avoid problems of *sechitah* (squeezing out the water from the washcloth)
- One must also be very careful not to squeeze out their hair for the same concern.
- Ideally, one should drip dry after the shower in order to avoid squeezing out the towel. If one exercises extreme caution they can pat themselves dry with a towel.

XXVI. Havdallah

At the conclusion of Yom Tov (Tuesday April 2, 2013; 23 Nissan) we recite

Havdallah no earlier than 7:53pm. We only say it over wine (no candle or spices) and we omit the introductory paragraph said on Shabbat.

XXVII. Chametz after Pesach

Please allow two hours after the conclusion of Pesach to allow Rabbi Pardo to buy back any chametz that was sold through him before eating it, otherwise it is theft.