

**A SHORT DIGEST OF
PRACTICAL HILCHOS PESACH 2013**

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Kehillas Bais Yehudah Tzvi

1. Besides studying Hilchos Pesach, there is a less well-known Halacha to be especially careful when eating or handling Chometz for thirty days before Pesach. This includes not carrying it into places where crumbs will be forgotten and causing it to be difficult to remove when Pesach comes.
2. Conversely, (the good news), when we do dispose of Chometz during this time, many Poskim hold that we are performing a Mitzvah D'oreisa.
3. The Chometz must be sold, burned and nullified (bittul) by 11:39 A.M. Monday morning, March 25th Erev Pesach, according to the zman of Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l. The last time to eat chometz is 10:23 A.M.
4. In pure Halacha, it is not necessary to move large objects such as ovens, refrigerators, closets etc. to find and dispose of the Chometz. This activity is more "spring cleaning" than searching for Chometz.
5. Also in pure Halacha, crumbs do not count and one need not worry about them. They are generally *boteil*, meaning we do not consider them significant, they are dirty so we will not eat them and we normally do not even encounter them on Pesach. However, there **is** an obligation to search and get rid of Chometz larger than the size of a cheerio, This is actually a surprising amount, since it is less than a *kezais* (olive), so what differentiates it from a crumb? The answer is that we are concerned with *chatzi shiur* (half a kezais), although not something totally insignificant such as a crumb.
6. Nevertheless, when we look beyond the letter of the law, at minhag Yisrael and midas chasiddus, we find that K'lal Yisroel, being Kedoshim, a holy nation, has always gone beyond the requirements in Hilchos Pesach and tried to find even tiny bits of Chometz. The conclusion of all this is that if one is going to be totally exhausted from searching for crumbs and therefore unable to conduct the Seder and its Mitzvos properly, one should avoid such cleaning. But if this is not a problem, it is certainly proper to rid oneself of every bit of Chometz. It is **NOT PROPER** to limit the search for Chometz to the ten pieces one prepared. The search should be a real one and should include opening all closets, looking under beds, in cabinets and all accessible places.

7. The Mitzvah of Bedikas Chometz is so great that many have the minhag to wear a hat and jacket when doing the Bedikah, Since we make a bracha on this mitzvah, many Poskim advise not to go into the bathroom with the candle etc. because it would be disrespectful to the mitzvah, but one should make sure to check the bathrooms for Chometz before or after the formal bedikah, Although some people delegate the mitzvah of Bedikas Chometz to various members of the family, it is best for the head of household to do it himself. This fulfills the rule of “bo yoseir m’shelucho” better for one to do a mitzvah himself than through an agent. Rav Elyashiv zt”l looked under beds and cabinets himself until well into his hundredth year, even once when he had just returned home from major surgery.
8. Some turn off the lights during the Bedikah so that it is performed only “l’ohr ha’ner” – by candlelight (Piskei Teshuvos) but others (Steipler zt”l) say this is unnecessary. One should do whatever works best. Although the Mishnah and minhag Yisrael dictate the use of a candle, one should use a flashlight in any area where it would be dangerous to bring fire.
9. The majority of Poskim hold that one should start doing Bedikas Chometz right after Tzeis Hakochavim, which is approximately one hour after shkiah (sundown). If one will not be able to start the Bedikah at this time, he should ask members of his family to remind him as soon as he gets home or is able to begin the Bedikah.
10. Although a number of Poskim hold that we make a Shehechianu at Bedikas Chometz (Raavad, Baal Haitur and others), the custom is that we do not. One reason is that we rely upon the Shehechianu we will make on Yom Tov (Be’er Heitev) and that we are not so happy about this mitzvah because it causes us a monetary loss (Rashbah, Avudraham). Some people avoid this problem by making a Shehechianu on a new fruit before Bedikas Chometz and having in mind the Mitzvah as well (Rav Ovadya Yosef)
11. Although the Satmar Rebbe and the Steipler zichronom livracha put out the ten pieces of Chometz themselves, the majority have the custom that SOMEONE OTHER THAN THE BODEK puts out the pieces so that the brachah on the search will not be a bracha levatalah.
12. Those who leave their homes to stay with their parents or others for the entire Yom Tov and sell their entire home to the gentile, should leave out one room which they do not sell so they can perform the mitzvah of Bedikas Chometz properly.

13. Regarding front or back yards, one need not search for Chometz because we assume that birds carried it away. However, if one left Chometz in the yard on Erev Pesach, the yard must be searched. Therefore, one should be careful not to let the children spread Chometz on ones property at breakfast Erev Yom Tov.
14. If one is afraid that there is a substantial amount of Chometz in an area which cannot be reached, such as a crevice in the refrigerator etc., it is best to spray ammonia or something similar on the area to make the Chometz inedible to a dog.
15. Similarly, if one is leaving Chometz on one's property (including the tree lawn) after the time when Chometz must be burned (this year 11:39 A.M.), one should also spray the bags with ammonia so that a dog would not want to eat it. It is best to get all bags with Chometz in them **off** ones property before this zman on Erev Pesach.
16. If one is home for Pesach, all the places where there is Chometz or Chometz utensils must be clearly marked. If one will be away for all of Pesach, this is unnecessary. However, if people will be staying in the house (which is very much frowned upon by most Poskim), all Chometz and Chometz utensils must be marked and essentially unavailable. To be very clear, if one is selling the entire house and will be away for all of Yom Tov, ideally no one should be entering the house. In cases of great need, it is permissible for one to enter briefly, get the mail etc. and leave. Regarding housekeepers coming in to clean, we assume the gentile who is renting your home is pleased that the home is being cleaned but even this is subject to disagreement among Poskim.
17. If one is going away for Pesach (within 30 days of Yom Tov), one must do Bedikas Chometz in his house. If he will be home on the night of Bedikas Chometz (this year Sunday, March 24th), he should do so with a Bracha. If he is leaving earlier than Sunday night, he should do so without a Bracha. Since there is a takanas Chazal (a very important Rabbinic decree) to do Bedikas Chometz in ones home, one should not obviate this rule by selling ones entire house. Therefore, the sale should leave out one room where all Chometz will be removed. That is the room where Bedikas Chometz (with the ten pieces) should take place, not in the entire house, as one would do if staying home.

18. If one will be in a hotel or other temporary home on Sunday night, Bedikas Chometz should be done there with a bracha. However, one should first eat some Chometz (carefully!) there so that the Bracha is not a bracha l'vatala. If one arrives at the hotel Erev Yom Tov, the time of arrival is crucial. If it is earlier than 10:23 A.M.(the final time to eat Chometz), he should eat some Chometz and then do Bedikas Chometz with a bracha. If it is after 10:23 A.M., the Halacha depends once again. If the room is clean, one should still double check for Chometz but without a Baracha. If the room is dirty, one should make the Bracha and do Bedikas Chometz.
19. **KASHERING** – We cannot, in this short digest review all **the laws of Kashering**. However, we will mention some of the more complicated or recent issues in this area. There is a major disagreement between two great Gedolim concerning kashering ovens, which has sometimes resulted in confusion. Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l holds that for all intensive purposes it is impossible to kasher an oven and therefore one should use an insert. According to Rav Moshe, the only oven which can *practically* be koshered is a self-cleaning oven. However, according to Rav Aharon Kotler zt"l, the oven need only be left for 24 hours without Chometz, easy-offed and turned on to “broil” for two hours. Therefore, for those who follow Rav Aharon (which is what I advise those who ask me), even a self-cleaning oven does not need to go through an entire self-clean cycle. It is certainly preferable to do so, but not necessary Halachically. Also, according to Rav Moshe, the door must be covered with heavy-duty aluminum foil. According to Rav Aharon, it does not. The stove-top electric grates should be cleaned and turned to the highest for 15 minutes. For a gas stove top, the same 15 minutes is sufficient but one must cover each grate with a blech (even a clean Chometzdike blech) or heavy duty aluminum foil for the fifteen minutes. For ALL stovetops, the area around the grates must be covered with heavy-duty aluminum foil. Glass-top stoves cannot be kashered without ruining the oven and are therefore not recommended when buying a new oven.
20. **When kashering countertops**, such as granite (not all countertops are kasherable), it is best to do so with boiling hot water from a Kli Rishon, meaning a pot which has just been removed boiling from a fire. It is best not to Kasher with a steam machine such as Steam Magic . This is because there is a major disagreement among Poskim if one is permitted to kasher with steam at all. The Poskim in the majority have therefore ruled that if one must kasher with a steam machine, the water emerging from the hose must actually be boiling so that the kashering is being done with Hagalah, not steam. Since this is very difficult to do, on a practical basis, one should try to avoid kashering with any steam machine.

21. Regarding microwaves, they should only be koshered for Pesach if they have been used to WARM Chometz foods, not if they have been used for over 20 minutes at a time to actually COOK Chometz foods. If they have only been used to warm up foods, they may be koshered by boiling water (preferably in a Styrofoam or other disposable vessel) in the microwave for 30 minutes. Please note that the water may have to be refilled several times and should be done immediately without allowing the microwave to cool down. On a practical basis, you must be aware of when the microwave has gone off so that the water can be refilled immediately. Please note that the thirty minutes begin AT THE MOMENT OF BOILING not when you start the microwave. You must CAREFULLY feel the walls of the microwave to ascertain whether or not steam has reached them. If not, the microwave has not been kashered.
22. Regarding Taanis Bechorim –the Fast of the Firstborn, some Poskim hold that it applies to kohanim and Leviim, as well as Yisraelim (Mishnah Berurah) while others are lenient (Daas Torah). It is best to be strict on this issue.
23. The optimum sium to exempt a Bechor from fasting is an entire Gemara or a Seder of Mishnayos (such as Zerayim, Moed etc.) However, many Poskim allow a sium on one Masechta of Mishnayos or an entire sefer in Tanach if it was studied in-depth with Meforshim.
24. What may one eat and drink on Erev Pesach? One should not drink wine or eat Matzah on Erev Pesach. There is a disagreement between the Rama who forbids lettuce if it will later be used for Maror and the Mishneh Berurah who allows it. Some (Shaarei Halacha) also add not to eat any of the foods which will be present in the charoses.
25. Some refrain from eating Matzah for 30 days before Pesach.
26. **THE SEDER** - It is best not to use very large kosos for the seder, since the Halacha insists on drinking the majority or even entire kos. This becomes difficult and a burden if the kos holds more wine than necessary. The four kosos may hold as little as 2.9 ounces. In fact, the best size to use is a three ounce cup which will make it relatively easy to drink the entire kos for each of the arba kosos. Of course, some people are more machmir (strict), as follows. The Chofetz Chaim used a cup which held 5 ounces, Rav Yisroel Salanter 4.1 and the Brisker Rov 6.06. The other shiurim are as follows: Maror, if using lettuce leaves, 8 X 10 inches, stalks 3 X 5 inches. Same for Korech. If using pure grated horseradish, 1.1 fluid ounces for Maror, .7 fluid ounces for Korech. For Motzei Matzah, slightly less than half an average shmurah matzah, for Korech slightly more than a quarter of an average matzah. Since according to many

Poskim, the Afikomen is when we actually fulfill the mitzvah of matzah, one should use the same shiur as for motzi matzah.

27. It is preferable to drink wine not grape juice for the Four Cups. However, if for medical reasons or a personal difficulty with wine, one may drink grape juice, as did many Gedolei Yisrael such as the Brisker Rov, Chazon Ish and Tshibiner Rov zichronom livracha (Piskei Teshuvos page 224, note 45).
28. Women who have already said a Shehechyanu upon the Yom Tov candles should be careful not to make the bracha again if they are reciting Kiddush along with the Seder Leader. However, they may answer amen to his bracha.
29. The Chayeu Adam holds that we must ALWAYS prepare the salt water before Yom Tov, not just when the seder is on Shabbos. However, many Poskim are lenient and allow the salt water to be prepared on Yom Tov.
30. There is a machlokes whether or not we dip the Matzah into salt, as we do the challah on Shabbos and Yom Tov. The Rama says that we do but the Ari Zaal says to dip in salt. Some Poskim try to reconcile this disagreement by dipping and shaking off the salt (Kaf Hachaim).
31. Women are not obligated to lean over (heseibah) but it is preferable that they do so.
32. In order to be yotzei the Mitzvah of Matza, one must eat a little more than half of a shemurah matzah for each kazayis required or almost an entire machine matzah. This is for the first kazayis of Matzah and for the afikomen. For Korech, we are more lenient and require one sixth ($1/6^{\text{th}}$) of a shemurah matzah or one third ($1/3^{\text{d}}$) of a machine matzah.
33. Even those who use a somewhat bland vegetable for maror (such as Romaine Lettuce) may put in some chrain to add a bitter taste, but this is not required. If using chrein only, the *shiur* is 1.1 fluid ounces for Maror and .7 ounces for korech. If using Romaine lettuce leaves, the *shiur* for both maror and korech is the amount of leaves covering an area of 8 by 10 inches. If you are using only the stalks (which has the advantage of much less bugs), the *shiur* is 3 by 5 inches. Each act of eating (i.e. Matzah, Maror, korech and the afikomen should preferably be eaten within 2 minutes but worse comes to worse, can span 9 minutes but no more.

34. When reciting Hallel, the Seder Leader should act as the Sheliach Tzibur (Chazan) does in Shul and everyone else should answer where it is usually responsive in Shul (hodu lashem, ana Hashem etc.)
35. Regarding, quinoa, as far as we know, there are only two acceptable Pesach Hechsherim: Trader Joes, which comes from Bolivia where there is no concern about the quinoa having been mixed with barley and “Sugat” with the hechsher for Pesach of the Badatz and Rav Ovadiah Yosef. We are following the opinion of those that hold that quinoa is not kitniyos, so the only issue is whether some other grain has been mixed in. Therefore, even Ashkenazim may eat quinoa as long as it carries one of these hechsherim for Pesach.
36. An Ashkenazi may eat in the home of a Sephardi, even on utensils which have been used for rice etc. as long the Ashkenazi does not actually eat kitniyos.
37. In general, there is an ancient custom to be machmir (specially scrupulous) with the Halachos of Pesach. During Elul and Tishrei we do Teshuvah out of fear. On Pesach our Teshuvah is out of love. Therefore, whenever possible we try to show Hashem that we love his Yom Tov, Halachos and the Mitzvos of Pesach. We should never chas v’shalom, imply that they are a burden or we just want to get them over with. In the zchus of properly keeping Hilchos Pesach, may we all have a Chag Kasher V’sameach and be zocheh to the Geulah Shelaimah b’meheira b’yameinu.