

From The Desk Of Rabbi Noah Gradofsky

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A GUIDE TO PASSOVER 5770 (2010)

Dear Friends:

Passover is just around the corner! The first Seder will be on **Monday night, March 29th**. Passover is a holiday that celebrates our liberation from Egypt and the dawn of our becoming the Jewish people. It is a time for family gatherings and ritual observances. This mailing should familiarize you with some of the rituals and requirements of Passover.

For more information about Passover, please feel free to visit my office, call, or e-mail. You can also find an excellent "Passover FAQ" on the Kosher Nexus Blog at <http://www.koshernexus.org> (search for "Passover FAQ") The Union for Traditional Judaism runs "Operation Passover" – a Passover hotline to answer all your questions (e.g. does milk need Passover certification, where can I find KP brown sugar, etc.). You can call them at 1-888-MATZAH1 (1-888-628-9241) from March 22nd through March 28th. or e-mail operationpeseach@utj.org.

KEY DATES/TIMES: (See explanations below)

- Siyum for First Born: Following morning services Monday, March 29th (services begin 7:00 AM).
- Search for *chametz*: Sunday night, March 28th, after 7:57 PM.
- Last time to eat *chametz*: Monday, March 29th, 10:54 AM.
- Burn Chametz by: Monday, March 29th, 11:56 AM.
- Do not eat a meal after on Monday, March 29th after 4:06 PM until the seder (snacking is permitted). *Please note: Matzah may not be eaten on the day before Passover.*
- First Seder: Monday, March 29th after 7:58 PM. *Please consult with me if this time creates an insurmountable burden.*
- Earliest time to set the Seder table and begin the 2nd Seder: Tuesday, March 30th, 7:59 PM. *Please consult with me if this time creates an insurmountable burden.*
- Eat the Afikoman by: 12:59 AM (both nights).
- The chametz you sell through TILB will be yours again by: Tuesday, April 6th at 8:30 PM.



“CLEANING” FOR PASSOVER:

Preparing for Passover is not about cleaning. It is about searching for and removing *chametz* (leavened grain products). Now, there is nothing wrong with vacuuming and dusting once a year (some people even do it more often than that) but people should be aware of what the requirements of *halakha* (Jewish law) are. This is important because we don't want Passover to become a horrible burden. Doing some extra cleaning is fine. But we wouldn't want to resent this wonderful holiday simply because of work that we take on ourselves.

On this subject, I recommend the clip titled “Passover Cleaning Made Easy” by Rabbi Yitzchak Berkowitz. You can find that at <http://kosher4passover.com/learning.htm> (link available from the Temple Israel website “Extras” section, <http://www.templeisraeloflb.org/extras.html>, along with a link to a summary that you can read). I don't necessarily agree with everything he says, but it's a very good guide. The first 23 minutes are particularly helpful.

What to look for:

The goal of cleaning for Passover is to remove all *chametz* from our possession. Therefore, our search is a search not for all forms of dirt or mess. Just for *chametz*. *Chametz* is any food product that has one of five grains (wheat, oats, spelt, rye, barley) that came in contact with water and was not baked into *matzah* within the prescribed time. **However, if the product is not fit to be fed to a dog, it is not *chametz* at all!!!** This means that your perfume¹, shoe polish, toothpaste, aluminum foil, etc. do not need to be Kosher for Passover. **This is also one of several reasons that medicine that is swallowed does not need to be kosher for Passover** (chewable vitamins, on the other hand...). Also, **if it is a tiny, insignificant crumb that you wouldn't think of eating, it is not *chametz*.** This means you don't need to chisel gunk out of the pots and pans that you are not using for Passover (but why are they gunky in the first place?), and you don't need to dust the walls, etc.

You don't need to search your entire house with a magnifying glass!

As we discussed above, crumbs are insignificant, and inedibles aren't a concern. So, we are really looking for edible pieces of food (e.g. the piece of cereal that got into the couch cushion). You also do not need to go through your house with a fine-toothed comb. You want to check all areas where food might be brought by yourself, your children (toddlers create lots of issues here), your pets, and that pesky little mouse you still haven't gotten rid of.² Check your clothing, pockets, bags, handbags etc. Vacuuming will be helpful, but remember to clean out the vacuum as well. **Remember to check your car, trunk, and under your car mats.** Of course, you should go through your refrigerator, freezer, and pantry closets etc. If you are selling your *chametz*, it is wise to put all that *chametz* together into one location, preferably out of sight.

How to kasher stoves, utensils, pots etc?

If there are items that you use all year around that you would like to use on Passover, see the Passover FAQ on <http://www.kosher-nexus.org>. Another good source is <http://www.kashrut.com/Passover/kashering/>. Ovens and ranges should be completely scrubbed clean (Or use an oven cleaner) and then set to their highest heat for an hour. For self-cleaning ovens, use the self-cleaning function. Sinks should be scrubbed thoroughly, and a lining or a basin

¹ Some feel that inedible items containing ethyl alcohol are not permitted, as they can be distilled. I respectfully disagree.

² I remember the time I had a squirrel in my apartment – I found lots of *chametz* that year.



should be put in. Stainless steel sinks can be used after scrubbing out and pouring boiling water on them. Please check the websites or call me for further information.

BEDIKAT CHAMETZ – THE SEARCH FOR LEAVEN:

Bedikat Chametz is the actual “cleaning for Passover.” This is to say that in ancient days, people would do all their checking for chametz in *Bedikat Chametz*. Nowadays, of course, our homes are bigger and more complex, so that isn’t practical (actually, if we weren’t so obsessed, we could probably knock off Passover cleaning in a couple of hours). *Bedikat Chametz* should be done as an actual search for *chametz*, and not just a symbolic act. Take this as a last opportunity to walk around the house and look for *chametz* in the likely locations.

Bedikat Chametz is done at night, since this is when people are generally home (also, using an artificial light source at night will give you the best chance of seeing things that you are looking for). The search should be done at night after 3 stars come out (or would come out but for light pollution). This year, *Bedikat Chametz* is to be done on Sunday night, March 28th, after 7:57 PM in Long Beach.

Many people have the custom of using a candle, a feather, and a wooden spoon for *Bedikat Chametz*. I prefer a flashlight and a dustpan. They just work better.

There is a custom that developed to hide some pieces of bread before doing the search. People were worried that if they say the blessing on searching for *chametz* (which actually is a blessing “to remove Chametz,”) and didn’t find any *chametz*, that their blessing may have been in vain. This does not stand to reason, since the commandment is to look for *chametz* and remove it if it is found. Therefore, unless leaving the bread is a tool to keep children interested, it is probably not necessary. If you leave bread, make sure to write down where you are putting it, so you don’t miss it. Also, make sure that pets can’t get to the pieces.

The blessing:

Before searching for the *chametz* say (in English or Hebrew):

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוֵּנוּ עַל בְּעוֹר חֲמֵץ.

Baruch Attah A-donay E-lohaynu melech ha'olam asher kideshanu bemitsvotav vetsivanu al biyur chametz.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who sanctified us by your commandments and commanded us regarding the removal of *chametz*.

Search your house for *chametz* and then say the following in English, unless you are conversant in Aramaic. This paragraph is a declaration that you disavow ownership of any *chametz* you may have accidentally missed, as opposed to *chametz* that you have set aside to eat later. Later, there will be a similar declaration disavowing even *chametz* that you know about.

כָּל חֲמֵצָה וְחֲמֵצָה דְאֵכָא בְרִשׁוּתִי, דְלֵא חֲמֵינָהּ, וְדֵלֵא בְעֵרְתָהּ, וְדֵלֵא וְדַעְנָא לָהּ, לְבִטּוּל וְלִהְיוּ הִפְקָר כְּעֵפְרָא דְעֵרְעָא

All Chametz which I own, which I have not seen nor removed, and which I did not know about, let it be nullified and ownerless, like the dust of the earth.



BURNING AND DISAVOWING THE CHAMETZ

One may not eat any *chametz* on Monday, March 29th, after 10:54 AM. Any *chametz* that you find during the search the night before, and any other *chametz* that you care to add should be completely burned by Monday, March 29th, at 11:56 AM. **Please exercise every possible measure of fire safety when burning your chametz.** Once the *chametz* is burned, the following should be said. This paragraph disavows ownership of any *chametz* that you own (knowingly or accidentally).

כָּל חֲמִירָא וְחֲמִיעָא דְאֶפְא בְּרִשׁוּתִי, דְחִזִּיתָהּ וְדָלָא חִזִּיתָהּ, דְחֲמִיתָהּ וְדָלָא חֲמִיתָהּ, דְבִעֲרַתָּהּ דְלָא בִעֲרַתָּהּ, לְבִטּוּל וְלַהּוּי הֶפְקֵר
כְּעַפְרָא דְעָרְעָא

All Chametz which I own, which I have seen or not seen, which I have or have not observed, removed or not removed, let it be nullified and ownerless, like the dust of the earth.

SELLING AND DONATING CHAMETZ

A Jew is not allowed to own *chametz* on Passover. In ancient days, when refrigeration and preservatives were not around, this rule was a lot easier. Nowadays, we often have pantries full of *chametz*, lots of grain alcohols, etc. For many, disposing of this food might cause great financial hardship. In the early medieval period, the practice began for those people who simply owned too much *chametz* to sell it and then buy it back after Passover. This is not a legal fiction – this is an actual sale that means that you do not own the *chametz* on Passover. However, since this is a way of “getting around” the law, many Rabbis encourage people to get rid of, rather than selling their *chametz*. **Any non-perishable, packaged *chametz* products can be donated to the Saint Mary of the Isle food pantry located at 315 East Walnut.** They are available weekdays between 9:30-12:00 and 1:00-6:00. You may want to call ahead to (516) 432-1320 to insure that they are available.

If you are selling your *chametz* through Temple Israel, please fill out the enclosed form **KINDLY USE THIS FORM RATHER THAN YOUR OWN FORM OR A LETTER.** This form authorizes me (or someone I appoint) to sell your *chametz* and to lease any cabinets etc. in which that *chametz* is stored to the buyer for food storage purposes. **The *chametz* you sell through TILB will be yours again by Tuesday, April 6th at 8:30 PM.**

THE FAST OF THE FIRST BORN

A Custom developed many years ago for first-born males to fast on the day before Passover, symbolic of the fact that Jewish first born males were spared from the plague of the first born. Nowadays, this custom is, in effect, observed in the breach. Rather than fasting, first-borns attend a *siyum*, a celebration of the conclusion of a course of study (usually the conclusion of someone’s learning a tractate of Talmud). Eating a celebratory meal at such an occasion is considered a *mitzvah*, and overrides the custom of fasting. This year, we will have a *siyum* at Temple Israel on Monday, March 29th, following our daily minyan (which starts at 7:00 AM). All are welcome to attend this *siyum* and eat with us.



PREPARING FOR THE SEDER

When to prepare for the Seder

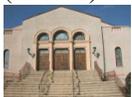
For the first Seder night, it makes sense to set the table well before the Seder begins. However, on the second Seder night, the situation is a bit more complicated. In general, it is not permitted for one to make any preparations for the second day of *Yom Tov* during the first day of *Yom Tov*. Therefore, during the first day of *Yom Tov*, one is not allowed to set the *Seder* table or prepare foods for the second *Seder* (even if this does not involve cooking). Prevalent practice is to wait until the stars come out (i.e. Tuesday, March 30th, 7:59 PM) before setting up for the second *Seder*, though there is an argument for allowing such preparations after sundown. To the extent possible, it makes sense to prepare for the second *Seder* before *Yom Tov*. This means making enough *charosethh* for both nights, perhaps preparing a second *Seder* plate, etc. In order to speed things up, I recommend not completely setting the table until the meal. I am taking bets as to whether my mother will let me get away with this. ***Please consult with me if this timing presents an absolutely insurmountable burden.***

What to prepare for the Seder

You will need the following foods for the *Seder*:

- A roasted, hard boiled egg. This represents the festival offering in the Temple.
- A roasted meat bone, representing the Passover offering.
- ***Marror***: Lettuce, (AKA "Bitter herb") which was served as a garnish for the Passover offering³. Romaine lettuce is preferred, because of its slightly bitter taste. But in a pinch any leaf lettuce will do. **I do not use horseradish as a bitter herb.** It may be eaten for fun, old times sake, or to clear out your sinuses. But eat lettuce first.
- ***Charoseth***: a tasty mixture of apple, nuts, cinnamon, and wine representing the bricks made by the Israelite people while slaves to Pharaoh.
- ***Karpas***: any green vegetable (many use parsley or celery). This was made part of the Seder to pique the interest of children. It is also said to represent Passover being the "holiday of the spring." During the *Seder*, everyone will eat at least enough Karpas as the size of an olive, dipped in salt water.
- Salt water, said to represent the tears of the Israelites.
- Matzas. The Talmud contrasts the two loafs of bread we have at the *Shabbat* table with the one whole and one half matzah that we have at the *Seder* to represent "poor person's bread." Based on this, many people (myself included if my mother lets me) set the *Seder* table with two matzahs. Others put three matzahs on the table, since they believe that one needs two whole loaves for *hamotzi* on a holiday, despite the Talmud's explicit reference to 1 ½ loaves at the seder. Shmurah matzah should be used for the *Seder* rituals.
- Wine. Lots of it. Grape juice too.
- Cup of Elijah. Many people also have the custom of having a cup for Miriam, the prophetess and sister of Moses, who led women in a song of praise of God at the Red Sea and was instrumental in the story of young Moses' survival.

³ The word "*maror*" originally meant "lettuce," but also meant "bitter". The Bible commands eating *maror* with the Passover offering, much like one would eat lettuce with a hamburger. The Bible also introduces a play on words, saying that we eat the lettuce (*marror*) because the Egyptians embittered (*mirreru*) our lives.



Instructions for the Seder.

The word *Seder* means order. The *Seder* was designed to emulate a Roman banquet. This way, we celebrate the freedom and dignity that is represented by our liberation from Egypt. This is why, for instance, we are supposed to recline to our left during the *Seder*, and in particular when we eat or drink⁴. The *Seder* should be used as an opportunity for learning and discussion, not just the reading of words. If things aren't understood in Hebrew, they should be read in English. The most important thing is to keep the children awake and interested during the *Seder*. The Rabbinic sources talk about giving children some food in the afternoon that will stimulate them to stay awake for the *Seder* (a nap can help too – even for adults). The *Shulchan Aruch* also encourages going through the first part of the *Seder* quickly, so as to get to the Matzah etc. while the children are still awake.

Here is a brief overview of the parts of the *Seder* and their *Halachic* (Jewish Law) requirements:

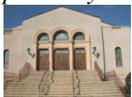
- **Kaddesh:** Wine (or grape juice) is poured for everyone (one custom is that everyone should have someone else pour their wine, so they are being “served” in the manner of royalty). Everyone should have at least 6 ounces of wine, and should drink a cheekful of each cup. Everyone should hold their cup in the air while saying the Kiddush. When Kiddush is complete (after saying “Shehecheyanu”), drink the wine.
- **Urechatz:** Jewish law requires that one wash one's hands before eating foods that are dipped in certain liquids (water, wine, honey, oil, milk, dew, and vinegar). This is why we wash our hands before *Karpas* (though for some reason many people do not observe this halacha at other times). Although modern *hagadahs* don't have a blessing at this point, the ancient *hagadahs* included the blessing,⁵ and I would recommend saying a blessing before the hand washing. You will find the blessing in your *hagadah* before *Motse Matzah*. Hold a cup with water in one of your hands, say the blessing, and then pour water onto both hands (most people pour the water two or three times on each hand). Dry your hands thoroughly.
- **Karpas:** We eat a green vegetable dipped in salt water. Distribute the vegetable dipped in salt water to each person at the *Seder*. Each person should get at least an olive's size portion of the vegetable.⁶ Once everyone has received the vegetable, say the blessing and eat the vegetable. **Do not speak after saying the blessing until you have eaten.** After eating at least an olive's size of vegetables, one should say the grace known as *borei nefashot*: “Blessed are you Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, creator of many creatures and their needs, for all that You have created to sustain every living being. Blessed are you Lord⁷, life of the universe.”
- **Yachatz:** The bottom matzah (the middle if you have 3 matzahs) is broken in half. Half is kept on the table, while the second half is designated as the Afikoman. Common practice is to hide

⁴ In Roman times, a formal meal would be eaten while lying on one's side on a couch.

⁵ Daniel Goldschmidt, *Hagadah shel Pesach*, p.7. See also Maimonides Laws of Blessings 6:1-2. Per Goldschmidt, this was also Rashi's opinion, and the opinion of all of the early medieval Rabbis (Geonim).

⁶ Many modern *Hagadahs* say to eat less than an olive's bulk. However, Goldschmidt notes that most of the ancient *hagadahs* included a grace to be said after *karpas*, which would only be said if a person ate an olive's bulk. See also Maimonides Laws of Chametz and Matzah 8:2, compare *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim* 473:6.

⁷ Most people today end this blessing with “Blessed are you, life of the universe.” Without the word “Lord” (*adonay*), however Goldschmidt notes that most ancient texts use God's name at the end of this blessing, and this is consistent with the format of most other blessings. *Note 3/20/12: Vilna Ga'on also included “Lord” (see ביאור הגר"א אורח חיים סימן רז). However, in discussing this matter with my teacher Hakham Isaac Sassoon it was noted that the inclusion of the last sentence of this blessing is a tradition from Israel (see e.g. (ירושלמי ברכות ו:א דף י טור ב. עירובין דף יד עמוד ב and עמוד ב עמוד ב). Therefore, to the extent one says the second sentence of this blessing (and why not say it), it should probably be said without God's name.*



this matzah for the kids to find (remember: keeping the kids interested is priority#1). Breaking the matzah is symbolic of matzah being "poor person's bread."

- **Maggid:** Maggid is the telling of the Story of Passover. It begins with a paragraph (*halachmah anyah*) talking about matzah, and inviting people to join the Seder. After this paragraph, and before *mah nishtanah*, the Seder plate is removed from the table (again, a ploy to get children's interest). The plate may be returned after *mah nishtanah*. The rest of the Maggid section should be read through with some discussion. If we were to designate any parts of this section as the "most important," it would be the section that is based on four verses from Deuteronomy. This section begins with *tsay u'lemad* ("Come and learn what Laban . . .") and goes through the enumeration of the plagues until *Dayenu*. Also absolutely essential is the section where Rabban Gamliel discusses the three essentials: the Passover offering, the matzah, and the bitter herb. The Maggid section closes with the first two paragraphs of Hallel, and a closing blessing. Finally, we drink the second cup of wine. **Please note:** There is a custom to take drops of wine out of our cups while listing the plagues. This is meant to symbolize our sadness at the suffering of others. Others object to this saying that this is an unnecessary waste of food, since this practice is not mentioned in the Talmud. I suggest everyone take a little bit of *charoseth* and then put the wine that they take out of their cups into the *charoseth*.
- **Rachtsah:** We wash our hands (in the same manner described in Urechatz) with a blessing, in preparation for eating matzah.
- **Motzi Matzah:** After everyone has washed their hands, someone (an adult) should take the whole matzah and half matzah in their hands and recite the blessings (the blessings are said on behalf of all who are present). **Once the blessings have been recited, people should not speak until after they have eaten the matzah.** Everyone should eat an olive's volume of matzah,⁸ and have at least a piece of both the top and middle matzah. If the two matzahs are not enough to get everyone an olive size portion, give everyone a piece of both of those matzahs, and supplement with extra shemurah matzah. Some Hagadahs say to eat the matzah plain. I believe the matzah should have some salt on it, in the same way as we put salt on challah.⁹
- **Maror:** Use lettuce and not horseradish (Romaine lettuce is a good choice as it is a bit bitter, see above section on preparing for the Seder). The lettuce should be lightly dipped in the *charoseth*. Each person should eat an olive's size of *maror*. The blessing is said, **and no one should speak after the blessing until they have eaten an olive's size of maror.**
- **Korech:** Eat a sandwich of matzah and lettuce dipped in *charoseth*. As this is merely a remembrance of Hillel's practice, there is no minimum volume. Those who have three matzahs use the third matzah for this sandwich.
- **Shulchan Orech:** Eat. Drink. Be happy. It is appropriate to talk about the Passover story during the meal. Remember that you will have to complete your meal, including Afikoman by 12:59 AM.¹⁰

⁸ The Rabbis believed in "eyeball measurements." There is a lot of modern discussion about what an olive's size of matzah is (trials and tribulations of applying a three dimensional measure to a two dimensional food). A bit more than ¼ of a round matzah should do it. Some also require eating matzah equivalent to the size of two olives.

⁹ Those who say not to do this want you to get only the taste of the matzah. Those who say that you should have salt follow the Talmud which says that one should not break bread without having something to add taste (especially necessary for matzah, which is fairly tasteless). This is the position of Rabbi Yosef Karo, the Sephardi voice in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 475:1). Maimonides (Laws of Chametz and Matzah 8:8) suggests dipping the matzah in *charoseth*, but his *charoseth* was probably much more liquid than ours.

¹⁰ This is the Jewish midnight. It is the midpoint between sunset the night before and sunrise the next day. The same time applies to both nights of Passover this year. According to some Rabbis in the Talmud (whose position is accepted), the Passover offering had to be eaten by midnight. Our Afikomen is meant to symbolize the Passover offering.



- Tsafun: Eat the Afikoman. Everyone should have an olive size portion of matzah (apx. $\frac{1}{4}$ of a round matzah), including at least a piece of the Afikoman. **The Afikoman is the very last thing we eat for the night**, as we want the “taste” of the matzah to linger in our mouths. Clear liquids, coffee, and tea may be drunk.



- **Barech**: We say the grace after meals. As with all prayers, this may be said in English or in Hebrew. The grace is said over a cup of wine (the third cup), which is drunk at the end of the grace. The person who leads the grace should hold their cup during the grace. After drinking the third cup, several verses are recited, and the door is opened to welcome Elijah the prophet.
- **Hallel**: The Hallel, which we began to recite at the end of *Magid* is now completed. At the end of this section, we drink the final cup of wine. Immediately following the wine is a blessing that is the grace said after one drinks wine or grape juice (if they are not saying *Birkat Hamazon*). This blessing should be recited by one person, and all should respond with "amen" at the end.
- **Nirtzah**. As the opening paragraph to this section (*chasal sidur pesach*) implies, the formal Seder is now over. The Nirtzah *section* is a series of fun songs.

GRAPE AND EGG MATZAH

There are differences of opinion as to whether grape or egg matzah may be eaten on Passover. Prevalent Ashkenazi custom is to only allow children, and people who are sick to eat grape or egg matzah. **Please note that grape and egg matzah are considered "rich matzah" and thus may not be used for the blessing on the matzah or the eating of the afikoman, were we require "poor person's bread."**

COUNTING THE OMER

On the second night of Passover we begin to count the Omer, counting the forty nine days between Passover and *Shavuot*, which celebrates the giving of the Torah. The counting is done every night, and preceded by a blessing (you can find this at the end of the evening service in most prayer books). If one forgot to count at night, they should count the next day without a blessing. There are those who say that if you missed one day entirely, you may not say the blessing when counting on subsequent days. They view the counting of the omer as one whole unit. Others (e.g. Tosafot, Maimonides) view each day as a discreet mitzvah and would say a blessing even if they miss a day. I tend to agree with the latter opinion. The Omer should be counted while standing.

I WISH EVERYONE A VERY HAPPY AND KOSHER PASSOVER!
RABBI NOAH GRADOFSKY

