

Why Is This Year Different?

A Practical Guide To The Laws That Apply
When Erev Pesach Occurs On Shabbat

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FORWARD

The problems that arise when erev Pesach falls on Shabbat are not new. In Talmudic times it was Hillel's expertise in this area of Jewish law which gained him the position of Nasi (religious leader) in preference to other scholars. Yet the problems are by no means as complex as at first appears. With careful planning, the variations from other years can add an exciting new dimension to the celebration of the festival. Through injecting both joy and meaning into the ceremonies preparatory to Pesach, the celebration of the festival can make a lasting impact on every Jewish home.

THE PROBLEM

The basic problem may be set out simply. The day before Pesach has been described as the busiest day in the Jewish year. On this day, the last of the chametz (leaven) is used up, and the remainder burnt. The house is meticulously cleaned. The 'change over' from chametz to Pesach utensils takes place. Although we can still have bread for breakfast, we have to eat a Kosher for Pesach lunch. After lunch comes the final cooking for the Seder and other detailed preparations for the upcoming Yom Tov.

What happens when, as this year, erev Pesach falls on Shabbat? The prohibition of work on Shabbat is very strict: to burn the chametz that remains is out of the question, and even the cleaning and tidying of the house is severely restricted. No cooking may be done, nor may we make any preparations for the following day, even to the extent of laying the Seder table. Yet at the same time, the main Shabbat meals of Friday night and Shabbat morning must include *lechem mishneh* – two loaves of bread – over which we say the appropriate blessing. How then is it possible to have two chametz meals on Shabbat, to dispose of any chametz that remains, to effect the change-over from chametz to Pesach utensils, and to prepare the Seder, without coming into conflict either with the laws of Shabbat or those of Pesach?

Halachic solutions exist to all these problems, and in this guide an attempt has been made to set them out as clearly as possible. But first a word of caution. No such publication, however comprehensive, can hope to cover adequately every single question that may arise. If you are in any doubt at all, please ask your local Rabbi. He will be delighted to help you. Secondly, the arrangements recommended seem to the author the most practical and least complicated. But they are not necessarily the only correct way of coping with the problems, and again your own Rabbi can advise you according to your individual circumstances.

The sequence of events described below begins on the Thursday before Pesach (this year April 10th). It is assumed that by this time, as in any ordinary year, stocks of chametz products will have been rundown, the house will have been cleaned of chametz, and only food sufficient for the last few days before Pesach will remain.

For the sake of convenience, a summary of the arrangements is given at the end, but in order to understand them fully, a more detailed description is now given.

THURSDAY 10th APRIL

The fast of the Firstborn (*Ta'anit Bechorot*) usually takes place on the day before Pesach, but this year it would occur on Shabbat. As fasting is forbidden on Shabbat (except for Yom Kippur) it is brought forward. We do not favour fasting on Friday, the eve of Shabbat either, so we observe it on Thursday instead. The Siyyum celebration (conclusion of studying a volume of Talmud, or Order of the Mishna) which release the firstborn from fasting, will therefore take place after the morning service on Thursday.

By Thursday, or Friday morning at the very latest, you should have already made arrangements with your Rabbi for him to sell your chametz (*Mechirat Chametz*). The sale of chametz involves a contract drawn up with a non-Jewish person to purchase any items containing chametz. It is usually done through the Rabbi of your synagogue and details will be announced locally. (Alternatively, forms to authorise the sale of chametz through the London Beth Din Kashrut Division can be found online: www.kosher.org.uk).

On Thursday one is advised to thoroughly clean and kasher the inside of the oven, and thus make it ready for Pesach. After this of course, it may no longer be used for chametz.

The search for leaven (*Bedikat Chametz*) which is traditionally performed by means of a candle and a feather, usually takes place on the evening of the day before Pesach. But as this would fall on Friday night, when the use of a candle is forbidden, the ceremony is held instead on Thursday evening, after nightfall. The blessing recited over the search, and the declaration made afterwards annulling any chametz which has not been noticed can be found at the beginning of the Haggadah.

FRIDAY 11th APRIL

For all practical purposes, Friday may be considered as Erev Pesach, and you should plan the day accordingly.

After breakfast, the kitchen should be prepared as for Pesach, including ensuring that all surfaces are thoroughly cleaned and covered. A small area should be set aside in the kitchen, completely separate from the rest, where the chametz food and crockery etc. for Friday lunch and the challot for Shabbat can be left. Apart from this, all other chametz utensils should be cleaned and stored away and replaced with Pesach utensils. Any food not containing chametz, but which is not supervised for Pesach, should be similarly stored away.

The burning of chametz (*Biur Chametz*) should take place this year before **11:54am** as is normally done on Erev Pesach. The declaration (*Kol chamira*) annulling any chametz inadvertently left over, however, is omitted, as a quantity of chametz still has to be used, and some may be left over for this purpose. It is instead said after breakfast on Shabbat.

As no preparations for the Seder may be made on Shabbat, it is a good idea to prepare it and lay the table on Friday if possible, to avoid a long wait after Shabbat goes out. Care should be taken that no chametz is brought near the Seder table, e.g. the Seder

table could be laid in the dining room and all meals between now and Shabbat afternoon eaten in the kitchen.

Shabbat meals must be cooked on Friday and should consist only of foods permitted for Pesach. The cooking should be done in Pesach utensils. However, two challot should be reserved for use on Friday night and two for Shabbat morning. Where these are unlikely to be finished, small ones should be used instead. It is recommended that these are the only items of actual chametz used for the Shabbat meals.

An alternative to using challot with all the attendant chametz complications is to use *Matza ashira*. This is a special type of matza made with eggs or fruit juice instead of water. Since it is not real matza it can be eaten on Erev Pesach and thus avoids all the difficulties of using chametz when the home and the rest of the food is Kosher for Pesach. **Please note**, however, that *Matza ashira* must be purchased from a Kosher shop with a reliable hechsher, and that the Ashkenazi ruling is that *Matza Ashira* may not be consumed on Pesach at all. It may also not be consumed on Erev Pesach after **10:45am** (this year).

NB. When making the blessing (*Hamotzi*) over bread on Friday night and Shabbat morning, it is suggested that the challot are placed on a small side table, separately from the other food. They should be eaten up. The family should make sure that no crumbs remain on their hands or clothes, and they should then move to the main table for the rest of the meal.

The meals on Friday night and Shabbat morning, which have been prepared in Pesach utensils can be served most easily on paper plates. This avoids the problem of transferring food from a Pesach saucepan to a chametz plate (which would have to be done by means of an intermediate vessel) and also lessens the possibility of mixing Pesach and chametz dishes. Paper cups and disposable cutlery are also recommended for the same reason.

SHABBAT 12th APRIL

The morning service on Shabbat Erev Pesach is held early in order to enable people to return home, make Kiddush, wash for hamotzi on two challot and have breakfast before the *Hafsakah* (the latest time for eating chametz), which this year is at 10:45am. This serves as the first daytime Shabbat meal.

Immediately after breakfast, the tablecloth is well shaken and stored away with the other chametz utensils. Any bread or other chametz unavoidably left over from the meal should be flushed away in the toilet. Paper plates, cups and disposable cutlery which have been used should be thrown away.

The declaration (*Kol chamirah*) which was omitted on Friday should now be said (at the beginning of the Haggadah). By saying it, we finally renounce our ownership over any chametz which we have inadvertently failed to remove. It should be recited before **11:54am**.

By lunchtime on Shabbat the whole house has been converted to Pesach routine and lunch can be enjoyed in a relaxed atmosphere. There is one restriction however;

matza cannot be eaten until Yom Tov begins. Therefore, one does not wash for this meal, relying instead in order to fulfill the mitzva of the 'third meal of Shabbat' (Seuda Shlishit) on fish, meat or other similar special Shabbat foods.

Yom Tov candles should be lit from an existing flame after Shabbat ends (20:41).

May the effort that we have put into preparing for Pesach this year be amply rewarded by the satisfaction we receive from it. May it imbue us with a sense of renewal especially at this time of year, when G-d miraculously renews the cycle of nature. May it inspire us with even greater love for our traditions, loyalty to our faith, and commitment to the ideals and values which Judaism has given to the world.

SUMMARY OF ARRANGEMENTS AND TIMETABLE

THURSDAY 10TH APRIL – Fast of the Firstborn

1. Siyyum in Synagogue after Morning service.
2. Make arrangements with your rabbi for Sale of Chametz (at the very latest).
3. Kasher inside oven.
4. Search for chametz in the evening.

FRIDAY 11TH APRIL

1. Finish preparing kitchen for Pesach.
2. Store away chametz utensils – put aside separately remaining chametz utensils and food still required, together with challot for Friday night and Shabbat morning.
3. Burn chametz by 11:54am – omitting *Kol chamira*.
4. Prepare Seder and lay table, ensuring no chametz is brought near.
5. Prepare Shabbat meals in Pesach utensils.
6. After Kiddush on Friday night and Shabbat morning, say blessing over challot at side table, eat all bread, brush off crumbs and continue with meal on another table, using paper plates and cups and disposable cutlery.

SHABBAT 12TH APRIL

1. Morning service held early. Finish eating chametz by 10:45am at the latest.
2. After breakfast, clear away any remaining chametz (see details above), throw away paper plates etc., shake and store away tablecloth. Recite *Kol chamira* before 11:54am.
3. Shabbat lunch – no matza may be eaten.
4. Yom Tov candles must be lit **after** Shabbat terminates at 20:41. The light should be taken from an existing flame.

Please note:

All times given in this booklet are London Times and are valid for Pesach 2025 only.

לשנה הבאה בירושלים

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM