

Pesach 2025: Why Is This Year different?

A practical guide to the laws that apply when Erev Pesach occurs on Shabbos

All times below are for London

BACKGROUND

What happens when, as this year, Erev Pesach falls on Shabbos? The prohibition of *melacha* (prohibited labour) on Shabbos is very strict: to burn the chametz that remains is therefore 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 meals of Friday night and Shabbos morning must include *lechem mishneh* – two whole loaves, rolls, pitta breads or the like – over which we say the appropriate blessing. How, then, is it possible to have two chametz meals on Shabbos, 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 with the laws of Shabbos or of those of Pesach?

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, our stocks of chametz products will have been run down, the house will have been cleaned of chametz and only chametz food sufficient for the last couple of 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 follows.

Thursday 10th April

The Fast of the First-Born (*Taanit Bechorim*) usually takes place on the day before Pesach, but this year it would occur on Shabbos. As fasting is forbidden on Shabbos (except for Yom Kippur) it is brought forward. We do not favour fasting on a Friday, the eve of Shabbos, either so we observe it on Thursday instead.

The Siyum celebration (conclusion of studying a volume of the Talmud) which absolves the first-born son from fasting, therefore takes place after the morning service on Thursday.

By Thursday, or Friday at the latest, arrangements should already have been made with a Rabbi (or alternatively with KLBD) for the sale of chametz (*mechirat chametz*). This involves a contract drawn up with a non-Jewish person to purchase items containing chametz such as pasta, whisky etc, the disposal of which would entail financial loss. It is usually done through the Rabbi of one's local shul but if this is not practical, chametz may be sold online via KLBD. See www.kosher.org.uk/category/sell-my-chametz.

On Thursday at the latest (but usually earlier since no Pesach baking or cooking may be commenced before the kashering of hobs and ovens), one should thoroughly clean and *kasher* the inside of the oven to make it ready for Pesach. After this, of course, it can no longer be used for chametz and one should serve meals on Pesach crockery or on paperware which can be recycled.

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. As this would fall on Friday night, however, when the use of a candle is forbidden, the search is performed instead on Thursday evening after nightfall. The blessing recited over the search, and the declaration made afterwards annulling any chametz which has been overlooked, can be found at the beginning of the Haggadah or on page 642 of the green siddur.

FRIDAY 11th APRIL

Friday may be considered as Erev Pesach, and the day should be planned accordingly.

After breakfast, final preparations of the kitchen for Pesach should be made: the top of the cooker, if not yet kashered for Pesach, should be *kashered* and well-covered.

Working surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned and covered.

A small, separate area should be set aside in, or adjacent to, the kitchen, where the remainder of the chametz food and crockery for Friday lunch can be kept, together with challot or similar bread for the two Shabbos meals. Apart from this, all other chametz utensils should be cleaned and stored away and replaced by 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 before 11:54am, as would normally be done on Erev Pesach. The declaration (*kol chamira*) annulling any chametz inadvertently left, however, is omitted, as a quantity of chametz remains to be used. It is said instead after breakfast on Shabbos, once any remaining chametz has been disposed of.

As no preparations for the Seder may be made on Shabbos, it is a good idea to lay the table and have everything ready on Friday, so that Seder can commence without delay once Shabbos has ended. Care should be taken that all remaining chametz is kept well away from the areas which are ready for Pesach. For example, if the Seder table is already laid in the dining room, all meals between Friday and Shabbos afternoon could be eaten in the kitchen or, if possible, in another adjacent room.

Shabbos meals must be cooked on Friday in Pesach utensils. Two challot should be reserved for use on Friday night and two for Shabbos morning. If large challot are unlikely to be finished, small ones should be used instead. Many use pitta bread, as noted above, since these create less crumbs. It is recommended that these are the only items of actual chametz used for Shabbos meals.

As an alternative to challot with all the attendant chametz complications, some prefer to use *matza ashira*, commonly known as 'egg matza'. This matza is made with eggs or fruit juice instead of water. Since it is not considered to be 'real' matza, it can be eaten on Erev Pesach and used for hamotzi in this situation, thus avoiding the complication of using chametz when the home and the rest of the food is Pesachdik. (Please note, however, that accepted Ashkenazi practice is that *matza ashira* may neither be consumed on Pesach, nor on Erev Pesach after 10.45am, following this year's timings.)

NB. if making the blessing (*Hamotzi*) over challot or pitta bread on Friday night and Shabbos morning, it is suggested that they be placed on a small side table, separate from the rest of the food. They should be fully consumed. Those partaking should make sure that no crumbs remain on their hands or clothes, and they should wash out their mouths before eating the rest of the meal.

SHABBOS 12th APRIL

The morning service on Shabbos Erev Pesach is held early to enable people to return home, make kiddush and have breakfast before the *hafsakah* (the latest time for eating chametz), which is at 10.45am this year.

For breakfast, after the challot have been eaten, it is suggested that light refreshments be served, such as cheese, herring, cake and biscuits (all supervised for Pesach) and fruit.

Immediately after breakfast the chametz tablecloth should be thoroughly shaken out and stored away with the other chametz utensils. Any bread or other chametz unavoidably left over from the meal should be disposed of carefully.

Paperware should be thrown away into recycling. The declaration (*kol chamirah*) which was omitted on Friday should now be said (it can be found at the beginning of the Haggadah). By saying it, we finally renounce ownership of any chametz which has inadvertently been left behind. It should be recited before 11.54am.

Now is the opportunity to enjoy a well-earned rest, an opportunity which rarely presents itself on Erev Pesach in other years.

By lunch time on Shabbos, when the entire house is now kosher for Pesach, lunch can be enjoyed in a relaxed atmosphere. One restriction remains, however: in order to preserve it's 'newness' matza is not eaten until the Seder.

It is recommended that Seudah Shlishit, the third Shabbos meal, which is eaten in the afternoon, should consist of light food, such as fish or fruit, since neither matza nor bread can be served.

Yom Tov candles should not be lit until Shabbos ends at 8.41pm and either Maariv or the phrase '*baruch hamavdil bein kodesh lekodesh*' recited, marking the separation between Shabbos and Yom Tov.

Now the time for Seder has finally arrived! The age-old story of our deliverance from Egypt is recounted anew, and we are told that we must think of ourselves as having been personally redeemed from Egypt.

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 God miraculously renews nature's cycle. May it inspire us with even greater love for our traditions, loyalty to our faith, and commitments to the ideals and values which Judaism has given to the world, which have ensured our survival, and which have brought us from slavery to freedom.

Sunday 13th APRIL

Second day of Yom Tov begins at 8.43pm, at which time candles may be lit and preparations for the second Seder may commence.

Wishing you a Chag Kasher veSameach from all at KLBD!

לשנה הבאה בירושלים הבנויה

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM REBUILT

SUMMARY OF TIMES

Thursday 10th April

- Fast of the Firstborn or *Siyum*
- Search for chametz after nightfall, which is **8.32pm**

Friday 11th April

- Burning of chametz before **11.54am**

Shabbat 12th April

- Finish eating chametz by **10.45am**
- Dispose of all chametz and recite *Kol Chamira* before **11.54am**
- Yom Tov candles lit after **8.41pm**

Sunday 13th April

- Second day Yom Tov candles lit after **8.43pm**

Monday 14th April

- Yom Tov ends at **8.56pm**