

# Pesach Laws & Customs



## When is Pesach?

We observe Pesach from the 15th through the 22nd of the Hebrew month of Nisan.

Pesach 2024 falls on Monday night, April 22, and lasts through Monday, April 29.

It is forbidden to eat chametz beginning Monday morning, April 22.



## Is my home kosher for Pesach?

Keeping a year-round kosher home is not the same as a “kosher for Pesach” home.

On Pesach, eating chametz, or having chametz in your possession, is forbidden. (See “What exactly is chametz?” below)

This mitzvah takes up the bulk of our Pesach preparations, as we search, clean and even scrub our homes to remove all remnants of edible chametz.

## What does this look like in practice?

### Maot Chitim - money for the poor

Before Pesach, there is a custom to give Maot Chitim (literally, money for wheat). We donate money to the needy to help them buy matzot and other food for Pesach. Visit [ou.org](http://ou.org)/hunger to support the OU’s Maot Chitim campaign efforts, where money is given to poverty-stricken families to help them celebrate the holiday with happiness and dignity.

### Cleaning

The entire home must be cleaned of all edible chametz. Check and clean out any place where chametz may have entered during the year. (If you have kids at home, this might mean under the beds, in the closets, and of course, in your car!) Either clean all toys or set aside designated clean toys.

### Selling

As it’s impractical to dispose of all of one’s chametz,

there developed a custom to sell one’s chametz to a non-Jew. Place chametz in a specially marked and sealed place, e.g.: a room or closet. That storage space can then be leased to a non-Jew for the duration of the holiday. Ask your Orthodox rabbi to help you arrange this.

### Different Utensils

Year-round cooking and eating utensils should not be used, and separate utensils should be purchased exclusively for Pesach use. (In some cases, year-round utensils may be kashered for Pesach use, in consultation with a rabbi.)

### What exactly is chametz?

Chametz is any food created by allowing grain (specifically wheat, oat, spelt, rye or barley) and water to ferment and rise. This is often referred to as “leaven.” Some common examples of chametz are bread, crackers, cookies, pretzels and pasta. Even foods with minute amounts of chametz ingredients, or foods processed on utensils or machinery that are used for chametz, are not permissible for Pesach use. Practically speaking, any processed food not certified as kosher for Pesach may include chametz ingredients and should not be eaten on Pesach.

## The busy days before Pesach - special mitzvot and customs

Have you combed every inch of your home for wayward chametz, turned over your kitchen into an aluminum-foil-covered spaceship, and searched all corners? **You’re ready for the next step!**

### Bedikat Chametz

Bedikat Chametz means the “search for chametz.” Using a candle or flashlight we comb our homes for any chametz that we might have overlooked. This year, Bedikat Chametz will take place on Sunday evening, April 21, after dark. Kol chamirah should be recited. Any chametz found is set aside to be burned the next morning.

## Burning the Chametz

On the morning of Erev Pesach, we burn the chametz. Kol chamirah should be recited.

## The Fast of the Firstborns

Erev Pesach - Monday, April 22, is a fast day for firstborn males (Ta'anit Bechorim). During the tenth plague, all the firstborns in Egypt died. G-d passed over the homes of the Jews and spared their firstborns. To commemorate this, firstborns fast on Erev Pesach.

Many congregations conduct a siyum. (The conclusion of a portion of Torah learning is a celebratory occasion that allows for a seudat mitzvah, a ritual feast). A siyum exempts firstborn males from fasting altogether.

## Pesach is here

Not all the days of Pesach are the same or have the same laws.

## The first day and the last day

The first day (sundown Monday night, April 22, through nightfall Tuesday, April 23) and the last day (sundown Sunday night, April 28, through nightfall Monday, April 29) are observed with Shabbat restrictions on work and creative activity. The exceptions are carrying and the use of fire, which are both permitted (in certain ways) if needed for cooking and food preparation.

## Chol Ha'moed - The Intermediate Days

The intermediate days of Pesach (Tuesday night, April 23 – Sunday, April 28) are considered “semi-festive.” Although they are the “weekdays” of the holiday, not all work, activities and crafts are permitted. The laws of Chol Ha'moed are pretty nuanced. An Orthodox rabbi will be able to give you detailed guidance. Note that of course for Shabbat, April 27, despite falling during the Chol Ha'Mmoed period, the usual Shabbat restrictions apply.

	LEIL HASEDER		SHABBAT CHOL HAMOED			SHVII SHEL PESACH	
	CANDLES	HAVDALA	CANDLES	EARLY	HAVDALA	CANDLES	HAVDALA
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	6:37	7:52	6:40	5:53	7:56	6:41	7:56
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	6:55	7:54	6:58	5:55	7:58	6:59	7:58
Beit Shemesh/RBS	6:57	7:52	6:59	5:54	7:56	6:59	7:56
Alon Shvut	6:53	7:52	6:56	5:53	7:56	6:57	7:57
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	6:55	7:54	6:57	5:55	7:58	6:59	7:59
Modiin/Chashmonaim	6:54	7:53	6:56	5:54	7:57	6:58	7:57
Netanya	6:55	7:54	6:58	5:55	7:58	6:59	7:59
Be'er Sheva	6:54	7:52	6:56	5:54	7:56	6:58	7:57
Rehovot	6:54	7:53	6:57	5:55	7:57	6:59	7:58
Petach Tikva	6:37	7:53	6:40	5:55	7:57	6:41	7:58
Ginot Shomron	6:54	7:53	6:56	5:54	7:57	6:58	7:58
Haifa / Zichron	6:45	7:54	6:48	5:55	7:59	6:49	7:59
Gush Shiloh	6:53	7:52	6:56	5:53	7:56	6:57	7:57
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	6:55	7:54	6:58	5:55	7:58	6:59	7:59
Givat Ze'ev	6:57	7:52	7:00	5:53	7:56	7:01	7:57
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	6:53	7:52	6:56	5:53	7:56	6:57	7:56
Ashkelon	6:55	7:54	6:58	5:55	7:58	6:59	7:59
Yad Binyamin	6:54	7:53	6:57	5:55	7:57	6:58	7:58
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	6:47	7:53	6:50	5:53	7:57	6:52	7:57
Golan	6:52	7:52	6:55	5:53	7:56	6:57	7:57
Nahariya/Maalot	6:54	7:54	6:57	5:55	7:59	6:58	7:59
Afula	6:53	7:53	6:56	5:54	7:57	6:58	7:58

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem):

Leil HaSeder 8:30 PM • Shabbat Chol Hamoed 8:33 PM • Shvii Shel Pesach 8:34 PM

*Please see the OU Magazine for more Pesach details and halachot*

See: [www.ouisrael.org/pesach-guide-5784/](http://www.ouisrael.org/pesach-guide-5784/)