Are We Ready for the Eve of Pesach?

Before Pesach begins, we must make sure that no edible chametz remains in our homes.

Chametz refers to foods or drinks (for humans or for pets) made from, or containing any element derived from, the five grains: wheat, barley, oats, rye, and spelt. Such as bread, cake, pasta, cookies, and many alcoholic beverages like beer, whisky, vodka, etc.

The Torah teaches that during Pesach chametz may not be eaten, and it also may not be in our possession.

The Rabbis also taught that we must physically remove all edible chametz from our properties. This includes our homes, cars, offices, or any other place.

That is why, before Pesach, we carefully clean our homes and remove from them all chametz products.

 Tuesday, March 31 (at night)

Bedikat Chametz – Searching for Chametz

On the night before Erev Pesach, that is, tonight Tuesday, March 31, we perform Bedikat Chametz, the final search for chametz.

Using a flashlight , we carefully check places where food might be found. (traditionally, candles were used, but today many rabbis recommend using a flashlight due to fire concerns.)

 Places to check carefully:
 kitchen
 pantry

 refrigerator and freezer
 dining room
 car
 backpacks, bags, pockets

During the search, we are mainly looking for actual chametz food, such as:

 cookies
 snacks and candy
 crackers, pretzels
 cereals
 alcoholic drinks made from grain
Liquid products such as multivitamin drinks or protein shakes that contain chametz.
 pet food (many contain chametz and may not be used or kept during Pesach)

What is NOT Chametz?

Some items are not considered chametz because they are not edible, food, even if they might contain grain derivatives.

For example:
 cosmetics
 cleaning products
 medications in the form of hard tablets, which are swallowed with water

These may remain in our possession during Pesach.

What is Se'or?

 Se'or is the sourdough starter used to make bread

It is an additive that is not eaten directly, but is kept in the home (it can last for years!) and is used whenever one wants to prepare homemade sourdough bread.

The Torah forbids using or keeping *se'or* during Pesach.

Therefore, it must also be removed from the house, and it is discarded or given away before the holiday.

The Berakhah

Before beginning the search we say:

Barukh Ata A-donay, E-lohenu Melekh ha'Olam, asher qiddeshanu be-mitsvotav ve-tsivanu al bi'ur chametz.

Translation:
"Blessed are You, HaShem our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to remove the chametz [from our homes]."

Bitul Chametz – First Declaration

After the search, we place the chametz we found in a safe place in order to remove it from the house the next day.

Then we recite the Bitul Chametz, declaring that any edible chametz that we may not have found during this inspection no longer belongs to us:

Kal chamira deika birshuti dela chaziteh vedela biarteh, libtil veleheve hefker ke'afra de'ar'a

This means:
"All chametz or se'or that is in my possession, which I did not see and did not remove from the house, should be considered ownerless like the dust of the earth."

 Wednesday, April 1 (in the morning)

Erev Pesach

Bi'ur Chametz – Removing the Chametz from the house

After breakfast we gather:

• the chametz found the night before

• any remaining chametz

And we **remove it from the house**.

 Traditionally it is burned (in the past garbage was disposed of this way).

But it may also be:

 thrown into a garbage bin outside the home
 given to animals

Bitul Chametz – Final Declaration

After removing or burning the chametz, we repeat the declaration, this time more broadly:

…

Transliteration:
Kal Chamira de'ika birshuti dehaziteh u'dela haziteh…

Meaning:
"Any chametz that belongs to me, whether I saw it or not, whether I removed it from my house or not, should be considered ownerless like the dust of the earth."

Chametz may be eaten until the end of the fourth hour of the day, and must be removed from the house until the end of the fifth hour.

In our community, UMJCA, every year we use the same times:

 Chametz may be eaten only until 10:00 a.m.
 It must be removed from the house before 11:00 a.m.

For times in other cities and locations, see:
https://www.myzmanim.com/search.aspx

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The Hebrew root □□□□□ **(BET–AYIN–RESH)** is polysemous: it has several different meanings depending on the context. The same is true for the root □□□□□ **(AYIN–RESH–BET)**, which contains the same letters and has multiple meanings.

The word **Bi'ur (□□□□□□□)** in this context does not mean "burning". It comes from the root □□□, which means **to remove something completely from a place, leaving nothing behind**.

Examples:

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"You shall remove the evil from your midst"

Or even closer:

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"I have removed [completely] all that is sacred from the house (ma'aser, etc.)" (Devarim 26:13)

□ **Bi'ur Chametz = removing the chametz completely from the house**