

How To Make Pesach Easier

With Pesach on the way, some are filled with dread and overwhelmed with the monumental task that lies ahead called making Pesach. Because most of the preparation is shopping, cleaning and cooking, it is common that the brunt of the work falls on the wife and she shouldn't have to enter Pesach exhausted and feeling used. While it is hard work and some stress is expected, try to make it as least stressful as possible, so you can have a happy home and a happy Pesach.

If the wife is the high energy, creative, organized type, the husband should move out of her way, make sure that she has what she needs and count his blessings.

This article will give some tips on how to make preparing for Pesach and Pesach itself less stressful and more enjoyable for the whole family. Though it will focus on families with young children, you will find ideas in this article for everybody, just take whatever you think will be helpful for you.

Make a Plan and Follow It

Write up a plan and make it as detailed as possible. It should cover, readying the house for Pesach, minhagim (traditions) you will keep, the Seder, meals, Chol Hamoed outings. Based on your plan, you will know what to shop for, clothes, kitchenware, and food.

When you plan, plan on making things as easy as possible. Eliminate everything that is unnecessary, and search for the easiest way to do things. The clearer and more detailed your plan is, the easier it will make your Pesach.

Once you create your plan, you can use it from year to year, but you will probably have to review it and make some changes.

The only thing is that you follow through on your plan.

Preparing the House

Make a checklist for every room. For example,

Bedroom 1

- ☐ Closet
- ☐ Dresser
- ☐ Desk
- ☐ Bed
- ☐ Floor

Do the same for every bedroom, hallway, bathroom, family room, living room, dining room, dinette, kitchen and so on.

Whoever is doing the task, should check it when it is done. You can even add a second checkbox to each task, for you to check, that it is satisfactory.

The next thing is to assign the work to whoever will be responsible for it. Hired help, father, mother and children if they are capable.

Hiring Help

You should hire help according to what you could afford. The more the better. But at least for the hardest tasks, like cleaning the refrigerator, the oven (if you don't have self clean), the stove top, etc.

The Children

It is okay to have your children help, but it is not okay to turn them into slaves or to make them miserable. They have been learning about cleaning for Pesach in school, now they can do it as well. Give them each a sheet of paper with their tasks for that day, explain how you want it done, and they should check the boxes when they complete each task. You can inspect their work when they are done, and check your box. You can even offer a treat as an incentive, for when their work is complete. Their task sheet should be right next to yours in a central location, like the kitchen table, so it is a family thing and they will see you and the other children filling their tasks as well. If it is a lot,

split it into two or three days, and have a separate sheet and treat for every day.

Try to Make Things Easier

Be clever and remember that Pesach is just 8 or 7 days, you don't have to have things perfect and you can live without some things.

Here are some ideas of things we do or don't do in our home, to make life easier.

- 1) We used disposable goods and plasticware wherever and whenever we could. This makes cleaning up a breeze.
- 2) We don't empty our kitchen, we seal the pantry, the cabinets (except for under the sink) and the drawers with tape and sell it with the chametz. We bought a chef rack with wheels to be our temporary pantry and cabinets, and a few plastic bins to hold potatoes, onions, nuts etc. After Pesach, all of our Pesachware is boxed, put on the rack, rolled away and stored until next year.
- 3) We don't make Pesach cakes or other things like that, it is not worth the hassle. We have fruits, melons, nuts and chocolate instead. It is healthier and no one misses the cake. The same is for anything else that is too much work, unnecessary or doesn't really enhance the meal.
- 4) We cover the counters with plastic drop cloth. It is cheap and goes into the garbage after Yom Tov. We have a few large floor tiles (different colors for milk and meat) on top of the plastic to put hot pots and pans on.

I am sure you will come up with your own clever ideas to make life easier. Please share your ideas in the comments section below.

Minhagim

Sit together with your spouse and discuss how you will celebrate Pesach, and which minhagim you will keep. You might want to be strict about some things, but you have to be practical, taking into

account your whole family and their needs. For example, you may not want to buy processed foods, but if you have little children, you might want to buy some lady fingers for snacks and chocolates for treats. Another example, some have a tradition not to use cutlery that falls on the floor for the rest of Yom Tov, but if you have little children, you will find that very quickly, you will have nothing to eat with. So you will have to decide if you are going to be able to keep that one.

If you have a tradition that will make everyone miserable, you don't have to keep it. For example, if you have a certain food that you ate at your parents Seder, that is a hassle to make or no one but you likes, either don't have it or make it yourself. You will find that your family will create their own special traditions.

Plan Your Meals

Create a menu for the whole Pesach, including breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks. Also, think about the outings, and what you will eat on them. Once you have this information, you will know what food items you have to buy.

Chol Hamoed

Chol Hamoed is part of Yom Tov and there are specific laws that pertain to it. It is not totally like a weekday, and our sages say strong words about those who disrespect Chol Hamoed. It is a good idea to sit down with the children that are old enough (9) and review the laws of Chol Hamoed from the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch. You will find that your children will take it seriously, because you made it important.

Chol Hamoed Outings

Your children expect to go on outings on Chol Hamoed. There is nothing more frustrating for the kids than waiting for you to get your act together. So plan your outings before Pesach.

The outings should be according to your means, and consider doing an outing with family or friends,

it doesn't have to be expensive. It can be a trip to a park or a nature hike.

Shopping

It is proper to get new clothes for the family for Pesach. And if you can afford it, jewelry for the wife and girls.

Take the menu that you created and based on that, make a shopping list for food, drinks and kitchenware. Fruits and vegetables should be enough to last until sometime on Chol Hamoed, you can get fresh fruits and vegetables during Chol Hamoed.

We are blessed to live in a time, that most things can be ordered from the comfort of your home. So order whatever you can, and have it delivered.

Preparing for the First Days of Yom Tov

Most of the food preparation is going to be for the Seder. Some of my fondest memories growing up was of the family preparing for the Seder. We had the music playing in the kitchen, and all of us had something to do. Everything can be done on the two days before Pesach, but mostly on Erev Pesach. You can use the same method as cleaning the house, where they can check a box when they are done.

Plan the Seder

If you have a family with kids under bar and bas mitzvah, you want them to be able to participate in the Seder. But if your Seder goes to the wee hours of the morning, you are going to lose them. They are most important by the Seder, and you should plan the Seder around them.

Here are a few things that will make this possible.

- 1) Have the kids take a nap for a few hours on Erev Pesach.
- 2) Get rid of wasted time.
 - a) Have the table set and ready to start the Seder before they come home from shul, so that right when they

get home the Seder could begin, immediately. Everything needed up until the meal should be on the table, or be ready to be brought out on a moment's notice.

- b) Some should be in charge of running the Seder, keeping it flowing. There is no need to rush, just keep it flowing.
 - c) Someone should be in charge of bringing things to the table when they are needed.
- 3) Dvar Torahs
- a) The Seder is not the time to start searching for something to share at the Seder. Don't come to the Seder with 10 different Haggadahs, hoping to find something to share. Prepare everything you are going to say a few days before Pesach, and come to the Seder with a plain Haggadah, with no commentary.
 - b) The children have been preparing for the Seder in school, and surely have something to say. You might want to make rules, such as, 1 or 2 dvar Torahs per person until the meal, and another during the meal. You keep the rule as well. This will force you to say what is most important.

After Pesach

When Yom Tov is over, and you are packing up the Pesach things, take inventory of everything you have and make a note of all the things you thought would make your next Pesach better. Attach the list to the outside of your Pesach goods, so that you will have it when you start planning your next Pesach.

Have a wonderful Pesach!