



# Agudas Achim Congregation

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## Special Pesach Guide 2021 / 5781

All listed services below (including the seder)  
will be hosted on Zoom.

We won't have a communal first seder on Saturday, March 27.

Pesach morning service <a href="#">link</a>	Sunday, March 28	9:30 a.m.
Pesach Second Seder <a href="#">link</a>	Sunday, March 28	6:30 p.m.
Erev Shabbat and Festival Service <a href="#">link</a>	Friday, April 2	7:30 p.m.
Shabbat and Festival Morning Service (includes Yizkor) <a href="#">link</a>	Saturday, April 3	9:30 a.m.

[Conservative Shabbat and Festival Morning Siddur](#)

[Conservative Shabbat and Festival Evening Siddur](#)

[Mishkan T'filah for Weekdays, Shabbat, and Festivals](#)



## AGUDAS ACHIM PESACH GUIDE

Dear brothers and sisters,

Some of you may know that on the second Seder night, we start counting the Omer – the fifty day period between Passover and Shavu'ot. We count our way from redemption to revelation, from enslavement and trauma to liberation and dignity. I've always found it curious that we start counting the Omer on the second Seder night. Why not the first? The easy, straightforward answer is that 'the Torah tells us so', but actually it's not that simple. (If you want to look up the references to the mitzvah in the Torah, you can find them in Leviticus 23:15-16 and Deuteronomy 16:9-12).

What once started as the administration of an agricultural barley offering during Temple times has evolved into a profound spiritual practice where we work on the development of soul traits and moral character (I can highly recommend the Central Conference of American Rabbis' *Omer* app!) It seems like a long way to go for a fairly obscure mitzvah. Still, it is possible to derive hope and resilience from this teaching.

The Omer isn't started on the first day, when all seems fresh. Usually, we are quite excited for first Seder night. The anticipation feels new; we have prepared, cleaned and cooked to the best of our ability. The table is set, the candles lit and the wine poured. On the second day, the Seder may have lost its luster. We have already eaten the special foods and sung the special songs. We have told the story and reflected on it already. We are tired, and dare I say, bored. That is exactly when the Omer count starts; a jolt of hope, the first casting of a long vision to redemption. We step out of the festival and into the future. Even after having undergone it a second time.

That is also how it is with the pandemic. We are now at a crossroads: this is the second Passover on Zoom. In last year's letter, I optimistically wrote 'next year in-person.' Few of us could have foreseen in those heady, hazy first days what the year would bring; its losses and its triumphs. We are still here, after a year. Like the second Seder, we are still in *Mitzrayim*, Egypt. We have not yet been redeemed. And at the same time, by the time we finish off singing 'Echad Mi Yodea' and 'Chad Gadya', we count the Omer; we number our days towards the coming of better days. At this phase in the pandemic, we too can see the glowing, growing embers of hope. The vaccines are rolled out; infections appear to be falling. Like the Israelites journeying through the wilderness, we know that the way out will not be straightforward. We may backtrack; we may get lost. But we are firmly setting our feet on the road to freedom.

The Omer count teaches us that small acts of daily discipline can yield large spiritual and moral dividends. So it is too with the precautions and mitigations during this pandemic. We will continue wearing our masks, distancing and washing our hands. We will continue to practice caution. But we will also get vaccinated and embrace a vision for what the world can be like once we can embrace each other again. That day is close.

In closing, I just want to add how very proud we should be of our community. We have held fast to our values, to our congregation and to each other. We have continued to do the right thing; we have stepped up the plate and shared in the love that we have given each other and the wider

Iowa City community. As your Rabbi, a year on, I am grateful and privileged to be your Rabbi and to journey with you at this time and into a brighter future.

The dawn is breaking, the sea is splitting. Soon, we will be able to raise our timbrels and cross to the other side. I look forward to seeing you all in-person again.

*Shalom u'vrachah*, peace and blessings ,



Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz

## SALE OF CHAMETZ, KITNIYOT AND PESACH PREPARATION

The formula for what defines chametz is the five Biblical species of grain (wheat, spelt, rye, barley, oats) that have been brought in contact with water (and airborne yeast) for a minimum of 18 minutes. The Torah, supported by rabbinic interpretations in Rabbinic law, commands us to not consume, use or possess chametz during the seven days (eight days, rabbinically) of the holiday.

A second category of food items traditionally prohibited for Ashkenazi Jews (Jews of European descent) are *kitniyot* (known collectively as 'legumes' — rice, corn, legumes, peas and nuts). These have always been permitted to Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews (of Middle Eastern and Asian descent). The Committee of Jewish Laws and Standards of the Conservative Movement has ruled that kitniyot are permissible to Ashkenazi Jews also, expanding the range of foods available for Passover, especially relevant this year.

Changing one's home over to keep 'kosher l'Pesach' (kosher for Passover) is one of the traditional observances of Passover. Note: preparing the house for Passover does not need to be equal to spring cleaning and is not meant to be a stressful process (rather, it invites us to cleanse symbolically and contemplate our liberation). Rabbinically, anything that is no (longer) fit for human consumption is not consider chametz, including grime, stale breadcrumbs etc.

It is traditional to use special crockery, cooking utensils and dishes for Passover, or to kasher ('make kosher') utensils for the occasion. Hard, non-porous, heat resistant plastic, glass, Pyrex and metal can be kashered; earthenware, ceramics and wood (except if one sands it down) cannot. Fine bone china can be used if it has been left standing unused for a year. Kashering is usually done parallel to how the item was used: immersion in boiling water for silverware and cooking pots, heating until red hot on the stove for skillets and simple washing in case of glass. Heat-resistant kitchen surfaces and counter tops that can withstand purging with boiling water can be kashered that way. Covering food preparation surfaces with tinfoil is another option. Stoves and ovens are kashered by cleaning them and heating them (all burners on for about 10 minutes, or a self-cleaning oven cycle).

The Rabbis of the Talmud, aware that destroying chametz wholesale could cause economic hardship, created a method for storing away our chametz for the holiday and selling it to a non-Jew so that it is legally no longer in our possession. This practice is known as 'mechirat chametz'. This year, we encourage people to use the form provided by the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism included in the resource pack.

# PASSOVER RESOURCES

## General:

[Hebcal's full set of Passover dates for this year, including Torah readings](#)

[My Jewish Learning: Six Tips for Hosting a Solo Seder](#)

## Reform:

[Mishkan HaSeder, the new Reform Haggadah which we will use for the Second Zoom seder at Agudas Achim \(livestreamed from the Rabbi's house\).](#)

[Family-friendly Haggadah by Rabbi Amy Scheinerman](#)

[Resources from the CCAR \(Central Conference of American Rabbis\)](#)

### Resources from the Union of Reform Judaism:

[Pandemic Passover, Take Two by Rabbi Rick Jacobs \(Reform Judaism\)](#)

[Your Guide to Hosting a Great Virtual Seder](#)

[Video: How to Make Matzah at Home](#)

[How to Recite or Sing the Four Questions](#)

[Send Beautiful, Free Passover eCards](#)

[A Guide to Eating on Passover](#)

[Digital Content to Enliven your Passover 2021 Seder \(Reform Judaism\)](#)

## Conservative:

[Pesach 5781 Q&A by Rabbi Aaron Alexander](#)

[More Passover COVID-19 resources from the Rabbinical Assembly, including virtual 'sell of chametz' \(mechirat chametz\) form.](#)

[Sale of Chametz Form 5781/2021](#)

[YouTube video on how to prepare your kitchen for Passover](#)

[Preparing for Passover during a Pandemic: Rabbinical Assembly resources](#)

[More resources from the USCJ](#)

[FREE Feast of Freedom Haggadah](#)

## THINGS TO CONSIDER IN YOUR RITUAL OBSERVANCE OF PASSOVER

### Mental and emotional wellbeing

Make ritual and religious decisions that facilitate and protect your mental and emotional wellbeing and that safely reduce your isolation, including the use of technology on the Sabbath and Festivals. If you are new to the practice of Passover, be gentle with yourself – this may not be the year to grow one’s level of observance or to experiment with new expressions of Jewish religiosity. If you require additional emotional and spiritual support, please reach out to the synagogue, to the Rabbi directly or to the Caring Committee.

### Passover kashrut and leniencies

This addendum seeks to provide context and leniencies to the practice of Passover kashrut for those who observe.

If it is your practice to replace already-open products that may in themselves not be *chametzdike* (contain leaven) but may have a slight chance of having encountered leaven by being in proximity of leaven (for example, spice containers in the pantry sitting next to bags of flour), you may want to weigh the virtue of buying new products against the extra exposure (and expense, during economically uncertain times) to contagion if you would go to the supermarket. I would encourage you to consider using as much as you can of items you already have in the house. The same applies with the ritual food items needed for the Seder. If you lack certain items, consider replacing them with symbolically similar items. For example: parsley with other herbs or greens, horseradish with ordinary radishes, a shankbone with a beet or even a chicken bone, etc. If you are short on matzah, you can choose to make your own or please be in touch with the synagogue in order to procure matzah safely.

If you ordinarily follow Ashkenazi minhag and refrain from eating kitniyot (legumes), you may consider eating kitniyot this year if it feels spiritually comfortable to you and if it reduces anxiety and exposure to contagion in order to procure extra food items. (There is no Halakhic objection to eating kitniyot – see pack - according to Conservative Halakhah, but many continue to observe Ashkenazi minhag out of fondness of family and communal tradition).

In short, all ritual and religious decisions should be made with pikuach nefesh (preserving life) in mind. If amending religious practice directly impacts your exposure to contagion (by, for example, reducing trips to the supermarket), then please amend your religious practice. If the integrity of your religious practice is sound irrespective of the need to procure extra items, then you may be encouraged to continue your ritual practice as customary.

## BEDIKAT CHAMETZ

There is a custom to engage in a ‘chametz hunt’ on the night before Passover begins (March 26 this year) once Passover cleaning has been completed. Some wrap a number of pieces of bread (for example, 10, a mystical number) in tinfoil and hide them around the house. The members of the family go search for these pieces with a candle and feather, or in our contemporary context, a flashlight or the light on your cellphone. Then the retrieved chametz is burned or discarded (biur chametz) the next morning with a blessing (the blessings can be found in every Haggadah). This activity may provide extra family fun when sheltering-in-place.

## HILLEL MEALS

Iowa Hillel is excited to offer Kosher for Passover meals! (**Orders due Sunday March 21st**) They have a great menu planned! You can order for one, two, or four people. While there is a slight discount for ordering for multiple people, Passover Seder costs \$30/person, lunch is \$15/person, and dinner is \$18/person. Everything is kosher for Passover, prepared in the Hillel kitchen, and available for a socially distant pick-up. (If you live in Oaknoll Community, the Hillel staff will happily drop off meals for lunch and dinner daily.)

Passover Seder will be available for pick up on Friday before Shabbat or on Saturday. Lunch will be available for pick up between 11 AM - 1 PM and dinner will be available for pick up between 5 - 7 PM. Once you've registered, the week of the 22nd, you'll receive a link to schedule which time you'd like to come pick up your food during that time slot. (There will be time slots of 10 minutes with up to 6 people able to register in order to maintain social distancing at pick up.) If you are a vegan or gluten free, please let us know under dietary restrictions and we will adjust your meals. If you order at least 3 meals, we will give you a box of matzah.

Order by Sunday, March 21st. Please reach out to [office@iowahillel.org](mailto:office@iowahillel.org) if you have financial constraints as we want everyone to be able to have Passover meals and Agudas Achim Congregation will sponsor your meals.

You can order via credit card here: <https://www.iowahillel.org/passover2021>. If you'd like to pay via check, please email [Jaime@iowahillel.org](mailto:Jaime@iowahillel.org) with your order and he'll send you back a confirmation with your total.

You can see a menu for these meals [at this link](#).

## BITTUL SHISHIM

Bittul shishim, the nullification of 1/60th of an admixture is a halakhic principle that allows one to purchase non-kosher for Passover products before the start of the holiday but not during the weeklong holiday. The principle at work here is that one may intentionally nullify traces of chametz in food items that are in and of themselves not chametz (think fruit juice, tinned vegetables and fish, cheese, yogurt, milk, eggs etc.) as long as they are purchased beforehand. This allows the consumer some leniency in observing the holiday. During the holiday itself, one is limited to buying fresh produce (vegetables, fruit, fish, meat) without a hechsher, while other products will need a hechsher. See the addendum on taking on leniencies l'shem pikuach nefesh, for the sake of preserving life, at this time. A suggestion to reduce exposure and contagion would be to continue the leniency of bittul shishim throughout the holiday itself and not just for advance preparation.

## PASSOVER COOKING CLASS

The Jewish Federation of the Corridor and Iowa Hillel invite you to join Iowa Hillel's cook, Jaime Holt, on Tuesday, March 23 at 7:00 p.m. to learn how to make a delicious Passover meal that is sure to be the star of your holiday! [Click here for more info](#).