



Publication: The Daily Telegraph (online)
Date: 31.03.2020
1/4

The Telegraph

Jews allowed relax Passover rules in unprecedented intervention by Chief Rabbi

The Chief Rabbi has issued new guidance for Jewish families to celebrate Passover by gathering virtually on social media

By Gabriella Swerling, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS EDITOR
31 March 2020 • 4:58pm

◆ Premium



Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis | CREDIT: Chris Jackson/Chris Jackson Collection





Publication: The Daily Telegraph (online)
Date: 31.03.2020
2/4

The Telegraph

'Why is this night different from all other nights?' is a question asked by Jewish families all over the world while celebrating Passover.

Yet this year, for the first time ever, Jews have been given permission to relax the strict religious rules surrounding the festival.

"This Passover is going to be different from all the other Passovers," Europe's most senior rabbi told The Telegraph. "This year it's going to be a Passover in extremis."

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, the Chief Rabbi of Moscow and President of the Conference of European Rabbis, made the unprecedented comments as Jews around the world prepare for their makeshift festival celebrations next week.

It also comes after the Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, who represents all British orthodox Jews, issued new guidance for families to gather virtually via social media. For the first time, he also offered leniency regarding the purchasing of certain items without a Kosher for Pesach label.

Passover, or 'Pesach' as it is known in Hebrew, is one of the most widely celebrated Jewish holidays and this year it begins in the evening of April 8 and ends in the evening of April 16.

The eight-day festival commemorates the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt and is more widely known for its recounting of the ten plagues as well as the gatherings of family and friends for the Seder night meal and Hebrew songs.

Pesach is observed by avoiding leaven, and highlighted by the Seder meal that include four cups of wine, eating matzah crackers, bitter herbs and vegetables dipped in salt water (to represent tears), and retelling the story of the Exodus.





Publication: The Daily Telegraph (online)
Date: 31.03.2020
3/4

The Telegraph

During Passover, followers of the Jewish faith are forbidden to eat, drink, or own 'chametz' - food that is made from or could have come into contact with grain (barley, oats, rye, spelt, or wheat) and water and has been allowed to rise.

The 'Kosher for Passover' label usually appears on many food items in Jewish groceries and delis, indicating that a product has met the strict requirements. However this year the London Beth Din, or religious court, has issued a list of products not made under the usual special supervision that Jews will be permitted to eat.



Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt | CREDIT: J.

"Looking ahead, let us hope that this is the only year which we will need to provide





Publication: The Daily Telegraph (online)
Date: 31.03.2020
4/4

The Telegraph

ideas of this sort for our Pesach experience,” the Chief Rabbi said to his followers in a video posted to Facebook.

He also offered a leniency on purchasing certain items without a Kosher for Pesach label meaning that foods such as quinoa, spices, potato starch, 100% pure cocoa powder and tinned salmon are also now permitted.

Despite the Chief Rabbi describing the Seder meal as “the ultimate family experience” he also suggested that British Jews celebrate with a ‘pre-Pesach’ video conference via the social media platform, Zoom.

Rabbi Goldschmidt, speaking from his home in Russia, said: “Thanks to God, there is ‘Zoom’. I think that’s the silver lining, that the whole world is connected.

“By the way,” he added, “that’s also the reason why an epidemic from China turned into a pandemic. It’s both the bad and the good. I think that’s what we’re learning from this, that the whole of humanity is connected.”

“This Seder night will be the 3,332nd time that Jewish people have gathered for their Seder and it harks back to when Jews were requested not to leave their homes during the epidemic of the first borns in Egypt [the tenth plague].

“So now we are back to 3,332 years ago. And I will pray of this coronavirus, we will not have to wait for mass immunity, but as fast as possible, it will mutate and become incapable of harming any human being.”

Around the seder table, it is tradition for the youngest member of the family to sing ‘Ma Nishtana’. These are the first two words in a phrase meaning ‘Why is tonight different from all other nights?’ and which appears at the beginning of each line of The Four Questions which are read out during the Seder meal.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/03/31/jews-allowed-relax-rules-surrounding-passover-festival-unprecedented/>

