

Fifteen Ways You Know Pesach is Coming to Jerusalem

Contributed by [Rabbi Barry Dov Lerner](#)

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By Judy Lash Balint

1. No alarm clock needed here—instead we have the clanging of the garbage trucks as they roll through the neighborhood every morning during the 2 weeks before Pesach to accommodate all the refuse from the furious cleaning going on in every household. The day before the seder they make their rounds at least twice during the day.
2. Street scenes change every day according to what's halachically necessary: For the week before the holiday, yeshiva students wielding blow torches and tending huge vats of boiling water are stationed every few blocks and in the courtyard of every mikveh. The lines to toyvel (dunk) cutlery, kiddush cups and the like, start to grow every day, and, at the last minute, blow torches are at the ready to cleanse oven racks and stove tops of every last gram of hametz.
3. The day before the seder, the yeshiva students are replaced by families using empty lots to burn the remainders of their hametz gleaned from the previous night's meticulous search. Street corner flower vendors do great business too.
4. Most flower shops stay open all night for the two days before Pesach, working feverishly to complete the orders for delivery to grace Seder tables.
5. Meah Shearim and Geula merchants generally run out of heavy plastic early in the week before Pesach. In a panic, I make an early morning run to the Mahaneh Yehuda market to successfully snap up a few meters of the handy material.
6. No holiday here is complete without a strike or two. Last year, the doctors came to agreement to end their month-long walkout just hours before the start of Pesach and gas suppliers at Ben Gurion airport decided to use the opportunity to cause havoc to the plans of 200,000 Israelis who travel abroad for the holiday. A wildcat strike caused delays in arrivals and departures at the airport too.
7. Good luck if you haven't scheduled an appointment for a pre-Pesach/Omer haircut. You can't get in the door at most barber and beauty shops.
8. Mailboxes are full of Pesach appeals from the myriad of organizations helping the poor celebrate Pesach. Newspapers are replete with articles about selfless Israelis who volunteer by the hundreds in the weeks before the holiday to collect, package and distribute Pesach supplies to the needy.
9. The biggest food challenge to those of us Ashkenazic, non-kitniyot (legume) eaters is finding cookies etc. made without kitniyot. But most years, many restaurants in the city stayed open offering special Pesach menus—most without kitniyot, to accommodate the largely Ashkenazic tourist population that used to be their bread and butter (matzo & butter?) This year, with the dearth of tourists, we may end up spending most meals at home.
10. Since most of the country is on vacation for the entire week of Pesach, all kinds of entertainment and trips are on offer, despite the jihad being waged against us. Ads appear for everything from the annual Carlebach festival to a "Tour de Pesach" bicycle extravaganza at the Bloomfield Science Museum. There's Jewish Film Week at the Jerusalem Cinematheque and Tel Aviv weighs in with Drag Festival 2001.
11. Pesach with its theme of freedom and exodus always evokes news stories about recent olim. Last year's focus was the Jewish community of Cuba. Hundreds of Cuban Jews and their non-Jewish relatives arrived in Israel during the year to fill up absorption centers in Ashkelon and Beersheva.
12. This just in: According to Israel's Brandman Research Institute study, 43 million people hours will be spent nationwide in Israel's cleaning preparations for Passover this year. How does that break down? Of those cleaning hours, 29 million are done by women and 11 million by men. Persons paid to clean do the remaining 3 million hours at a cost of NIS 64 million (\$15.6 million).
13. On erev Pesach, dozens of members of various movements intent on preserving our connection to the Temple, re-enact the ritual Pesach sacrifice on Jerusalem's Givat Hananya. The hill is located in the neighborhood of Abu Tor and is named for the High Priest Hananya of the Second Temple period. Participants emphasize that their slaughter and roasting of a young goat is a preface to making the sacrifice, since they are wary of creating the impression that they are renewing the sacrificial act outside the Temple Mount.
14. Israel's two chief rabbis sell the nation's hametz to an Arab resident of Abu Ghosh. Estimated worth: 150 million shekel.
15. In the Galut (Diaspora), Pesach is observed...in Israel it's celebrated.

