



Guide to *Pesah* Observance – 5770-2010 by Rabbi Neil Zuckerman

General Information

Pesah is celebrated this year from the night of Monday, March 29th through Tuesday, April 6th. The two *Sedarim* are observed on Monday and Tuesday, March 29th & 30th.

In addition to the conducting of *Sedarim* and the observance of *Yom Tov*, (the festival days) the mitzvah of abstinence from “*hametz*” is the major characteristic of *Pesah*. *Hametz* may not be consumed from 11 am, Monday, March 29th to 8:20 pm on Tuesday, April 6th. *Hametz* must be burned by 12:05 pm on March 29th and ownership of *hametz* is prohibited from 1:10 pm that day.

The Torah prohibits the ownership of *hametz* (leaven) during *Pesah*. Therefore, we arrange for the sale of the *hametz* to a non-Jew. The transfer, *Mekhirat Hametz*, is accomplished by appointing an agent to handle the sale. Use the form included in this mailing to appoint me as your agent for this sale. It is a valid and legal transfer of ownership. At the end of the holiday, I will arrange for the reversion of ownership of the now-permitted *hametz*. If ownership of the *hametz* was not transferred before the holiday, the use of this *hametz* is prohibited after the holiday as well as during (*hametz she-avar alav ha-Pesah*). Since the Torah prohibits the eating of *hametz* during *Pesah*, and since many common foods contain some mixture of *hametz*, guidance is necessary when shopping and preparing for *Pesah*. The search for *hametz* is done in the home on the night of Sunday, March 28th.

What follows is a general guideline. However, I should be consulted when any doubt arises. (Rabbi Zuckerman at 301-299-7087, x1) Kosher *le-Pesah* labels for observance of *Pesah* that do not bear the name of a rabbi or one of the recognized symbols of rabbinic supervision, or which are not integral to the package, should not be used without consultation.

Preparing the Home for *Pesah*

Year after year, at each festival, we relive the miracle of our existence with creative experiences. At *Sukkot*, we move out of the house to re-experience our journey in the wilderness. At *Pesah* we turn our house inside out to relive our journey from slavery to freedom. Each year we relive the journey by thoroughly cleansing the home, office and car from *hametz* and leftover food. We clean out desk drawers which might store a snack, pockets in clothing which might still contain a piece of gum or candy, and scour counter tops and sinks thoroughly. It is preferable to put contact paper or another liner on counter tops and shelves to avoid contact with *hametz* during *Pesah*. The stove is prepared by thoroughly scrubbing and cleansing all parts and turning on full flame until all the grates or burners are red hot. The oven is turned to its highest setting and left on for 20 minutes. An electric dishwasher may be used for *Pesah* after thoroughly scouring it with boiling water, running it for one cycle on empty and, if feasible, obtaining a new tray.

Kashering Utensils and Dishes

Since we are not permitted to have even traces of *hametz* in our food on *Pesah*, it is best to have a special set of dishes and utensils for *Pesah* use only.

However, under the following circumstances, it is possible to render utensils fit for *Pesah* use:

- a. Silverware, pots, non-baking pans and other metal utensils are to be thoroughly scoured and completely immersed in boiling water. A few minutes are sufficient. If a pot or frying pan is too large to immerse it, fill it with water, boil it, and then place a hot object, such as a heated stone, in it to make it overflow while it is still boiling. If the utensil has wooden or plastic handles, it is not fit for *kashering* unless the handle may be removed and cleaned separately.
- b. All table glassware is permitted after soaking in water 3 days, changing the water daily. However, the use of a single set of glass dishes for both meat and dairy is not recommended.

c. Fine chinaware, if not used for a year, is permitted after a thorough scouring and soaking in room temperature water.

d. Utensils used for baking, or those whose eating surfaces are made of wood or plastic may not be *kashered* under any circumstances. The same applies to earthenware, enamelware, and porcelain.

(It is worthwhile to note that such a cleansing renders these items kosher not only for *Pesah*, but also for year-round use. Thus, here is the opportunity to make your home thoroughly kosher, even if it was not kosher before.) Please feel free to call me at 301-299-7087, x1, with any *kashering* questions.

Bedikat Hametz - The Search for Hametz (leaven), Sunday, March 28th, after dark

The entire home should be clean of any possible food particles by the evening of the day before *Pesah*. *Hametz* for the next morning's breakfast is kept in a specified area of the kitchen. A formal search for *hametz* is conducted on the night before *Pesah*. This symbolizes the final removal of leaven (*hametz*) from the home. Before the search, it is customary to hide small pieces of bread (count the number before hiding, so you don't forget any) in places where *hametz* is eaten. The search is done by candlelight with a feather, a wooden spoon and a bag (paper is best) to collect the *hametz*. Before the search begins a blessing for *bedikat hametz* is recited (found in most *Haggadot*). When all are collected, set the bag, feather and spoon aside for burning the next morning, and recite, "Any unfound *hametz* that may still be in our possession that I am not planning to eat before *Pesah* or that I did not sell to a non-Jew, shall be as it if does not exist, as dust of the earth".

The Morning before Pesah, Monday, March 29th, 6:45 am

Service for the First Born: As a gesture of gratefulness at not having been struck by the Tenth Plague, first-borns are obliged to fast the day before *Pesah*. However, one may break that fast in order to participate in a feast celebrating the completion of a major portion of Jewish literature, so it has become traditional to celebrate such a completion that morning.

Therefore, following the 6:45 am service, everyone who attends is invited to a feast celebrating the completion of a Tractate of *Mishnah* by the Thursday morning *Mishnah* class. Even non-first-borns may attend! This is the last chance to eat *hametz* you do not wish to discard.

Burning the Hametz. The bread found in the Search for *Hametz* and any left over from breakfast should be burned outside one's home before 12:05 pm on Monday, March 29th. At that time, recite the last line from the search: "Any *Hametz*, etc." (The entire ritual can be found in your *Haggadah*.)

Eating Matzah: As we wish to fully appreciate the uniqueness of *matzah*, no *matzah* is to be eaten from the 1st of Nisan, Tuesday, March 16th until the Seder, despite the fact that after breakfast no *hametz* may be eaten either.

Foods During Pesah. Forbidden foods: The following are forbidden for use during *Pesah*: bread, cakes, biscuits, crackers, cereals, and pasta made from wheat, barley, oats, rye or spelt. All liquids which contain ingredients or flavors made from grain alcohol. Ashkenazim traditionally refrain from rice, corn, legumes, called *kitniyot*, as well.

During the eight days of *Pesah*, *hametz* cannot lose its identity in any mixture. Therefore, the smallest amount of *hametz* renders the whole mixture *hametz*, and its use of *Pesah* is prohibited. However, during the rest of the year, *hametz* follows the normal rules of mixture, i.e., it loses its identity in a mixture of one part *hametz* and sixty parts of non-*hametz* (*batel be-shishim*). This affords us the opportunity to differentiate between foods purchased before and during *Pesah*.

Permitted Foods:

a. Requiring no "Kosher *L'Pesah*" label: The following foods are permitted in unopened packages or containers. They require no "Kosher *L'Pesah*" label if purchased before *Pesah*: Natural coffee, sugar, tea, salt, pepper, milk, vegetables (except peas and beans; string beans, however, are permitted, since they are not really beans at all. A recent ruling by the Conservative rabbis of Israel states that the original prohibition of legumes by the rabbis of Poland in the Middle Ages was not based on sound reasoning, and therefore, if they are fresh or frozen, beans and other legumes may be used, except by

someone who has a family tradition of not doing so. If you are interested in discussing this or reading the ruling, please contact Rabbi Zuckerman).

b. Frozen fruits and vegetables: Fruits and those vegetables normally permitted for *Pesah* are permitted in their frozen state.

c. If certified for *Pesah* use by Rabbinical authority: *Matzot*, *matzah* flour, *Pesah* noodles, candies, cakes, beverages, canned and processed foods, butter, cheese, jams, jellies, vinegar, wines and liquors, vegetable gelatin, relishes, salad oils, dried fruits, and shortening are permitted if Rabbinical authority indicates that these items of food have been manufactured and wrapped free from contact with *hametz*.

Labels and tags marked "Kosher *L'Pesah*" are of no value unless they bear rabbinical signature. This statement also applies to products manufactured in Israel. Kosher *L'Pesah* Milk: Milk, if purchased before March 29th, and not opened, may be used on *Pesah* without rabbinic supervision, even according to the strictest authorities, since any impurities are nullified when you nullify all *hametz* on March 29th. For milk purchased during the holidays, "Kosher *L'Pesah*" certification is preferred.

The Sale of Hametz

Not only is it forbidden to eat *hametz* on *Pesah*, but it is prohibited to own it or even have it in our possession. Therefore, we plan our shopping so as to have no *hametz* left by *Pesah*. If some does remain, we burn it on the morning before *Pesah*.

Today, however, with canned goods, liquors, and well-sealed packages, it has become impractical to discard all unused *hametz*. So as to avoid it being "found" in our possession, we collect it and set it in a place we do not intend to use during the holiday. The *hametz*, stored in a basement or closet, is then covered or locked. We then make arrangements for it to "leave" our possession.

The Rabbi is designated to act as our agent to sell the remaining *hametz* to a non-Jew, who makes a small down payment and purchases it before *Pesah*. After the final day, April 6th, the Rabbi asks him for the balance. If he does not wish to pay the full amount, he sells it back to us through the Rabbi.

To observe this important tradition, you may designate Rabbi Zuckerman as your agent for "*Mekhirat Hametz*" (The Selling of *Hametz*) by giving him or faxing the form below no later than March 28th or Monday morning, March 29th (at the *Siyum* for the First-born at 6:45 am). Any donations made in conjunction with this tradition will be deposited in the Senior Rabbis' Discretionary Fund for distribution to needy causes for *Pesah*. However, no donation is required, for the sale to be valid.