

# Guide to Pesah Observance – 5767-2007

by Rabbi H. David Rose

## General Information

Pesah is celebrated this year from the night of Monday, April 2 through Tuesday, April 10. (Those observing seven days of Pesah go through Monday, April 9, but observe the food rituals through the eighth day.) The two *Sedarim* are observed on Monday and Tuesday, April 2 and 3.

In addition to the conducting of *Sedarim* and the observance of *Yom Tov* (the festival days), the *mitzvah* of abstinence from “*hametz*” (leaven) is the major characteristic of Pesah. *Hametz* may not be consumed or owned from 11:05 am on Monday, April 2, to 8:25 pm on Tuesday, April 10.

The Torah prohibits the ownership of *hametz* 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 newsletter to appoint me as your agent for this sale. The form 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*). Because the Torah prohibits the eating of *hametz* during Pesah, and because 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, April 1.

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 during Pesah is prohibited. During the rest of the year, however, *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.

What follows is a general guideline; however, I should be consulted when any doubt arises. (Rabbi Rose at 301-299-7089, ext. 5) Kosher *L’Pesah* labels 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 to remove *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 we thoroughly scour counter tops and sinks. 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 twenty 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***

We are not permitted to have even traces of *hametz* in our food on Pesah, so it is best to have a special set of dishes and utensils for Pesah use only. 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 in another, place the pot or pan into a low, larger pan; fill it with water; boil it; 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 for three 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. Here, then, is the opportunity to make your home thoroughly kosher, even if it was not kosher before.) Please feel free to

call me at 301-299-7089, ext. 5, with any *kashering* questions.

### ***Bedikat Hametz - The Search for Hametz (leaven); Sunday, April 1, 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 pieces of the bread 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, April 2, 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. One may, however, 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.

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 12:08 pm on Monday, April 2. 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 first of Nisan, Tuesday, April 1, 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 are also forbidden. *Ashkenazim* traditionally refrain from rice, corn, legumes (called *kitniyot*) as well.

### ***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, and vegetables, except peas and beans. String beans, however, are permitted, because they are not really beans at all. A 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, if the beans and other legumes are fresh or frozen, they 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 Rose.

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 a Rabbinical signature. This statement also applies to products manufactured in Israel. Kosher *L'Pesah* milk—Milk, if purchased before April 2 and not opened, may be used on Pesah without Rabbinic supervision, even according to the strictest authorities, because any impurities are nullified when you nullify all *hametz* on April 2. 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. With that in mind, we plan our shopping so we have no *hametz* left by Pesah. If some *hametz* does remain, we burn it on the morning before Pesah.

Today, with canned goods, liquors, and well-sealed packages, it has become impractical to discard all unused *hametz*. To avoid *hametz* 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 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 10, 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 Rose as your agent for “*Mekhirat*

*Hametz*” (The Selling of *Hametz*) by giving him or faxing to him the form on the last page of this insert no later than April 1 or Monday morning, April 2 (at the *Siyum* for the First-born at 6:45 am). Any donations made in conjunction with this tradition will be deposited in the Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund for distribution to needy causes for Pesah. No donation is required for the sale to be valid.

### ***Mekhirat Hametz Agreement - Pesah 5767/2007***

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Additional addresses where *hametz* might be found:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Rabbi H. David Rose; Congregation Har Shalom  
11510 Falls Road; Potomac, MD 20854, or fax to: 301-299-2247