



# *A Guide to Passover Observance*

*Some special notes as you plan for the Passover holiday*



CONGREGATION TIFERETH ISRAEL

## **NOTE**

This guide was prepared for the Rabbinical Assembly Committee on Jewish Law and Standards by Rabbi Mayer Rabinowitz. It was accepted by the Committee on December 12, 1984. The last paragraph of the introduction, as well as part A under "Permitted Foods" has been amended to reflect more recent decisions of the Committee affecting the status of peanuts, peanut oil and certain cheeses.

## **TZEDAKAH-MAOT CHITIM**

As we look forward to our own Passover celebration, a first priority is the effort to see that other Jews can look forward to a happy celebration as well. This is traditionally called the Maot Chitim (“wheat money”), money for people who are in need to buy Matzah.

There are people in our community who are in need, and there are special charities which help in Israel and in other communities to distribute money at this season of the year to those whose enjoyment of the holiday depends on extra help.

Rabbi Ungar will administer a special fund again this year to help with such special needs for individuals and special charities. Contribution should be sent to the synagogue office (checks made out to Congregation Tifereth Israel) and marked “Passover Fund.”

## **REMOVAL OF ALL CHAMETZ**

On Passover, we aim for 100% in our removal of all bread and all bread products, and 100% is hard to achieve.

We search diligently. We clean, we kasher and we search some more for every bit we might have left behind. And when we are finished, we search some more. Most prayer books and most Passover Haggadot have a section providing the prayers and procedures for the final search on the night before the eve of Passover, to remove the last of the leaven (chametz) left behind. On the morning of the eve of Passover, it is customary to take the last crumbs of Chametz and burn them.

Because for most people it is impossible to completely remove every bit of leavening (considering liquors, substantial food supplies and items which are part of one’s business) we also arrange for the sale of Chametz, offering a legal formula to separate ourselves from that which we cannot remove or destroy.

All Chametz should be locked away completely to observe the Biblical requirement that it not be seen in our homes throughout the days of Passover. It should be stored in a place that will not be used or opened during the days of the holiday.

Before 9:00 am **Wednesday, April 8**, contact Rabbi Ungar to arrange for the sale of Chametz. Simply call before coming and drop in at the synagogue (almost) any time, or fill out the form found on page 16. Authorization may also be given by telephone. Arrangements will then be made for the sale of all Chametz by the rabbi so that it will be owned by a non-Jew for the duration of the holiday.

## **THE FAST & SIYYUM OF THE FIRST BORN**

When the plague killing the firstborn struck Egypt, Israel was singled out for life. Since Talmudic times, the first-born have customarily given expression of their gratitude for being spared, to their sense that life in general must never be taken for granted, by observing the day before Pesach as a fast day (Taanit Bechorim).

In Judaism, however, more emphasis has always been placed on positive religious action than on asceticism, or self-denial. Therefore, anyone partaking in a special joyous mitzvah is freed from the obligation to fast and the mitzvah, is celebrated by a Seudah, or festive meal. Such a joyous mitzvah is the study of Torah, which is considered a positive, active way of serving God in Judaism. The custom, then, has arisen to complete a book, usually of the Talmud, on Erev Pesach. The Siyyum or completion is considered an occasion to celebrate for all who share the study of the last portion.

Our Siyyum will take place after morning services on **Wednesday, April 8**. You do not have to be a first-born to attend. A light breakfast will follow. Please join us for this first of the special services of Passover.

## CHOOSING A HAGGADAH

The **FEAST OF FREEDOM**, a new translation of the Passover Haggadah with notes, guides and discussion material, is again on sale at Sisterhood's Judaica Shop. This Haggadah, prepared by the Rabbinical Assembly has received rave reviews from countless households. The Haggadah you use makes a major difference. We have several available from the Gift Shop. Take some time to browse through them, consider the ages and interests of those who will be gathering at your Seder table. Plan in advance for the kind of Seder you want to have.

The Torah prohibits the ownership of chametz (leaven) during Pesach. Therefore, we arrange for the sale of the chametz to a non-Jew. The transfer, mekhirat chametz, is accomplished by appointing an agent, usually the rabbi, to handle the sale. It is a valid and legal transfer of ownership. At the end of the holiday, the agent arranges for the reversion of ownership of the now permitted chametz.

If ownership of the chametz was not transferred before the holiday, the use of this chametz is prohibited after the holiday as well (chametz sheavar alav hapesach). Since the Torah prohibits the eating of chametz during Pesach, and since many common foods contain some admixture of chametz, guidance is necessary when shopping and preparing for Pesach.

During the eight days of Pesach, chametz cannot lose its identity in an admixture. Therefore the minutest amount of chametz renders the whole admixture chametz and its use on Pesach is prohibited. However, during the rest of the year, chametz follows the normal rules of admixture, i.e., it loses its identity in an admixture of one part chametz and sixty parts of non-chametz (batel beshishim). This affords us the opportunity to differentiate between foods purchased before and during Pesach.

What follows is a general guideline. However, your rabbi should be consulted when any doubt arises. Kosher-le-Pesach 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 consulting your rabbi.

Prohibited foods include the following: leavened bread, cakes, biscuits, crackers, cereal, coffee with cereal derivatives in them, wheat, barley, oats, spelt, rye and all liquids containing ingredients or flavors made from grain alcohol.

Most Ashkenazic authorities have added the following foods to the above lists: rice, corn, millet, legumes (beans and peas; however string beans are permitted). The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards has ruled unanimously that peanuts and peanut oil are permissible, as peanuts are not actually legumes. Some Ashkenazic authorities permit, while others forbid, the use of legumes in a form other than its natural state, for example, corn sweeteners, corn oil, soy oil. Sephardic authorities permit the use of all of the above.

CONSULT YOUR RABBI FOR GUIDANCE IN THE USE OF THESE PRODUCTS.

## PERMITTED FOODS

### **A. The following foods require no Kosher-le-Pesach label if purchased prior to Pesach:**

unopened packages or containers of natural coffee (without cereal additives), sugar, pure tea, salt pepper, natural spices, fruit juices with no additives (frozen, canned or bottled), frozen (uncooked) vegetables (for legumes see above), milk, butter, cottage cheese, cream cheese, ripened cheeses, such as cheddar (hard), muenster (semi-soft) and camembert (soft), tuna in water (no oil added), frozen (uncooked) fruit (with no additives), baking soda.

### **B. The following foods require no Kosher-le-Pesach label if purchased before or during Pesach:**

fresh fruits and vegetables (for legumes see above), eggs, fresh fish and fresh meat.

### **C. The following foods require a Kosher-le-Pesach label if purchased before or during Pesach:**

all baked products (matzah, cakes, matzah flour, farfel, matzah meal, and any products containing matzah), wine, vinegar, liquor, oils, dried fruits, candy, chocolate flavored milk, ice cream, yogurt and soda.

**D. The following foods require a Kosher-le-Pesach label if purchased during Pesach:**

processed foods (canned, frozen, or bottled), milk, utter, juices, vegetables, fruit, milk products, spices, coffee, tea and fish, as well as all foods listed in category C.

**DETERGENTS**

If permitted during the year, powdered and liquid detergents do not require Kosher-le-Pesach label.

**MEDICINE**

Since chametz binders are used in many pills, the following guidelines should be followed: if the medicine is required for life sustaining therapy, it may be used

on Pesach. If it is not for life sustaining therapy, some authorities permit, while others prohibit.

Consult your rabbi. In all cases, capsules are preferable.

**KASHERING OF UTENSILS**

The process of kashering utensils depends on how the utensils are used. According to halakhah, leaven can be purged from the utensil by the same process in which it was absorbed in the utensil. Therefore, utensils used in cooking are kashered by boiling, those used in broiling are kashered by fire and heat, and those used only for cold food are kashered by rinsing.

**A. Earthenware (china, pottery, etc.):**

may not be kashered. However, **fine translucent chinaware** which has not been used for over a year may be used if scoured and cleaned in hot water.

**B. Metal (wholly made of metal):**

Used in fire (spit, broiler) must first be thoroughly scrubbed and cleansed and then made as hot as possible. Those used for cooking or eating (silverware, pots) must be thoroughly scrubbed and cleansed and completely immersed in boiling water. Pots should have water boiled in them which will overflow the rim. The utensils should not be used for a period of at least 24 hours between the cleaning and

the immersion in boiling water. Metal baking utensils cannot be kashered.

**C. Oven and ranges:**

Every part that comes in contact with food must be thoroughly scrubbed and cleaned. Then, the oven and range should be heated as hot as possible for half an hour. If there is a broil setting, use it.

**Self-cleaning ovens** should be scrubbed and cleaned and then put through the self-cleaning cycle. Continuous-cleaning ovens must be kashered in the same manner as regular ovens.

**A microwave oven**, which does not cook the food by means of heat, should be cleaned, and then a cup of water should be placed in it. Then the oven should be turned on until the water disappears. A microwave oven that has a browning element cannot be kashered for Pesach.

**D. Glassware:**

Authorities disagree as to the method of kashering drinking utensils. One opinion requires soaking in water for three days, changing the water every 24 hours. The other opinion requires only a thorough scrubbing before Pesach, or putting it through a dishwasher.

**E. Dishwasher:**

After not using the machine for a period of 24 hours, a full cycle with detergent should be run.

**F. Electrical Appliances:**

If the parts that come into contact with chametz are removable, they can be kashered in the appropriate way (if metal, follow the rules for metal utensils). If the parts are not removable, the appliance cannot be kashered. (All exposed parts should be thoroughly cleaned).

**G. Tables, tablecloths and counters:**

If used with chametz, they should be thoroughly cleaned and covered, and then they may be used.

**H. Kitchen sink:**

A **metal sink** can be kashered by a thorough cleaning and by pouring boiling water over it. A **porcelain sink** should be cleaned and a sink rack used. If, however, dishes are to be soaked in a porcelain sink, a dish basin must be used.

## **I. Chametz and non-Passover utensils:**

Non-Passover dishes, pots and chametz whose ownership has been transferred, should be separated, locked up or covered, and marked so as to prevent accidental use.

## **SYMBOLS OF THE SEDER**

### **SEDER:**

The Hebrew word "Seder" means order. Since we arrange the table in a certain order and follow a special order for the service, we refer to this ceremony as a Seder.

### **THE HAGGADAH:**

Haggadah comes from the Hebrew word meaning "tell." Since the book we use for the Seder "tells" the story of Passover, we call it Haggadah.

### **THREE MATZOT:**

Our ancestors left Egypt in a hurry and did not have enough time to allow their dough to leaven, to become soft and to rise. Therefore, they ate matzot, unleavened bread, and we eat matzah as a reminder of their hasty departure. Three matzot represent the three kinds of Jews according to their tribal descent: the Kohanim, the priests; the Leviim, the Levites; and Yisrael, the Israelites. According to another explanation, two matzot represent the two loaves placed on every holiday or Shabbat table, and the third matzah represents the **LECHEM ONI**, the poor man's bread that our forefathers ate in Egypt.

### **ELIJAH'S CUP:**

In the center of the table is a shiny goblet in honor of Elijah, the prophet, who, we are told, will announce the coming of the Messiah and bring peace and freedom to the world.

### **THE SEDER PLATE:**

An important feature of the Seder table is the Seder plate on which is placed five symbols. Especially designed metal and ceramic Seder plates are often used for this occasion. The five symbols are:

### **Z'ROA:**

The shankbone which helps us to remember the

Passover Sacrifice during the days of the Temple.

### **CHAROSET:**

A mixture of chopped apples and nuts flavored with cinnamon and wine and is like the mortar from which our ancestors made bricks.

### **BETZA:**

The roasted egg reminds us of the pilgrim offering in the Temple and the celebration of Passover in ancient times.

### **MAROR:**

The bitter herb symbolizes the bitter times in Egypt.

### **KARPAS:**

Parsley or another green vegetable that reminds that Passover is the holiday of spring.

### **FOUR CUPS:**

A prominent part of the Seder table is the wine cup from which each person drinks four times. There are several reasons given for drinking four cups of wine. The most popular one is that they represent the four different expressions used by God when He promised our ancestors freedom from Egyptian bondage.

### **SALT WATER:**

Near the Seder plate, we place a dish of salt water. The salt water reminds us of the tears our forefathers shed in Egypt.

### **AFIKOMAN:**

For children, a favorite part of the Seder is stealing the Afikoman. At the beginning of the Seder service, before we start to read the Haggadah, the middle matzah is broken and the larger half is put away, usually in a napkin which is placed in a hiding place. At the end of a meal it is eaten as dessert, or the last course in the menu. The Seder cannot be ended without the Afikoman. It has become a custom for children to try to "steal" the Afikoman and hide it until the end of the meal. Returning the Afikoman is a happy occasion for the children who stole it because the leader of the seder usually gives a prize for its return.