



Passover Preparations~ A Guide for the Perplexed

CHAMETZ

Definition of Chametz

In Exodus 12:15 the Bible tells us, “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the very first day you shall remove leaven from your houses.” The Rabbis specified five grains, which can become **chametz**: wheat, barley, spelt, rye, and oats. *Askenazi* authorities added to this list rice and *kitniyot*, or legumes (including beans, peas, lentils, corn and maize, millet, and mustard). Sephardic authorities prohibit only the five specified grains, thus Sephardic Jews are allowed to eat legumes and rice during Passover.

Bedikat Chametz-Search for Leaven

The search of *chametz* normally takes place the evening before the first Seder. This ceremony is the climax of the Passover preparation. Small pieces of *chametz* are hidden around the house. The family gathers together with a candle for lighting the way, a feather for brushing-up the *chametz* and a wooden spoon onto which the *chametz* is brushed. If you prefer, a flashlight and small hand broom work equally well. Everything is to be burned the next day with the rest of the leaven. The ceremony should involve the children and be performed immediately after supper. The prayers to be recited are found at the front of any Haggadah. The search should be conducted on *erev Pesach*.

Mechirat Chametz-Selling of Leaven

According to the Biblical injunction, “no leaven shall be seen or found in your possession” during Passover. Jewish law prohibits the use or legal possession of any *chametz* leaven of any kind, on Passover. In order to be certain that all *chametz* has been removed from our possession, Jewish tradition requires us to sell our remaining *chametz* to a non-Jew. This *chametz*, then, becomes the property of the non-Jew for the duration of Passover and should be set aside in a place in one’s home that will be unused during Passover.

The authorization of the right to sell *chametz* can be granted to another. If you would like Rabbi Dollin to sell your *chametz* on your behalf, please use the form on the last page of this booklet. In order to symbolize that one is transferring the authority to sell, it is customary to make a token monetary transfer. The money contributed will be used to provide for the poor. Authorization to Sell *Chametz* must be returned to HEA by **erev Pesach**.

Biur Chametz-Burning of the Leaven

The crumbs of bread that have been gathered the night before are put together in a bundle and burned the morning before Passover. The appropriate prayers can be found in any Haggadah. The burning of *chametz* should be done in the morning of **erev Pesach** by noon time.

PASSOVER KASHERING

The Passover home atmosphere is created by the practice of cleansing the home of all traces of *chametz* or leaven, and by the careful avoidance of its use throughout the holiday, both at home and away. The term *chametz* is applied not only to foods, but also the dishes and utensils in which foods are prepared or served during the year. These may not be used during *Pesach*, except as indicated.

Kashering Appliances, Dishes and Utensils

Only dishes and utensils specially reserved for Passover should be used, with the following exceptions. Silverware, knives, forks and spoons, made wholly of metal can be *kashered* by a thorough scouring and immersing in boiling water. Any utensil which is to be *kashered* should not be used for a period of 24 hours between the cleansing and the actual *kashering* by immersion. **Metal baking utensils cannot be kashered.**

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

Utensils used for baking during the year cannot be used during Passover. Chinaware, enamelware, earthenware, porcelain and plastic cannot be kashered. Pyrex used for baking cannot be *kashered*. All other Pyrex can be *kashered* as glassware.

Kitchen Appliances:

Refrigerators should be defrosted, cleaned and scoured including the metal shelves.

Ovens and ranges can be *kashered* by thoroughly scrubbing and cleaning every part that comes in contact with food. Oven and range should then be heated as hot as possible for a half 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.

Microwave ovens can be kashered by thorough scrubbing and then placing a glass of water in the oven and running the oven on high for a few minutes until the cavity fills with steam and the water disappears. A microwave oven that has a browning element cannot be *kashered* for Passover.

Dishwashers may be kashered for Pesach by thorough scouring, not using the machine for 24 hours, and then running through a full wash cycle.

Surfaces

All table tops, shelves and pantry or kitchen surfaces which are used during the year should be thoroughly cleaned and scoured before placing Pesach utensils upon them. It is highly preferable that all such surfaces be covered during the entire week of Passover, especially if you place hot utensils, pots, or pans upon them. To make your Pesach kitchen attractive you can use heavy shelf paper, heavy foil, or ornamented plastic cloth to cover all surfaces. Shelves for Passover dishes should be thoroughly cleaned or relined.

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). (All exposed parts should be thoroughly cleaned). If the parts are not removable, the appliance cannot be *kashered*.

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.

PERMITTED AND FORBIDDEN FOODS

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 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, the Rabbi should be consulted when any doubt arises.

The following are prohibited: leavened bread, cakes, biscuits, crackers, cereal, coffee with cereal derivatives in them, wheat, barley, oats, spelt, rye, and all liquids containing ingredients of flavors made from grain alcohol.

Most Ashkenazic authorities have added the following foods (*kitniyot*) to the above list: rice, corn, millet, legumes (beans, peas; however, string beans are permitted). The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement has ruled unanimously that peanuts and peanut oil are permissible. 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 the above. Consult the Rabbi for guidance in the use of these products.

The following foods require no *kosher lePesach* label if **purchased prior to Pesach**: unopened packages or containers of natural coffee without cereal additives (however, be aware that coffee produced by General Foods are not *kosher* for Passover unless marked KP); sugar, pure tea; salt (not iodized); pepper, natural spices; frozen fruit juices with no additives; 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); frozen (uncooked) fruit (with no additives); baking soda.

The following foods require a *kosher lePesach* label if **purchased before or during Pesach**: all baked products (*matzah*, cakes, *matzah* flour, farfel, *matzah* meal, and any products containing *matzah*); canned or bottled fruit juices (these juices are often clarified with *Kitniyot* which are not listed among the ingredients. However, if one knows there are no such agents, the juice may be purchased prior to Pesach without a *kosher*

lePesach label); canned tuna (since tuna, even when packed in water, has often been processed in vegetable broth and/or hydrolyzed protein. However, if it is known that the tuna is packed exclusively in water, without any additional ingredients or additives, it may be purchased without a *kosher lePesach* label before Passover); wine, vinegar, liquor, oils, dried fruits; candy; chocolate flavored milk, ice cream; yogurt and soda.

The following processed foods (canned, bottled or frozen) require a *kosher lePesach* label **if purchased during Pesach**; milk, butter, juices, vegetables, fruit, milk products, spices, coffee, tea, and canned or processed fish, as well as all foods listed in the previous section.

OTHER ITEMS

Detergents

If permitted during the year, powdered and liquid detergents do not require a *kosher lePesach* 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 the Rabbi. If available, capsules are preferable.

Passover Labels

No products can be used on Passover unless it is accompanied by a reliable *heksher*: an endorsement by a rabbi whose name and location are clearly stated. A label reading simply “for Passover” and adorned with Jewish symbols is **not** reliable, especially if not integral to the package. Baked products are a particular problem and their preparation by a bakery under Jewish ownership is not a guarantee of *kashrut*. It is also important to note that Jewish law forbids the purchase of bread immediately after Passover, which has been baked during Passover.

