

Pre-Pesah Guide - 5775 (2015)

Rabbi David L. Abramson

Tikvat Israel Congregation

Selling of *Ḥametz*

Jews are not only forbidden to eat *ḥametz* [food containing leaven] on *Pesah*; we are even forbidden to own *ḥametz* during the holiday. Therefore, *halakhah* [Jewish law] requires that any *ḥametz* that is not used up before *Pesah* should be given away or sold to a non-Jew. After *Pesah*, the *ḥametz* may be bought back. However, according to Jewish law, any *ḥametz* that a Jew did not sell before *Pesah* may not be used after *Pesah*.

Rather than going to the trouble of selling your own *ḥametz* to a non-Jew before *Pesah* (a technically complicated transaction), you may name Rabbi Abramson as your agent, and he will make the necessary arrangements to sell your *ḥametz* in accordance with Jewish law. This sale also includes your dishes and utensils that are used for *ḥametz* throughout the year. Contributions that you may make in connection with this transaction may be made out to Tikvat Israel and will be distributed to worthy charitable causes before *Pesah*.

Since the *ḥametz* that you sell through Rabbi Abramson's agency is not considered your property, it must not be used by you during *Pesah*. *Ḥametz* food, dishes, and utensils used for *ḥametz* throughout the year, whose ownership has been transferred, should be separated, locked up or covered, and marked, in order to prevent accidental use during *Pesah*.

If you are interested in having Rabbi Abramson sell your *ḥametz*, please return the authorization form to the synagogue office no later than **Wednesday, April 1. If your authorization form is not received in the office by this date, your *ḥametz* will not be included in the sale. Please do not bring your form to the *siyyum b'khorim* (see below); it will be too late to include your *ḥametz* in the *sh'tar m'khirah* [bill of sale] at that time.**

Searching for *Ḥametz*

This year, *b'dikat ḥametz* is performed on **Thursday night, April 2**. This charming ritual, which involves the use of a candle, a feather, and a wooden spoon, also includes the recitation of a special *b'rakhah* [blessing]. (The ceremony and additional instructions can be found at the beginning of most *Haggadot*.) It is customary for parents to hide a few pieces of bread around the house so that the children can find them during *b'dikat ḥametz*; these pieces of bread are burned (see below) the following morning.

Siyyum B'khorim

In remembrance of the tenth and final plague, which killed the first-born sons of the ancient Egyptians, first-born Jewish males are required to fast on the day preceding *Pesah* (from sunrise until the *se'udat mitzvah*—not from the previous evening). Fathers whose first-born sons have not yet reached adulthood are required to fast on behalf of their sons.

However, there is one way to avoid the obligation to observe this fast, and that is to participate in a *se'udat mitzvah*, a meal celebrating a *mitzvah*. One such *se'udat mitzvah* is the celebration of a *siyyum*, the completion of a talmudic tractate. A *siyyum b'khorim*, the *siyyum* for first-born sons, will take place on **Friday morning, April 3**, beginning at 6:45 A.M.

Burning *Ḥametz*

The final step in removing *ḥametz* from our homes takes place this year on **Friday, April 3**. At that time, we burn the pieces of bread that were gathered during *b'dikat ḥametz* the night before. "*Kol ḥamira*" is recited; the text can be found at the beginning of your *Haggadah*.

This must be completed no later than 12:07 P.M., and no *ḥametz* may be eaten after 11:04 A.M.

A Guide to Food and Home Preparation On *Pesah*

(A longer, more detailed *Pesah* guide can be found at the Rabbinical Assembly's website:
www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/jewish-law/holidays/pesah/rabbinical-assembly-pesah-guide-5775_1.pdf)

During *Pesah*, according to the *Torah*, Jews are forbidden to eat *hametz*, leavened food. In addition, even possessing *hametz* on *Pesah* is forbidden. The prohibition of *hametz* includes *hametz* itself, *ta'arovet hametz* (foods containing any *hametz* among their ingredients), and dishes and utensils that come in contact with *hametz* during the year. For this reason, the Jewish home is prepared for *Pesah* by using up or disposing of *hametz* whenever possible, selling whatever *hametz* cannot be disposed of (see the Pre-*Pesah* Guide), putting away dishes and utensils that are used year around, and bringing out dishes and utensils that are reserved for *Pesah* use.

The following general guidelines should assist you in your preparation for *Pesah*. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact Rabbi Abramson.

Forbidden Foods

The following items may not be used during *Pesah*: leavened bread, cakes, biscuits, crackers, cereal, coffee with cereal derivatives, wheat, barley, oats, spelt, rye, *kitniyot*¹ (rice, corn, peas, beans; however, string beans are permitted), and all liquids containing ingredients or flavors made from grain alcohol or corn sweeteners.

Permitted Foods

NOTE: Labels and tags marked “*kosher l’Pesah*” or “*kosher for Passover*” abound during the *Pesah* season. Some of these claims are bogus. “*Kosher l’Pesah*” labels are of no value unless they bear the name of a reputable rabbi, rabbinical organization, or *kashrut* certification organization.

1. The following foods require no “*kosher l’Pesah* [*kosher for Passover*]” label: fresh fruits, fresh vegetables (for legumes, see above), and eggs.
2. The following foods require no “*kosher l’Pesah*” label if purchased prior to *Pesah*: unopened packages or containers of pure natural coffee (without cereal additives, non-decaffeinated²); sugar; pure tea (not herbal tea); salt (not iodized); pepper; natural spices; milk; frozen fruit juices with no additives; frozen (uncooked) vegetables (for *kitniyot*, see above); frozen (uncooked) fruit with no additives; baking soda (not baking powder). All foods in this category require a “*kosher l’Pesah*” label if purchased during *Pesah*.
3. The following foods require a “*kosher l’Pesah*” label if purchased before or during *Pesah*: all baked products (*matzah*, cakes, *matzah* flour, farfel, *matzah* meal, and any products containing

matzah), wine, vinegar, liquor, oils, dried fruits, candy, butter, cheese, cream cheese, cottage cheese, chocolate milk, ice cream, yogurt, canned or bottled fruit juices, canned tuna, and soda.

Dishes and Utensils

Dishes and utensils used during the year may not be used on *Pesah*, with the following exceptions:

1. Silverware, knives, forks, and spoons made wholly of metal, if used during the year, may be kashered for *Pesah*. The process of kashering these utensils is the following: do not use the utensils for 24 hours prior to kashering, then thoroughly scour the utensils, immerse them in boiling water, and rinse them in cold water.
2. Metal pots and pans used for cooking purposes (but not baking), if made wholly of metal, may be kashered for *Pesah* by not using them for 24 hours, then scouring them, immersing them in boiling water, and rinsing them in cold water. Metal baking utensils cannot be kashered for *Pesah*.
3. Earthenware (china, pottery, etc.) may not be kashered. However, fine translucent china which has not been used for over a year may be used on *Pesah* after being scoured and cleaned in hot water.
4. Drinking glasses can be kashered by soaking them for 72 hours in cold water, changing the water every 24 hours.

Appliances

1. Ovens and ranges are prepared for *Pesah* by thoroughly scrubbing and cleaning all parts and then turning on all burners to the highest temperature for 30 minutes. Self-cleaning ovens should be thoroughly cleaned and then put through the self-cleaning cycle.
2. A microwave oven, which does not cook the food by means of heat, should be thoroughly cleaned. A cup of water is then placed inside, and the microwave oven is turned on until the water is brought to a boil and disappears. If the microwave has a tempered glass tray (often revolving), it can be kashered as a sink is kashered (see below).
3. Tables, closets, and counters should be thoroughly cleaned and covered. (Shelf paper is recommended.) Some follow the practice of pouring boiling water over these surfaces before covering them.
4. A sink can be kashered by thoroughly scouring it and then by pouring boiling water over it.
5. A dishwasher can be kashered by leaving it unused for 24 hours, then by thoroughly scouring it with boiling water, and, if possible, using new racks.

¹According to Ashkenazic practice.

²Some decaffeinated coffees are certified *kosher l’Pesah*.

The Festival of Freedom

For many of our parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents—new immigrants to this country—the pressing financial circumstances of years gone by made it impossible to observe the holidays as our tradition requires: to refrain from work, instead spending the holiday at home and in the synagogue. Today, social and financial circumstances are different, and most Jews can much more easily arrange time away from work and school in order to observe *Yomtov*. To put it another way, most of us are far more free than previous generations to observe our holidays fully.

Public schools are legally required to accommodate observance of religious holidays—permitting rescheduling of tests and homework assignments, as well as excusing absences—and most schools are responsive (sometimes with a little “reminding” by assertive parents or rabbi) to this requirement.

We urge you to observe *Pesah* as you should, by being at home and at *shul* during the major days of the holiday. (If you can’t arrange to take the entire days off, perhaps you can take a few hours of comp time to come to services.) A “good crowd in *shul*” on *Yomtov* is the sign of a vibrant congregation—and participating in *Yomtov* services is your obligation and your opportunity to more fully observe our Festival of Freedom.

“Rabbi Alexandrai, after finishing his prayers, used to say the following: Master of the universe, it is revealed and known before You that our desire is to do Your will. And what prevents us? “*Ḥametz* in the dough’.”

Talmud, B'rakhot 17a

Rashi explains that “*ḥametz* in the dough” means: the *yetzer ha-ra*—the evil inclination in our hearts that puffs us up.

Pesah Schedule

- Thu., Apr. 2 *B'dikat Ḥametz* [search for leaven] in homes in the evening.
- Fri., Apr. 3 *Minyan* and *Siyyum B'khorim* [service for firstborn sons], 6:45 A.M. *Ḥametz* may not be eaten after 11:04 A.M. *Ḥametz* must be burnt/nullified no later than 12:07 P.M. *Yomtov* candles, 7:16 P.M. No *Ma'ariv* in the synagogue. First *seder* in homes in the evening.
- Sat., Apr. 4 First day of *Pesah*. *Shabbat* and *Yomtov* Morning Service, 9:30 A.M. *Yomtov* candles, 8:17 P.M. No *Ma'ariv* in the synagogue. Second *seder* in homes in the evening.
- Sun., Apr. 5 Second day of *Pesah*. *Yomtov* Morning Service, 9:30 A.M. *Minḥah*, 7:00 P.M.
- Mon., Apr. 6 *Hol Ha-mo'ed Pesah*. Morning *minyan*, 6:30 A.M. Evening *minyan*, 7:30 P.M.
- Tue., Apr. 7 Evening *minyan*, 7:30 P.M.
- Wed., Apr. 8 Evening *minyan*, 7:30 P.M.
- Thu., Apr. 9 Morning *minyan*, 6:30 A.M. *Minḥah* and *Ma'ariv* for *Yomtov*, 6:30 P.M. *Yomtov* candles, 7:22 P.M.
- Fri., Apr. 10 Seventh day of *Pesah*. *Yomtov* Morning Service, 9:30 A.M. *Minḥah* and *Ma'ariv* Services, 6:30 P.M. *Yomtov* candles, 7:23 P.M.
- Sat., Apr. 11 Eighth day of *Pesah*. *Yomtov* Morning Service (including *Yizkor*), 9:00 A.M. *Ḥametz* may be eaten after 8:24 P.M.

NOTE: There will be no evening *minyan* on Friday and Saturday, April 3 and 4, the evenings of the *s'darim*. *Minyan* on Sunday, April 5, at 7:00 P.M., will be *Minḥah* only. Weekday morning *minyan* during *Hol Ha-mo'ed* (Monday, April 6 and Thursday, April 9) will be at 6:30 A.M. (15 minutes earlier than usual).

Miriam's Cup Ritual in the Family Seder

Filling Miriam's Cup follows the second cup of wine, before washing the hands. Raise the empty goblet and say:

Miriam's cup is filled with water, rather than wine. We invite women of all generations at our *seder* table to fill Miriam's cup with water from their own glasses.

Pass Miriam's cup around the table(s); explain the significance of filling Miriam's cup with water:

A *midrash* teaches us that a miraculous well accompanied the Israelites throughout their journey in the desert, providing them with water. This well was given by God to Miriam, the prophetess, to honor her bravery and devotion to the Israelites. Both Miriam and her well were spiritual oases in the desert, sources of sustenance and healing. Her words of comfort gave the Israelites the faith and confidence to overcome the hardships of the Exodus. We fill Miriam's cup with water to honor her role in ensuring the survival of the Jewish people. Like Miriam, Jewish women in all generations have been essential for the continuity of our people. As keepers of traditions in the home, women passed down songs and stories, rituals and recipes, from mother to daughter, from generation to generation. Let us each fill the cup of Miriam with water from our own glasses, so that our daughters may continue to draw from the strength and wisdom of our heritage.

When Miriam's cup is filled, raise the goblet and say:

We place Miriam's cup on our *seder* table to honor the important role of Jewish women in our tradition and history, whose stories have been too sparingly told.

Continue by reciting this prayer (from Susan Schnur):

"You abound in blessings, God, creator of the universe, Who sustains us with living water. May we, like the Children of Israel leaving Egypt, be guarded and nurtured and kept alive in the wilderness, and may You give us wisdom to understand that the journey itself holds the promise of redemption. Amen."

Next, tell the story of a Jewish woman you admire. Begin by saying:

Each *Pesah*, we dedicate Miriam's cup to a Jewish woman who has made important contributions in achieving equality and freedom for others. This year, we honor...

Dancing in honor of the prophetess Miriam follows the rituals for the prophet Elijah after the meal.

Lift Miriam's cup and say:

Miriam's life is a contrast to the life of Elijah, and both teach us important lessons. Elijah was a hermit, who spent part of his life alone in the desert. He was a visionary and prophet, often very critical of the Israelites, and focused on the messianic era. On the other hand, Miriam lived among her people in the desert, following the path of *hesed*, lovingkindness. She constantly comforted the Israelites throughout their long journey, encouraging them when they lost faith. Therefore, Elijah's cup is a symbol of future messianic redemption, while Miriam's cup is a symbol of hope and renewal in the present life. We must achieve balance in our own lives, not only preparing our souls for redemption, but rejuvenating our souls in the present. Thus, we need both Elijah's cup and Miriam's cup at our *seder* table.

Adapted from:
www.miriamscup.com

AUTHORIZATION TO SELL *HAMETZ* – 5775 (2015)

KNOW ALL PEOPLE BY THESE PRESENTS: that I do hereby make and appoint Rabbi David L. Abramson my true and lawful representative to act on my behalf, to sell all *hametz* owned and possessed, knowingly or unknowingly, as stated in the *Torah* and defined by the sages of Israel (e.g., *hametz*; *hashash hametz*—suspect *hametz*; and all kinds of *ta'arovet hametz*—*hametz* mixtures), also, *hametz* that tends to harden and to adhere to the surface of pots, pans, or other cooking or eating utensils, of whatsoever nature, and to lease all places wherein the aforementioned *hametz* owned or possessed by me may be found, especially in the premises located at the address below. Rabbi Abramson has the full authority and power to sell said *hametz* and to lease said places wherein said *hametz* may be found, upon terms and conditions as discretion dictates. Rabbi Abramson has the full power and authority to assign or appoint a substitute or substitutes to act with all the same powers and authority invested in the rabbi, and I hereby ratify and confirm all that Rabbi Abramson or a rabbinic substitute lawfully does or causes to be done by virtue of these presents. This transaction will be in effect for the duration of *Pesah*, which this year begins with sundown on Friday, April 3, 2015, and continues through Saturday, April 11, 2015.

And to this I hereby affix my signature on this _____ day of _____, 2015.

Name (print) _____

Address _____

Signature _____

This form **must be received** in the synagogue office by **Wednesday, April 1, 2015**.



Tikvat Israel *Pesah* Hospitality: Matching *Seder* Seekers With *Seder* Seats

“All who are hungry, let them come and eat” is not just something we read in the *Haggadah* twice a year. At Tikvat Israel, we encourage the *mitzvah* of *hakhnassat orhim* [hospitality] by offering members of our community the opportunity to be either a host or a guest at a *Pesah* seder.

If you do not have a *seder* to attend or if you have room at your *seder* for others, please fill out the form below and return it to the Tikvat Israel office by Monday, March 30. You also may contact coordinator Hope Levy Kott at 301-921-8268 or hkott@aol.com.

Name _____

Phone number/e-mail _____

_____ We would like to **host** up to _____ people on Friday, April 3.

_____ We would like to **host** up to _____ people on Saturday, April 4.

_____ I/We would like to **attend** a *seder* on Friday, April 3.

_____ I/We would like to **attend** a *seder* on Saturday, April 4.

Please indicate the names (and ages of children) of all who will be attending:

Please indicate as well if your family:

____ does ____ does not keep *kosher*.

____ does ____ does not observe the Sephardic custom of eating *kitniyot* [rice, beans, legumes] on *Pesah*.

____ does ____ does not eat exclusively vegetarian meals.

____ does ____ does not observe traditional *Yomtov* restrictions.

Please tell us anything else your host would need to know (allergies, etc.):

Thank you in advance for participating in our shared celebrations.