

Adath Jeshurun Pesach Guide

“In every generation, every person should feel that he or she personally has been redeemed from Egypt...”



A Festival for Every Part of Us

The re-telling of slavery and liberation is *our* story, not ancient history of a people long since passed from the earth. In order to fully relive the experience, on Pesach we are invited to observe three important mitzvot:

- I. To refrain from eating or owning Hametz (Exodus 12:15)
- II. To eat Matzah (Exodus 12:18)
- III. To tell the story of our liberation from Egypt (Exodus 13:3)

Pesach is a wonderful celebration that demands attention to detail. Here are some guidelines from the Conservative Movement, to help you have a kosher and meaningful Pesach.

For a newly updated and more complete version of the guidelines, see the Rabbinical Assembly web-site:

www.rabbinicalassembly.org

Copies are also available in the Adath Jeshurun office.

If you are not able to accomplish all of these steps, your attempt to accomplish some is important and meaningful! These guidelines can be quite complicated. We encourage you to contact the rabbis with questions.

Preparing for Pesach

What is Hametz?

If one of the five grains – wheat, oats, rye, barley or spelt – comes in contact with water after being cut off from the ground, it becomes fermented, or “Hametz.” Pesachdik baked goods are made from flour that has not been fermented. The term “Hametz” is also applied to dishes and utensils that have been in contact with Hametz food during the year.

Why do most Ashkenazim not eat beans, rice, corn, millet, peas or peanuts on Pesach?

Although the above foods (known as *kitniyot*) are not among the five species of grains that can become Hametz, the Rabbis forbade their use because in the past, flour was made from them.

To avoid possible confusion, most Ashkenazic Rabbis proclaimed that these not be used at all. Most Sephardic authorities permit their usage. The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Jewish Theological Seminary has ruled that peanuts and peanut oil are permissible, as peanuts are not legumes.

What is a Siyum B’chorim?

For firstborn children, the day before Pesach has special significance. On that day, firstborn Jewish children are called on to fast, in memory of the loss of firstborn suffered by the Egyptians, and as thanks to God for “passing over” our children. Many firstborn participate in a special celebration called a *siyum*, a ceremony of completion. They complete a section of Jewish study together, allowing them to celebrate this completion with food and drink. This is known as the Siyum B’chorim and follows the morning minyan.

Why must we clean our houses so thoroughly before Pesach?

The rule against Hametz on Pesach applies not only to the eating but also involves removing all of the Hametz from one’s home or possession. To facilitate this cleaning, the following rituals are part of the Passover preparations:

Please return this form to Adath Jeshurun no later than the day before the first seder.

AUTHORIZATION OF AGENT TO SELL HAMETZ

I, _____, hereby authorize the Rabbis to act as my agent to sell any Hametz that may be in my possession, wherever it may be at home, place of business or elsewhere – in accordance with the requirement and provision of Jewish Law.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Address (Hm): _____ Value: _____

Address (Business): _____ Location (s): _____

I enclose \$ _____ for the Ma’ot Hittim Charity Fund.

This year’s donations will be forwarded to MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger.
Please make checks payable to MAZON.

Bedikat Hametz— Searching for Hametz

After the house has been cleaned, we search again for crumbs of Hametz we may have missed, traditionally using a candle, a feather and a wooden spoon. This symbolizes that all the Hametz which we could see was removed.

Biur Hametz— Burning of Hametz

The burning of all Hametz found during the previous night's search should be completed by the fifth hour after sunrise. The stove should by then be kashered for Pesach. All cooking should be done with Pesach pots and utensils.

Bittul Hametz – Renouncing our Hametz

A formula renouncing any Hametz that we have inadvertently missed is recited, canceling our responsibility for it, thus symbolically removing it from our homes. The formula for Bittul Hametz is recited for the search on and for the burning.

The formula is: “All leaven in my possession, whether I have seen it or not, whether I have removed it or not, is hereby nullified and ownerless as the dust of the earth.”

Some have the custom of adding the following kavannah (meditation): “Lord, our God and God of our ancestors, just as I have removed all Hametz from my home and from my ownership, so may it be your will that I merit the removal of the evil inclination from my heart.”

Mechirat Hametz – Selling our Hametz—and Providing for the Poor

We are not always able to destroy or get rid of our Hametz. It may be economically disastrous. So the Rabbis ordained that a symbolic sale is made of all the Hametz to a non-Jew in the community who then sells it back to us after Pesach. The Hametz is then no longer “in our possession.” This is normally done by the rabbi for the entire congregation. A form for selling Hametz is found in this insert and must be returned to Adath Jeshurun by the day before the first seder. It is traditional to include Tzedakah money for Ma’ot Hittim, to provide for those in need.

Pesach Food and Preparing Your Kitchen

What foods may not be used during Pesach?

All the following foods are considered Hametz and may not be used during Pesach: leavened bread, cakes, biscuits, crackers, cereals, wheat, barley, oats, spelt, rye and foods containing derivatives of these grains. Ashkenazim also include rice, corn, millet, beans and peas.

What foods require rabbinic supervision for Pesach?

Matza and matza products, noodles, candies, cakes, beverages, canned or bottled fruit juices, canned tuna, wine, vinegar, liquor, decaf coffee, dried fruits, oils, frozen uncooked vegetables, candy,

chocolate milk, ice cream, yogurt, all cheeses, soda and processed foods.

What foods require no supervision?

The following foods require no kosher l’Pesach label *if purchased new and unopened prior to Pesach*: natural coffee without additives, non-confectioners’ sugar, pure tea (not flavored herbal or decaf tea), non-iodized salt, milk (in the absence of a kosher Pesach alternative), frozen uncooked fruit with no additives, and baking soda.

The following foods require no kosher l’Pesach label if purchased before or during Pesach: fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, fresh fish and fresh meat.

Is detergent allowed?

If permitted during the year, detergents do not require a Kosher L’Pesach label.

How may utensils be kashered?

It is preferable to have dishes and utensils reserved for Pesach and stored away during the rest of the year. Since this is not always possible, the Rabbis have ordained that certain types of utensils may be “kashered” – specifically prepared for Pesach. However, earthenware, enamelware or porcelain utensils, if used during the year, may not be used during Pesach.



The process of kashering utensils depends on how the utensils are used. According to halachah, the Jewish legal tradition, leaven can be purged from a utensil by the same process in which it was absorbed in the utensil. Therefore, utensils used for cooking are kashered by boiling, those used only for cold food are kashered by rinsing.

1. Earthenware (china, pottery, etc.) may not be kashered. However, fine translucent chinaware that has not been used for over a year may be used after washing.

2. Metal utensils (wholly made of metal) used in fire (spit, broiler) must first be thoroughly cleaned and then made as hot as possible. Those used for cooking or eating (silverware, pots) should be cleaned and immersed in boiling water. Pots should have water boiled in them which will overflow from 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.*

3. Oven and ranges: Every part that comes in contact with food must be thoroughly cleaned and scrubbed. Then, the oven should be heated as hot as possible for an hour. Self-cleaning ovens should be scrubbed and cleaned and then put through the self-cleaning cycle. Continuous cleaning ovens should be kashered in the same manner as regular ovens.

The range top should be heated until the elements turn red and glow. Then parts around the element may be covered with foil. Smooth top electric ranges should be cleaned, and the burners turned to maximum, followed by carefully pouring boiling water on the surface area.

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

4. Glassware: 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. Another opinion requires only a thorough scrubbing or putting through a dishwasher.

5. Dishwasher: Clean the dishwasher and run it through a full cycle with detergent. After not using the machine for a period of 24 hours, run it again for another full cycle with detergent.

6. Refrigerator: Remove all Hametz food and open packages. Clean thoroughly with boiling water and scour the racks. In a freezer, frozen Hametz foods should be put in a special closed-off section and should be sold with other Hametz.

7. Electrical appliances: If the parts that come into contact with Hametz are removable, they can be kashered in the appropriate way (if metal, follow rules for metal utensils). If the parts are not removable, the appliance cannot be kashered.

8. Tables, closets and counters: If used with Hametz they should be thoroughly cleaned and covered, and then they may be used. Alternatively, boiling water may be poured over counters.

9. 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 used with Pesach sink racks and dish basins.

10. Non-Pesach dishes, pots and Hametz food whose ownership has been transferred should be separated, covered and locked away, so as to prevent accidental use.

What are Ma'ot Hittim?

Collection is traditionally taken up before Pesach to provide money for matzah and other Pesach essentials to the poor. This is called Ma'ot Hittim. Money collected at Adath Jeshurun goes to MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger.

Seder Innovations

A great seder is the ultimate teaching and learning experience—meaningful, memorable and fun.

Choose a good Haggadah. There are wonderful haggadot for all ages and all types of sedarim. We recommend the two Haggadot by Noam Zion, *A Different Night: Family Participation Haggadah* (with David Dishon) and *A Night to Remember: The Haggadah of Contemporary Voices*. Some families compile their own haggadot with special family stories and pictures.

Give homework. One good way to encourage participation in the seder is to ask people to prepare something in advance. It could be a song, a poem, a question, a family story or photograph.

Tell the story. Think of ways to tell the story that supplement the Haggadah, with skits, puppets, story books or props. Think of ways to link the Passover story to family stories and more recent experience.

Ask questions. Encourage your guests to free themselves from the book and discuss what it is the Haggadah and the holiday is trying to tell us. Some seder leaders give a prize for every question asked.

Try new rituals, new foods, new ways to do things. You needn't turn your seder upside down every year, but some innovation is good!

Learn more:

Visit the Adath Jeshurun Library and www.adathjeshurun.org for great seder ideas and opportunities to learn much more.

Other web-sites to visit:

www.uscj.org
(click on Jewish Living; follow the links to Shabbat and Holiday Information, Jewish Holidays and Passover)

www.rabbinicalassembly.org

www.myjewishlearning.com