



# A Guide to Passover 5768-2008

## United Synagogue of Hoboken

Pesach is the most widely observed Jewish holiday, as well as the holiday that involves the most extensive advance preparations. This mailing presents an overview of the traditional observance of Pesach and its preparations, as well as a listing of all our classes, services, and programs relating to the holiday this year. Please feel free to contact Rabbi Scheinberg at the office (201-653-6696 or [rabbi@hobokensynagogue.org](mailto:rabbi@hobokensynagogue.org)) with any additional questions about this important holiday – as well as with suggestions for next year’s pre-Pesach mailing.

### I. When is Pesach? What are the primary observances of Pesach?

Pesach lasts this year from Saturday night, April 19, to Sunday evening, April 27, 2008. **There are two primary observances of Pesach: (1) refraining from eating and owning *hametz*, leaven; (2) participating in the Seder ritual on the first two nights of Pesach.** (This year, the seders take place on Saturday and Sunday night, April 19 and 20.)

### II. What is *hametz*?

*Hametz*, or leaven, refers to food prepared from five species of grain (rye, wheat, barley, spelt, and oats) that has been permitted to ferment and rise (water has been added to them, and the mixture was permitted to stand for more than 18 minutes). The consumption or possession of *hametz*, even in minute quantities, is prohibited by Jewish law during Pesach. The prohibition actually begins on the day before Pesach (this year, Saturday, April 19) at about 10 am. (In circumstances when Pesach begins on Saturday night, the traditional approach is to get rid of *hametz* by the previous Friday afternoon.)

Refraining from consuming *hametz* reminds us that, according to the Torah, the Israelites left Egypt in such a hurry that they did not have time for their bread to rise.

*Hametz* also symbolizes all the things in our own lives which “puff us up,” in the same way that leavening agents puff up our bread. God enters our lives only when we recognize human frailty and dependence. The process of searching for the *Hametz* in our homes is mirrored by an internal process of searching for, and making an effort to remove, our “psychological *hametz*.”

In addition to refraining from eating *hametz*, most Ashkenazic Jews (Jews who trace their ancestry from eastern and central Europe) refrain from eating certain other foods, called *kitniyot*, on Pesach; these foods include beans, rice, corn and peas.

Because of the strictness of the Pesach dietary laws, observant Jews refrain from eating most processed foods during Pesach unless they are marked with a *hekhsher*, a seal that indicates that the product is produced under rabbinical supervision for Pesach.

Included in this section is a Guide to Pesach Observance published by the Rabbinical Assembly of the Conserva-

tive Movement. It indicates which foods require a *hekhsher* and which do not, according to the practice of the Conservative movement.

It is also traditional to refrain from eating Matzah for at least two weeks before Pesach, so that we can experience the taste of Matzah afresh at the Seder.

### III. Whew – that’s a lot of restrictions!

Yes. This mailing describes a traditional observance of the laws of Pesach. In our congregation, we see the *mitzvot* as analogous to a ladder which we each climb at different rates. Everyone in our community can find a way to incorporate some of the rituals of Passover into their lives this year. For example, someone who is not at the point of requiring a *hekhsher* on every item of food can still incorporate a portion of the Pesach laws in his/her life by refraining from eating overt forms of *hametz* (bread, crackers, cake, cookies, pasta, beer).

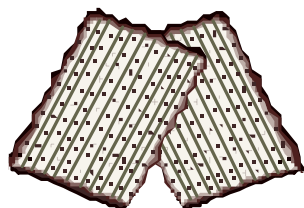
A special note for families with children: One of the most important and useful lessons we can teach to our children is that it’s okay to be different. With that in mind, I strongly urge families with school-age children to send them to school with special snacks or lunches for Passover (and for adults to take special snacks or lunches to work), whether or not you are keeping a strict observance of Passover at home.

### IV. How do we eliminate *Hametz* from our homes?

It’s a process with a number of steps:

#### Step 1: Finishing up / donating as much *hametz* as possible

As in previous years, we will be collecting non-perishable *hametz* foods for donation to the Hoboken Emergency Food Pantry. Please bring all your *hametz* items (open packages are OK, as long as they are at least ½ full and you make an effort to seal them up) to 115 Park Avenue, where there is a receptacle for donations. Donations will be accepted until Thursday, April 17.



### Step 2: *Mechirat hametz* - the sale of hametz; *ma'ot hittim*: Passover food for the needy

It is traditional for Jews to sell their *hametz* for the duration of Passover to someone who is not bound by Jewish law. This permits people to retain particularly expensive forms of *hametz*, such as liquor or certain spices, for the duration of the holiday. (Even though the *hametz* is sold, it remains in your home.)

Since this is a legal transaction, Rabbi Scheinberg needs to be explicitly appointed to perform such a sale on your behalf. You can stop by the office during the weeks before Pesach, or you can send or fax the attached form to the office, or e-mail its contents to the rabbi at [rabbi@hobokensynagogue.org](mailto:rabbi@hobokensynagogue.org), by Wed., April 16. You can do this even before you clean for Pesach, because the sale takes effect only when the rabbi sells the *hametz*, on the morning before Pesach.

At our congregation, like most congregations, we combine the *mitzvah* of *mechirat hametz* with the *mitzvah* of *ma'ot hittim* – the establishment of a fund to deliver Passover food to the poor and elderly of our community. We cooperate with the Jewish Family and Counseling Service in performing this *mitzvah*. Donations for this purpose are often between \$5 and \$18, but smaller or greater amounts are always welcome! Checks can be made out to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund, marked for *Ma'ot Hittim*.

The *hametz* is sold for the duration of Pesach and may be eaten again 30 minutes after the holiday ends, at approximately 9pm on Sunday, April 27.

### Step 3: cleaning and kashering for Pesach

Next is a thorough cleaning of all the places in the home (and office, and car) where *hametz* may have been brought. Additionally, there special procedures for rendering utensils fit for use on *Pesach* (“kashering”). See the Rabbinical Assembly Guide to Passover, included in this section, which should help to provide information about cleaning and preparations. If you have any specific questions, please do not hesitate to contact Rabbi Scheinberg by phone or e-mail.

### Step 4: *bedikat hametz* – search for hametz

On Thursday night, April 17, the ceremony of *bedikat hametz* is performed. Here's how Yosef Abromowitz and Rabbi Susan Silverman describe it: “Children love this activity! On the night before the seder, families make a symbolic search for hametz. Before the activity, place a bagel or

cracker or some other form of hametz in an obvious place in each room in your home. Then turn out all the lights. The family goes room to room looking for the hametz with a lit candle (make sure an adult is holding it). Give one child a big paper bag and another a feather .... When some hametz is found, the one with the feather gently sweeps it into the bag. The point is to not actually touch the bread. When all the pieces are found, the bread, candle and feather are placed in the bag. The next morning they are safely burned outside. Most Haggadahs contain the appropriate blessings for the “search-and-burn” operation.” (From *Jewish family and Life: Traditions, Holidays and values for Today's Parents and Children*)

A hint from the Scheinberg-Kalish family: hide lasagna noodles – they are *hametz* but they don't leave any crumbs around your recently-cleaned home.

### Step 5: *Bi'ur Hametz*: Burning hametz

It's traditional to burn any remaining *hametz* on the morning before Pesach—this year, though, the burning takes place on Friday, April 18.

## VI. What is special about the days immediately before Pesach?

**Thursday, April 17 is designated on the Jewish calendar as the Fast of the Firstborn.** In memory of the slain firstborns of the 10<sup>th</sup> plague in Egypt, and in gratitude for the salvation of the firstborns of Israel, first born sons and daughters fast on the day before Pesach (this year, a few days before Pesach because Pesach begins on Saturday night), unless they attend a *siyyum* – a celebration marking the culmination of a unit of Rabbinic text study. Following the morning service on Thursday at 7 am, there will be such a *siyyum*, to which all members of the community are invited – not just the first born!

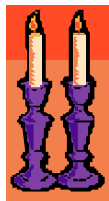
## VII. Is there a congregational Seder?

Yes.... on the second night of Pesach, Sunday, April 20, beginning at 7pm. We expect the seder to sell out completely! Please call the office to reserve your space as soon as possible if you are planning to join us! Please see the reservation form on page 9 of this issue of The Shofar.

## VIII. I'm hosting a Seder for the first time / I'm attending a Seder for the first time – how can I learn a little more about it?

See the schedule of pre-Pesach classes offered by the rabbi. He can also recommend books, Haggadot, and





other Pesach-related resources. In addition, you may wish to check out the following web pages, all of which have educational information about Pesach: [www.myjewishlearning.com](http://www.myjewishlearning.com); [www.jewishfamily.com](http://www.jewishfamily.com) (Jewish Family and Life). Also see [www.hobokensynagogue.org](http://www.hobokensynagogue.org), which has links to Rabbi Scheinberg's Seder Songs CD!

### IX. What's special about Pesach beginning on Saturday night this year?

This doesn't happen too often—only about 11 times a century. (Next time is in 2021!) The following are the salient differences:

1. **Fast of the First Born** takes place on the preceding Thursday. (Actually, Sefardic Jews say the fast is simply cancelled.)
2. **Bedikat Hametz (search for leaven)** takes place on Thursday night, with burning of *hametz* taking place on Friday morning.
3. **Traditionally, one makes one's home Kosher for Passover by Friday morning.** There are a variety of customs for what one can do for meals on Shabbat. Some people, for example, will still eat challah at dinner on Friday night and even at a very early lunch on Shabbat morning (i.e., before 10am), being very careful not to let any challah crumbs get on the Passover utensils and throwing away all remnants of the challah before 10am. Rabbi Scheinberg says: "Hey, I love challah too, but this sounds ridiculous to me! My recommendation is simply to be Kosher for Passover beginning on Friday morning, and then to use two pieces of egg matzah in place of the challahs for the Shabbat meals. (It is traditional not to eat regular matzah on the day before Passover so that it will be a novel food at the seder.)"

### X. How can I use the Pesach holiday as an opportunity to help others?

1. **donate your leftover *hametz*** - see question IV, step 1
2. **contribute *ma'ot hittim*** - see question IV, step 2
3. **The Jewish Family and Counseling Service CareLink program delivers Pesach packages each year to Jews in need in our area.** Volunteers are needed on Sunday, April 13 at 9am at the Bayonne JCC. Pre-registration is essential: send in the form included in this Shofar newsletter as soon as possible if you want to participate!
4. The USH is a partner synagogue with **Mazon, a Jewish Response to Hunger.** One of our partnership responsibilities is to encourage all of our members to symbolically provide for a hungry guest by donating to Mazon the cost of one meal at your Seder. The address is Mazon, 1990 South Bundy Drive, Suite 260, Los Angeles, CA 90025.

## The Rabbinical Assembly Pesach Guide

*This guide was prepared for the Rabbinical Assembly Committee on Jewish Law and Standards by Rabbi Mayer Rabinowitz.*

The Torah prohibits the ownership of *hametz* (leaven) 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, usually the rabbi, to handle the sale. It is valid and legal transfer of ownership. At the end of the holiday, the agent arranges 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 (*hametz she-avar alav ha-Pesah*).

Since the Torah prohibits the eating of *hametz* during Pesah, and since many common foods contain some admixture of *hametz*, guidance is necessary when shopping and preparing for Pesah.

During the eight days of Pesah, *hametz* cannot lose its identity in an admixture. Therefore, the minutest amount of *hametz* renders the whole admixture *hametz* and its use on Pesah is prohibited. However, during the rest of the year, *hametz* follows the normal rules of admixture, i.e. it loses its identity in an admixture 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, your rabbi should be consulted when any doubt arises. *Kosher le-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 consulting your rabbi.

Prohibited foods include the following: leavened bread, cakes, biscuits, crackers, cereal, coffees containing cereal derivatives, wheat, barley, oats, spelt, rye, and all liquids containing ingredients or flavors made from grain alcohol. Most Ashkenazic authorities have added the following foods (*kitniyot*) to the above list: 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. Some Ashkenazic authorities permit, while others forbid, the use of legumes in a form other than their 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:**

**The following foods require no *kosher le-Pesah* label if purchased prior to Pesah:** unopened packages or containers of natural coffee without cereal additives (However, be aware that coffees produced by General Foods are not kosher for Passover unless marked KP); sugar, pure tea (not herbal 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 no *kosher le-Pesah* label if purchased before or during Pesah: Fresh fruits and vegetables (for legumes see above), eggs, fresh fish and fresh meat.

**The following foods require a *kosher le-Pesah* label if purchased before or during Pesah:** 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 Pesah without a *kosher le-Pesah* 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 le-Pesah* label); 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 le-Pesah* label if purchased during Pesah:** milk, butter, 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 a *kosher le-Pesah* label.

**MEDICINE:** Since *hametz* 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 Pesah. If it is not for life sustaining therapy, some authorities permit, while others prohibit. Consult your rabbi. In all cases, capsules are preferable to pills.

**KASHERING OF UTENSILS:** The process of kashering utensils depends on how the utensils are used. According to halakhah, leaven can be purged from a utensil by the same process in which it was absorbed in the utensil (*ke-voleo kakh poleto*). 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.

**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.

**METAL** (wholly made of metal) **UTENSILS 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 cleaned and completely immersed in boiling water. Pots 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.

**OVENS AND RANGES:** Every part that comes in contact with food must be thoroughly scrubbed and cleaned. Then, oven and range should 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**, 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 disappears. A microwave oven that has a browning element cannot be kashered for Pesah.

**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. The other opinion requires only a thorough scrubbing before Pesah, or putting them through a dishwasher.

**Glass Cookware:** There is a difference of opinion as to whether it is to be kashered. One opinion is that it must be kashered. After a thorough cleansing, there should be water boiled in them which will overflow the rim. The other opinion is that only a thorough cleansing is required.

**Glass Bakeware**, like metal bakeware, may not be kashered.

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

**ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES:** If the parts that come into contact with *hametz* 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.)

**TABLES, CLOSETS AND COUNTERS:** If used with *hametz*, they should be thoroughly cleaned and covered, and then they may be used.

**KITCHEN SINK:** A metal sink can be kashered by thoroughly cleaning and then 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.

**HAMETZ AND NON-PASSOVER UTENSILS:** Non-Passover dishes, pots and *hametz* whose ownership has been transferred, should be separated, locked up or covered, and marked in order to prevent accidental use.

**Form for the Sale of Hametz**

(Send, fax, or e-mail this form to the synagogue **NO LATER THAN WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16.**)

I/We, \_\_\_\_\_, residing at \_\_\_\_\_, fully empower and permit Rabbi Robert Scheinberg to act in my behalf to sell all *hametz* possessed by me – knowingly or unknowingly – as defined by Torah and rabbinic law, and to lease all places wherein *hametz* owned may be found.

\_\_\_\_\_ (signature) \_\_\_\_\_ (date)