

A Pesah Guide

RABBI MAYER E. RABINOWITZ

Note: This guide was prepared for the Rabbinical Assembly Committee on Jewish Law and Standards by Rabbi Mayer Rabinowitz. It was adopted by the Committee on December 12, 1984. Those present at the meeting and participating in the discussion which led to its adoption by a consensus agreement of those members present, were: Rabbis Kassel Abelson, Isidoro Aizenberg, Ben Zion Bergman, Elliot N. Dorff, David M. Feldman, Morris Feldman, Robert Gordis, Benjamin Z. Kreitman, David H. Lincoln, Judah Nadich, Mayer E. Rabinowitz, Barry S. Rosen, Joel Roth, Morris M. Shapiro, Israel N. Silverman, Henry A. Sosland, Gordon Tucker and Alan J. Yuter.

The last paragraph of the introduction, as well as Part A under "Permitted Foods," have been amended to reflect more recent decisions of the Committee affecting the status of peanuts, peanut oil and certain cheeses. See Kassel Abelson, "The Use of Cheese on Pesah," which appears elsewhere in this volume, and Ben Zion Bergman, "A New Look at Peanuts -- From the Ground Up," which is to be published in the next volume of the Proceedings of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards.

INTRODUCTION

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 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 *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 hapesah*).

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 beshishim*). 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. *Kasher lePesah* 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 list: rice, corn millet, legumes (beans, peas; however, string beans are permitted). As peanuts are not actually legumes, both 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

- (A) The following foods require no *kasher lePesah* label if purchased prior to Pesah: 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) and baking soda.
- (B) The following foods require no *kasher lePesah* label if purchased before or during Pesah: Fresh fruits and vegetables (for legumes see above), eggs, fresh fish and fresh meat.
- (C) The following foods require a *kasher lePesah* 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, chocolate flavored milk, ice cream, yogurt and soda.
- (D) The following foods require a *kasher lePesah* label if purchased during Pesah: Processed foods (canned, frozen, or bottled): 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 *kasher lePesah* 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. If available, 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 a utensil by the same process in which it was absorbed in the utensil (*kevoleo kakh poletto*). 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 cleaned 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) 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. 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 Pesah.

- (D) 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 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 *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.)
- (G) Tables, closets and counters -- If used with *hametz*, 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) *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 so as to prevent accidental use.