

A Guide for the Passover Perplexed

As Passover draws near, it is time to get our homes and kitchens ready for this special Holiday. I thought I would send out CyberTorah a few days early this week to help answer any questions that may arise as we prepare our homes. One of the most preparation intensive Holy Days on the Jewish calendar, Passover is meaningful because it is hard work. We are specifically commanded in the Torah to neither eat leavened products, called hametz, nor to possess them. That process of cleaning takes on a spiritual dimension as we symbolically cleanse our souls and prepare ourselves for God's service.

Hametz is the combination of wheat, oat, barley, spelt or rye with water. This specifically makes bread, pasta, cereals, cakes, crackers, and liquids with grains in them like beer or scotch forbidden for eating or drinking. Jews can neither eat nor own these items during Passover. As a result, there is a custom of separating out left over chametz and placing it in a closed clearly marked area and then sold. If you would like, you may designate me as your agent to sell your chametz. It is customary to make a donation but not required. Simply send me an email designating me as your agent to sell chametz.

Fresh fruits and vegetables can be purchased at any time without any Rabbinic supervision. Such items are always considered Kosher. Further, dishwashing soaps, toothpaste, and other non-food items are not considered food and therefore are not subject to needing kosher supervision.

Prior to Pesach, some items can be purchased with only a regular kosher label but no special kosher for Passover label. Such items are limited to fresh natural coffee, sugar, tea, salt, spices, frozen fruit juices, milk, butter, cottage cheese, cream cheese, and frozen fruit. All of these items are produced without the use of Chametz. If an infinitesimal quantity of chametz should accidentally have fallen into these items, it is considered void prior to the start of the Holy Day. If they are purchased during Passover, they must have a kosher for Passover mark because any quantity of chametz is forbidden during Passover.

All other packaged or processed items must have a kosher for Passover label because they may use chametz in their production. Ingredient lists on packaged items are unreliable because chametz items occur in a variety of additives and are sometimes used for processing or as preservatives.

Ovens are thoroughly cleaned and then run on their highest setting for one half hour to make them Kosher for Pesach. Self cleaning ovens can be run through one cycle, washed down, and then run through a second cycle to kasher. Microwave ovens are thoroughly cleaned and then a cup of water is boiled in them for two minutes.

Glassware is thoroughly cleaned in hot soapy water and is then considered kosher for Passover. Metal utensils, provided they are solid metal pieces, can be koshered by cleaning them and then being fully immersed in boiling water. Earthenware and plastics cannot be koshered for use on Passover. Only when such items have never been in contact with Hametz can they be used.

Finally, the Rabbinical Assembly permits the use of dishwashers during Passover. They are koshered by refraining from using them for 24 hours and then running them through a cycle with detergent.

I hope this helps as you being your Passover preparations. I wish everyone a wonderful and kosher Passover.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi David Booth

To be added to the CyberTorah list, please email me at Rabbiboath@kolemeth.org.