

PASSOVER LORE—DO YOU KNOW?

NAMES OF THE FESTIVAL:

Chag Ha-Matzot ("Festival of the Unleavened Bread"), **reflects the centrality of matzah** in the celebration of Pesach.

Chag Ha-Pesah ("Festival of the Paschal Lamb Offering"), **recalls the offering that was brought to the Beit HaMikdash** (Holy Temple) in Jerusalem in former times, even as the word Pesah (from the Hebrew, "to protect") links us to the biblical account of the tenth plague when our ancestors' homes were "protected" when the Angel of Death "protected" them.

Chag He-Aviv ("Festival of the Semi-ripe Barley"; in later Hebrew this name connotes "Festival of Spring"), **reminds us of the agricultural dimensions and seasonal significance** of the Festival.

Z'man Cheruteinu ("Season of Our Freedom"), **marks the attainment of the goal of freedom** from bondage by our ancestors. The Sages chose this name for use **in every Amidah** (central prayer) **and Birkat HaMazon** (the Blessing after Meals/Nourishment) throughout Passover.

MA-OT CHITTIM ("Wheat Money"):

For Passover, special **care must be taken to provide for the poor, as the costs for Passover observance are greater than usual**. Less fortunate Jews should yet be able to celebrate free of worry on the Festival of Freedom. The practice of distributing *ma-ot chittim* (also known as *kimcha d'Pischa*, literally "Passover flour") was instituted so that the needs of the indigent might be met. This custom has given rise, in local communities, to the creation of special Passover funds. The money for selling one's chametz (see below) is generally channeled into such a fund.

CHAMETZ:

Any **product that is fermented or that can cause fermentation may not be eaten on Passover. Only five grains are included in this prohibition: wheat, rye, barley, oats and spelt**. Any food or drink made from one of these grains, or which contains one of these grains, even a most miniscule amount, is considered chametz. Obviously, matzah is made from one of these five grains, although careful attention has ensured that no leavening has occurred.

In addition, all utensils that came into contact with chametz may not be used during Pesach or even on the day preceding it. These and any non-Pesach foods we are saving are stored where we won't see them or get into them. (The prohibition includes not seeing chametz in one's domain.) The surfaces upon which we prepare food, cook food and eat food are scoured and usually covered for the duration of the Festival. The refrigerator is likewise cleaned to remove any trace of chametz. Many utensils may be "kashered" for Passover, that is, they might be rendered usable for the holy day by following the traditions for doing so.

Ashkenazi Jews have followed the minhag (custom) of treating rice, corn, peanuts or members of the pea family as chametz because these products swell when cooked and so resemble a leavening process. According to the strictest application of this minhag, neither the

grains nor any of the flours or oils made from them may be used. Some Ashkenazi commentators do allow the use of these products when in certain forms, such as oil. Sephardic tradition allows these products, in any form, to be eaten. No, one cannot declare oneself a Sephardic Jew for eight days a year!

However, the **Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) of the Conservative Movement has ruled** unanimously in separate rulings **that peanuts and string beans are not members of the pea family** and hence should not fall under this minhag (and are hence fully acceptable for Passover use in all forms).

In addition, in 2015, **the CJLS** published two separate Jewish legal opinions **now allowing Ashkenazi Jews to eating rice, corn, peanuts, et al, just as our Sephardic brothers and sisters do**. This is not a requirement, but a possibility. You may wish to refer to the two specific papers on this that are noted in the Rabbinical Assembly's 2019 [Passover Guide](#): If the link does not work on your computer, the url is www.rabbinicalassembly.org/pesah-guide.

Whether one follows Sephardic or Ashkenazic tradition, one is keeping kosher for Passover. There should be no belittling the considered, meaningful practice of someone else. For those who choose to follow the Sephardic practice, please note that Rabbinical Assembly's guide explains a number of caveats that must be followed. For those who are Ashkenazic, please note that eating off the kosher-for-Passover plates that have had items like corn on them do not in any way adversely affect your own keeping of Passover. In addition, **Ashkenazi Jews are fully able to eat derivatives of rice, peanuts, et al, such as peanut oil, as the prohibition never affected derivatives.** Please contact me with any specific questions.

In addition to a prohibition on eating chametz, one cannot get any advantage from it. So, for example, Jewish bakeries often close during the week of Passover to not make money from chametz during the holy day.

M'CHIRAT CHAMETZ (Selling Chametz):

Since one must not own any chametz during Pesach, **any chametz stored is sold (to a non Jew) for the duration of Pesach.** *The transaction is technically an actual sale: People sign a document appointing the Rabbi as their legal agent for this purpose. Food that is sold must be placed out of the way and covered, along with the year-round ("chametz-dik") dishes, so that one does not encounter the chametz during Pesach itself. At the end of the holiday, the agent (the rabbi) arranges for the reversion of ownership of the now permitted chametz. Some who do not change dishes nevertheless should consider selling their actual chametz. Those needing or desiring Rabbi Sacks' help to accomplish this mitzvah should contact him by Tuesday, April 16 or mail the form elsewhere in this Migdalor to him so that it arrives to him by Wednesday, April 17 at: Rabbi J.B. Sacks, 6871 Valley Circle Blvd., Unit 2, West Hills, CA 91307.*

B'DIKAT CHAMETZ/BI-UR CHAMETZ (Search for/Burning of Chametz):

After thoroughly cleaning one's home, a search for leaven takes place on the evening before Pesach begins, i.e. the night before the first seder. So as not to make this search in vain, a few crumbs or pieces of chametz are conspicuously placed, searched for by candlelight and when "found," swept onto a wooden spoon with a feather. (Obviously, it is helpful to count how many pieces of bread/candy/whatever you have conveniently placed throughout the house so that no chametz remains!) Children (of all ages) delight in this tradition. One does not have to have a wooden spoon and/or feather to conduct the search.

The following morning (i.e. the morning of the first seder) before 10:00 a.m. or so (consult the Rabbi if more specificity is required), these last crumbs/pieces are burned (in some places, flushed or thrown in the outside garbage can). A short declaration is recited both evening and morning, which you can find [here](#).

Any other chametz found in the house is then considered to be "mere dust" and not food (and hence, the household is still considered to be fully kosher for Pesach for the family that worked so hard to clean.(A humane remedy if there ever was one!!!) Many modern young families, whether traditionally kosher for Pesach or not, have now incorporated this Ritual in whole or in part as a feature of their family's preparation for Pesach. This year the first seder takes place on Friday night, April 19, so the **search for chametz takes place on Thursday evening, April 18, with the burning of chametz the next morning.**

MECHIRAT CHAMETZ: THE SELLING OF CHAMETZ

One must not have any chametz (leaven) in his or her legal possession during Pesach. After doing a complete and thorough cleaning of your home, you should throw away any opened packages of chametz, thereby beginning Pesach in a chametz-free environment. Consider donating new and closed chametz items to a local food pantry. The remainder of your chametz should be stored in a place where you will not inadvertently use it.