

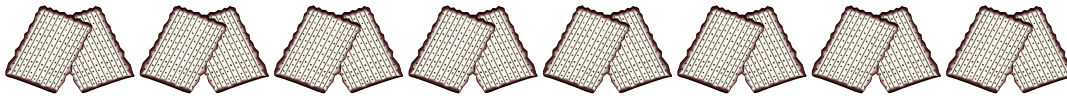
A guide to PESAH (Passover) 5779

Congregation Etz Hayim

Pesah is the holiday in the Jewish calendar that most involve advanced preparations. To help us prepare for the holiday in our congregation, here is a concise guide:

****Pesah* begins on Friday evening, April 19, and concludes after dark on Saturday, April 27, at 8:47pm.**

On Friday, April 19, after 11:00am, we are not allowed to eat “*Hametz*” anymore. We are also not supposed to eat *matzah* until the *Seder*, when we will be able to taste it afresh.



***What is *Hametz*?**

Hametz, or leaven, refers to food prepared from five species of grain (rye, wheat, barley, spelt and oats) that were allowed to leaven (water has been added to them, and the mixture was allowed to stand for more than 18 minutes). If any amount of this mixture becomes mixed with other food, it is called *Ta'arovet hametz*, and it is also prohibited during *Pesah*. Consumption, enjoyment, and even possession of leaven is prohibited during *Pesah*. For that reason, we remove the leaven from our homes and lives. This is a metaphor for the concept of liberation, in which we should be involved during the days of *Pesah*. We free ourselves from the *Hametz* in our lives, in whatever forms they exist in our homes. The process of disposal and search of leaven symbolizes the letting go of old stuff, of the feelings and attitudes we have that can and should be thrown away.

***How do we eliminate *Hametz* from our homes?**

We start by removing all leavened foods from our homes. As in previous years, we will donate all unopened non-perishable *hametz* foods to the Arlington Food Assistance Center. Please bring all your unopened *hametz* items to the synagogue. **Donations will be accepted until Wednesday, April 17.** This is a firm deadline. Please do not bring any other food items into the building after that. We also have to make our homes fit for *Pesah*, or *Kosher*. If you have any questions, or want help with the cleaning and the preparations, please do not hesitate to call Rabbi Bass at the office. A Kashrut guide from the Rabbinical Assembly is found at rabbinicalassembly.org/pesah-guide

The next step is to do “*mechirat hametz*.” The words mean “the selling of the *hametz*,” and it is a legal fiction that permits us to hold on to expensive forms of *hametz* such as liquor, exquisite spices and condiments. Rabbi Bass will “sell” your *hametz* to a non-Jew for the duration of Passover. Since this is a legal transaction, Rabbi Bass needs to be explicitly appointed to perform such a sale on your behalf. You can stop by the office during the weeks before *Pesah*, or you can send a written authorization to Rabbi Bass, **prior to Thursday, April 18**, after minyan, to perform the transaction, along the following lines:

I/we, _____, residing at _____ authorize Rabbi Lia Bass to sell my *hametz* according to the stipulations of Jewish Law. Should the new owner decide to take possession of the *hametz*, it will be found in a sealed closet in the _____ room of my house/apartment/office.

Signature _____ Date _____

At this time, we combine the *mitzvah* of *mechirat hametz* with the *mitzvah* of *maot hittim*, literally “money for wheat.” When we sell our *hametz*, we think about those in our community that are not as fortunate, and we try to provide the means for them to enjoy the holiday. It is customary to donate \$18 for this purpose. Please make your checks out to the Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund, marked for Maot Hittim. You may also donate a percentage of what you will spend on your *Seder* (around 3%) to Mazon, A National Jewish Response to Hunger, at 2940 Westwood Boulevard, Suite 7, Los Angeles, CA 90064. I will take *mechirat hametz* forms until **Thursday, April 18, after morning Minyan.**

At the end of *Pesah* you may again enjoy the *hametz* you sold. Please give Rabbi Bass a half hour after the appearance of the three stars to open your cabinets. We will be able to eat from that *hametz* again this year on Saturday, April 26, at 9:15 pm. *Pesah* will end at 8:47 pm.

On Thursday, April 18, as soon as night has fallen, we continue the process of removal of *hametz* by doing *Bedikat Hametz* (the search for leaven) and *Bitul Hametz* (the nullification of leaven). We light a candle, say the benediction “*Baruch ata.... vetzivanu al biyur hametz*” and we search the house for little pieces of *hametz* that have been previously hidden. It is a lot of fun to go around the house, with a candle or a light, looking for *hametz*. After the search for the *hametz* is done, and all the pieces are found, we collect the pieces and the remaining leaven. We proceed with *Bitul Hametz*, and the formula for that can be found in any *Haggadah*.

The next day we will burn the leaven, in a ceremony called *Biyur Hametz*. On Friday April 19, we will have services at 7:00am. During services, we will finish a unit of Rabbinic text study. This is done because firstborns are to fast (sons and daughters) in memory of the slain firstborns of the last plague in Egypt. To avoid the fast, we organize a *Siyyum* (concluding a unit of Rabbinic text study), and we are then commanded to eat. After the service, we will burn our *hametz*. You do not need to be a first born in order to participate in the service, and all of us need to burn our *hametz*, anyway, so please come!

For the Seder, if you can accommodate some guests, please let our office know. If you need a place to go for Seder, do not be shy; contact the office, and we will do our best to find you a place for the Seder.

***Passover Services**

Friday, April 19, 7:00am: Morning service and Siyyum. (*No Friday evening Shabbat Services due to First Seder*)

Saturday and Sunday (April 20 and 21), Friday and Saturday (April 26 and 27): Morning services at 10:00am. On Saturday, April 27, the service includes Yizkor.

Services occurring during Passover:

Thursday, April 25, 7:00am: Morning minyan.

Friday, April 26, 6:15pm: Shabbat Ma’ariv services.