



February 2018
Adar 5778

Dear Friends:

Of the many messages of *Purim*, one tends to speak loudest: *Pesah* is only a month away!

I do not mean to detract from the festivities of *Purim*, but *Pesah* is supposed to be joyous as well. As we approach Yom Tov, I hope to ease our path to freedom, at least in some logistical areas.

•Many of us, no doubt, invite family and friends to the *seder*. If you are hosting a *seder* or two this year, please consider making yourself available to welcome others who may be in need of a place to celebrate this year. **Requests should be filtered through my office, and if you are in need of a place to go or are willing to host extra guests, please contact me.**

•Not only are we forbidden from eating *hametz*, or leaven; we are not even permitted to own it. We traditionally try to use up our *hametz* before *Pesah*, but to avoid great financial hardship, the rabbis enabled us to sell our *hametz* to a non-Jew, to whom the prohibitions do not apply, for the duration of Passover.

In order to sell your *hametz*, you can appoint me as your agent and sign your name to our congregation's document of sale. Enclosed is a form for you to return so I can serve as your agent. You may sell your *hametz* even before your house is clean. **We are permitted to eat hametz up until 10:50 on Friday morning, March 30.**

Though I intend to re-purchase the *hametz* on your behalf immediately after *Pesah*, it must be noted that this is a very real transaction. Even if you keep the *hametz* in a separate area on your property, the *hametz* belongs to someone else; so improper use of it during Passover is also considered stealing!

It is my honor to serve as your *shaliah*, or agent, in this sacred task. Please avail me of the opportunity to do so. **The form for sale of hametz is enclosed. I must have it in hand by 10 AM on Friday, March 30th in order to include your hametz in the transaction.**

•More than ever before, Kosher-for-Passover products are available to us. Virtually everything is being produced and supervised! However, as we well know, these products can be expensive, and not everyone who wishes to buy them is able.

One of the *mitzvot* of *Pesah* is *Ma'ot Hittin*--literally “money for wheat.” Jews have always taken care of one another, especially those in need of the basics for making Passover. I will be making a contribution to a variety of organizations that feed the hungry on Passover, as well as to those in our community who might need assistance.

I encourage you to return the enclosed form with your contribution to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund, and I will make my donation in your name.

•The Chesed committee is also setting up two bins in the shul in advance of Yom Tov. One will be for kosher, non-perishable *hametz* food items, which will be donated to the American Martyrs Church food pantry. The last day for collection of *hametz* will be Wednesday, March 28th. The second bin will be for kosher-for-Pesah food items, which will be distributed to needy Jews throughout Queens. The final day of the collection will be Wednesday, March 21st. **We welcome you to join the Queens Jewish Community Council in packing and distributing kosher for *Pesah* food to the needy on Sunday, March 25th at 9:00 AM at Ezra Academy, 119-45 Union Turnpike, Forest Hills, NY 11375, Lower Level.**

•Though I am not a *bekhor*, a first-born, I am sensitive to those of you who are *bekhorim*, and don't want you to have to fast on *erev Pesah*. This year, the annual *siyyum* (completing a tractate of Talmud) takes place on Friday, March 30th at morning minyan, which begins at 6:45 a.m. My goal is to share with you as I complete my study of *Avot de Rabbi Natan*. And since an event as joyous as a *siyyum* must be marked with a *se'udat mitzvah*, a festive meal, I'll gladly invite you to join me.

•I am available to answer questions pertaining to *Pesah* as it approaches. I am enclosing the updated Rabbinical Assembly's Passover Guide to help get you started; it is newly updated, so read carefully. You'll also find the text of the ceremony of ***Bedikat Hametz*, the search for *hametz*, this year to be conducted on Thursday night, March 29th, after dark. Those who wish to burn their *hametz* at the synagogue Friday morning should come to the 210th street entrance at 11:00 am.**

May we all have an easy preparation and a joyous *Pesah*--one that lives up to the joy of *Purim*!

Hag kasher ve-sameah,
Rabbi David Wise