

Dear Congregants,

According to the Torah and our tradition, we are to remove all *Chametz* from our possession before *Pesach*. To accomplish this, we clean for Passover; we go through our homes, cars, storage rooms, etc to remove any remaining *Chametz*. Contrary to popular opinion, Chametz does not mean bread or even leavened bread. Yes, they are Chametz but Chametz is even more than that. Chametz is anything made out of the five grains: Barley, Rye, Oats, Wheat, and Spelt which has been allowed to ferment in the process. Any of the grains that was mixed with water and not fully baked within 18 minutes of its mixture with water is Chametz. We all have lots of Chametz in our homes and many people have Chametz in their businesses. In Europe and other places, since Jews were not as a rule allowed to farm, they went into various businesses including the grain business, innkeeping, and liquor, where their entire stock was Chametz. If they were to be forced to remove all Chametz from their possession prior to Passover, the process could mean a tremendous economic loss to them. So in order to prevent such a financial tragedy to many Jews, the rabbis invented a procedure whereby the Chametz could be sold to a non-Jew, and the place where it was kept would be leased to the purchaser during the eight days of Passover. In this manner, the Chametz would be removed from Jewish possession and the Jew would not be in violation of the prohibition against owning Chametz during Passover.

It is customary for members of synagogues to appoint the Rabbi of the synagogue as their agent for the purpose of selling their Chametz for them. This is done by means of what we used to call a conditional sales contract whereby the purchaser agrees to pay a substantial amount of money for the Chametz of the community, paying a very small down payment and being obligated to pay the balance of the money due after sundown of the evening Passover ends. If the purchaser fails to pay the balance owed at the end of the period, all of the Chametz of the community reverts to its original owners. During Passover, the purchaser has a right to the use and possession of the Chametz, but if he doesn't pay the balance due, he no longer has a right to the chametz.

I have prepared a form whereby you can appoint me as your agent to sell your Chametz; it is also customary as consideration for my appointment as your agent for you to make a contribution to Congregation B'nai Torah specifically for the purpose of providing Passover food to those who may need financial assistance currently.

Contact Rabbi Robert G. Maslan / 12414 SE 25th St. / Bellevue, WA. 98005, to make arrangements to sell your Chametz. Rabbi is meeting with the purchaser at 10: 00 AM on Friday, March 26, 2010.

Shabbat shalom and happy Pesach preparation (but not on Shabbat 😊!)

Rabbi Bob Maslan