



Deal or No Deal

One of the main prohibitions on Passover is the possession of chametz. Chametz is formed when dough made from wheat, barley, rye, oats or spelt is allowed to sit for a period of 18 minutes. This would include not only bread, but all types of food or drink that are made from these types of flour.

The ultimate reason for this prohibition is not known to us but in common with all the mitzvot of the Torah, we keep them because they are G-d's will and we believe they have fundamental spiritual reasons. Historically though, when the Jewish people left Egypt, they were in such a hurry that they did not have enough time for the bread that they were baking to rise. Our abstention from chametz recalls their enthusiasm. Not only are we forbidden to eat even the tiniest amount of chametz, but we are also not allowed to have ownership of chametz.

Therefore, any products that contain edible chametz, even though they will not be eaten, would also fall under the same prohibition. Any chametz products that one has left in one's house before Passover must be either consumed or disposed of. In cases where this is not an option, then one sells them to a non-Jewish person for the duration of the festival. This is usually done through the local rabbi or a competent kashrut authority.

Many people have a mistaken idea of what the sale of chametz is all about. Far from being the symbolic ancient ritual that some people think it is, the seller enters into a legally binding contract with the non-Jewish person whereby the products that they specify are actually sold and the area that they are stored is also sold to the purchaser.

Although the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law) allows us to sell our chametz outright before Passover to a non-Jew, the practice has only become more prevalent in recent years. This is mainly due to the large quantities of food that we now keep as stock in our homes.

After Passover, any products which were not consumed are repurchased. The ability to sell one's chametz is a good example of the flexibility of Jewish law and the rabbis' desire to find ways to make our life as easy and pleasant as possible. All chametz that is to be sold should be securely put away and kept locked up over Passover to avoid unintentional use.

It is always best to consult a competent rabbi where the circumstances are not straight forward. It is most important that all chametz is disposed of or sold before Passover. Although the non-Jew usually sells it back after Passover, this is an entirely valid and legal sale, both in Jewish and English law. The chametz to be sold should be securely locked away in a room or cupboard, which will not be used over Passover. It is customary to empower the local rabbi to sell one's chametz and to sign the rabbi's contract.

[If you would like to sell your chametz through the United Synagogue, please follow this link](#) [1]

Date Uploaded: Sunday 23rd March 2014

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