



**BVK PESACH GUIDE**

**2013 EDITION**

**BY: RABBI MOSHE TAUB**

**All Final Rulings should come from one's personal Rabbi**

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### **Glossary of Terms**

*Bedika* – The search for Chometz

*Chazal* – Rabbis of the Talmud

*Chumrah, Chumros, Machmir* – Stringency, Stringencies, Stringent

*Mechiras Chometz* –Sale of Hametz

*Minhag, Minhagim* – Custom(s)

*Poskim* – Halachik Masters

*Hechsher* – Kosher Symbol

*Kashering* –To ‘kosherize’ a utensil for Passover use, or from one status to another

*Rav* – Rabbi

*Rav hamachshir* –the leading Halachik authority for a kosher council

### ***PREAMBLE:***

***FROM OUR INCEPTION –THE INJUNCTION AGAINST EATING FROM THE EITZ HADAS/THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE– GD A-MIGHTY SAW THAT MAN COULD EASILY SANCTIFY HIS MOST PRIMITIVE AND ESSENTIAL NEED: THAT OF FOOD. THE TORAH DOES NOT EMBRACE UTTER ASCETICISM OR ABSTINENCE RATHER THE SANCTIFICATION OF ALL BODILY NEEDS AND HUMAN DESIRES. WE ARE MEANT TO ENJOY THIS WORLD. HASHEM SAW TO IT THAT WE OUGHT HAVE AN EASY WAY TO TURN EVEN THIS - AND EVERY - MOST BASIC HUMAN NEED AND DESIRE INTO A SPIRITUAL CONQUEST. LET US ENJOY PESACH, AND THE FOOD, ALL THE WHILE FOLLOWING HALACHA: FOR IT IS NOT A CONTRADICTION.***

## **PART I – CHUMROS/STRINGENCIES ON PESACH**

“**A** person is obligated (by Torah Law)[1] to be happy and in good spirits on the Yomim Tovim; the husband, his wife, and their children...”

-Shulchan Aruch, *siman* 529:2-

Unfortunately, not only do many women not enjoy Pesach, they dread its arrival. The sad irony is that *chazal* teach that Pesach and the exodus it comes to celebrate are owed specifically to the Jewish women and their merits. [2]

Rabbis have seen all too often the joy of Pesach sullied, the anticipation for this holiday frustrated by unnecessary behavior done in the name of *halacha*.

We must put Pesach *chumros* in perspective.

It should be said at the outset that there are various wonderful *chumros* relating to Pesach, as well as innumerable *minhagim*, all of which should be observed in their respective homes. We all know the words of the Ari Z'L that he or she who is careful for even a trifle of *chometz* will be protected from sin throughout the year [3].

However, we must remember that *chumros* do not exist in a vacuum bound by no rules and whereby they can potentially metastasize into adversities that are unrecognizable even to their creators. *Chumros* too are restricted by rules. In fact, we need to be *machmir* regarding *chumros*, to learn when *chumros* are unnecessary and, sometimes, even forbidden.

In addition, by confusing *chumros* with real *halacha* we can create an atmosphere where

what *has to be done* is eclipsed by what one *wants to be done*, leading to undesired consequences. In the words of the Netziv, "...we run away from the fox but into the mouth of a lion".[4]

What follows is a brief listing of the rules of stringencies.

***Of course, one should not rule according to what is written here rather a rav should be consulted for all final rulings.***[5]

1 – All *chumros*, aside for one's personal *minhagim*, must have a source – a singular opinion, for instance– in the *poskim*, and it certainly cannot go against a ruling of *chazal*. A stringency made up out of whole cloth is not acceptable unless it is a specific tradition or *minhag* that one has. (By tradition, we don't mean 'Well, I did it last year'). [6] [7]

2 – If a new *chumra* would be in direct conflict with another clear *halacha*, like *simchas Yom Tov* (enjoying the holiday –a *mitzva* in itself), it often needs to be abandoned.[8]

3 –All medicine in pill form, in the opinion of the BVK, is allowed on Pesach.[9] While at first the BVK was nearly alone in this public pronouncement, as of the past few years most *kashrus* agencies are publicly ruling the same.

4 – One cannot take on a *chumra* for someone else – or for one's wife.[10]

Indeed, if a husband desires to take on *chumros* in cleaning for Pesach he is more than welcome to them, *and his wife should show him where the cleaning supplies are kept*.

Yes, we must be vigilant, *machmir* even, when it comes to the laws of Pesach. Yet let us remember the words of *chazal* (Berachos 8a, with Shlah) that the highest form of fearing Heaven is found in the person who merits the next world while also enjoying this world.

## **PART II - CLEANING FOR PESACH IN HALACHA -PUTTING IT IN PERSPECTIVE**

**D**ue to the fact that the many complicated *halachos* of Pesach-cleaning get tied together in our heads, let us here carefully delineate what the prohibitions are and what they are not. We can then more easily apply the *halacha* to common cases:

1 – Aside for the Prohibition against eating *chometz* and their mixtures on Pesach there is a separate, biblical, prohibition of **possessing** *chometz* over Pesach.

2 – There is therefore an obligation to check for, remove, and destroy all *chometz* in one's home on the 14th of Nissan. There is no requirement for cleaning unless directly related to the removal of *chometz*.

3 - The custom today is to thoroughly clean our homes long before the night of the 14th. Some posit [11] that cleaning too well before the night of the 14th may establish our homes as being "*chometz-free*" thus obligating one to abstain from a *beracha* on the 14th. It is therefore advisable for the head of the household, on the night of the 14th, to either

a) See his job as also being to ask and determine if the house was cleaned well, and to search so as to verify the response he received to that question (Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach; cf. Rama 433:11)

b) Make sure that a small portion of the house remain unchecked before the 14th (Beis HaLevi).[12]

4 – Aside from the *bedika*, one must also nullify the *chometz* in their home before Pesach. This nullification alone - without any cleaning before or after - removes all biblical concerns, **yet** the basic *halacha* still demands a thorough cleaning from, and burning/destroying of, all *chometz* due to a fear that a) Such a nullification may not have been done wholeheartedly b) *Chometz* is something that we are allowed to eat all year, therefore having it in one's proximity over Pesach can lead to it mistakenly being eaten.

5 – The Torah prohibition of possessing *chometz* concerns only what is, minimally, the size of an olive. *Chometz* that is less than this is of no **biblical** concern. This should not be confused with the prohibition of **eating** *chometz*, which has **no** minimum *shiur* (measurement) [save for the *kares* penalty involved].

6 - However some rule that one must still clean for such small crumbs out of rabbinical concern (Chafetz Chaim [in *sefer* Machene Yisroel], Shulchan Aruch HaRav, et al.). All opinions agree that small crumbs less than an olive-size that are also slightly inedible are of no concern at all (Mishne Berrura).[13] Therefore one need not clean in between the tiles of their floor or the like for tiny slightly inedible pieces of *chometz*.

7 – If one fears *chometz* behind a large appliance or shelf space (e.g. a bookshelf) that cannot be moved without great effort (e.g. unscrewing panels, or very tricky lifting) there is no need to remove it, especially if any *chometz* there would anyway be inedible (Shulchan Aruch HaRav, some understand his words as applying to even large pieces of *chometz*)

8 –Based on all of the above, while it is praiseworthy to clean *seforim/books* from tiny crumbs, it is not an obligation (Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach, et al.). Nevertheless one should not bring unchecked *seforim* to the table where a crumb could fall into food (Rav Moshe Feinstein). Pockets of clothing, however, must be checked (Rama).

9– All areas of one’s home and property (e.g. car) must be cleaned from *chometz*, save for an area where one is certain no *chometz* has entered. In homes where young children are present even such spaces must be checked unless the children have no way of entering (e.g. a locked office, a high shelf).

10 - All areas that are to be sold to a Non-Jew for *pesach* need not be checked or cleaned for *chometz* (Rav Shlomo Zalman; cf. Mishneh Berrura 436:32). Nevertheless any such *chometz* must be out of view over Pesach.

[1] Shagas Aryeh

[2] Sota 11b

[3] See Baer Heitev Siman 447:1. See also Zohar, Parshas Ki Seitei brought in Kaf HaChaim

[4] Relating to selling land in Eretz Yisroel during Shmitta.

[5] See introduction of Rav Yosef Karo to his Kesef Mishna and his Beis Yoseph. See also Maharal, Nesivos Olam, Nesiv HaTorah 15.

[6] Shlah, Shavous Ner Mitzva (47) s.v. Tachlis; Maharsha, Chulin 44a; Igros Moshe *oh'c* 3:73; Shulchan Aruch Harav *oh'c* 63:2; Drashos Chasam Sofer *chelek* 2 page 358 s.v. “*aval*”.; *shu't* Chasam Sofer *y'd* # 37, “If we gathered all the stringent views found in the *poskim* we would not be able to ‘eat bread or drink water...’”; See Darkei Teshuvah, *siman* 116:109, some would even say that it would be *apikorsis* in such a case to be *machmir*. Indeed, see the Pishchei Teshuva’s comments to a ruling by the Issur V’Heter, *y'd* 116:10.

[7] Even Rabbanim are told to be careful to let the *shoel know* when a reply is based on a *halacha* or just a *chumra*. See Darkei Teshuvah ad loc and *Shu't Ksav Sofer y'd*#77. See Shulchan Aruch, *oh'c*, *siman* 485 and Mishne Berrura # 45.

[8] See the wonderful short essay based on a class given by Rav Scheinberg Shlit’a titled “Putting Pesach Cleaning In Perspective” found in Rabbi P. Eliss’s “Preparing For Pesach” page 131-134 where this last point is focused on.

[9] See: *Ksav Sofer* 118; *Igros Moshe* 2:92 and 3:62; *Chazon Ish* 116:8. *Minchas Shlomo* 1:17. Even those who would disagree would at least agree that it is at worst only a *drabanan* of *achshivei* and only according to the opinion of the *Rosh*.

[10] *Pashut*. See also *Igros Moshe eh'e* 2:12 at end, that a husband cannot be *machmir* against the basic *din* when it affects only his wife (not to wear just a *shaitel*, see there).

[11] See *Yarchon HaEmek* [R. Moshe Goldberg] #17, Rabbi Lebhar, page 33; *Halichos Shlomo* ch. 5

[12] The *minhag* of leaving ten pieces of bread (Rama, *siman* 432) is also born from a similar, although not identical, concern.[13] Cf. *Chazon Ish* 116:17 who wonders if small crumbs under one roof are seen as combined to a *shiur k'zayis*.

### **Part III – Product List (2013 only)**

The Following items may be purchased for Pesach without a special Kosher-for-Pesach marking:

#### **PILL-FORM MEDICINE**

*It has been the policy of the BVK for the past 7 years that All medication IN PILL FORM that are swallowed -and not chewed- are permitted for use on Pesach regardless of its ingredients (Ksav Sofer 111; Ig'M 2:92; Chazon Ish 116:8; Minchas Shlomo 1:17, inter alia; see footnote #9 above). Vitamins (pill form) taken on doctor's advice are included. Please speak to your rabbi for a final ruling on Pill-form medicine, as some may disagree with this policy.*

**ALCOHOL -ANY ISOPROPYL ALCOHOL MAY BE USED FOR EXTERNAL USE. ALL ETHYL ALCOHOL MUST BE AVOIDED.**

**ALUMINUM FOIL PRODUCTS -ALL**

**AMMONIA - ALL**

**BABY WIPES – ANY BRAND WITHOUT ALCOHOL**

**BABY OILS**

**BAKING SODA - ALL**

**BLEACH -ALL**

**BLUSH/ROUGE, POWDERED -ALL**

**CARROTS, INCLUDING BABY CARROTS, RAW IN PLASTIC BAGS**

**– WITHOUT ADDITIVES – ALTHOUGH, REGARDING PEELED**



**BABY CARROTS, IT IS BEST TO AVOID THEM IF POSSIBLE.**

**COCOA -ANY 100% PURE COCOA - NORTH AMERICAN MADE.**

**COFFEE - REG. GROUND UNFLAVORED, ANY. FOR KEURIG**

**CUPS SEE BELOW**

**INSTANT COFFEE – FOLGERS (PLAIN), TASTERS CHOICE**

**(PLAIN)**

**DECAF COFFEE –NEEDS KOSHER FOR PASSOVER**

**MARKING**

**CONTACT LENS SOLUTION**

**CONTACT PAPER**

**DISHWASHING SOAP**

**DENTAL FLOSS -ANY UNFLAVORED (WAXED OR NON-WAXED)**

**DEODORANTS/ANTIPERSPIRANTS - ALL POWDER AND**

**SOLID STICK POWDER.**

**DETERGENTS, DISHWASHING - ALL.**

**EGGS -SHOULD BE PURCHASED BEFORE PASSOVER.**

**FISH, FROZEN RAW -ALL FROZEN RAW FISH BEARING**

**RELIABLE KOSHER CERTIFICATION**

**FRUIT, FROZEN ALL UNSWEETENED ADDITIVE FREE, WHOLE**

**OR SLICED WITHOUT SYRUP, CITRIC ACID OR ASCORBIC ACID.**

**FURNITURE POLISH**

**GLOVES, RUBBER (LATEX) WITHOUT INNER POWDER  
COATING**

**HYDROGEN PEROXIDE –ALL**

**ICE – (BAGGED)**

**INFANT FORMULA – ISOMIL, SIMILAC, ENFAMIL (USE  
SEPARATE UTENSILS DUE TO *KITNIYOS*)**

**JUICES, FROZEN - ANY 100% PURE GRAPEFRUIT OR  
ORANGE, NO SWEETENERS, ADDITIVES, PRESERVATIVES OR  
ENRICHMENTS.**

**JUICES, LEMON OR LIME- REALIME/REALEMON JUICE  
(LIQUID)**

**LACTAID MILK- MAY BE USED ON PESACH IF PURCHASED  
BEFORE PESACH.**

**LAUNDRY DETERGENT**

**MEAT –ALL KOSHER FROZEN - SO LONG AS IT IS NOT GROUND  
OR SEASONED MEAT - AND STILL IN ORIGINAL PACKAGE**

**MINERAL OIL**

**MILK-WITHOUT *HECHSHER* SHOULD BE PURCHASED BEFORE  
PESACH**

**SOY MILK, RICE MILK AND ALMOND MILK – *Soy and Rice are  
kitniyos and their sold 'milk' may contain chometz. Under normal circumstances***

*one may not consume them on Pesach. Those found in the link below are chometz free and may be consumed by someone who is allowed to eat kitniyos (e.g. one who is ill). Of course, one can choose to make Almond milk at home for Pesach. It is recommended that those who require these products ideally purchase them before Pesach. [Soy milk, Almond milk, Rice milk](http://oukosher.org/passover/guidelines/food-items/soy-milk-almond-milk/)– Please visit this link at the OU for a list of acceptable brands: <http://oukosher.org/passover/guidelines/food-items/soy-milk-almond-milk/>*

**NUTS - RAW WHOLE, CHOPPED, OR GROUND NUTS WITHOUT ADDED PRESERVATIVES, OR OTHER ADDITIVES SUCH AS BHT OR BHA. NOTE: MIDGET PECANS AND PECAN PIECES REQUIRE A RELIABLE KFP CERTIFICATION.**

**PLASTIC DISPOSABLES - ALL PLASTIC CUPS, CUTLERY, AND PLATES**

**PLASTIC WRAP**

**PAPER GOODS (E.G. PLATES)**

**PAPER TOWEL ROLLS - THE FIRST THREE SHEETS AND THE LAST SHEET ATTACHED TO THE CARDBOARD SHOULD NOT COME INTO DIRECT CONTACT WITH FOOD SINCE A CORN STARCH BASED GLUE MAY BE USED.**

**PLASTIC WRAP**

**QUINOA- CAREFULLY CHECK GRAINS BEFORE PESACH FOR EXTRANEIOUS MATTER. SOME RABBIS DO NOT ALLOW QUINOA**

**ON PESACH.**

**RUBBER GLOVES - WITHOUT POWDER COATING.**

**SALT-NON IODIZED, WITHOUT DEXTROSE OR POLYSORBATES**

**SELTZER- ALL PLAIN WITH *HECHSHER* (EVEN IF THERE IS NOT A PESACH *HECHSHER*)**

**SILVER POLISH**

**SUGAR - GRANULATED, CANE - ALL PURE (NO DEXTROSE ADDED) (BROWN SUGAR NEEDS A PESACH SYMBOL)**

**TEA - INSTANT- NESTEA UNFLAVORED, REGULAR AND DECAF**

**TEA BAGS - LIPTON, NOT FLAVORED AND DECAFFEINATED**

**TOOTHPASTE-COLGATE, CREST— FOR OTHER BRANDS**

**PLEASE SEE RABBI TAUB**

**VASELINE**

**WAX PAPER**

- **ALL VARIETIES OF BODY SOAPS, SHAMPOOS, AND BODT WASH ARE PERMITTED**
- **ALL DRY OR POWDERED MAKE-UP**
- **KEURIG COFFEE CUPS MAY ONLY BE PURCHASED WITH A**

**"P" NEXT TO KOSHER SYMBOL.**

- THE BVK DOES NOT RECOMMEND *KASHERING* A KEURIG COFFEE MAKER FOR PESACH, ALTHOUGH IT MAY BE *KASHERED* THE REST OF THE YEAR. IF ONE WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION RELATING TO *KASHERING* KEURIG MACHINES FOR PESACH, PLEASE CONTACT THE BVK.

- REGARDING PERFUMES, LOTIONS, HAIRSPRAY, ETC. PLEASE SEE RABBI TAUB (IF THEY HAVE TEXTURE OF SHAMPOO OR BODY SOAP THEY ARE FINE)

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- ALL TYPES OF OINTMENTS, CREAMS, NAIL POLISH, HAND LOTIONS, EYE SHADOW, EYELINER, MASCARA, BLUSH, FOOT AND FACE POWDERS, AND INK AND PAINT MAY BE USED REGARDLESS OF ITS INGREDIENTS.

- COLOGNES, PERFUMES, HAIRSPRAY, SHAVING LOTIONS AND DEODORANTS THAT HAVE RESTORABLE DENATURED ALCOHOL SHOULD NOT BE USED. THIS STRINGENCY ONLY APPLIES TO ITEMS IN A PURE LIQUID FORM.

- LIPSTICK THAT CONTAINS *CHOMETZ* SHOULD NOT BE USED AND A FRESH STICK SHOULD BE STARTED ON PESACH.

- FOR PET FOOD INFO SEE [STAR-K.COM](http://STAR-K.COM) -

Passover 2013-5773

### Authorization for Sale of Chometz

Rabbi Moshe Taub Young Israel of Greater Buffalo • 105 Maple Road •  
Williamsville, NY 14221 Phone: (716) 634-3990  
**One may email back this form to vaadbuffalo@yahoo.com**

Please return this form to Rabbi Taub before 8 A.M., March 25

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby authorize Rabbi Moshe Taub, or his agent, to sell my *chometz* and to rent the room where it is stored to a non-Jew of his choosing. The *chometz* is currently located:

Home: \_\_\_\_\_  
City State  
Specific location at this address: \_\_\_\_\_

Business: \_\_\_\_\_  
City State  
Specific location at this address: \_\_\_\_\_

and includes:

- Baked Goods  Pasta  Flour
- Cereals  Yeast  Medications  Vitamins  Cosmetics  Cough  Medicine
- Groceries  Mouthwash Pet Foods Other
- Whiskeys  Elixirs  Perfumes and Colognes  Stock in Companies Owning *Chometz*

{  (Check if applicable) I will not be home all of Pesach and therefore am selling all my property. The buyer can gain access to his *chometz* by contacting \_\_\_\_\_, who will have a key or combination. }

I give the buyer free access to his *chometz* at the above location(s). The buyer's deposit will be paid to Rabbi Taub or his agent. The *chometz* has an approximate value of \$\_\_\_\_\_. An exact appraisal of the *chometz* will take place after Pesach by three experts. I realize the *chometz* may be sold for less than its market value.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Hebrew Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## THE SALE OF CHOMETZ: SUBTERFUGE?

What do you think are the most common questions a rabbi receives in preparation for Pesach? How to *kasher* a stove? Sure. Who can eat Egg Matza? Certainly. What is the *shiur* of Matza one must eat by the *seder*? Of course. But somewhere in the top ten questions is another, more philosophical question, that while touching upon *Halacha* demands a thorough and historical explanation as well.

I am referring to the sale of *chometz*. “Rabbi, is this not but a subterfuge? Surely the Gentile knows he is not ‘really’ buying the *chometz*, and anyway does he not know that it will be returned to us after Pesach?”

While colloquially people express this act as ‘Selling *chometz* to the *rav*’, that is, of course, a misnomer. For, while at one time one did in fact sell his *chometz* to the *rav*, today this is no longer the case; rather one simply authorizes their rabbi with a power-of-attorney to sell their *chometz* on their behalf. This is the purpose of the *Shtar Harshao*, the contract we all sign and give to the *rav*. According to Rav Zevin in his monumental *Moadim B’Halacha* this modification can first be seen documented in *shu’t Shoel U’Meishiv* regarding a query received in 1856.

Now, many rarely, if ever, witness the actual sale of *chometz* as it happens on *erev* Pesach, one of the busiest days of the year.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed it is for this reason that many have the custom of giving their rabbi some “*schar tircha*” - ‘money for his troubles’ (see *Teshuvos V’Hanhagos* 2:218 for additional *halachik* reasons for this payment; cf. *Sdei*

In fact, historically it was *not* the *rav* who performed this sale. Rather anyone who wanted to sell their *chometz* would simply, well, sell their own *chometz*. However due to the complications involved in the laws of sales and acquisition (as we shall see below), and the ease at which someone can err in them the custom evolved that the *rav* typically assumes this responsibility for his entire *kehilla*.

But back to the original question: How can such a sale be valid? The simple answer is, 'A sale is a sale'.

Allow me to give a common example from secular law:

Say someone wants to give his son or daughter a house. Once purchased the parents would want their child to have complete ownership and title over it. So they sell it to them for just a dollar (it may still be deemed a gift by the IRS and one should speak to a tax attorney to understand all ramifications of such a legitimate sale).

Now, the reality of the above is not questioned for we have faith in the power and authenticity of secular law. We must have the same faith in the power of monetary *halacha*. If *halacha* deems a certain act as a viable act facilitating a sale – by performing certain *kinyanimi*/acquisitions - then it is just that: a sale, and authentic transaction.

Nevertheless there are many reasons to be stringent regarding *mechiras chometz*. Some, for instance, have the custom not to sell any actual *chometz* (Vilna Gaon, Rav Aaron Kotler, et al) Although even among those who are stringent it is still worthwhile to go ahead with a sale just in

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Chemed, *chometz u'matza* 9:6 **who discourages this custom**. See Piskei Teshuvos vol. 5 p. 74 footnote 68 and 74 at length).



case (*poskim*). But, you may be asking, **Why** are people *machmir*? Haven't we explained that a sale is a sale?

Well, first and foremost, there are indeed those who were concerned regarding the very point of the seriousness of the sale; the fact that this sale may be perceived as a joke, a subterfuge. Indeed there is a *girsā* in the Tosefta –while clearly approving the efficacy of such sales before Pesach – that ends with the words, “...so long as it does not become a subterfuge” (Behag, et al. Cf. Chasam Sofer and Beis Yosef). Second, it is clear from all the early sources –including the Shulchan Aruch, *siman* 548:3 –that for such a sale to be valid one would have to actually physically remove the *chometz* from their possession. Meaning the sale would have obvious weight when one not only goes through the motions of a transaction but also, in fact, presents the Gentile with that which they have purchased.

Due to our relative wealth today and the amount of *chometz* in many homes the Gentile no longer removes all *chometz* to his property (see Bach ad loc s.v. ‘*v'im*’, regarding Jews who would deal in liquor and could not possibly remove all their *chometz*). However based on a separate Halacha (*siman* 440:2), the Mishne Berrura (*siman* 548:12) and others (see Magen Avraham ad loc) explain why today we can be lenient and simply cover or hide the remaining *chometz* with a mechitzah (of at least 10 *tefachim*, about 38 inches, see *siman* 440). This is allowed –in place of removal of the *chometz* - due to a relatively new innovation: we do not just sell the *chometz*, but we also sell the rooms in which they are kept (actually, the *rav* usually will not sell the rooms to the Gentile but rather rent them; this is a significant debate that is beyond the scope of this article. See *shu't* Chasam Sofer 113, Shulchan Aruch Harav ad loc. and Moadim V'zmanim vol. 3 at length).

Another interesting question is if the sale of *chometz* must be viable according to *secular* law.

To put this question in perspective, let me share a very famous story in *halachik* circles: Once, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, someone informed the Kaiser that Jews were selling large quantities of merchandise – i.e. *chometz* before Pesach - and were not paying any sales tax on them. The Kaiser replied, “Not to worry, I know this sale, it is not a ‘real sale’ rather a religious one”!! Rav Baruch Frankel therefore argued that one should avoid selling *chometz*, for the State may not see it as ‘real’, viable. The Chasam Sofer (*shu't* 113) did not agree and writes – in a famous *teshuva* where he also states that ‘anyone who questions the custom of selling *chometz* should be harshly rebuked’ – that even if the State sees this as a religious exchange they too recognize its validity and standing. Nevertheless many seek to have their contracts approved by lawyers so that the sale would be binding in a court of law.

Another question that arises: What needs to be sold? For instance must one sell owned stocks in companies that own and deal in *chometz*, say Kraft Foods? This question is debated by the poskim (according to the Igros Moshe one would not have to sell such stocks, according to the Minchas Yitzchak 3:1 and many, if not most, others it must be sold).

Because of this many rabbis ask congregants to sell over such stocks as well. If the market knew how many stocks are sold *erev* Pesach there would be a yearly market crash!

(The above does not concern bonds)

Proving that *mechiras chometz* is a valid sale can, on the other hand, carry with it its own questions. For instance, the custom is to sell our

*chometz* utensils –although we really need not to, assuming they are clean from any visible *chometz*. But would not that obligate us to re-*teivil*<sup>2</sup> our cookware when we ‘purchase’ it back after Pesach?! To avoid this concern most contracts state that the Gentile is purchasing but the infused *chometz* in the walls of the vessels, but not the vessels themselves (see Piskei Teshuvos p. 67 and sources in footnote 24-29).

What about the need to reattach *mezuzos* after Pesach? After all did one not purchase this house/room from a Gentile after Yom Tov!? Here too the *poskim* either amend the contract or dismiss the concern for a number of reasons that are beyond the scope of this article.

There are a myriad of other questions relating to this sale. What type of biblical *kinyanim* (types of effective acquisitions) are affective for a Gentile (because of this concern *rabbanim* perform several acts of acquisition when they sell the *chometz*; see Yesodei Yeshurin vol. 6); what if one discovers that the ‘Gentile’ was in fact a *halachik* Jew all along; can one ‘sell’ his apartment for Pesach even though his official contract does not give him such power? Etc. etc. etc.

Finally, may a *rav* sell *chometz* for a non-religious Jew without his knowledge, to save him from the biblical injunction against owning *chometz*?

Several years ago I attended a meeting with several heads of major Kashrus organizations together with leading *poskim* and *roshei yeshiva* (see article below titled ‘The Wild World of Kashrus’). One of the issues discussed was the recent discovery that some whisky companies were

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<sup>2</sup> *Tevila*: Most newly purchased utensils, made from most-but not all-materials, needs to be dipped fully in a kosher *mikveh* before use. The point above is that after Pesach we re-purchase these utensils, thus creating a new *tevila* obligation, perhaps.

owned by Jews, which made their product(s) '*chometz sh'ovar al ha'Pesach*'/*chometz which was owned by a Jew over Pesach*, and forbidden to benefit from year-round. One Rabbi from Chicago mentioned that a congregant of his owned \$30,000 of this product and now was fearful he would have to throw it all out!

(Whiskey contains *chometz* and *kitniyos* at various percentages, depending if it is American bourbon, rye, etc. Many American bourbon contains about 10% true *chometz*)

I suggested the following solution which relates to the above question: Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank –and to a lesser extent the Tchibener Rav –allow one to sell on behalf of another without the latter's knowledge. Rav Frank (see *Mikroei Kodosh/ Pesach* vol. 1 #71 at length) goes as far as to support such a sale even if the other person protests! This is based on the Talmudic principle of "*zachin l'adam sh'lo b'fanav*"-one could benefit another without the other being present, an automatic power of attorney.

"Why not rely on this?" I suggested, "We can, at least for future production, simply sell the *chometz* owned by the company without their knowledge (see *Igros Moshe* who discusses the status of products that are *chometz* yet which a company does business with although it was sold to another for Pesach). The *poskim* shot down my idea –and for good reason, for a *vaad* that serves the public should not rely on singular views, and it would anyway do nothing to help all past production of such whiskey (and whiskey is a product that remains drinkable indefinitely).

Let us be grateful to those *rabbanim* who study these topics so that our *erev Pesach* –and Pesach – be free of worry.

## THE STORY OF ONE BVK PESACH OPERATION:

One of my favorite quotes is a paraphrase from the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. “People love to buy books because they believe that they are also purchasing the time to read them”.

How often have I purchased *sefarim* with the subconscious cause being, “Now this is a *sefer* that I would love to go through would I only have time”?

Today we have (as one journal on psychology recently put it) the ‘Paradox of Progress’. It seems that the more we invent time-saving devices – washing machines instead of hand washing, air travel instead horse and buggy, etc. –the *less* time we seem to have.

In the Torah world too we have seen an explosion of time saving devices. No more is there a need to fill the menorah with oil as now we buy pre-filled mini-holders, and one need not get out of his seat to see if the Rashba asks his question on the Gemara as the Mesivta and Shas Lublin Gemaras will bring it down on the bottom of the page.

But one time saving innovation may be under appreciated by many: Pre-made Pesach food. There was a time in our not to distant past that the anxiety of Pesach’s arrival was not only due to the cleaning that had to

be done –in an era before vacuum cleaners no less! – but was also due to the amount of food that would have to be made from scratch.

Today one can purchase all of their culinary desires ready-made, with reliable *hashgachos*. Why, there are probably 6 *heimeshe* brands of Pesach mayonnaise and ketchup, and the past few years even saw the creation of Pesach mustard! (Even during the year, much of the taste of our mustard comes from turmeric, and not just the *kitniyos* mustard seed)

Allow me to use one case as an example to demonstrate the complexities each and every Pesach product presents, and what is needed to be done in order to get it to your table for the *seder*. Before we begin, it is helpful to view *chometz* as an allergen, in that a good yardstick in judging what may at first seem like a *chumra* is to ask, ‘What would I do to make a peanut-butter factory ‘peanut-free?’

Wegman’s is a boutique supermarket in the northeast. This year they wanted to produce a Wegman’s label horseradish (a beet-free *chrayn*) that would be kosher for Passover. Now, such private labeled products (say, Shoprite brand chocolate chip cookies) are not actually made by the company on the label, rather they are made by a private company – according to the specifications of the costumer –and labeled with the costumer’s name. This is by no means a trade-secret that I am revealing.

Being a Rochester based company they turned to Ed Roller’s Horseradish in that same city to ask if they would be willing to produce said product. Ed Roller’s in turn contacted me at the BVK to see if it is possible for them to make a kosher for Passover horseradish, as we provide them with *hashgacha* the rest of the year.

To make matters simple, let us assume that the only thing Ed Roller's produces the rest of the year is kosher (although not for Passover) horseradish. And let us assume that all that goes into that product is freshly ground horseradish, vinegar, and water.

How does one go about changing that over for Pesach? How does one *kasher* such a facility? Before you answer, let me provide some more details. The production of horseradish begins with fresh horseradish (whole) that is thrown into a tumbler. This machine, well, tumbles the vegetable to release any dirt or other undesired properties. Once this is done the clean vegetable is put into a grinder that cuts the vegetable up in to chunks. From there those chunks are taken on a conveyer belt that takes it up toward a more serious grinder that will blend it finely and into what we recognize as the texture of horseradish found in our *chrayn*. As the finely ground horseradish leaves this final grinder it is dropped down into a mixer.

So far no other ingredient has been introduced...until now. Into this mixer is poured (non *pesadik*) vinegar. About six circular blades move on a piston turning and mixing the vinegar and ground horseradish. Once this is done, the mixture is placed into barrels to sit overnight. The next day the mixture is poured into a large metal unit that dispenses the product in to containers, which are then stickered and boxed. Viola! Fresh ground horseradish.

Now, what needs to be done to *kasher* the above process and machines for Pesach? Let us begin with the simplest –and most important - element of security. After checking that the vinegar bought for the Passover run is indeed kosher for Pesach (this is an expensive ingredient to purchase, and even after seeing the sealed item I still ask for a copy of the purchasing receipt), we still have to be concerned for the non-*pesadik*

vinegar in the facility. After contacting the manufacture of the year-round vinegar it was determined that it is a *kitnoyos* derived vinegar (from corn). While this would not change, per se, how we would *kasher* such a facility it may be important information to know should an error be made. Indeed, in a famous incident a vinegar manufacturer was once selling their product as corn-derived only to have it discovered that it came from fermented wine in France! This was not just a Pesach problem, but a year-round one as well. Today, with the knowledge of celiac disease and the fear from liability - while kashrus agencies are still vigilant - companies have their own reasons not to give false information (cf. Igros Moshe *yd* 1:55).

After sealing the pipes from which the non-*pesadik* vinegar arrives into the facility, it was now time to *kasher*.

When considering how to *kasher* this facility the first thing that may enter one's mind is the concept of *davar charif*? Now, the concept of *davar charif*—*sharp foods* is often misunderstood. They have specific stringent powers as delineated in the Shulchan Aruch and the poskim, ***but nothing more*** (see *y'd siman* 96 at length). However, one lesser-known stringency they carry is the following: liquid *charif* (like vinegar, see *y'd siman* 105:1, 13 with commentaries) has the ability to transfer flavors just by sitting idle—and cold - in a container or bowl (for about 18 minutes, see Badei Hashulchan ad loc for different opinions regarding the length of time needed to begin this transfer). So that in the above factory we had two items that are *charif* (horseradish and vinegar) that—without getting into possible leniencies—would demand that we *kasher* the mixer and the dispenser.

Another, separate, complication: the Rama rules (*oh'c siman* 451) that grinders cannot be *kashered* with *hagalah* (hot water) but need *libun*



(fire) (see Mishneh Berura there regarding a grinder used during the year for only vegetables).

Now, even if we would simply *kasher* everything in the plant (which we did –even the tumbler which likely didn’t need it), how would we do it, on a technical level? This is an all-cold plant, and while much of the equipment in other plants have self-heating mechanisms, this one did not.

One of the devices often used in tough cases is an industrial ‘steam jenny’. This is a device so powerful that in the past we could only run it for minutes at a time out of fear of melting the plastic pipes! It shoots out water at temperatures over 220 degrees!

While we do not have enough space to touch on even 10% of the *halachic* details or the questions raised, nor even mention other issues that came up, perhaps my objective has been reached. *Kashering* even a ‘simple’ plant for Passover is a heady task. We all need to be thankful that we live in a country that allows for free enterprise thus giving incentive to companies to choose to become kosher for Pesach, and grateful for even the seemingly simplest product we purchase for Pesach.

## ***SUGAR, SUGAR INNOCUOUS INGREDIENT?***

**W**hile much of the autobiographical *Mekor Baruch* (by Rabbi Baruch Epstein, d.1941) has been questioned by many and discredited by some, the following is but a parable brought there in the name of the *Netziv* (Rabbi Naftali Tvi Yehudah Berlin, d. 1893). The parable, I believe, stands on its own.

The king's daughter took seriously ill and was told by the royal doctor that she must eat the meat of a healthy pig to be healed. So the king has a pig slaughtered and afterward has its lungs checked to make sure that it was healthy. Noticing an adhesion, the king advises the butcher to go to the famous Rabbi who specializes in these types of questions. The royal guards take the slaughtered pig with the "*shayla*" (*halachik* question) and hurry to the *rav's* home. When he answers the door they explain the purpose of their visit and their need to determine if "this pig meat is kosher". The rabbi looks at the lung and responds "Had this been a kosher animal I would not have waited to declare 'Kosher, Kosher'. Alas, here, I cannot, in good conscience, say it is kosher, for even if its lungs are 'kosher', *it is not*, rather it is a pig" (see "My Uncle The *Netziv*" page 129-132). While the purpose of this parable in the *Mekor Baruch* was to explain that while the *Netziv* would work, from time to time, with *maskilim* (the 'enlightened'), he was nevertheless reticent to praise them in any way, this same parable, I believe, may also shed light on the world of *Kashrus*.

In *Kosher* manufacturing it is important to separate true *Halachik* concerns from true *Halachik* prohibitions. While both are areas critical in

maintaining a reliable *hechsher*, understanding this distinction helps the *Rav HaMachshir* (rabbinic head of a kosher organization), and indeed the consumer, make better judgment-calls.

Interestingly many issues that the public feels are concerns are really prohibitions and *visa versa*.

For instance, I have noticed that some who are unfamiliar with Tractate *Avoda Zara* or *Yoreh Deah* think that the institution of *Cholev Yisreol* is but a *chumra* that was rejected by Rav Moshe Feinstein. In truth it is an indisputable *halacha*. Rav Moshe only came to prove that US milk fits the Talmudic criterion for *Cholev Yisroel*. The term *Chalev 'Stam'* was coined to describe this new standard, yet it still, in Rabbi Feinstein's eyes, is considered *Cholev Yisreol*.

This is an important distinction. For all too often I hear of friends and members going to far off countries for business or vacation with the assumption that all milk in any country is kosher.

On the flip side there are certain ingredients or products that simply do not require a *hashgacha* that many are not aware of. In fact, one cannot avoid this: there are chemicals in our water system (fluoride, etc.) that are simply not (to my knowledge) being monitored yet are of little or no concern.

Another example may be Sugar.

Several months ago I took a trip to Little Rock, Arkansas. The purpose of the visit was not just to visit the Clinton Presidential Library (although I did spend a few hours there; a story for a different time) rather to inspect a new factory to be certified under the BVK (Buffalo Vaad HaKashrus).

The policy of the Vaad is that while we reserve the right to hire outside contractors to make the monthly, yearly or weekly inspections, I must make the initial inspection of any new facility. This is true whether the factory is in Buffalo NY or if it is in Saint-Nicolas, Belgium (again, a story for another time).

The question is: what could be wrong with sugar? In fact I need to justify the need for me personally visiting this plant since each day spent away for the *vaad* takes me away from my duties and presence at the Shul.

There are three common varieties of sugar. a) Granulated Sugar, this is the plain white sugar you put in your coffee. It can be made from either Cane or Beet. b) Brown Sugar. This is the above, in either a purer form or mixed with Molasses. C) Confectionary Sugar, or, Powdered Sugar. This last type of Sugar is really the same as plain sugar, however it is ground very fine. In addition, in order to give it flow, it is mixed with cornstarch.

Now, regarding the latter two varieties we can see some concerns.

Cornstarch is *kitniyos*. If I were to allow them to label their plain sugar as *Kosher For Pesach* I would have to set up protocol to assure that there is no cross contamination between the production of the Powdered Sugar and the Plain. In addition, much of the cornstarch becomes airborne in the plant (when I leave this factory after a visit my black suit magically turns white) and this brings up questions of the laws of *bitul* (nullification) when it comes to *kitniyos* on Pesach. Interestingly, there are ways to make *Kosher For Pesach* Powdered Sugar. One can just not add the cornstarch and the Powdered Sugar will look no different, although it may turn to clusters and have a hard time pouring. We once

made a Kosher For Pesach Powdered Sugar for a *Chasideshe Hechsher* where instead of cornstarch they added cocoa!

But what may surprise most readers is the fact that plain sugar is not as innocuous as it may seem. When one looks at a bag of plain granulated sugar they will notice that it is one shade of white consistent throughout. Even the biblical *Tzaaras* (commonly translated as Leprosy; see Hirsch Chumash) comes in many shades of the color white. How do sugar manufacturers accomplish this consistency?

Well, this is where it gets interesting; or scary depending on one's vantage point. There is a process called 'Bone Charring'. Using animal bones as carbon they are able to lay the sugar on a bed causing bleaching to take place.

While few, if any, believe this is a true *halachik* concern –for the animal bones are heated until they turn into charcoal –many vegans have been fighting with the sugar industry for years to move away from this bleaching process.

The policy of the BVK is to allow sugar that is bleached through the Bone Charring process. However, upon request, we can create a private label (lets say for a Kollel Co-Op) that is Bone-Char free.

While the poskim agree that that sugar produced this way is not a concern it does serve as a healthy reminder that even the most innocuous product must always be looked into.

**FROM THE WILD WORLD OF KASHRUS:**  
**AKO –THE MOST IMPORTANT**  
**ORGANIZATION YOU MIGHT HAVE NEVER**  
**HEARD OF**

*Dateline: Toronto*

**T**o many, the world of *kashrus* is magic. ‘Poof!’ and there is now an OU on Gatorade. ‘Shazam!’ and Kraft’s vinegars have a *hashgacha* on the label. ‘Abracadabra’ and ‘that’ *hechsher*, we are told, is not reliable.

Of course if we think about it for a moment we would come to realize just how much Torah, how many man-hours, and the amount of labor that goes into each and every product that we put into our mouths.

Several weeks ago I attended the conference for the Association of Kashrus Agencies (AKO), the umbrella group for reliable agencies.

This is like when *–l’havdil* – mafia bosses from different families meet once a year in the back of a meatpacking warehouse to discuss some ground rules that they all can agree on.

There are presently close to 2000 *vaadim*, kosher councils and supervising agencies around the globe, each with their own standards, practices, and *poskim*. There are national agencies, local *vaadim*, and even *hechsherim* given out by private, non-*musmachim* individuals. How does one know which standards went into any given product?

*Furthermore, due to shipping capabilities and refrigeration it is not at all uncommon to be walking down an aisle in a grocery store in Los Angeles and pick up a product made three days ago in Philadelphia, that is certified by a rabbi in Connecticut, who in turn sent a mashgiach living in Baltimore after speaking to his posek who lives in Brooklyn!*

The goal of AKO is to have a ‘commons’, a place where all reliable agencies –*chasidish* and *litvish*, *heimesh* and standard - can come to talk openly about concerns, values, and policy. While it would be close to impossible to have one standard across hundreds of agencies, within reason however certain common policies can be set, ideas shared, and frustrations aired.

In addition there are certain ‘new’ concerns that arise from time to time regarding which all *rabbanim* and agencies are looking for *hadracha* (guidance). AKO, then, offers a forum for *geonim v’chachamim* to come and offer their perspective on any given hot-button issue. These are not your average *shiurim* (classes), for the room is packed with *talmidei chachamim* and experts in these areas. This often allows for lively and respectful open dialogue.

This year the conference was held in Toronto and hosted by the COR, Canada’s largest *vaad* (once run by my father-in-law, Rav Mordechai Levin *shlita* and now headed by Rav Yaakov Felder and Rabbi Shalom Hirsh Adler).

To give the reader some idea of just how many *vaadim* were represented; by one meal I received a text from a congregant asking me if a certain *hechsher* was reliable. I simply turned to the man to my left who was the

*rav hamachshir* (head rabbi) of that particular organization and asked him with a smile, “Are you reliable?”

I was fortunate enough to run a panel discussion together with the heads of the OU, OK, Star-K, and two other local *vaadim*, and was lucky enough to sit next to the *belzer dayan*, Rav Eckstein during the other sessions. We have worked together in the past and he is a tremendous *talmud chacham* with vast knowledge of the world of *kashrus*.

Rav Shlomo Miller *shlita* delivered a *shiur* relating to the *kashrus* of medicines, principally children’s chewable and liquid medications where the odds of, ostensibly, non-kosher ingredients are high – something that has vexed *rabbanim* for many years. A knowledgeable layman from Baltimore presented a brilliant paper on sherry casks – something that has vexed *kiddush*-clubs for just as long. Slide-show presentations on bug infestation were offered. Tours of complicated kosher facilities were given, with a leading *posek* explaining how certain issues therein should be handled.

There is an old saying “A camel is a horse designed by committee”. We all have had the experience of watching our original ideas and innovations that we have brought forth at a meeting become cut and pasted, virtually unrecognizable.

While the above fear has its place so does the need for groupthink and big-table discussion. This is especially true in the world of *kashrus*.

Any system of law that relates to food and its production will be by definition complex and tedious. Even the FDA’s (the government’s Food and Drug Administration) rules are necessarily tedious. If one were to check online for its laws regarding bottled water, for instance, they would



feel overwhelmed. Bug infestation too is something that they must contend with; they allow, for instance, one maggot fragment per square inch of chocolate (!).

But government laws are often unseen outside the industry; *kashrus* on the other hand demands that the consumer too be intimately aware of the principles and directives that guide its production. This can often times, and understandably, cause people to feel overwhelmed, confused or even suspicious.

It is therefore important for the reader to know that *kashrus* is not “just politics”, that indeed we seek to work together –with Torah and experience as our guide – so as to benefit the *klal*.

While the sessions at the AKO conference were indispensable, so was the camaraderie offered, and the war stories shared. For instance, when a major *vaad* noticed an OU on a package of camera-film several years ago they contacted the Chinese manufacture who explained, “We were told that to increase our sales in the USA we should have that logo on our product”!

Let us have *hakaros hatov* for, and give the benefit-of-the-doubt to, those who travel around the world and across the *yam hatalmud* so that we can be informed as to what we can eat *al pi haTorah*. The next time we walk into a Shoprite, Tops, or a 7-11, we take should take notice and marvel at the amount of complicated foodstuff that bare a reliable symbol and the hours of work and Torah study that allowed for our amazing American reality.

## “FROM EGYPT WITH LOVE” MY SEDER WITH AN EGYPTIAN TERRORIST

Now for something lighter:

**T**his Pesach story begins in January 2006...in JFK International. I was returning home from a rabbinic conference and had not had a decent night sleep in days. Arriving at the airport terminal all I wanted was a seat and a few minutes of nothingness before my flight. Alas, it was packed, not one seat was to be had. Leaning up against a wall, I spotted him from the corner of my eye – something was different about this fellow, I thought. Ever since 9-11 - if we are being honest with each other - our paranoia can lead us to convince ourselves that someone boarding or on our flight is up to nefarious activity. Sometimes our imagination runs wild and we are inches away from starting a mutiny on the plane. What was different about this time was that I was right; the man that I feared was up to no good had indeed been trained with the worst terrorist in the world - Ayman Al-Zawaherri who would later go on to infamy as the second in command in Al-Qaeda. This man I was looking at was, at a time, on every watch list –from the United States’ to Interpol. You could not miss him. He had deep, black eyes. He was big, dark, and most likely Egyptian. And he did not take his eyes off me, the one person who was clearly a Jew. I pretended not to notice him. But, then, from the corner of my eye, was he...? Yes! He was coming straight at me! “Excuse me” he began, with a thick Egyptian accent, “I would like to give you my seat.” Nonplussed, I said “No thank you”, and turned away. “Please” he persisted, “I insist”. I was one of dozens who were stuck without a seat in the terminal, why he chose the man in the black hat to offer his seat to was beyond me. Too nervous to say no, and,

simply wanting this exchange to end, I accepted his offer. He is probably not even on the same flight as me, I thought. When they finally called my flight to board I saw that he indeed was on my flight, and, to my horror, he took his assigned seat right next to me. My heart was pounding.

Sitting down he extended his hand and said “Tawfik Hamid. Pleasure to meet you. Are you a rabbi?”

“Yes I am”

“That is why I offered you my seat in the terminal. Whenever I see a Jew, especially an orthodox one, I go out of my way to help them”

This was starting to get interesting.

“Why?” I asked.

“Because of respect...and guilt. You see, I was once a trained terrorist. I had nothing in my life save for my simplistic interpretations to the Quran. Sometime before 9-11 I saw the error of my ways and repented, became reformed. I now dedicate my life to wiping out radical Islam.” In fact he was returning now from a trip in Washington where he had been briefing Capitol Hill. He was now on his way to speak at the University of Buffalo.

The flight could not have been more pleasant – or gone by any faster. We exchanged contact info, he joked that this would make a great commercial for JetBlue (the rabbi and the reformed terrorist befriend each other on their vessel), and we went our separate ways.

Some time passed when I received a phone call from a professor at UB (an Israeli who teaches Hebrew). I knew who she was by name but had never met her. She apologized at the outset, explaining that what she was about to do is highly unorthodox. She explained that she and Dr. Tawfik Hamid were friends and that he expressed a desire to come to my home for the *seder* on Pesach. She was calling to invite herself, her husband, and Dr. Hamid to my home for the *seder*.

Before I go on I should state that there are many *halachik* issues involved in inviting Non-Jews to a Seder – indeed to any Yom Tov meal. One should speak to a competent *halachik* authority if such a need should arise<sup>3</sup>.

Now, before he arrived Pesach night, Dr. Hamid may have read about the *seder*, or seen it mimicked in films. I don't think, though, that he was prepared for the hectic night ahead. My wife's entire extended family was with us, including my in-laws and many, many raucous children *kn'h*. The *seder* was to start at about 8:30 and would likely go until two in the morning.

In addition, my mother-in-law was, reasonably, not keen on this whole idea. We all get reprimanded by our mother-in-laws from time to time but I may be the first to hear, "You invited a terrorist to the *seder*!?!?" My wife too was dubious about the whole thing. I tried to calm their nerves, explaining that it was highly unlikely that this was one long elaborate setup, planned for decades and to be executed in our home<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> This comes up more often than we think. When people are in the process of going through a Gerus, no matter how far along they may be, they have the status of a gentile (save, according to most Poskim, regarding teaching them Torah). One must speak to a Rav about cooking for them on Yom Tov, etc. Relating to Pesach see Siman OHC 477 and MB 4 in the name of Shlah.

<sup>4</sup> See however the story that took place in the home of the Ben Ish Chai as brought in the Kaf HaChaim 167:140.

Amazingly, *erev* Pesach, we opened up the Wall Street Journal and there on the OP-Ed page was an article written by our soon to be guest. This calmed all of our nerves down<sup>5</sup>.

The night of the *seder* came. Dr. Hamid understood his role was that of an observer (he was not served a piece of the *afikomon*, for instance). But he asked questions, good ones. He cried when we sang “*Bchol dor Vador Omdim Aleinu Lachaloseinu – In every generation (our enemies) stand against us to destroy us*”. He marveled at how much of the *seder* revolves around the children, explaining to them, on their level, what we were doing.

When we reached ‘*shulchan aruch*’ (he must have wondered when he will finally get to eat something!) and the kids temporarily put their *hagados* away, Dr. Hamid clasped his hand and with great feeling remarked, “Forget torture; forget Guantánamo Bay. We should force Islamic Radicals to watch what a *seder* is and to see with their own eyes what Judaism is truly about. The beautiful people and faith that they want to wipe out”.

While his sentiments were acutely quixotic, such a reflection was astonishing to hear coming from a person with his upbringing and background.

At midnight he apologized and asked to be excused as he had a flight the next morning. I joked, “But the *seder* is about Jews escaping from Egyptians – not the other way around!”

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<sup>5</sup> Since that time he has written several columns for the WSJ.

It was a surreal night, but a memorable one, for sure.

In my mind I could not help but juxtapose this peculiar *seder* with another, a few years earlier. In Netanya, in 2002, true terrorists disturbed a communal *seder*, killing 21.

*Shehechyanu*, indeed.

On Pesach night we are all commended “to view ourselves as if we ourselves are escaping from Egypt”. In our world today – and especially for those living in Eretz Yisreol – this has become less and less of a challenge with each passing year. We must never forget that our survival is eternally and unwaveringly linked to our performance of Torah and *mitzvos*. Sometimes we need a reformed terrorist to remind us just how fortunate we are to have this contract with Hashem.

May Gd bless each and every one of us with a *Chag Kosher V'Sameach*, and may we merit the final exodus soon.

**HAVE A HAPPY, RESTFUL, AND  
KOSHER PESACH!**

**YOUR FRIENDS AT THE BVK**