Preparations for Pesah, tonight and tomorrow morning

THURSDAY APRIL 21

Owning Hamets, keeping Hamets in our possession during Pesah, is a biblical prohibition. To avoid this, we clean our houses, car, office, etc., before Pesah, removing all Hamets food that can be found there.

Then tonight, when the first stars come out (8.00pm in NY), we do the Bediqat Hamets, i.e., the last inspection for any Hamets food that could have remained in our property.

Bediqat Hamets

How do we do the Bediqat Hamets? With the help of a candle or a flashlight, we look everywhere in our house where we could have brought, eaten or stored foods. We must check especially in the kitchen, and in all areas where usually store food, like the pantry, refrigerator, etc. In the Bediqat Hamets we are looking specially for Hamets food: cookies, crackers, bread, pasta, frozen foods, protein drinks, cereals, and alcoholic beverages made from grain (beer, whiskey, most vodkas, etc).

Remember that one just has to get rid of Hamets that is edible (suitable for human or animal consumption). Medical pills or capsules that are swallowed with water, perfumes, cosmetics, cleaning supplies or any non-food item may be in our possession during Passover, regardless of their composition. Hamets utensils should be kept in a locked place until after Passover.

Cars should be washed and cleaned before the night of the Bediqa. Then they should be searched for any trace of Hametz, usually after we search our homes. We should also search our office or place of work because we often bring food there. If it is not possible to search these places right after we do the Bediqa at home, it could be done early in the morning of the following day.

After the bediqa we keep in a safe place the Hamets that we will be eliminating in the morning, and, in a different place, the Hamets that we will consume tomorrow morning.

Then we say the first Kal Hamira, the formula by which we

renounce to our possession of any Hamets that belongs to us and we have not found

KAL HAMIRA DEIKA BIRSHUTI, DELA HAZITEH VEDELA BI'ARTEH, LIBTIL VELEHEVE HAFQER KE'AFRA DEAR'A.
"All Hamets or yeast which belongs to me, that I have not seen or removed, should be considered owner-less as the dust of the earth"

FRIDAY APRIL 22

Bi'ur Hamets (Disposing of Hamets)

In the morning, we can only eat Hamets until the fourth hour of the day (in NY 9.50am). Once we finished eating Hamets, we collect the remains of Hamets from this morning, together with the rest of Hamets we left yesterday, and proceed to eliminate it (=remove it). This can be done by feeding the Hamets to the birds, to fish, or throwing it in a public garbage, or selling it to a non-Jew. Many have the custom to burn the Jamets left-overs, following the ancient tradition recorded in the Mishna, and because Hamets symbolizes arrogance, and by burning it we demonstrate that our souls are clean and purified from pride.
After the removal of Hamets, we proceed to its final nullification (= declaring the Hamets ownerless). And once again we recite the statement of "Bitul Hamets" but more detailed:
KAL HAMIRA DEIKA BIRSHUTI, DEHAZITEH VEDELA HAZITEH, DEBIARTEH VEDELA BIARTEH, LIBTIL VELEHEVE HAFQER KE'AFRA DEAR'A.
"All Hamets or yeast that belongs to me, which I saw or which I did not see, which I have removed or which I have not yet removed, should be considered ownerless as the dust of the earth"
The elimination/removal of the Hamets, in any of its forms, and the renunciation to the Hamets, must be done before the fifth hour of the day. In New York this is about 11.06am.
From that time on, one cannot consume, sell or make any nullification of Hamets.