

April 4, 2016 / 25 Adar II 5776

Dear Friends,

With the festival of Pesach approaching, I wanted to share with you the most recent Pesach Guide published by The Rabbinical Assembly (RA), the organization which represents Conservative Rabbis. The guide presents in clear and unambiguous terms the various issues we confront as we prepare for and observe Pesach. The RA publishes this guide each year as a way to remind us all of both the stringencies and the leniencies connected with the observance of Pesach.

This year, the RA Guide presents a discussion of the issue of kitniyot. Kitniot, legumes, are foods such as beans, peas, corn, peanuts and soy which, historically, have been on the list of prohibited foods for Jews of Ashkenazic dissent. Jews of Sephardic dissent have always included legumes in their Pesach menus. Over the past several years, the question of Ashkenazim and the permissibility of eating kitniyot has been re-opened to study. Following the submission and discussion of a teshuva (legal responsum) on this question, submitted by Rabbi Avram Reisner, the Committee of Jewish Laws and Standards (CLJS) of the Conservative Movement, determined that it is permitted, for both Sephardim and Ashkenazim, to eat kitniyot on Pesach. A summary of the discussion of the CJLS is included in the RA Guide. You may access that guide at www.rabbinicalassembly.org under Pesach Guide for 5776.

This permission does not require any changes to your traditional Pesach practices. At the same time, this ruling provides new culinary opportunities as well as new options for vegetarians, those with dietary restrictions and others.

I hope that you find the new RA Guide useful and that the guide will help you to find new ways to enhance your holiday menus. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. I take this opportunity to remind you to return the authorization form in the Pharisee which allows me to sell your chametz on your behalf.

In the meantime, shalom.

Neil Cooper, Rabbi