

Someone Works in Foodservice, and Part of His Job is to Handle Chametz, Is There an Issue With This?

Question: If someone has a job working with chametz food, is that a problem on Pesach?

Answer: It is a big problem.

The halacha is that it is forbidden to derive any benefit from chametz on Pesach. Being paid to work with chametz would be prohibited under this prohibition.

If one's entire job entails working with chametz, it obviously is forbidden to take payment for working on Pesach. Even if only part of one's job entails working with chametz, this too is forbidden. We derive this halacha from a Gemara in Avodah Zara that says that if someone is hired to transport 100 barrels of wine, even if 99 are kosher wine and only one is *yayin nesesh* - which is forbidden to derive benefit from - it would be forbidden to take payment for the job.

The Shach explains that the Gemara is speaking of a case where the worker would not have been given the job had he refused to transport the one bottle of *yayin nesesh*. Thus, his entire job was dependent on transporting that one bottle, and taking payment for the job would have constituted benefitting from something that is forbidden to benefit from.

Accordingly, if one would work at a job that partially entails working with chametz - such as stocking shelves in a grocery of both chametz and non-chametz items or working as a nurse when part of the job entails serving food that is chametz - it probably would be forbidden to accept payment for any part of the job. It can be assumed that if this employee would refuse to do that one part of the job, he would lose his job. Therefore, we must say that the entire job depends on working with chametz, and all of the earnings would be forbidden to take.

Question: What if the worker would offer not to take payment for the part of the job that includes working with chametz? Would that be a solution?

Answer: In an interesting teshuva, an individual asked Rav Moshe Feinstein if he may work in a non-Jewish bakery on Pesach. The man stated that he would be willing to work for free, without taking any money from his work on Pesach, but would be only working so that he doesn't lose his job. Rav Moshe rules that it is forbidden because if one works in order to keep his job, that is considered benefitting from chametz. Thus, even if one works for no money at all, if he is working in order to keep his job Rav Moshe rules that it is forbidden.

It would thus seem that the only solution for someone with such a job would be to take off from work for the duration of Pesach.