

What price Passover?

By IRIS M. SAMSON, Assistant Editor

While the prices of foods that are kosher for Passover appear to be on the rise -- and consumers are feeling it in their pocketbooks -- local store owners that carry these products are feeling the crunch as well.

The Chronicle spoke with three local business owners who carry Kosher for Passover groceries and meats, and discovered that profits are not filtering down to the store level.

Zishe Gutman, owner of Koshermart, admits that there may be extra costs involved -- "rabbis have to be hired, machinery is kashered for Passover," and that costs money, "but the distributor probably feels this is the time of year to make money, because no one has a choice."

"I feel badly about it, and try to keep my prices down as much as possible."

Gutman blames the big manufacturers for the high holiday costs: "Manischewitz, Rokeach, and Adlers" raise their prices at this time of year, he notes, despite legislation designed to keep prices stable and halt price-fixing.

"The problem for me," he adds, "is that we lose money because the prices become so high that people don't want to pay for it."

He feels that Manischewitz is the biggest offender, noting "they are the main ones who have raised prices, and I'm getting complaints about their products."

"The price, for example, of Manischewitz matzo is very high, and their cakes are high. Manischewitz is the main culprit" in the Passover price hike, he feels. He adds that the chain -- from manufacturer to dis-

tributor to store owner -- adds to the hike.

"We're losing money on certain grocery items, and so at Koshermart my main business is the meat."

Gutman points out that his meat prices have remained steady throughout the Passover season. "As a matter of fact, our chicken prices are down, as are many meat items."

"When I get good deals," he concludes, "I give it to the public."

Prime Kosher's owner, Yitzhak Shlomo, disagrees with Guttman.

"The prices go up for the single reason that additional supervision is required during this time of year," he asserts.

Some items, like meat and poultry, is kosher all year round. "But it is a matter of supply and demand that prices rise. For some reason, more people prefer to buy kosher meat for Passover," Shlomo explains. "All year long they're not as concerned. The demand then goes up, and there are shorter supplies."

"There are only a few kosher meat plants and the prices go up as the demand rises. If people kept kosher all year long, the price and supply would remain the same."

Shlomo notes that it is a wise move to buy products that are kosher for Passover well before the holiday. "But remember that it costs

money to make the machinery kosher for Passover, people have to be hired as extra help, and you pay for all that. The cost must be absorbed somewhere."

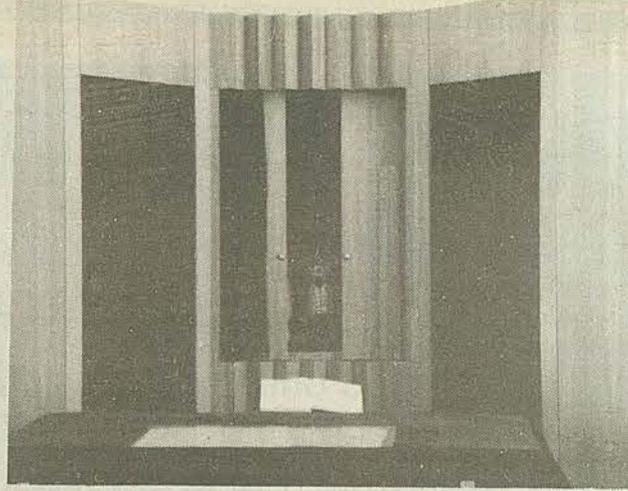
He believes that all items, across the board, "go up, because of the increased expense." While he's received some complaints about food prices, he adds that kosher meat prices go up all year long.

"If you haven't bought it since Rosh Hashana, you won't be used to the gradual increases, so it seems like a gigantic jump," he says. "But there's really nothing we can do. Our margin of profit stays the same no matter what, all year long. We don't take advantage of our customers."

Hank Greenberg, owner of Greenberg's Kosher Poultry and Meat Market, feels that the high costs associated with Passover are unnecessarily inflated. Greenberg, who raises and slaughters his own chickens, emphatically notes that "our chickens don't go up in price. People take advantage, because they know that customers need items during the holiday."

"Feed isn't up, labor isn't up, so why should chicken prices be up? It's just a gimmick, and it's unfair to the public."

And though Greenberg's is busier now, "and we've needed to add more help, we're selling more chickens -- so why raise the price? It's sickening," he concludes, "to see the gimmicks and tricks used by the big manufacturers. There's no reason for it."



TALMUDIC tradition from Messianic times states that the synagogue and study halls of the Diaspora will be transported to the Holy Land. In keeping with the conviction that the present State of Israel is "Ascholta D' Geula," the beginning of the redemption, Congregation Adath Jeshurun - Cneseth Israel has begun that transfer by sending one of its Sifre Torah to Jerusalem. On June 12, 1939, Joseph Fogel presented Congregation Adath Jeshurun with a Sefer Torah. Now his granddaughter, Carol (Fogel) Gleiser, resides in Jerusalem and her synagogue was in need of a Torah. The local synagogue made that Torah available to the Jerusalem congregation. Above, Dr. Morris Landes, Adath Jeshurun rabbi, hands the Torah to Carol Gleiser. From left are: Harry Spiegel, Arnold Kanselbaum and Allan Goppman. Below, the Torah in its new home in the Jerusalem Synagogue.



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JFCS offers 'breaking up' support group

Jewish Family & Children's Service is offering a support group for women experiencing separation, divorce, or the breakup of a meaningful relationship.

Group leader is Debbie Levenstein, for six weekly sessions, on Mondays, beginning April 1, at 7-8:30 p.m., JF & CS, 234 McKee Pl.

Contact Levenstein at 683-4900.

Yom Hazikaron set for April 16 at the JCC

This year's "Yom Hazikaron," Israel memorial day program to commemorate those who gave their lives defending the Jewish state, will take place at the Jewish Community Center on April 16 at 8 p.m.

Yom Hazikaron in Israel is observed on the eve of Independence Day, which falls this year on April 17. An address will be given by Sigan Aluf Zvi Barkai.

This year's Yom Hazikaron program is being chaired by Dr. Keith S. Somers.

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