

## **Bedikat Chametz / Searching for Leaven**

*Children love the ritual for removing chametz, called bedikat chametz, which is done on the night before the first seder (this year: Thursday April 6). Using a feather and wooden spoon to scoop up the chametz, children search with a candle or flashlight to find the pieces of bread that their parents have hidden around the house. Parents can use this ritual as an opportunity to talk with children about searching themselves for the things that they would like to remove from their behaviors and attitudes in the coming year. When all the bread has been found, it is placed in a paper bag to be burned the next morning (if you still have the palm from your lulav last Sukkot, you can use it to light the fire!)*

*On the next page, there's a poem by Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb about this practice, which you might choose to read before or after your search.*

Before beginning the search, recite the blessing:

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותו, וצונו על בעור חמץ.

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, asher kiddeshanu bemitzvotav, vetsivanu al bi'ur chametz.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Source of all being, You sanctify us with Your mitzvot and enjoin us to remove chameitz.

After the search is complete, say:

If there is any *chametz* I do not know about, that I have not seen or removed, I disown it. I declare it to be nothing—as ownerless as the dust of the earth.

## Spring Cleaning Ritual on the Eve of the Full Moon Nisan

Removing the Hametz  
In the month of nisan  
with the death of winter  
and the coming of spring  
our ancient mothers  
cleaned out their houses.

They gathered brooms, mops, brushes,  
rags, stones, and lime  
they washed down walls  
swept floors  
beat rugs  
scoured pots  
changed over all the dishes in the house.  
They opened windows to the sun  
hung lines for the airing out of blankets and covers  
using fire  
air  
and water  
in the cleaning.

In the month of nisan  
before the parting seas  
called them out of the old life  
our ancient mothers  
went down to the river  
they went down to the river  
to prepare their garments for the spring.

Hands pounded rock  
voices drummed out song  
there is new life inside us  
Shekhinah  
prepares for Her birth.

So we labor all women  
cleaning and washing  
now with our brothers  
now with our sons  
cleaning the inner house  
through the moon of nisan.

On the eve of the full moon  
we search our houses  
by the light of a candle

for the last trace of winter  
for the last crumbs grown stale inside us  
for the last darkness still in our hearts.

Washing our hands  
we say a blessing  
over water...  
We light a candle  
and search in the listening silence  
search the high places  
and the low places  
inside you  
search the attic and the basement  
the crevices and crannies  
the corners of unused rooms.  
Look in your pockets  
and the pockets of those around you  
for the traces of Mitzrayim.

Some use a feather  
some use a knife  
to enter the hard places.

Some destroy Hametz with fire  
others throw it to the wind  
others toss it to the sea.  
Look deep for the Hametz  
which still gives you pleasure  
and cast it to the burning.

When the looking is done  
we say:

All that rises up bitter  
All that rises up prideful  
All that rises up in old ways no longer fruitful  
All Hametz still in my possession  
but unknown to me  
which I have not seen  
nor disposed of  
may it find common grave  
with the dust of the earth  
amen amen  
*selah* . . .

(—Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb)