

Preparing Our Homes For Pesach

בְּדִיקַת חֲמֵץ *Bedikat Chametz*

Removing Leavened Food From Our Homes

Exodus 12:19-20

No leaven shall be found in your houses for seven days. For whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be spiritually cut off from the assembly of Israel. . . You shall eat nothing leavened. Rather, wherever you dwell, you shall eat matzah.

When our ancestors escaped from Egypt they did not have time to allow their dough to rise. Matzah, unleavened bread became a symbol of freedom and an essential part of the Passover experience. Removing all leavened products from our homes is a time-honored ritual. By cleaning our homes from leaven (*chametz*) we signal that we are ready for Passover. It is akin to saying: "Just as my ancestors went without *chametz*, we, too, will not possess *chametz*. As they ate matzah, so will we eat matzah. Their redemption we will tell by reading the Haggadah and holding a seder because their story is our story!"

1) Before searching for and gathering all the *chametz*, we say the following blessing which declares our intention to fulfill the mitzvah from the Torah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל בְּעוּר חֲמֵץ.

Barukh Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, asher kideshanu be-mitzvo-tav, ve-tzi-vanu al bee-ur chametz.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments, and commanded us concerning the removal of leaven.

2) Gather all the leavened products. E.g., bread, cookies, pasta, flour, beer and liquor, etc.* Once the leavened products have been gathered, either destroy them by burning, throw them out, or hide them as non-possession, and say:

כָּל חֲמִירָא וְחֲמִיעָה דְאַפָּא בְּרִשׁוּתֵי דְלָא חֲמַתָּה וְדָלָא בְּעִרְתָּהּ וְדָלָא יִדְעָנָא לֵהּ לְבִטְל וְלַהּוּי הִפְקֵר כְּעַפְרָא דְאַרְעָא..

Any kind of leaven in my possession which has escaped my notice, and which I have not removed, shall be regarded as nonexistent or as mere dust of the earth.

This year the search and removal of chametz from our homes is done on Tuesday evening, April 7.

*Many Ashkenazi families do not eat corn, rice and legumes during Passover. Technically, these are not *chametz* and need not be removed. Whether you eat corn, rice and legumes during Passover should be based on your family's custom.