**Bedikat Chametz - The Search for Leaven**

Chametz is leavened bread, bread that has been allowed to rise and become fermented. Chametz is different from all other forbidden foods in that it must be removed from the house before Passover. “Leaven shall not be found in your houses for seven days” (Exodus 12:19). One of the reasons Chametz is treated so much more strictly is that one is used to eating it during the rest of the year. If one were allowed to keep Chametz in the house during Passover one could easily forget that it is Passover and eat the Chametz as one does during the rest of the year.

Bedikat Chametz is a wonderful ritual that your family can participate in on the day before Passover. It is a wonderful way to symbolically prepare yourself for the start of the holiday. In preparation for Passover, our homes are cleaned and all of the chametz, leavened bread, has been removed or stored away. A parent hides small pieces of bread throughout the house and a child (or children) are required to “search and destroy.” The traditional tools include a feather, wooden spoon and candle. Your family can create their own tools - a “Dustbuster” would definitely be a modern twist!

Here’s how Bedikat Chametz is done:

- On the night before the first Seder (this year, on Thursday, April 21, because it is not done on Shabbat) at some point after sundown, someone hides ten (or so) pieces of Chametz (pieces of bread, crackers, etc.) around the house. The “searchers” should not see where the pieces are hidden.

- Each searcher is armed with a wooden spoon, candle and feather (customary, but not necessary). The candle is lit (a flashlight works well with younger children).

- Conduct the search, using a candle (or flashlight) to illuminate areas. When a piece is found, sweet it onto the wooden spoon using the feather, and then deposit it into a container (paper bag). Be sure to collect all pieces that are hidden.

- After the search is concluded, the bi’ur chametz prayer is recited. The bag of bread is either burned (traditionally) or disposed of.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam
asher kid’shanu b’mitzvotav v’tzivanu al bi’ur chametz.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe,
Who hallows us with mitzvot and commands us to burn chametz.