



PASSOVER AND THE SEARCH FOR CHAMETZ (LEAVENED BREAD)

Passover is the ultimate Jewish family story time, when we gather and tell the story of the Israelite's Exodus from Egypt in a wonderfully experiential way. With its striking narrative of redemption from oppression, Passover remains at the forefront of the universal Jewish experience, its themes echoing throughout time. We prepare our souls and our homes by removing and abstaining from *chametz* – bread and other leavened goods. This is in order to remind us that the exodus from Egypt is not only something our ancestors experienced but something each of us must grapple with as we seek freedom from the narrow places in our own lives. What inner *chametz* of yours is keeping you stuck, enslaved, arrogant, or overextended?

Jewish wisdom teaches us that Passover is not only a time to recall and retell the freedom from Egypt, which occurred years ago, it's also a time to envision new and future freedom. Check out two resources that will make your seder a spiritual opportunity for, your family, and your guests. The QR code will lead you to A Passover Preparation Companion and Seder Conversation Starters.



On the night before Passover begins, families search one last time for any crumbs of bread that may remain in their home – a spiritual metaphor for seeking to remove the parts of ourselves that enslave us throughout the year. It is customary to hide ten small pieces of bread around the house to give the search purpose, which has the added benefit of being a fun way to welcome the holiday for children of all ages.

Before the search, recite:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל בִּיעוּר חָמֵץ.

Blessed are You, *Adonai*, our God,
Majesty of the world, who has made
us holy with Your commandments,
and instructed us concerning
the removal of *chametz*.

After the search, nullify the *chametz* that you may have inadvertently overlooked (remaining aware that perfect is beyond us) by saying:

כָּל חֲמִירָא וְחִמְיָא דְאִיכָא בְּרִשׁוּתִי,
דְּלֹא חִמְתִּיהּ, וְדְלֹא בְעָרְתִּיהּ,
וְדְלֹא יִדְעָנָא לִיָּהּ, לְבָטֵל וְלִהְיוּ הַפְּקָר
כְּעַפְרָא דְאַרְעָא.

All leaven and anything leavened that is in my possession, which I have neither seen nor removed, and about which I am unaware, shall be considered nullified and ownerless as the dust of the earth.

On the morning before Passover, there's a custom to burn all the *chametz* that was found the previous evening, as well as any other *chametz* that may be left over.

The word *chametz* shares a root with *chamtzan*, the Hebrew word for oxygen. As the bits of bread are burning, we can reflect on the nature of the flames burning the *chametz*. Just as the fire is fueled by oxygen, it is likewise getting rid of leavened products through oxygen. Moreover, a slow breath can puff up our chests with oxygen in a posture of arrogance, or it can instead reconnect us to our inner core and to our Creator to rid us of and free us from arrogance.¹⁶

After the *chametz* has been burned in the fire, we again nullify any *chametz* that was inadvertently overlooked by saying:

כָּל חֲמִירָא וְחִמְיָא דְאִכָּא בְּרִשׁוּתִי
דְּחִזְתִּיהּ וְדְלֹא חִזְתִּיהּ דְּחִמְתִּיהּ וְדְלֹא
חִמְתִּיהּ דְּבְעָרְתִּיהּ וְדְלֹא בְעָרְתִּיהּ לְבָטֵל
וְלִהְיוּ הַפְּקָר כְּעַפְרָא דְאַרְעָא.

All leaven and anything leavened that is in my possession, whether I have seen it or not, whether I have observed it or not, whether I have removed it or not, shall be considered nullified and ownerless as the dust of the earth.

¹⁶ Adapted from a teaching from Rabbi Ben Perlstein, <https://soundcloud.com/user-832114774/biur-hametz-meditation> (accessed March 2022).