



BEDIKAT CHAMETZ

The Search for Leaven

According to Exodus 12:15; 13:7-8 no leaven is to be found in the house on the feast of Passover. Therefore great care is taken to insure all leaven is removed from the dwellings:

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. (Exodus 12:15)

Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and nothing leavened shall be seen among you, nor shall any leaven be seen among you in all your borders. You shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' (Exodus 13:7-8)

Biblically, leaven often represents sin and observant Jews take special care to ensure

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that anything containing leaven be completely removed in order that it would not contaminate the home. Beginning one month prior to the feast of Passover, the Jewish woman goes through a very intensive house cleaning process to extract all the leaven from her home. All carpets and rugs are cleaned, the drapes and curtains, the entire house is vacuumed including between the seats of the couch and chairs, and between the box springs and mattress in the home. The cookware, flatware, and dishes that are used for the rest of the year are removed and a special set of cookware, flatware, and dishes are

brought out. The set that is brought out is the very best that the family owns, since we are to give God our very best. All leaven has been removed from the home with the exception of ten pieces which are hidden throughout the house. On the evening before Passover, when all the lights in house have been turned off, the father takes a feather, a wooden spoon, a candle, and a bag and performs the following ceremony.

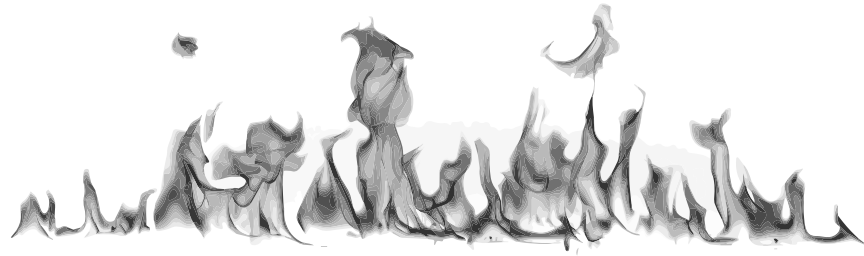
As the ceremony begins the following blessing is recited:

Blessed are you, O LORD our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with his commandments and commanded us concerning the removal of chametz.

After saying the blessing and lighting the candle the father begins to search the home using the candle to search every crack and crevice of the house for the pieces of leaven. Once a piece of leaven is located, the father uses the feather to brush the leaven onto the wooden spoon. He then places the leaven into the bag. Once all pieces of leaven have been located and gathered into the bag, the bag is kept in a safe place until morning.

After the inspection has ended the following declaration is recited:

All chametz or leaven still in my possession, that I have not seen or have not removed because I have no knowledge of it, let it be ownerless like the dust of the earth.



BIUR CHAMETZ

Burning of the Leaven

The following morning (by mid-morning) the bag containing the leaven and articles used for its retrieval are gathered together and taken to where a fire has been prepared. It is then thrown into the flames where it is consumed—never again to be remembered or retrieved. While the chametz is burning the following confession is made:

Any chametz in my possession that I have seen or not, have noticed or not, have removed or not, shall be as if it does not exist, and ownerless as the dust of the earth.

Many times in Scripture leaven is symbolic of sin, especially pride. Just like pride, leaven puffs up anything that it comes in contact with. Our Heavenly Father examines every crack and crevice of our heart using His Word, symbolized by the candle. The light of the Word dispels darkness and reveals anything that is displeasing in His sight. His Holy Spirit, symbolized by the feather, then reveals to us our sin. Once we have this revelation, it is our job to repent. Some people see the wooden spoon as a symbol for the cross of Yeshua. When we repent, our Heavenly Father takes our sins and casts them away forever. This is symbolized by the burning of the bag. We can see how this custom is a vivid reminder of what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote:

Many times in Scripture leaven is symbolic of sin, especially pride.

Your boasting is not good Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just

as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

It is not enough for the leaven to be out of the house, it must be out of the Jewish person's possession. This is even more important in regard to purging the leaven of sin from our lives.

The sixth chapter of Romans is Paul's discourse on freeing oneself from the clutches of sin ("leaven"). He uses the analogies of death and resurrection, slaves and freedmen. Following this, in the seventh chapter he goes back and forth with trying to explain the nature of struggling with sin. He culminates his argument in chapter eight, telling us that we must "put to death the misdeeds of the body" in order to be fully sons of God (vs. 12-14).

But on a practical level, how do we do this? We must do just as our Master has instructed us and regard even the smallest sin as leaven with the potential to spread throughout our entire being. We must purge the leaven of sin within us before it consumes us.¹ ❧

1 Matthew 5-7

