

# Searching for Hametz **בדיקת חמץ**

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE SEDER

*At Night & Remembrance!*

*The Hymnology of Contemporary Voices*

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**בְּרַחֵם אֱלֹהֵינוּ**

**מְלֶכֶת הָעוֹלָם,**

**אֲשֶׁר קִדְשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָי,**

**וְצִוְנוּ עָלַי בְּעֵתֵךְ חַמֵּץ.**

Before the search recite this blessing:

Blessed are You, Adonai

our God, Ruler of the

Universe, who sanctified

us by commanding us to

remove all hametz.

Ba-rukh ata Adonai / Elo-hei-nu me-lekh ha-olam /  
asher kee-d'sha-nu b'meez-vo-tav / v'zee-va-nu al bee-ur hametz.

After the search recite this formula in Aramaic, for disowning any hametz still undiscovered in the home:

**כָּל חַמֵּצָא תְּמַיְצָא**

**דְּאִפֵּא בְּרִישׁוּתִי,**

**דְּלֵא חֲמִצְתָּא וְדְלֵא בְּעָרְתָּא,**

**לְקִטְיָא וְלְחֵי תְּפִקָּר**

**בְּעִפְרָא דְאַרְעָא.**

All hametz in my

possession, whether I have

seen it or not and whether

I have removed it or not,

shall be nullified and

ownerless as the dust of

the earth.

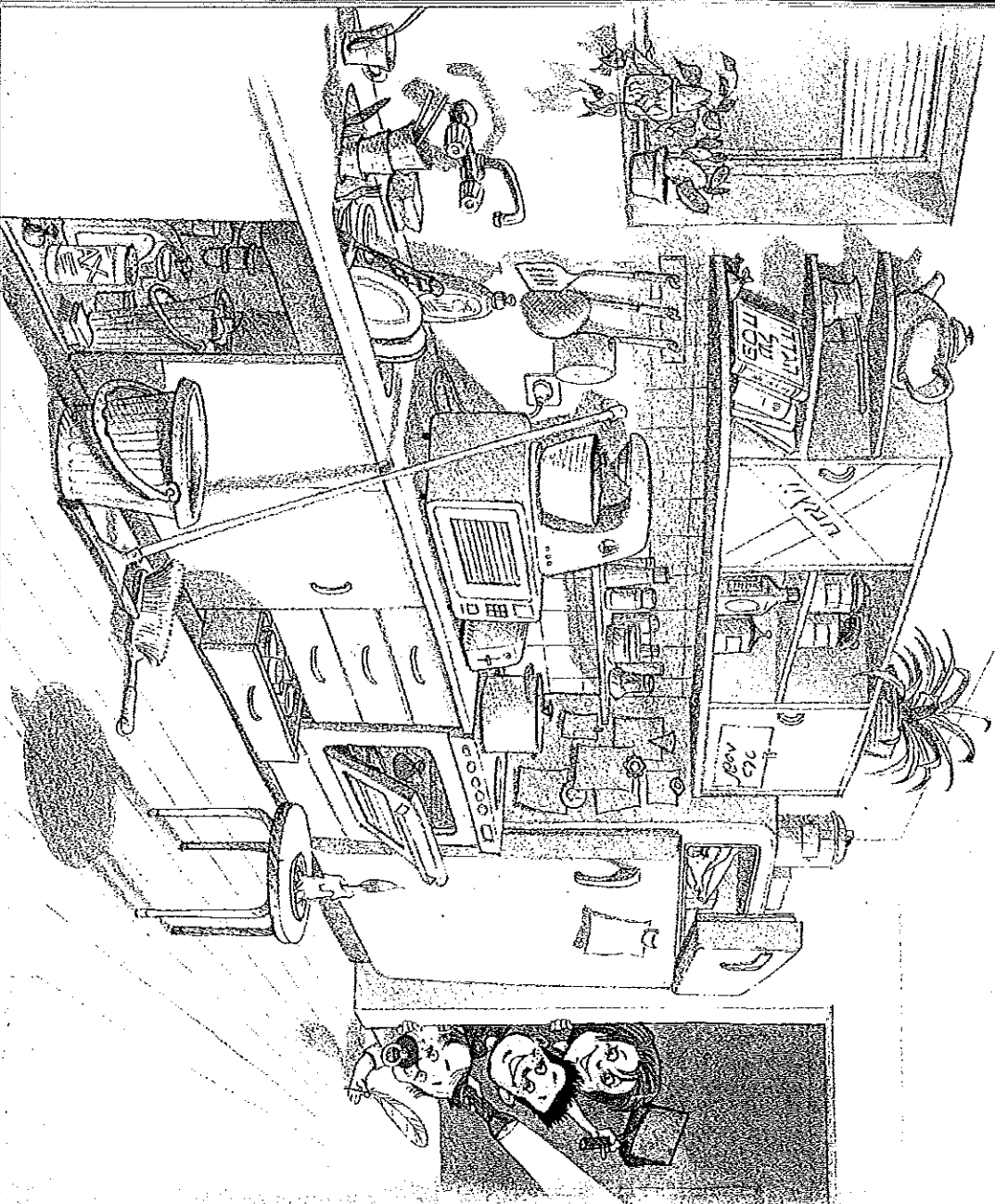
The Search for Hametz is the ceremonial culmination of several weeks of transforming the house into a sanctified setting for Pesach. The physical efforts help create a psychological readiness for the Seder.

"Hametz" refers to grain products that may have leavened, fermented and risen like yeast.

Jews usually clean all the rooms where food might have been eaten or stored. Many collect hametz products (like spaghetti or whiskey) in a sealed cabinet, mark it as hametz, and sell its contents to a non-Jew for the duration of the holiday. Generally a local rabbi will serve as an agent for the ritual "sale."

After dark, on the night before the Seder, conduct a search for hametz into all the corners of the house. The search is conducted in the dark, with a candle or a flashlight for spotting the hametz, and a feather or a spoon for collecting it. All hametz found is buried the next morning.

When Seder night falls on Saturday evening, the search is conducted on Thursday night and the bonfire on Friday morning. Hallah is put aside in a special "hametz zone" in the house to be eaten by approximately 10 a.m. on Shabbat morning. The leftovers may be removed by means of a flush of the toilet.



Six bags of Hametz have been hidden in this illustration. Good luck ferreting them out!

## INSPECTION AND INTROSPECTION

*"The human soul is the light, the candle of Adonai, for searching the hidden, innermost self" (Proverbs 20:27).*

The Search for Hametz is not simply a search for leavened bread, but rather an opportunity for us to examine ourselves. On the night before Pesach, when each of us is at home within our own walls, where there is no one else around, and we are not troubled by daily affairs, it is then that we can sit alone and confront all of our outstanding obligations to

## HIDE AND GO SEEK

A medieval custom perfectly suited to a children's game involves hiding ten pieces of bread throughout the house before the candlelight search for hametz begins. Originally this was done to guarantee that even after the scrupulous cleaning, the ritual search on the last night before Seder would still uncover some hametz. Today it provides an occasion for a game in which ten pieces of bread secured in closed plastic bags are carefully concealed. To enhance the fun for the children, a word, clue or question may be attached to each bag (the words can form a secret message or a Pesach song; the clues hint at the next hiding place; the ten questions constitute a quiz about basic Pesach facts). Remember that besides finding the pre-hidden bags of hametz, one must genuinely check the typical "hang-outs" of forgotten hametz (like the car's glove compartment, coat pockets, etc.).

God, saying to our soul:

"Let us awaken and arise... let us examine our ways and turn away from all our sins. Let us cleanse and purify ourselves and remove our evil ways from God's sight. Let us become allies, my soul, and stand guard together. We will abjure slumber from our eyes day and night. We will not rest, rather we will be as gatekeepers lest we return to our evil ways. May God be with us as God was with our mothers and fathers..."

Rabbi Moshe Alshetkh, Sifed Kabbalist, 16th C.

# Burning the Hametz בעור חמץ

## THE MORNING BEFORE THE SEDER

כָּל חֲמֵצָה וְדָלָא חֲמֵצָה, בְּרִשְׁתֵּי,

All hametz in my possession,

דְּחִינְתָּהּ וְדָלָא חֲמֵצָה,

whether I have seen it or not and

דְּחִמְתָּהּ וְדָלָא חֲמֵצָה,

whether I have removed it or not,

דְּבִעַרְתָּהּ וְדָלָא בִעַרְתָּהּ,

shall be nullified and ownerless as

לְכַטִּיל וְלִהְיוֹי תַפְקֵר כְּעַפְרָא דְאֲרֵצָא.

the dust of the earth.

### Meditation

After nullifying the physical hametz, the Sephardic custom is to recite this prayer for purification from spiritual hametz and the power of the evil *Yesser* [selfish inclination]:

May it be your will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, that just as we burned the hametz out of our homes today, so You will help us to burn out the evil inclination from our hearts.

Please God, remove from our hearts the bad part of our ego, and purify us lovingly, empowering the good sides of our ego.

Let our souls shine and be empowered with your light, and be connected to You in the highest holiness, which shall be with us always.

The Burning of the Hametz marks the symbolic division between hametz and matza, winter and spring, the evil inclination and the desire for purity.

Before approximately 10 a.m. on the day of the Seder, we stop eating hametz and gather the leftovers for a ritual bonfire outside.

After the hametz has been burned (or rendered inedible in some other way), repeat the Aramaic formula disowning any undiscovered hametz on the premises. From now on no hametz may be eaten.