



LOOKING FOR CHAMETZ – INSIDE AND OUT

The night before the Passover Seder, we search our homes for any remaining bread and dispose of it the next day.

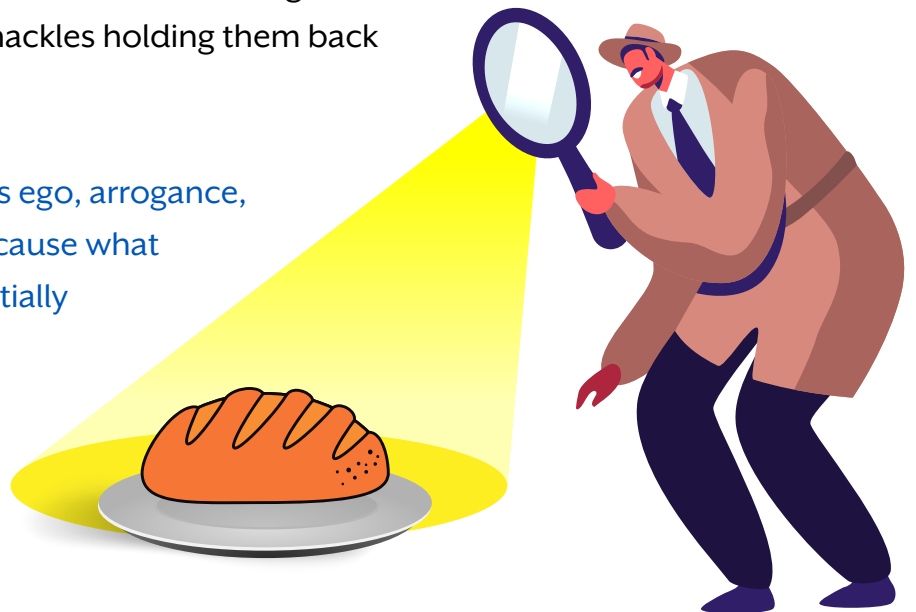
No leaven shall be found in your houses for seven days. (Exodus 12:19)

Judaism teaches us that everything in the physical world mirrors the spiritual world. In other words, the reciprocal relationship between the finite and infinite empowers us to take actions in the physical world and create, through those actions, infinite transformations. It's cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) in its earliest form. The Pavlovian theory is a core concept in Jewish self-development and self-actualization. The author of Chovot Halevavot (Duties of our Hearts), a 16th-century sage, put it this way: "After the actions, the heart will follow." If you act, your actions will affect your thoughts and feelings, and lead to spiritual transcendence.

After we search physically for the leavened bread* and remove it, we utter a prayer in the hope that our external actions of search and destroy are mimicked by our spiritual actions. Imagine a world in which everyone searches the depth and the nooks and crannies of their hearts to discover any shred of arrogance, judgment of others or cruelty. Where one makes an honest reckoning and then sets about to invest great efforts to free their hearts by chipping away at the shackles holding them back from becoming all they can be.

*Spiritually, leavened bread represents ego, arrogance, judgment, pettiness, and jealousy, because what defines it as leavened is that it is essentially "full of hot air."

**WHAT IS YOUR
PERSONAL CHAMETZ?**





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Chametz also symbolizes other things like the yetzer harah (the ego, the self, mental clutter, negativity) that live within us and distract us from our true goals. We are tasked with cleansing ourselves of that kind of "chametz" as well, as it allows us to focus on what matters in our lives. In a way, this is a mental cleanse as much as it is a physical cleanse.

Much like chametz, a mental cleanse involves taking a critical look at your mental space, determining which feelings are serving your larger goals and which are holding you down. You can also take a look at your physical space to identify relationships or behaviors that are functioning as triggers for negative thoughts and then create boundaries between those people and things.

By creating boundaries and ridding yourself of negative thoughts and triggers, you can excise the clutter from your mind and focus on what truly matters to you.

Before the search for chametz, say the following blessing. (Some have the custom of using a candle, a feather and a wooden spoon to search for chametz in their home.)



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל בְּעוֹר חָמֶץ.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the
universe, who has sanctified us by Your
commandments and has commanded us
concerning the removal of chametz.



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Activity One – Chametz in Your Mind



- Identify the thoughts and feelings that weigh heavily on your mind and write them down on a piece of paper.
- Now, write a list of things you want to bring into the next year.

Activity Two – Chametz in Your World



- Identify the people and things in your life that are triggering you, and create an action plan for setting boundaries with them.
- This can mean unfollowing people who hurt you on social media or asking a certain friend for some space, even if it's hard. Sometimes you need to take time to heal for the sake of your mental health and even the relationship itself.

Once you have your list of mental chametz for the next year, save it along with your physical chametz until you burn everything the next day. Read each item out loud, and then release it from your mind. Then, proclaim the Kol Hamira, the prayer in which you relinquish ownership of any chametz you couldn't find. No search is perfect, and whether it is mental or physical chametz, there is always a chance we missed something. Therefore, we say the following blessing and release those fears to make room for the freedom of Passover:



כָּל-חֲמִירָא חֲמִירָא וְחֲמִיעָה דְּאִבָּא בְּרִשּׁוֹתֵי, דִּלָּא חֲמִתָּהּ וְדִלָּא
בְּעִרְתָּהּ וְדִלָּא יִדְעָנָא לֵיהּ לְבָטֵל וְלִהּ הִפְקֵר בְּעַפְרָא דְּאֶרְעָא.

Any leaven that is in my possession, whether I have seen it or not, whether I have removed it or not, shall be unclaimed and considered as the dust of the earth.



This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



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