

Removal of Chametz: An Explanation and Ritual

Contributed by [Many Sources \(Compiled By Stephanie\)](#)

Source: Love and Justice in Times of War Haggadah

One Jewish tradition in preparing for Passover, is eliminating chametz, or leaven from your house. Traditionally, we go through our cupboards and storage areas to remove all products of leavened grain from our possession. When this task (called bedikah) is accomplished, we destroy a symbolic measure of the collected items by burning (biur), and a blessing is recited. This spring-cleaning gives us an immediate opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah (commandment) of ma'ot hittin (grains of wheat), or caring for the hungry. Many Jews collect their chametz and donate it to a food bank.

Our rabbis remind us that matzah, the sanctified bread of Pesach, is made of the same grain as chametz, that which is forbidden to us on Pesach. What makes the same thing either holy or profane? It is what we do with it, how we treat it, what we make of it. As with wheat, so to with our lives.

As we search our homes, we also search our hearts. What internal chametz has accumulated over the last year? What has puffed us up? What has made us ignore our good inclinations? What has turned us from the paths our hearts would freely follow? Everyone writes down some personal chametz of which they want to be rid. When everyone is finished, we put our chametz together in a bowl for burning. Together we recite the blessing for burning chametz:

(Ashkenazi pronunciation, masc.) Baruch atah Adonai, eloheinu Melech ha'olam, asher kidshanu b'mitvotav vitzivanu al biur chametz.

(Ashkenazi pronunciation, fem.) Brucha Yah Shechinah, eloheinu Malkat ha'olam, asher kidshanu b'mitvotav vitzivanu al biur chametz. Blessed is the force of all life, who makes us holy with mitzvot and invites us to burn chametz.

Every sort of hametz in my possession, which has met my gaze or has not met my gaze, which I have destroyed or have not destroyed, let it be null and void, ownerless, like the dust of the earth.