

Passover is a time for immense soul searching. We identify the personal burdens and societal plagues that constrain and confine us and work on getting rid of them and attaining freedom.

Towards the end of the Seder, the children get to look for the Afikoman, the last piece of matzah that is eaten as a reminder of slavery. After they have scampered and scoured the premises searching high and low, our little ones are rewarded for their valiant efforts.

This search brings our observance full circle since the festival also begins with a search. We are commanded to look for and burn any *chametz* (leaven) throughout our home the night before Pesach. As it is written: "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the very first day, you shall remove leaven from your houses . . ." (Exodus 12:15).

After reciting

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al biur chametz (Blessed are You, our God, Ruler of the world, who sanctifies us with mitzvot and calls upon us to remove *chametz*),

flashlight, sweeper and bag in hand, we remove any crumbs from the tiniest corners of our home, along with any floury products we may have in our pantry. The next morning, we double check no crumbs have been overlooked and burn or dispose of all the leaven debris we have put in our bag.

Bedikat Hametz (searching for leaven) is a very powerful personal experience that enables us to break free of the yoke of some of our habits. It is also a poignant reminder that there are others who do not have anything to eat and that the leaven we part with on Pesach can sustain someone else and make them free.

During the Seder we declare "Let all who are hungry come and

eat!". But however many guests we may be able to fit around our Passover table, sadly there will always be others who will be left behind.

As we remove pasta, baked goods and other symbolic foods from our kitchen cabinets, how about donating them to a food bank to help our neighbors in need? Not only will we have freed up space in our homes to welcome the holiday but we will have made a conscious effort to lessen the burden of a family in need of sustenance in the community at large as well.

Chag Pesach Sameach,
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