



Shabbat Vayikra/Rosh Chodesh
29 Adar 5778 / March 16, 2018

Dear Shir Tikvah,

There's a lot to do before Pesach begins in three weeks! There's hametz (leavened bread) to eat, space to clean, and seders to organize. On the day before Pesach, we are told to search for any remaining crumbs of bread that might be hiding in our home to make our space totally ready for the holiday. It's so easy to feel like our preparation isn't quite done. We struggle with the nagging suspicion: there's still some hametz hiding that we've not yet found.

Our liturgy anticipates this feeling of incompleteness. Upon finishing the search for hametz, we are instructed to say:

May all the hametz that exists in my property that I have seen and have not seen, that I have destroyed and have not destroyed, be considered nullified and ownerless, like the dust of the earth.

We learn: by erev Pesach, even the hametz that we couldn't find no longer belongs to us.

This Pesach, I want to let go of the hametz of internalized oppression, of feelings of powerlessness, of spiritual exhaustion. I know that I must disavow even the hametz that I don't yet know how to name. And from that place, I can rededicate myself to the work of moving towards freedom.

The Passover haggadah says: " "השתא עבדי" Now we are slaves. Next year we will be free people. We experience this spiritual enslavement when we disconnect from our neighborhoods. When we start ignoring our ethical impulse. When we stay silent before oppression.

We shed a year's worth of accumulated *hametz* to make space for the courage and clarity necessary to be good neighbors, allies, and friends. We must dedicate ourselves this year to justice, to curiosity, to challenging the status quo, that we might come to feel how deeply our freedom is linked with the struggle for liberation of all those around us.

May this year's song be a song of liberation.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Arielle Rosenberg