

## ***The Bedikat Ḥametz Kit: Wax Candle, Wooden Spoon, and Feather***

By: ZVI RON

In this article we trace the development and significance of each element of the *bedikat ḥametz* kit commonly found for sale: the wax candle, wooden spoon, and feather.

### **Wax Candle**

The Mishnah (*Pesahim* 1:1) speaks about checking for *ḥametz* “by the light of the candle.” TB *Pesahim* 7b–8a provides verses to demonstrate that searching should be done by candlelight, and that candlelight is superior to sunlight, moonlight, and torchlight. Although among the Rishonim it was suggested that an oil lamp may cast better light for searching, Raavad,<sup>1</sup> Rosh,<sup>2</sup> and Rabbeinu Yeruḥam<sup>3</sup> all rule that it is best to use a wax candle for searching. This because people would not search well with an oil or fat candle as it is difficult to use them for checking in narrow crevices, and people would be hesitant to search thoroughly with them since they would not want the oil or fat to drip on their household utensils. The use of a wax candle was codified in the *Tur* and *Shulḥan Arukh* (*Orah Ḥayyim* 433:2), and is therefore the most basic, and well attested, element of a *bedikat ḥametz* kit.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Kolbo, siman* 48.

<sup>2</sup> *Tur, Orah Ḥayyim* 433:2.

<sup>3</sup> *Bayit Ḥadash, Orah Ḥayyim* 433:4, *v-katav*.

<sup>4</sup> Mystical and homiletical reasons were also given for using wax candles specifically, see Simcha Rabinovitch, *Piskei Teshuvot*, vol. 5 (Jerusalem: 1995), p. 12, note 4.

---

Zvi Ron received *semikhab* from the Israeli Rabbanut and his PhD in Jewish Theology from Spertus University. He is an educator living in Neve Daniel, Israel, and the author of *Sefer Katan V-Gadol* (Rossi Publications, 2006) about the big and small letters in *Tanakh*, and *Sefer HaIkkar Ḥaser* (Mossad HaRav Kook, 2017) about the variable spellings of words in *Tanakh*.

### Wooden Spoon

R. Ya'akov Moelin (Maharil, 1365–1427) writes that if one did not find any *ḥametz* during one's search, one should at least burn the utensil that one used during the search in order to have a "remembrance of burning."<sup>5</sup> This is based on the proposition raised in TB *Pesahim* 7a that it would be plausible to wait to nullify the *ḥametz* at the sixth hour, which Rashi writes is theoretically a foolproof time, since nobody would be negligent and forget to nullify then. Rashi explains since people are burning their *ḥametz* at that time, they will be reminded to nullify it as well. Maharil asks how we could be so sure that burning is taking place at that time? Perhaps all the *ḥametz* was consumed or destroyed at an earlier time? He concludes that it must be that either a little *ḥametz* was always left over to burn at the later time,<sup>6</sup> or that even if there was no *ḥametz*, a vessel would be burned at that time.<sup>7</sup> This vessel is described by Maharil as a bowl (קערה).<sup>8</sup>

Use of a bowl for collecting the *ḥametz* during the *bedikah* is found in illustrated *Haggadot* even before the time of Maharil, going back to the early 1300s.<sup>9</sup> However, only once Maharil recommended burning the bowl, do we find an illustration of people using specifically a broken bowl for *bedikat ḥametz*, as it will be destroyed anyway.<sup>10</sup> This avoids the prohibition of *bal tashhit*, destroying a perfectly good utensil, as noted by R. Ya'akov Hayyim Sofer.<sup>11</sup>

The idea of burning the bowl into which the *ḥametz* was collected was included in the notes to R. Issac Tirnau's *Sefer Ha-Minbagim*.<sup>12</sup> R.

---

<sup>5</sup> Shlomo Spitzer, *Sefer Maharil* (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 1989), p. 40, *siman* 8.

<sup>6</sup> This is his explanation for the custom to specifically put out *ḥametz* to be found during *bedikat ḥametz*, in order to have something to burn the next day.

<sup>7</sup> Yitzchak Seff, ed., *She'eilot U-Teshuvot Maharil Ha-Hadashot* (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 1991), p. 58, *siman* 48.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Sperber, *Minbagei Yisrael*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 2003), p. 175.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 170, 174. See there for the idea that once it became customary to use ten pieces of *ḥametz* for the *bedikah* there would always be something to burn whatever the case, and the burning of the bowls was less prominent.

<sup>11</sup> *Kaf Ha-Hayyim* 432:32.

<sup>12</sup> Shlomo Spitzer, ed., *Sefer Ha-Minbagim L-Rabbeinu Isaac Tirnau* (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 2000), pp. 36–37. On the authorship of these notes, see pp. 17–18 of the Introduction.

Moshe Isserles (Rema) brings this idea of Maharil in *Darkei Moshe* (*Orah Ḥayyim* 432:2) and in the *Shulḥan Arukh* (*Orah Ḥayyim* 445:3). Not everyone accepted this approach. *Pri Ḥadash* comments that “there is no reason or support for this,” and *Arukh Ha-Shulḥan* (*Orah Ḥayyim* 445:11) similarly writes that since we customarily put out *ḥametz* to find and later burn, there is no need to burn a utensil. Despite these detractors, it was customary to burn the utensil in which the *ḥametz* was collected along with the *ḥametz*.<sup>13</sup>

Although some modern works, particularly Sefardic ones, still refer to using a bowl for *bedikat ḥametz*,<sup>14</sup> nowadays wooden bowls are not a very common household item anymore, certainly not as common and inexpensive as the wooden spoon. Because of this, the spoon has taken over the role of the utensil burned along with the *ḥametz*. Since there is no way to make a wooden spoon used for cooking *ḥametz* kosher for Passover, it would have to be destroyed anyway before Pesah, so it was no financial loss to use it for *bedikat ḥametz* as well.<sup>15</sup> However, since the shallow spoon is not as effective as a bowl for collecting and storing the *ḥametz*, another item—usually a bag of some sort—was added to actually hold the *ḥametz*,<sup>16</sup> relegating the spoon to almost no functionality, having basically only ceremonial value at this point.

The current ceremonial role of the wooden spoon can be seen in the book of Chabad customs, *Sefer Ha-Minbagim*. There the instructions for *bedikat ḥametz* say that one is to “check by the light of a wax candle, and with a bird’s feather. The checker places the *ḥametz* that he finds in a

---

<sup>13</sup> See Chaim Deitch, *Seder Haggadah shel Pesah: Kol Yebudab* (Satmar: 1937), pp. 5–6, where the Belzer Rebbe explained that since the spoon and feather came into contact with *ḥametz* it makes sense that they should be burned. He gives a homiletic explanation as to why the candle is burned as well.

<sup>14</sup> For example, see the instructions in Yitzhak ben Shushan, *B-Fi Yesbarim, Haggadah shel Pesah* (Rishon LeTzion: Agudat Maḥzikei Torah Etz Ha-Ḥayyim, 1986), p. 105; *Ishei Yisrael, Nissan* (Bnei Brak: Kollel Rabbeinu Ha-Ari, 1997), p. 189; Ephraim Oved, *Haggadah shel Pesah* (Bnei Brak: 2004), p. 20; Yosef Chaim Mizrahi, *Od Yosef Chai* (Jerusalem: 2005), p. 36; *Haggadah shel Pesah, Sha’ar Bin-yamin* (Makhon Sha’ar Binyamin, 2013), p. 34. Regarding the Sefardic custom to have salt in the bowl, see Avner Afjin, *Divrei Shalom*, vol. 4 (Rosh Ha-Ayin: 2003), p. 493; Bentzion Mutzfi, *Shivat Tzion, Shabbat*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: 2005), “*Yoshev Tzion*,” p. 17; Yitzchak Chazzan, *She’eilos U-Teshuvot Yechaveh Da’at*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Otiot, 2008), “Customs of Morocco,” p. 36.

<sup>15</sup> Yitzchak Lieberman, *Sefer Chag Ha-Matzot, Halakhot U-Minbagim* (Bnei Brak: 2003), p. 138, note 31\*.

<sup>16</sup> Nissan David Dubnow, *Ehad Mi Yodea* (Tzfat: Chish, 2008), p. 117.

small paper bag. Upon finishing to check, this bag, the feather, and the remnant of the candle, if there is any, are placed in the hollow of a wooden spoon, then it is all wrapped in paper (except the handle of the spoon which remains unwrapped)” which is then tied shut.<sup>17</sup> Contemporary guides to Jewish observance written for laypeople struggle to find a role for the wooden spoon. For example, “a feather [is used] to brush the *hametz* into a wooden spoon, with which they scoop the discovered *hametz* into a napkin for disposal.”<sup>18</sup> Note how there is nothing that the spoon actually does in these descriptions that could not be accomplished by the napkin or paper bag already in use.

In modern times, as the spoon became more ceremonial and less functional, homiletical explanations have been offered for the presence of the wooden spoon. R. Shaul Brach, the Kashoer Rav (1865–1940) brings two such explanations.<sup>19</sup> He states that the spoon (כף) hints to ‘the fruit of your labors (יגיע כפיך)’ (Psalms 128:2), the work done all year. Wood (עץ) has the same numerical value as money (כסף). Burning the wooden spoon is a symbolic representation of the idea that all our prosperity comes from G-d rather than from our own efforts. He also states that there is a connection between destroying *hametz* and destroying Amalek, and the wooden spoon hints to the destruction of Amalek through the raised hands (כף) of Moses, and through being hanged on the tree (עץ) that Haman had prepared.<sup>20</sup> R. Yehoshua Zev Zaffrin (d. 1996), a member of the inner circle of the Bobover Rebbe, R. Shlomo Halberstam, explained that the word for spoon, כף, recalls the idea of כפייה, to be forced. Here it teaches that we must force ourselves to check thoroughly for *hametz* even though it can be very burdensome to do so.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> *Sefer Ha-Minbagim* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1993), p. 37, first published in 1966.

<sup>18</sup> Wayne Dosick, *Living Judaism: The Complete Guide to Jewish Belief, Tradition, and Practice* (New York: HarperOne, 1995), p. 165. So too in Mordechai Becher, *Gateway to Judaism* (New York: Sha’ar Press, 2005), p. 204, “he brushes it into a wooden spoon using a feather, then transfers the pieces into a paper bag.”

<sup>19</sup> Shaul Brach, *Tov Devarkha* (Munkacs: 1940), p. 2b, *siman* 3.

<sup>20</sup> Although he brings both explanations in his book *Tov Devarkha*, only the second one is mentioned in *Yalkut Mo’adei Kodshekha, Pesah* (Kahal Ittav Lev, 2006), p. 89, and Chaim Ben-Zion Folger, *Shevah Pesah* (Monsey, NY: Eastern Book Press, 2013), p. 173.

<sup>21</sup> Chaim Ben-Zion Folger, *Shevah Pesah* (Monsey, NY: Eastern Book Press, 2013), p. 173; Aharon Pelov, *Otzroseihem shel Tzaddikim* (Jerusalem: 2012), vol. 2, p. 625. See *Tosafot, Pesachim* 4b *himmubu*, for the idea that checking for *hametz* is particularly burdensome. It is also reported that in 1973 the Bobover Rebbe,

The use of a wooden spoon is particularly stressed in Chassidic writings, where we find reported, for example, that in 1955 the Belzer Rebbe would not begin *bedikat hametz* until he had a wooden spoon.<sup>22</sup>

Another popular reason given for the custom to use a wooden spoon is based on the opinion of R. Yehudah in TB *Pesahim* 27b that the destruction of *hametz* must be accomplished specifically by burning it, as he compares it to *notar*, leftover sacrifices, that must be burned. R. Shmuel Strashun (Rashash, 1794–1872) explains that since *notar* must be burned with wood, it follows that according to R. Yehudah, *hametz* should be burned with wood as well, rather than, for example, pouring fuel on the *hametz* and setting it on fire.<sup>23</sup> The wooden spoon is thus understood to be part of *bedikat hametz* to make sure there is wood burned along with the *hametz* to fulfill this idea. The first to make this connection seems to have been R. Eliezer Zvi Zigelman in his book *Nahalei Emunah*, published in 1935,<sup>24</sup> and it has since been repeated in many places.<sup>25</sup>

This does not appear to be the original reasoning behind the custom, as the idea found in Maharil preceded the innovative idea of Rashash by a few centuries, and the idea to connect the opinion of Rashash

---

R. Shlomo Halberstam, explained that everything must have a vessel prepared to receive it, and the hidden *hametz* can only be found if there is a vessel prepared for it, in this case the spoon. *Haggadah shel Pesah, Beit Tzaddikim* (Monsey: Eastern Book Press, 2003), p. 162, note 24. See also, Moshe Deutsch, *Or Ganuz*, vol. 2 (London: 1996), p. 74, *siman* 3, where a *remez* to using a spoon for the ten pieces of *hametz* is found in Num. 7:14, “one *kaf* of ten.”

<sup>22</sup> Aharon Pollack, *Beito Na'aveh Kodesh*, vol. 1 (Bnei Brak: Machon Zichron Aharon, 1999), pp. 272–273.

<sup>23</sup> Rashah, TB *Shabbos* 66a, *kaveret*.

<sup>24</sup> Eliezer Zvi Zigelman, *Nahalei Emunah* (Lublin: 1935), p. 37. R. Zigelman is best known for his books collecting Chassidic teachings and stories, *Obel Emunah* (1909) and *Beit Tzaddik* (1910). The book *Hok L'Yisrael* by Yisrael Waltz is often given as a source for this explanation, but although this book was published in Budapest in 1927, and later in 1930 and 1950, this explanation was only included in much later editions, see Yisrael Waltz, *Hok L'Yisrael* (Jerusalem: 1974), p. 38, note 33.

<sup>25</sup> Shmuel Gelbard, *Otzar Ta'amei Ha-Minbagim* (Petach Tikvah: Mifal Rashi, 1996), p. 271; Gavriel Zinner, *Nitei Gavriel, Hilkebot Pesah*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Shemesh, 2002), p. 74, note 19. See also Yisrael Dandrovitch, “Are we really not fulfilling the commandment to burn *hametz*?” (Hebrew), *Moriab*, vol. 10–12 (2016), p. 304.

to the wooden spoon is of very recent vintage.<sup>26</sup> It may be that this explanation originated only after bowls were no longer used, in order to explain the wooden spoon, which we have noted has very limited functional value in the *bedikah*.

### Feather

R. Avraham Gombiner (*Magen Avraham*, 1635–1682) is the first authority to mention feathers as a component of *bedikat hametz*. Commenting on the ruling of Rema (*Orah Hayyim* 433:11) that all areas that may have had *hametz* in them must be cleaned prior to *bedikat hametz*, he writes, “therefore it is customary to take feathers and clean.”<sup>27</sup> Although the cleaning referred to by Rema is the cleaning taking place prior to *bedikat hametz*, the feathers are still a valuable tool during *bedikat hametz* to clean up after any remaining *hametz*.<sup>28</sup> *Magen Avraham* is quoted in *Mishnah Berurah* (*Orah Hayyim* 433:46). Feathers were being used for *bedikat hametz* hundreds of years before *Magen Avraham* mentioned the practice, as can be seen in illustrations of *bedikat hametz* going back to the 1400s.<sup>29</sup>

Some sources, particularly Chassidic ones, are very specific about the use of the feather. We find reports that three feathers should be taken, and held in the right hand,<sup>30</sup> or that feathers from the chickens of *kapparot* are used.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the Vizhnitzer Rav (R. Mordechai Hager, Monsey) explained that taking specifically feathers for *bedikat hametz* is a new innovation, in actuality it is simply the *ויש פעדערין*,

---

<sup>26</sup> See also Yitzchak Weiss, *Minhat Yitzhak*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: 1993), p. 106, *siman* 53, where he writes that the innovative idea of Rashash, that wood is needed for burning *hametz*, is a “very big stringency” (חומרא גדולה).

<sup>27</sup> *Magen Avraham*, *Orah Hayyim* 433:21.

<sup>28</sup> *Hok Ya’akov* (433:25) (Berlin: 1767), points out that while a feather may be fine to clean up crumbs from cracks and crevices during *bedikat hametz*, to actually clean the house for *hametz* a large, broom-like cleaning implement made of large feathers bound together should be used.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel Sperber, *Minhagei Yisrael*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 2003), pp. 167–168, 174; Avraham Maimon, *Bris Avraham* (2005), p. 273.

<sup>30</sup> Yosef Weinberger, *Edut B-Yebosef* (Bnei Brak: 2006), p. 91; Chaim Ben-Zion Folger, *Shevah Pesah* (Monsey, NY: Eastern Book Press, 2013), p. 173.

<sup>31</sup> See *Orkhot V-Hanbagot Rav Mordechai Eliyahu Slushtitz* (2013), p. 19, *siman* 4. R. Slushtitz (1912–1966) was a rabbinic and communal figure in Jerusalem. See David Tidhar, *Encyclopedia of the Founders and Builders of Israel* (Tel Aviv: 1997), vol. 16, p. 4960 (Hebrew).

a small broom made with feathers used for cleaning year round.<sup>32</sup> In an illustrated 15<sup>th</sup> century *Haggadah*, the person doing *bedikat ḥametz* is shown holding a bundle of feathers, like a feather duster without a handle.<sup>33</sup> For this reason, while using a feather is very popular among many Jewish communities, it is not customary among Yemenites<sup>34</sup> or Moroccans,<sup>35</sup> where small feather brooms were not as popular as cleaning implements.

Clearly the feather is in no way considered integral to the *bedikah*; it serves a strictly functional purpose.<sup>36</sup> Although E.E. Hoag is considered the first person to bind turkey feathers to a short broom handle, creating the feather duster in 1870,<sup>37</sup> and Susan Hibbard's design for mass-produced feather dusters was granted in 1876,<sup>38</sup> feathers were used for cleaning much before the commercial feather duster was invented, particularly for items which "any harsh substance would injure them."<sup>39</sup> For example, feathers as cleaning tools have been documented in the 14<sup>th</sup>-century work, *The Good Wife's Guide*,<sup>40</sup> and goose feathers are given by Rema (*Orah Ḥayyim* 337:2) in a list of examples of soft cleaning tools, without any connection to Passover.

---

<sup>32</sup> Yosef Weinberger, *Edut B-Yehosef* (Bnei Brak: 2006), p. 91, note 17. He is reported to have said this in 2002. See also Yehudah Taub, *Otzar Ha-Halakhot, Pesah*, part 1 (Jerusalem: 1983), p. 154, note 145, where the feathers are described as a kind of broom.

<sup>33</sup> Daniel Sperber, *Minhagei Yisrael*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 2003), p. 174.

<sup>34</sup> Yitzhak Ratzabi, *Shulhan Arukh Ha-Mekutzar, Orah Ḥayyim*, vol. 3 (Bnei Brak: 2001), p. 8, *siman* 81:8.

<sup>35</sup> Yitzchak Chazzan, *Ko L-Hai, Haggadah shel Pesah* (Jerusalem: Alfa, 1986), p. 40, *Bedikat Ḥametz, siman* 4, note 2, "In Morocco there are no set customs regarding this."

<sup>36</sup> Arye Forta, *Examining Religions: Judaism* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational, 1995), p. 49; Gamliel Rabinowitz, *Gam Ani Odekha, Responsa of Rabbi Yisrael Pesah Feinhandler* (Bnei Brak: 2016), p. 233, *siman* 129:4; Yosef David Weingarten, *Darkei Hora'ah*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: 2006), p. 42, *siman* 5:3.

<sup>37</sup> Robert McClain Corbit, *History of Jones County, Iowa*, vol. 1 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1910), p. 477.

<sup>38</sup> Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *Encyclopedia of Kitchen History* (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004), p. 124.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Webster, *An Encyclopedia of Domestic Economy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1845), pp. 372–373.

<sup>40</sup> Gina L. Greco, Christine M. Rose, trans., *The Good Wife's Guide: A Medieval Household Book* (London: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 220.

Being that the feather originated simply as a mechanism to clean up after the *hametz*, it is not unusual to find sources which refer to additional items carried by the one checking during the *bedikah* for cleaning purposes, such as a rag,<sup>41</sup> a brush, or even a knife or screwdriver to get *hametz* out of cracks.<sup>42</sup>

In recent times, as using feathers for general cleaning has become uncommon, more homiletic explanations have developed for using a feather. For example, that the feather is an object of negligible value and smells bad when burned, as noted in *Rasbi* to Lev. 1:17 quoting *Vayikra Rabbah* 3:5, so the use of a feather teaches that even lowly things can be elevated when used properly to fulfill G-d's Will.<sup>43</sup> It has also been suggested that the feather reminds us that we can soar to great heights, or conversely that we burn a chicken feather to indicate that we should not act like "chickens pecking in trash" (TB *Avodah Zarah* 4b), which spend their time bringing impurity to different places.<sup>44</sup>

### The Current Situation

We have seen that explanations regarding these items and instructions for their use are found especially in Chassidic works, and many sources refer to these three elements as a Chassidic custom,<sup>45</sup> probably because Chassidim are particularly careful not to change earlier practices. Even so, in the wider Jewish community as well, the wax candle, wooden spoon, and feather are regarded as the normative components of *bedikat hametz* and are sold in stores,<sup>46</sup> and are the subject of projects for young schoolchildren.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Shalom Gross, *Afiat Matzah Ha-Shalem* (Jerusalem: 1983), p. 10, chapter 6, *siman* 14, of the section detailing "Customs of the *Tzaddikim*," where this is brought as a custom of the Belzer Rebbe.

<sup>42</sup> Yehudah Teshenzer, *Sha'arei Yemei Ha-Pesah* (Ofakim: 2008), p. 38, *siman* 18.

<sup>43</sup> Shimon Herschler, *Seh La-Bayit* (London: 2010), p. 282.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Aryeh Rand, *Ke-Hilkehot Pesah* (Ashdod: 2011), pp. 61–62, note 25.

<sup>45</sup> See Shalom Gross, *Afiat Matzah Ha-Shalem* (Jerusalem: 1983), p. 10, chapter 6, *siman* 14, of the section detailing "Customs of the *Tzaddikim*," where this is brought as a custom of the Belzer Rebbe; Asher Waserteil, ed., *Yalkut Minhagim* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1977), in the section on Chassidic customs by Tuvia Bloi, p. 146, 11:5.

<sup>46</sup> Sol Scharfstein, *Understanding Jewish Holidays and Customs* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1999), p. 77.

<sup>47</sup> Maxine Segal Handelman, *Jewish Every Day: The Complete Handbook for Early Childhood Teachers* (Denver: ARE Publishing, 2000), p. 229.



It is interesting to note that other elements never caught on as part of the *bedikat ḥametz* kit. For example, we noted that some sources refer to a rag taken along,<sup>48</sup> which was used to tie up the *ḥametz* at the end of the *bedikah*, and would be burned along with the *ḥametz*.<sup>49</sup> Today this role is taken by a small paper bag sometimes included in the *bedikat ḥametz* kit. It is not considered necessarily more traditional to prefer a rag over a paper bag. Since the rag is still clearly recognized as a cleaning tool with no possible symbolic or ceremonial value, it is easily excluded from *bedikat ḥametz*. This is not the case with the feather and wooden spoon, which by now are simply part of the ritual, irrespective of functionality. In fact, the less obviously functional an item is, the better the chances that it will remain intact as part of *bedikat ḥametz*, as it will be viewed as ceremonially important.

We also saw that some sources talk about taking a knife along for *bedikat ḥametz* in order to get any *ḥametz* out of cracks and crevices,<sup>50</sup> but this too did not catch on as a *bedikat ḥametz* kit staple, probably since walking around with a knife in the dark along with children is perceived as inappropriate according to modern sensibilities.

The feather and wooden spoon began as the cleaning and collecting tools used in *bedikat ḥametz*. Today they remain part of *bedikat ḥametz* as an expression of nostalgia more than anything else.<sup>51</sup> This does not necessarily mean that we should take these items lightly, as the continued use of a wax candle in the dark for *bedikat ḥametz* could also be viewed as due to nostalgia. It is reported in the name of R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach that one may, and perhaps even should, leave the electric lights on during *bedikat ḥametz* to make it more effective.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, R. Auerbach ruled that while one should use a candle, because that is what the

---

<sup>48</sup> Israel Klopholtz and Natan Ortner, eds., *Haggadah shel Pesah, Midrash B-Hidush* (Bnei Brak: 1965), p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> Asher Waserteil, ed., *Yalkut Minhagim* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1977), in the section on Chassidic customs by Tuvia Bloi, p. 146, 11:5.

<sup>50</sup> Yitzchak Chazzan, *Ko L-Hai, Haggadah shel Pesah* (Jerusalem: Alfa, 1986), p. 40, *Bedikat Ḥametz, siman 4*, note 2.

<sup>51</sup> Wayne Dosick, *Living Judaism: The Complete Guide to Jewish Belief, Tradition, and Practice* (New York: HarperOne, 1995), p. 165.

<sup>52</sup> Tuvia Prener, *Shalmei Moed* (Jerusalem: 2004), p. 312. See there in note 12 where it is reported that once when R. Auerbach was doing *bedikat ḥametz* and a lightbulb went out, he waited to continue until it was replaced. See also R. Avigdor Nebenzal, *Yerushalayim B-Moadeha, Pesah* (Jerusalem: Makhon Keren Reem, 2006), p. 32, where differing accounts are reported.

Mishnah says to do, one can use a flashlight if no candles are available.<sup>53</sup> Despite these sensible rulings, since *bedikat ḥametz* today generally comes long after the house has been cleaned for Pesah, it mainly serves a ritual and ceremonial function rather than a practical one. That being the case, a wax candle, wooden spoon, and feather are actually the ideal tools for *bedikat ḥametz*. ❧

---

<sup>53</sup> Tuvia Prenner, *Shalmei Mo'ed* (Jerusalem: 2004), p. 312; Aharon Auerbach, Yitzchak Triger, eds., *Halikhot Shlomo: Nissan–Av* (Jerusalem: Yeshivat Halikhot Shlomo, 2007), p. 110, note 19.