

Celebration!

MAGAZINE

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SPRINGTIME FOR THE SOUL

Passover, the Festival of Freedom, is when we commemorate our ancestors' redemption from Egyptian slavery. Also known as Chag Ha'Aviv, the Festival that occurs in the Spring, the connection between season and festival is not merely an "accident" of the calendar, but must surely contain a vital and relevant message for us, today.

Spring brings to the surface the forces which were hidden during winter. New shoots and crops sprout from seeds that have rotted away. This change is not a gradual transition, but an extraordinary change, bearing no relation to the previous stage. From decay into growth, we observe a change that creates a new entity. This change is inevitable, as the cycle of seasons were set into motion by G-d, and have been so since the time of creation.

At Passover, the season of liberation, we are tasked with this: In every aspect of life, whether physical or spiritual, we aim to transform and take all things out of their limitations and "elevate" them to spirituality, to reveal something alive and growing.

To be sure, there can be a "winter" of apparent unproductivity in a person's life, when a long time of fruitlessness has elapsed. There may be very real obstacles and limitations, whether physical handicap or social

circumstance that we cannot change. And yet, we know that the state of spiritual winter can easily and suddenly be changed into a season of growth. This was true for the Jews in Egypt. For hundreds of years they suffered through the harshest of slaveries, and then in almost an instant, they were freed. Within 49 days they were at the foot of Mt. Sinai, receiving the Torah.

It is precisely in the season that nature asserts itself as an unchangeable force, that we celebrate Passover, when we were liberated in a most supernatural way. Even something as immutable as the calendar's march of time can be elevated to a higher purpose: we use it to observe Passover in the spring months. It can come in a moment. We can reveal the blossoms of spring, which lay dormant through the tough winter months. We can bring to light our inner strengths and talents, and liberate ourselves from our personal slaveries.

May G-d help every Jew to make full use of the powers which He has given them to overcome all difficulties and hindrances—to achieve a personal exodus and attain true freedom, by connecting to G-d through Torah and mitzvot.

Adapted from the teachings of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, OBM.



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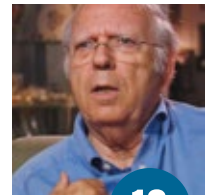
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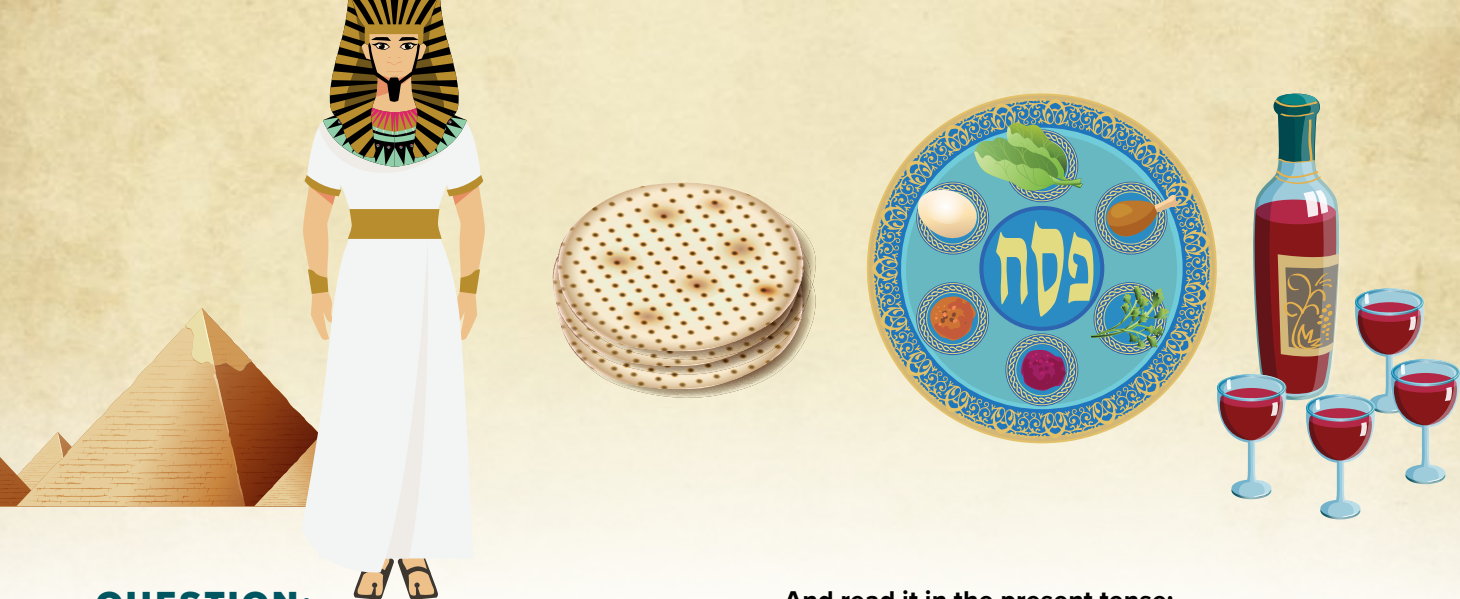
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Rabbi Sholom Ber Tenenbaum, *Director* • Mrs. Feigel Tenenbaum, *Program Director*
Mrs. Mushka Krinsky, *Managing Editor*

If you have any questions, thoughts or comments concerning this publication, please contact us:
Phone: 847-782-1800 • info@chabadofgurnee.com • www.chabadofgurnee.com
17684 W. Gages Lake Road, Grayslake, IL 60030

*Dedicated to the Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, OBM,
whose boundless love and teachings are an
endless source of inspiration and guidance.*



QUESTION:

So it's Pesach again. Another Seder night where we meet up with distant relatives we almost forgot about, to tell a story that we aren't allowed to forget about. **Is it really necessary more than 3000 years on to still commemorate our ancestors' freedom from slavery in Egypt?** Can't we move on to more pressing and contemporary issues?

ANSWER:

My friend, you are reading the wrong Haggada. The Seder is not just a memorial to events of the distant past - it is a dynamic process of freedom from the challenges of the present.

We are slaves. Slaves to our own inhibitions, fears, habits, cynicism and prejudices. These self-appointed pharaohs are layers of ego that prevent us from expressing our true inner self, from reaching our spiritual potential. Our souls are incarcerated in selfishness, laziness and indifference.

Pesach means "Passover." It is the season of liberation, when we pass over all these obstacles to inner freedom. On Pesach, we give our souls a chance to be expressed.

Reread the Haggada. Every time it says "Egypt" read "limitations." Replace the word "Pharaoh" with "Ego."

And read it in the present tense:

"We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt" =

"We are slaves to our egos, stuck in our limitations."

How do we free ourselves? By eating Matza. After eating Matza, the Israelites were able to run out of Egypt and follow G-d into the desert. Because Matza represents the suspension of ego. Unlike bread, which has body and taste, Matza is flat and tasteless - the bread of surrender.

Usually, we are scared to suspend our egos, because we think that we will lose ourselves. On Pesach we eat the Matza, we suspend our egos and find ourselves - our true selves.

This night is different from all other nights, because on this night we let ourselves go, we liberate our souls to follow G-d unashamed. We say, "I may not understand what this means, but I have a Jewish soul, and somehow that is the deepest layer of my identity."

That soul is the innocent child within us is waiting to be free. This Pesach, let's allow that child to sing:

Ma Nishtana Halayla Haze...

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THE REAL
Haggadah

By Aron Moss

a Brief HISTORY

of the birth of the Jewish people and the redemption from Egypt

Who are we? We have been around for a long time, but how did it all start? We were slaves. Were we born into it? How were we freed? How did we maintain our identity and nationhood?

I T WAS OVER 3,800 YEARS AGO in Assyria (now Iraq), in a world infested with idol worship, where Abraham was born.

A son of an idol merchant, from early childhood he questioned his society's beliefs, and on his own, he came to realize the existence of one Creator, a Master of the universe. A profound scholar with an extraordinary spirit, he not only practiced his beliefs even while facing persecution, but reached out and taught monotheism to his fellow countrymen. So did his wife Sarah.

Because of his absolute self-sacrifice in his service of G-d, he was promised that an eternal nation would blossom from his descendants.

His son Isaac and his wife Rebecca followed in Abraham's footsteps; so did Isaac's son, Jacob and his wives Rachel and Leah, maintaining their beliefs and practices in a hostile and barbaric society.

Jacob, who is also called Israel, fathered twelve sons and a daughter. From them the Jewish people have descended. Hence, the names "Children of Israel" or "Israelites".

Jacob and his family endured great trials and tribulations, which eventually brought them to Egypt. Keeping their distinct identity, they were eventually enslaved and forced into hard labor of bricks and mortar.

For eighty-six years, without a single day of rest, they were engaged in building Egyptian pyramids, monuments and cities while being subjected to constant beatings and all kinds of harsh treatment.

They became conditioned into a life of slavery. The concept of freedom simply did not exist.

It was at their darkest moment that Moses, a descendant of Jacob's third son, Levy, who himself grew up in Pharaoh's home miraculously came to the rescue.

A great soul, an individual of immense intellect and noble character, G-d revealed Himself to Moses, charging him with the task of attaining the Jewish people's freedom.

As Pharaoh refused to listen to Moses to free the Jewish people - and even tightened his harsh rule - Moses, on G-d's behalf, warned him of grave punishments. And so it was. For a full year, one after another, G-d inflicted upon the Egyptian people ten catastrophic plagues until they were forced to free their workforce, their slaves of generations.

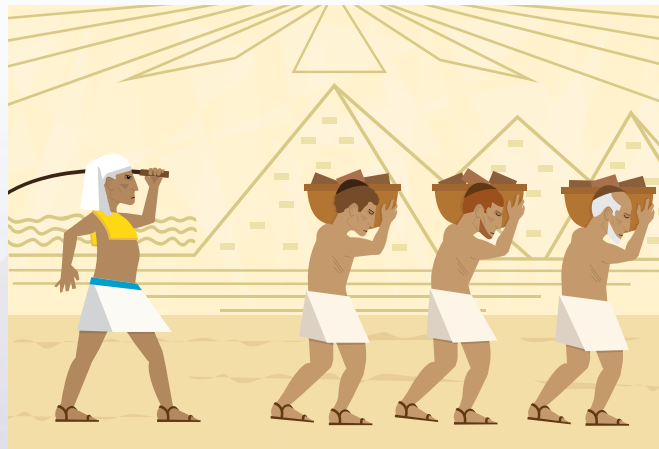
In a country where not an individual could escape, a few million people left in great triumph, as their powerless oppressors were forced to watch them leave their country for good.

It was the first time in the history of mankind, that an entire nation became free – a breakthrough that endowed the world the ideal of freedom.

At that moment the Jewish nation was born.

It is our nationhood and freedom that we celebrate on Passover.

The story goes on. Seven weeks after leaving Egypt, G-d Gave us the Torah, and the Jewish people began their journey until today.



For more on the above very brief history, the story of the Jewish people since, how we arrived in Israel, being exiled and surviving until today as the same people, visit www.chabadofgurnee.com/passover or call (847) 782-1800 for a class in Jewish history, practice and philosophy.

AHA, I FOUND THE Cheerio!

lessons from a wayward piece of cereal

by Nechemia Schusterman

This past Sunday wasn't the usual "funday."

You see, we decided that we'd clean for Passover as a family. So we pulled out all the drawers, clothes and toys. We shook them out, vacuumed them and wiped them down, all in search of the elusive piece of chametz (leavened foods, including bread, cookies and cereal) that might have accidentally been dropped in the toy room (or was brought downstairs illegally by one of the kids).

After about 30 minutes our enthusiasm started to wane, and as we hit the one-hour marker we were in full-on regret mode. But we tried to stay positive and encouraging, at least until the two-hour ice-cream-break marker.

And then it happened. You got it—at roughly 2 PM in the toy room, under a shelf, I saw it. It stood there in its full, arrogant pomposity, glaring at me for daring to upset it from its comfortable perch. It looked at me and I looked at it, wondering who'd blink first. It was a wayward Cheerio. Honey Nut, I believe. The sheen of its nutty belly gave away its identity.

This was no joking matter. This whole exercise was exactly for this moment. For me to eradicate and destroy, eviscerate and obliterate any vestige of chametz. And here was this pretentious little leavened food brazenly resting at the foot of the toy cabinet. How dare it. The sheerchutzpah! I grabbed my trusty Sears Kenmore vacuum and aimed the wand at the Cheerio. First it wiggled, then it tried to stay in place, but eventually the force of suction and my determination were no match for it, and

it was dislodged and sucked into the wand, where it will ultimately meet its maker in General Mills heaven once I throw out the vacuum bag.

And then it hit me. Really? Seriously? Does G-d really care if a Cheerio lives in my house over Passover?

I mean, yes, you gotta spring clean. It's good for the house, it's good for the kids to learn some domestic ethics, like the fact that clothing and toys don't pick themselves up. But really, does G-d care if there is a wayward piece of cake, cookie, challah, cereal, or any other chametz hidden off in some corner, deep in the recesses of the house?



To paraphrase Tevye, would it spoil some vast eternal plan if a piece of chametz were found, oh goodness gracious, in a corner, in a drawer, in a closet or in any other place?

There are many important answers to this question, but one of the mystical answers resonates deeply with me.

The exodus from Egypt was a journey from physical slavery to physical freedom. The modern Exodus is the journey from personal slavery—be it mental, emotional or spiritual—to personal freedom. The freedom to reach our full potential, to "be all that we can be."

There are many factors that inhibit us from reaching our fullest self. Fear, anxiety, worry, too much sense of self, too little sense of self, and so on. **What is most often at the core of any of these inhibitors is ego. To quote recovery expert Shais Taub, E.G.O. is an acronym for Edging G-d Out.**

Ego, in its most literal sense, gets us in trouble so often. Why do we get upset at other people? Because they called us a name, made fun of us, didn't invite us to their party. What is the root of all that upset? Ego. If we didn't have an inflated sense of self, we wouldn't be bothered by any of the above.

Why are we so afraid of taking new leaps and striving higher? What is at the core of our fear of failure? Again, EGO. If we had an appropriate, accurate sense of ourselves, we wouldn't think of ourselves as "all that and then some." If we succeed, great; if not, well, it wasn't meant to be.



Now, in the real world, we don't have the luxury to wax poetic and think deep thoughts and theorize and philosophize about profound hypotheticals, because the burdens of life consume us.

Until Passover.

Come Passover, and the weeks that lead up to it, we need to slow it down a bit, however painful that may be. We need to stop to find the Honey Nut Cheerios that may be lurking in the deepest recesses of our soul and psyche. For just as chametz is leavened food, a food that rises, ego points to a puffed-up sense of self.

For one week a year, we must banish any form of chametz from our lives. We need to open all cabinets (our relationship with food), empty all drawers (our sense of self-importance because of our many projects, real or imagined), dump out the toy box (our inner child that may be too immature to make the next move), move the couch from the wall (the part of us that couches laziness and relaxation—pun intended), take books off the bookshelves (our pseudo-philosophical side that hides behind fancy words and

philosophies that absolve us, in our minds, from the hard work that must be done), because it is not certain where some inflated sense of self may be hidden.

It is not easy to confront the chametz devil, but we have a rich history of righteous people who have shown us how to do it.

Now we just have to pick up the vacuum cleaner and start. One drawer at a time. One shelf at a time. Because the tendency to edge G-d out is so harmful that even one petrified Cheerio can be the reason for our lack of progress.

And that, my friends, is my answer. Yes, G-d does care. Not because of a particular dislike for Cheerios, but for all that they represent.

A parent who loves his child hates anything that can hurt his child. In the case of Passover, chametz (read: ego) hurts G-d's children, and He says, "I don't want it seen, I don't even want it found on your property, for the seven to eight days of Passover!"

Happy hunting.

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THINGS TO DO:

before you Passover

GETTING STARTED

Regarding Passover we are commanded- In addition to the regular holiday observances- that we should not eat, see or own any leaven for the duration of the holiday.

We accomplish this by cleaning our homes well in the weeks preceding Passover, and gradually eliminating Chametz from every room and crevice.

This intensive cleaning takes place in Jewish homes throughout the world. The following will help you tackle the process in your own home.

Due date: *Preferably, all cleaning for Chametz should be completed before the search for Chametz on the night of March 31*

What is Chametz?

Chometz means "leavened grain." Any food or drink made from wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt or their derivatives, that wasn't guarded from leavening or fermentation is considered chometz. On Passover, if a food contains even a trace of chometz, we don't eat it, buy it, or sell it, and we make sure not to have any of it in our possession.

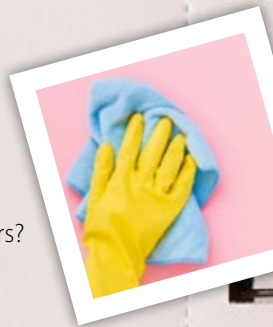
If that sounds rather strange, you need to look at the historical context: The night we were liberated from Egyptian slavery, we had to get out of there fast. So fast, there was no time for the bread we were baking to rise. All we could pack for the way was flat, unleavened bread. To remember the occasion and to re-experience it, G-d commanded us to purge our homes and diets of any leavened grains every year.



Can the purging be painless?

Before you drive yourself nuts on an endless spring cleaning expedition, here are some tips to lighten the load:

1. Out of reach, out of existence: if you can't reach the chometz with your hand, the stuff might as well not exist.
2. Stick to the Chometz Domain: You only need to search those places where people sometimes take chometz. Your first floor, for sure. Do you, your grandchildren or your guests take food up to your upper floors? Most probably. How about your office desk and drawers?
3. You can always quarantine the Chametz: Any room or closet can be sealed off for eight days – as long as you remember the vital "Sale of Chometz" mentioned next, then you are okay.



Hide and Go Sell

Now you're thinking, "What about my Ballantine's 30 Year single malt whiskey, my assortment of organic, home-brewed vinegars and my kid's 'Cheerio-Man' masterpiece?"

The good news is, there's an alternative to the search-and-destroy approach to Passover, which is to simply ensure that no chometz belongs to you for the duration of the holiday.

This can be done as follows:

Take all the chometz you can find – food, drinks and utensils used throughout the year (and not koshered for Passover) – and store them away in a closet or room that you will lock or tape shut.

You then temporarily rent out that space and sell everything in it to a non-Jew.

Since this has to be a legally binding sale according to both Jewish and civil law, we authorize a competent rabbi to act as our agent to take care of it. He sells all our chometz to a non-Jew just before Passover and buys it back as soon as the holiday is over.

The night Passover ends, you can already break out that single malt for a l'chaim.

Make sure you complete the online form (www.chabadofgurnee.com/sell) before midnight on Tues., March 31st, and we will take care of the rest. Do not leave it for the last minute. (For the very latest time for sale of chometz, see schedule page 22).

The Search

March 31, 2026

At nightfall on the eve of the day before Passover, we conduct a "formal search" for all chometz throughout the house.

Setting the Scene

Wrap ten pieces of Chometz tightly in paper wrappings and place them around the house (Make sure you keep a list of the hiding spots). Get a paper bag, a candle (or flashlight), a wooden spoon (as a shovel) and, if you can, a feather (as a broom) to collect any chometz found.

1-2-3 Go!

One half hour after sunset, gather the family, especially the kids, they love it, and say the blessing (#4 on page 22). Armed with those searching tools, the family now fans out to scour every nook and cranny of the house for those nefarious crumbs, crusts and cheerios, as well as the ten pieces you placed. All incriminating evidence is swept into the paper bags with one of those feathers. When everyone is done, all the bags, the feathers and wooden spoons join the chometz in a single paper bag.

Afterwards

After the search, verbally nullify any chometz that was not found (statement #5 on page 22). Place the bag with the Chametz in a conspicuous spot to be burned the next morning.

(Note: Before the search, put aside the chometz you plan to use the next morning for breakfast).

(Away from home for the holiday? Ask your rabbi when and how to do the search.)

The Next Morning

April 1, 2026

You can still eat chametz in the early hours of the morning. (For the latest time, see schedule on page 22). Once that time is up, be careful to eat only foods which are kosher for Passover for the full eight days of the holiday.

Burning the Chametz

Make a small bonfire and burn the entire paper bag along with any leftover chometz from breakfast or any chometz not stored with the chometz which was sold before Passover. (For latest time, see schedule on page 22)

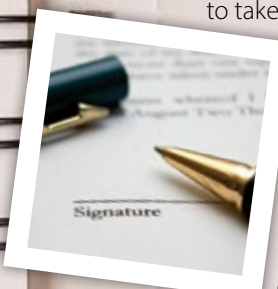
Declaration!

Now you are ready to formally declare your home a chometz-free zone. As the chometz is burning, recite the Chometz Nullification statement (#6 on page 22,) verbally disowning any chometz that might have been overlooked.

Celebration!

Now you have a whole day to look forward to the Seder. Be sure to prepare the seder items for both days.

One more thing: to develop your spiritual and nutritional appetite for the Seder, we abstain from eating any food found on the Seder plate today, especially Matzah. If you're a fan of bitter herbs, raw onions, apples, nuts or wine, stay out of the kitchen. Utilize the day to prepare the Seder table. Get ready for the big party tonight!



What Was the Point of THE PLAGUES?

BY ARON MOSS

QUESTION:

When it comes to the Passover Seder, I always get stuck on the ten plagues. The Nile River turns to blood, the land is covered in frogs, the people riddled with lice. **It all sounds a bit weird. Why would the Almighty G-d afflict a people with these particular plagues?** He could have just zapped them, and yet He sends them....frogs?!

ANSWER:

I too have been baffled by the plagues, especially the frogs. It is a bit incongruous, like calling a football team "The Roosters." It just doesn't sound menacing.

You can only understand the plagues if you listen to the way G-d Himself described them. He told Moses, "I will smite the Egyptians and bring justice to their gods." G-d was not only punishing the Egyptian people for enslaving the Israelites, He was also smashing the Egyptian value system.

Each plague was an attack on the core beliefs of Egypt, the beliefs that led them to become the most immoral society of that time. Let's look at the three examples you mentioned: the river turning to blood, the frogs and the lice.

The Egyptians worshipped the Nile as a god. It was their source of irrigation, and thus their source of wealth. The Nile represents materialism in the extreme. That's why it was afflicted first. When money is god, blood will flow.

The frog was another Egyptian deity, the god of fertility. Having children is a noble pursuit, but for the Egyptians, children were no more than a power base. Being fruitful

like a frog meant expanding your clan and extending your influence. When children are seen as frogs, humans have lost their humanity.

But it was the third plague, the plague of lice, that forced the Egyptians to recognize that the finger of G-d was at play. The Egyptian sorcerers were able to replicate the first two plagues through black magic, and so they weren't convinced that they were being divinely

punished. But when lice swarmed over every Egyptian, they lifted their hands up in defeat.

As powerful as Egyptian sorcery was, it could not manipulate something as small as a louse. Egyptian spirituality dealt with big things, major issues, not minute details. They didn't give importance to the small things.

We left Egypt and its ugly beliefs behind to embrace a value system that was its polar opposite. Money is not a god, merely a means to do good. Our children are not trophies, but precious souls entrusted to us by G-d. And little things do matter. Most of our lives are made up, not of dramatic choices and big events, but of small details and subtle choices, and they all make a difference.

At the Seder we enumerate the ten plagues and reflect on the values that made the Egyptians into oppressors—the values we left behind, and the values that have kept us coming to the Seder for three thousand years.

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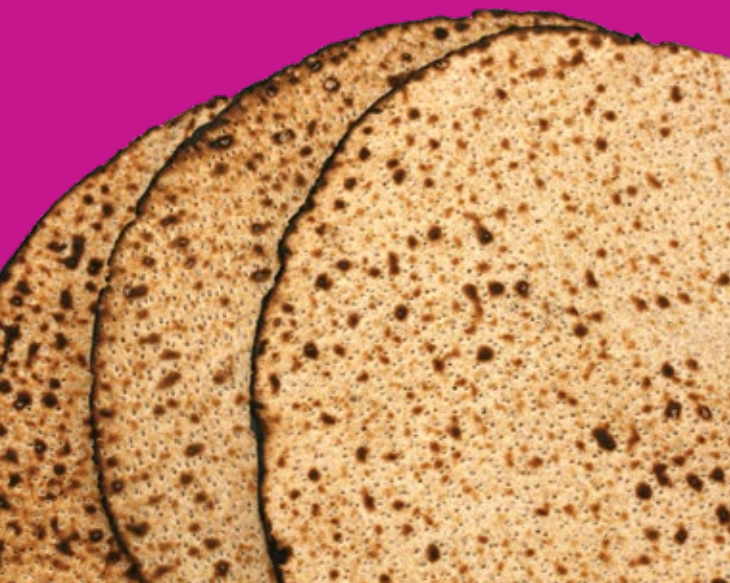
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The Seder

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We Don't Just Tell the Story - We Taste It

Each food we eat or drink makes us feel a part of the experience of Exodus.

Bitter herbs = Slavery.

Matzah = Liberation.

Wine = Freedom.

Doing It - Your Way

Whether you are a true believer, a diehard skeptic, an innocent bystander, or the guy who doesn't even notice anything out of the ordinary, the Passover Seder speaks to you. It even speaks to kids (especially your inner child), filled with customs that make the Seder stimulating. Engage all of your senses in this dynamic and moving experience.

The tastes, the aromas, the textures, the sounds, and the sights of Jewish continuity in action all combine to achieve the meaningful events of the Seder. Take the time this year to fully engage yourself and your family in Jewish life. Feel the passion of the Exodus, taste the beauty of freedom, hear the message of personal growth all brought to life at the Seder.



WEDNESDAY
April 1
7:30pm

*At Chabad
of Gurnee*

RSVP REQUIRED:
ChabadofGurnee.com/Seder

The Seder

AT-A-GLANCE

We prepare for the Seder by setting the table fit for royalty: our best china, silverware and crystal, the finest Kosher wine.

SETTING THE SEDER PLATE



MATZAH Three whole matzos are placed on a tray or large plate, with a cloth (or napkin) partly separating between each of the matzos. Place the first matzah in the lowest “compartment,” another matzah above it and another matzah above these.



ZE'ROAH Place a roasted meatless chicken shank or neck bone on the upper right side on top of the cloth covering the matzos. The ze'roah is symbolic and not eaten. You can re-use it for the following Seder night.



BEITZAH Place a hard-boiled egg on the upper left side. Use: The egg is dipped into saltwater and eaten right before the meal starts.



MAROR Place an ounce of bitter herbs in the center. It is customary to use romaine lettuce and horseradish for maror. Use: The maror is eaten right after the matzah before the meal.



CHAROSES The charoses, made of a mixture of crushed walnuts and apple, is placed on the lower right side, under the ze'roah. Use: Before eating the maror, it is dipped in charoses.



KARPAS Place a raw onion or a boiled potato on the lower left side, under the egg. Use: A small slice of the vegetable is eaten at the very beginning of the Seder.



CHAZERES Place an ounce of bitter herbs in the center, under the maror. It is customary to use romaine lettuce and horseradish for chazeres, just like the maror. Use: It will make up the inside part of the Korech sandwich of matzah and maror.

CONDUCTING THE SEDER

1. KADESH | *The Benediction & First Cup*

The Seder begins with the recitation of Kiddush, proclaiming the holiness of the holiday, over a cup of wine—the first of the four cups we will drink at the Seder, reclining.



2. URCHATZ | *Purification* We wash our hands in the usual, ritually prescribed manner as is done before a meal, but without the customary blessing.

3. KARPAS | *Appetizer* A small piece of onion or boiled potato is dipped into salt water and eaten (after reciting the blessing over vegetables).

4. YACHATZ | *Breaking of the Matzah* The middle matzah on the Seder plate is broken in two. The larger part is put aside for later use as the Afikoman, while the smaller part is returned to the Seder plate and will be eaten later as the “bread of poverty.”

5. MAGGID | *The Haggadah and the Second Cup*

After a short introduction, at the beginning of the Haggadah, the Seder tray is moved aside. A second cup of wine is filled. The child who wonders "What's Going On" asks the time-honored four questions: "Mah nishtanah...?" The child's questioning triggers one of the most significant Mitzvot of the Passover eve. In response to the child's questions, the Haggadah includes a brief review of the suffering imposed upon the Israelites and the miracles performed by the Al-mighty for the redemption of His people. We drink the second of cup of wine, reclining.



eating the afikoman, we do not eat or drink anything except for the two remaining cups of wine.

13. BERACH | *Reciting Grace and the Third Cup*

A third cup of wine is filled before Grace is recited. We also fill the "cup of Elijah" (and place it at the center of the table). After Grace we recite the blessing over the wine and drink the third cup, reclining. We now fill another cup of wine and open the door and recite the passage that is an invitation to the Prophet Elijah, the harbinger of the coming of Moshiach.

14. HALLEL | *Songs of Praise and the Fourth Cup*

At this point, having recognized the Al-mighty and His unique guidance of the Jewish people, we go still further and sing His praises as L-rd of the entire universe. After reciting the Hallel, we again recite the blessing over the wine and drink the fourth cup, reclining.



15. NIRTZAH | *Acceptance*

In conclusion we proclaim, "Leshanah haba'ah b'yerushalayim—Next year in Jerusalem."



6. ROCHTZA | *Washing Before the Meal*

Readying ourselves for the meal, we wash our hands again; this time with the customary blessings, as is usually done before eating bread.

7 & 8 MOTZI-MATZAH | *Blessing of the Matzah*

Before eating the matzah, we say the "Hamotzi," the usual blessing for bread followed by the special blessing for the mitzvah of eating the matzah. We then eat the matzah while reclining.

9. MAROR | *The Bitter Herbs*

We take one ounce of the bitter herbs, dip it in the charoses; we then shake the latter off and make the blessing "al achilat maror." We eat the maror without reclining.

10. KORECH | *The Sandwich*

We now do the matzah and maror together. We break off two pieces of the bottom matzah, which together should be at least one ounce. We then take at least one ounce of bitter herbs and dip it in charoses. It is placed between the two pieces of matzah, (say "kein asah Hillel...") and eat the sandwich while reclining.

11. SHULCHAN ORECH | *The Feast*

The holiday meal is now served. We begin the meal with a hard-boiled egg dipped into salt water.

12. TZAFUN | *Out of Hiding*

After the meal, the half-matzah that was "hidden," set aside for the afikoman (dessert), is taken out and eaten. Everyone eats at least 1.5 ounces of matzah, reclining, before midnight. After



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WHAT'S THE Rush?

BY ARON MOSS

QUESTION:

The way they tell it in Sunday school, the Jews left Egypt in such a rush, the dough didn't have time enough to rise. "Honey, we gotta go in ten minutes," the men would have been saying to their wives. "Just grab some food and let's go!"

So, they happened to eat matzah. Who cares? It doesn't seem at all significant. Why is matzah elevated to be main focus of the whole Passover experience? I thought that Passover is about freedom, not food!

ANSWER:

Think about what you just wrote. The Israelites had to rush out of Egypt so fast, they didn't have time for their bread to rise. Why? Does that make sense? What was the rush, exactly? The Egyptians had just been blasted with ten plagues as divine punishment for holding the Israelites captive; they were more than ready to let them go. So, why rush things? Couldn't they have spent the few extra minutes it takes to let the bread rise and make proper sandwiches for the trip?

The answer is: they weren't running from the Egyptians, they were running from themselves. Two centuries of slavery had taken their toll on the Jewish people's spirit. They had forgotten their illustrious past as children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, pioneers of a path of ethics and higher morals. The corruption and depravity of Egyptian society had slowly crept into the Israelite mentality, and they assimilated many of its pagan ideals into their own. They were slaves to Egypt, not just in body, but in mind as well.

It came to a point where their

unique identity was all but lost. Suddenly they realized that the legacy of Abraham could be lost forever, and the message of hope that the Israelites were to bring the world would not be delivered. Only then did they cry out for help. On the brink of point of no return, they called out to G-d.

Think of an alcoholic. For a while, the alcoholic fools himself into thinking that things are in control, he is just drinking socially, it relaxes him, there's nothing wrong. Gradually, the habit overtakes him, and one by one he loses everything he has: his family, his job, his money, his dignity. But it's only when he hits rock bottom, when he has been stripped of everything, that it suddenly dawns on him that he has a real problem.

Now he has to act fast. Once he has recognized the problem, he has to deal with it immediately, before that moment of clarity passes by and he slips back into self-justification. He can't do it alone. He's too drunk to help himself. He has to call for help. Someone from the outside, someone sober, will have to reach out to drag him out of his addiction. But they can help him only if he is willing to go cold turkey, not to touch alcohol until he is cured. He has to run away from the addict that he has been until now. Otherwise, he cannot begin to heal.

That's why matzah is the crux of what the Exodus is all about. The children of Israel had to make a hasty retreat from Egypt. Egypt and its lowliness had a hold on them as powerful as an addiction. They had to first get out of Egypt in order to get Egypt out of themselves. To delay would be deadly. Once they had realized the problem, if they would then have hesitated, it could have spelled the end for them—they might have sunk to the point of no return.

We all have our addictions, whether to harmful substances, poisonous relationships, toxic habits or negative ideologies.

Pesach is a detox retreat, where the spirit of liberty calls upon us to free ourselves from our personal Egypt.

The matzah reminds us that the first step towards freedom is to go cold turkey. No hesitations: make a sudden and complete exodus from the you that was, and march through the desert towards the you that you can be.



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THE Extra Matzah

A Heartwarming Passover Story

Our sages tell us that a propensity for acts of loving-kindness is one of the three basic characteristics of the Jewish soul. I would like to share with you a story that moved me deeply, which relates to this characteristic of loving kindness and mutual responsibility.

Rabbi Eliezer Zusha Portugal (1896-1982), the Skulener [pronounced skoo-LEH-ner] Rebbe, was the chassidic rebbe from a small town, Sculeni, in what was then northeastern Romania (now Ukraine). Toward the end of World War II, in March of 1945, he found himself, along with other holocaust survivors and displaced persons, in the Russian-governed town of Czernovitz, Bukovina. Although Germany would not officially surrender until May 7, much of Eastern Europe had already been liberated by the Russian army.

Passover was only weeks away. Although some Passover foodstuffs might well be provided by charitable organizations, the Rebbe sought to obtain wheat that he could bake into properly-guarded and traditionally baked Shmurah Matzah. Despite the oppressive economic situation of the Jews, he was able to bake a limited number of these matzahs. He sent word to other rebbes in the region, offering each of them three matzahs.

One week before Pesach, Rabbi Moshe Hager, the son of the Seret-Vizhnitzer Rebbe, came for the matzahs that had been offered to his father, Rabbi Boruch Hager. After being handed the allotted three matzahs, he said to the Skulener Rebbe: "I know that you sent word that you could give only three matzahs, but nonetheless my father, the Seret-Vizhnitzer Rebbe, told me to tell you that he must have six matzahs." The Skulener Rebbe felt that he had no choice but to honor the request, albeit reluctantly.

On the day before Passover, Rabbi Moshe returned to the Skulener Rebbe, saying "I want to return three of the matzahs to you."

"But I don't understand. I thought your father absolutely had to have six matzahs."

"My father said to ask whether you had saved any of the Shmurah Matzah for yourself?"

Embarrassed, the Skulener Rebbe replied, "How could I, when so many others needed?"

"My father assumed that is what you would do," explained Rabbi Moshe. "These three matzahs are for you!"

Yisroel Susskind

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HOW UNBEARABLE IS Darkness?

THE NINTH PLAGUE that struck the Egyptians was darkness. But that hardly seemed like a plague at all. Every evening we experience the dark and we make it through to the next morning. Did G-d run out of creative ideas for plagues?

When a room is dark, everything is still there, only you can't see it. Emotionally, being in a dark place means that you aren't able to see the blessings and opportunities that are around you. It can be the darkness of loneliness - when you don't sense anyone in your life that cares - or depression - when you can't see things in your life that seem meaningful.

Perhaps there was more than a physical darkness that engulfed the Egyptians. The way the darkness is described in the parsha is: "They did not see each other, and no one rose from his place for three days." The plague turned the tables and uncovered the Egyptians as true slaves - stuck in the dark - and the Jews as having inner freedom - seeing the light. It exposed the Egyptians as bereft of a sense of brotherhood and higher purpose.

The first thing we are told about the Egyptian condition in this plague is that "they did not see each other." They were only concerned with themselves. They didn't feel responsible for each other.

In his Holocaust memoir, *If This is a Man*, Primo Levi describes the days after the camps were liberated from the Nazis. He writes that at one point, some of the

inmates offered to share their bread with one another, and to him that signaled that they were free men. As prisoners each of them were concerned only for their own survival. But as free men they could see each other's pain and share their resources.

The first thing we do at the Seder - even before we tell the story of the Exodus - is to invite all those that are hungry to join our Seder table. We say

this sitting in our homes and the invitation isn't heard beyond our walls. But this is the first commemoration of our freedom: we express care and concern for one another and look out for those that need help.

The second thing we're told is that they didn't get up from their places. Their lack of purpose and meaning paralyzed them. They were overwhelmed by the darkness that engulfed their existence.

At the same time we are told that "but for all the children of Israel there was light in their dwellings." The hallmark of Jewish life is community and purpose. We care for each other and look out for the needs of the oppressed.

When we are there for each other and care for those that need our help, our lives are filled with meaning and purpose and there is light in our lives and homes.

As ambassadors of light, our role is to brighten a dark world. To spread kindness and purpose and bring the values that we have received from our heritage to light up the lives of others.



HERE'S *my* STORY

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TUNISIAN JEWS

MR. EFRAIM HALEVY

Efraim Halevy served as the director of the Mossad, Israel's national intelligence agency. He was interviewed at his home in August, 2009.

The first Lebanon War in 1982 was a unique war, during which the Israel Defense Forces reached Beirut and conquered it, causing the expulsion of the Palestinian forces from Lebanon.

PLO chairman Yasser Arafat and his men went to Tunisia and established their command there. At that time, there was a small community there of about five thousand Jews in Tunisia.

After analyzing the facts, we in the Mossad came to the conclusion that, as a result these events, the Jews of Tunisia were in greater danger than before, and we felt that the time had come to evacuate this community to Israel.

Since the government of Israel was established, it has made it a policy to take responsibility for the fate of Jews living in foreign countries where they might be in danger. We feel that this is the responsibility of the State of Israel because it is the state of the Jewish nation. And since the State of Israel has the power and the ability to intervene overseas when needed, it has the right and the obligation to do so.

Thus, we began to work with the Jews in Tunisia. We sent people there to convince them to leave. But very quickly we encountered a problem. We identified an authority that was telling the Jews not to leave Tunisia. This was not a local authority; not the Tunisian government. It was the community rabbi! His name was Rabbi Nisson Pinson, and he was encouraging the Jews to stay in Tunisia.

We quickly understood that Rabbi Pinson's authority flowed from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the leader of the Chabad movement, of which Rabbi Pinson was a part,



and we reached the determination that we needed to see the Rebbe to explain the situation to him, so that he'd understand and encourage the Jews to leave.

Now, my interaction with Chabad goes back many years. I served in the Israeli Embassy in Washington from 1970 to 1974. In the context of my service there, I visited New York many times together with my wife and children. I visited the Rebbe's court and was present at his farbrengens.

The General Consul of Israel, Naftali Lavi, arranged a meeting with the Rebbe for me.

I flew in from Israel and I arrived to the Chabad Headquarters for my appointment, which was scheduled for one or two o'clock in the morning. As I sat in the waiting room, I noticed the others who were awaiting their turn with the Rebbe; a mixed group of people. Each had their own reason for being there – one came for advice, another for direction, and another for his approval of some decision they had made. I waited. People went in and out, and I waited.

Finally, I was called inside and I met with the Rebbe. The two of us talked, he and myself, and no one else was in that meeting. To the best of my recollection, the meeting lasted about two hours. It began with a discussion of the situation of Tunisian Jewry. And the Rebbe immediately told me that he was the one who gave the directive not to leave. He had his own intelligence-gathering network with various sources, including the US government.

He had checked his information and had come to the conclusion that there was no special danger to the Jews of Tunisia, so he had directed them not to leave. He said, "I believe we must sustain, to the extent possible, every Jewish community around the world. I recognize the role of the State of Israel – I personally support Aliyah, and I've instructed certain families to make Aliyah, but we mustn't just eliminate a Jewish community."

I explained to the Rebbe why we in Israel saw the situation differently. But, in the end, we remained with our different opinions – he was convinced that the Jews were in no special danger, and I that they were.

In our conversation it was apparent that he had a tremendous knowledge in the area of intelligence and

intelligence gathering. And his connections were vast. He had connections with the White House and the State Department. He had connections in other places in the world with the powers that be. It was obvious that here was a man of the larger world, not of a small chasidic court.

He was also a man with a vision – a big vision – and he did not abandon that vision even for a moment. And his vision was expressed not only in theory, but also in action – sending his emissaries all over the world to serve the Jewish nation.

There is no doubt that in many places in the world, Chabad emissaries play a very important role in the continued existence of the Jewish people, and in the continued existence of the Jewish nation as a whole. When I served as Israel's ambassador to the European Union in Brussels, I met the emissaries of Chabad who worked there. And I also met those in Riga and in Sydney. And I believe that if Chabad did not exist, the situation of the continuity of the Jewish nation would be much worse. This tremendous contribution that Chabad is making – no other movement in the world gives such a contribution to our people. And in my eyes this is a great blessing.

MY ENCOUNTER
with the **REBBE**

An oral history project dedicated to documenting the life of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory. The story is one of thousands recorded in the 900 videotaped interviews conducted to date. Please share your comments and suggestions. mystory@jmedia.org

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PASSOVER

Blessings & Schedules

CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES

			Blessing
April 1	Eve of Passover/ First Seder	2&3***	6:58 PM
April 2	Eve of Passover/ Second Seder	2&3**	8:01 PM
April 3	Friday Candle Lighting	1*	7:00 PM
April 7	Eve of 7th day of Passover	2***	7:05 PM
April 8	Eve of 8th day of Passover	2**	8:09 PM

*Do not light after sunset. Light only from a pre-existing flame.

** Do not light before the times indicated. Light only from a pre-existing flame.

***If lighting after sunset, light only from a pre-existing flame.

A pre-existing flame is a flame that has been burning continuously since the onset of the festival, such as a pilot light, gas or candle flame.

CANDLE LIGHTING BLESSINGS

1. BA-RUCH A-TOH A-DO-NOI E-LO-HEI-NU ME-LECH HA-O-LAM AHSHER KID-E-SHO-NU BE-MITZ-VO-SOV VETZI-VONU LE-AD LIK NER SHEL SHABBOS KODESH. *Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the light of the holy Shabbat.*

2. BA-RUCH A-TOH A-DO-NOI E-LO-HEI-NU ME-LECH HA-O-LAM ASHER KID-E-SHO-NU BE-MITZ-VO-SOV VETZI-VONU LE-AD-LIK NER SHEL YOM TOV. | *Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the Yom Tov light.*

3. BA-RUCH A-TOH ADO-NOI E-LO-HEI-NU ME-LECH HA-OLAM SHE-HECHI-YO-NU VE-KI-YE-MO-NU VE-HI-GI-ONU LIZ-MAN HA-ZEH. | *Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.*

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, AFTER NIGHT FALL – SEARCH FOR CHOMETZ

Before beginning the search, the following blessing is recited:

4. BA-RUCH A-TOH ADO-NOI E-LO-HEI-NU ME-LECH HA-OLAM ASHER KID-ESHO-NU BE-MITZVO-SOV VETZI-VONU AL BE-UR CHO-METZ *Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the removal of chometz.*

After concluding the search the following declaration is stated:

5. ALL LEAVEN AND ANYTHING LEAVENED THAT IS IN MY POSSESSION, WHICH I HAVE NEITHER SEEN NOR REMOVED, AND ABOUT WHICH I AM UNAWARE, SHALL BE CONSIDERED NULLIFIED AND OWNERLESS AS THE DUST OF THE EARTH.

Sell chometz in advance Fill out the online sale of chometz form no later than **Tuesday, March 31 by Midnight** (www.chabadofgurnee.com/chometz)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1 – EATING, SELLING AND BURNING CHOMETZ

Finish eating and selling chometz before: 10:47 am
Burn chometz by: 11:51 am

As the Chometz is burning, the following declaration is stated:

6. ALL LEAVEN AND ANYTHING LEAVENED THAT IS IN MY POSSESSION, WHETHER I HAVE SEEN IT OR NOT, SHALL BE CONSIDERED NULLIFIED AND OWNERLESS AS THE DUST OF THE EARTH.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

Light holiday candles.
(See Candle Lighting Times Blessings above).

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

Eruv Tavshilin. (See details on page 23.)

WED. EVE, THURSDAY & FRIDAY

APRIL 1, 2 & 3 – YOM TOV

(See Candle Lighting Times and Blessings above)

On Thursday Eve we begin the "Counting of the Omer"

SATURDAY, APRIL 4, AFTER NIGHTFALL – THE FIRST DAYS OF YOM TOV ENDS

Intermediate days begin. 8:04 pm

TUES. EVE, WED. & THURS., APRIL 7, 8 & 9

– LAST DAYS OF YOM TOV

(See Candle Lighting Times and Blessings above)

THURSDAY, APRIL 9 – YIZKOR

Yizkor is recited during morning services.

Consult your local synagogue before the holiday for times.



THURSDAY, APRIL 9

PASSOVER ENDS AT NIGHTFALL 8:10pm



Eiruv Tavshilin

Preparing for Shabbat

Wed., April 1, 2026

This year, the 2nd day of Passover occurs on a Friday. Generally, on the Festivals we are permitted to prepare (cook, bake, etc.) foods necessary only for that day. Can we prepare food necessary for Shabbat on this Friday, being a holiday, with all the restrictions of Yom Tov – Festival?

An Eiruv Tavshilin allows us to “join” Friday’s Shabbat food preparations to those begun on the eve of the Festival (Wednesday). On Wednesday, the eve of the holiday, before sundown, we set aside a matzah and one cooked item to accompany it (such as meat, fish or eggs) as designated for Shabbat.

Now, any further food we prepare for Shabbat on Friday is regarded as a continuation of this initial preparation. The food however, must be fully cooked before sunset – the end of the day – on Friday.

We recite the following blessing:

Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Melech Ho-olom A-sher Ki-de-sha-nu Bemitz-vo-sov Ve-tzi-vanu Al Mitz-vat Ei-ruv.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us by His commandments, and commanded us concerning the mitzvah of Eiruv.

Then declare:

By means of this Eruv it shall be permissible for us to bake, cook, put away a dish to preserve its heat, kindle a light (from a pre-existing flame), and prepare on Yom Tov everything we need for Shabbos.

The food from the Eruv should be put aside to be eaten on Shabbos. The best time to eat it is on Shabbos afternoon.

FILL OUT THE CERTIFICATE AUTHORIZING THE SALE OF CHOMETZ ONLINE AT

WWW.CHABADFGURNEE.COM/SELL

Submit your form no later than **Tuesday, March 31st before midnight.**

If you're unable to submit online, please call us at 847-782-1800.



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This publication is in loving memory of Mrs. Henya Federman and her daughter Shterna Sara Federman.