



Pesach

IJS Hevraya Resource Bank

Cleaning as Spiritual Ritual Preparation for Pesach

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“It’s so much work!” Isn’t that what we all say as we prepare for Passover? Cleaning, shopping, cooking—they are all a means to an end, a goal and reward of the Seder. But what if we saw them as rituals in their own right? So here is a new perspective: As Pesach is one of the three pilgrimage holidays, preparations for a pilgrimage enrich the process.

We clean, search and labor in our homes in preparation for Pesach. How is this important ritual preparation for our journey toward freedom? As we clean, we may sort through the accumulations of the past year, and decide, “Do I really need this?” We can examine our relationship to the object and to the memories it holds; some things will remain precious while others will no longer engage us. We may learn that we have completed a chapter of our lives or that we have integrated the lesson of the object into our being and can release it. We may simply want to discard the clutter, making room for new possibilities. As we reflect, transformation is taking place.

Cleaning can become a meditation, during which we are able to address the emotional crumbs of our lives. We can ask, “What is my attachment to this crumb? Can I let it go? Am I freer having this or letting it go?” As we search our homes for *chametz*, we can imagine some aspect of our lives or ourselves that no longer serves us and dispose of it.

If we perceive the cleaning as truly a burden, we might ask, “What burdens do I carry or create in my life? Are they real, or something that I hide behind? By seeing these preparations as a burden, am I hiding from opportunities for self-reflection?”

These preparations for a pilgrimage are sacred work. We are challenged to decide what is essential for us now, in this life. By freeing ourselves of things and ideas we no longer find necessary, we create space for the unknown and the unexpected to enter, for the Divine Presence to be with us.