

## CyberTorah: Cleaning our Souls

I've got a Passover cleaning schedule on my wall calendar. It's pretty scary. Next week we are getting the living areas clean and scrubbed. We move the furniture and clean up all the dust and assorted items we find back there. Every year some favorite toy resurfaces, and the world's supply of pens is rediscovered.

Then we start in on the kitchen. Carol will move the refrigerator and scrub out the drawers. I will move all our Passover stuff from the garage into its appropriate places in the kitchen after it in turn is scrubbed and cleaned from the accumulated dust of the last year.

All in all, a demanding project that I always enjoy looking back upon. My house is gleaming and clean and I too feel cleansed. The ritual itself has a cleansing process. And that is what is supposed to happen. Because fulfilling God's commandments through our external actions is supposed to create an internal spiritual change.

We are standing halfway between last Yom Kippur and the next Yom Kippur. It's a good time for spiritual examination, to look inside and see how well we have fulfilled what we promised ourselves and God last Yom Kippur. To see the dust and muck that has been accumulating in the dark places within our souls, underneath the cushions and behind the refrigerator. To engage in a process of spiritual cleaning.

The Hasidim liken chametz, the forbidden foods of Pesach derived from flour and water, to the evil urge. Just as we cleanse our homes of bread and pasta and cereal, so also we engage in a process of self-examination and change. We want to get all of the chametz out of our homes even though it's an impossible task. That's why we finally declare any leftover chametz "null and void" before Passover begins.

So also we try to live one week without the evil urge. For one week we make an additional effort to live in a holy way. This includes ritual behavior, as we join together as one Jewish people in celebrating Passover. It also includes our moral behavior. It's a good week to entirely avoid lashon harah, or gossip. It's a good week to intend that every word to our loved ones be supportive and encouraging. It's a good week to remember others who are in need.

We declare the remaining chametz that we cannot find null and void and go on with our celebration of Passover. So also we try as much as we can to live up to the holy best of who we can be during Passover and declare that which we cannot (yet) change as "null and void." Living in this way for one week challenges us the rest of the year. It suggests: we can indeed change. It says: God's redemptive power means that I too can be redeemed and brought close.

Just as we set aside time for cleaning our homes, so also we need to make time for spiritual self-examination and cleansing. It's easy to put this process off. That's why we have these special Shabbatot leading up to Pesach. It is a wake up call. Now is the time to begin thinking, to begin looking inside and getting ready for the redemptive possibilities of Pesach. We can change and grow, we can indeed move closer to God, but only when we take the time for self-examination.

I need a lot of help to get my house clean. It's too big of a project to do by myself. If I need help to clean my house, all the more so I need help to clean my soul. I have a long standing study partner with whom I plan to spend some time thinking through the chametz in my soul, and listening as well to some of his concerns and issues. In this way I will spend some time cleansing my own soul.

As many of you know, I have invited congregants this year to make an appointment with me or Rabbi Graff for an annual Spiritual. I have had many people take me up on this offer and the meetings have been wonderful. It's been meaningful to me to listen to people's concerns and questions about faith and liturgy, about the direction of their lives, their fears and dreams. As you engage in your own process of spiritual cleansing, please feel invited to come in. I would find it deeply meaningful to be helpful in your own process of spiritual growth and change.

I wish everyone strength as we ready our homes and our souls for Pesach!

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi David Booth

If you would like to receive CyberTorah, please email Rabbi Booth at [rabbibooth@kolemeth.org](mailto:rabbibooth@kolemeth.org).



Rabbi David Booth

Congregation Kol Emeth

[rabbibooth@kolemeth.org](mailto:rabbibooth@kolemeth.org)