

Meditations for Leaving Mitzrayim

The Inner Work

1. **Crying Out.** The movement of *Yitziyat Mitzrayim* (leaving Egypt) begins with the Israelites crying out (Exodus 2:7). Once we recognize our condition of bondage and acknowledge that we cannot create our own liberation without help, the story of our transformation begins. The practice of *hitbodedut* is one way of “crying out.”
2. **Cleaning out the Chametz.** Sit with the question “What is the *chametz* in my life?” See what comes up. If you do this practice over time, you will begin to see what is most important to work on. You can think of *chametz* as the puffed up, prideful or excessive parts of your life or as the little places of sourness that can ferment and spoil that which is good and pure. {The preparation only *begins* with meditation; what first steps can you actually take to begin to do the work of removing some of the pieces of *chametz* that you have found?}
3. **Living at the level of matzah.** Matzah is the plain bread, as basic as one can get. In a way, it is “just being there,” as we sometimes are in meditation. The deeper your meditation, the less content there is, the closer you are to your essence and to the Essence of the world. Sit with the intention of “just being there,” with the understanding that what you are doing is sitting in *Ha Makom* (The Place, one of the names we use for God).

The Physical Work

1. **As you clear out chametz** from your cupboards and refrigerator, as you scrub and clean, focus on what is comparable in your inner purification process. Imagine actually being able to remove your personal *chametz* --sourness or inflation-- this way. Break up the process with an occasional 5 or 10 minute periods of meditation.
2. **Pay attention to how your body is moving** as you clean, cook, move or set tables, arrange flowers, etc. Use what you learned from walking meditation to really feel what your body is experiencing.
3. **Actually burn your chametz.** You may need to get a slightly more traditional haggadah for a description of the full ritual and its recitations. If you don't have one, use the *bracha* that begins the process: *Baruch Atah Adonay, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam, asher kideshanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu be-ur chametz* (who has commanded us to burn/destroy *chametz*). Before reciting the *bracha*, add your

personal kavvanah. You may formulate the intention with which you perform this mitzvah in words or you may wordlessly focus your heart's intent to relinquish your spiritual chametz so that you may move unencumbered into the possibility of liberation and spiritual transformation.

At the Table

1. **Eat the ritual foods with mindfulness** (pay attention to taste, texture, associations you make with their symbolic meaning) and with transformative intention, thinking about how you will use the energy in this good.
2. Experience the ritual **handwashing** at the very beginning of the seder (again, you may need a more traditional haggadah) as your first taste of anticipated freedom. In slavery, one does not have the luxury of cleanliness let alone the use of water for purely ritual purposes. **Concentrate on the feeling of the redemptive water** – the water from which Moses is saved, the waters of the parting sea, the waters of Miriam's well, the water that sustains all life --being poured over your hands.
3. **Before your first bite of matzah, do a mini-meditation** (30-60 seconds will do unless you have guests who will be receptive to a meditative interlude) that focuses you on that place of the Essence, pure being.

Any number of moments during the seder present possibilities for short meditations. The three suggested above are easy to do privately if you are not in the company of others who have meditative proclivities. If you are, you may suggest these or other meditations to your guests (don't overdo it!). Whether for yourself or as a leader, mark your haggadah in advance to remind you of those places at which you want to be especially attentive and awake to the spiritual possibilities.