**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Tzav 5772**

Volume 3, Issue #28 8 Nisan 5772/March 31, 2012

*For a free subscription, please forward your request to* [*keren18@juno.com*](mailto:keren18@juno.com)

**Rabbi, Wife Share Tradition**

**Of Iconic Jewish Bread:**

**Vancouver Children Learn the Passover Story**

**By Jacques Von Lunen**

Matzo must be done baking within 18 minutes of the moment water meets flour, to prevent accidental rising.

Rabbi Shmulik Greenberg had the kids’ full attention.

“Are you ready to bake matzo?” he shouted out after telling the story of the iconic Jewish bread.

“Yay!” the two dozen children yelled back excitedly.

They had come to the Gan-Garrett Jewish preschool in Orchards to prepare for one of the high holidays of the Jewish calendar in a way none of them ever had — by baking matzo.

**The Reason for Eating Matzo**

The reason why Jews eat matzo is to remember their ancestors’ history, Tzivie Greenberg, the rabbi’s wife and director of the preschool, told the children.

The matzo was baked differently from other bread out of desperate necessity, according to Hebrew teachings. The Jewish people during their exodus from slavery in Egypt had to flee so hastily that they had no time to leaven their bread, that is, to let the dough rise.

And matzo is a poor man’s bread, made of only water and flour, lacking all the flavorful ingredients enjoyed in breads today, the rabbi’s wife told her students.

Jews all over the world eat matzo during the seven days of Passover, which this year doesn’t start until April 6, Shmulik Greenberg said.

But he wanted to build the mood of the holiday in his community’s children. He leads Chabad Lubavitch of Clark County.

“A major part of the holiday is to tell the children the story of Passover,” Greenberg said.

And to make the holiday story interesting to children, he brought the holiday to life.

[](http://www.columbian.com/photos/2012/mar/27/42553/)

*Rabbi Shmulik Greenberg shows Shalom Dinberg, 3, Cameron Hatton, 12, and Levi Greenberg, 5, how to grind wheat to make matzo at the Gan-Garrett Jewish preschool. Telling children the story of Passover is an integral part of the holiday, the rabbi said.(* Photo by [Steven Lane](http://www.columbian.com/staff/steven-lane/))

When the children filed into the preschool Tuesday, stations decorated in historic motifs were set up. After some short introductions, the children soon were separating wheat from chaff, grinding the wheat into flour by hand, adding water and rolling out the dough with wooden dowels.

They couldn’t dawdle with the dowels — no more than 18 minutes were allowed to pass from the time flour met water until the finished matzo loafs emerged from the oven.

[](http://www.columbian.com/photos/2012/mar/27/42554/)

*Photo of children’s freshly baked matzos (Photo by Steven Lane)*

That’s because the dough will start to rise after 18 minutes, which would mean the children and their families would disobey the ancient commandment to eat unleavened bread on Passover, Greenberg said.

He didn’t just learn how to make matzo out of a book — it’s a deep-rooted family tradition for him.

**Illegal to Bake Matzo**

**In Communist Russia**

Greenberg’s grandfather lived in communist Russia before emigrating to Israel in 1966, the rabbi said.

It was illegal to bake matzo in Russia in those days, so his grandfather built a hidden chamber in his fireplace and baked matzo at night.

Rabbi Greenberg can now pass on the tradition to the next generation. On Tuesday, he watched his 5-year-old son, Levi, make the traditional bread in the ancient ways of his people.

*Reprinted from the March 27, 2012 edition of The Columbian daily newspaper in Vancouver, Washington.*

**Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, Zt”l:**

**Living for Others**

**By Rabbi Yaacov Haber**

Last Wednesday I attended the funeral of Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, my teacher and spiritual guide of the past 40 years,. As a I took a seat up front, in clear sight of the deceased and the speakers, I thought to myself that this could be a funeral like so many others; a gathering of relatives, of close acquaintances, and in this case, students.



Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Sheinberg

But there was a tangible difference. According to news reports there were between 60 to 80 thousand men and women in attendance for the funeral for Rabbi Scheinberg. Most of them participated in the six kilometer funeral procession which wound by foot through Jerusalem to the Rabbi’s final resting place on the Mount of Olives.

Tens of people flew to Israel from the United States and Europe and amongst those in attendance were the most important leaders of the Jewish people; the Chief Rabbis of Israel, past and present; deans of the most prestigious Yeshivot, and Rabbinic leaders of the largest and most important communities in Israel. They all wept. Most of Jerusalem’s streets, schools and many of its shopping facilities were closed during the event. Jerusalem was in mourning.

I knew why I was there. Rabbi Scheinberg altered my life. Not only by giving me the tools that I needed to serve as a relatively effective Rabbi and teacher, but by showering me with a type of love, guidance and happiness that have been seminal to my life until today. In fact, hardly a day goes by that I don’t refer back to a teaching or an episode that was a lesson learned from my great teacher.

Why were the other tens of thousands there? Why were they crying?

Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, died at 101 years of age. Volumes could - and probably will - be written on his many unique qualities. In Poland, the place of his birth, on his own initiative he arose at 4 am every morning to tie his elderly grandfather’s shoes, enabling him to go to morning prayers at sunrise, and would then ask to join him at those prayers. His grandfather predicted that this boy will grow to be one of the greatest leaders of the Jewish people. He was then 5 years old.

He immigrated to the U.S. at the age of nine and notwithstanding the complete void in Jewish education and the spirit of mass assimilation at that time, the young Chaim Pinchus became a Torah scholar. He attended public school until age 14, when he left home to study in a Yeshiva in rural Connecticut.

At age 16 he was tested and celebrated the completion of an in-depth study of the entire Talmud, an accomplishment usually found in a select few advanced and elderly scholars. By the age of 19 he was tested on all of Shulchan Aruch, the Code of Jewish Law.

The author receiving a blessing from Rabbi Scheinberg at his wedding ceremony he was presented with a Semicha, Rabbinic ordination, signed by the most renowned Rabbis of Europe and America. And still, he was able to relate to his peers; he became an All American teenager.

Old timers would call him Lefty Scheinberg for decades for his proficient ability to play shortstop. But beyond his down to earth mannerisms, there was a very deep fire burning. An almost unexplainable yearning to help restore Judaism and Torah to its prominence and majesty.

He returned to Europe after his marriage to continue his studies in the famed Mir Yeshiva where he soon became know as the most diligent student in Mir. The great dean of the Mir Yeshivah, Rabbi Lazer Yudel Finkel, would say, “I have two very diligent students, Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz and Reb Chaim Scheinberg.” During that period he visited and spent time with the saintly Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan, who went on to become his guiding light in life.

He considered every moment precious, until his very last moments. Eventually he opened his own Torah institution which went on to become one of the most prestigious yeshivot in the world. To describe his Torah knowledge could only understate the case - he taught generations of scholars, and spread Torah to many thousands of students.

That being said, the 80,000 people who attended his funeral did not do so simply for his Torah knowledge. Those who met him sensed something unique.

When I was a Rabbi in Monsey, my family was fortunate that Rabbi Scheinberg would stay with us in our home on his visits to America. His schedule was grueling: up at 4 am to study and pray, receive hundreds of visitors all day and night until I would finally close the doors around 12 or 1 in the morning. Fifty years younger, I couldn’t keep up with him. I remember running after him with some food or a cup of coffee begging him to take a break for just a few minutes.

On Saturday night hundreds of visitors arrived soon after Shabbat ended with questions and requests for blessings. He happily received them. I recall one of the visitors being a young married man who was just diagnosed with cancer and was told clearly by several doctors that he only had weeks to live. The Rabbi warmly grasped his hand and comforted him.

After the crowds left, in the wee hours of the morning, Rabbi Scheinberg joined us in the kitchen and starting crying. It was uncomfortable. What do you say when a 92-year-old great Torah scholar is crying at your kitchen table?

I asked if there was anything I could do. He explained that he was crying for the young man who had received the terrible diagnosis. He then asked that we pray together for his recovery, which we did. After we prayed we sang together the Saturday night song of Eliyahu HaNavi. I cried too.

There must have been at least 200 visitors that Saturday night, and thousands during the preceding week. But the Rabbi was not jaded, not detached, and not neutral. A person told him a tragic story and he cried. Five minutes later someone shared a simcha and he was happy.

Someone gave him charity money to distribute and he took it. Someone asked for money and he gave it. He certainly wasn’t an actor, and had no pretenses. How could he switch emotions and roles? Another aspect of Rabbi Scheinberg’s life became clear to me; the Rabbi was virtually selfless.

He lived for others and fully identified with the person he was with. When someone spoke to him he felt his pain or his joy. When people spoke, he truly listened. He often taught us that when someone is speaking to us we should listen with all of our mind and heart. We should not be waiting for a chance to speak or even be formulating a response in our minds. When someone speaks we should be selfless and just listen. He lived for others. It wasn’t about him. It was about finding the good in others, and enabling them to become greater.

A mother once confided in me that out of her nine (!) children, there was one she found difficult. Try as she might, she simply didn’t get along with that child. She found herself picking on him, and not being as nice to him as the other children. One day, her husband became sick with hepatitis. As was his way when a student was ill, Rabbi Scheinberg called to arrange a time to visit him. When he arrived, the children were all bathed and in clean clothes and waiting at the door to greet their Rebbe.

Somehow, he immediately focused on that child. The one child the mother did not quite get along with. He looked at him intensely, turned to the mother and complimented his eyes. “This child has the most beautiful eyes!”

From that moment on, even during the most difficult times, the mother would notice this child’s eyes. In fact she told me that sometimes she looked at this child and all she would see were his magnificent eyes; eyes that she had never noticed before. Their relationship improved dramatically.

It wasn’t an isolated occurrence; he taught us that we should always try to find one special thing about every person we meet. After doing so, that trait becomes their ‘signature’, enabling us to always think well of them, be concerned for them, and build them up.

To be in his presence was in itself an experience. Totally unpretentious, he would tuck in a child’s shirt, tell him to tie his shoelaces, caress the cheek of a troubled father. There was literally an aura of peace, of tranquility, surrounding him. His faith and trust in G-d was so complete it actually transcended his own personal space to effect a change in anyone who approached him.

Students of his would return to Jerusalem after many years of being away and Rav Scheinberg would remember their stellar qualities (‘You still have that amazing memory?’ ‘You never lost your smile!’). He did this for many thousands of students.

He taught us many times that we can make another person’s day - and sometimes their life - different with a well- placed, albeit simple compliment. We have the power to make people great.

He was a great mensch and much more. He bonded with every single person he met. How could a man so devoted to the study and teaching of Torah spend so much time - and offer so much of his heart - to complete strangers? How did he remember them? How was his heart big enough to care for them?

Perhaps he would smile at the question and say ‘I follow the Torah! Treating people as human beings created in the Divine Image, keeping the laws of Shabbos or keeping Kosher. It is all one Torah, inseparable.’

Some people are impressive from afar, but the more you get to know them, the more blemishes appear and the more ordinary they seem. Not so with truly great people. The closer you are to them, the more you see greatness that you never noticed before. Tens of thousands saw in Rav Scheinberg an example of Torah. They saw the human potential of every person as they were all created in the image of G-d.

When he would hear people say, ‘I’m only human!’ he would tell them ‘human’ is a very great thing. To be human is to be G-dly. To internalize the Torah is to become G-dly. G-dliness touches everyone in it’s path.

I guess that is why they were all there last Wednesday morning.

Reprinted from the website of Aish.com

**The Kosel (Western Wall) Undergoes Cleaning for Pesach, Kvitlach Removed**

Armed with wooden poles, Kosel (the Western Wall in Jerusalem) employees yesterday removed millions of kvitlach - handwritten notes, faxes and email printouts - from between the ancient stones of the Kosel.

The Western Wall Heritage Foundation, which gives the Kosel such a face-lift twice a year - before the Pesach and ahead of Rosh Hashanah - are considering a third annual clean-up, due to the growing influx of kvitlach.

The kvitlach will be placed in a repository in accordance with halacha, with the laborers - working under the supervision of Kosel rov Rav Shmuel Rabinovich - taking care to not read their content.

Engineers also regularly conduct a test to determine the stability of the stones so that none are in the risk of falling on the mispalelim (people praying) below. (Editor’s Note: The Kosel or the Western Wall, the remaining remnant of the Beis Hamikdash or Holy Temple is considered by most Jews to the holiest site to Jews around the world)

*Reprinted from the Thursday website of Matzav.com*

**It Once Happened**

**Payback Time in Paris**

In 1985, Rabbi Yehouda Shvartz, a Lubavitcher Chasid in Paris, was a truck driver for "Orly," importers of kosher food from Israel to France. The company was owned by Rabbi Daniel Amram, also a member of the Lubavitch community in Paris.

Once, as Yehouda was driving a used truck that been purchased two weeks earlier, he realized that the brakes didn't work. He was nearing a red light at a busy intersection. He had two choices: to continue forward and kill many people G-d forbid, or turn left towards the bridge and fall into the river.

Yehouda turned the wheel sharply and rammed into the side of the bridge. The truck broke through the railing but then remained suspended half over the water and the other half on the bridge. Emergency personnel worked for hours to extricate him. The next day all the French newspapers carried a photo of his truck balanced on the bridge's edge. G-d had made a miracle!

The police investigation uncovered that the brakes had been faulty for quite awhile. An inquest was to be held to determine the responsibility for the accident. The damage to the bridge was 25,000,000 francs and according to the finding of the judge, one or more of the parties would have to pay.

In addition to Rabbi Amram, as the owner of the vehicle, and Yehouda, the driver, there was also an extremely wealth elderly gentleman who owned the company that had been responsible for repairing the truck. Each party came with lawyers who would argue that someone else was to blame.

But when the elderly man saw Yehouda and Rabbi Amram - with their beards and black hats - in the courtroom, to the amazement of the judge and the lawyers from both sides, he said: "It's not important to me who is at fault. I agree to pay the damages, the fine and the expenses of the case."

The judge was so taken aback that he waived the fine. He only had to pay for the damage that the truck had done to the retaining fence of the bridge. Then, the man said that he would take the truck to be fixed at a garage near his home and he would pay all the expenses.

Three weeks went by and Rabbi Amram got a phone call. The wealthy man was in Paris and could drive Yehouda back to the mechanic and get the truck which was now fixed. A half hour into the ride, the gentleman started asking Yehouda about Judaism. Yehouda, still shaken by the trauma of the accident, was not really interested in getting into a conversation.

"I once knew a rabbi," the man reminisced. "Let me see if I remember his name. Oh, it was Schneerson. He was a student with us in our Mathematics class in the Sorbonne." Now Yehouda began listening more intently.

"He was a noble looking young man, dressed elegantly but not in style. He always sat at the back of the class with a book on his lap and did not appear to be paying attention to the lesson. Moreover he was Jewish. We were not brought up to love Jews, and in occupied France in 1940, we did not have much to do with him at first.

"In those difficult days, some friends and I would earn money to pay for our studies by peddling butter on the Black Market. This involved travelling a distance and we would often be too tired to concentrate during our classes. This young man would explain the difficult problems to us. Many times his explanations were more clear than our teachers'. In this way we grew to appreciate his intelligence and good character and we became close to him.

"Then, one day, one of our professors, who clearly did not like Jews, decided to mock our fellow student. He put up an extremely difficult problem on the blackboard. 'We have with us an extremely intelligent student, Mr. Schneerson.' He said with disdain in his voice. 'I am sure that he can come up here and solve the problem for us.'

"Upon hearing his name, Rabbi Schneerson stood up. He walked calmly to the front of the room, looking regal as always. To the astonishment of students and teacher alike, he solved the problem, that should have taken an expert an hour and a half or more to complete, in a matter of a few minutes.

"We were happy that our friend was not embarrassed, but the professor grew more and more angry by the minute. 'Imposter, thief,' he shouted. 'Tell me who gave you the answer.'

"After the professor complained, Rabbi Schneerson was summoned to the Dean's office where a number of administrators were gathered to evaluate what had happened. Rabbi Schneerson then explained to them in great detail over several hours exactly how he had reached his solution to the problem. They were astonished at the innovative approach that he had taken and at the lucidity of his explanation.

"Once the administrators realized that they were dealing with a person of unique intelligence, they hastened to apologize. The professor was forced to beg forgiveness for the way he had treated his student in front of the class.

"I believe that the story was recorded in the official 'Livre d'Or' of the Sorbonne." The man finished, "Now you can understand why I insisted on paying for everything. I had often thought of my classmate from long ago, and wondered how I could repay his kindness. When I saw you and your friend, I remembered Rabbi Schneerson, and realized that the moment had come when I could do an act of kindness for his fellow Jews and settle my debt of gratitude to him."

Versions of this story have appeared in several publications. Yehouda Shvartz spoke with L'Chaim directly and recounted the original story.

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn. The story was printed in connection with the upcoming 110th Birth Anniversary of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, zt”l, the Lubavitcher Rebbe (1902-1994 and one of the major Jewish leaders of the 20th Century.)*

**Murray Lender, Who Gave All America a Taste of Bagels, Dies at 81**

**By Dennis Hevesi**

Murray Lender, who with his brothers took over what started as their father’s bakery in a backyard garage and built it into a business that brought the [bagel](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/b/bagels/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) — the “Jewish English muffin,” as he called it — into kitchens across the country, frozen, died on Wednesday in Miami. He was 81.

The cause was complications of a fall several weeks ago at his home in Aventura, Fla., his brother Marvin said.

Murray, Marvin and Sam Lender expanded H. Lender & Sons — founded by their father, Harry — into the nation’s leading distributor of packaged frozen bagels.

Lender’s Bagels, now owned by the Pinnacle Foods Group, had revenue of $40.9 million last year from the sale of 23.4 million six-bagel packages, according to SymphonyIRI Group, a Chicago-based market research company.

That’s a long way from the several dozen a day that Harry Lender hand-rolled and baked after emigrating from Poland in 1927, setting up shop in his garage in West Haven, Conn., and delivering to local grocers.

Murray Lender was president of the company from 1974 to 1982 and chairman two years later when it was sold to Kraft Foods. Pinnacle bought the company in 2003.

To be sure, it was Harry who started the transformation when he bought a large freezer in the 1950s. By ensuring that his product would not go stale after 24 hours, he was able to start distributing it across a large swath of Connecticut. After he died in 1960, his sons pooled their resources to build a plant in West Haven. At first about 100 workers produced 120,000 dozen bagels a week, packaging them in plastic bags and shipping them to 30 states.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| LENDER-obit-popup | spacer |

Murray Lender with a 563-pound bagel in 1996.

Photo by Doug Lawhead/Mattoon Journal Gazette, via Associated Press

“The 1970s saw an unprecedented interest in all things ethnic, and Lender’s frozen bagel was at the vanguard of the resurgence,” The Jerusalem Post reported in 2009, adding that by the end of the decade Lender’s had “reinvented the bagel as a versatile sandwich bread that could be as easily paired with peanut butter and jelly as it could be with ham and cheese.”

The company eventually had two plants in the New Haven area, one in Buffalo and another in Mattoon, Ill., a prairie town 180 miles south of Chicago. That plant, built by Kraft in 1986, has a 12-foot-wide conveyor belt holding 24 bagels across, a 70-yard-long oven and an 80-foot-tall, 250-foot-long freezer. By then the bagel had become a national food, in variants from the cinnamon raisin to the green [St. Patrick’s Day](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/s/st_patricks_day/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) variety.

“The vision,” Mr. Lender told The New York Times in 1996, “was to really get it out of the ethnic marketplace.”

Murray Isaac Lender was born in New Haven on Oct. 29, 1930, one of six children of Harry and Rose Braighter Lender. He was counting bagels in the backyard bakery before he was 11. After graduating from the Junior College of Commerce (now Quinnipiac University) in Hamden, Conn., he served two years in the Army, then went to work full time in the family business.

Besides his brother Marvin, Mr. Lender is survived by his wife, the former Gilda Winnick; a daughter, Haris Lender; two sons, Carl and Jay; and eight grandchildren. His brother Sam died in 2004.

After Kraft bought the company in 1984, Mr. Lender continued to work as its spokesman. “I never walked into anybody’s office without a toaster under one arm and a package of bagels under the other,” he said.

To those who contended that frozen bagels didn’t compare with the fresh ones found at shops opening around the country, he said, “I think our bagel is the best bagel in America, but on the other hand, I’ve never eaten a bad bagel.”

*Reprinted from the March 23, 2012 edition of The New York Times. Different tributes to Murray Lender were also published in the Jerusalem Post, Washington Post, USA Today, the New Haven Register and by the Associated Press, Reuters, CNN Money and NPR News.*

**Where Can One**

**Find Hashem?**

**By Savta Kops**

*Borei Olam*, can we find You atop of the highest mountain?

Or in the depth of the deepest ocean or simmering fountain?

G-d can only be found when permitted into one’s heart

By opening the passageway and making a solemn start.

Our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov were bound

With a solitary thought of the A-mighty and He was found.

They had a Divine spark and wished to install it to all mankind

To connect themselves to Hashem wholly, heart and mind.

Try to find beauty in all the *mitzvos* we learn and do

With joy in one’s heart, desiring to do more as a Jew.

Being thoughtful and smiling to those who are forlorn

Who cannot find peace, soothing their hearts that are torn.

Wisdom is the vehicle we receive, the ability to love

Enabling us to admire the beauty inherited from Above

To seek and understand His greatness to learn and see

By delving into learning, we can build a sanctified tree.

Loving Hashem is behind the *mitzvos* we were to keep

But living all the daily miracles until we retire to sleep.

Our thankful hearts overflow and we try to emulate Hashem

By assisting the poor with kindness as you endeavor to help them.

Discard the key to your heart, keep it opened without a lock

Follow our Creator, who shows forgiveness to His flock.

He will send the Final Redemption with His right hand

If we keep *Shabbos*, stand united, following His command.

*Reprinted from a recent issue of the Jewish Connection.*

**How I Prepared My House For Pesach in 59 Minutes**

**By Fradl Adams**

I am one of those women who men will always laugh at come Pesach cleaning time. I start cleaning the day after *Rosh* *Chodesh* *Cheshvan*, and I’m still finishing up as my husband makes his *bedikas* *chometz* rounds. I scrub every square inch of floor, ceiling, wall and counter until I’ve peeled off a layer of its surface along with any stubborn molecule of *chometz*, both visible and invisible.

I move every moveable and not-so-moveable appliance and piece of furniture and attack the area behind it with a vengeance that frightens the hardiest of onlookers. Every sock, every paper clip and every toothpick gets scrubbed down with soap, water and my magic cleanser. Don’t even get me started on the toys. You get the picture; I’m one of *those.*

I get mocked and I get hocked, mostly by the male population, but still I staunchly stick to my Pesach cleaning rituals and take great pride in my work. I keep a collection of some of my more interesting finds, exotic specimens discovered in the most unlikely places. These I show to any man who dares question my methods. I regale anyone who will listen with the story behind each piece of chometz (or pseudo-chometz), cherishing my precious stash until *Erev* Pesach, when I’m forced to burn it.

“This Cheerio was stuck to the inside wall of the filing cabinet drawers where I keep my pay-stubs from when I was still single.”

“This mold-growing pasta was sandwiched between two headbands in my 9-18 months ‘girls summer clothing bag’.”

My pride and joy: a piece of *lokshen* *kugel*, glued with some mysterious substance to the underside of our *seder* plate. That one I save for those who wonder why I have to Pesach clean the Pesach things.

Again, you get the idea.

I won’t go into great detail about cooking, but suffice it to say that, for about two months before Pesach, my life-saving kitchen in the basement sees a non-stop flurry of activity, from the oven to the freezer, and then back again.

One particular year, I was due to give birth three weeks before Pesach. We decided to spend Pesach with my parents in Baltimore to spare me what I call my labor of love, but what the rest of the family deems backbreaking, excessive and unnecessary. I must admit, I was kind of relieved to be able to take it easy that year. It was a difficult pregnancy and waking up the morning after *Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan* with nothing but the usual daily chores on my agenda felt great.

I used my spare time to focus on the children, giving each my full attention while they spoke, spending ample time with them on their homework, even sitting down and playing games, making projects and having a great time. Gone was the rush, the madness and the “Let’s get this over with quickly because I have to clean and cook for Pesach.”

As Pesach neared, we consumed as many *chometz* products as we were able and got rid of whatever was left. When I gave birth to a beautiful baby boy a mere two weeks before *Yom* *Tov*, we planned the *bris* without the added pressure of cooking and cleaning for Pesach.

Then, *Bedikas Chometz* day dawned crisp and clear, and I was super relaxed. No last minute cleaning for me. All I had to do was clean one room for my husband to do a *bedika* on, have him call our Rabbi to sell the remaining chometz, wherever it was hiding, to the non-Jew, and we’d be off early tomorrow to a relaxing Pesach. Or so I thought.

Erev Pesach was a great day for interstate traveling. In the early afternoon, after a day and a half of frenzied packing, we piled into the car with our new addition carefully bundled into his car seat. It was with a true feeling of liberty, of *z’man cheiruseinu*, that we pulled out of our driveway.

Our liberty was pretty short lived. It began with a slight rumbling, then continued with a more ominous hissing. The *coup de grace* was the billowing smoke emanating from under the hood of our car. Barely two hours into the eight hour trip, we found ourselves on the side of the I-80 at a safe distance from our smoking car. *My heart sank.*

Shivering in our thin sweaters, my six girls and I huddled together while my husband attempted to get in touch with the AAA. Thankfully, the newborn was more appropriately attired and was comfortable for the moment, but a glance at my watch told me that he would very soon get hungry.

Thus began the waiting… and the whining… and the waiting… By the time the tow truck showed up, an hour later, the sinking feeling had begun to settle deep in my stomach.

While my husband and oldest daughter traveled home in the tow truck, I and the rest of the crew had to settle for a car service. Our desperate plea to be towed to Baltimore elicited incredulous laughter from our kind but businesslike tow truck driver. The cost of taking the car service the rest of the way to Baltimore ruled out that option. We piled into our home exactly sixty minutes before candle lighting time, with the alarming awareness that Pesach has to be made… *Now!*

The panic that had been slowly rising over the course of this surreal day shot up exponentially. I attempted to quell it by closing my eyes and inhaling really deeply. After ascertaining that this was not some nightmare I had yet to wake up from in the warmth of our car, I took mental stock of the situation. We had spent a minute talking and strategizing, meaning that *candle lighting* was now in fifty nine minutes. In that time we would need arrangement for our meals, out of the house, obviously, and we would need to clean and do a *bedikah* of our entire house.

I steadied my shaking hands, swallowed hard and opened my eyes to face my troops.

“Okay, everyone, gather round for your assignments. We have exactly 59 minutes until *yom tov*, and that means we have 59 minutes to get this house ready for Pesach. What do you say; think we can do it?”

The gleam in my older daughters’ eyes told me they were up for the challenge, Hashem should bless their souls. Because a mutiny was the last thing I needed on my hands at that moment.

My husband made arrangements for us to eat out for the first days at least, miraculously at one house. We could buy supplies after that or make the trip, a bit late. The first order of business for me was to map out the battlefield. I assigned two adults, or semi-adults, to each level of the house. The oldest girls would tackle upstairs; my husband and middle daughter would take on the main floor until he would begin the *bedika*, and the “Younger Middles”, as we like to call them, would handle the basement. My youngest girl, the new baby, and I would supervise.

I designated one of the bedrooms upstairs as the “Lock-Up room”, where we stowed anything that likely contained *chometz* but was too complicated to clean. We would lock up this room and that would be the room where all the non-Jew’s chometz would be stored, should he honor us with a visit.

The three displaced girls would bunk with their sisters. I had already packed the children’s clothing for Yom Tov, so all the other clothing went in the Lock-Up room, as well as toys, games and books and select pieces of furniture.

We turned the music on loud enough to reverberate through all corners of the house, ensuring that only the fastest tunes with the most invigorating beats play, to help us maintain the tempo and rhythm of our cleaning.

Following behind me, by just a few steps, was my husband doing a quickie *bedika*, the shortest he had ever done for a full house *bedika*, and this year even he discovered “real” *chometz.*

Meanwhile, I tried to close my eyes to this short-cut version of Pesach cleaning that was transpiring in my very own home. My husband kept our devoted *rov* on the phone nearly the entire time, asking checking, receiving guidance and inspiration (and counseling). It was amazing how little I truly knew about what was required, what was recommended and what was ridiculous.

“Move the stove?”

“No!”

“The fridge gaskets?

“Pour ammonia!”

“Coat pockets?”

“Whatever they’ll wear on Pesach.”

The questions were endless. Chairs, mattresses, window shades, sock drawers… we’d never thought to differentiate between what was necessary and what wasn’t; we’d always just cleaned it all.

Couches that would be used on Pesach were opened, moved and vacuumed. Toys were all stowed out of sight, besides for a select few that were easy to clean and would suffice to keep the children busy for the entire duration of our *Yom* *Tov* at home.

We didn’t even bother checking the books, generally a job that took two weeks, as I had very strict no–eating–and–reading rules. Tables were covered tightly with waterproof material, and the *chometz* kitchenware wasn’t even glanced at.

We scrubbed, we covered and we taped shut. We laughed, we sang, and we screamed.

Some time in the middle of all the madness, my husband recited with particular intensity the words that nullified any *chometz* we’d overlooked, and ran out to shul, six blocks away.

I took over. The adrenaline coursing through my veins helped me forget that I was still recovering from birth and not exactly operating at peak strength. We swept and vacuumed till the kids said it’s time to light.

When my husband returned from *maariv,* it was to a home smelling of lemon-scented cleanser and hefty doses of Ajax and to a tired but glowing troop of women lining up to greet him. 59 minutes and we had done it (or it had done us in). Right then and there, all I could think about was, if I did *this* I could do anything.

I could make a wedding two weeks before Pesach, and I could have 50 guests over for the *seder.* I could compromise slightly on my self-imposed pressure to be perfect and I could make Pesach no matter what else may be going on in my life.

Because in future years, if circumstances will seem difficult and I’ll wonder how to cope, all I’d have to do is remember the time I made Pesach in 59 minutes.

*Reprinted from the May 2012 edition of KASHRUS Magazine.*