

Freeing Ourselves from Excess Cont'd

Perhaps our loved ones would want us to let go of these objects if it allowed us to lead healthier lives, unburdened by clutter. Perhaps they would encourage us to take their spirit, love, and values on our journey, while letting go of material objects that no longer serve us.

Material objects may be thrown away when necessary, but the spirit of our loved ones is forever imprinted on our hearts.

Letting go of excess material objects has the potential to bring us great holiness. It allows us to reminisce on the glorious days of our past while symbolically making room for new experiences.

Of course, there are some *truly special* objects worth holding onto all the days of our lives; but there is wisdom in recognizing that not every object fits into this category. We must recognize which objects simply weigh us down.

There is a story told, that one day, a man prepared to visit the Chofetz Chaim, the great Rabbi Israel Kagan. This man always imagined what the rabbi's home might look like. Perhaps there would be beautiful Jewish paintings or a collection of family heirlooms.

When the man entered the rabbi's home, he was struck by how empty it was. There seemed to be barely anything around.

"Where is your furniture?" the man asked.

"Where is yours?" replied the rabbi.

"Oh, I'm only passing through," said the man. To which the Chofetz Chaim replied, "I am also just passing through. I'm only a visitor in this world."

This story invites us to think about the material objects in our own lives. Which objects are necessities? Which objects simply take up space?

As Passover approaches, there is a tradition to clean our homes of *chametz*, any leavened products. *Chametz* also may refer to any form of excess weighing us down. Passover gives us an opportunity for spring cleaning. This holy time invites us to examine our homes, as we ask ourselves:

What do we hold precious enough to save?

What do we have the courage to part with?

What will we donate to those in need?

As we eliminate the clutter in our lives, we may feel a sense of relief—we may become lighter, more capable of living in the present moment.

Rabbi Shlomo Ibn Gabirol (1021-1058) said, “Who seeks more than he needs, hinders himself from enjoying what he has. Seek what you need and give up what you need not. For in giving up what you don’t need, you’ll learn what you really do need.”¹

On Passover when we sing *Dayenu*, we sing over and over again: *It would have been enough!* We celebrate the miracles our people have witnessed, and we declare that each miracle on its own would have been enough. Each blessing in our lives would have been enough.

May each of us examine our own lives and realize when we have enough—when we do not need more. May we realize when eliminating excess will lighten our load and inspire healthy, holy living.

¹ Morinis, Alan. *Every Day Holy Day*. Trumpeter, Boston 2010. Page 135.