

# I Flee

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Source: Original by Warren Hoffman

I'm in hour three of cleaning my kitchen and there's still no end in sight.

Crouching on my kitchen floor, refrigerator door open, food stuffs spoiling around me, I wonder

Is this what the Israelites did?

Did they throw out their moldy jars of pasta sauce and shriveled vegetables, so rotten I'm not sure what some of the things once were?

I have taken my kitchen apart in a rather manic fashion. Pots to scour sit on the countertops, cabinet doors are open, their shelves needing to be wiped, *chametz* begs to be discarded.

I thought the Israelites were in a hurry to get away. Did they let their "Easy-Off" sit overnight in their ovens as the can recommends?

I try not to think about the hours of cooking that still lie ahead, and the house that needs to be cleaned before guests arrive, and all the other "ands" that are making my head spin.

I could say this is "slavery" that I'm experiencing, what my ancestors went through, but that would be insulting to them.

How am I supposed to connect to this holiday that seems more like one long advertisement for Soft Scrub and Clorox than a spiritual journey?

Another 18 minutes passes, enough time to bake matzo, and I haven't done a thing, lost in some foggy cleaning stupor. The refrigerator door is still open, energy just spilling out. My kitchen looks like something out of *Hoarders* and I start to panic that if I don't get out of there soon, I'll be buried alive amidst the half-eaten burrito and pots and pans and dirty paper towels that surround me.

I crawl through the debris of the kitchen on my hands and knees, pushing months of old food away from me, and make my way to the dining room where bags of overpriced Passover goods sit. I'm already regretting the impulse buy of the kosher for Passover pizza that I know will taste like a soggy shoe that someone left in the gutter.

On my dining room table sits a megapack of matzo. More boxes than I'll ever need, but hey, I know a deal when I see one and the megapack, stuffed with enough cardboard-like crackers to ensure that my bowels need not visit my bathroom for the next 8 days, is truly a bargain.

I rip open the plastic packaging and take out a box and hold it in my hands. The Israelites, with the Egyptians fast on their heels, made matzo because they didn't have time to let the dough rise.

But no one is chasing me now, the clock quietly ticking, the house deathly still. And yet, suddenly, I feel the need to run too. To get out of my house, away from my kitchen with the petrified vegetables and moldy salad dressing and stale burrito.

To feel something, *anything*, that will connect me to this ancient holiday that we're supposed to experience at seder as if we were there. As if we were slaves ourselves, sitting at our Williams-Sonoma place settings, eating overpriced kosher meat made with our Cuisinart appliances.

We are meant to feel, to empathize.

But I feel nothing and for once I want to feel something. Even a little bit.

And so I take a single box of matzo from the megapack and open my front door.

The kids of my Mexican neighbors are playing out front. A trash truck is slowly turning down my street like a lumbering elephant.

I'm lucky, I know. What a great time to be living. I step outside onto my stoop, leaving the front door ajar, no bloody marks telling the Angel of Death to stay away, and holding my box of matzo, like my Israelite ancestors, I start to run and I don't look back.