BRING IT HOME SHABBATON
APRIL 2-4
SHABBOS HAGADOL
LOCATION: YOUR HOME
DEAR NCSYERS,

NCSY has been running inspirational Shabbatons for over 60 years. Those Shabbatons have educated, uplifted and changed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

We are now living through a once in a lifetime pandemic that has come with many challenges and opportunities. We have a unique opportunity now to take part in NCSY’s first ever virtual Shabbaton! The hope is, for it to be just as fun, educational, uplifting and life changing as an in person Shabbaton. We have been working around the clock over the past two weeks to make sure we have done the best we can to ensure that happens and now it’s over to you!

Once upon a time in a remote mountain range hidden from civilization, lived an old wise man surrounded by countless students. Periodically the wise old man would venture down into the local village and entertain the villagers with his knowledge, and enlightenment. One of his talents was to “psychically” tell the villagers the contents in their pockets or minds.

One day a young student decided to attempt to discredit the wise man’s special abilities. The student came up with an elaborate plan to capture a butterfly and hide it in his hands. He of course knew that the wise man would know what he’s holding. The student’s plan was that the wise man would correctly state the object in his hands was a butterfly, then he would proceed to ask the man if the butterfly was dead or alive. If the man said the butterfly was alive, the student would crush the butterfly with his hands, so that when he opened his hands the butterfly would be dead; if the man said the butterfly was dead, the student would open his hands and let the butterfly fly free. So no matter what the old man said, the student would prove the man’s a fraud.

The following week the wise old man came down the mountain into the village and along the way, villagers would line up to ask him their most difficult questions. The student showed up and asked: “Sir, if indeed you are as wise and talented as everyone believes you are, please tell me whether the butterfly in my hand is dead or alive”

For a moment it appeared as if the wise man was at a loss for words, the student thought he finally cornered the wise old man. In a moment the wise man looked the boy straight into his wide expectant eyes, then glanced at his closed hand, and slowly shook his head from side to side.

Then he said: “Son, whether the butterfly is dead or alive, is entirely in your hands!”

It’s our responsibility to take whatever situation God has placed us in and make the most of it. How you choose to spend this Shabbat is completely in your hands. We hope that you will use this special Shabbat to deepen your connection to God, enjoy precious time with your family, find time to introspect and have FUN.
THURSDAY NIGHT
8:00 PM CHALLAH BAKE
8:30 PM CHOLENT MAKE

FRIDAY
All times are based on Cedarhurst, NY and may vary depending on location.
5:30 PM PRE-SHABBOS RUACH & CANDLE LIGHTING PROGRAM ONLINE
7:00 PM SING KABBALAS SHABBOS WITH YOUR FAMILY! Please see Kabbalat Shabbat Packet.
7:04 PM CANDLE LIGHTING PAGE 4
7:45 PM SHABBOS DINNER WITH YOUR FAMILY! PAGE 6
8:15 PM FIRST DVAR TORAH
8:30 PM BIRKAT HAMAZON OUT LOUD
8:45 PM SHABBOS ONEG & SHABBOX GAMES PAGE 11
9:45 PM DMC (DEEP MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION)
11:00 PM CURFEW! LAYLA TOV

SHABBAT DAY
8:30 AM WAKE UP (Your advisors will be busy! Please make sure to wake yourself up 😊)
9:00 AM SHACHARIS – MORNING PRAYERS
11:30 AM KIDDUSH AND PARSHA PACKET LEARNING Please see Parsha Packet.
12:00 PM SHABBOX GAMES WITH YOUR FAMILY!
12:30 PM SHABBOS LUNCH WITH YOUR FAMILY!
2:00 PM BOARD GAMES WITH YOUR FAMILY!
2:45 PM GET FRUSTRATED WITH THE FIRST GAME AND PICK A NEW ONE
4:00 PM SHABBOS NAP
5:00 PM WAKE UP FROM SHABBOS NAP Please see Road to Personal Freedom Session Packet.
5:30 PM READ A GOOD BOOK OR SEFER
6:30 PM SHALESHUDES/SEUDAT SHLISHIT & EBBING Please see Seudah Shlishit Song Sheet.
8:05 PM SHABBOS ENDS – CEDARHURST, NY PAGE 13
* Please consult Shabbat times for your area! *
8:30 PM GLOW IN THE DARK MUSICAL HAVDALAH ONLINE
9:30 PM MELAVE Malka (ESCORTING THE SHABBOS QUEEN) WITH RABBI TZACHI DIAMOND ONLINE
How to turn Friday night into Shabbat

Clean Your Room! Make sure your house looks awesome for Shabbat!

Dress extra special! Wear your nicest clothes, even though you’re not going out!

Have a meal with your whole family! Try to get everyone involved.

Stay tech free! Keep phones off and in a different room.

Take a shower. Brush your hair.

Light Candles! Make sure you do it before sunset.

Hold a cup of grape juice and make the blessings of Kiddush.
Every Friday afternoon, just before the sun begins to set (18 minutes to be exact), I strike a match and kindle the lights. The lights that will light up the room, the lights that will light up the souls of all that partake in them. Lighting the candles connects me to all the other women around the world that are bringing the spirit of Shabbos upon them.

A minimum of two candles should be lit, these represent “shamor” (keep) and “zachor” (remember), (both of these words begin the command of Shabbos in the ten commandments; Exodus 20:8 Deuteronomy 5:12, respectively).

**STEP BY STEP**

01 Light the candles

02 Draw your hands around the candles and towards your face from one to three times.

03 Cover your eyes with the hands

04 Say the blessing: *Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha’olam asher kid’shanu b’mitzvotav v’tzivanu l’hadlik ner shel shabbat.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, king of the Universe, who has sanctified us with commandments, and commanded us to light Shabbat candles.

Before you uncover your eyes, use this time to pray, Pray for all the things you desire, pray for even the things you think can never happen, because you will be tapping into the merits of all those women who light their candles as well.

05 Uncover your eyes, look at the candles first, and say good shabbos.

This ritual is done in this way because of a number of reasons. The first and foremost is, normally when someone does a mitzvah they make a blessing and then do the action. I make a blessing and only then do I shake the *Lulav*, or listen to the *megillah*. When lighting candles for shabbos however, if we first made the blessing, we would have accepted shabbos and we would not be permitted to light the candles, therefore we light the candles, cover our eyes, (blocking the light) make the blessing, pray and then uncover our eyes, as if the candles have just been ignited.
BACK IN THE MID-NINETIES, a Jewish advertising executive in New York came up with an idea. What if the New York Times - considered by some to be the world's most prestigious newspaper - listed the weekly Shabbat candle lighting time each week. Sure someone would have to pay for the space. But imagine the Jewish awareness and pride that might result from such a prominent mention of the Jewish Shabbat each week. He got in touch with a Jewish philanthropist and sold him on the idea. It cost almost two thousand dollars a week. But he did it. And for the next five years, each Friday, Jews around the world would see "Jewish Women: Shabbat candle the lighting time this Friday is..."

Eventually the philanthropist had to cut back on a number of his projects. And in June 1999, the little Shabbat notice and stopped appearing in the Friday Times. and from that week on it never appeared again. Except once.

On January 1, 2000, the NY Times ran a Millennium edition. It was a special issue that featured three front pages. One had the news from January 1, 1900. The second was the actual news of the day, January 1, 2000. And then they had a third front page. Projecting future events of January 1, 2100. This fictional page included things like a welcome to the fifty-first state: Cuba. As well as a discussion as to whether robots should be allowed to vote. And so on. And in addition to the fascinating articles, there was one more thing. Down on the bottom of the Year 2100 front page, was the candle lighting time in New York for January 1, 2100.

Nobody paid for it. It was just put in by the NY Times.

The production manager of the New York Times - an Irish Catholic - was asked about it. His answer was right on the mark. And it speaks to the eternity of our people. And to the power of Jewish ritual. "We don't know what will happen in the year 2100. It is impossible to predict the future. But of one thing you can be certain: that, in the year 2100, Jewish women will be lighting candles each Friday night."

EXCERPT FROM A WOMAN WHO WENT ON TJJ FOR MOMS ISRAEL TRIP:

“While my Jewish Heritage was always important to me, it has taken on a much deeper level of significance since my trip to Israel. Having celebrated Shabbat in Israel, I saw the beauty in observing our Sabbath in a way I hadn’t before my trip. Lighting shabbat candles has become a weekly tradition in my home with my children, and I try to make family Shabbat dinners whenever possible......”
Have you ever had one of those weeks that was just wild? When you couldn’t catch a breath because everything was moving so fast? Where deadlines kept coming and stresses kept building? What about a week where you couldn’t even leave your own house?

Let’s think back. During such a week, how are our relationships? How is the bond between us and those we love? There are people in the world, probably some right near you at this moment, that you would give up everything for, and yet, in times of high pressure, those relationships may take a back seat. Our relationship with G-d is no different. In fact, the only reason we have relationships with people in this world is to understand our relationship with G-d. So, in a very literal sense our relationship with G-d faces the same exact challenges that we face with friends or family. We get busy and push the relationship aside. So what can we do?

It was from this very problem that the famed “date night” was born. A time to switch off your phone, dress your best, have a glass of wine, sit down to a nice meal, and focus singularly on the person whom you so cherish. Shabbat is our date night with G-d. We stop what we’re doing, and focus. Focus on the relationship with G-d, on the relationship with our family, and on the relationship with ourselves.

As we welcome the Shabbat into our home, we take a moment to recognise the distinction between the mundane of our daily routine and the sanctity of our relationship with the Almighty. The word for this distinction; Kiddush, meaning “Making Holy”, refers not only to the Shabbat, but also to each and every one of us. We make ourselves holy by taking our relationship with Hashem to new heights. Let this Shabbat be the spark that reignites our bond.

A HALACHIC PERSPECTIVE:

One is obligated to recite “Kiddush B’makom Seudah” - Kiddush in the same place that one has a meal. It is therefore best to say Kiddush at the Shabbat table immediately before the meal. Alternatively, however, one can say Kiddush anywhere and then eat a k’zayit (1.27 fl. oz./38 ml) of a grain-based, Mezonot product (which is about the volume of a golf-ball), in fulfillment of Kiddush B’makom Seudah.
The Impossible Kiddush:

When we first immigrated to Canada from Holland in 1951, we settled in Toronto. We were a family of ten children. I was already twenty years old, and so I went to work, while my younger siblings went to school. The two youngest ones stayed home with my mother – Obi, who was three, and the baby, Amina, who was not quite two at the time.

It was hard on my mother, because the house had no modern facilities and, to do the laundry, she had to boil water in a big pot on the stove, then haul it upstairs to the bathroom which was on the second floor. One day, when she was going back and forth, she returned upstairs to find Amina submerged in the pot of boiling water!

In a panic, my mother grabbed her and she immediately saw that her skin was coming off her. She wrapped Amina in a sheet, and rushed her to the Hospital for Sick Children. I don’t know how she managed this, because she didn’t speak English, but she ran out into the street screaming, and people helped her.

Later that same day – which was Thursday, November 22, 1951 – I was sent to the hospital to talk to the doctors because I was the only one in the family who was fluent in English, having attended the Bais Yaakov seminary in London. The doctors’ prognosis was grim. “Tell your parents that there is no hope,” they said. “She is very, very sick, and we are trying our best.”

Indeed, they were trying. They put her in a cast in order to minimize the exposure of the burned skin to the air and retain as much fluid in the tissues as possible. But they really didn’t think that this would help her survive.

Realizing the gravity of her condition, and not knowing who else to turn to, my father called his brother-in-law, Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Aizik Hodakov, who served as the secretary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Rabbi Hodakov took the matter to the Rebbe, who said that Amina would be alright, and he instructed my father to make a communal kiddush that Shabbat, specifying that my mother be involved in the preparations.

It felt strange to us to be making a celebratory kiddush, but my parents – who were not Chabad chasidim – put on the kiddush because the Rebbe had instructed them to. Word spread in the neighborhood and many Lubavitcher chasidim showed up – they ate, they drank, they danced. They put their all into it, knowing the directive had come from the Rebbe, which meant it was important. And when Shabbat was over, we found out that the Rebbe had been right – Amina was still alive despite the doctor’s worst predictions. We began to grasp the power of the Rebbe’s blessing, and our trust in G-d was renewed, as our hopes grew. But she was hardly out of danger.

The following Saturday, December 1, was her second birthday, and we planned to go to the hospital on Sunday to celebrate and give her some small presents. Instead, the police came to our door – because we had no phone and the hospital couldn’t call us – to inform us that we needed to rush to the hospital because Amina was dying.

When we arrived, she was in bad shape. It was awful to look at her little face. Her
cheeks were sunken, and there were deep black circles under her eyes. I tried to pull my mother away, saying, “Don’t look, don’t look,” but she said, “This is my child. I have to.”

My father called the Rebbe again, and again the Rebbe said that she would be all right. My brother Dovid remembers that, on this occasion, my father spoke directly with the Rebbe who told him, “You are a local Rabbi. It is your job to see that Jewish education in the city is as it should be, that the kosher standards are good … You must do your job, and G-d will do His.”

While the doctors were constantly trying to prepare us for the worst, the Rebbe continued to sustain our hope, which we clung to as the months passed and Amina remained on the critical list. During this time, there were many setbacks and close calls, as when her fever spiked to 106 and, again, when she began vomiting and deteriorating for an unexplained reason.

In the latter instance, when my father informed the Rebbe, he said, “Ask the hospital to check what they are doing. Something is not right.”

It is very difficult for a foreigner who doesn’t speak the language to challenge doctors and insist that they double-check their treatment. However, the Rebbe’s certitude that the hospital was making some sort of mistake instilled my parents with courage. So they spoke up.

As it turned out, Amina was being given the wrong medicine – an improper injection or something like that. I don’t remember specifically what it was, but I do remember that my parents’ insistence caused the hospital to correct the mistake. It took months for her to recuperate, but, ultimately, the Rebbe was right – she got better and was able to function normally.

When she became engaged to Yitzchak Newman, he was a bit worried that the trauma her body had suffered as a result of the burns might affect her ability to bear children. He asked the Rebbe about it, but the Rebbe assured him there was nothing to be concerned about. Indeed, she went on to have sixteen children, which was very unusual in itself. Now her children are raising their own children, so a whole tribe has come out of that miracle.

Mrs. Schulamith Bechhoffer (1931-2018) was the daughter of Rabbi Dov Yehudah and Sarah Shochet. She was a teacher who resided in Queens, New York, where she was interviewed in August, 2012

**SOMETHING TO PONDER:**

We make Kiddush on two occasions over the course of Shabbat. Once as an induction on Friday Night, and once before we eat in the day. The Kiddush of Shabbat Day is known as “Kiddush Rabbah”, which means “The Great Kiddush.” This would imply that the other Kiddush, that of Friday Night is inferior, whereas in actuality it is really the Friday evening Kiddush that holds the greater level of prestige. Why then do we refer to the daytime Kiddush as the “great” one?

One answer given is that this terminology emphasises that even the “second place” kiddush is also of very great importance, and must not be overlooked. This goes to show that within relationships, it’s not all about the grand gestures, but often it’s the smaller things that make the relationship “great”.

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Exodus 16:4-5
(4) And the LORD said to Moses, “I will rain down bread for you from the sky, and the people shall go out and gather each day that day’s portion—that I may thus test them, to see whether they will follow My instructions or not. (5) But on the sixth day, when they apportion what they have brought in, it shall prove to be double the amount they gather each day.”

Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 274
(1) The Laws Pertaining to Breaking Bread on Shabbos, 4 Seifim: 1. Every person is obligated to break bread on two [whole] loaves. One holds them both in his hands and breaks the bottom one. RAMA: Specifically on the night of Shabbat. However on Shabbat day, or on the night of Yom Tov, we break the top one [Kol Bo; Hagahos Maimoni] and the reason is according to the Kabbalah.

(2) 2. It is a mitzvah on Shabbat to break a big piece that will last you through the whole meal [and see above Siman 167].

(3) 3. Those participating in the meal may not partake [of the bread] until the person breaking bread [first] partakes [of the bread that he cuts]. If, however, two loaves are placed before each one of them, they may partake of their bread even though he has not yet partaken of his.

**STEP BY STEP**

01 Keep the loaves covered until the recitation of the blessing.

02 After all of the assembled have washed their hands and are ready, mark the bread with the knife.

03 Hold the breads side by side and recite the blessing.

04 Cut a piece from the center of the loaf and eat a bit—after dipping it in salt.

05 Cut the bread up for the assembled to eat and pass around for everyone. (Each piece should first be dipped in salt.)
IN BERGEN BELSEN, when Shabbos approached each week, the Klausenberger Rebbe did his utmost to obtain two challos in honor of the holy day. Even though he never had enough bread to satisfy his hunger, he had to have two challos over which to recite Kiddush and eat the Shabbos meal. The Germans distributed daily portions of bread to the prisoners in whole loaves, one loaf for six prisoners. Every evening when they returned from the hard labor, the prisoners stood in line for their loaves of bread, which they then divided up among themselves. The Rebbe searched for five volunteers each week who would agree to forgo Thursday’s loaf and keep it whole until Friday night, when they would get a second loaf. Then they would use both loaves as challah for Shabbos and eat them both. It should be noted, however, that sometimes the Rebbe would notice that one of his five volunteers looked ravenous or very weak. The Rebbe would slice the bread immediately and urge the prisoner to eat it so that he would get stronger, even though it meant that the Rebbe would not have his lechem mishna.

NOT ONLY DO DIFFERENT types of food require different blessings, but there is actually a hierarchy that regulates the order in which we recite blessings and eat various foods.

Generally, the seven foods with which the land of Israel is praised—wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates—take priority over other foods. In the event that one is eating two or more of these foods, they are eaten in the order that they are mentioned in the Torah. Since grain is mentioned before grapes, it would follow that the bread should be eaten before the wine.

We therefore cover the bread (“wheat”) in order that it not be “shamed” by the fact that we drink the kiddush wine (“grapes”) before we partake of the challah. Tur, Orach Chaim 271, quoting the Jerusalem Talmud.

Obviously the lesson is that we go through lengths not to "embarrass" inanimate objects, how much more careful should we be with people and their feelings. Covering the Challah on Shabbat serves as a reminder to us.
The word “oneg” brings most of us back to a cozy Friday night with friends, perhaps even on a shabbaton, back to the smell of steaming hot cholent, really good candy, and to the sound of the most inspiring Jewish songs. But, what many do not realize is that the name for everyone’s favorite Friday night chill is actually derived from one of the most essential mitzvos of Shabbos itself:

“You shall call the Shabbos ‘oneg’ - enjoyment or delight, the holy of Hashem honored, and you honor it by not doing your wonted ways, by not pursuing your affairs and speaking words. Then, you shall delight with Hashem, and I will cause you to ride on the high places of the land, and I will give you to eat the heritage of Yaakov your father, for the mouth of Hashem has spoken.” - (Yeshaya, 58:13-14)

Interestingly, Shabbos is the only mitzvah that requires the reaction of oneg. You may be able to think of other mitzvos associated with “simcha” - joy, like Purim or various Yamim Tovim, but “oneg” is something different, a unique experience reserved solely for the holy Shabbos. That means, technically, you don’t have to enjoy davening. You don’t have to enjoy honoring your parents. You don’t have to enjoy giving charity. You don’t have to enjoy keeping kosher. But, if you don’t enjoy Shabbos, you’re actually missing the essence of what Shabbos is all about.

What does it mean to have “oneg Shabbos”?

How can Hashem command that I enjoy something? What if I just don’t?!

On the most basic level, “oneg Shabbos” refers to engaging in certain activities on Shabbos just for the sake of their enjoyment, even if they don’t seem very spiritual. Whether for you it’s taking a nice walk or meeting up with a friend, reading a book or taking a nap - these activities can all fall under the category of “oneg Shabbos.”

The Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos 30:7-10) particularly emphasizes eating extra special, delicious food in honor of Shabbos.

But, if one looks more carefully at the source for “oneg Shabbos”, he will notice the commandment is not actually “to delight in Shabbos”, but rather “to call Shabbos a delight” and that, if one does call it so, the natural result will be that he will, in fact, delight in Shabbos and in Hashem. Shabbos is inherently a day of oneg. It’s full of good and it’s waiting to be tapped into and accessed by you. Yes, there’s oneg in eating special food we don’t have during the week. But, beyond the homemade challah and potato kugel is God’s more essential request - “call Shabbos a delight.”

Speak about Shabbos with excitement. View Shabbos positively. Enter Shabbos saying “this is a day of goodness, of enjoyment, of delight that goes far deeper than the greatest delicacies one can possibly prepare to eat at his Shabbos table. All we have to do is put in our effort to view Shabbos as a day of oneg, to call it “oneg”, and Hashem promises we will get to experience the objective reality of oneg Shabbos.
Shabbos does not give me something new, something from above. It opens me up to experience the boundless depth and height that is within me, that I have spent the week in developing. The halakha calls on us to find the delight in that experience, for otherwise the point will be lost. What is delight? It is the recognition that this boundless depth is in me, that I can experience it, cherish it, be one with it. . . If you only REST on Shabbat, recuperate from a week of toil, you miss out on the inner message - that you, within you, contain the light of creation. One has to open one's eyes to see the obvious. One has to make an effort to ensure that the experience of the infinite is grasped and internalized. The way to do that, paradoxically enough, is not by trying hard, but by enjoyment - by opening oneself to let the experience sparkle and delight us.

No other mitzvah has oneg, for all other mitzvot add to man from outside himself. If he enjoys that, good, and if not, also good. Shabbat adds nothing if you do not enjoy it, because it is not new, or rather it is a new dimension to yourself. Its only value is in the recognition that it is there, in the sudden realization how much value resides in the soul of a creative human being. That realization is delight.

BEREISHIS RABAH, 11:4
Our master (R. Yehuda Ha-nasi, the author of the Mishna) made a meal for Antoninus (the Roman emperor) on Shabbos. He served a cold dish, (Antoninus) tasted it, and it was pleasant. (Antoninus) made a meal on a weekday and served a boiling dish. (Antoninus) said: The first was more pleasant to me. (R. Yehuda) said to him: It is missing one spice. (Antoninus) said: Is anything missing from the king's treasury? He said to him: It is missing Shabbos. Do you have Shabbos?

WHY WOULD A COLD dish taste better on Shabbos than a boiling hot dish during the week? The answer is that Shabbos is the secret ingredient. When we view the day of Shabbos through the lens of “oneg”, when we choose to refer to it as a day of immense, deep enjoyment, we experience the same activities, the same foods, the same conversations, through Shabbos and it tastes entirely more delightful.
**WHAT IS HAVDALAH:** Wines, spices and candle. Easy as 1-2-3.

Just as we proclaim the entrance of Shabbat by making “Kiddush,” so too we mark the exit of Shabbat with “Havdalah” (translated as distinguish or differentiate). The deeper understanding of this is we don’t let Shabbat leave without solidifying and internalizing everything we gained from the holy Shabbat that we shared together before entering the mundane days of the week.

In that way, we realise that we, the Jewish People, are imbued with the same potential for Godliness as the holy Sabbath and can continue to carry it with us until the next Shabbat when we will have the opportunity for a recharge. This is deeply conveyed in the concluding words of Havdalah.

**WHAT YOU’LL NEED:**
- Double-wicked candle (or two candles held with flames together)
- Cup of wine or grape juice
- Spices (cloves or cinnamon work well)
- Piece of foil (or plate) for dripping the candle on, and extinguishing the flame

**WHEN DO YOU SAY IT AND WHY?**

Shabbat ends when three medium-sized stars are visible in one glance in the evening sky. This time varies according to location and season.

**A** Introductory paragraph - The introduction to the Havdalah consists of nine joyful biblical verses which set the tone for a hopeful and joyous week to come.

**B** Blessing over the wine - On joyous occasions we celebrate with wine and sanctify the moment.

**C** Blessing over spices. The Kabbalists tell us during Shabbat, we each receive an extra soul, or extra spiritual sensitivity. So as Shabbat goes away, so does the extra soul, causing us to feel spiritually desensitized. For this reason, we smell some spices (spiritual smelling salts!) to comfort our soul (the deepest part within us) at the loss of Shabbat.

**D** Blessing on the flame. The Talmud says that when Adam was created on Day Six, he became anxious and disturbed when he saw darkness setting in on Friday night. He thought perhaps the world was ending! To counter this, God gave Adam the gift of fire on Saturday night. Therefore, we say the blessing over fire on Saturday night. The Havdalah candle also reflects the primordial first light of creation; new beginnings, a new commitment. We hope to extend the light of Shabbat into our week.

**E** Finally, the blessing of the Havdalah itself.
“Havdalah” literally means “separation”: in a world with so much confusion, we often struggle to differentiate, separate and prioritize. Ultimately, this wisdom to differentiate between right and wrong, between the important and unimportant, elevates and refines us. It is a skill that we strive to incorporate into our upcoming week as we leave the serenity of Shabbos. May we sanctify our week through Havdalah. Kiddush sanctifies Shabbos. Havdalah sanctifies the week.

— Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin
Hallel Redner, 12th Grade, Townsend Harris High School

“A constant fire shall burn upon the altar; it shall never burn out.” These powerful words, read in this week’s Parshat Tzav, are enough to illustrate the undying devotion of the Jews to Hashem as they prepared to assemble the Mishkan for the first time. After an unbelievable redemption from Egypt... brimming with miracles, radiating with Hashem’s supernatural strength... These words from the Parsha can easily stand alone. The coalescence of Parshat Tzav with Shabbat Hagadol, however, unearths a new, human element to the perpetual fire that is described. On the tenth of Nissan, the Jews were commanded to tie a lamb – the very animal that the Egyptians worshipped – to each of their bedposts. A period of four days before the lambs were to be sacrificed ensured that the Jews’ adherence to the word of Hashem was openly displayed. When asked what the lambs were for, the Jewish people found the courage to profess their loyalty to God in front of the Egyptians under whom they were enslaved for generations. They even boldly told them that God would kill their firstborn sons with the tenth plague. An internal war erupted upon hearing this, with the Egyptian firstborns demanding the release of the Jews from the hands of Pharaoh. Shabbat Hagadol signifies the very beginning of the Jewish people’s courage and the swelling pride of identity that comes with it. For the first time, they confronted the Egyptians, not with miracles, but with their own confidence. The strength that they found within themselves, within each other, left the Egyptians “incapable of uttering a word in protest”, with many of them even fighting on behalf of the Jewish people’s freedom. When the lambs were originally tied to the bedposts in Egypt, the tenth of Nissan fell on a Shabbat. The blossoming of the Jewish people’s freedom, therefore, is celebrated on the Shabbat before Pesach. Although Shabbat Hagadol very rarely coincides with the tenth of Nissan, the Jews’ confidence in Hashem is intrinsically connected to the holiness of Shabbat. Today, the tenth of Nissan and Shabbat Hagadol coincide as they did in Egypt over two thousand years ago. Despite the vast amount of time and history between us, we find ourselves sharing other parallels with the Jews in Egypt on this Shabbat. Makat Habechorot (The Plague of the Firstborns), bound them to their homes for protection, as many of us are today. As the Ari Hakadosh explained, Pesach can also be read as “Peh Sach,” or “a mouth that speaks,” highlighting the dialogue about our freedom that is essential to the essence of Pesach. On this special Shabbat Hagadol, the fire of our ancestors is kept burning with every spiritual conversation and every effort to grow closer to Hashem and to one other within each of our homes.

Naomi Feygin, 12th Grade, Hewlett High School

The word “freedom” has multiple definitions. It’s the power or right to speak or act without restraint, the unrestricted use to do something, the list goes on. With everything going on in the world right now, our freedom as individuals is more restricted than ever. It’s all for a good reason because no one wants to get sick, but it’s restricting and irritating that during this break or “coronacation” from life, we can’t be within 6 feet of our loved ones or friends. If we didn’t have to stay inside and still got the break, then obviously everyone would be thrilled to be free from school and work restrictions, but what would they use their freedom to do? There’s millions of answers to that, because with unlimited freedom you have unlimited answers.
One way we can connect freedom and Judaism is through the story of Pesach, when our ancestors had experienced years of slavery under Pharaoh but where finally freed and left to go to Israel. We celebrate the exodus every year as a reminder of what happened to our ancestors and how we overcame it.

But for me as an individual, I would spend my freedom trying to do something worthwhile. The freedom of doing something good when you could’ve been doing something fun or otherwise is incredibly rewarding and I know that first hand. Over the February break, I participated in a relief trip to Houston, Texas where me and a group of teenagers gave up the freedom of a week long vacation to do some good. Together, the group helped to rebuild a house, and to package over 1,000 meals for those affected by Hurricane Harvey. It was incredibly rewarding and the trip itself was eye-opening and enjoyable. As a group, we bonded and learned about doing good as individuals and as Jewish people. During the recent Jewish holiday of Purim, there are several Mitzvahs that we carry out over the holiday, but a big one is the giving of charity to the needy, otherwise known as Matanot LaEvyonim. We also discussed the ways to give charity, whether anonymously or not, when giving it. All the discussions about the gift of giving and how good it feels where very eye opening and interesting to take part in.

The trip to Houston will be one I won’t forget. By giving up my freedom over a vacation to instead go and do something good, I learned many valuable lessons and how to “caulk”. Being free means not being restricted by something. I gave up my freedom to do some good and I would gladly do it again.

**DANIEL BOROVSKIY 12TH GRADE, LEON GOLDSTEIN HIGH SCHOOL**

“Thank You” – we use the phrase so much: sometimes it seems like we have worn it out and taken away its meaning. Does that mean we should stop using it altogether? Absolutely not: as Jews, we have to say, “thank you.” What then do we do, continue to say the useless phrase? No: not because we shouldn’t say “thank you” but because the phrase has meaning. Every time we say it, we must truly be thankful. When we thank G-d for our happiness and health, when we thank our parents for providing for us, when we thank our friends for looking out for us, we should feel thankful (that’s the real reason we should say “thank you”.)

Every year, at least one of the Jewish club meetings at my school focus on the importance of being thankful. I remember a particular meeting where the rabbi leading the club, who comes in to teach at my school’s club every Tuesday, asked me to put on a blindfold and keep it on. The rabbi told a few others to either put earplugs in, put rubber bands on their fingertips, or to not talk even when the rabbi called on them to answer a question. A few minutes later, he asked us how we felt, to which we all responded that it was annoying and uncomfortable to give up such important abilities and senses as sight, touch, speech. The rabbi then pointed out that I was in the blindfold for a few minutes while some people are blind, and always will be. In that moment, I realized that I was taking so much for granted: when was the last time I paused to say, “thank G-d I’m able to see“? That club meeting has stuck with me since constantly reminding me how important it is to be grateful and to show it.