

Seder in the time of corona

This Passover holiday is different from all other Passovers.

The coronavirus pandemic presents us with an opportunity to experience firsthand the story we tell every year. Only today, it's not about our ancestors. It's about us.

This Haggadah (Passover Guide) focuses on The 14 Steps of the Seder (Passover meal) to encourage our evolution through this crisis. The white boxes indicate the Jewish rituals, prayers, blessings, songs, etc. per step. You may add them if you like.

The color palette is black and white because this is a life or death matter.

You'll find links to various inspirational sources, The People, at the end.

If the Exodus freed the Israelites to serve their G-d, for what will our freedom be?

- Lauren Zinn, April 8, 2020

PASSOVER 2020/5780

freedom from pandemic

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The Name

"I confess I chuckle when I hear the name of the virus abbreviated to COVID-19. Koved in Hebrew means heaviness, weightiness. And I feel the heaviness of the responsibility ahead of us – the responsibility not to panic, the responsibility to learn and help each other learn the ways to stay healthy. And I feel the weight of the not-knowing – not knowing how exactly this will unfold."

- Rabbi Irwin Keller, Hope Monger

1. Kadesh

Separation is the first step to freedom.

"You must leave somewhere to get somewhere."

We separate by sanctifying ourselves.

How is Covid-19 highlighting the 'narrow places' from which we must separate today (including pre-Covid conditions)?

Bless the
candlelights

Bless 1st
Cup of Wine

Bless our
lives
reaching this
moment

The Seder
Plate

Candle Lighting

Pandemic

What if you thought of it as the Jews consider the Sabbath—the most sacred of times? Cease from travel. Cease from buying and selling. Give up, just for now, on trying to make the world different than it is. Sing. Pray.

Touch only those to whom you commit your life. Center down. And when your body has become still, reach out with your heart. Know that we are connected in ways that are terrifying and beautiful. (You could hardly deny it now.) Know that our lives are in one another's hands. (Surely, that has come clear.)

Do not reach out your hands. Reach out your heart. Reach out your words. Reach out all the tendrils of compassion that move, invisibly, where we cannot touch. Promise this world your love—for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, so long as we all shall live.

- Lynn Ungar

Wine Blessing

"Koved in Yiddish means honor, respect. And I am called to honor the complexity of the Creation we live in. This Creation in which uncountable species compete for space and survival, including the tiniest ones, who can sometimes take down the mightiest among us. Species who, unlike humans, are not guided by malice, but simply by being what they are."

- Irwin Keller

Shehecheyanu

*"May all who are sick be healed. May all who are well stay well.
And may we hold this time in awe and in love, as a species and
as a community, hardwired for healing, compassion, and care."*

- Irwin Keller

2. Urchatz

Once we separate, we clean up our act through purification by washing our hands/emotions with water/wisdom.

Pass pitcher
of soapy
water and a
clean towel
to wash and
dry hands

No blessing

With what wisdom do we purify our emotions?

What can Covid-19 teach us?

Listen

"There is an opportunity for some of us to slow down right now, to be a kind of witness to what's happening and why it is happening. I'm trying to make sure I sit on my mat and cushion every morning, do some deep breathing and listening, and then engage in my journal where I try to "capture"....for lack of a better word....the messages that hopefully come from a place of wisdom and compassion. "

- Lenny Bass, The Man Who Talks to Trees

3. Karpas

*To liberate ourselves from narrowness/slavery,
we remind ourselves of its harshness
and prepare for our freedom.*

Recall our world's harshness before and
during Covid-19.

How might a *post*-Covid-19 world
evoke feelings of hope?

Harshness =
Saltwater
(tears)

Hope =
parsley,
celery,
boiled egg

Dip the hope
in the
harshness

Bless the
greens of
the earth

Hope

In the Time of Pandemic

And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows.

And the people began to think differently.

And the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal. And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.

- Kitty O'Meara

4. Yachatz

Breaking the matzah symbolizes the splitting of the Red Sea which allowed the Jews to leave Egypt. Breaking reminds us of our interdependence.

How has Covid-19 made us aware of our dependence on others and of others' dependence on us (locally & globally)?

Break the middle of the 3 matzot

"This is the bread our ancestors ate in Egypt."

Hide the bigger half of the broken matzah

"Let anyone who is hungry enter and eat."

Breaking

"May our culture be transformed through the opening created by this **break** from business as usual so that it becomes embedded in our common consciousness that we all are connected, and each person has the basic human right to home, health, dignity and opportunity."

- Barry Barkan

5. Maggid

We tell the story of how we left the Mitzrayim of Egypt, a narrow place; the wonders of G-d, the role of Moses, Pharoah, G-d, and the Ten Plagues.

The Exodus is a continuous story that defines us. Telling the story reveals our essence.

How does the story of Covid-19 reveal our essence today?

G-D, Moses,
Pharoah

The Ten
Plagues

The Four
Questions,
The 4 Sons

Bless 2nd
Cup of Wine

Songs:
Dayenu,
Ballad, etc.

Of Plagues, Questions, Sons

"I hear a lot of people (especially my age), who claim this will change politics and social patterns forever....Our world has been through many pandemics before... I'm interested in how the world changed after major Flu Pandemics in '68, '56, and '18 (each which killed millions - tens of millions). I want to say that I "hope we learn from this" -- but..."

- Noah Beiting, a college student

"Dear coronavirus, welcome to Kenya. A few things you should know - here, we don't die of flu. Don't be surprised if you fail to succeed. Everything fails in Kenya. We also cannot afford to pay you too much attention because we are really, really broke. We are more likely to die of a cholera attack than to be killed by you. For us, every day is a run escape from death. We are the walking dead. (Kenya is not excited to host coronavirus. The locusts, the biggest infestation in 75 years, got here first.) Death can befall us anytime and we are not scared. If it comes, let it come. Why worry over what we can't control? Everything dies right? Even you corona will die!

- Samuel Mang'era, a college student

***Covid* Story Telling**

"And so we will get through this. If we have to stay at home more. Read books. Wash our hands like our mothers told us to. Eat cans of vegetarian chili. Talk to each other on the phone. Pray together or welcome Shabbat together by Zoom or Skype or Google Hangout -- we will find our ingenious ways of being fully human: caring, creative, innovative, amusing. Because that is what our species does. And our meeting that other species will be cause to remember it. And so I offer koved, respect, honor, to all of us, our bodies and our neshomes [souls], to all humanity."

- Irwin Keller

Dayenu

"As we try to navigate our anxiety about the coronavirus, there's one quote I've been trying to keep at the forefront of my mind.

It's by the Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh:

*When the crowded Vietnamese refugee boats met with storms or pirates, if everyone panicked all would be lost. But if even one person on the boat remained calm and centered, **it was enough**. It showed the way for everyone to survive."*

- Tara Brach

6. Rochtza

Every generation must prepare to find freedom from its oppression, slavery, narrow-mindedness.

Bless and
wash hands

When future generations look back at how we met with Covid-19 and how we altered our society as a result, what will they say?

Water =
symbol of
renewal

Renewal

"...all the silver lining [is] down the road a ways. But for now, there is/will be much anger, blame, sadness, fear, worry that can easily take us "down the rabbit hole"...We have to be careful not to get pulled there!..."

- Lenny Bass

As we wash our hands, We pray, Blessed is the Soul of the Universe,
Breathing us in and breathing us out. May our breath continue
And our health and the health of all Be preserved. In this time of sickness
and fear of sickness. Holy Wholeness, We take as much responsibility for
this as we can By observing the obligation to wash our hands Thoroughly:
For as long as it takes to say this prayer. Amen

- The Ritual Well

7. Motzie Matzah

Like a seed of grain underground, we're buried in an identity of mitzrayim/narrowness. As grain becomes bread in the baker's oven, so too does the furnace of oppression liberate our true gifts. Bread puffs up like egos but Matzah reminds us of our true identity.

How has the impact of Covid-19 liberated our true concerns?

"We are like bread..."

Bless bread:
HaMotzie

Hold, bless
and eat
matzah

Freeing Us

"My biggest concern is with the many, many people who are the most vulnerable among us: people who are financially marginalized, people who are without houses living in tents or in doorways; people who are living from pay-check to pay-check and can't afford to miss work; people who are in overcrowded prisons, jails and detention centers; or people who have fragile health or who like myself simply have lived a long time. May the greater forces be summoned from within and beyond each of us so that each person who is at risk is protected."

- Barry Barkan

8. Maror

If we get used to slavery, it's hard to leave and we become self-destructive. Adding optimism and direction to bitterness springs us to freedom.

What was bitter about life *before* Covid-19?
How can this global hardship lead to a more
just and compassionate world?

Dip bitter
herbs in
charoset

Bless the
bitter herbs

Life's
bitterness
motivates us
to change

Be Loving

"If we become ill, don't blame ourselves. Be loving and kind to each person who is caring for us. They're putting themselves at risk to help us. Our kind consideration, even when we are in the worst of circumstances, is our best insurance that we will receive that extra measure of love and attention that distinguishes great care from good care or even mediocre care."

- Barry Barkan

9. Korech

The sandwich reminds us to reunite those cut-off parts of our selves, to awaken to our true expansiveness, in order to accept our freedom.

Make a sandwich of matzah, bitter herbs, charoset

Will we revert to 'business as usual' after Covid-19 or will we grow spiritually, expanding our sense of self in community, to become a caring culture?

Recognize the unity of life's responsibilities.

Reunion

"This morning it occurred to me that we each have arrived to this situation from the varying paths we have taken through life. This makes each of us uniquely equipped to help with this crisis in some specific way that represents the path we have taken...after all is said and done, we will be a better culture having gone through this. We will learn a bit about humility, kindness, gratitude, and who it is that is exactly "in charge" around here."

- Lenny Bass

10. Shulchan Orech

Look at the table!

All you prepared to eat.

A feast.

Appreciate. Recline. Celebrate.

The Set Table

“As you move through these changing times... be easy on yourself and be easy on one another. You are at the beginning of something new. You are learning a new way of being. You will find that you are working less in the yang modes that you are used to.

You will stop working so hard at getting from point A to point B the way you have in the past, but instead, will spend more time experiencing yourself in the whole, and your place in it.

Instead of traveling to a goal out there, you will voyage deeper into yourself. Your mother’s grandmother knew how to do this. Your ancestors from long ago knew how to do this. They knew the power of the feminine principle... and because you carry their DNA in your body, this wisdom and this way of being is within you.

Call on it. Call it up. Invite your ancestors in. As the yang based habits and the decaying institutions on our planet begin to crumble, look up. A breeze is stirring. Feel the sun on your wings.”

- The Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers

11. Tzafun

Search for
the hidden
matzah

*Find the hidden piece of matzah, the
Afikoman.*

Share dessert.
Feel whole.
Give.

*Bringing us 'out of hiding', we become
whole.*

We yearn for community to make us whole.
How will we help each other create a post Covid-19
world better than the one before?

Out of Hiding

"...let's keep a dialog going, if only to keep reminding each other of the greater good this mysterious virus has, in my opinion, come to bring us. And when you find yourself "in the rabbit hole"...just give me a call....and I'll send down a rope and pull you out! Okay? And maybe I might call on you as well..!"

- Lenny Bass

12. Barech

Grace after
the meal.

*Express gratitude for all we've shared
and all we've received.*

Welcome
Elijah with a
cup of wine

How might our experience of life *in
this time* of Covid-19 enlarge the circle
of giving and receiving?

Drink the
3rd Cup of
Wine

Bless

"After all is said and done, we will become a much more humble society...We will be kinder rather than simply concerned about how to make the rich richer. We will appreciate each other's roles, and compensate one another on more equal footing. We'll appreciate what we have and we'll see that our collective health depends on one another across the board, not simply those with privilege. We'll be better for this in the long run..."

- Lenny Bass

13. Hallel

Make a joyful sound.

How are people, companies, and governments around the globe helping and nurturing each other during this historic pandemic?

Praise the
Source of
Oneness.

Drink the
4th Cup of
Wine

Praise

"...offer koved, respect, to the wonder of us, the wonder of humanity, that we are frail and vulnerable and as a result we create and we sing and we make beauty out of our frailty and we build community to be stronger together than we are on our own. We humans are strong and resilient. We spend our lives wandering between health and sickness and back to health again, over and over, just about always making it through. This is how we have evolved; this is the Universe in which we have evolved. This is Creation. And it is hard not to feel awe."

- Irwin Keller

14. Nirtzah

*Let's commit to a common vision
with our collective will.*

Could Covid-19 be the 'Red Sea' we
cross together as we create an
egalitarian, inclusive, sustainable,
fulfilling and fair society for all?

Tradition:
"Next Year,
Jerusalem."

Innovation:
"Now, city/
community
of peace."

Embrace

"Here we are in the midst of the global pandemic of 2020, a crisis only a very few among us --prophetic voices who have been essentially ignored-- could have imagined.

May we all be resilient. May each of us be careful, live our lives with joy, and come through this deeper, wiser, and more committed to the well-being of ourselves, of one another, and of future generations."

- Barry Barkan

The Story of Tonight

I may not live to see our glory But I will gladly join the fight
And when our children tell our story They'll tell the story of tonight
Let's have another round tonight Raise a glass to freedom
Something they can never take away No matter what they tell you
Raise a glass to the four of us Tomorrow there'll be more of us
Telling the story of tonight They'll tell the story of tonight

- Lin Manuel Miranda (Hamilton)

DONATE

Covid-19 Frontline Responders

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/frontlinerespondersfund>

Thank you, Lauren Zinn.

Comments? laurenzinn@zinnhouse.com

The People

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Samuel Mang'era [https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/03/29/](https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/03/29/822053880/kenya-poet-dear-corona-virus-don-t-be-surprised-if-you-fail)

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Lynn Isenberg <https://lynnisenberg.com/focus-media/>

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Lin Manuel Miranda <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vqwrepaMR0>