

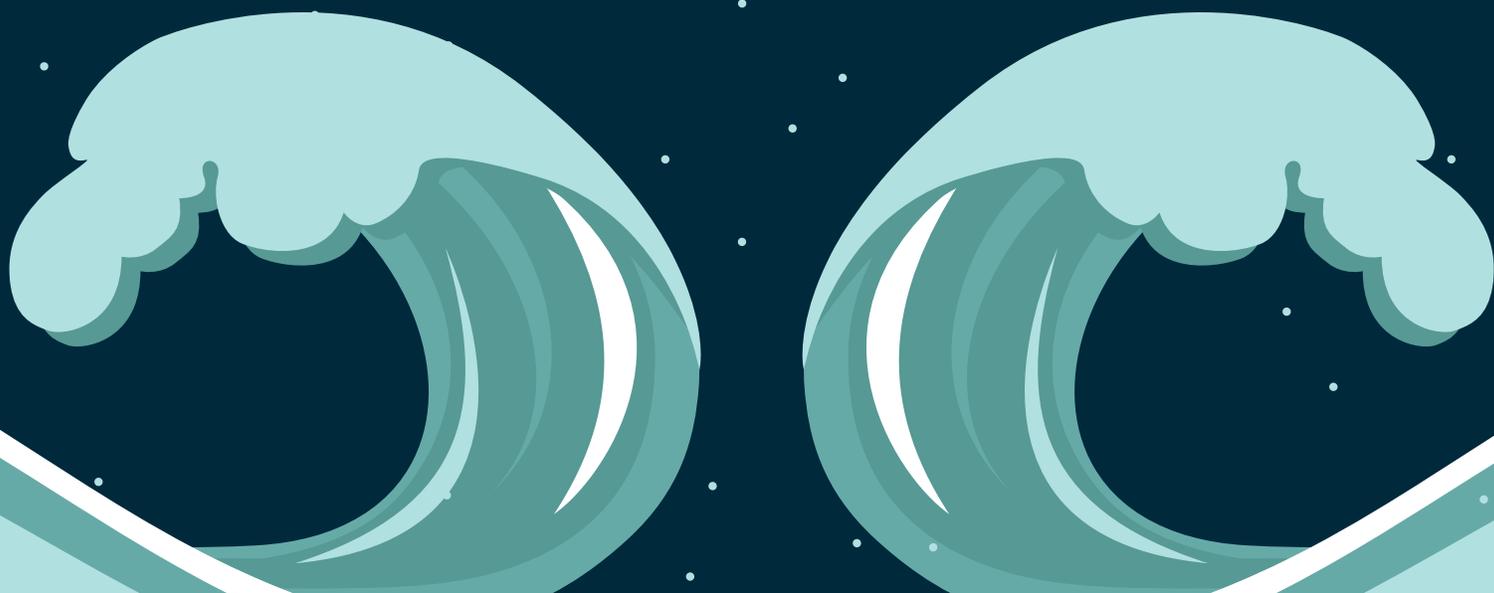


BRINGING SEDER to

CHAOS

Freedom in Quarantine

by Rabbi Dovid Bashevkin, Rabbi Jacob Bernstein, & Rabbi Josh Grajower



BRINGING SEDER to CHAOS



Freedom in Quarantine

DAY 1 - INTRODUCTION

 **The Caffeinated Therapist**
@bellabee13

Schools close, Tom Hanks, trouble in the big banks, no vaccine, quarantine, no more toilet paper seen.

Travel ban, Weinstein, panic COVID-19, NBA, gone away, what else do I have to sayyyyyy

 **Matt Warburton** @MCWarburton · Mar 12

Today was like if "we didn't start the fire" was a day.

12:29 AM · Mar 12, 2020 · [Twitter Web App](#)

66K Retweets 297.1K Likes

History is taking place before our eyes. A generation's worth of news is unfolding within days and weeks. The memory of how we spent these days will remain with us forever. We can sit at home and commiserate, or like so many Jews in difficult times before us, we can rise to the occasion and maximize the moment.

In just a few short weeks we will open up the most well-read history book of the Jewish people - the *Haggadah*. The name - הגדה - is rooted in the verse in the Torah which commands every father to teach his son the story of leaving Egypt, as it is written (*Shemot 13:8*):

וְהַגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ, בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר: בְּעֶבְרַת זֶה, עָשָׂה ה' לִי, בְּצֵאתִי מֵמִצְרַיִם

And you should tell your son on that day, saying. Because of this Hashem did this for me when I left Egypt.

Why in this context did Hashem specifically choose to use the language of הגדה, as opposed to the many other verbs we have for communication in the Hebrew language (ספר, אמר, דבר)? Is there something unique about the language of הגדה that correlates with this specific *mitzvah*?

Rabbi Meir Leibush Wisser zt"l, better known as the Malbim (*Bereishit 37:5*), explains that the verb הגדה is used to reflect a speech that is relevant to the personal life story of the speaker. There is much we communicate, but when we talk about our personal lives we use the word *haggadah*. This is the distinguishing factor of a הגדה from the other "synonymous" words used in the Torah for speaking. A דיבור, אמירה, or סיפור are not strong enough to convey that personal connection.

On the first night of Pesach, parents are commanded to teach their children about יציאת מצרים. It is not intended to be an intellectual activity or an interesting story, rather it is intended to transmit our fundamental tradition and faith in Hashem to the next generation. If one wants to have any success in effectively transmitting that tradition and faith, it must be communicated that the story is relevant and personal to the speaker. It cannot be something you simply tell another (דיבור or אמירה) or even a nice story (סיפור), it needs to be something infused with personal passion and commitment – a הגדה.

This year will be a Pesach like none other. **Join us daily in connecting the feelings and emotions of Pesach 2020 with the classical text of the Haggadah.** We look forward to you joining the conversation.

Join the Conversation

In the spirit of making our collective history of leaving Egypt more meaningful and current, what name would you give to the *Haggadah* of 2020?

Submit Your Answers

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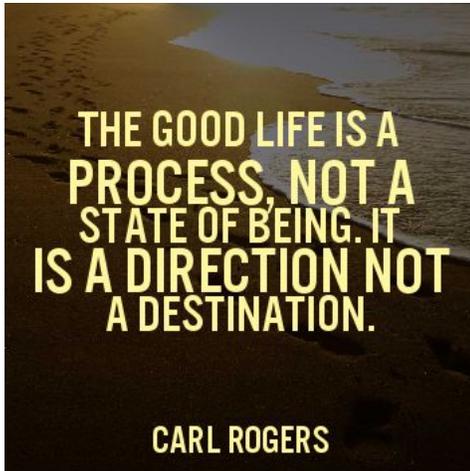
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DAY 2 - KADESH



On the Seder night we drink four cups of wine (or grape juice). But why four cups? Seems a bit excessive, no?

When God first appears to Moshe at the burning, He explains that He will redeem the Jewish people. Here is what God told Moshe:

לֵאמֹר לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי ה' וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבֹלֹת מִצְרַיִם וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעַבְדֹתָם וְגֵאלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָהּ וּבְשִׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים: וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהִיִּיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וַיְדַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבֹלֹת מִצְרַיִם:

Therefore, say to the children of Israel, 'I am the Lord, and I will take you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will save you from

their labor, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. And I will take you to Me as a people, and I will be a God to you, and you will know that I am the Lord your God, Who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

God uses four different verbs to describe the redemption. Why? Rabbi Shlomo Luschnitz explains in his commentary Kli Yakar that **redemption is not binary, it is a process**. Redemption has several steps and each step along the way is purposeful and meaningful. Rabbi Luschnitz explains that for the Jewish people the steps were as follows: **removing** them from physical pain, **saving** them from slavery, **redeeming** them as converts able to connect, **taking** them as a nation.

At the seder we drink four cups of wine to celebrate the process of redemption. Freedom from oppression can come in an instant, but true redemption takes time and development.

As articulated by the Kli Yakar, each language corresponds to a different step in the process. The first two represent a freedom that removes a negative, while the final two words associated with redemption introduce a positive. The image to the side reflects the process of each of these terms.



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What four words would you use to describe your redemption story?

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DAY 3 - URCHATZ

2020 Pesach Seder: Kadesh, Urchatz, Karpas, Urchatz, Yachatz, Urchatz, Maggid, Rochtza, Motzi-Matzah, Urchatz, Maror, Urchatz, Korech, Urchatz, Shulchan Orech, Urchatz, Tzafun, Urchatz, Barech, Urchatz, and so forth...

Hand washing is all the rage right now (for good reason!), but Jews have been a little obsessed with handwashing even before it was popular. At the seder though, we take it to the next level and wash at the very beginning of the meal before we eat the karpas. Why?

Before coronavirus, would you wash both hands before eating celery or potatoes? What is significant about this experience of dipping Karpas in salt water?

The reason we wash is a little technical, yet contains a profound insight. There are certain laws that pertained to the holiday of Pesach in the times of the Beit Hamikdash which are generally absent from our religious reality today. After all, at the center of our seder experience was the Korban Pesach. The seder today is comparable to ordering a Shawarma in a Laffa and only receiving the bread and lettuce! When the Temple stood, it was common practice to wash hands before eating foods that came in contact with a liquid. Therefore, even though we are generally not stringent to do this practice nowadays, at the seder we wash our hands before dipping the karpas in salt water...why?

R. Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, commonly known as the Netziv, explains that **we wash our hands during Urchatz because we try to emulate a life at the Beit Hamikdash during the Seder**. Wherever we may be for the seder this year (or any other year for that matter), we bring a piece of life at the Beit Hamikdash along with us. **For one night, we transcend our current reality and imagine a world that has the constant presence of Hashem right before our eyes**. Perhaps the first step toward a rebuilt Beit Hamikdash, is not only imagining its current existence, but by living for a moment as if it is here already.

Our ability to transcend reality is a unique tool for each of us when in a precarious situation. In our current state of isolation, confusion and concern it may be beneficial to tap into this skill to help us through the challenges of the coronavirus.



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Dublin, Ireland

Flexing in March 2019



Flexing in March 2020



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What have you done to keep your life "normal" during this period of social distancing?

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DAY 4 - KARPAS



"Italians and Jews, very similar. People say, same corporation, different division. We get along. There is an obvious thing with the religion. I went to my first Passover dinner...the food they start bringing out, oh God, terrible. Jews have no idea what they are doing in the kitchen. These people have no cuisine. Celery, crackers, jam. I'm like what is this, we're losing people!"

- Sebastian Maniscalco (watch the whole clip [here](#))

Everyone enjoys a good appetizer. On Seder night, we have a vegetable dipped in salt water. Is that the best we could come up with?!

The Talmud (Pesachim 114b) explains we eat this vegetable appetizer so the children will ask. This is a continuous theme throughout the night. But what do we want them to ask? And why this--surely there are stranger things to do than having a vegetable in saltwater. If they want children to ask, why not just wear a silly hat?

This isn't any appetizer--it's a reenactment. Rabbi Shmuel Binyamin Sofer, known as the Ksav Sofer, suggests that we eat a vegetable at the beginning of the seder because we are reliving our experience as slaves. When we were slaves in Egypt we were only able to eat vegetables and did not have meat and other delicacies. Therefore, we begin the seder remembering the food we ate in Egypt as slaves.

We have many reminders of slavery throughout the Haggadah. Perhaps this is a little different. The karpas is not just a reminder of slavery, it is **a taste of nostalgia**. It is clear in the Torah that the Jewish people looked back nostalgically on the vegetables they ate in Egypt (see [Bamidbar 11:5](#)). When we are in stressful situations, eating can often serve as a form of comfort. Therefore, we begin the seder by nostalgically remembering the foods that gave us a sense of hope while in slavery. **Karpas is our seder night comfort food.**



Me opening my fridge and realizing I ate all of my quarantine food



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What is your quarantine comfort food?

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DAY 5 - YACHATZ



“Hey, that’s my matzah--be careful with that!” For anyone who enjoys the pristine round (or square) matzah, this part of the Seder can be horrifying. We take the middle matzah and break it in half. The Talmud (Pesachim 115b) explains that just as someone in poverty only has crumbs, on Passover, we eat the bread of paupers.

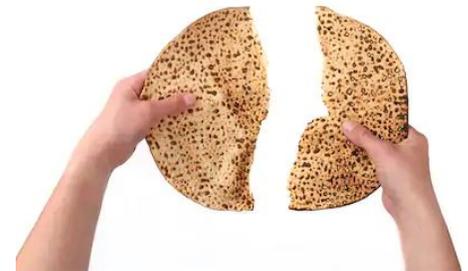
There’s a very simple and important message here. Broken matzah is not exactly a luxurious meal. **Eating the food of poverty is an exercise in humility.** This is an appropriate time to reflect on cultivating humility.

And recently that has become harder.

In 2010, the late comedian Harry Wittels noticed a trend, people bragging in a humble way. He called it a humble brag. “Ugh, keep getting pulled over in my new red lambo #struggleisreal.” In our attempt to stay humble or share, we’ve found a way to brag at the same time. **Yachatz reminds us that wholeness emerges through vulnerability.** As the great Rebbe of Kotzk said, “there is nothing more whole than a broken heart.”

David Brooks, in his New York Times column (April 2015) developed a concept called **a moral bucket list**, the great values we should strive to achieve over the course of our lives. **At the top of his list was humility.** This is what he wrote:

“The humility shift: We live in a culture of the Big Me. The meritocracy wants you to promote yourself. Social media wants you to broadcast a highlight reel of your life...But all the people I’ve ever deeply admired are profoundly honest about their own weaknesses..They have achieved a profound humility, what has been defined as an intense self-awareness from a position of other-centeredness.”



It’s great to have whole matza in your life, but make sure you share your broken pieces as well.

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Give us your best Jewish #humblebrag

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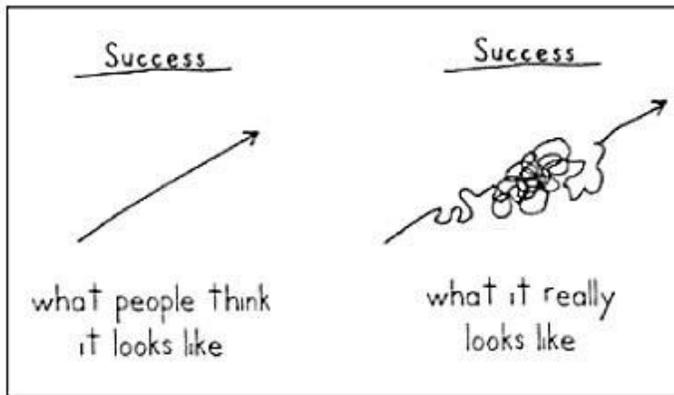
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DAY 6 - MAGGID



When did your family come to this country? How did your parents meet? What is the source of your name? Which of your grandparents are you most like?

These questions aren't just cute family trivia--they tell us about how we cope. In a study from Emory University, they discovered that children's ability to cope correlated with their knowledge of their family history.

The Pesach Seder is about the redemption of the Jewish nation. Parents are obligated to teach their children our collective family history (see Shemot 13:8). The Talmud (Pesachim 116a) explains that one cannot just tell the positive outcome of leaving Egypt, rather one must tell the whole story - מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח - starting with the disgrace and ending with the praise. **We are mandated to teach our children the complete unedited history of our people.**

Bruce Feiler wrote a widely disseminated but continually relevant article for the New York Times, [The Stories That Bind Us](#). He explains that when a child knows the family history the child feels a sense of belonging and being part of a larger narrative, which ultimately helps with coping with personal setbacks.

Feiler outlines three basic family narratives: (1) the ascending narrative - "Son when we came to this country, we had nothing. Our family worked. We opened a store. Your grandfather went to high school. Your father went to college. And now you..." (2) the descending narrative - "Sweetheart, we used to have it all. Then we lost everything." (3) the oscillating narrative - "Dear, let me tell you, we've had ups and downs in our family."

He explains further that the oscillating narrative is the most healthful narrative. It is healthy to know that one comes from a history of ups and downs. **The Torah is an oscillating narrative, highlighting the highs and lows of the Jewish people.** As Jews, our historical narrative is embedded into our learning and our practice. At the same time, it is important for each individual family to tell their own family narrative. For many families, the seder is the optimal setting for retelling their family story, within the context of the greater story of the Jewish people.

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What is a unique family custom you have at your Seder?

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DAY 7 - HA LACHMA AN'YA



Natan Farber
@NatanFarber

CORONAVIRUS SHAYLA:

Will we be able to say כל דכפין ייתי ויכל at the Seder this year?

12:13 PM · Mar 22, 2020 · [TweetDeck](#)

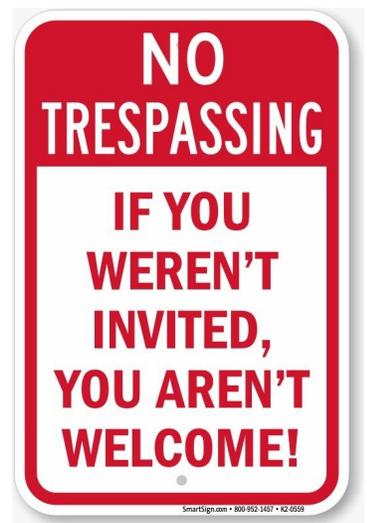
✓ The declaration we state at the beginning of the seder - כל דכפין ייתי ויכל - inviting all people to come and eat with us, on an average year feels disingenuous given that the Seder has already begun. It seems odd to offer an invitation to others when in reality it's too late. This year though, it feels like a flat out lie! We are (in all likelihood) going to remain in social-distancing throughout Pesach and we actually cannot invite people to our seder. What is the purpose and meaning of this paragraph?

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks offers an incredible perspective on the act of offering an invitation that sheds light onto this odd practice. He writes:

Sharing food is the first act through which slaves become free human beings. One who fears tomorrow does not offer his bread to others. But one who is willing to divide his food with a stranger has already shown himself to be capable of fellowship and faith, the two things from which hope is born. That is why we begin the seder by inviting others to join us. Bread shared is no longer the bread of oppression. Reaching out to others, giving help to the needy and companionship to those who are alone, we bring freedom into the world, and with freedom, God.

Even if the invitation is too late, and sharing the bread is out of the question, an act of freedom is performed. A slave cannot offer his food to someone else, let alone declare that he is willing to accept guests, because he has no food of his own to share.

The simple act of offering to share food makes the host free, and can be paralleled this year as well. Many of us cannot welcome guests to our seder due to coronavirus and perhaps feel less free due to the restrictions around us. We can be free though. We can declare that we wish we could have guests. We can call friends and family in advance of the holiday to tell them their lack of presence at the seder will be felt this year. **Offering an invitation, even if no one can come, reflects a level of freedom that can liberate even the most isolated.**



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Due to the inability to invite guests this year to the seder, who is one fictional character you would invite to your seder?

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DAY 8 - MAH NISHTANA



My mother made me a scientist without ever intending to. Every other Jewish mother in Brooklyn would ask her child after school, So? Did you learn anything today? But not my mother. Izzy, she would say, did you ask a good question today? That difference - asking good questions - made me become a scientist.

(Isidor Isaac Rabi)

Have you ever thought about the oddity of *Mah Nishtana*? We prepare our children for weeks, from the youngest age, to recite these four questions regarding the seder...and we never really give them a straightforward answer! Children ask questions about matzah vs. chametz, marror vs. other vegetables, leaning, and dipping twice; and we never respond to any of these details. Instead, we

go right into a discussion about our slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt.

It seems that the goal is to train our kids to ask questions. Receiving cogent, thoughtful answers is obviously ideal, but it is also not always the reality. As Jews, **we train our children to ask and know that there will not always be clear answers to life's questions.** As the famous Yiddish saying goes: *foon a kasha shtarbt men nisht*, you don't die from a question.

The Talmud (Ketubot 42b) records that Rabbah and Rav Yosef had difficulty regarding a law for twenty-two years before they had a resolution. R' Shlomo Zalman Braun z"l in his commentary *Sha'arim Metzuyanim B'Halacha* points out that despite these great rabbis not understanding the law for twenty-two years (!), they remained persistent and did not reject the law. That is the hallmark of a Jew; being able to live with questions.

There is a statement of the talmud in a few instances that we do abnormal things at the seder "so the children will ask." Again, it seems odd that all we are trying to do is peak the curiosity of our children, especially if our answer to the question will be - "I just wanted you to ask." Doesn't seem very satisfying! It is clear that the Rabbis were seeking to embed within the educational experience of the seder the importance of having a discerning eye and voicing our questions. As Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks writes in his Haggadah, "In Judaism, to be without question is not a sign of faith, but a lack of depth." **We want our children to be seekers, thinkers and investigators, even if they don't come up with all the answers!**



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What is done at your seder to get the kids engaged and asking questions?

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Freedom in Quarantine

DAY 9 - AVADIM HAYINU

This is the first year in many that the concept of slavery feels relevant to our lives. Granted, no slave in history has had Netflix or free delivery for dinner. At the same time, the feeling of physical constraint and social distancing can feel similar to slavery. Slavery though is not only a physical constraint - it is also a mentality.

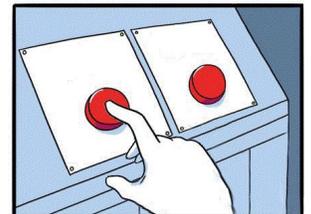
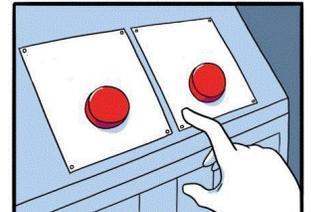
When the Jews were fleeing the Egyptians, the Torah explains that the Jewish people were terrified (Shemos 14:13). Why were they so scared? The Jews outnumbered the Egyptians pursuing them by several thousand. Rabbi Ovadia Seforno (1475-1550) explains that they were scared because they had a slave mentality. The Jews had grown up under slavery and became accustomed to being subjugated. The years of slavery made them downtrodden and the Jewish people did not have the confidence or resolve to stand up to the Egyptians.

Rav Soloveitchik (1903-1993) eloquently describes the pain of a slave mentality:

The greatness of man - his dignity and his creativity - is expressed in his freedom of will and in his ability to choose. A slave is never confronted with two alternatives. He makes no decisions; someone always does it for him. He has no faith in himself, and he is psychologically unable to cope with situations. A slave is unable to seize initiative; he lacks the urge and the drive to do things, and he cannot intervene in certain situations in order to improve his lot and better himself.

While some of the day to day frustrations of isolation and quarantine might feel slave-like, **in reality our collective decision to choose this lifestyle as a cautionary response to the pandemic is a reflection of true freedom.** Communities and individuals 'seized initiative' and shut down shuls, schools, and declared social distancing because they had the 'ability to choose.' We are officially free to leave our homes to congregate, but we actively choose to stay away to save other people's lives. We have made the toughest choice to collectively react, not only for our own benefit, but for the benefit of society around us.

Difficulty and challenge are not signs of slavery, in fact, if we react correctly they can actually be the source of our freedom.



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What has been the most liberating part about the choice to be social distancing?

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DAY 10 - BARUCH HAMAKOM



A highlight for so many at the seder is to discuss the four different sons. Which one are you? Are these the only four? What's the deal with the wicked son and why are we punching him in the face?

Before we get to the four sons at the seder, we introduce them with the following paragraph:

ברוך המקום ברוך הוא, ברוך שנתן תורה לעמו ישראל ברוך הוא. כנגד ארבעה בנים דיברה תורה. *Blessed is God (makom) Blessed is He, Blessed is He that gave the Torah to his nation the Jewish people. The Torah speaks corresponding to four sons.*

We have many different names for God and it is interesting to note that we use the uncommon name of *makom* (literally means place) in this context. In order to understand why this name is chosen for God, we need to understand why we refer to God as *makom* (place).

The Rabbis point out in the midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 68:9) that the name *makom* signifies that Hashem does not have a place in this world, rather He is the place of the world. Like Uncle Moishy has taught us: Hashem is here, Hashem is there, Hashem is truly everywhere. **The name *makom* represents the idea that Hashem is everywhere in this world.**

Rav Soloveitchik (1903-1993) points out that we specifically use this name *makom* when we comfort a mourner: המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים, *Hashem (makom) should comfort you amongst the rest of the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.* The message we are trying to give a mourner is that although one may feel abandoned by God at this time of loss, Hashem is there experiencing the pain with you. God, who is everywhere, is here with you now in this time of pain.

Expanding this thought, Rav Soloveitchik explains that on the night of the seder we express loud and clear that Hashem loves each and every one of his children. **No one should think the Torah is only relevant to the wise son; the Torah is for each child, even the wicked son.** Hashem is the place of this world, which includes each and every one of us, which is why we begin the Seder with *Baruch HaMakom* as an introduction to the four sons.



HASHEM IS HERE

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Name one place in the world (be specific) where you have felt God's presence.

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DAY 11 - THE FOUR SONS



FINISH THE DRAWING

In 1970, Jewish Federations around the world suggested that we leave a chair empty at the seder as a reminder of the plight of Soviet Jewry. It was intended to be a moving reminder to Jews everywhere about their brothers and sisters suffering under Soviet oppression.

The idea was presented to the The Lubavitcher Rebbe. He agreed Soviet Jewry needed American Jewry's attention, but disagreed with their campaign. "It's a powerful idea," he responded, "but the chair shouldn't be empty--it should be filled." The greatest testament of Jewish unity is having everyone at the table.

The Rebbe's response was not surprising. On his birthday in 1957, he sent a letter to his followers about the Four Sons at the seder. He wrote:

The four sons of the seder all have something in common--they're at the seder. But there is another type of child: the one who is not at the seder at all.

The presence of all four types of children at the table is certainly a reason for comfort. No matter the background, no matter the disposition, there is room at the seder for everyone. But, sadly, not everyone joins. It's important to remember the fifth child as well.

This year especially, there are those who will be absent from our seder. Whether it is a grandparent, parent, sibling or friend -- the seder is not just about celebrating who is with us, it's also about recognizing who is absent.



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What is something you will do to recognize those who are absent this year from your seder?

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DAY 12 - MITCHILAH OVDEI AVODAH ZARAH



Superheroes have a Jewish origin. Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, the creators of Superman, incorporated a lot of Jewish ideas into Superman's story. His super strength derives from the story of Shimshon. His double identity was inspired by balancing their own Jewish identity. Even Superman's Kryptonian name, Kal-El, derived from Hebrew words for God.

Perhaps nothing captures the mystery and excitement of superhero stories like their origin stories. In the book, *Enter the Superheroes*, the authors highlight the role superhero origins play in our self-conception. They write:

"A doomed planet explodes, and its last surviving child is rocketed to Earth. The son of a wealthy family watches his parents murdered before his eyes in a dark alleyway. A noble princess is sent from her isolated homeland to a world of alien values. An unpopular high school student with glasses is bitten by a radioactive spider....These stories are elemental, simple, inspirational, and powerful. Because they tell of ultimate strength, deep despair, unfathomable longing, and immeasurable bravery, superhero stories have been an enduring form of entertainment reflecting American ideals and celebrating the inherent nobility of man."

During the seder, we tell our origin story as well. The Talmud has a fascinating dispute about which story of shame we should begin with. Some explain that we should begin with the story of our forefathers who worshiped idols. Others insist that we should begin with the story of our ancestors who were subjugated in slavery. The present Haggadah text includes both. Everyone agrees that part of telling a heroic story is beginning with an origin.

The Passover Seder is a retelling of the origin story of the Jewish people. Before discussing our heroic redemption, much like any superhero origin, we too are instructed to retell our lowly origins. **That's how heroes are made.**

Join the Conversation

Tell us your origin story in 20 words or less.

Submit Your Answers

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BRINGING SEDER to CHAOS



Freedom in Quarantine

DAY 13 - V'HI SHE'AMDA

HELLO! If you are self-isolating, I can help.

My name is

I live locally at

My phone number is

If you are self-isolating due to COVID-19 I can help with:

- Picking up shopping Posting mail
 A friendly phone call Urgent supplies

Just call or text me and I'll do my best to help you (for free!)

Coronavirus is contagious. Please take every precaution to ensure you are spreading only kindness. Avoid physical contact (2m distance). Wash your hands regularly. Items should be left on your doorstep. #ViralKindness

At times of difficulty, we often find comfort and hope standing in solidarity with each other. We pray together, sing together, and cry together. Perhaps what might be the most difficult component of our current challenge is precisely our inability to physically come together to give each other hope and comfort. When we think of responding to our traditional challenges, the paragraph of the seder that comes to mind is v'hi she'amda.

וְהִיא שְׁעִמְדָה לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ. שְׁלֹא אֶחָד בְּלִבָּד, עָמַד עֲלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ. אֲלֵא שְׁבָכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר, עוֹמְדִים עֲלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ. וְהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מִצִּילֵנוּ מִיָּדָם
And this (Hashem's blessings and the Torah) is what kept

our fathers and what keeps us surviving. For, not only one arose and tried to destroy us, rather in every generation they try to destroy us, and Hashem saves us from their hands. (translation from Chabad.org)

We highlight all our enemies who sought to destroy us, beginning with Pharaoh in Egypt, and throughout the generations since then as well. Throughout the ages, we have been forced to bounce back against all odds and against the wishes of our oppressors. On a face value, the single secret to our success is *v'hi She'amda*, that Hashem has saved us throughout each of these difficult times; allowing us to survive darkness after darkness.

The Sfas Emes has a unique way of reading this Seder paragraph, however, which gives us another insight into our survival throughout the ages. He reads "שְׁלֹא אֶחָד בְּלִבָּד, עָמַד עֲלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ" as referring not only to the external enemies we have throughout history, but the internal ones as well. When we are not "אֶחָד" or unified together as a Jewish people, we stand to lose everything. In other words, our ability to survive relies on a double edged sword, relying on Hashem and unifying together.

It may feel like our second measure against moments of collective difficulty has been removed from our toolbox because we are all in solitude right now. But this is anything but true!

Solitude is not the opposite of solidarity. Both can coexist. We can stand together (virtually and emotionally) more so now, than ever before. We have the capacity to unify as a people well beyond physically coming together. Call a friend. Facetime with grandparents. Daven for Jews you have never met before. Give tzedakah. Share Torah or a positive message with an online audience. **Let us take this opportunity to unite our minds and hearts and ensure that we are truly "אֶחָד."**

Join the Conversation

What have you done to show solidarity in solitude?

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BRINGING SEDER to CHAOS



Freedom in Quarantine

DAY 14- TEN PLAGUES



Did Hashem really need to punish the Egyptians with ten makkot? Was sending ten individual plagues really necessary? Couldn't Hashem just directly declare His dominance in some other way?

There is an important principle in writing called: "show me, don't tell me." A great author does not need to tell you whether a character is happy or sad or embarrassed. You just know from the dialogue and scenery what they're feeling.

The prolific F. Scott Fitzgerald emphasized this point when he said that using an exclamation point in a sentence is like laughing at your own joke. **Show me, don't tell me.**

The best way to understand is through an immersive experience. Describing something as "very serious" is not as effective as living the message directly. The best way to teach character traits is not by telling others about them, but by showing them. This, after all, is how we build relationships and credibility. Real relationships emerge from experience. It is not enough to express our love, our commitment, or our leadership; this needs to be demonstrated.

Perhaps this is the core reason for the plagues as well. Through the ten plagues God demonstrated that He controls the world. **He didn't just tell the Egyptians. He showed them.**

For many of us, coronavirus is the closest personal experience we have had to the ten plagues performed in Egypt. It is a plague that is not only impacting the world's day to day living experiences, but is unfortunately causing illness and death as well. Do you remember how you felt when you heard about the coronavirus in China? Was it similar or different to the way it felt to hear about your school or shul closing down?



This is the reason we place such an emphasis during the seder on reliving the experience of leaving Egypt. **God revealed Himself to the world experientially--He didn't just tell us, He showed us. At the seder we do the same; we don't just profess our commitment, we experience it.**

Join the Conversation

What shtick do you use to act out the ten plagues at your seder?

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Freedom in Quarantine

DAY 15 - DAYEINU



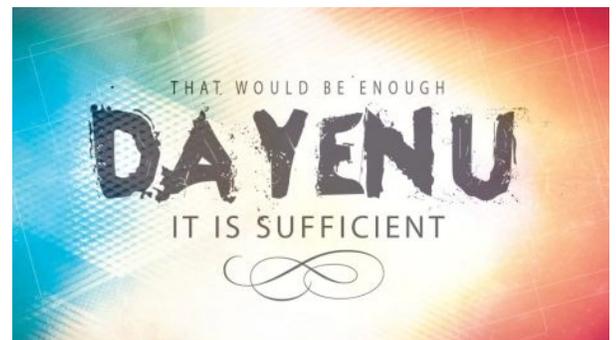
Are we there yet?! Several times on a long car ride, an impatient child is bound to ask a frustrated parent whether they have arrived at their destination. It's not easy sitting through a long car ride, even with all the distractions available today. After asking about their arrival time every half hour, and receiving dissatisfactory answers, this poor child has just had enough.

We too went on a long journey into a scolding hot Sinai desert, and like the impatient child asked when we were going to reach the promised land. At the time, the challenges of the desert with a lack of water and food were too impactful to our day to day lives, that we too were the restless child who had enough. At times we demanded **'enough of the**

desert - we'd prefer Egypt! We declared **'enough is enough'** when our fearless leader Moshe arrived a day late, leading us to create a golden calf. **We had enough** when the spies came back to us with a negative report about the promised land we previously had longed for.

These moments of 'enough' reflect being knee deep in the moments of difficulty. When we are inside a narrow place, enough is our way of saying we cannot handle this anymore. Enough means, we are full of frustration and simply will not wait any longer. Many have felt this way throughout this challenging period of social isolation. Perhaps we've screamed enough once or twice, as we too are knee deep in these difficult waters.

There is another 'enough', however, as we say--Dayeinu **'that would have been enough.'** 'Enough' is no longer a statement of frustration, but rather appreciation. As we left Egypt and began our treacherous journey through the desert, each day seemed like 40 years. Once we reached the promised land, we were able for the first time to reflect on that journey and see the guiding hand of Hashem throughout the way.



There is a profound lesson here about challenging moments.

While in the time of pain and crisis it is very normal and understandable to feel the pain is unbearable. However, once we have emerged from that time, with the power of hindsight we can actually come to appreciate many of the kindnesses that we received along the way.

Join the Conversation

Write one personal line of Dayenu.

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BRINGING SEDER to CHAOS



Freedom in Quarantine

DAY 16 - PESACH



Remember when you had to drag yourself out of bed to get ready for school or work? These days few people are dragging themselves out of bed to go anywhere. Most would be thrilled to have somewhere to go. For the first time in forever, kids are begging to go to school and parents are yearning for more time at the office. Everyone is just hoping to get back to their normal routine.

This time of year on the Jewish calendar is consistently a time of disruption. In preparation of Pesach, we turn our houses upside down looking for specs of chametz. Our diet changes completely.

We think charoset is a delicacy and for some reason we start to like Potato Sticks. Due to Coronavirus though, this year we are not troubled by *these* disruptions.

While this year Pesach is not perfect, it might be worthwhile to consider **it wasn't ideal last year either**. The central component of our Pesach experience has been lacking for thousands of years now. Rabban Gamliel stresses that we must discuss three main components of the Seder to fulfill our obligation, and the first is to talk about the Korban Pesach. In the times of the Beit HaMikdash, it felt natural to discuss the Korban Pesach - it was the focal point of the entire seder. The scrumptious lamb sandwich, surrounded by matzah and maror, was the entree.



Nowadays, we quickly mention the sacrifice and gaze at a meatless shankbone on our seder plate. Despite the constant reminders about the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash in our tefillah, it is often easy to forget that we are not living in the ideal state. We pray that we don't just go back to normal day to day life, the way it was last year. **We pray that we go back to an ideal day to day life, the way it was in the times of the Beit Hamikdash.**

Join the Conversation

What are you most looking forward to with the coming of Mashiach and the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash.

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Freedom in Quarantine

DAY 17 - MATZAH



Jerry Seinfeld should really write a skit about matzah. “What’s the deal with matzah? Is it the bread of freedom or slavery? And the taste. I mean really.” Seriously, matzah is easily the most complex of all of the symbolisms in Judaism. The very same matzah which represents our slavery in Egypt, just moments later is at the center of our redemption.

Here is part of a beautiful poem (author unknown) regarding the nature of matzah and why it is the quintessential symbol of freedom:

*You were there from beginning to end.
You who were the bread of slaves became the sustenance of a free people.
From lechem oni to afikomen, from slave past to messianic future.
All the blows of the taskmasters can be seen on your pockmarked surface;
yet fragile as you are, you survived unbroken.*

*Thus you remind us of our humbling beginnings as slaves,
and yet you show that the lowly, not just the high and mighty, can become free.
You are the symbol of possibility of change for all.
You, matzah, are the focal point of the haggadah, not the unmentioned leader Moses.
For “freedom” is the kingdom of the free, its gates open to all.*

*Yet, free as you are, changed as you are, you look exactly the same as your slave self.
For you watched yourself to prevent being contaminated with the yeast of pride,
the lust for wealth, the thirst for praise.
No water was allowed to puff you up artificially,
to make you appear to be more than what you naturally are.*

*Simple, plain, and flat, matzah,
the eternal symbol of freedom,
is the antithesis of fine food and wine,
for freedom lies in the intoxication with the idea, not with the self.*

This past few weeks have been extremely difficult, and it does not seem to be getting easier. People all around us are passing away, others are sick, many are suffering from financial difficulties and all of us are trapped in our homes. It is easy to fall into despair. Matzah comes at the perfect time to be the ‘*symbol of possibility of change for all.*’ Let’s remember all that the matzah represents not only in the past but for our future as well.



Join the Conversation

What is your favorite Matzah Spread?

Submit Your Answers

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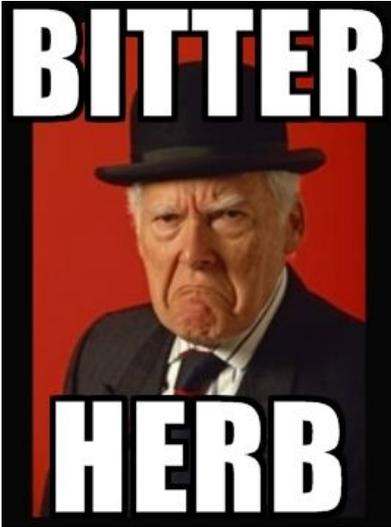
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BRINGING SEDER to CHAOS



Freedom in Quarantine

DAY 18 - MARROR



Stand at the line of a Starbucks for five minutes and listen to people order. We live in a culture that takes coffee orders very seriously. Everyone has a particular way they like their coffee. Do you use milk or creamer? Sugar, brown sugar, or sweet n' low? There is one particularly intimidating coffee drinker - the one who drinks it black. No sugar. No creamer. Just straight, black coffee. For this person, even a drop of sugar, ruins the natural bitter taste of the coffee.

We know that the marror - bitter herb - was commanded to be eaten at the seder to remind us of the 210 years of backbreaking slavery we endured in Egypt. Every year we explain the significance of remembering not just the exalted redemption, but the difficult beginnings. It is clear in the Torah (Shemos 12:8) that on the night we left Egypt, we were already commanded to eat marror with the Korban Pesach. They were not even free, yet they needed to be reminded of slavery? What was the significance of marror for the enslaved Jews

about to become free?

One rarely begins by drinking black coffee. It is an example of an acquired taste. At first, the bitterness is overwhelming and intolerable, but over time it becomes not only bearable but preferable. While enjoying black coffee is neither here nor there, some bitterness is intended to ward us off from acquiring it as a taste that we prefer.

The Ramban (Shemot 1:10) suggests that Pharaoh was a master of gradual change, as he strategically mapped out a plan for enslaving and oppressing Bnei Yisrael over time. Had Pharaoh opened his reign with an edict to kill all Jews, society as a whole (Jews and Egyptians alike) would have rebelled. To accomplish his nefarious goals, Pharaoh used a stealthy approach of incremental change, limiting the freedom of Bnei Yisrael through taxes, gradually increasing forced labor, and propaganda. By the time Pharaoh declared all male sons should be thrown into the river, society had become accustomed to treating Bnei Yisrael differently. The bitterness was no longer a shock to the system. The acquired taste of Pharaoh's infused bitterness proved to be so successfully infused into the tastebuds of Bnei Yisrael, they even asked to go back to Egypt as they traveled through the desert!

Perhaps the lesson of marror is not only to remember the hard times of slavery in Egypt, but to remind us that it was bitter! It is much easier for us today to look back and know it was terrible, however, as Bnei Yisrael were leaving Egypt the bitter herb was needed to shock their system. The marror is a reminder about how quickly we can become comfortable and complacent in less than ideal situations, and even yearn for the comfort of a horrific circumstance.

Join the Conversation

What emoji would you use to represent the eating of marror at the seder?

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BRINGING SEDER to CHAOS



Freedom in Quarantine

PRE-SEDER ZOOM SEDER

This year many people will be unable to celebrate Passover with their family--particularly their older relatives. Nobody, it's safe to say, will be having a normal seder. But that doesn't mean it can't be cherished.

There is a unique opportunity now to have a pre-Passover intergenerational seder experience with your families through zoom. Passover is a holiday where family is central--and even when we're apart, we always find a way to stay together.

The Basics

-  **Who Knows Zoom?** Make sure you know the basics of zoom and appoint someone to lead the seder before the call. There's a unique opportunity now for a mute button, so people can actually hear each other. Zoom also allows you to raise your hand. So, in a way, this might even be less dysfunctional than your regular seder.
-  **Dress the Part:** Traditionally, the leader of the seder wears a kittel. Proper attire for zoom calls has been spotty--if you're wearing pants, you're already ahead of the game. For this zoom call, to reimagine the seder experience, it adds a special feeling if everyone is dressed the part in their special Yom Tov clothes.
-  **Don't Forget About the Actual Seder:** A pre-Pesach zoom call with family is not meant to replace the actual seder. You should save your matzah, your maror, and your four cups of wine for the actual seder. You can even skip much of the main text of the haggadah. Don't say every word together. Focus on the songs and creating memories. Also, if you're using a free zoom account, you really only have 40 minutes. So save your eating, wine stains, and matzah crumbs for later in the evening. Create a moment through the haggadah with family you wish were with you.
-  **Make It About Your Family:** Each family has unique traditions, favorite tunes and quirks. Additionally, each family has a unique story to tell. Spend some time on what is unique about your family. Have an older member recall a seder moment from many years or a story that he or she heard from a grandparent. Recall a funny moment from a previous seder. Sing the tunes that your family loves to sing.

Create Your Seder Moments

Kadesh: Instead of blessing the wine, have everyone go around and bless a different member of the family.

Urchatz: This should be instinctive by now, but everyone could wash their hands. Instead of singing Happy Birthday, sing the seder song: Kadesh Urchatz. Should qualify CDC guidelines.

Karpas: Find a fun dipping food!

Yachatz: Break a cracker or chocolate bar in half. Don't forget to hide the afikoman!

Maggid:

Mah Nishtana - Ask people to share what is going to be different this year for them.

Dayenu - After singing the song together go around and have everyone on the call share something they are grateful for.

Ve-higadata l'bincha: The main commandment of the seder is to share the story of redemption. What is a story you want to pass from one generation to the next?

Rachtzah: Did we mention the importance of handwashing?

Motzi: OK, so don't have matzah. Save that so you have a full stomach. But you can still all share what you love about matzah. It may even build your appetite.

Maror: Let's be honest, there is a lot to potentially be bitter about this year. What is something that you are currently upset about?

Korech: We traditionally wrap the maror in Matzah. What's the symbolism behind that? According to the Marbeh Lisaper on Pesach Haggadah, Maror 1:1 Even if some disagreement or bitterness burns in his heart, let him 'wrap up' (hikhrikh) pain with love. *What loving elements have occurred because of the events of this year? Even if they don't take away the bitterness, how can we right now surround it with love and sweetness?*

Shulchan Orech: Send out a "family recipe" in advance of the call that everyone can cook beforehand. Enjoy your special treats together.

Tzafun: Designate an object as the "Afikoman" and hide it somewhere in the background of your screen. Have the children on the call guess and play "hot or cold" until they find it. Turn it into a virtual scavenger hunt!

Barech: Sing the first paragraph of Bentching out loud together.

Hallel: Go around the table and have everyone finish the sentence, "God, I want to thank you for..."

Nirtzah: Sing all your favorite songs! Who knows one? During Chad Gadya, each person can be assigned a character (don't assign anyone to the role of God) and it can be acted out while everyone else sings along. You can even have everyone come in costume.

Join the Conversation

Leshana Ha'Baah: Next year may we merit to celebrate Passover together as a family in Jerusalem!

What ideas and programs are you planning for your pre-Seder seder?

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