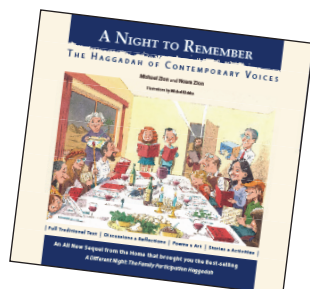
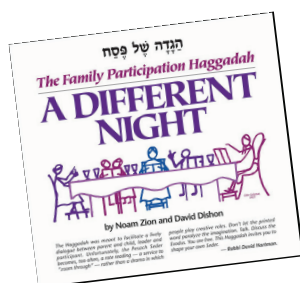


Seder In Time of the Plague: reflections, suggestions, readings, activities for a seder where families are separated.

A Coronavirus Seder Planner to accompany



by Noam and Mishael Zion, co-authors

**A Different Night:
The Family Participation Haggadah (ADN)**

and

**A Night to Remember:
The Haggadah of Contemporary Voices (NTR)**

<http://www.haggadahsrus.com/>

for downloadable and orderable haggadot and for
seder planners with artistic illustrations by Michel Kichka.

INTRODUCTION

The Challenge: The Seder of Separated Generations — Family Participation with Limited Family Access

This year's seders are literally plagued by special challenges. The mood is not festive but anxious. Around us is a world of death and epidemic, and even if we are temporarily safe, there are no guarantees that our extended communities are safe. The desired liberation from fear and final return to normality has no date and beyond the containment of the plague there is a crisis in the world economy. In 2021 we are infused with hope with the new vaccines, yet the basic anxiety and existential vulnerability remain.

More immediately, this seder is not an occasion for ingathering of family but its division and isolation of its members, one from the other. It forces many of us to cook and lead a seder for the first time. On one hand, there are people without parents or grandparents or siblings who usually lead the seder and on the other, empty nesters without the presence of the next generation which are the heart of the seder experience as a time for intergenerational storytelling and reaffirmation of the continuity of the Jewish people, family by family.

How do we maintain some normality, some comfort, nostalgia, joy and hope, and yet make the seder relevant to our situation without avoiding the elephant in the isolated rooms of a zoom seder.

The Question: How different should this seder be than all other seders?

On one hand, the 2020-21 seder is abnormal and radically different and it calls for relevance. In this short manual we have emphasized ways to connect the corona crisis with the traditional seder. On the other hand, in a time of disrupted routines we need to go on living as normally as possible and to enjoy the family traditions and songs of the seder we love as best we can and to enjoy quality family time even by Zoom without a hug. Especially with two seders, there is no reason to let corona crisis take over the whole seder and all our conversations.

Our haggadot *A Different Night: The Family Participation Haggadah* and *A Night to Remember: The Haggadah of Contemporary Voices* offer an enormous variety of resources — visual, activities and readings — for customizing one's seder differently each year. In light of the current extraordinary situation, these haggadot are now downloadable for this year on www.haggadahsrus.com and you can enrich your seder as always without being preoccupied by the health crisis.

What the following seder manual offers is ideas for connecting to the corona plague, but don't overdue the relevance and beware of making Seder 2021 a depressive exercise in anxiety.

SHAI ZARCHI, ISRAELI EDUCATOR AND RABBI

Seder without Grandparents

Many Israeli families recount with nostalgic longing the wonderful seders that their grandfathers once led. "Since grandpa died, we have not yet found a way to fill the absence." The Israeli seder is often performed around that great lacuna — "Grandpa is gone!"

Grandpa used to stubbornly read the whole Haggadah to the very end, and because we honored him we used to stay around the table a little longer. Grandpa constituted the bond to the tradition that gave us the feeling that he heard the story of the Exodus from Moshe himself. Tonight we miss him even though his seder was sometimes boring and too long. His memory raises longing memories.

There is nostalgia but also apprehension — How can we fill his place? How can we cope with the fact that his seder is now supposed to be our seder?

Yet we must admit there is some relief knowing we can shake out the old Haggadah and together we can create something renewed — our own seder! May we be blessed that we shall become "Grandpa!" with a renewed tradition for our children and grandchildren.

Tips for a Corona Seder

Picking and choosing and preselecting what to skip is necessary for every seder but especially this year when you may be leading your first seder and when key participants may appear only on zoom for short intervals.

As usual, delegate responsibilities and take turns on Zoom, so as to maximize participation, but assume that pure spontaneity will be problematic in the conditions of Seder 2021. Whoever takes it upon themselves to lead the seder for the first time (even though they never wanted that task) needs support from the participants who might otherwise be passive or even hostile to innovations. Honestly admit your own uncertainty and ask everyone in advance for ideas and participation and encouragement. In the end you are doing what you have to and doing the best you can and so do not overemphasize your sense of inadequacy by apologizing that you are leading the seder.

Hebrew is always a challenge for non-Hebrew speakers. In fact there is no obligation to do the seder in Hebrew and translations have always been used whether in Yiddish or Ladino or Judeo-Arabic. Yet Hebrew is the international language of our tradition so — in advance — ask those who can read Hebrew to lead kiddush and blessings when possible.

Zoom singing produces a cacophony when people try to sing in different locations simultaneously. So ask one site or person to sing alone.

The main point of the seder is to recall the Exodus, retell its story and seek its relevance. Besides the blessings and symbolic foods, there is no commandment to read the whole book. Don't let the Haggadah as a text get in the way of facilitating a conversation and creating a festive family evening. Below we will suggest how the texts of Haggadah can help invite that conversation.

RAV DAVID HARTMAN (SHALOM HARTMAN INSTITUTE)

On Liberating the Seder

The Haggadah was meant to facilitate lively dialogue. Unfortunately seder too often becomes rote reading to "zoom" through, rather than a drama of creative roles. Don't let the printed word paralyze the imagination. Talk. Discuss. You are free. This Haggadah invites you to shape your own seder..

Family Preparations at a Distance

Though one cannot cook for those in multiple sequestered houses, recipes can be taught and prepared simultaneously and shared by video, so we are united by eating the same menu in multiple locations. In addition, more people will learn the core family recipes.

Family memories of the seder should also be recalled and shared. At the start of the zoom seder, list all participants and their locations for Seder 2021 and write the list into a family Haggadah, so this seder takes its unique and memorable place in the family history.

Traditional Seder Plate and Corona Seder Plate for 2021

The seder plate has many edible souvenirs of the original seder in Egypt — maror, matza, haroset and so on. On the same principle you may prepare an additional Corona Seder Plate (as it will be used in 2021) to recall the objects characteristic of the year of the virus: toilet paper, yardstick to measure social distance of two yards, disinfectant wet wipes, Zoom password, and Purell gel.

IDEAS for SEDER 2021

Setting the Mood before the Seder

Since this year's Passover is not naturally festive but emotionally conflicted, we ought to consider ways to lighten the atmosphere. As in any seder, we can do Passover warm-ups to tell the story and put on Passover songs as background as the family gathers.:

Seder Jokes and Corona Jokes. The Babylonian Rabbi Rabbah bar Nahmani (Rava) always began his lectures with *d'var b'dihuta*, entertaining jokes and that can set the tone for every seder especially in time of fear and isolation. On the internet humorous quotes on Pesach and corona abound. Collect the ten best. For example: "I just put blood on my door post. After all it worked last time we had a plague."

Relaxation exercises or deep breathing techniques before sitting down.

Singing Songs from the Appendix of the Haggadah: Had Gadya and Who Knows One. Many of us never get to the end of the seder with the best Passover folksongs, so move them up to the beginning to set the tone of playfulness. Had Gadya is especially poignant because the angel of death appears and yet is defeated.

Storytelling warm-ups: excerpts from movie Prince of Egypt by Steven Spielberg and reading children stories of Moses, Miriam and Pharaoh.

(ADN Classic 50, 52, 54, plus storytellers appendix at back; ADN Red Cover 86, 88, 90, 91; NTR 13, 15, 17, 18, 22, 23, 30, 34-35, 37, 38, 39, 71, 75, 97, 99, 113, 116, 143-147)

1. Lighting a Candle in a Time of Darkness

(ADN Classic 16, ADN Red Cover 4, NTR 6)

Light one candle for every child or family member, whether at your table or far away, and name them out loud so each one is symbolically present. In a Zoom seder light candles in each location and focus camera on candles for 30 seconds of meditation as you move from one location to the next.

Cover your eyes and meditate: on the powers of darkness in the world and the human ability to light a candle and spread light, then recite the blessing in Hebrew or English.

**RAV ABRAHAM ISAAC KOOK,
FIRST CHIEF ASHKENAZI RABBI OF ISRAEL (D. 1935)**

Ignite a Great Flame

Everyone must know and understand that within burns a candle/lamp.

No one's candle is like his/her fellow's and no one lacks their own candle.

Everyone must know and understand that it is their task to work to reveal the light of that candle in the public realm.

And to ignite it until it is a great flame, and to illuminate the whole world.

ANNE FRANK, DIARY, 1944

I Still Believe

That's the difficulty in these times: ideals, dreams, and cherished hopes rise within us, only to meet the horrible truth and be shattered.

It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery, and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness. I hear the ever-approaching thunder, which will destroy us, too. I can feel the suffering of millions — and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think it will come out all right, that this cruelty too will end, and that peace and tranquility will return again. In the meantime, I must uphold my ideals, for perhaps the time will come when I shall be able to carry them out.

2. Blessing Your Children at a Distance

(ADN Classic 18, ADN Red Cover 5, NTR 6)

In English or Hebrew bless your children and grandchildren and smile at them as you invoke God's smile. Add to each a personal appreciation for one of their special qualities that you admire.

Blessing Your Parents/Grandparents at a Distance in a seder of separated generations.

In your own words express thanks for something they have done for you or taught you or modelled for you and one wish for them.

Recall Elijah's Calling to Intergenerational Reconciliation in a Day of Crisis — Malachi 3:23-24

Now I am sending to you Elijah the prophet, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and terrible day; and he will turn the hearts of parents to children and the hearts of children to their parents.

3. Introduce the Plan for the Seder

Everyone including you are feeling anxious about how this seder will go. Begin by reviewing what you have planned, to whom you have delegated responsibilities (like who will recite kiddush) and how to handle Zoom (one person speaks at time, how you get attention to speak, and perhaps not to sing together in different sites simultaneously). Then assure everyone they will be eating hors d'oeuvres immediately after kiddush and list the cuisine in each venue.

While this seder may begin with a sense of discomfort and nostalgia for what will be missing, try to make it more comfortable by asking everyone to bring a pillow to place on their chair to recline, as ancient Greeks once did at their symposiums when drinking wine.

Making Everyone Feel Welcome

You shall rejoice in your festival — with your son and daughter, your male and female servant, the Levi, the stranger, the orphan and the widow in your communities." (Deut. 16:14)

FIRST CUP of Dedication

4. Kadesh (Kiddush on wine) — dedicating this night to memory and hope

(ADN Classic 22-24, ADN Red Cover 7-8, NTR 10-11)



The seder begins with a toast dedicating the evening to the memory of our oppression in Egypt and our historic night of liberation as well as hope for future redemption. Ask several participants to lift their cup and add a brief improvised toast for today's meal before reciting in Hebrew or English the kiddush.

As Michael Walzer writes, redemption cannot be achieved by individuals but only by everyone collaborating (as with the attempt to stop the corona epidemic).

MICHAEL WALZER, EXODUS AND REVOLUTION

The Door Of Hope Is Still Open

The "door of hope" is still open; things are not what they might be — even when what they might be isn't totally different from what they are. We still believe, or many of us do, what the Exodus first taught: first, that wherever you live, it is probably Egypt; second, that there is a better place, a world more attractive, a promised land; and third, that "the way to the land is through the wilderness." There is no way to get from here to there except by joining together and marching.

5. Urchatz and Karpas (dipping vegies)

(pages: ADN Classic, ADN Red Cover, NTR)

After kiddush as with any fancy reception, cocktails are followed by dips and so everyone is invited to nosh and drash, to nibble and talk about the Exodus, from now on until the eating of the matza as the Rabbis of the Mishna did. Try artichokes, potato chips, French fries, and if course cut green vegetables (which is what the word karpas means in Greek, and hard boiled eggs in salt water, etc.

Since the Rabbis imitated the priesthood in eating all their food free of contaminating impurity, they washed their hands ceremonially before eating bread but also before consuming vegetables in liquids that could transfer impurity. While rabbinic impurity is not about hygiene or health, it is equally obsessive about avoiding contagion through touch as we are today with corona. So we suggest using not only water but also Purell gel for URCHATZ (washing) to make this seder unique.

6. The Plague Seders: A Night to Remember – “You shall not leave your house until . . .”

While the traditional Haggadah does not bother to include the tale of the first seder in Egypt (which was held during the height of the tenth plague), the story in the Torah is read in synagogue before and during Passover. Tonight it is especially appropriate to read this chapter at the seder (since no one can go to the synagogue). As you read it out loud, look for the many ironic parallels and divergences between the first seder in Egypt as the firstborn sons died all around them and Seders of 2020-21. Ask: how was this first seder (1200 BCE) different or similar to the present seder 3200 years later)?

Exodus 12: Moses’ Public Safety Announcements for the First Passover

a. Stockpiling for the Coming Emergency

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, “This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat.”

b. Sealing the Doors from the Angel of Death and the Seder Menu

“⁶Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.

“⁸That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and matzah.”

c. The Dress Code for the Seder and the Anxious Mood of Trembling , not Festivity

“¹¹This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in HIPAZON (literally, haste or trembling); it is God’s Passover.”

“²²None of you shall go out of the door of your house until morning.”

“¹²On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive

plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.”

“³⁰Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead”

“³³The Egyptians urged the people [of Israel] to hurry and leave the country. ‘For otherwise,’ they said, ‘we will all die!’ So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing³⁹The dough was without yeast because they had been driven out of Egypt and did not have time to prepare food for themselves.”

d. Commemorating the First Seder Annually in the Promised Land of Freedom and Security

God kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honor the Lord for the generations to come.

“¹⁴This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord — a lasting ordinance. For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast.

“²⁵When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony.

e. When in the Future Your Children Question You about the Seder on the Night of the Plague

“²⁶And when [in future generations] your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ Then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over / protected/skipped over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.’”

Discuss: What experiences during Corona 2020-21 echo or vary from the pattern in Egypt? (warnings by Moses in advance of how to prevent the plague; stockpiling; lockdown in the house; harrowing escape from infected areas; terror of one’s neighbors bringing death; social separation into separate houses; special

precautions from infection). Both seders are moody with mixed emotions — Fear, Hope, and Uncertainty — since no one knows what the future holds even when sequestration is suspended. Both seders involve high risk age group: family founders (over 60) now and first born sons then.

The greatest differences are: We cannot say that God brought the plague of 2020-21 as a means to force a tyrant to liberate his oppressed slaves or as punishment for improper behavior, though the responses of governments to warnings bears some resemblance.

Further, the original seder brought intergenerational families together physically, while Seder 2020-21 separates families.

Further, the original plagues distinguished one nation from another (Egyptians/Hebrews), while corona highlights our human solidarity and need for a collaborative solution, though in other ways nations, states, regions are being locked down to avoid sharing in the disease.

Discuss: In several years what will you tell your children about Seder 2020-21 and the Corona Epidemic? What would you place on a **Corona Seder Plate** (comparable to matzah and maror) to recall the souvenirs from that period? Perhaps: toilet paper; yardstick to measure distance between people; zoom invitation; Purell gel, etc.

Discuss: What are the moral lessons to be learned from “know the heart of the stranger” (Egypt) and knowing the loneliness, abandonment and vulnerability of those sequestered in isolation (corona). How do we feel about strangers today? Have maintaining social distance, fear of infection and experiencing common vulnerability enhanced or undermined human solidarity?

7. Yahatz: Entering the Broken World (breaking matza in a broken world)

(pages: ADN Classic 32, ADN Red Cover 10, NTR 14)

The Pesach story begins in a broken world, amidst slavery and

oppression. The sound of the breaking of the matza sends us into that fractured existence, only to become whole again when we find the broken half, the afikoman, at the end of the Seder.

This brokenness is not just a physical or political situation: It reminds us of all those hard, damaged places within ourselves. All those **narrow places** from which we want to break to free. In Hebrew, Egypt is called *Mitzrayim*, reminding us of the word *tzar*, narrow. Thus, in Hassidic thought, *Mitzrayim* symbolizes the inner straits that trap our souls. Yet even here we can find a unique value, as the Hassidic saying teaches us: “There is nothing more whole — than a broken heart.”

In Seder 2021 we are enclosed in a tight spot, narrowed in our mobility, but yearning for space and breadth.

Share: Pass out a whole matza to every Seder participant, inviting them to take a moment to ponder this entrance into a broken world, before each one breaks the matza themselves.

VICTOR FRANKL

My Narrow Prison (*Man's Search for Meaning*)

One day, a few days after the liberation [from the Nazi concentration camp], I walked through the country past flowering meadows, for miles and miles, toward the market town near the camp. Larks rose to the sky and I could hear their joyous song. There was no one to be seen for miles around; there was nothing but the wide earth and sky and the larks' jubilation and the freedom of space. I stopped, looked around, and up to the sky – and then I went down on my knees. At that moment there was very little I knew of myself or of the world – I had but one sentence in mind – always the same: “*I called to Adonai from my narrow prison and God answered me in the freedom of space*” (Psalm 118:5). How long I knelt there and repeated this sentence, memory can no longer recall. But I know that on that day, in that hour, my new life started. Step for step I progressed, until I again became a human being.

LEONARD COHEN

Broken Unto You

All my life is broken unto you, and all my glory soiled unto you.

Do not let the spark of my soul go out in the even sadness.

Let me raise the brokenness to you, to the world where the breaking is for love.

Do not let the words be mine, but change them into truth.

With these lips instruct my heart, and let fall into the world what is broken in the world.

Lift me up to the wrestling of faith. Do not leave me where the sparks go out, and the jokes are told in the dark, and new things are called forth and appraised in the scale of the terror. Face me to the rays of love, O source of light, or face me to the majesty of your darkness, but not here, do not leave me here, where death is forgotten, and the new thing grins.

Magid:

Intergenerational Questions, Stories and Discussions

(pages: ADN Classic 34, ADN Red Cover 12, NTR 16)

8. Ha Lahma Anya: This is the bread of poverty and persecution. Let all who are hungry come and eat.

(pages: ADN Classic 36, ADN Red Cover 12, NTR 20)

Giving or Pledging Tzedakah to the Needy

In remembering the bread of poverty (matza) at a meal of unusual culinary richness (the seder), it has always been essential to invite the needy to the seder by opening the door and reciting *Ha Lahma Anya*. But seldom if ever does anyone walk off the street. At best we make a financial contribution before the seder to organizations who feed the hungry so they too can celebrate Pesach.

Given the economic dislocation of the corona virus, it is worthwhile to speak of its effects — short and long term — and

to pledge a special contribution to a relief organization made in honor of Passover 2021.

On a normal seder those who host the seder make a special effort to invite those who have nowhere else to go. Their need is social not financial. This year elevates the number of socially “indigent” who need a seder including many who never imagined they would be totally alone on Seder night.

Besides inviting a few to a Zoom seder, for many others it is valuable to call them before the seder and to report at the seder on their emotional needs and their response to your calls. Perhaps share your own moments of loneliness during the epidemic and what you need most and what you can give to others.

RABBI JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK

Needy But Not Poor

Although they may initially seem redundant, the two invitations we issue in HaLahma Anya — “Let all who are hungry enter and eat” and “Let all who are in need come and celebrate the Passover” — in reality are not. The first one refers to whoever is in need of bread, whoever is hungry. The second one means those who are in need, but not in need of bread. *Kol ditzrikh* refers to one who is alone, who has a lot of Matza and wine but no home or family. There are indeed many ways to be included among the *kol ditzrikh*. The invitation to “all who are in need” is not “to eat with us,” rather, it is to spend the Pesach with us, “to celebrate with us.” It is an invitation addressed to unfortunate and lonely people. They might be millionaires; it is completely irrelevant. Whoever is in need should come and celebrate. *Ha Lahma Anya* is the renewal of a pledge of solidarity.

9. Ma Nishtana: Four Questions and More

(pages: ADN classic 40, ADN Red Cover 14, NTR 24)

Traditionally the youngest child who is aged five to ten asks the ritualized questions about how or why this night is different than all other nights? But tonight we should start by asking: *how is*



this seder in 2021 different than all other seders we attended?

If children are not aroused to ask spontaneously, then parents must trigger their questions with prizes. That is good pedagogy, but questions are not only for children and the knowledge sought is not simply about rituals. Given our conflicted world, what adult questions come to mind (*even if you do not have answers*). (See the example of Kibbutz Ein Harod below.)

In fact if there are no children to ask questions — as may be the case in Seder 2021 — any adult should ask the other and one should even ask oneself. Hard questions liberate us from the standard assumptions purveyed by our society. (See Steve Greenberg on next page.)

How Am I Different Tonight

After asking how this night is different from all other nights, you might want to take this opportunity to go around the table and have people share: ***How am I different tonight and this year from previous years? What has changed this year?***

RABBI STEVEN GREENBERG

Questions Are A Paradox

The key to Jewish exegesis is to assume that nothing is obvious. Questions are the great cultural paradox. They both destabilize and secure social norms. Nikita Khrushchev, onetime leader of the Soviet Union, once explained why he hated Jews. He said, "They always ask why!"

Questions tend to democratize. Ease with questions conveys a fundamental trust in the goodwill and the good sense of others. Autocrats hate questions. We train children at the Passover Seder to ask why, because tyrants are undone and liberty is won with a good question. It is for this reason that God loves it when we ask why. Consequently we celebrate challenging the Torah to make sense.

Asking Contemporary Political Questions

In every generation one is obligated to ask new questions. In the early days the Kibbutz Haggadah retooled the four questions to transcend ritual issues and to focus on contemporary historical concerns, such as the battle with the Arabs (1930's), the Holocaust (1940's) and the ingathering of 2,000,000 Jewish refugees (1950's) when the issues of antisemitism were central.

Below are four questions asked by children in Kibbutz Ein Harod. It is a shame that we don't have a copy of the answers the parents gave to these contemporary questions.

- Why do people all over the world hate Jews?
- When will the Jews return to their land?
- When will our land become a fertile garden?
- When will there be peace and brotherhood world over?

What questions would you pose in light of the world crises today?

My questions this year include:

- What are the responsibilities of local, national and international governments to contain an epidemic? In what way have they

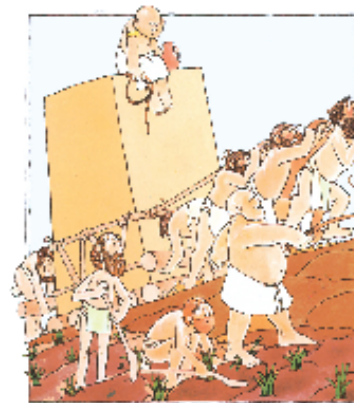
failed us and in what ways have they adjusted to save their populations?

- What individuals and organizations have stepped forward to help? What can I do and what have those at this table done so far?
- Have we been living in a typical modern illusion that humanity has rational control over our fates? How do we handle our heightened sense of vulnerability? Will we ever be so naïve again to think that plagues are a thing of the past?
- What can be done to rebuild our economy and social webs after containment of corona?

10. Avadim Hayenu: Storytelling “We Were Slaves” and “In every generation one is obligated to see oneself / or show oneself as one who personally went out from Egypt. Just as it says: “You shall tell your child on that very day: ‘It is because of this that God did for me when I went out from Egypt.’” (Exodus 13:8)

(pages: ADN classic 44, ADN Red Cover 16, NTR 28)

Once questions have been raised and interest evoked, then it is



time to tell the story of slavery and freedom, of passivity and liberation, but also this year the attempted genocide in the Nile of all the Hebrew sons and their rescue.

Note two typical mistakes of the seder leader that should be avoided at any seder:

- (1) While the word “Haggadah” means to tell the story of the Exodus to our children, the traditional Haggadah does NOT

include the text of the slavery and freedom from Egypt (described extensively in the Torah).

While the Haggadah instructs us: “The more and the longer,

one expands and embellishes the story, the more commendable it is," most people just keep on taking turns reading the haggadah out loud even though the tale of the Exodus is not told there and the ten plagues are mentioned in name only.

- (2) The most important mitzvah is NOT only to recount the facts of the tale, but to RELIVE the experience in which one feels as if they were enslaved, as if they were liberated and to SHOW others what that feels like by using theatrical methods.



Therefore consider SKIPPING all the unnecessary sections (such as the five rabbis in Bnai Brak) and instead TELL the story by acting it out using dress up clothes,

by reading a children's version at the back of our haggadot or the mock newspaper version; or by asking people to pantomime the tale; or by singing the gospel song "Let My People Go."

Given the corona epidemic it seems that the move from slavery to freedom (Pharaoh's enslavement and negotiations to liberate the slave) is less relevant. By contrast the story in **Exodus 1-2** about Pharaoh's policy of national genocide and the struggle by health officials like the first righteous gentiles, the midwives, to save the high risk age bracket of male babies is more relevant, though clearly not identical to today's threat. (See *Stephen Arnoff's tale of the midwives at the end of A Night to Remember*.)

Discuss: Which medical personnel are risking their lives today to save our lives? What motivates them? How do we show our appreciation?

Personalizing the Exodus: Freedom from Depression

In the blessing over the second cup, the cup of redemption, it says:

"God took us from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to festivity, from thick darkness to a great light, from enslavement to redemption!"

Not only is political, national and economic oppression mentioned but also the psychological component of personal darkness and sorrow. In the hasidic tradition we learn:

Rebbe Nahman of Bratslav: "The Exodus from Egypt occurs in every human being, in every era, in every year and even on every day."

In many contemporary seders, participants are asked to talk about what enslaves and constrains them and what has given them personal liberation. This year we must add: how do we go from mourning and dread to joy? While it might seem appropriate in a time of epidemic to minimize the festivity of Passover, Rebbe Nahman holds that an intentional even artificial effort to generate joy is the source of true freedom, while dwelling on sadness may sink us into *mara shehora*, dark depression. Famously in the Warsaw Ghetto followers of Reb Nahman sang and danced about the mitzvah to be joyful even in a terrible situation, not because they were naïvely hopeful or passive, but because they wanted to fight off despair and they refused to let the Nazis terrorize them.

Rabbi Nachman

Know that one sunk in *mara shehora* / black depression cannot control his mind freely. It is hard for him to settle his mind/ maintain peace of mind.

Only by means of joy/*simha* can he control his mind freely and achieve mindful composure, for joy means a world of liberty, and by means of joy we become free beings and we are enabled to go out from exile.

11. Keeping Promises: V'hi She'amda in the Face of Recurrent Threat of Destruction

(ADN classic 76, ADN Red Cover 35, NTR 62)



While the Haggadah speaks of anti-Semitic threats to the people and the state of Israel's existence, it also raises a general question about faith in survival when facing an existential threat.

Coping with Isolation and Uncertainty. Natan Sharansky, the former Zionist activist Prisoner of Zion in the Soviet Union who spent 405 days in a punishment cell and four years in solitary confinement out of nine years in the Soviet Gulag system, sums up five existential survival strategies to withstanding despair in the face of uncertainty. Listen to them and share your ideas for coping with sequestration which allows you to keep your psychological freedom.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdyHlYpRvko>

12. Symposium on Understanding the Stranger and the Ten Plagues

(pages: ADN classic78-91, 100-101, ADN Red Cover36-42, NTR 64-77)

In the long section entitled "My Father was a Wandering Aramean" the rabbis engage in a discussion of the persecution in Egypt and end by reciting the ten plagues. While there is no obligation to read this section, it is a mitzvah to discuss the meaning of the biblical verses describing slavery and that exercise in empathy with the ancient past is supposed to help us treat others around us with greater sensitivity and justice.

Exodus 23:9: Also you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Discuss "the heart of the stranger" and our estrangement one from the other by order of the health ministries and the effect of the psychology of the epidemic on our society, our nation and our relationship with others — enhancing or weakening solidarity among humanity!

Read the Ten Plagues adding new plagues:

- How is the corona plague different than plagues in Egypt?

Recount the Plagues

Recount the plagues that have struck this year and for each remove a drop of wine from one's cup of joy. Some families recount ecological, economic or political plagues at this point.

Symbolizing Suffering:

For years the plagues have been a game we play (plague bags, tables covered with plastic frogs etc), but now it is no joke. Many have long removed a drop of wine from our cup of joy for each plague that struck our recalcitrant Egyptian oppressors. But now we will take the plague more seriously.

Consider that as we recite the plagues we might add the number of victims, nation by nation, and even commemorate a victim you knew or read about. Yes this can be very depressing and one should be careful before deciding whether to try this custom. In principle, it is like breaking a glass at a wedding, a gesture recognizing our connection to a broken world even in the midst of our private celebration.

13. Dayenu: Counting our Blessings and Hallel: Gratitude for Liberation

(ADN classic 104-109, ADN Red Cover 48-51, NTR 82-84)

With all our suffering and the despite the fact that there is no redemption to be celebrated at this point, we do have so much to be thankful for beginning with the dedication of the medical staffs that protect us. Ask each participant to add to the singing of Dayenu a phrase expressing gratitude during this stressful period (such as the opportunity to spend quality time with the family at home).

RABBI ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL

The Inversion of Gratefulness

Basic to human existence is a sense of indebtedness — of indebtedness to society, of indebtedness to God. What is emerging in our age is a strange inversion. Modern people believe that the world is indebted to them; that society is charged with duties toward them. Their standard and preoccupation: What will I get out of life? Suppressed is the question: What will life, what will society get out of me?

14. Afikomen: Hiding and Seeking

(ADN classic 130-131, ADN Red Cover 63, NTR 104-105)

Much of Passover is about hiding and seeking whether hametz that must be purified from our homes; hiding and then rescuing baby Moses before Pharaoh has him drown; hiding half the matza as the afikoman until the end of the seder meal as its dessert.

Activity for Zoom Seder: While parents may hide the Afikoman, let the grandparents in a different house know the secret hiding place and then they can give their grandkids hints as are needed. The grandparents then give out the gifts.

THIRD CUP of the Meal

(ADN classic 137, ADN Red Cover 67, NTR 110)

15. Concluding Ceremonies: ELIJAH's CUP of Hope Envisioning the Reunion of Divided Generations

(pages: ADN classic 138-142, ADN Red Cover 68-69, NTR 112-115)

Pour a large cup of wine in honor of Elijah, and open the door expectantly, especially in a period of fear of the stranger, lockdown and closed doors.

Elijah's Calls for Reconciliation in a Day of Crisis Malachi 3:23-24

Now I am sending to you Elijah the prophet, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and terrible day; and he will turn the hearts of parents to children and the hearts of children to their parents.

YITZHAK TABENKIN, THE GREAT KIBBUTZ EDUCATOR

"I believe in the past, the present, and the future"

I still believe in his approach: Every time I hesitate on a major question, I ask the advice of two people: my grandfather — for his opinion, and my grandson — how will the decision affect his future? It's important to me that in answering any question, I consider both previous generations and possible effects on the future ones; not merely my own immediate future, but the farthest foreseeable unfolding of events.

Filling Our Cup of Redemption Ourselves

The Hassidic Rebbe Naftali Tzvi Horowitz (Poland) used to go around the Seder table inviting each participant to pour from their personal cup into Elijah's cup. This symbolizes the Kabbalistic concept that Divine action will occur when there is a corresponding human action, an awakening from below that precedes it.

In some families, each participant helps to fill Elijah's cup of future redemption, while, silently or aloud, making a particular wish for a better year. May it come true with our own initiative and then with God's help.

16. Messianic Imagination: Next Year in Jerusalem

(pages: ADN classic, ADN Red Cover 85, NTR 136)

In a time of crisis survival depends not only on conserving strength and circling the wagons for defense against attack, but also imagining a day after the crisis, a time of *Tikkun Olam*. The rebuilding of Jerusalem, destroyed and forbidden to Jewish access for hundreds of years (70 CE to 7th C.), became the symbol of redemption not only for the family but for the community and through the messiah for the world.

RABBI CHAIM POTOK, AUTHOR OF THE CHOSEN **Messianism Is About Healing**

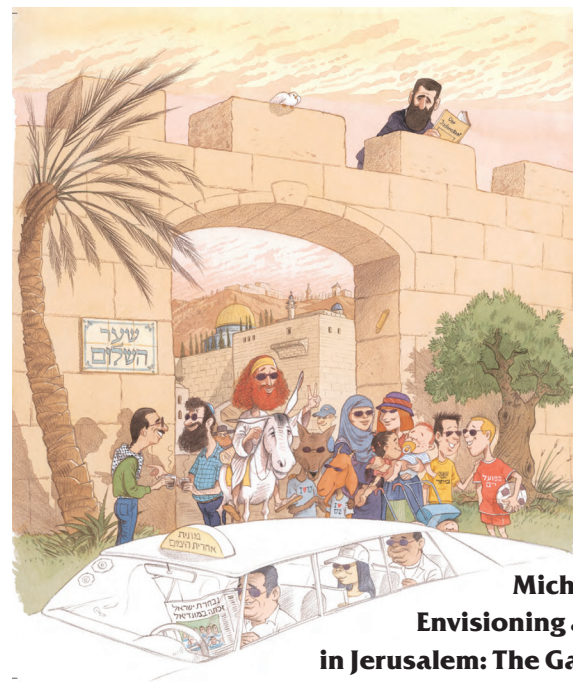
The notion of Messiah as an actual individual is very dangerous, something we should be on guard against. Salvation for me is the effort that we put into understanding our deepest selves in the most honest way that we can, so that we can look not only at our own selves, but at the selves of others around us. Messianism is about a world that's trying to be healed, redeemed; the notion of a goal toward which we are constantly navigating.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. LINCOLN MEMORIAL, WASHINGTON D.C., 1963, 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF LINCOLN'S EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION **I Have A Dream Today**

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood.

With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.



**Michel Kichka,
Envisioning a New Gate
in Jerusalem: The Gate of Peace**

Song and Prayer: *God makes peace in heaven,
and so may God make peace over us. Amen.*

*Oseh shalom beem-romav / hu ya-aseh shalom aleinu
v'al kol Yisrael / v'eemru amen.*

Activity: Share your Dreams and Resolutions for the Day After

RABBI ABRAHAM ISAAC KOOK, ZIONIST MYSTIC AND FIRST ASHKENAZI CHIEF RABBI OF ISRAEL

Songs of the Soul, the Nation, Humanity and the Cosmos

*When a nation or a race or a political movement feels threatened
by an enemy (like the Egyptians), then they need to develop
solidarity among the persecuted or those fearful of usurpation,
but in the face of a natural disaster we need to extend our
empathy for all those who share a common vulnerability.*

continued on next page

There is one who sings the song of his soul, discovering in it everything — utter spiritual fulfillment.

Then there is one who sings the song of his people. Emerging from the private circle of his soul — not expansive enough, not yet tranquil — he strives for fierce heights, clinging to the entire community of Israel in tender love. Together with her, he sings her song, feels her anguish, delights in her hopes. He conceives profound insights into her past and her future, deftly probing the inwardness of her spirit with the wisdom of love.

Then there is one whose soul expands until it extends beyond the border of Israel, singing the song of humanity. In the glory of the entire human race, in the glory of the human form, his spirit spreads, aspiring to the goal of humankind, envisioning its consummation. From this spring of life, he draws all his deepest reflections, his searching, striving, and vision.

Then there is one who expands even further until he unites with all existence, with all creatures, with all worlds, singing a song with them all. Then there is one who ascends with all these songs in unison — the song of the soul, the song of the nation, the song of humanity, the song of the cosmos — resounding together, blending in harmony, circulating the sap of life, the sound of holy joy.

This full comprehensiveness rises to become the song of holiness, the song of God, the song of Israel, in its full strength and beauty, in its full authenticity and greatness. The name Yisra-el (Yashir-El) stands for the Song of God [sung originally at the Red Sea but projected into the future as a comprehensive song].

It is a simple song, a twofold song, a threefold song and a fourfold song. It is the Song of Songs of King Solomon whose name means Shalom — peace and wholeness. It is the song of the Sovereign in whom is wholeness.