

Passover Prayer in the Age of Coronavirus

Why is this night different from all other nights? Why is this Passover different from all other Passovers?

On this Passover, when a pandemic threatens our collective health on an unimaginable scale, we are called to respond with the power of our humanity, with the Divine spirit implanted within us, with our legacy of hope and determination to prevail.

We pray for the at risk, the isolated, the stricken, the mourners.

We pray for those who have dedicated their lives to keeping us healthy—doctors, nurses, health-care workers—and all who sustain our hospitals and health-care institutions—existing and makeshift—operating under trying circumstances.

We pray for the first responders—police officers, fire fighters, military personnel who have been marshalled to the cause—all who are responsible for the safety of our communities.

We pray for our elected officials, who can save lives with wise leadership.

May God bless all of our public servants and watch over them.

On this Passover, when so many are separated from one another at a traditional time of being together, we reach out to one another with renewed love and compassion. When someone is missing from our Seder table, we tell their story as if they are with us. When there is personal sadness, we respond with communal solidarity, empathy, and fortitude.

On this Passover, not “all who are hungry can come and eat” and not “all who are in need can come and celebrate Passover.” In response, we commit all the days of our year to a heightened awareness of Passover’s values—to freeing the enslaved, to feeding the hungry, to sheltering the homeless, to supporting the poor. We rededicate ourselves to rekindling and cherishing our Passover traditions for all the years of our future, when light will overcome darkness, when health will overcome infirmity.

Dear God, “Spread over us Your canopy of peace . . . Shelter us in the shadow of Your wings . . . Guard us and deliver us. . . Guard our coming and our going, grant us life and peace, now and always.”

“This year we are slaves, next year we will be free.”

A Seder Responsive Reading in the Age of Coronavirus

As we fill our four cups of wine, we pray for a time when our cups will yet again be overflowing.

As we wash our hands, we affirm our role in protecting ourselves and others.

As we dip in salt water, we cry the tears of a planet besieged.

As we break the matzah, we long to be made whole.

As we ask the four questions, we search for the answers that elude us.

As we remember the ten plagues, we contemplate our own.

As we imagine our own redemption from Egypt, we aspire to be free.

As we sing Dayenu, we beseech, may our efforts to combat this pandemic be enough.

As we eat the matzah, we contemplate our impoverished state.

As we consume the bitter herbs, we empathize with another's pain.

As we enjoy the haroset, we remember the sweetness which awaits us.

As we search for the afikomen, we pray to be connected to our missing pieces.

As we welcome Elijah, we pray for redemption.

As we sing songs of praise, we remain grateful for all of God's gifts.

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