

## **Why do we need this supplement?**

The global Coronavirus pandemic has changed the way that the Jewish people are celebrating Passover in many ways, but we are still committed to continuing our ancient traditions. Passover is a holiday that is meant to reflect the times in which it is celebrated. We would be irresponsible if we did not acknowledge and discuss our experience of celebrating Passover amidst sweeping quarantine measures and in the face of global tragedy. This supplement includes a few suggestions for how you might bring our contemporary reality into our long standing tradition.

## **Rachtzah**

Hand washing rituals have been a part of Jewish practice for millenia. Even back to the Torah's description of Temple practice, cleanliness was emphasized as a way to achieve ritual purity. In those days, ritual purity was a necessity for communion with the deity.

During the Black Plague, some Medieval scholars attribute the relatively low mortality rate among Jews to hand washing rituals: a heightened sense of cleanliness may have led to a slower spread of disease in the Jewish community. Other scholars point out that Jews were ostracized from many European communities and forced into ghettos.

Though we might look around our world and become despondent in the face of global tragedy, we can take comfort in the fact that our tradition gives us the tools and values to be leaders in public health. Our people have had to experience what it means to be exiled from the community. In this moment, the exile is imposed due to public health measures rather than anti-semitism. Even in our quarantine, we rejoice in the freedom we have to connect with those in our community who may have different beliefs and opinions than us. Now more than ever, that community is necessary.

As we wash our hands this evening, we share a blessing for public health and for finding community even in the face of social distancing.

## **Plagues**

Often when we discuss the biblical plagues we pause and take stock of some of the plagues of our contemporary society. We would be remiss in not mentioning that, as we read this, there is a literal plague sweeping the planet. As we reach the point in our seder when we recite the biblical plagues and mourn the deaths of those who perished, it is impossible to not empathize with our reading. Our experience today is all too similar to the account in the text.

This moment, this overwhelming anxiety that we feel, the dread we have about tomorrow, the fear that the world does not quite look the same as it once did, and the worry we have for our loved ones, all of these feelings that we have in this moment are why our people have celebrated Passover for millenia. We read our ancient text to learn something about our past.

We experience our story as if we, ourselves were present. The emotions, the senses, the thoughts and ideas, we internalize all of them. Don't forget where you are right now. It is our story.

We do the work today so that we can pass something along to our next generation.

We are experiencing a plague. It is neither biblical nor ancient; it is real and happening now. How will the plague of Coronavirus change you? How will you change the world?

### **Tzafoon**

I cannot help but glance around in this moment and wonder

“How?”

How can I find a place

Just a tiny space

To hide this piece

This piece of my story that has been told so long

That echoes from generation to generation

I know I must fulfill its ending

But this place that I live is just too small

Too cramped

Too known

Do hiding places exist here anymore?

I cannot help but glance around in this moment and wonder

“Where?”

Where is the place

A tiny nook

A little cranny

Where the last puzzle piece of my story is hidden

The joy in the fulfillment

Of a generations old obligation

This place that I live has become so small

So cramped

So known

Yet hiding places still exist.