Friends,

As we are all sitting in our homes and watching as the world is fighting this severe pandemic I am reminded of the first night of Passover. By that I mean the very first night... back in Egypt. The Israelites were commanded to put blood on the doorposts of their houses to be spared from the 10th and final plague, death of the first born. All of the other ten plagues God spared us and the Egyptians suffered while for the tenth we were required to actively save ourselves by slaughtering the lamb and putting its blood on our doorposts. That night as Egypt suffered a loss that never had been experienced we sat huddled in our homes scared and unsure of what the next day would bring. That is an awful lot like what we are doing right now. Those of us who have no symptoms and no known links to any people who have contracted the virus are sitting in our homes while the social distance that we are maintaining is keeping us safe. We watch as outside the world continues on in a very different way. That first night of Passover must have been beyond scary and at the same I hope that people recognized that there was something on the other side of that night. As we are all adjusting our Passover plans for this year let us all recognize that it will not always be like this. That there will be a world after we beat this virus. And that we can do our part by celebrating our lives and our freedom even in the darkest of places and times.

Attached to this letter you will find the Passover guide for 5780 that was prepared for the Conservative Movement. This guide is meant to answer questions regarding what foods we can and cannot eat during the eight days of Passover. During Passover there are three rules that we follow in regards to chametz, food items that are leavened or have the potential of being leavened. 1) We may not consume any chametz, 2) we may not own any chametz and 3) we may not see any of it either. These rules make Passover a complicated celebration and also a very misunderstood one as well. The guidelines on the following pages should help to alleviate some anxiety associated with preparing for this wonderful holiday. Preparing for Passover should not be mistaken for “spring-cleaning” or for an intensive purging of everything edible in our homes. Rather, preparing for Passover is a ritual act of cleaning our homes of forbidden items for the duration of the holiday. Furthermore, Passover cleaning is not something that needs to take place in every single room of our homes... rather we must clean rooms that there is a likelihood that food was at one time or another found in it. It is also a time to get ourselves prepared for celebrating one of the greatest gifts that humankind knows... the gift of freedom. Just as important as it is to prepare our homes to cook and enjoy the holiday, it is of equal importance to prepare incredible Seders that will enable all of the participants to truly relive the moment of our being freed from slavery and to discuss this privilege.

There might be special updates for this year due to the current situation. I will share all updated decisions that are made by the CJLS and help anyone who is looking for guidance.

I want to once again add one brief note about the guide for this year. As you will see in the guide kitnyot is listed as being allowed for all Jews, both Ashkenazi and Sephardi. As I wrote last year, I am advising our non-Sephardic members to continue to abstain from kitnyot. I am happy to have a longer conversation with anyone interested in such a discussion.

Here are some important dates and times for this coming Passover:
1. **Bedikat Chametz (The Search For Chametz):**
   Tuesday, April 7: 8:30pm (As close to nightfall as possible.)
   A final search for Chametz is conducted after nightfall. Customarily, 10 pieces of bread or any other type of Chametz are placed in various rooms of the house and the search is conducted by candlelight (feel free to use a flashlight) using a feather and/or wooden spoon to gather the Chametz.

2. **Ta’anit B’chorim - Fast Of The First Born:**
   Wednesday, April 8: 7:00AM Following Morning Minyan
   This commemorates their deliverance from death during the tenth plague in Egypt. It is customary for first-born sons to participate in the meal served in celebration of a mitzvah, such as a Brit Mila (circumcision) or Siyum (the completion of a tractate of the Talmud). Those attending these events on the eve of Passover celebrate with the partaking of refreshments and are then exempt from this fast. (This will likely be done on Zoom)

3. **Last Time For Eating Chametz:** Wednesday, April 8: 12:15AM.

4. **Last time for Annulling Chametz (declaring it no longer in your possession):** Wednesday, April 8: 1:25PM
   This is the time by which you burn your remaining Chametz found the night before during Bedikat Chametz.

5. **Candle Lighting: Wednesday Night, April 8: 7:34PM**

6. **Candle Lighting: Thursday Night, April 9: 8:42PM**

7. **Candle Lighting: Friday Night, April 10: 7:35PM**

8. **Candle Lighting: Tuesday Night, April 14: 7:37PM**

9. **Candle Lighting: Wednesday Night, April 15: 8:45PM**

10. **End of Holiday: Thursday Night, April 16: 8:46PM**
   Chametz permitted after approximately 9:15pm when dining out and after 9:45 when eating at home.

With all of that out of the way, I would like to offer you a few suggestions on ways to make your Passover a more meaningful experience:

- Do everything in your power to stay healthy and to stay safe
- Heed the warnings of our elected officials and medical professionals
- Resist the temptation to put Passover on the back burner
- We are celebrating freedom and not slavery, and so keep it fun and keep it meaningful. Do not become a slave to the holiday.
- Ask questions, do not allow for decorum to get in the way of you and your guests experiencing the evening together.
- Eat lots of fruit, and less Matzah than you have in the past. Matzah is hard on the stomach and fruit negates this.
- Bring something that represents freedom to you to your Seder, and show it to everyone there.
• Try telling the story of Passover in a new way this year. Remember that the Hagadah is our guide book, and that the Mitzvah is in embellishing and expanding the narrative. This can be done in a multiplicity of ways.
• I know it might be late to do this, but buy a new Hagadah for this year.
• I think that above all else, the most important way to make this year a meaningful one is to go into the Seder and the holiday with an open mind, and allow yourself to experience Passover 5780 as if it were your first Passover ever.

So that is all for now, on behalf of Carrie Ayelet and Galit, I want to wish each of you a Chag Kasher v'Sameach, a Happy and Healthy Passover,

Rabbi Josh Hearshen