

Happy Passover to You

From all of us at BMH-BJ to all of you, our members and friends, we wish you a very **happy and healthy Pesach.**

-Rabbi Chai, Cantor Marty, Ilene, Jeff, the entire BMH-BJ Staff and Preschool.



"Passover" oil on canvas by Lynne Feldman

Inspiration for Tonight

Passover and the Eleventh Plague by Rabbi Benjamin Blech

Ten plagues are listed in our Passover Haggadah. Today our minds are preoccupied with the eleventh. Suddenly we are confronted with the reality of the coronavirus which has turned us into contemporary victims like the ancient Egyptian taskmasters of our ancestors.

When we recite the plagues during the Seder, we spill a drop of wine from the cup before us. As a little boy my father taught me the rationale for this beautiful custom. Although the Egyptians were our enemies who brutally enslaved us, we need to remember that they were still human beings. And when human beings suffer our cup cannot be full, our joy cannot be complete. There needs on our part to be at least a drop of compassion for the pain of others.

How much wine should we then spill from our cups this year during our global pandemic?

A friend of mine put the problem of celebrating Passover this year into stark perspective. "It just doesn't feel like Pesach this year – it feels much more like Tisha B'Av."

Tisha B'Av is the saddest day of the calendar year. The list of tragedies it commemorates, the terrible events that occurred precisely on this Hebrew date are a statistical improbability of the highest order, beginning with the destruction of both temples on exactly the same day. Passover, on the other hand, is the most festive and widely observed of the Jewish holidays. In Israel 93% of Israelis participated in a Seder last year, according to the most recent survey. The Seder has always been a synonym for joy – the finest expression of Jewish love for family, for home, for the glories of our past and for the hopes for a future.

Surely the observation that the current plague can elicit the feeling that this year's Passover seems

more like Tisha B'Av is cause for weeping. And yet strangely enough Jewish tradition made this very connection between the saddest day and the most joyous day long ago: both occur on the same day of the week. What is the meaning of this linkage? It is a connection that offers us tremendous hope and comfort in this tragic time.

Tradition teaches us that the Messiah who we hope to welcome on Passover will be born on Tisha B'Av. From the tragedy of the one comes the redemption of the other.

Passover reminds us that despite our challenges, there is a higher plan that is unfolding.

We may not comprehend the ways of God and understand suffering. We may sit perplexed in our homes, unable to go out, mystified in the very same way biblical Job had to contend with his inexplicable misfortunes. But there is one truth we cannot abandon. The name of the month of our collective tragedies is Av. Av means father, and no matter what befalls us we continue to believe our Father in heaven will never forsake us. Which is why Tisha B'Av has within it the seed of the holiday of Passover. We will set a cup for Elijah at the Seder with full confidence that on the 15 of Nisan, the month of miracles, he will personally appear to prepare us for Messiah's arrival.

At the Seder we have a tradition of eating a hard-boiled egg. Some commentators explain it to commemorate the meal of mourning immediately prior to beginning the fast of Tisha B'Av. Once again it is meant to remind us that from tragedy will come redemption.

We do not unfortunately know when Messiah will come. But the rabbis have prophetically left us one clue to alert us to his imminent arrival. It is recorded in the Midrash by way of a mesmerizing parable.

A student once asked his rabbi: "We have been waiting so long for the Messiah to come, yet he still has not made his appearance. How will we, the Jewish people, know when he will at last reveal himself? What is the sign we can look for that will announce his imminent arrival?"

The rabbi responded, "I will answer you by way of a story. A father and son journeyed together on a long trek through a desert. Their destination was a faraway city. Weary from the trip, the young boy pleaded with his father to give him a sign so that he might know when they were close to their final destination. In response, the father told the boy, 'This will be a sure indication before you. Remember this sign. When you will see a cemetery, you will know that the city is near.' This parable," the rabbi continued, "is the answer to your question. When you will see a cemetery, you will know that redemption is near. So too did God reveal to his children that in the aftermath of being beset by horrible tragedy, death and destruction, the Almighty will have mercy and answer the prayers of the Jews, as it is written (Psalms 20:4) 'And the Almighty will respond to you in the day of great hardship.'"

And it is the Tisha B'Av of today's plague that may perhaps be the cemetery of the parable.

Thomas Cahill, the Irishman who wrote the best-selling book *The Gift of the Jews*, claimed that Jews should be given credit for gifting the world with the idea of history, that we were the first to grasp the significance of the past and the relevance of memory. What he should've added is that Jews joined the idea of destiny to the meaning of history. History has a purpose. History has a plan. Better put, history fulfills a divinely ordained order meant to lead us to a prophesied destiny. The word for order in Hebrew? It is Seder, the very name given to the most important Passover ritual.

One of the most powerful prayers recorded during the Holocaust was the prayer of a rabbi who beseeched God with these words: "Heavenly Father I do not ask you to explain why. I know that Your thoughts are not our thoughts. I understand that our finite minds cannot grasp Your management of the universe. Please do not tell me why. I ask only that you reassure me that there is a why."

That is indeed the ultimate message of Passover. To celebrate it is to reaffirm our belief that history is His story, that even sorrowful events are part of a divinely sanctioned Seder, a destined order, that even the tragedies of Tisha B'Av are somehow a prelude to the ultimate Passover of final redemption.

Passover Virtual Events on Zoom!

After you click on the highlighted link you choose, you will be asked for a password.

the VIDEO PASSWORD is: BMHBJ

You can also CALL IN to the meeting. The CALL IN NUMBER is: 720 707 2699

The CALL IN PASSWORD is: 498778

Saturday 4/11

8:30 PM [Musical Havdalah](#) with Rabbi Chai

Sunday 4/12

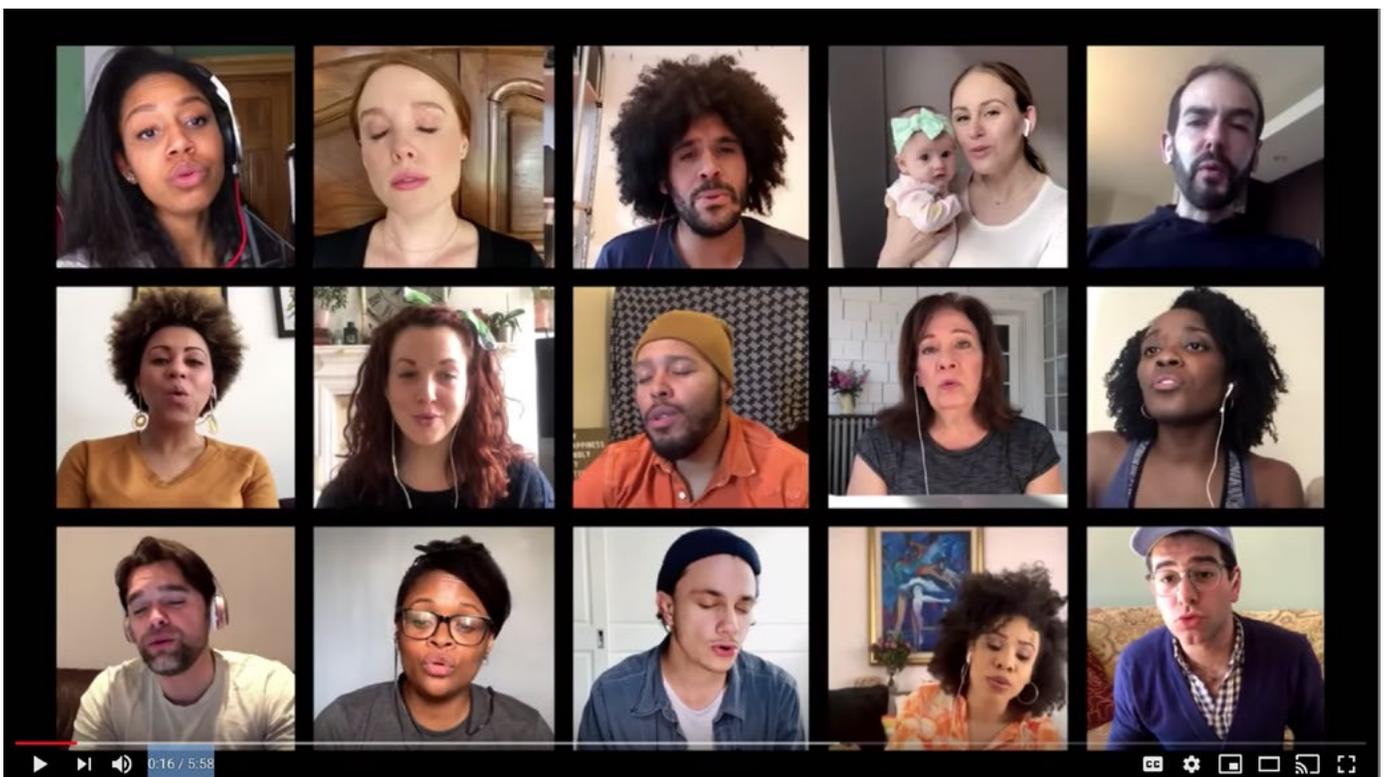
6:00 PM [Daily Minyan](#) with Yahrzeit Memorial Ceremony

Monday 4/13

6:00 PM [Daily Minyan](#) with Yahrzeit Memorial Ceremony

You've Got a Friend!

Performed by the worldwide cast of BEAUTIFUL (in quarantine) for The Actors Fund.
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