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Why I Won't Be Passing Over Passover This Year



Art by Chana Helen Rosenberg

The dam finally burst! For a while, there was an ongoing existential shift, beginning with the tightening in my chest as the days wore on, and the news reports grew more and more grim.

But today was different. Today, I got a text from my daughter that the father of her very close friend had just passed away. From corona. He had the symptoms for just a day.

He wasn't a number. This wasn't just an inconvenience or a scare. He was a real human being who died.

He wasn't a number. He was a real human being who died

It's hitting home. The long lists of prayers. People I know who are ill, some very critical. Friends are sending texts, urging, begging people to pray for their fathers, their sisters, their loved ones.

When this craziness originally hit, it felt surreal. Like we walked into a doomsday sci-fi scenario, except it wasn't ending. As a society, we tried to meet this "new normal"—that was anything but normal—with a degree of equanimity. Even with humor. There were great memes poking fun at our ideals as a society that made us re-examine our closest relationships and priorities, and that taught us to really appreciate our children's teachers and the simple things in life, like going for lunch with a friend. There were great inspirational messages floating around about how we were going to get through this as a better people. I, too, looked for inspiration, to find the silver lining of good and of gratitude.

Sure, there was so much uncertainty. I tried to bury the pessimistic voice inside of me, whispering that "this could take many months," or that was demanding, "what about shortages?" and, "will the economy survive?" Were we going to run out of food, necessities, hospital beds, money? I heard those voices and felt my chest tightening even as I couldn't stop myself from reading the latest news reports. Nevertheless, through it all, I continued to stay in my bubble, insisting this was for a reason—that it will teach us to become a better society.

Then came Passover season. The highlight of our year has always been Passover, when our whole family gets together. I cook and bake for weeks in advance so the grandkids can enjoy the time together as they nibble their favorite *pesachdike* treats, trailing crumbs all across my freshly cleaned home. But then, boom, everything changed, and for the first time in 10 years, my oldest daughter and her family won't be coming. Yesterday, I helped her compose a list of basic necessities to set up her own Passover kitchen, with all her kids at home, as she scrambles to prepare the essentials for the holiday while trying not to venture out.

The new situation is sad, so very sad. But somehow, through it all, I keep insisting to myself that we're going to do it for G-d. G-d needs us now, I told myself. We're going to come through this challenge. G-d is counting on us, and we're going to show Him the stuff we're made of. There are great heroes emerging from this: the tireless medical staff, teachers attempting their classes online, the people who offer to shop for others, the overwhelming kindness all around us—we're going to prove to ourselves and our world, the greatness of the human spirit, the beauty of communities holding strong.

And while that is all true, today, as I heard the news that hit too close to home, something shifted. While maybe G-d still needs us, I just realized how much I need G-d.

G-d, I'm scared. G-d, I need You. G-d, You are the only steadfast in our lives. G-d, please see how much we are trying.

Eventually, I will get around to preparing a beautiful Passover. No, it won't be lavish meals, the discussions won't be as lively, and the atmosphere won't be as joyous without my sweet, little grandchildren.

But I am going to give Passover my "all" this year, whatever my "all" is, during these crazy times. I will do my best because our world needs spiritual light during a time of such darkness. I will exert myself because we need to really experience liberation. I will try because G-d is counting on me—all of us—to open these spiritual channels of blessings, faith, strength, liberty and healing.

But moreover, I will make it the best Passover I can because in this darkness, fear and helplessness, I realize more than ever that as everything I ever knew and was familiar to me changes, and as more and more darkness spreads around me, the only thing that has not changed in our world and never will is that G-d, I need You in my life. I so desperately need a relationship with You. Even in this darkness, I will do whatever it takes to have that relationship, which I hope and I know will soon be revealed in much more of an openly happy and loving bond.

G-d, I'm scared. G-d, I need you.

Wishing you all health and safety, and a happy and kosher Passover!

By Chana Weisberg



Chana Weisberg is the editor of TheJewishWoman.org. She lectures internationally on issues relating to women, relationships, meaning, self-esteem and the Jewish soul. She is the author of six books. Her latest book, *Shabbat Delights*, is a two-volume series on the weekly Torah portion.

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Rita Forbes Clinton April 24, 2020
Hi!
This is my first time counting the Omer. I like it.

That you!
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Maxxine Sarasota April 5, 2020
I think counting the Omer Will be really powerful and fraught with meaning. I always use my Chabad reminder and I follow your spiritual, personal, and powerful advice. May I finally refine my personality by diminishing my anxiety/control & really trust in the Holy One, Creator of Heaven & Earth!
Maxxine, Sarasota
[Reply](#)

Donald MacLeod Lr, Sackville, Nova Scotia, Canada April 3, 2020
Dear Chana and Followers. Greetings from a Noahide, in Nova Scotia, Canada. I trust you and your loved ones are safe and sound. My wife and I are spending our 22nd day in isolation, being "guarded over" by our youngest son, who shops for us. He keeps checking on us and reminding us to stay at home. We thank Heshem for his love, care and protection. Our elder son lives on the West Coast and our grandchildren and their partners are spread from coast-to-coast. We've begun regular gatherings on Zoom. It's a joy, after our regular greetings, to sit back and watch/listen to 14 of them chat and to see their love for one another.

We thank G-d for protecting us from this scourge that is upon the world and we pray for our family, friends and neighbours everywhere. May He bless each one of you and keep you and yours safe. Shalom.
Don MacLeod
[Reply](#)

Rita Forbes Clinton April 3, 2020
Hello, Chana

It's 4 AM and your words, "G-d needs us now. We are going to get through this challenge" gave me the strength and the tenacity to keep moving forward and to be a beacon of light to others in a world of chaos and darkness. Thank you for being beaming your light from the "lighthouse."
[Reply](#)

Zev Manila April 2, 2020
Is it okay to do an ePassover instead? only for common year 2020, though.
[Reply](#)

Eliezer Zalmanov for Chabad.org April 6, 2020
In response to Zev:
While an ePassover on Passover itself is not possible, [here](#) are some suggestions on how to do a Pre ePassover.
[Reply](#)

Ann RI April 2, 2020
I hope you will still keep social distancing. G-d helps those who help themselves.
[Reply](#)

Femi Mohammed United Kingdom April 2, 2020
Thank you so very much for this article and the message that you have conveyed Chana as it feels like it has personally spoken to me. Being all on my own I know I am under the protection of G-d, knowing they are with me is all I need so I can play a part in what they require of all of us. These high holidays I will make the arrangements in a special spiritual way with the faith that no matter what, we will Passover this obstacle too.
[Reply](#)

Yael Stepansky Jerusalem April 1, 2020
Chana, thank you for this lift. It really is going to be a very special passover dedicated totally to Hashem and our nuclear families. Wishing us all the strength and clarity to feel true joy in the presence of Hashem at our Seder.
[Reply](#)

Rachel Leah Fry Daphne, AL March 30, 2020
Thank you for this enlightening and heartfelt piece. It speaks to the worries we all have, but more than that it speaks to the fierce hope and faith in Hashem's goodness that will get us through this terrible time. Happy Pesach. May you and your family be well and safe.
[Reply](#)

Miriam G Brooklyn March 30, 2020
Thank you so much for a timely message. I felt like you spoke to me directly and supported me through my thoughts and fears.
May Hashem send us Geula asap, otherwise this whole situation doesn't make any sense.
[Reply](#)

Yehudis Karbal Chicago March 29, 2020
Thank you Chana. You certainly echo the thoughts and feelings of us all. We are so alone and afraid and yet so together in this. The paradox of our existence is revealed now - in all its terrifying "glory." There is an incredible story about the Rebbe being alone on Pesach. It gives me hope that we all can really do this somehow. This crisis begs us to go deep inside and find the "tzelem Elokim." Wishing everyone a speedy recovery - and a true liberation from our personal and collective "Egypt."
Yehudis Karbal
[Reply](#)

Rivka March 26, 2020
Todah rabah Mrs Chana. Thanks for the timely message.
[Reply](#)

Anonymous March 26, 2020
I have many memories of strange Passover holidays. I remember ten years ago when I had a very lonely Seder with only myself and my father, going through all the steps with only the two of us in our otherwise empty house.

I remember a year when I had to walk home through the darkness in the middle of the night, with my head pounding from too much sugary grape juice and raindrops pounding my skin from a thunderstorm raging overhead.

I remember a year when I watched as the full moon turned red from a lunar eclipse.

I remember a year when I was graciously invited to our Rabbi's home, surrounded by a welcoming atmosphere, but still felt spiritually empty and unwanted inside. It took all my strength to speak up when my insights and humor would brighten up the room.

Passover is a holiday of destiny when the strangest things happen. It shakes up our lives and gives us challenges. I say bring it on. This year will be a strange one, too. In the future, it will become a well-tread memory.
[Reply](#)

Anonymous April 2, 2020
In response to Anonymous:
I love your beautiful message. I have experienced times like this as well, not necessarily on Passover, but on random days. You are so right, this will be a year to remember. There will be plenty of deep messages within this that will enlighten us all. Lots of love and beauty. We are all in this together. Wishing everyone a joyous and blessed holiday.
[Reply](#)

Aleksandra Belgrade March 25, 2020
Beautifully written message we all need in this time, todah rabah
[Reply](#)

yehuda BelAir April 8, 2020
In response to Aleksandra:
As the sages have spoken to the entire nation of israel it gives me hope to respond in accordance of this sacred time of mercy and favor as our g-d increases our steadfast hope and the mitvah of Faith in the message of true love to his chosen to behold greatness for the honor of abba our g-d is G-d
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Aleksandra Belgrade April 24, 2020
In response to yehuda:
Thank you for your beautiful words, todah rabah
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