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At the Confluence of the Exodus and “Shelter at Home” ~ Seder During Pandemic

Posted on April 8, 2020 by Rabbi Jessica K. Shimberg



This year, so many are doing so much online for Passover ...

The flood is nearly overwhelming and many beautiful things may be missed in the flood. I encourage you to find that which makes you feel MOST nourished and to let go of the rest. Here is something I ADORED from my toes to the tips of my fingers – a gift from the Israel Philharmonic.

As a rabbi, I feel a responsibility, like never before, to be wise, clever, intelligent, creative, spiritual, enriching, delightful, thoughtful, and more.

Then, I remind myself (as so many of us who lead communities are helping each other to remember) that even in this climate of sadness, fear, concern, and “look at me and all of the great things I am doing,” there is “enoughness” and “a still soft voice.”

In Nevi'im (Prophets), in Kings I, Chapter 19, Elijah (the prophet we invite to our Passover seder along with “all who are hungry,” yet how often do we actually do the latter) is exhausted, even wanting to die, “Enough!” he tells God, so overwhelmed is he. Elijah is encouraged by an angel to “arise and eat.” Even the miracle of a cake baked on a stone and a fresh jar of water (19:6) are not enough to shock him to his feet. Yet, the angel again nudges Elijah to eat and drink or the journey will be too much. And so he does and he journeys (paralleling our 40 year journey through the desert, Elijah journeys for 40 days and nights) to visit the Divine Mystery at Mount Horeb.

And ... he first goes into a cave (fear) rather than venture up to the mountaintop.

And the Holy One calls him out in the famous passage: “Come out and stand on the mountain before The Ineffable.”

And ... the Divine Mystery passed by. There was a great and mighty wind, splitting mountains and shattering rocks by the power of the Source; but the Source was not in the wind.

After the wind—an earthquake; but the Source was not in the earthquake.

After the earthquake—fire; but the Source was not in the fire.

And after the fire—a soft murmuring sound— קול דממה דקה (Kings I 19:11-12)

I have always loved the imagery of this passage from TaNaKh (Hebrew Scriptures, for my friends of other faiths). And, I have long listened for the Divine Mystery in the soft murmuring of nature's stillness – the flutter of Ruach ha'Olam (the Spirit-Breath of All time and space) in the trees or the whistle of that Breath across the sea before the crash of the waves. Inclining my ear, attuning to the melodies of the Ruach haKodesh (the Spirit-Breath of the Holy) in the rustling tall grasses or cornfields of late summer.

So to find myself standing, a bit afraid, in the shadows of all the Passovers of my life, approaching this extremely odd and alienating Pesach in the shadow of loss and without my Mom for the first time ever, I think of Elijah, not as the fierce prophet with zeal for the Divine, but as the one in the seder who turns the hearts of the children toward their parents and the hearts of the parents toward their children. The one who recognized the soft murmuring sound as the Melodic Voice, the Divine Mystery.

In doing so, I will take my own deep breath.

I will turn down my anxiety, my judgment around my own productivity.

I will lean into this Festival of Freedom.

I will listen for קול דממה דקה – the soft murmuring sound of the Divine Mystery.

And, then, upon the foundational strength that provides, I will answer the question asked by the Divine of Elijah in the following verse: “Why are you here?” (19: 9 & 13)

And I, Baruch HaShem (please, God) will relax into the answers ...

Happy Passover! הג שמח! Zisn Pesach!

May your journey bring you new learning and new appreciation of freedom!

May we build the dreams of next year atop and with memory of the lessons of this year and all other years ...

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UPCOMING EVENTS

JUN 5 Fri	7:00 pm Shabbat Service with Mike Solms @ Virtual Via Zoom
	7:30 pm Kehilah Tefilah ~ Kabbalat Shabb...
JUN 13 Sat	8:00 pm Havdalah ~ with Rabbi Jessica @ Virtual Via Zoom
JUN 20 Sat	11:00 am Shabbat Morning “Ahhhh” with Rab... @ Virtual Via Zoom
JUN 28 Sun	10:00 am Kehilat Sukkat Shalom Community ... @ Virtual Via Zoom
JUL 3 Fri	7:30 pm Kehilah Tefilah ~ Kabbalat Shabb...
AUG 7 Fri	7:30 pm Kehilah Tefilah ~ Kabbalat Shabb...
SEP 4 Fri	7:30 pm Kehilah Tefilah ~ Kabbalat Shabb...
OCT 2 Fri	7:30 pm Kehilah Tefilah ~ Kabbalat Shabb...
NOV 6 Fri	7:30 pm Kehilah Tefilah ~ Kabbalat Shabb...

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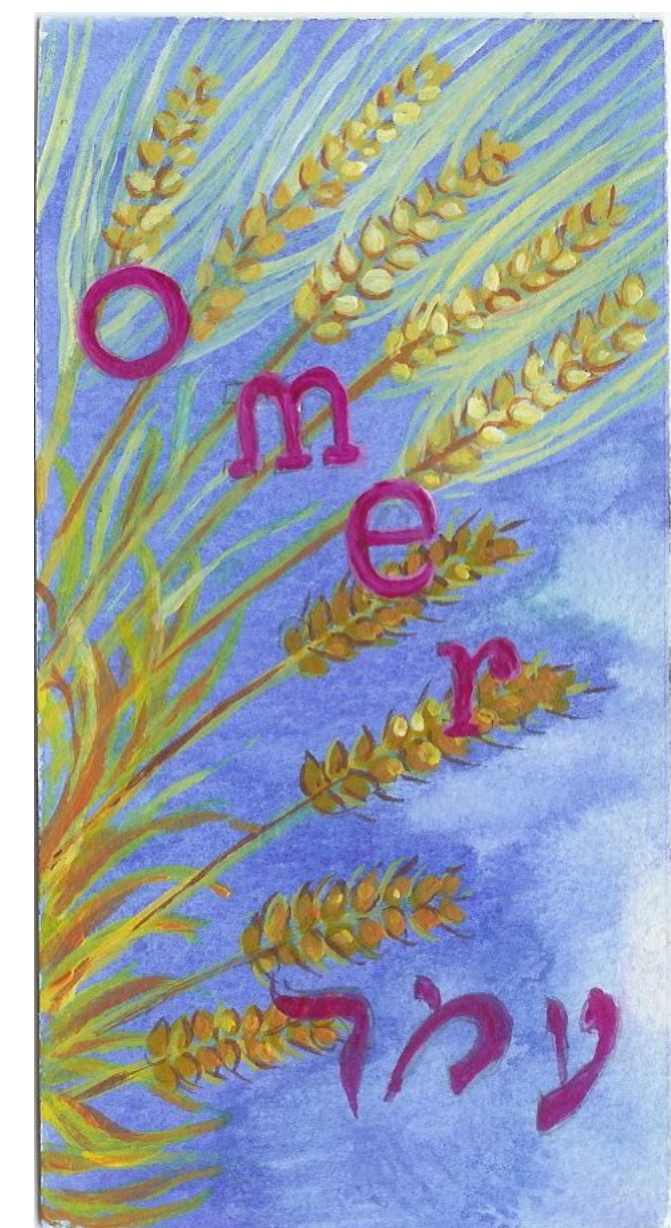
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