

## Positive Judaism Passover Primer

Using the teachings of Positive Judaism to guide your seder in the time of COVID-19.



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The parallels between Passover and the experience of Covid-19 are many. Passover is about the trials and challenges of the ancient Israelites. It tells the story of a community of people on their journey from oppression to freedom. The stories told and questions asked lend themselves naturally to a conversation about our experience of living and coping in the time of Covid-19.

The core teachings of Positive Judaism aim to lead people to live with more gratitude, hope, awe, inspiration, courage, love, and joy. Regardless of your background or level of Jewish observance, this guide pairs the essence of Passover with universal human strengths and values. The strengths and values displayed by the Israelites in the ancient day are the very same strengths that we can draw on today to lead our lives. You're invited to deepen the conversation around your seder table by using this primer as a positive intervention. May you all have a joyful Passover!

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### 1. Gratitude: Welcome and Candle Lighting

"We welcome you to this seder and as we kindle these festival lights, we are **grateful** to be here with each other, sharing our lives together, humbly mindful of the gift of light and life." Rabbi Nachman of Breslov taught, "**gratitude** rejoices with her sister, joy, and is always ready to light a candle and have a party. **Gratitude** doesn't much like the old cronies of boredom, despair, and taking life for granted."

Action: Kindle the lights. Presence each person to express something for which they are **grateful** right now, at this very moment.

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### 2. Resilience: Blessing for Wine: Kiddush

"We lift this cup of wine in honor of the Israelites who suffered under the yoke of slavery and for demonstrating **resilience** in the face of bondage." **Resilience** is the ability to remain active, energetic, focused, and flexible no matter what life presents. The inspiration for resilience is found in the words of Zechariah, "Not by might, not by power, but by my spirit alone."

Discuss: How are we expressing our strength of **resilience** in the days of Covid-19?

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### 3. Kindness: The Unleavened Matzah

"This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate before they were free. Let us show unwavering **love and kindness** to all who are hungry and enslaved today. We are all called in every generation to remember the Exodus "as if you were still a slave in Egypt." The Torah teaches, "great is the virtue of **love and kindness.**" (Exodus 34:6).

Consider: Let us think of the hungry who we are not able to welcome to our table and other ways to serve them with **love and kindness** from a physical distance?

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#### 4. Perseverance: The Middle Matzah = The Afikomen

“We set aside a broken piece of matzah that will become the afikomen to teach the value of **perseverance**, knowing that what seems broken may be repaired.” Break a piece of matzah to honor the **perseverance** of the Israelites and their ability to complete the task and to persist in the face of obstacles. The Akaedat Yitzchat taught that “personal effort and **perseverance** contribute the major part to eventual success. In fact, any negligence or laziness is rated as sinful when circumstances seem to have called for exertion of the self.”

Discuss: Many things about our lives have changed since Covid-19. What can be done to repair some of the broken aspects of our society which will require **perseverance** and imagination?

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#### 5. Bravery: The Hillel Sandwich: Motzi/Matzah/Maror/Charoset

“The combination of the matzah, maror, and charoset teach us that life can be dry, sweet, and sometimes bitter. Yet when we rise to the challenge with **bravery**, we can accomplish great things. Ben Zoma taught: Who is **brave**? Those who conquer their evil impulse. As it is written: “Those who are slow to anger are better than the mighty, and those who rule over their spirit than those who conquer a city.” (Pirke Avot 4:1). Make a Hillel sandwich and enjoy.

Action: Health, medical, fire, police, social service, and delivery workers have stepped up with **bravery** to support our society in a time of coronavirus. Acknowledge this **bravery** with appreciation.

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#### 6. Spirituality: Open the Door for Elijah

“We now open the door” for the Prophet Elijah which symbolizes hope for a better world for all people. With a gesture of **spiritual** positivity, we honor our faith in a higher purpose and an interest in the unknowable and unseen. Judaism teaches that the Creator has opened three gates to mankind so that they may enter into the domain of **spirituality**, ethical conduct and the laws divine, that guide us in our life to health of body and mind and soul. (Duties of the Heart, Bahya Ibn Pakuda)

Discuss: How is your **spiritual** self expressing itself in these days of Covid-19? How is your **spirituality** helping you cope?

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#### 7. Love: The Passover Seder Meal

“And now it is time to eat.” The meal time is the perfect opportunity to express our feelings of neighborly **love** for everyone at this table as we share in the festive meal together and engage in positive conversations that enhance your seder. The Torah teaches, and you shall **love** your neighbor as yourself. (Leviticus 19:18)

Action: Clap and cheer with love and appreciation to your seder leader! Now, eat, drink, and be joyful. No matter what is occurring in our world, It is a mitzvah to be joyful on Passover. Happy Passover!