

Let's Get Through the Winter Together

Remember when the pandemic started, and so many of us said, "Thank goodness it's springtime, and at least it's getting nicer and nicer to spend time outside..."?

I don't actually feel nostalgic for the start of the pandemic. But I am concerned about how we're all holding up now that it's winter. I am concerned that many of you are isolated in your homes, yearning for contact, feeling bored, lonely, and stressed (not to mention, perhaps, cold!) – and also feeling guilty, like you don't have the right to complain, because of how much harder other people have it.

The months of January and February coincide with the beginning of Exodus in our Torah reading cycle. As Exodus 2:23 teaches, the redemption of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt begins when the Israelites "cried out; and their cry for help from the bondage rose up to God." It is the cry that triggers the redemption. That redemption unfolds over time, and things get excruciatingly worse before they improve. But after plagues and miracles, we do eventually leave Egypt. And the cry is a necessary step.

I am not suggesting that if we cry more, COVID will end any more quickly. But I am suggesting that there is value in crying out together when we face collective challenges. There is no Jewish value on stoicism! (By all means, acknowledging our own griefs doesn't preclude holding compassion for others who are suffering even more.) Sometimes, the crying itself *is* liberation.

So as winter continues, we will be creating more deliberate support spaces. I will also be holding brief check-in times, so you can have the opportunity to connect with me briefly, one-on-one, through an easy on-line sign up or by calling Rachel, my assistant. -

The winter will pass, of course. Ultimately, this pandemic will pass, too, and there will be a great deal of grief and trauma to process. While we are in it together, let's do what we can to face the challenges together as a caring community. May we be blessed to know that just like our ancestors, liberation and redemption are possible.