

RABBI'S MESSAGE

What a Difference a Year Makes

A year ago at this time, life was very different for all of us. Personally, I was making arrangements to attend a rabbinic conference in New York. I had no qualms about flying and all the restaurants were open. At the conference, nobody was wearing masks, we sat close to each other and affectionately embraced our colleagues. As I flew back to Houston on February 15, 2020, I had no idea what the coming months had in store.

The Hebrew calendar starts with the month of Nissan, the month that includes Passover. When the Coronavirus became a reality a few weeks before Pesach, we scrambled to learn how maintain our joyous community when we were separated physically. The “zoom” format was an uncomfortable solution for many, but we made it work. We all thought it was a temporary solution; it still IS temporary, but has lasted much longer than anticipated.

Adjusting to a different reality is nothing new for the Jewish people. As I think back just a few months ago to the process of hosting, in virtual technology, a Passover seder, an Open House, weekly religious school classes, adult education and High Holiday worship, I'm reminded of when our ancestors were rushed out of Egypt. The Pandemic that arrived a year ago forced us to explore new avenues of learning and worship, just as the sudden redemption from Egypt forced us to explore a forty-year wilderness in search of a Promised Land.

It hasn't been an easy adjustment, but we continue to explore the best ways to stay safe and communicate. The desert wilderness was filled with challenges. It included the mysteries of available food and water, as well as fears about safety and uncertainty about how long the journey would last. Our society is experiencing many of those same mysteries. Countless people have gotten sick; many have recovered fully, some still experience symptoms while others, sadly, have died. A vaccine is here! And with it, the uncertainty of how long it will take before enough people are safe from the virus.

Like our biblical ancestors, we maintain our hopes, regardless of how uncertain the path. Our prayers are not empty, because they are accompanied by actions: increased hygienic practices, masking, and making sure we and are loved ones remain safe while embracing what medical science provides. In our desert journey G-d gave us manna to eat, helped Miriam find water and guided Moses on the path to freedom. Moses could not lead if we did not follow the paths and learn from G-d's instructions. Today, we rely on the wisdom of science to help us learn what we need to do...and then we need to do it! We have already shown that we can, and we will remain strong as a community, whatever challenges are in front of us.

And we continue, moving forever forward...

L'shalom,

Rabbi Dan Gordon