

# NEWS & VIEWS



## Bitter Water Sweet

*By Rabbi Gray Myrseth*

*An excerpt from the new [Hebrew College Passover Companion](#)*

*The children of Israel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea and the water was like a wall to their right and to their left. (Exodus 14:29)*

No question The sea took us in to our necks before doubt  
could claim our sound Who could unswim a sea-stretch then  
No wonder No willing knees unbuckled  
No plea unspent No higher ground

Cry mercy Cry shallow Cry harbor  
Cry ancestor Cry warning Cry surface  
Cry rescue Cry with an outstretched hand  
The sea will swallow all your noise

Ask nothing of the crossing that mountains don't ask of valleys  
Ask nothing that moons don't ask of the tide

Give me unedged wilderness I will take it in as remedy

This song's initial phoneme sears the tree of your lungs  
They say a certain branch can render bitter water sweet  
A certain refrain can leech poison from the wound

Don't stop now Keep going

## Motzi Matzah

By Rabbi Ebn Leader

*An excerpt from the new [Hebrew College Passover Companion](#)*



We say two blessings before eating matzah. We bless the One who brings forth bread from the earth (*ha-motzi*) and we bless the One who has given us the practice of eating matzah. The former is the blessing we say upon eating bread or matzah all year around, while the latter is unique to this Passover ritual. It is important to note that by the time we reach the blessing over bread, the bread—or in this case, the matzah—has already been broken. Half of the middle matzah has been hidden away to be eaten later. We will eat only the smaller part now.

Beginning a festive meal with broken bread creates a striking contrast to Shabbat and every other holiday, when the traditional practice is to make sure to say the blessing over whole loaves. Putting two whole loaves on the table expresses a sense of bounty and abundance: Shabbat is the day we step away from the rush of daily life in order to acknowledge that we have all we need, indeed, that we have more than we need. But the brokenness, as the Talmud notes, is part of what identifies matzah as “bread of affliction” or, as the Talmud reads it, of poverty. We eat “like a poor person, who eats only part of their bread” (B. Pesachim 115b). Rashi even proposes that the blessing on eating matzah is directed only towards this broken piece, while the blessing over bread is directed to the remaining two whole matzot as it would be on any other holiday. Common practice, however, avoids the need to make this distinction by holding both the broken and the whole matzah together while saying both blessings. Some people even make sure to eat from both the whole and the broken matzah simultaneously...

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## Commencement & Ordination Update

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Hebrew College has had to make the difficult decision not to gather in person for our Commencement exercises and Ordination ceremonies on June 7.

This is a real loss for all of us, but especially for our graduating students and family members and friends who have been looking forward to this moment for years. We are currently in the process of determining how best to mark these occasions, and will do so in close collaboration with our graduating students to ensure that there will be a meaningful opportunity for us to gather as a community to honor and celebrate their accomplishments.

[Read more](#)

COMMUNITY  
LEARNING





## Catch up on our Virtual Community Courses

If you missed one of last month's free one-hour online adult learning experiences, you can watch them [here](#). Sessions featured a range of dynamic Jewish topics, including "People of the (Comic) Book" (pictured above), all led by outstanding Hebrew College faculty members and rabbinical students to help build community and connection during these uncertain times.



## *Leadership, Learning, and Love*

As you know, we had originally planned an in-person celebration of *Leadership, Learning and Love* on April 29. As we adapt to this new reality, we are more committed than ever to leadership, learning and love. It represents who we are—not only on April 29, but every day of the year. Please join us for our transformed Spring Event, a series of four virtual offerings over the next month, as well as a livestreamed event honoring **Rabbi Rim Meiowitz** on April 29. (We will wait until we can gather again in person to honor our beloved student, **Jill Segal z"l**, with the Esther Award.)

Instead of our weekly *News and Views*, you will receive:

April 7

*Leadership, Learning, and Love: Let Us Sing a New Song!*

April 14

*Leadership, Learning, and Love: Caring for One Another*

April 23

*Leadership, Learning, and Love: Tending to Hope*

April 29

*Virtual honoring of Rabbi Rim Meirowitz, who will offer a teaching on Leadership, Learning, and Love, and will receive a blessing from Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld.*

May 7

*Leadership Learning and Love: The Journey to Sinai*

[Learn more](#)



*Posts from this [Hebrew College-hosted blog](#) are also published weekly in [Patheos](#).*

## The *Todah* Offering in a Dark Time

### *Parashat Tzav* (Leviticus 6:1-8:36)

*By Rabbi Jim Morgan, Rab`08*

*Chaplain, [Hebrew SeniorLife Center Communities of Brookline, MA](#)*

For someone in my field of geriatric chaplaincy, this difficult moment of social distancing is fraught with a painful irony. A significant portion of my job involves reducing the social isolation of the older people in my communities by engaging them not only with one another, but also with the general public, to foster face-to-face relationships between residents and younger people in the



context of shared meals, religious services, and learning opportunities.

Now, of course, we are encouraging people to stay apart, to remain isolated in their apartments. My institution in Boston, Hebrew SeniorLife, like most other senior housing and care facilities, has closed its doors to visitors and volunteers, including family members of patients and residents. This guidance cuts so squarely against the grain of our usual instincts, but it also can represent the difference between life and death.

[Read more](#)

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