

# The Four Children and COVID-19

## A CONVERSATION FOR YOUR SEDER TABLE

By Jordan Namerow

At Passover, we read the story of our ancestors' journey from oppression to freedom. This year, as we grapple with the global pandemic of COVID-19, the struggle to find freedom from illness weighs heavily on our hearts and minds. How do we engage with our children when they ask us about this crisis?



“There will be times  
when the climbing bars  
are too high,

The run is too fast  
and far,

The game isn't one you  
can ever really play,

There will be times  
when the world feels  
like a place

That you're standing all  
the way outside of...

And all that stands  
beside you is

Your own brave self —  
Steady as steel  
and ready

Even though you don't  
yet know

What you're ready for.”

FROM THE CHILDREN'S BOOK  
“THE DAY YOU BEGIN,” BY  
JACQUELINE WOODSON

### The Inquisitive Child

**The Inquisitive Child asks, “Why are people getting sick?”**

Discuss how the Seder teaches us that the highest expression of freedom is the ability to ask ‘Why?’ Help your children understand that illness is a part of life. We are still learning about COVID-19 but we know that viruses spread more quickly when people aren't taking care of themselves or caring for each other. Explain that not everyone has the freedom to visit doctors or buy medicine.

### The Worried Child

**The Worried Child asks, “What if the virus keeps spreading and never stops?”**

Discuss how to manage fears and anxieties related to our schools, synagogues, and the broader world. Talk about ways to stay socially connected, mindful, grounded, and engaged in the present moment. The Talmud teaches, “Do not suffer from tomorrow's trouble. Do not worry about the problems that might arise in the future as you do not know what a day will bring.” Reinforce the value that “Whoever acts from love is greater than who acts from fear.” Finally, explain that throughout history, people have faced many hardships and found ways to overcome them. That is a core message of the Passover story.

### The Compassionate Child

**The Compassionate Child asks, “What can I do to keep myself and others healthy and safe?”**

Discuss how we are all interdependent. Talk about best practices for hygiene, social distancing, and solidarity. Explore how our actions and behaviors have an impact on others. Ask how we are able to show love and affection with our words instead of our bodies. We might not be able to do *everything* to solve this problem, but we must do our own part. As we read in Pirkei Avot, “It is not your responsibility to complete the work, but you must still participate.”

### The Resilient Child

**The Resilient Child asks, “When this crisis is over, how can we prevent it from happening again?”**

Discuss the ways in which Jewish tradition requires us to understand our past in order to build a better future. Talk about the courage it takes to recover from a challenging time and make new choices for everyone to stay healthy. As Rebbe Nachman writes, “All new beginnings require that you unlock a new door.”