



## A Comedian's Guide to Being Jewish During Coronavirus

**Some humorous advice for practicing Judaism in a time of uncertainty.**

By Jon Savitt | March 19, 2020

The Jewish people have survived *a lot*. The Black Eyed Peas yelling Mazel Tov in a song. Subway bagels. Adam Sandler not winning an Oscar for *Uncut Gems*. Am I missing anything else?

The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19 if you're fancy) isn't exactly helping. It's not that it specifically targets Jews, it's just that currently every Jewish grandparent in the world has plans to play Scrabble with their friends. They'll stop at nothing. Like I'm pretty sure my grandma values a 30-point word more than life itself. I guess what I'm trying to say is: Please check on your grandparents!

But in all seriousness, this virus has prompted discussion beyond health concerns. Restaurants are closed. People are living in isolation. My crush hasn't texted me back in three days. It's chaos out there. And for us Jews, there's another question: How do we practice Judaism in this time of uncertainty?

Full disclosure: I'm a comedian, not a rabbi. The other week at synagogue I asked if the "eternal flame" was new. Do you know how embarrassing that is?! Nonetheless, my Jewishness is a significant part of my life (I even worked at summer camp post-college). And without the ability to go to synagogue or get together with friends for Shabbat, I know we'll have to get creative with our traditions.

Lucky for you, now that my shows have all been canceled I have more time to 1) eat chips and 2) think about what Judaism can look like in the time of Coronavirus.

**TL;DR:** I present my comprehensive guide below.

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### *Introduction*

Welcome! If you're reading this, you're probably quarantined. Sure, it sucks. But it's necessary, and you're saving lives. You literally might be saving Paul Rudd's life right now. You're a hero. On a serious note, I know you have a lot going on. Keeping up with your Judaism might not be at the top of your list. But I've outlined some helpful tips below to help you turn that "oy vey" into an "oy yay."

### *Part 1: Praying*

With synagogues around the country closing, you'll have to find time in your personal schedule between watching six different Netflix series to pray. Here are some ideas:

- Do you have a balcony? Scream the *Shema* off of it as loud as you can. The later in the night the better.
- Bored? Re-enact your bar/bat mitzvah and post it to your Instagram story. The entire thing. Did you have a b'nai mitzvah? Sorry, social distancing!
- Recite the *Ashrei* but take a sip of wine every time you say "Ashrei." Yes, I know it's noon.

### *Part 2: Noshing*

It's time to quench that quarantine hunger. This isn't Yom Kippur. Fortunately, if you have time to eat, you have time to be Jewish.

- Do you have any leftover etrogs laying around? Eat those. Bam — Jewish.
- Hide the *afikoman*, then try to look for it three days later (you'd be surprised).
- Have any gefilte fish handy? Why! It tastes bad!

Also, FYI, ordering takeout Chinese food now counts as a *mitzvah*. What a time to barely be alive! (But really, see how you can support your local restaurants/businesses.)

### *Part 3: Socializing*

It's easy to get lonely when you're self-distancing. But what if I told you that you can be social AND Jewish at the same time? A few options:

- Continuously FaceTime your rabbi until they pick up. I don't recommend this but it's certainly an option.
- Have two (2) drinks, then text your crush from summer camp (this is *technically* Jewish).
- Sign your emails with "Chag Sameach!" Nobody will know what it means anyway.
- Tie two soup cans to the ends of *tefillin* and use it as a makeshift phone to communicate with your neighbor
- If you must go outside, stay six feet away from everyone unless you think your mom would approve of them.
- Teach a Jewish tradition to a spider in your apartment.

### *Part 4: Sleeping*

Sleeping is like *Curb Your Enthusiasm*: I need it. And just because you're not conscious doesn't mean you can't be Jewish. There are tons of ways you can put some shtick into your sleep:

- Consider sleeping outside in a sukkah. It's better for air circulation or something idk I'm not a doctor.
- Use a challah cover as a pillow case (use the actual challah as a teddy bear).
- Fall asleep by listening to any and all podcast episodes featuring Eugene Levy. Very Jewish and a surprisingly soothing voice!

### *Part 5: Dating*

Let's be honest: You didn't like dating before a pandemic. You're certainly not going to like it now that it's not only boring, but dangerous. But I get it, FONMO (Fear Of Not Making Out).

However, I don't think a virus should stop us from finding NJPs (nice Jewish people). I have some ideas:

- Virtual dates! No jokes here, I genuinely think this is a good, fun thing to do (My DMs are open).
- JSwipe should offer to pay for the wedding of anyone who finds love during the pandemic.
- Write romantic letters! Then take those letters and throw them directly into the trash. Coronavirus can spread through surfaces, what are you thinking?
- Play Jewish Geography with your LinkedIn connections.
- Text *New York Times* articles back and forth responding "haha" then never meet up when this is all over.

### *Part 6: Working*

With many businesses opting to work remotely, we'll spend much of our quarantine time working. Which kind of feels like cleaning the Death Star as it's getting blown up? But anyways. Working can be good because it keeps you busy. It can also be bad because the more time you work, the less time you have to watch reruns of *Laguna Beach*.

Personally, I'm going to try to include as much Yiddish in my Slack conversations as possible. God forbid my coworkers forget I'm Jewish for one day.

### *Part 7: Entertaining*

It's easy to go stir crazy when you can't go to the one bar you always go to. But it's imperative that you find ways to stay happy and healthy. Unfortunately, your family group text doesn't count. Try:

- Starting a Debbie Friedman cover band.
- Playing dreidel with your roommates (instead of money, play for toilet paper).
- Pretending it's Purim and dress up as someone who isn't worried.
- NEW GAME: "What's In This Kiddush Cup?" Participants blindly take a sip and have to guess what it is (am I okay??).
- Memorizing every line from Disney Channel's Full Court Miracle.

### *Conclusion*

Our normal way of life has changed. From the way we interact to the way we work, we have no choice but to adapt and make the best of it. Through it all, it's important to maintain some sense of normalcy — to continue to form connections, laugh, take measured risks (inside), grow, and be optimistic. For me and many of you, that probably includes reflecting on the aspects of Judaism we value most, and perhaps even take for granted.

So be kind, take a deep breath, and whether you're ordering matzah ball soup or making it from scratch, let's do it with some chutzpah.

P.S. Do mezuzahs keep out viruses?

<https://www.heyalma.com/a-comedians-guide-to-being-jewish-during-coronavirus>