

LEAD IN THE WATER



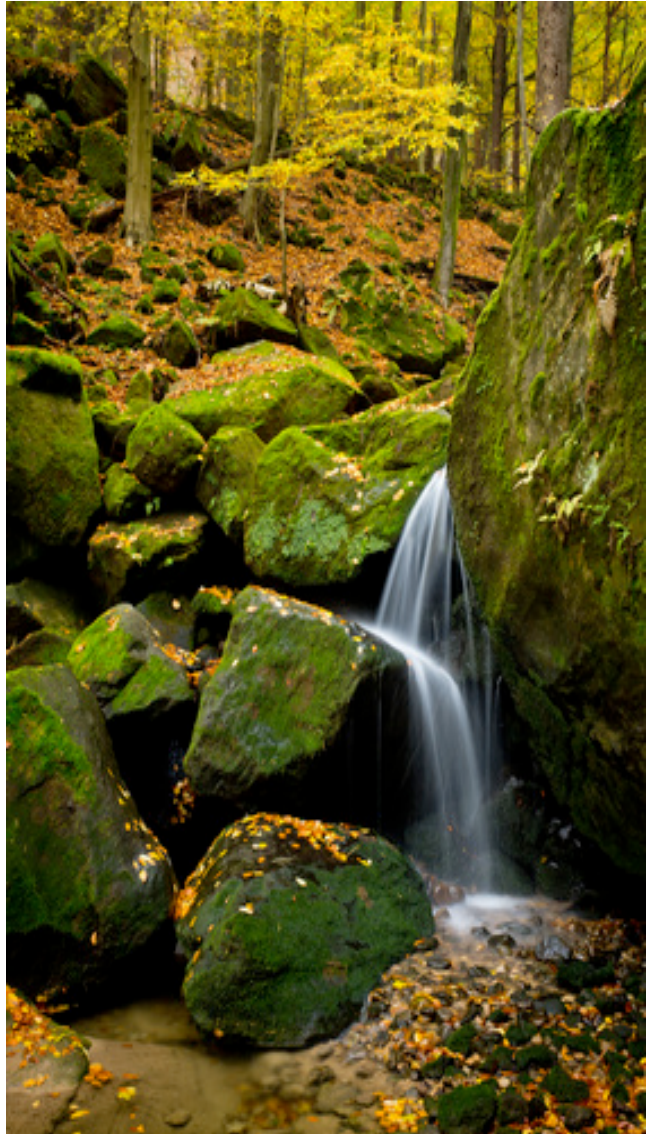
For thousands of years Jews have been studying in pairs or in groups, respectfully debating each other, learning the stories and legal texts of Judaism, and investigating their past as a means for enriching their present. Tonight, we continue to engage in the millennia-old practice of exploring the written word as a means to connect with our tradition, open ourselves up to our inner selves, make sense of the world around us, and inspire us to action. Thank you for joining us on this journey.

*This evening's event is part of The Well's **CSI: Coffee. Study. Interpret.** series, in partnership with Repair The World Detroit, NEXTGen Detroit and Moishe House Royal Oak, and is made possible in part by funds granted by The Covenant Foundation. The statements made and the views expressed, however, are solely the responsibility of The Well.*

Going for Water

Robert Frost, 1874 - 1963

The well was dry beside the door,
And so we went with pail and can
Across the fields behind the house
To seek the brook if still it ran;
Not loth to have excuse to go,
Because the autumn eve was fair
(Though chill), because the fields were ours,
And by the brook our woods were there.
We ran as if to meet the moon
That slowly dawned behind the trees,
The barren boughs without the leaves,
Without the birds, without the breeze.
But once within the wood, we paused
Like gnomes that hid us from the moon,
Ready to run to hiding new
With laughter when she found us soon.
Each laid on other a staying hand
To listen ere we dared to look,
And in the hush we joined to make
We heard, we knew we heard the brook.
A note as from a single place,
A slender tinkling fall that made
Now drops that floated on the pool
Like pearls, and now a silver blade.



Discussion Questions:

What are all the things you do in a day that require water?
How many gallons of water do you think you use in a day?
How much water do you think you'd use each day if your pump or well
was 50 yards from your home?

Exodus 7:19-25

יט וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, אָמַר אֶל-אַהֲרֹן קַח מִטֶּבֶת וְנָטָה-יָדְךָ עַל-מִימֵי מִצְרַיִם עַל-נְהַרְתָּם עַל-יְאֹרֵיהֶם וְעַל-אֲגֻמֵיהֶם וְעַל כָּל-מְקוֹה מִימֵיהֶם—וְיָהִיו-דָּם; וְהָיָה דָם בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, וּבְעַצְמָם וּבְאֲבָנִים.

19 And Adonai said to Moses: 'Say to Aaron: Take your rod, and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their ponds of water, that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and of stone:

כ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ-כֵן מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה, וַיִּרָם בְּמִטָּה וַיַּךְ אֶת-הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּאֹר, לַעֲיֹנֵי פְרָעָה, וּלְעֵינֵי עֲבָדָיו; וַיִּהְיֶה כָל-הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר-בַּיָּאֹר, לְדָם.

20 And Moses and Aaron did as Adonai commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river turned to blood.

כא וַהֲדָגָה אֲשֶׁר-בַּיָּאֹר מָתָה, וַיִּבָּאֵשׁ הַיָּאֹר, וְלֹא-יָכְלוּ מִצְרַיִם, לִשְׁתּוֹת מַיִם מִן-הַיָּאֹר; וַיְהִי הַדָּם, בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.

21 And the fish that were in the river died; and the river became foul, and the Egyptians could not drink water from the river; and the blood was throughout all the land of Egypt.

Discussion Questions:

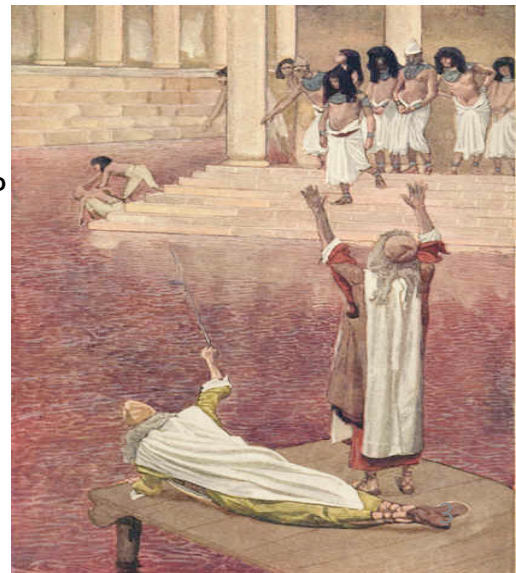
When looking to be taken seriously, the first thing (plague) God does is have Moses and Aaron go after the Egyptians' primary fresh water source.

What is your primary source of fresh water?

Where does your tap water come from?

Where do you think it comes from if you don't know?

If you had no running water at your house, where would you go get water?



Exodus 15:22-26

כב וַיֹּסֶע מֹשֶׁה אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵיַם-סוּף, וַיֵּצְאוּ אֶל-מִדְבַּר-שׁוּר; וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת-יָמִים
בַּמִּדְבָּר, וְלֹא-מָצְאוּ מַיִם.

22 And Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.

כג וַיָּבֹאוּ מִרְתָּה--וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לִשְׁתּוֹת מֵיִם מִמֶּרְהָ, כִּי מָרִים הֵם; עַל-כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמָהּ,
מֶרְהָ.

23 And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah.

כד וַיִּלְנוּ הָעָם עַל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר, מַה-נִּשְׁתָּה.

24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying: 'What shall we drink?'

כה וַיִּצְעַק אֶל-יְהוָה, וַיֹּרְהוּ יְהוָה עֵץ, וַיִּשְׁלַךְ אֶל-הַמַּיִם, וַיִּמְתְּקוּ הַמַּיִם...

25 And he cried out to Adonai; and Adonai showed him a tree, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet....

Discussion Questions:

The Israelites, after centuries of enslavement, finally go free from Egypt into the desert only to immediately find a lack of drinkable water. Their response? To start complaining about their leader.

What is the role of community leaders as it relates to providing clean drinking water for their constituents?

Who is responsible if water is unable to be located/purified?

What role does the community have to play in ensuring that their own needs are met?

Detroit Water Shut Offs to Begin Tuesday

Joe Guillen

Detroit Free Press, May 24, 2015

“Water shutoff crews will begin cutting service Tuesday to Detroiters behind on their bills while officials continue to debate possible water bill subsidies for those living in poverty.

The Detroit water department has delivered about 3,000 shutoff notices to households with delinquent bills since May 11, giving those customers 10 business days to make arrangements to pay their bill or have their service cut off. More notices will be delivered as the shutoffs are carried out this week.

Detroit's number of delinquent accounts — those owing \$150 or more in bills that are at least two months late — remains a significant problem. There are 64,769 delinquent residential accounts owing \$48.9 million, according to the water department. As of last June, there were more than 79,000 delinquent accounts owing \$42 million.”

Discussion Questions:

Water shut offs (and the threat of them) in the City of Detroit are a serious issue impacting tens of thousands.

If you had no running water in your house, where would you go to get water? Where would you bathe?

Is access to water a human right? What about access to a toilet?



GESHEM

Our God and God of our ancestors:

Remember Abraham, his heart poured out to You like water.
You blessed him, as a tree planted near water;
You saved him when he went through fire and water.
For Abraham's sake, do not withhold water.

Remember Isaac, his birth foretold
while angels drank cool water.
At Moriah his blood was almost spilled like water;
In the desert he dug deep to find springs of water.
For Isaac's sake, grant the gift of water.

Remember Jacob who, with his staff, forded Jordan's water.
Gallantly he showed his love beside a well of water;
He struggled, victoriously, with a creature of fire and water.
For Jacob's sake, do not withhold water.

Remember Moses, whose basket rocked in reeds and water.
In Midian he gave his sheep ample grass and water.
He struck the rock; then the people drank sweet water.
For Moses' sake, grant the gift of water.

Remember Aaron the priest who immersed himself in water.
On Yom Kippur he kept the rites with water;
He read from the Torah and bathed himself in water.
For Aaron's sake, do not withhold water.

Remember Israel's tribes; You brought them through water.
Brackish marsh became, for their sake, sweet water.
For You their descendants' blood was spilled like water.
For all Israel's sake, grant the gift of water.

You are Adonai our God
who causes the wind to blow
and the rain to fall.

Congregation, then Reader, line by line:
For a blessing, not for a curse,
For life, not for death,
For abundance, not for famine,

Congregation:
Amen.
Amen.
Amen.

*The Ark is closed.
The Reader continues with "Your love..,"
page 166a or b.*

Discussion Questions:

The Jewish tradition, like many others, makes space to pray for rain. The selected prayer above is recited at the end of the Festival of Booths (Sukkot), leading into the winter/spring months.

Does any of the water imagery in the piece speak to you? Why or why not? Living in an agrarian society, would a prayer for rain speak to you differently? In the J tradition, the Torah is often compared to water, while we're compared to trees. What are some of the parallels and some of the differences?

How can I help?

Donate

The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit has opened a special fund to support the people of Flint, Michigan in light of the recent contaminated water crisis. 100% of all funds raised will be donated to **The Flint Jewish Federation** to assist people with needs related to the crisis, as well as to **The Flint Child Health & Development Fund** (led by the United Way of Genesee County and established at the Community Foundation of Greater Flint) to ensure that children are afforded the resources and interventions to overcome this population-wide exposure to lead.

<https://action.jewishdetroit.org/events/flint-emergency-donation>

Communicate

Continue engaging in the important conversations begun here with us this evening. Share what you've learned with others. Help spread the word about ways to assist, upcoming events, and opportunities for further education. Encourage others to examine their relationship with water, to investigate where their water comes from, and to advocate for meaningful public policy solutions to structural problems and inequalities.

Activate

Get involved on the ground locally with **Detroit Jews for Justice** - organizing the Jewish community in Metro Detroit to participate in movements for racial and economic justice (detroitjewsforjustice.org), **Detroit Water Brigade** - a volunteer-led alliance of compassionate citizens of Detroit and their international allies working to bring emergency relief to families facing water shut offs while advocating for an income-based Water Affordability Plan in Detroit (detroitwaterbrigade.org), and others. Get involved with advocating on behalf of water insecurity globally by visiting Water.org.