Last year a few weeks before pesach, the first passover where family would be together in the same room, around the same table, not on zoom, without a mute button, my inbox was full with guides on “how to avoid political arguments at your family seder”.

The strategies read like I imagine the contingency plans for D-Day or the moon landing.

1. Talk to key players beforehand.
2. Have conversation starters and activities at the ready.
3. If you're hosting, seat people strategically.
4. Have a designated room for political talk.
5. Don't engage.
6. Have an exit plan for sticky one-on-one conversations.
7. Prepare for the inevitable

My favourite…

8. If the table gets fired up, propose a toast.

We’ve all sat at that seder, we’ve all been there when that nutty uncle or that aunt with no social filter starts telling you how you’re wrong about everything you’ve said or believe. Blames you, your generation, your choices for the crumbling of the social order.

It usually begins with, “Well in my day…” or “What’s wrong with you liberals/conservatives is…” It usually starts with something like that and ends with shouting, hurried exits, proclamations never to return again and slamming doors.

Its at that point that you propose a toast - L’chaim!! And silently wonder if this is why the rabbis ordained we should drink four cups of wine.

I feel like this last year, maybe mor

In the Torah the world is destroyed three times

First in the Garden of Eden when innocence is destroyed by eating of the tree of knowledge.

Second in the generation of Noah, when a flood is brought to wash away the evil and wickedness of senseless hatred.

A third time it was destroyed because people lived in fear; fear of difference, fear of diversity. Metaphorically, they feared a seder where people argued and had different opinions.

“And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech… And they said one to another: ‘Come, let us build a city, and a tower, with its top in heaven, and let us make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth…

The people of the time, not unlike the people of our own time, thought that the only way for society to succeed was if everyone spoke the same language, shared the same values, had the same thoughts and opinions. Saw the world in only the same way. Build the tower, nothing else matters.

But God did not want us to look the same, speak the same or act the same. No good was coming from that, just the opposite, human beings were wasting the wonder of their creation, building a tower to heaven instead of making heaven here on earth.

And the LORD said: 'Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is what they begin to do; Let us, then, go down and confound their speech there, so that they shall not understand one another's speech."

… So the LORD scattered the people upon the face of the earth… Therefore the name of it was called Babel…"

In the words of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (Germany, 19th century), "Mankind must be scattered, must distribute itself among all the different regions of earth in order that the most divergent and contrary faculties of the human mind may find in nature the needed opportunities of development, in order that experience become full and complete…"

The Torah does not only welcome diversity, it insists on it.

We are living in the shadow of that fallen tower, the reverberations of its impact ripple through our lives. None of us speak the same language,