

TO BE WITHOUT ELBOWS

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Once there was a man, who, as Passover approached, had the most unusual dream. He dreamt that Elijah visited his seder table and took him to a mansion in a far-off land. Elijah ushered him into the dining room where around a great table sat many guests. The table was piled high with delicious foods. **When the man looked closely at the scene, he saw the guests looked hungry, their faces lean and lined. He couldn't understand why, until he realized that none of them had elbows.** While they could reach the food on the table, they couldn't bring it to their mouths. The man turned to Elijah and cried, "This is too ghastly to behold. I cannot look at it any longer, please take me away from here."

“Because they could not bring the food to their own mouths, they were reaching across the table and feeding one another.”

So Elijah grasped the man's hand and whisked him away to another land and another dining room in another mansion that at first appeared the same as the one they had just left behind. Around this table, too, also overflowing with food, sat many guests, again with no elbows.

The man turned to Elijah and pleaded, "No, I told you I cannot look upon this hell any longer. It's too terrible." But Elijah insisted the man examine more closely. **To his amazement he saw that these guests were not hungry at all but were instead smiling and laughing.** Because they could not bring the food to their own mouths, they were reaching across the table and feeding one another. With that, Elijah took the man and led him back home.

Sadly, right now too many of us aren't able to bend the elbow to wrap our arms around the loved ones and friends whom we had hoped to be together with this season. Nor can we worship and celebrate in our typical way, in the physical presence of the communities sacred to us. This hour in history has taught us what in truth we already knew — that physical distance need not separate us. We've discovered new ways to reach out and remain present in one another's lives, to listen and support, to cry and comfort, and even to laugh. The tale reminds us, too, that **we must extend our arms even further to the most vulnerable in our society, to those who cannot help themselves.** The homeless and the hungry, the poor and the sick, the isolated and the lonely need us now more than any time in recent memory.

Like those with no elbows — if there's one lesson to be learned from this time, it's about our own limitations and abilities. **May we turn our shortcomings into gifts that can help us and others get through this challenging time.**

