



Pioneer Network™

SHARING RESOURCES

## Blessings from the Heart of Berkeley in a Time of Pandemic

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So. Here we are in the midst of the global pandemic of 2020, a crisis only a very few among us -- prophetic voices who have been essentially ignored -- could have imagined. *May we all be resilient. May each of us be careful, live our lives with joy, and come through this deeper, wiser, and more committed to the well-being of ourselves, of one another, and of future generations.*

I am hunkering in with my wife partner, Debby. I am doing some cooking and freezing, writing, zooming and facetimeing, and sitting on my porch and enjoying the night. Debby spends a lot of time watching cable news, reaching out to friends and family, engaging her varied interests, and providing the glue that holds our lives together. Younger friends have been calling to see if we need help with anything. *May all those who are reaching out to others offering help and support be blessed with good health, joy and meaning for themselves and all they hold in their hearts.*

The vulnerability we all share has of course been an undercurrent in my life. I don't dwell on the possibility that I may be among those who catch the flu and die. But yesterday, I looked at Debby and was struck as never before by how finite our lives are and how important it is to act in each moment as if it is nearing the last. *May we all wake up all over the world to what's real. Our lives are finite, we are all connected, and our loving kindness and compassion are the glue that binds us together.*

My biggest concern is with the many, many people who are the most vulnerable among us: people who are financially marginalized, people who are without houses living in tents or in

doorways; people who are living from pay-check to pay-check and can't afford to miss work; people who are in overcrowded prisons, jails and detention centers; or people who have fragile health or who like myself simply have lived a long time. *May the greater forces be summoned from within and beyond each of us so that each person who is at risk is protected. May our culture be transformed through the opening created by this break from business as usual so that it becomes imbedded in our common consciousness that we all are connected, and each person has the basic human right to home, health, dignity and opportunity.*

My biggest appreciation is for those who will come to work each day, making sure we have food to eat and medical care when it is urgently needed. Some among them are doing it because they have a calling to serve. Others, because without the paycheck they and their families would become impoverished. *Regardless of motivation, may each and all of them and all they hold in their hearts, be safe and flourish in all aspects of their lives.*

We are inundated with so much information and advice about the virus and how to distance ourselves from infection. Here is some advice from the Elders' Guild we might not receive elsewhere about how to act should the corona virus catch us.

*If we become ill, don't blame ourselves. Be loving and kind to each person who is caring for us. They're putting themselves at risk to help us. Our kind consideration, even when we are in the worst of circumstances, is our best insurance that we will receive that extra measure of love and attention that distinguishes great care from good care or even mediocre care.*

Barry Barkan is a Berkeley Times contributor. He is a life-long activist, a co-founder of the Elders' Guild, and serves in the Aquarian Minyan of Berkeley as a *Baal Bracha*, master of blessings.