

## וכל המרבה לספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משבח

“All who expand on the telling of the going out from Egypt are worthy of praise.” This year, consider adding some or all of these supplemental readings to your Passover Seder at the appropriate moments of the Haggadah:

## הא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא בארעא דמצרים

*Uncover the matzah and say:* “This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.” Tonight, we add a fourth matzah to recall the 21 million men, women and children enslaved and trafficked on our planet today. A slave cannot express his free will, is controlled through a combination of violence, threats and manipulation, suffers extreme economic exploitation, and receives no payment for his work other than basic sustenance. The lives of slaves today may be little different than the lives of our ancestors.

According to the French-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, “Man’s humanity is a responsibility for the other.” Our humanity depends on being responsible for, and reaching out to, the other.

Reflection: In your opinion, what does it mean to be responsible for others?

## עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים

“We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt but with a strong hand and an outstretched arm the Lord our God took us out from there.” Modern slaves are primarily in these four areas: Forced labor in agricultural and industrial settings, bonded labor (working off debts that are impossible to repay), involuntary domestic servitude, and sex trafficking and forced prostitution.

The typical slave can be bought for a few hundred dollars and, over the course of servitude, earns \$8,700 in Brazil and \$2,000 in India for the slaveholder. A sex slave earns \$18,000 for the slaveholder in Thailand and \$49,000 for slaveholder in Los Angeles.<sup>[1]</sup> According to the International Labour Organization, slaves generate at least \$32 billion annually while victims of slavery lose at least \$21 billion each year in unpaid wages and illegal fees for recruitment.

*“Even if we do not know the particular experience...we do carry with us the collective memory of being alienated and mistreated.”*  
-Professor Alyssa Gray, HUC-JIR<sup>[2]</sup>

Reflection: Does our collective historical memory of enslavement in Egypt influence your connection to modern slavery? How?

## בנגד ערבעה בנים דברת תורה

“The Torah speaks in reference to four children: One wise, one wicked, one simple, and one who does not know to ask.” The U.S. government estimates that 14,500 to 17,500 people are brought into the U.S. annually to be used as slaves. Which of the four children are you and would you recognize slavery here if you saw it?

Questions to Consider in Potential Situations of Slavery:

- Does this person enjoy freedom of movement?
- Does this person appear to be held against his will?
- Is this person followed or under the supervision of someone else?
- Does this person seem nervous or afraid to speak freely?
- Is this person free to change employers?
- If this person appears to be of school age, is he working when they should be in school?
- Does this person control his earnings?
- Was this person cheated into payment of debt upon arrival in the U.S.?
- Has this person had his passport or other documents taken away?
- Does this person seem injured? Are signs of physical injury apparent?
- Does this person seem confused, undernourished or afraid?
- Does he seem disoriented, confused, malnourished or frightened?<sup>[3]</sup>

The 12th century Jewish sage Maimonides considered *Pidyon Shvuyim*, the redeeming of captives, among the most important of the commandments and placed it ahead of feeding the hungry or clothing the poor.

Reflection: Why would Maimonides place a greater priority on redeeming captives than on feeding the hungry or clothing the poor?

## מרור

“Why are we eating this bitter herb? The Egyptians embittered the life of our ancestors in Egypt... they made their lives bitter with hard bondage.” Work is an essential part of the human condition and we have a responsibility to protect the dignity and rights of workers. We cannot accept that modern slavery and human trafficking are unavoidable byproducts of a global

society. To acquiesce violates *k'vod ha'briyot*, basic human dignity.

*"Abusive labor practices constitute a hillul Hashem, a violation of God's name."*

-2008 Union For Reform Judaism Resolution on Worker Rights

There is an apocryphal tale told about Rabbi Israel Salanter (1810-1883), renowned for his teachings on Mussar, Judaism's ethical practice. Every year before Passover, Salanter inspected matzah bakeries to verify their *kashrut* (religious appropriateness). One proud owner couldn't wait to show off the efficiency of his matzah production. But when Salanter finished his inspection, he declared that the bakery was in violation of the *halakhic* prohibition against blood in food. "Your sense of efficiency, together with the unacceptable demands placed upon your workers, shows that their blood is mixed into the food produced in this bakery," Salanter said. Even though the blood was purely metaphoric, Rabbi Salanter would not certify the *kashrut* of the matzah.

Reflection: Where does your food come from? What happens to our relationship to God when we benefit from an unethically made product?

#### Take Action:

**Learn:** Visit [chocolatemoses.org](http://chocolatemoses.org) for further background information on modern slavery and human trafficking and a Jewish perspective on our responsibility to respond to it.

**Teach:** Visit [chocolatemoses.org/salon](http://chocolatemoses.org/salon) to host your own Chocolate Moses Salon. Facilitate a discussion about modern slavery and Jewish responsibility and explore further ways to take action.

**Call:** If you suspect someone is enslaved or has been trafficked, call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center's information hotline: **888-373-7888**.

**Give:** It is traditional to give *tzedakah* on Passover. This year, consider giving to organizations committed to a 21<sup>st</sup> century Exodus of the 21 million enslaved:

- **Truah** ([truah.org](http://truah.org))
- **Atzum** ([atzum.org](http://atzum.org))
- **Free the Slaves** ([freetheslaves.net](http://freetheslaves.net))
- **Polaris Project** ([polarisproject.org](http://polarisproject.org))

[1] Kara, Siddharth. *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery*. New York. Columbia University Press, 2009.

[2] *Huffington Post*, February 2012.

[3] Bales, Kevin and Ron Soodalter. *The Slave Next Door*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 2009. p. 41.