

בכל דור ודור

חיים אדם לראות את-עצמו
כאלו הוא יצא ממצרים

IN EVERY GENERATION

LET EACH OF US LOOK UPON OURSELVES
AS IF WE CAME FORTH OUT OF EGYPT

A HAGGADAH SUPPLEMENT ON ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Rabbis for Human Rights

Passover 2003 / 5763

WHO SITS WITH US AT OUR SEDER?

from Rabbis for Human Rights Israel

(אבותינו ואבותינו) אלהינו ואלהי קדמונינו / *Eloheinu v'Elohei Kadmoneinu (Avoteinu v'Emoteinu)*, our God and God of our ancestors, we are gathered around this seder table as בני חורין / *b'nei khorin*, free people who still remember the long years of oppression. We have vowed never to become oppressors ourselves. Yet we know that we have hardened our hearts to those who have paid an excessive price for our people's prosperity and security in Israel. On this Feast of Freedom we proclaim our determination to banish Pharaoh from our hearts and we reaffirm our commitment to universal human rights.

Tonight we leave a place at our table for those who remain victims of oppression. We particularly remember:

Foreign workers—the “stranger” in Israel today?

Brought to Israel with promises of excellent working conditions, many foreign workers quickly find a very different reality. Cramped into substandard housing, they live without even the most basic amenities. Passports confiscated, they are at the mercy of their employers. Without health insurance, they are forced to lie ill or injured in their infested quarters, or are forced to fly back to their countries of origin, where they cannot press claims for compensation. Sometimes they are beaten by hired thugs if they dare to cross their masters. Tonight the struggle of foreign workers to free themselves from their Israeli taskmasters is our struggle. (see <http://www.rhr.israel.net/workers.shtml>)

Trafficked women—the slave in Israel today?

During the last ten years, an estimated 10,000 women have been trafficked into Israel for prostitution. Immediately after entering Israel, they are taken to locked apartments or brothels where they are subject to intimidation and repeated rapes. Their papers are confiscated and they themselves are sold at auction. They are forced to prostitute themselves without pay until they have worked off their “debt” for transportation. They are threatened that, as they are in Israel illegally, they will be locked in jail for life if they complain to the police. Some women come with an idea of what kind of work awaits them. Others are tricked into thinking they will get legitimate jobs, like *au pair* or waitressing. None anticipate the harsh treatment, truly slave-like, that they encounter in Israel. Tonight, their struggle to be freed from these conditions is also our struggle. (see http://216.239.33.100/search?q=cache:MJB_sJptsOkC:www.qweb.kvinnoforum.se/misc/israelun.rtf+%22Jerusalem+report%22+%22trafficking+in+women%22&hl=en&ie=UTF-8)

Sweatshop laborers—the slave in our modern global economy?

In a Manhattan sewing shop, a young immigrant works seven days a week, from early morning until late at night. The owner punches the worker's time card after eight hours, but he must keep working to keep his job, even though he is never paid overtime. The garments he makes are sold at big name stores such as Lord & Taylor. A thousand miles away, in a factory in Guatemala, a young woman works around the clock earning pennies making men's dress shirts. To get better wages and working conditions, she and her co-workers fought for ten years to win a union. After they won, the shirt company closed their factory and moved the work to lower-wage sweatshops nearby. Now she makes the same shirts, but is back to working long hours.

Tonight we stand with workers all over the world who struggle for decent wages and decent working conditions. Who else do you want to invite to sit with you at your seder table this year?

NEXT YEAR IN THE RESTORED JERUSALEM, WHERE WE HONOR THE IMAGE OF GOD IN ALL

Happy are those who act justly, who do right at all times (Psalms 106:3)

Pesach 5763 / April 2003

“In every generation let each of us look upon
ourselves as if we came forth out of Egypt”

Haggadah

“You shall not oppress the stranger, for you know
the heart of the stranger, as you were strangers
in the land of Egypt”

Exodus 23:9

In this generation, inspired by these teachings, Rabbis for Human Rights in Israel diligently and courageously applies the teachings of Pesach to our contemporary reality. Rabbis for Human Rights is the the only multi-denominational rabbinic organization in Israel that gives voice to the Jewish commitment to human rights. Through education and advocacy on issues of economic justice and other human rights, Rabbis for Human Rights pursues the vision of an Israel that fulfills the dream of the Jewish people as articulated in the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel.

Every year for Pesach, Rabbis for Human Rights Israel has selected a text to be read by American Jews. This year Rabbis for Human Rights - North America is pleased to offer a *Haggadah Supplement* that expands on this year's text from Israel with additional readings, rituals and songs. The *Supplement* by and large follows the order of the traditional seder. It is designed to be used with whatever *haggadah* is used in your home.

The central question of our *Haggadah Supplement* is: “Are economic rights a basic human right?”

Economic justice has been a central concern of Rabbis for Human Rights in Israel. Our colleagues in Israel join in coalition with other social justice groups in Israel to advocate for budget priorities that protect the rights of the most vulnerable. Even today, when issues of war and peace, and issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are of such urgent concern, it remains important to continue the long-term effort to secure economic justice both in Israel and in America.

For many years, Israel had one of the smallest gaps between rich and poor in the entire world. Today, Israel has the second largest gap of all

industrialized nations, second in fact only to the United States. This *Haggadah Supplement* is directed primarily to American Jews to focus our attention on this economic inequity in Israel and the United States and on our religious obligation—rooted in the story of Pesach—to be advocates for those who are poor and vulnerable.

The *Haggadah Supplement on Economic Justice* continues the series of materials created by Rabbis for Human Rights - North America for American Jews. In our first year of operation we produced a *Yamim Noraim Resource Packet* for rabbis and a *Haggadah for Tu B'Shvat*. In the coming year we will offer a video with an educational guide on the work and vision of Rabbis for Human Rights in Israel. We also hope to develop weekend study programs on Judaism and Human Rights for synagogues, rabbinical schools, and other Jewish institutions.

It is our hope that this resource will enhance your celebration of Pesach and we invite you to support our work and the courageous work of our colleagues in Israel.

This year the image of God in our world is marred by the suffering and pain that we as human beings inflict on one another. We hope that the words of this supplement will inspire us to take action, each in our own way, to bring more justice into our world.

Wishing you a sweet and meaningful Pesach,
Chag Sameach,

Rabbi Brian Walt, Executive Director
Rabbi Gerry Serotta and Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, Co-chairs
Rabbis for Human Rights - North America

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* Especially suitable for children.

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* Especially suitable for children.

בדיקת חמץ

SEARCHING FOR CHAMETZ

Another *Bedikat Chametz*

Lee Moore



Chametz refers to the leavened products that we remove from our houses before and during Passover. There is a Hassidic teaching that *chametz*, because it is puffed up, represents the ego, the ways that we “puff ourselves up.” Big egos are like bread that rises when it bakes. During Passover we eat the more humble bread of affliction, *matzah*. *Bedikat Chametz*, which literally means, “to check for *chametz*,” is a ritual we do the night before Passover ridding our houses of all that is puffed up.

Many of our household products are also “puffed up” like *chametz*—they have inflated costs that we can’t see in their price. Although some products are inexpensive in terms of how much we pay for them at the store, they may have additional costs to their production, like the undue suffering of workers who are not sufficiently paid for their labor. Or products may have harmful environmental impacts that are not reflected in the price. While we search through our houses to find any remaining pieces of leavening, we can also search for clues of economic injustice that are in our houses.

Let’s learn more about the hidden, puffed up, costs represented in our homes. Where do our household items come from? How are they made? Were the people who made our food, our clothes, treated well as workers?

Start in the kitchen. Our produce—where did it come from? Do we know how the workers who harvested our produce were treated? How far did it travel to reach us? (The average piece of food in America travels 1,000 miles before being consumed.) Continue the search for puffed up costs in your clothes closets. Who has made our clothes? Did they work under good conditions? What were the costs to their physical and mental health? Each person from the family can bring one item of clothing to share and reveal

the country from which the item came. Get out a world map and locate the various places where people live that have made the clothes we wear every day. The adventurous and curious seekers of *chametz* can do a little research to find out about the conditions of the people who made the clothing items.

After we learn about the impacts of our buying, we then ask—how can we make responsible choices as consumers? Many areas having buying coops, where consumers can make direct decisions about what they order. In general, buying local produce is better, because you can have a better idea about the conditions under which your food is grown and brought to you.

PREFACE

Are Economic Rights Human Rights?



Tonight, we are taking time out of our busy lives to sit together and remember that “we were slaves in Egypt.” The *Haggadah* will tell us that “In every generation one rises up against us.” and that “in every generation, we must look upon ourselves as if we, not our forebears only, went forth from slavery.” In inviting us to see that we ourselves went forth from slavery in Egypt, (not only some distant ancient ones), the *Haggadah* calls on us to grapple with notions of enslavement, freedom, the process of liberation.

Tonight, we will follow these suggestions of the *Haggadah* and pay particular attention to the ways in which people are today enslaved economically. We will ask: *do human rights include economic rights? If not, what is the difference? And, what does it mean to be a slave in our generation?*

In December 1948, in the aftermath of World War II, the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It states that all human beings are entitled to certain rights, because “the inherent dignity and . . . the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”

Normally, when we think of human rights, we think of freedoms of political expression and religious worship. *But is the right to put bread on the table a “human right”? Is the ability to provide shelter for one’s family a “human right”?*

And God said, “Let us make Humankind in Our image, after Our likeness.

(*Genesis 1:26*)

ARTICLE 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

The affirmation that all human beings created in God’s image means that the life of every human being is of infinite value.

“He who withholds an employee’s wages, it is as if he deprived him his life”
(*Bava Metzia* 112a).

ARTICLE 23

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it. Six days shall you work and accomplish all your work, but the seventh day is Sabbath to YHWH, your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son, your daughter, your slave, your maid-servant, your animal, and your stranger within your gates.

(*Exodus* 20:8-10)

ARTICLE 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

When you reap the produce of your land, you must not harvest the corners of your field nor gather the fallen sheaves. Leave them for the poor and the stranger. I, YHWH, am your God.

(*Leviticus* 23:22)

ARTICLE 25, SEC. 1

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of him/herself and of his/her family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

In biblical times, bartering agricultural products were the primary mode of economic exchange. Today, we have a more complex system, based on the abstraction of money. What, in our system today would be the equivalent of “leaving the corners of the fields” for the poor, for the stranger? What is our equivalent of the fields—our financial resources? In a world that

revolves around meeting the bottom line first and foremost, how can we acknowledge the humanity of all people by leaving some extra slack in our economic system?

DISCUSSION: RIGHTS AND/OR RESPONSIBILITIES?

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that every human being has these rights, while the Torah speaks more about our responsibilities: the responsibility to see all humans in the Divine image; the responsibility to ensure that we take time to rest, and that our workers take time to rest (even our animals, even our land); the responsibility to provide for those who are needy and fall through the cracks of the social net.

When it comes to basic human needs, what is the difference between a right and a responsibility?

Who has rights?

Who has responsibilities?



KADESH

Four Cups of Wine

Rabbi Gerry Serotta

The Four Cups: Four Expressions of Liberation

The four cups of the Passover Seder traditionally derive from four different expressions for liberation in the book of *Exodus* (6:6-7.) The four Hebrew verbs used there (typically translated as freeing, delivering, redeeming, and taking out of slavery) are in the peculiar Biblical future tense—so it shall come to pass if God’s plan is accomplished.

As we sit down to the ironic Seder ritual, re-experiencing a time of want through the lens of plenty, we connect each of the four cups with a modern vision of redemption. The blessing in each case can be accompanied with pledges by the guests to do what they can to bring about these visions. In this way we may make more real the image that our cups of wine and celebration is diminished due to the suffering of others.

In Western affluent societies the very lifestyle of the majority, let alone our contribution to global warming and our failure to work for a more just global economic order put us closer to Pharaoh than to the Israelites. There is no more compelling reason to observe the rituals of the Seder than to reconnect ourselves with this struggle.

The following are suggestions for themes for the four cups. Feel free to dedicate the cups to other themes and issues as well.

THE FIRST CUP—Freedom in America

As we lift the first cup, we envision an America—the “land of the free”—where everyone has a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of him/herself and of his/her family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services. (from Article 25 of the Declaration of Human Rights)

THE SECOND CUP—Deliverance in Israel

As we lift the second cup, we envision a modern day Israel, that fosters the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants. We envi-

sion an Israel that is “based on freedom, justice, and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel,” an Israel that “will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants” (from the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel, 1948)

THE THIRD CUP—Redemption from Overwork and Underwork

As we lift the third cup, we envision a world where everyone has work and, without any discrimination, receives equal pay for equal work. We envision a world where everyone also can enjoy rest and leisure, and periodic holidays with pay. (adapted from Articles 23 and 24 of the Declaration of Human Rights)

THE FOURTH CUP—Liberation from slavery all over the world

As we lift the fourth cup, we envision a world where no one is held in slavery or servitude . . . a world without sweatshop laborers, where all workers are able to make a fair wage, regardless of which country they are born into. We envision a world where all products are fairly traded, and no one country or financial institution can dictate trade policies. (adapted from Article 4 of the Declaration of Human Rights)



URCHATZ

Washing

We turn our attention toward the special properties of water with our first washing.

כוס מרים **KOS MIRIAM: MIRIAM'S CUP**

Lee Moore



Over the last few decades, Miriam's cup has come to grace the seder table at many homes. The Cup, filled with water, helps us recall Miriam's well, the source of water that followed us in the desert, sustaining our journey toward liberation.

This year, we hold up Miriam's cup and remember that over one billion people in the world lack access to clean drinking water. While some of this is a result of geography, increasingly people are being denied access to water because others who are more powerful seek economic gain. For-profit companies develop water control systems in developing countries, then charge for water that previously was free. In countries where access to cash is already challenging, this privatization of water sources can mean the difference between life and death. A citizen of Ghana voices the popular sentiment about this process of water privatization: "The idea that a foreign company will decide whether I get water or whether I don't get water, when they are pumping that water from my rivers and my streams and turning it into something that I don't have access to when I can't pay—it's outrageous. What right does this company have to do that?"¹

Hold up Miriam's Cup and say together:

May all people everywhere have access to the waters of life.

Let not water be held over people as an economic tool of oppression.

Rabbi Heschel on crossing the sea



n 1964, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote on the exaltation of liberation versus the real economic needs of the continued struggle:

The decisive event in the story of the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt was the crossing of the Red Sea. The sea became a dry land and the waters divided. It was a moment of supreme spiritual exaltation, of sublime joy, and prophetic elevation for the entire people. Every Israelite beheld the Glory with a clarity which even a prophet like Ezekiel did not experience.

Then Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went three days in the Wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water in Marah because it was bitter. And they murmured against Moses, saying: "What shall we drink?"

This episode seems shocking. What a comedown! Only three days earlier they had reached the highest peak of prophetic and spiritual exaltation, and now they complain about such a prosaic and unspiritual item as water.

[. . .] in 1963 [The African-American community] experienced the miracle of having turned the tide of history, the joy of finding millions of Americans involved in the struggle for civil rights, the exaltation of fellowship, the March to Washington. Now only a few months later they have the audacity to murmur: "What shall we drink? We want adequate education, decent housing, proper employment." How ordinary, how unpoetic, how annoying!

[But] the teaching of Judaism is the theology of the common deed. The Bible insists that God is concerned with everydayness, with the trivialities of life. The great challenge does not lie in organizing solemn demonstrations, but in how we manage the commonplace. The prophet's field of concern is not the mysteries of heaven, the glories of eternity, but the blights of society, the affairs of the market place. He addresses himself to those who trample upon the needy, who increase the price of grain, use dishonest scales, and sell the refuse of corn (*Amos* 8:4-6)²

מגיד

MAGGID

The Telling of the Story

Introduction

וכל-חמרבה לספר ביציאת
מצרים הרי-זה מש'בח

*V'khol hamarbeh l'saper bitziat
mitzrayim harei zeh m'shubach*

Whoever elaborates upon the story
of the Exodus deserves praise.



he Zohar states that in addition to our physical slavery in Mitzrayim, we were slaves of speech, as well. The *Sfat Emet* comments that this is why it behooves us to expand on the story of the *Haggadah*. The expanding of the story is not just worthy of praise, but is itself a form of praising the holy One that liberates all. “Our very utterances produce additional reverberations of the exodus, so the more we expand on it, the more we enhance reality.”³

The more we expand on our understanding of the story of oppression today, the more we clearly articulate what forces are truly oppressive. By giving voice to oppressions that occur, we disempower those oppressors and take the first step toward liberation. So we invite all of us tonight to share from our own experiences about the forms of economic injustice we experience and have witnessed.

Tonight, we will name instances of economic oppression we see today, we will seek to understand its causes and conditions. We may find strength and courage in the bravery of our familial or spiritual ancestors those who confronted oppression before us. We will not turn away from the suffering we encounter and we will commit ourselves to confronting oppression in the forms we encounter it.

מה נשיתנה — *Ma Nishtana: Questions*



After we have asked the traditional four questions, we continue to ask questions so that we can expand the story of the Exodus to further include ourselves. Here are a few questions that we may consider:

- Are economic rights also basic human rights?
- How does Jewish history and ethics inform our response to economic injustice in the world?
- How do those of us who are affluent relate to the idea that we were slaves in Egypt, and that we should see ourselves as going forth from slavery?
- What does it mean to live in a world that has enough food to feed all people, yet people still go hungry?
- What other question are on our minds right now?

כי-גרים הייתם — *Ki gerim heyyitem*—You were strangers

Rabbi Sheila Weinberg

You shall not oppress a stranger,
for you know the feelings of the stranger,
having yourselves been strangers
in the land of Mitzrayim.
(*Exodus 23:9*)

On the text of *Exodus 23:9*:

A *kavanna* in reverse order and in four parts

בארץ מצרים—*B'eretz Mitzrayim*

In the land of Mitzrayim
In dark places of greed, fear and ignorance
Where justice is partial,
Gold is king
And truth is for sale.

כי-גרים הייתם—*Ki gerim heyyitem*

You were foreign workers
Having neither power nor protection,
Shrinking under the gaze that did not see you,
Multiplying as you became more invisible.

וגר לא תפוש תגר—*V'atem yidatem et nefesh hager*

You know what the outsider knows,
The emptiness of belly,
The chill of cold alleys and wet streets.
You know long nights
Without sleep or hope.
You know the soul of the outsider
Looking in.

וגר לא תלחץ—*V'ger lo tilchatz*

For all these reasons—every Jew is addressed personally
to take as our own the well being of the stranger,
the foreign worker,
the poor,
the weak,
the outsider, the unprotected.
Do not oppress the stranger!
We all need the same things-
Food, water, clothing, a safe home.
We all merit the blessing that acknowledges our human dignity.
It's so easy to look away.

The Story of Moses: the First Labor Organizer

Adapted from Abraham Johannes Muste



oses lived in a period of dictatorship. His people were slaves. The bosses made them work under a speed-up system, and committed horrible atrocities, such as trying to kill all the boy-babies born to the Jews.

When Moses was a young man he became curious about the Hebrew slaves, and one day went to the brickyards where some of them were working. The first thing he saw was an Egyptian boss hitting a Hebrew laborer. Moses was a powerful young man. He lost his temper. He hit the boss—and killed him! He buried the body hastily in the sand, and went back to the palace.

But a fire had been kindled in Moses' heart, a fire of concern about his people and their suffering. Moses concluded that it might not be healthy to stay around those parts, so he ran away. [In his new home] he settled down to a nice comfortable life, raising a family and feeding the flocks of his father-in-law.

Only, after a while, God came into the picture. What was the sign that God had come? It was a bush that burned and burned and did not stop burning. Moses had a fire kindled in his heart once, but it went out, or at least died down. God is the Being whose heart does not stop burning, in whom the flame does not die down.

What was God all burned up about? The voice that came out of the bush said, "I have seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt and have heard their cry by reason of their oppressors."

It was the physical, economic, and spiritual suffering, the injustice, the degradation to which actual people were subjected here on earth, that caused God concern.

And the proof that God had entered into Moses, and that Moses had really been "converted," was that he had to go back and identify himself with his enslaved people—"organize them into Brickmakers' Union Number One"—and lead them out of hunger and slavery into freedom and into "a good and large land, a land flowing with milk and honey."

הַאֲלֵמָה עֵינֵינוּ

Ha Lachma Anya [the bread of poverty] and corporate responsibility

Rabbi David Seidenberg



t says in Lamentations, "Judah was exiled through poverty [oni]." The rabbis explain that this means that exile came because the owning class of Judah didn't fulfill the commandment of *Lechem Oni*—giving bread to the poor. The wealthy eliminated

tzedakah/charity for poor people in order to enrich themselves.

Tonight, we say, “This is bread for the poor . . . everyone who is hungry can come and eat,” in order to fulfill the commandment of *tzedakah*.⁵

Tonight we say, “This is bread for the poor/*ha lachma anya* . . . everyone who is hungry can come and eat it,” in order to fulfill the commandment of *tzedakah*. Only by truly fulfilling this commandment, inviting poor and rich to the same table to share the same meal, will we be redeemed.

The rabbis taught that our people was sent into exile because the owning class enriched themselves by denying the poor a share of the common wealth of society. Does this apply to our own society?

After so many revelations of corporate scandals, we know too well that some owners and CEO’s of corporations enrich themselves while endangering and stealing from their own workers and the lives of future generations. In a world where immediate profit-taking takes precedence over the long-term health of people and the economy, how many companies thrive by shifting costs onto workers, the environment, and the people who sustain them?

What does this teach us about how we prioritize our social budgets—both in Israel and in the US - where social programs are being cut year after year? What does it teach us about a society where the rich corporations receive charity tax breaks as incentives, and where the government puts its strength behind eliminating the minimum corporate tax? What does it say about laws written by corporate lobbyists to help corporations make more money, even when those laws destroy the common wealth and well-being of the planet and the country?

According to the New Jersey State Treasury, thirty of their fifty largest employers paid only the minimum \$200 in corporate taxes last year. Ten corporations revealed that they told their shareholders they had earned \$13.3 billion in profits, but when they filled out their state tax returns, they showed no profits. Even during the current economic slowdown, US Congress responded by supporting a “stimulus” package to eliminate the minimum corporate tax, yet it denied unemployment insurance and health-care assistance.⁴

Corporations enjoy some of the same rights as actual human beings under our economic system, but have far fewer responsibilities to the common good. Which is in God’s image: the corporation, or the people who work for it and live alongside it? Is Enron the exception, or is it an extreme case of the drive in corporate culture to make money now rather than to produce benefits for the future?

השָׁנָה אֲבֵדֵי. לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּנֵי חוֹרִין

Hashata avdei. I'shana habaah b'nei chorin — This year we are slaves. Next year we will all be free.



Why do we say that we are slaves, when it doesn't seem as if we are slaves? Perhaps "we" at this table tonight are not slaves. But the fact that slavery in its various forms still does exist in the world means that if some of us are slaves, then all of us are enslaved to an economic system that does not serve our common humanity.

Who is a slave in the modern economy?



In Mitzrayim, our enslaved ancestors made bricks, were forced to work long hours, and treated harshly. Tonight we ask ourselves: in our modern economy, who is a slave? Who is a stranger?

The Rabbinical definition of slavery is two-fold:

1. The subjugation of a people to another people, national enslavement, lack of political autonomy.
2. Idolatry, which enslaves. Robs people of their personal independence, depriving them of freedom of action, freedom of expression, freedom of worship.⁵

The first definition refers to our physical freedoms. The second definition refers to our spiritual lives, which can become enslaved by idolatry. But what does idolatry mean in our times?

One modern form of idolatry is our firm belief in "the bottom line." Many companies, for example, justify unfair working conditions and sweat-

WHAT DO PYRAMIDS LOOK LIKE IN THE MODERN DAY ECONOMY?

The CEO of a major company earned \$488 per minute in the year 2000. A U.S. worker in that company making minimum wage would have to work 5,695 years to equal the CEO's earnings in that one year. However, the company moved its factories to foreign soil to increase profits . . . so the actual line worker for the company made about 30 cents a minute. That worker could not even make in a year what the CEO made in one minute. That worker was probably also working in a sweatshop.

Why, in the U.S., during the last forty years, has the minimum wage barely changed in real dollars while the salaries of chief executive officers in corporations has grown by a multiple of more than eleven?

shop labor because it helps them meet their bottom line. The notion that economic gain is always the most important value enslaves many of us.

DISCUSSION: "THE BOTTOM LINE"

What are some ways you or those around you are enslaved by "the bottom line"?

What sacrifices do you make for your employers for which you are not adequately compensated?

How do we enslave ourselves for the sake of "luxuries" at the expense of our freedom?

אַרְמֵי אֲבִד אַבִּי וַיֵּרֵד מִצְרַיִמָּה וַיֵּגֶר שָׁם בְּמִתֵּי מִעַט

***Arami oveid avi vayeired Mitzraymah vayagar sham b'mitei m'at* — My ancestor was a wandering Aramean, and with just a few people he went down to Mitzrayim and sojourned there.**

Rabbi Toba Spitzer



When the Israelites brought the fruits of their first harvest to the Temple in Jerusalem, they proclaimed the formula that began with the words, "My father was a wandering Aramean." It is recited not from the perspective of slaves, but of successful farmers in the Promised Land. Why was it important to recite this formula?

When you have eaten your fill and built fine houses to live in, and your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold have increased, and everything you own has prospered, beware lest your heart grow haughty and you forget YHWH your God, who freed you from the land of Egypt, the house of slavery . . . and you say to yourselves. "My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me. (Deuteronomy 8:12-14; 17).

As we celebrate our freedom and our bounty, we are reminded never to forget the many sources of our privilege, and the covenantal obligations that these privileges impose upon us.⁴

DISCUSSION: PRIVILEGE AND POVERTY

Some Jews experience a high degree of privilege. Others are less privileged. A recent study points to 100,000 Jews living below the poverty line in New York City. What are the sources of our privilege? Has your family's economic status changed over the last few generations? In what ways? What does it mean to experience the *Haggadah* from a place of privilege? From a place of poverty?

All are invited to tell a short story of an ancestor who faced economic hardship, or came up against an economic system that did not acknowledge their humanity.

אלא שבבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלותנו

Ela shebkhoh dor v'dor omdim aleinu l'khaloteinu — In every generation, there is one who rises up against us to destroy us.



For many of us, one of the worst oppressions in our lives is being driven into overwork, and the spiritual and emotional exhaustion that follows. The *New York Times* recently reported that schools are increasingly abolishing recess time in order to get the children work more. Abraham Joshua Heschel taught that the root of all spirituality is “radical amazement:” the experience of true wonder. The notion that school is only for work squashes the chance for wonder to develop in a child. Heschel also taught that time itself is like the burning bush:

A Time for Freedom

Rabbi Arthur Waskow, based on a passage from Heschel

Today we face a new kind of Mitzrayim,
the Tight and Narrow Place.

Freedom without jobs is a bitter joke—
yet many of us find our jobs

dissolved, downsized, disemployed.

Jobs without freedom are slavery—

yet many of us are forced to overwork.

Our jobs exhaust us.

When Moshe faced the Burning Bush,

He learned that like an eternal burning bush,

Time itself is not consumed,

though each instant vanishes to open the way to the next.

Things of space seem permanent—

but as we seek to make them into tools,
they may enslave us.
When the Israelites went forth from slavery,
they sought time for rest and self-reflection:
They found *Shabbat*.
Rather than live under the tyranny of space and overwork,
We will in our lives set apart a time for freedom.

DISCUSSION: OVERWORK OR REST?

Are you overworked? Do you have enough free time? What would a world be like where we had enough time to do all that we need and want to do? Who or what is the “slave-master” that deprives us of our time—the “one who has risen up in this generation to destroy” our experience of time? How do you experience *Shabbat*—either the day itself or moments of “stopping” in your life to reflect?

Why does the workforce in the U.S., most technologically advanced country in the world, put in more hours than any other advanced country?

וישמע ה' את-קולנו

Vayishma Adonai et-koleinu — And God heard our cry
(Deuteronomy 26:3)

Rabbi Aryeh Cohen



he turning point in the story of the Exodus is the moment that God hears Israel’s cry—their cry for help from the bondage rose up to God. “God heard their cry and God remembered God’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” (*Exodus* 2:23-24) This moment of God’s hearing is memorialized in a commandment: “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. If you do mistreat them, I will heed their outcry as soon as they cry out to Me” (*Exodus* 22:20,22)

To mistreat the stranger is to choose Pharaoh’s path, the path of not hearing the cry of the oppressed, the path of “you are lazy, therefore you complain about the work.” To choose God’s path is to choose the path in which the moment of hearing the cry is possible. Then, when we hear the cry of the stranger, the marginalized, the homeless and the disenfranchised, we must act as God did. The first step, though, is to make sure that we can hear the cry; to make sure that we don’t wall ourselves and gate ourselves in to the point where we can no longer hear the cry. If we cannot hear the cry all we have left is Pharaoh’s path.

מוציא מצה

MOTZI MATZAH

Blessing the Matzah

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev at the *Matzah* Bakery



It was practice of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak each Passover to supervise the bakeries of Berditchev. In addition to the *kashrut* of the *matzot*, he was concerned with the working conditions of the women and children employees. One year, observing that they were being exploited, being forced to work from early morning until late at night, he approached the bakery owner. “Our enemies used to cause great consternation among our people,” he said, “charging that we use non-Jewish blood to bake our *matzah*. Today, however, God knows and you know as well that this is a foolish lie. But among our many sins, I see that there are Jewish bakers who prepare their *matzah* with Jewish blood, with the blood of the poor Jewish women and children from whom, unfortunately, they squeeze out the last bit of strength.”⁷

As we eat this *matzah*, the bread of affliction, we remember the conditions of the unseen workers who help to bring us food. We follow in the example of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev and acknowledge that the *kashrut* of our food also depends on the conditions of the workers who make it for us.

מרור

MAROR

Bitterness



As we eat the bitter herb, we taste the bitterness of suffering. We remember our own times of oppression and suffering. We don't revel in our victimhood, or fall into the trap of turning from the victim into the oppressor. We also taste the bitterness of living in a world where humans continue to create suffering for each other, often out of the motivation for economic gain. We know that to put profits before people is to deny that all people are made in the image of the Divine.

May this taste of bitterness inspire us to take actions that affirm the humanity of all peoples.

*Forgetfulness leads to exile, while memory is the secret of redemption.
Baal Shem Tov*

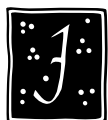
צפון

TZAFUN

The Hidden (*Afikomen*)

The *Afikomen* as *Tzedakah*

Phyllis Berman



Invite the children as a group to “steal” the *Afikomen*, to hide it, and then to bring it to the grown-ups. (They can only participate as a group, not competing one against the other.) Then invite them to let the grown-ups redeem it by naming one or two groups to which the grown-ups will give *tzedakah*. (The children can also name causes to donate to.) We ask one grown-up to volunteer to remind the others after Pesach. After the grown-ups agree, the *Afikomen* is shared. After Pesach, the “reminder” calls everyone to give them the addresses of the recipient groups. Each participant chooses how much to give.

בָּרַךְ

BAREKH

Grace after the Meal

Rabbi Gerry Serotta



In the spirit of asking questions at the Seder, the blessings and paradoxical statements of the *Birkat Hamazon* lead to other quandaries. The first blessing refers to God as the one who provides food for all (הוֹרֵץ אֶת הַכֶּלֶל / *hazan et hakhol*). How can we pray this falsehood? Should we see it as a reminder that there is abundance for all available in the world but that human beings have messed up the distribution system? Or should we see it as a challenge to make it real in our society and in our own eating behaviors? Similarly we recite that we wish not to be dependent on human loans or handouts (לֹא לִיְדֵי מוֹתֵנֶת / *lo lidei matnat basar vadam*), but rather on the order of the world that God intended. What is that order and how do we make it so?

We bless you now Eternal One,
The power and majesty in all.
You gave us this food, you sustain our lives
Through your grace,
 through your love,
 your compassion.
You provide all the food that comes to us,
Guiding and nourishing our lives.
Now we hope and we pray,
For a wondrous and great day,
 when no one in our world
 will lack bread or food to eat.
We will work to help bring in that time
When all who hunger will eat and be filled,
Every human will know that yours is the power
Sustaining all life and doing good for all.
We bless you now Eternal One for feeding everything.

Adapted from the translation by Rabbi Burt Jacobson

כוס אליהו

KOS ELIYAHU

Elijah's Cup

Marcia Cohn Spiegel



Just before opening the door for Elijah, pass around Elijah's cup so that each person can add a drop of wine from their own cup. As you do so, say what you will do in the coming year to make the world a better place. Each year you can add in a report on the success of what you promised the last year. The smallest children can participate with as much understanding as their elders.

SONG

אָנוּ נִתְגַּבֵּר / *Anu Nitgaber: We Shall Overcome*

אָנוּ נִתְגַּבֵּר *Anu nitgaber*

אָנוּ נִתְגַּבֵּר *Anu nitgaber*

אָנוּ נִתְגַּבֵּר בְּבוֹא הַיּוֹם *Anu nitgaber b'vo hayom*

אָנִי מֵאֲמִינִן *Ani ma'amin,*

בְּאֲמוּנַת שְׁלֵמָה *B'emunah shleima*

שֵׁאֲנוּ נִתְגַּבֵּר הַיּוֹם *She'anu nitgaber hayom.*



HALLEL

Praise

Song: This Land is Your Land

Words and music by Woody Guthrie

Chorus:

This land is your land, this land is my land
From California, to the New York Island
From the redwood forest, to the gulf stream waters
This land was made for you and me

As I was walking a ribbon of highway
I saw above me an endless skyway
I saw below me a golden valley
This land was made for you and me

Chorus

The sun comes shining as I was strolling
The wheat fields waving and the dust clouds rolling
The fog was lifting a voice come chanting
This land was made for you and me

Chorus

As I was walkin'—I saw a sign there
And that sign said—no tress passin'
But on the other side . . . it didn't say nothin!
Now that side was made for you and me!

Chorus

In the squares of the city—In the shadow of the steeple
Near the relief office—I see my people
And some are grumblin' and some are wonderin'
If this land's still made for you and me.

Chorus (2x)

GO AND LEARN, AND ACT

***Kipot* from EMPAWR**



In recent years, trade liberalization has been permitting large corporations to compete with and overpower rural workers in the developing world. Desperate competition contributes to the unmanageable unemployment and urban poverty that give foreign investors leverage to exploit poor countries. EMPAWR is a non-profit group that purchases apparel, including handmade *kipot*, from indigenous communities of rural Otavalo, Ecuador. The craftspeople work for themselves on their own terms, thereby helping preserve rural indigenous culture while combating exploitative corporate practices.

You can purchase EMPAWR *kipot* for your home or community by emailing empowerment@empawr.org.

Visit web sites for more information

On economic justice:

www.ufenet.org

On foreign workers in Israel:

<http://forworkers.israel.net>
www.kavlaoved.org.il

On trafficking women:

www.catwinternational.org

On water privatization:

www.worldwater.org

On sweatshops:

www.uniteunion.org
www.sweatshops.org

On corporate responsibility:

www.poclad.org
www.icrr.org

NOTES

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Rabbis for Human Rights - North America

Rabbis for Human Rights - North America is a multi-denominational rabbinical organization that gives voice in the American Jewish community and beyond to the tradition of human rights in Judaism. The primary goal of Rabbis for Human Rights North America is to provide moral and material support for Rabbis for Human Rights in Israel, the only multi-denominational religious organization that advocates for human rights for all in Israel.

Founded in 2002, Rabbis for Human Rights - North America has become a national organization with the support of prominent rabbis from all the movements of Judaism and widespread support in the American Jewish community and beyond. In its first year, Rabbis for Human Rights North America produced educational and liturgical materials on Judaism and Human Rights . Rabbis for Human Rights provides American Jews with a Jewish religious organization through which to become human rights advocates as an expression of our love for Israel and our commitment to Jewish values.

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Rabbis for Human Rights - Israel is the only organization in Israel today concerned specifically with giving voice to the Jewish tradition of human rights. In a country where Judaism is a powerful force often associated with intolerant and uncompromising beliefs and behaviors, Rabbis for Human Rights teaches a different understanding of the Jewish tradition. Rabbis for Human Rights is also the only Israeli rabbinic organization comprised of Reform, Orthodox, Conservative and Reconstructionist rabbis and students.

Founded in 1988, in 1993 RABBIS for Human Rights received the Speaker of the Knesset's Award for the Quality of Life for its work contribution to enhancing the rule of law and democratic values in Israeli society, protecting human rights, and encouraging tolerance and mutual respect. Rabbis for Human Rights is the rabbinic voice of conscience in Israel.

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