



NO MORE SLAVES!

*A Resource Guide for Engaging and
Empowering Young Jews To Help
End Human Trafficking by 2030*

**Prepared for The Rabbinical Assembly
Task Force on Human Trafficking**
Edited by Rabbi Debra Orenstein



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Acknowledgments & Permissions

Most of the material in this guide was originally written for *Next Year, Free!: A Modern Slavery Curriculum for Jewish Community*. *Next Year, Free!* was first published in 2015 and since revised. I initiated and oversaw the project, which included rabbis and educators from all Jewish movements and backgrounds. Rabbi Erin Hirsh was the project manager and editor for the first edition, and Nylah M. Pusin updated and beautified the second edition, which is still downloadable at <http://www.FreeTheSlaves.net/Judaism>. Nylah's artwork and graphic design are, unfortunately, not part of this RA publication. For that reason, and to see curricula for younger students, please download *Next Year, Free!* from www.FreeTheSlaves.net/Judaism. Entirely new sections have been solicited and written for this RA publication, including chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, and 10.

Next Year, Free! was undertaken in cooperation with Free the Slaves, which is happy to share teachings for teens and college students with the Rabbinical Assembly in this new format. The original publication was dedicated to the memory of my father, Rabbi Jehiel Orenstein. He not only valued freedom in the abstract; he made it happen for people in concrete and miraculous ways. He and my mother were instrumental in freeing Soviet Jewry. They visited behind the iron curtain numerous times beginning in 1959, advocated for the release of Soviet Jews, and helped them achieve spiritual and financial freedom once in the U.S., Israel, and FSU. My parents also took a refugee into their home who had escaped from political imprisonment in Cameroon. He stayed with them for more than two years, and my father tracked down a missing witness who helped that refugee, my brother Christophe, gain asylum in the United States.

To promote human freedom, you don't have to dodge the KGB or personally give cover in your home to a stranger fleeing torture and persecution. You can teach. Change a few buying habits. Inspire young people. Raise a bit of money. And literally save lives.

This book and the many resources it offers will show you how.

Debra Orenstein



Introduction: Why Youth? With Youth!

Rabbi Debra Orenstein

When it comes up in conversation that I educate children about the ongoing scourge of slavery, adults are sometimes shocked. Isn't it too difficult, too traumatizing to discuss this problem with youngsters? Even I was surprised, at first, that children as young as five can be introduced to this issue in a constructive, age-appropriate way. It empowers young people when we give them a handle on reality, a global perspective, and the ability to make a difference. Equally important, learning about slavery taps into and enhances children's natural empathy.

Children are not surprised to learn about injustice. Jewish preschoolers know that Pharaoh made us "work, work, work" as the ditty goes. They may see homeless people on urban streets. They know that some parents – or even classmates – die young. "It's not fair" is a rallying cry not just for small or selfish concerns, but for genuine suffering that children long to alleviate.

Kids have a special empathy for other kids who are enslaved – which explains why Maurice Middleberg and Evan Robbins, whose work is featured in chapters 4 and 5, have found children and teens to be such powerful allies in their push to end slavery. Teens in particular are idealists and activists; they sniff out hypocrisy, inequity, and the laziness of the argument (explicit or implied) that "it's always been this way." This generation is inheriting problems both created and exacerbated by previous generations. Young people and their children are the ones who will pay most dearly for climate change. They feel the effects of the political chaos and cronyism practiced by their elders every time they must practice a "live shooter drill," or witness #Me Too abuses, or hear national leaders using hate speech that would get them expelled from middle school.

There is no shortage of good causes for teens – or any of us – to work on. One thing that distinguishes the mitzvah of ending human trafficking is how surprisingly easy it is to make a meaningful difference. The end to slavery is in sight - and we know how to cross the finish line. Experts agree on how to get - and measure - results. Quickly, profoundly, and with very little money or personal effort expended, we can make a huge difference in people's lives. The personal stories of enslavement are horrifying, and the personal stories of liberation are inspiring.



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For Jews, these compelling stories connect to our foundational story: the Exodus - and to the commandment to remember and apply its lessons. Ending slavery is linked to the most-frequently repeated principle in Torah: Love and protect the stranger “for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

Many problems today (including climate change, violence, systemic racism) are overwhelming, and even experts can’t agree on how – or whether – they can be solved. By contrast, experts agree that slavery can be ended by 2030. They also agree on what to do:

- stop using slave-made goods and buy Fair Trade whenever possible;
- hold corporations accountable for their supply chains;
- arrest, prosecute, and jail traffickers;
- educate vulnerable populations - including migrants, women, and rural villagers in areas with a history of trafficking - on their rights and on how to resist traffickers;
- help survivors of trafficking heal, and empower former slaves who wish to become leaders in the movement to end slavery;
- alleviate extreme poverty and provide reasonable access to food, education, health care, police protection, and credit, especially in areas known for trafficking;
- raise money to help people who are now successful, on the ground, rescuing people and reversing the conditions that allow slavery to persist.

The vast majority of slaves toiling around the world work in places where only a few thousand dollars will free them, fund their recovery, provide them health care, and set them up for success through education, loans, and job training. We face many intractable problems. This is a problem we can solve merely by sacrificing small amounts of convenience, time, and money.

It’s not a new idea or reality that children can impact nations and policy - or even lead their elders. It was college students and high schoolers who sat for months at the Woolworth’s Counter in Greensboro, NC and dealt what would prove to be a fatal blow to Jim Crow. In the Book of Exodus, Moses’ young sister is credited with saving him when he was a baby. The Rabbis credit Miriam with influencing her father, Amram, and thereby saving an entire generation of Jewish children – not just her baby brother. About this, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has



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written, "Note that this Midrash, told by the Sages, unambiguously implies that a six-year-old girl had more faith and wisdom than the leading rabbi of the generation!" The age of Miriam when she saved Moses and the rabbinical status of Amram might be questioned, but the fact that children can save lives, influence adults, and shape personal and national destinies cannot be contested.

One of my proudest moments as a rabbi happened a couple of years ago, after I delivered a sermon on the cost of buying a human being on the open market vs. the cost of freeing slaves. (You can read a column I wrote as a follow-up on the same subject at [Times of Israel - For All We Are Worth](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/for-all-we-are-worth).¹

In 2016, I calculated that the *average* cost around the world to rescue an enslaved person came to \$800, although preventing slavery is, of course, much cheaper per capita. The following January, a member of my synagogue told me that her family had celebrated Hanukah differently that year. She had calculated that between all the presents, outings, and decorations, her family spent close to \$800 on Hanukah. Her children were then either in or just out of college. She suggested that they get together to light candles but forego the usual gifts and extras. They donated \$800 to Free the Slaves, and the family considered that their present to each other. She would not have made the same decision had she had school-age children, she said, but she and her adult kids felt enriched, rather than deprived. Do you even remember what book, ugly sweater, or gift certificate you got last year as a holiday gift? Those young adults will never forget their Hanukah gift of freedom.

Traffickers earn \$150 billion each year, and the U.S. government spends only about \$150 million to fight trafficking. Victory will take money. It will take will. It will require cooperation among nations and faith communities. For individuals, it might mean forgoing a few privileges, changing a few buying habits, perhaps paying more for some items. The burden is light, especially when compared with the reward. With just a few dollars and a few hours from each of us, we can – with participation by people from every generation and background – end slavery in our lifetimes.

May Jewish children, teens, and young adults lead the way.

¹ <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/for-all-we-are-worth>



Articles By and About Young People Who Have Freed Slaves

[Helping to Break the Chain by Lois Goldrich](https://jewishstandard.timesofisrael.com/helping-to-break-the-chain/)

<https://jewishstandard.timesofisrael.com/helping-to-break-the-chain/>

[When Your Child Speaks by Rabbi Debra Orenstein](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/when-your-child-speaks-passover-kids-and-slavery/)

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/when-your-child-speaks-passover-kids-and-slavery/>

[Do One Thing Different by Rabbi Debra Orenstein](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/do-one-thing-different/)

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/do-one-thing-different/>

[See One Person, Be One Person by Rabbi Debra Orenstein](https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/see-one-person-be-one-person/)

<https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/see-one-person-be-one-person/>

[Be One Person - TED Talk by Vivienne Harr](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBZc3t4BIhY)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBZc3t4BIhY>

[Former Child Slave, Now 22, Educates Teens About Slavery - from ABC News](https://abc7ny.com/society/former-child-slave-from-ghana-shares-his-story-with-nj-students-/4840482/?fbclid=IwAR3IU09IblyXnVQJ8_2FUTDhCmbmBISVljUF7J0-v7J3Qms1nd4mjinAAmiw)

https://abc7ny.com/society/former-child-slave-from-ghana-shares-his-story-with-nj-students-/4840482/?fbclid=IwAR3IU09IblyXnVQJ8_2FUTDhCmbmBISVljUF7J0-v7J3Qms1nd4mjinAAmiw

[Former Child Slave Rescues and Supports Others with Help from Funders - from Free The Slaves](https://vimeo.com/16664222)

<https://vimeo.com/16664222>



Able to Understand, Able to Make a Difference

Maurice Middleberg

The best letter I received during my years as of Executive Director of Free the Slaves came from a five-year-old boy. It was a pencil drawing, on brown craft paper, of a child behind bars with the following message, "Slavery is very, very, very bad! Oh no! Milo, age 5." Along with the letter was a contribution made up of Milo's birthday money.

Milo's letter exemplifies the capacity for understanding and empathy that children and young people exhibit on learning about the horrors of slavery. According to a conservative estimate by the International Labour Organization, 25 million people are in slavery today. Of these, five million are children, including one million sex trafficking victims and four million children in forced labor. I have seen the conditions that these children endure: Girls in brothels. "Dancing boys" who are sexually exploited. Girls trapped in domestic servitude. Boys on fishing boats. Children in factories and on farms. All abused and deprived of the most basic needs of children.

We have extensive experience demonstrating that children and youth embrace being educated and engaged on the issue of modern slavery. They especially respond to the discovery that children their own age are being abused and exploited.

Engaging children effectively has three dimensions:

- Teaching the facts in an age-appropriate manner
- Providing a means for children to express their understanding and feelings
- Giving children a way to engage constructively with the slavery issue.

Middle and high school students are especially responsive. They are old enough to grasp the severity and magnitude of the problem and mature enough to project themselves into the situation of children their own age.

The experience of Temple Kehillat Chaim in Roswell, Georgia is a very good example of how to engage students who are preparing for their Bar or Bat mitzvah. The rabbi, Harvey Winokur, and the school director, Caroline Fiegel, decided to integrate the slavery question into the curriculum of students preparing



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for their b'nai mitzvah. To that end, the school adapted *Next Year, Free!* Curriculum that teaches basic facts about modern slavery and connections to Jewish history and values. Upon request, Free the Slaves provided a guest speaker and relevant videos.

Students were asked to create, individually and in small groups, projects that captured what they had learned and what they felt about it. They made posters, developed a skit depicting slavery, created videos, wrote stories, essays, and poems, and made art, including paintings and collages. These were presented at an end-of-term ceremony to which the parents and the broader synagogue community were invited. The quality and diversity of the offerings were very high, and the impact on the adults was palpable.

Over the course of the semester, the students also carried out a fundraising drive to support the fight against modern slavery. This helped the students feel they were part of the solution, as well being more knowledgeable about the problem of modern slavery.

Some may feel that modern slavery is too difficult, fraught or complex for children and young people. My experience with many schools and faith communities - especially synagogues, Hebrew Schools, and Jewish Day schools - shows that these fears are unwarranted. On the contrary, the topic of modern slavery creates a rich opportunity to educate, encourage empathy, foster creativity and inculcate constructive engagement with the wider world, based on Jewish values and commitments.

A personal note: Members of the Rabbinical Assembly are invited to consult with me about crafting an initiative for your school or synagogue that will engage and energize your community. Please reach me at maurice.middleberg@gmail.com. I look forward to working with you to engage and inspire Jews of all ages.



Involving and Empowering Kids For Tikkun Olam: An Interview with Evan Robbins

conducted by Rabbi Debra Orenstein

The following interview with Evan Robbins was conducted via phone by Rabbi Debra Orenstein on July 11, 2019. Evan, who founded Breaking the Chain Through Education, was in Ghana, helping former slaves and supervising staff.

Breaking the Chain Through Education (btcte.org) began as a mom-and-pop mitzvah project in 2006 when Evan, a NJ public school social studies teacher, read an article about a six-year old boy enslaved in the fishing industry of Lake Volta in Ghana. The boy slept on a mud floor and spent 14 hours a day in dangerous work on a boat. The accompanying picture of a malnourished child in tattered pants touched Evan deeply. At the time, his own child was also six years old, and the contrast between the lives of these two innocents was too big of an injustice for him to bear or ignore. Evan began taking action to help save child slaves in Ghana.

He brought this issue both to his family and to his high school students. Together, they embarked on a quest to learn more about slavery as it is practiced today and to raise money to fight child trafficking. Thirteen graduation classes later, his students and family are still raising both awareness and funds - in amazing magnitudes - each year.

Since its founding, Breaking the Chain Through Education has supported well over 100 formerly-enslaved children with education, trauma recovery, health care, job training, food, as well as micro-grants and business advice for entrepreneurial ventures. BTCTE assists and accompanies each child it embraces into adulthood. From its original "mom-and-pop" status, the organization has grown, now employing four staff members in Ghana, one of whom was trafficked as a child. Evan is the President, as well as the founder, of Breaking the Chain Through Education. - D.O.

DO: You have an amazing track record of inspiring young people to help in the fight against slavery. What are the keys to your success?

ER: Awareness must come first. You can't solve a problem if you don't know about it. Young people have to be made aware of the issue. But information isn't enough. You have to tell them stories, to give them individual examples and



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connections. Then, they need guidance in how to direct their passion and empathy. The principle is: let them run it, but you guide.

DO: How do you bring in stories?

ER: I start every meeting by telling them a story from Ghana. It's a continuous education all year about what we are doing, why, and how. They receive updates on children. We show pictures, too. They are helping people who are 5,000 miles away; we have to make it real and give them the stories, so they can understand emotionally, as well as intellectually.

In 2019, I brought Michael Mikado from Ghana to tell his own story. He is now age 22 and a senior in High School, but spent much of his childhood as a slave on a fishing boat, working 15-16 hours a day. Today, he has a business making brooms, and he aspires to be a lawyer and work for justice. He is one of the children we were able to rescue through Breaking the Chain.

*(Editors' Note: ABC News did a story on this visit. View it at the following link: [ABC news on Breaking the Chain.](https://abc7ny.com/society/former-child-slave-from-ghana-shares-his-story-with-nj-students-/4840482/?fbclid=IwAR3IU09IblyXnVQJ8_2FUTDhCmbmBISVljUD7J0-v7J3Qms1nd4mjnAAmiw))*²

DO: Amazing! I can only imagine the impact of that storytelling - for him and for the students he spoke with. How do you guide the teens in the Breaking the Chain Club?

ER: I have them develop programs. I started off by teaching about slavery in the Social Studies classes, and eventually I transitioned the efforts to a school club. It's called Breaking the Chain because the kids came up with that name. I consult with them and I advise them, but they have the freedom to come up with the ideas, to run the programs. They don't like to be micromanaged. They need both guidance and the freedom to lead.

One of my students came to me and asked to do a dance benefit to raise money for our efforts in Ghana. Dancing was her talent and her interest. I would never have thought to do that. I would never had had the passion or the connections. We invited various studios to participate, and we charged the parents and grandparents money to attend. Last year, we had our 8th annual dance benefit. It raises between \$6,000 and \$7, 000 every year.

² https://abc7ny.com/society/former-child-slave-from-ghana-shares-his-story-with-nj-students-/4840482/?fbclid=IwAR3IU09IblyXnVQJ8_2FUTDhCmbmBISVljUD7J0-v7J3Qms1nd4mjnAAmiw



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I help students lead in settings and ways that are comfortable for them. High School students run the elementary school's Breaking the Chain Club independently and assist me with the middle school club, too. Overall, my students have raised about \$25,000 every year since we started the Club in 2012.

DO: What are some other important elements to your success in fostering a long-term commitment among teens to this issue?

ER: Teens want to be active. If you want to kill a club and stop kids from coming, then have them attend a meeting and don't give them anything to do. We *always* have events. They never come into a meeting without us having a project to work on. There is always the next thing to do. And when the school year ends, we are starting to plan the next events for the fall. I break up my High School Breaking the Chain Club into committees, and the committees are in charge of running multiple events. We run about 10 events a year. That's a lot.

I also try to put the kids in the position where they fit best and do their best. I have some kids who are amazing at soliciting contributions from business. Others are great at recruiting and involving their peers. It's important to play to their strengths so they can be successful.

DO: Thank you so much for talking to me all the way from Ghana.

ER: It's perfect timing. I have been in transit, and I just arrived at the school we built. I can't wait to see my kids!



Curriculum and Programming - Middle School

In a Place Where There is No One, Try to Be Someone

Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer

Objectives

Knowledge/ Content:

- Students will identify heroes from the Exodus story
- Students will be able to define the Jewish value of *Ometz Lev* as courage
- Students will research heroes from the American abolitionist movement
- Students will learn general statistics related to contemporary slavery
- Students will identify contemporary heroes such as Seema and Kamala, and organizations that are working to free people in slavery
- Students will name action steps to help people who are enslaved
- Students will work collaboratively to choose an action step that the class can take together

Skills:

- Students will be able to read Torah text and pick out heroes in the text
- Students will be able to list characteristics of a hero
- Students will be able to research U.S. abolitionists and explain why they were heroes
- Students will be able to consider ways that they can become heroes in the contemporary slavery crisis

Affect Regarding Material Studied:

- Students will be able to discuss their feelings about slavery in the Exodus, slavery in the United States and contemporary slavery
- Students will be able to recognize the characteristics of a hero and reflect on moments of courage in their own lives



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- Students will want to do something to address the issues of slavery

Session One: Heroes of the Exodus and Heroism Today

Materials

- Texts
- Paper
- Markers
- (Optional) Video Camera
- Index Cards

Activities

Set Induction (5-10 minutes)

On a board or large piece of butcher paper, write the word HEROES so that students see it as they enter the room. Explain that in today's session, you are going to learn about heroes from the Exodus story in the Torah and also about a hero who is alive today. Explain to the students that all the heroes in the Exodus story have something in common: they all show courage in the face of slavery. We are going to first think about the many ways that people can be a hero by helping others. Invite the students to brainstorm ways that people can be a hero in helping others. Write their responses on the board.

Text Study (10-15 minutes)

Read Exodus 1 (sheet below) out loud as a large group. Ask the students to explain in their own words why the midwives did what they did. Invite the students to imagine how the midwives may have felt when they were called to Pharaoh. Look at your hero Brainstorming list and ask the students to identify the ways that the midwives acted with the Jewish value of *Ometz Lev* (courage or, literally, strength of heart).

Then read Exodus 2 out loud as a group (below). Ask the students to underline all the people in this text who they think acted with the Jewish value of *Ometz Lev* (courage). What did each of them do to be a hero? Invite the students to share their responses. Heroes include Moses' mother (Yocheved), his sister (Miriam), Pharaoh's daughter (Bat Pharaoh) and Moses.



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Exploring The Heroes (15-20 minutes)

1. Divide the students into five groups. Each group will have a hero from Exodus to work with: The midwives (Shifra and Puah); Miriam; Yocheved; Bat Pharaoh and Moses.
2. Each group is going to create an interview with their hero that tells more about his/her story.
3. Everyone can play a different part: the interviewer, the hero, a “person on the street” who witnessed the heroic action, etc. If students prefer to be “behind the scenes” they can help write the sketch.
4. Interview questions should include (but aren’t limited to): What did you do to be a hero? How did you feel when _____ happened? How did you overcome your fear?
5. It might be fun to record the interviews.
6. Bring the class back together and invite each group to present their interviews.
7. After each group presents, invite the students who watched the interview to name what they think made that person a hero.

Slavery Today: Discussion and Video (20 minutes)

Following the interviews, you will transition to thinking about slavery that exists today and how each of us can be a hero in eradicating that slavery.

Explain to the students that the Exodus story gives us a model of how people can be heroes in the face of injustice. You are going to show them a video of a real person, living today, who is a hero helping to free people from slavery.

Pass out index cards to the students and invite everyone to write down 2-3 things that they know about people who are in slavery today. Be sure to let them know that if they didn’t know there is still slavery today, that is okay—many adults don’t know that either—and we will be learning about it.

As the students are writing on their cards, share [this definition of slavery on a board](https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/modern-slavery/):³

³ <https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/modern-slavery/>



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There are many different characteristics that distinguish slavery from other human rights violations. Someone is in slavery if they are:

- forced to work – through mental or physical threat;
- owned or controlled by an ‘employer’, usually through mental or physical abuse or the threat of abuse;
- dehumanized, treated as a commodity or bought and sold as ‘property’;
- physically constrained or have restrictions placed on their freedom of movement.

Go over the definition of slavery with the class and invite anyone who wants to share what they wrote to do so.

[Watch this short video⁴.](#)

Ask the children:

- Why do you think the slaveholder took Veero and the others to be slaves?
- Do you think Veero is a hero? Why?
- In what ways is her story similar to the Exodus heroes? In what ways it is different?
- Why has Veero risked her own life to save others?

Summary and Wrap Up (5-10 minutes)

- Give students paper and markers. Invite them to draw or write one thing they learned today that they didn’t know.
- As they finish, tape their papers to a wall.
- Have students do a “gallery walk” through and look at what everyone has learned today.
- Tell the students that in the next session, they will learn about more people who showed courage in the face of slavery and that you will choose an action together to fight against slavery.

⁴ <https://vimeo.com/6955604>



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Thank the students for their participation in learning with you!

Session Two: Abolitionist & Soviet Jewry Heroes and Heroism **Today**

Materials

- Poster board
- Markers
- Hero Sheet (attached)
- Index cards
- Paper
- Computers for research or printed information

Activities

Set Induction (15 minutes)

- Review the Exodus story: Tell the students that today you will be learning about more people in history who stood up to the injustice of slavery. You'll begin by reviewing the heroes from the Exodus story from Session One.
- Divide the students into five groups and give each group a poster board and markers.
- Ask them to create a poster of one of the Exodus heroes and how he/she showed *Ometz Lev* (courage): The midwives (Shifra and Puah), Miriam, Yocheved, Bat Pharaoh and Moses.
- When the students finish, each group can share their hero.

Heroes In the United States: Abolitionists (20-30 minutes)

- Explain to the students that you are now going to research people who were heroes in the United States Abolitionist movement.
- Ask the students to share something that they know about slavery in the United States. Write their responses on a board and keep that information present as they start to research.



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- You can assign students to research their hero using the internet if you have wifi and computers or tablets OR you can print out resources for them to use (click on the hyperlinks).
- Students will complete the Abolitionist hero sheet (below).
- Heroes could include:
 - Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglas, Harriet Tubman, William Lloyd Garrison, Angelina Grimke, Josiah Henson, Harriet Beecher Stowe
- When students have completed their research, they can share back with the class.

Heroes In the Movement to Free Soviet Jewry (20-30 minutes)

This same format as above can be used, alternatively, to explore heroes of the movement to free Soviet Jewry. Heroes for this mitzvah include Natan Sharansky, Leah Luria (the first Jew in Soviet Russia ever to apply for an exit visa), Elie Wiesel, Andrei Sakharov, Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, and Rabbi Jonathan Porath. Share the motto of the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry: "Let My People Go." Examine the photo with your students and ask them to explain the wording and symbols they see. What do these have to do with Soviet Jewry and their freedom? What does the plight of Soviet Jewry have in common with the plight of modern-day slaves? What did the movement to free Soviet Jews have in common with the contemporary movement to free slaves? When students have completed their research, they can share back with the class.



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Exodus March for Soviet Jewry, New York City April 1970.⁵

Slavery Today (15 minutes)

Following student sharing, you will transition to thinking about slavery that exists today and how each of us can be a hero in eradicating that slavery. Explain to the students that the Abolitionist movement and the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry give us models of how people can be heroes in the face of injustice.

Tell the students: “We are going to watch two short videos that will give us more information about slavery today and about how to take action. Afterwards, we’ll think about ways that we can be heroes, too, in fighting against slavery.”

Watch Videos About How to Help

[Awareness & Resources](#)⁶

[Free the Slave’s Formula for Freedom](#)⁷

[Don’t Buy Into Slavery](#)⁸

⁵ Yeshiva University Archives, Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry Collection, Box 6/6. Used by permission.

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7b73SuftPWM>

⁷ <https://vimeo.com/148250584>

⁸ <https://vimeo.com/295084737>



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Explain to the students that the class is going to work together to choose an action that you can take together to fight against slavery.

Ways To Be A Hero (10-15 minutes)

Depending on the age and size of your class, you could give them time to brainstorm ways that they could take actions to help people who are enslaved or you could **share** this list of actions and invite them to discuss what they might like to do as a class *tikkun olam* project. They can vote on which action that they would most like to take.

Actions might include:

- Raise tzedakah money for Free the Slaves⁹
- Learn about Fair Trade Judaica¹⁰ and purchase something together for the school
- Create a presentation about slavery to share with the school/synagogue
- Organize a Fair Trade Tasting for coffee and chocolates and use the social and culinary opportunity to educate others about Fair Trade and www.knowthechain.org¹¹
- What else?

Once the class has picked a project, you can talk with your education director or principal and parents of the students and put together an action plan for your project.

⁹ www.freetheslaves.net/

¹⁰ <https://fairtradejudaica.org/>

¹¹ <http://www.knowthechain.org>



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Summary and Wrap Up (5 minutes)

- Give students paper and markers
- Ask them to write/draw one hero that they learned about today—from Exodus or an abolitionist or a leader in the struggle for Soviet Jewry —whom they really admire.
- Go around the room and invite students to quickly share their heroes.
- Explain that by taking action - by raising awareness and/or money - they are becoming heroes, too, and will be able to help liberate people who are enslaved today.

Thank the students for their participation in learning with you.



Source Sheet - Exodus 1:13-19

יג וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת-בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּפָרֹךְ.

יד וַיִּמְרְרוּ אֶת-חַיֵּיהֶם
בַּעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה, בַּחֲמֹר
וּבִלְבָּנִים, וּבְכָל-עֲבֹדָה,
בַּשָּׂדֶה--אֵת, כָּל-עֲבָדָתָם,
אֲשֶׁר-עֲבָדוּ בָהֶם, בְּפָרֹךְ.

טו וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם,
לַמְּלֵכֶת הָעֵבְרִית, אֲשֶׁר
שֵׁם הָאֵחָת שִׁפְרָה, וְשֵׁם
הַשֵּׁנִית פּוּחַ.

טז וַיֹּאמֶר, בְּיֹלְדָכֶן אֶת-
הָעֵבְרִית, וּרְאִיתִי, עַל-
הָאֲבָנִים: אִם-בֵּן הוּא
וְהַמָּתֵן אֹתוֹ, וְאִם-בַּת הוּא
וְחִיָּה.

יז וַתִּירָאן הַמְּלֵכֶת, אֶת-
הָאֱלֹהִים, וְלֹא עָשׂוּ, כְּאֲשֶׁר
דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם;
וַתַּחְיֶינָה, אֶת-הַיָּלָדִים.

יח וַיִּקְרָא מֶלֶךְ-מִצְרַיִם,
לַמְּלֵכֶת, וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ, מַדּוּעַ
עָשִׂיתִי הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה; וַתַּחְיֶינָה,
אֶת-הַיָּלָדִים.

יט וַתֹּאמַרְנָה הַמְּלֵכֶת, אֶל-
פָּרֹעַה, כִּי לֹא כְנָשִׁים
הַמִּצְרִית הָעֵבְרִית: כִּי-
חַיֹּת הֵנָּה, בְּטָרֶם תָּבוֹא
אֱלֹהֵי הַמְּלֵכֶת וְיֹלְדוּ.

13 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor.

14 And they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; in all their service, wherein they made them serve with rigor.

15 And the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah;

16 and he said: 'When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, ye shall look upon the birthstool: if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.'

17 But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive.

18 And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them: 'Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men-children alive?'

19 And the midwives said unto Pharaoh: 'Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwife come unto them.'



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Source Sheet - Exodus 2:1-12

א וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ, מִבֵּית לֵוִי;
וַיִּקַּח, אֶת-בֵּת-לֵוִי.

ב וַתַּהַר הָאִשָּׁה, וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן;
וַתֵּרָא אוֹתוֹ כִּי-טוֹב הוּא,
וַתְּצַפְנֵהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרְחִים.

ג וְלֹא-יָכְלָה עוֹד, הַצִּפְיָנוּ,
וַתִּקַּח-לוֹ תִּבְתֹּת גֹּמָא,
וַתַּחְמֶרָה בַּחֲמֹר וּבְזָפֹת;
וַתִּשֶׂם בָּהּ אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד,
וַתִּשֶׂם בְּסוּף עַל-שֹׁפֹת
הַיָּאֵר.

ד וַתִּתְצַב אָחִיתוֹ, מֵרָחֵק,
לִדְעָה, מֶה-יַּעֲשֶׂה לוֹ.

ה וַתֵּרֶד בַּת-פַּרְעֹה לָרְחֹץ
עַל-הַיָּאֵר, וַנַּעֲרֹתֶיהָ הִלְכֹת
עַל-יַד הַיָּאֵר; וַתֵּרָא אֶת-
הַתִּבָּה בְּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף,
וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת-אֹמֶתָהָ
וַתִּקְחָהּ.

ו וַתִּפְתַּח וַתֵּרְאֶהוּ אֶת-
הַיֶּלֶד, וְהִנֵּה-נֶעַר בֹּכֶה;
וַתַּחֲמַל עָלָיו--וַתֹּאמֶר,
מִי־לְדֵי הָעִבְרִים זֶה.

ז וַתֹּאמֶר אָחִיתוֹ, אֶל-בַּת-
פַּרְעֹה, הֲאֵלֶךְ וְקִרְאתִי לָךְ
אִשָּׁה מִיִּנְקָת, מִן הָעִבְרִית;
וַתֵּינֶק לָךְ, אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד.

ח וַתֹּאמֶר-לָהּ בַת-פַּרְעֹה,
לְכִי; וַתֵּלֶךְ, הָעֹלָמָה,
וַתִּקְרָא, אֶת-אִם הַיֶּלֶד.

1 And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.

2 And the woman conceived, and bore a son; and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.

3 And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch; and she put the child therein, and laid it in the flags by the river's brink.

4 And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him.

5 And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the river; and her maidens walked along by the river-side; and she saw the ark among the flags, and sent her handmaid to fetch it.

6 And she opened it, and saw it, even the child; and behold a boy that wept. And she had compassion on him, and said: 'This is one of the Hebrews' children.'

7 Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter: 'Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?'

8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her: 'Go.' And the maiden went and called the child's mother.



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ט ותאמר לה בת-פרעה,
היליכי את-הילד הזה
והינקהו לי, ואני, אֶתֶן
את-שכרך; ותקח האשה
הילד, ותניקהו.

י ויגדל הילד, ותבאהו
לבית-פרעה, ויהי-לה, לבן;
ותקרא שמו, משה,
ותאמר, כי מן-המים
מִשִּׁיתָהוּ.

יא ויהי בימים ההם,
ויגדל משה ויצא אל-
אָחִיו, וירא, בסבלתם;
וירא איש מצרי, מכה
איש-עברי מאָחִיו.

יב ויפן כה וכה, וירא כי
אין איש; ויד, את-המצרי,
ויטמנהו, בַּחֹל.

9 And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her:
'Take this child away, and nurse it for me,
and I will give thee thy wages.' And the
woman took the child, and nursed it.

10 And the child grew, and she brought him
unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her
son. And she called his name Moses, and
said: 'Because I drew him out of the water.'

11 And it came to pass in those days, when
Moses was grown up, that he went out unto
his brethren, and looked on their burdens;
and he saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew,
one of his brethren.

12 And he looked this way and that way,
and when he saw that there was no man, he
smote the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.



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Abolitionist Hero

Name of hero:

Years he/she lived:

Where did he/she live:

What actions did he/she take to fight slavery?

What do you think makes him/her a hero?

What could we learn from him/her?



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Soviet Jewry Activism Hero

Name of hero:

Years he/she lived:

Where did he/she live:

What was he/she best known for?

What actions did he/she take to help free Russian Jews?

What do you think makes him/her a hero?

What could we learn from him/her?



Making the Mitzvah Your Own: Mitzvah Projects for B'nai Mitzvah and Beyond

Rabbi Debra Orenstein

As Jewish young adults prepare for a Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony, it has become a widespread practice for each student to take on a mitzvah project. Depending on the community and the family, many different guides and mentors may influence and help with the project, including rabbis, cantors, bar/bat mitzvah tutors, classroom teachers, principals, and parents.

The essay that follows is composed of two parts. The lessons in Part One are presented as family study and discussion sessions, led by a rabbi, for a Bar or Bat Mitzvah student and parents. These sessions can easily be adapted for one-on-one meetings with the child or for a B'nai Mitzvah class or youth group. They focus on teaching mitzvot and value-concepts¹² as the foundation of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony and project.

Part Two guides rabbis, cantors, and educators in mentoring B'nai Mitzvah students who choose modern slavery as a focus for their mitzvah expertise, mitzvah project, or both. This section also serves as a model for teaching about the religious underpinnings of any Bar or Bat Mitzvah project. It suggests questions and approaches that apply to any service project.

Older teens and adults might design a "community project," "Eagle Scout project," or "Social Action Committee event." Whether or not deeds of service are done in a Jewish context, the approach outlined in Part Two can help Jews of any age to see their volunteer activities through a Jewish lens and as an expression of their Jewish identity.

The indexes that follow the essay organize texts related to slavery first by Torah portion and the by topic. These are useful resources not only for guiding B'nai Mitzvah, but for all teaching and preaching about the Jewish tradition and its relevance for the contemporary moral challenge of slavery.

¹² This term was coined by Rabbi Max Kadushin. See *Organic Thinking: A Study in Rabbinic Thought*.



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Goals

Goals for the Student

Bar and Bat Mitzvah students will take responsibility for mitzvot both by studying mitzvot and by developing a fundraising and/or service project. A Bar or Bat Mitzvah will understand the concept of mitzvah, develop expertise in one mitzvah, and organize a mitzvah project. Because personal concerns, hobbies, and passions will be tapped to develop a project, students will make connections among the inherited tradition, contemporary social issues, and their own lives. Each Bar or Bat Mitzvah will experience Judaism as obviously and immediately relevant and feel connected to the mitzvah/mitzvot they choose to study and inhabit. Students will gain satisfaction from doing good - and from understanding Judaism and their own Jewish identity as forces for good in the world. In the process, they will develop new skills and habits and are likely to show growth in organization, time management, writing, speaking, text study, collaboration, and/or fundraising. B'nai Mitzvah will feel themselves to be respected members of the community who can and do make a difference – and will be treated as such by the community.

Goals for Rabbis, Cantors, and Educators

Those who work with Bar and Bat Mitzvah students will be inspired to "go deeper" in the guidance they give on mitzvot and mitzvah projects – whether they use the approach outlined here, adapt it, or take another tack entirely. More synagogues will integrate "becoming an expert in a chosen mitzvah" as well as "doing a mitzvah project" into their b'nai mitzvah programs.

Part One: A Method To Our Mitzvos: Specializing in a Mitzvah & Conducting a Mitzvah Project

Laying a Foundation with Bar & Bat Mitzvah Students: What is a Mitzvah?

This introduction can be done in one or two sessions, depending on time, temperament, and interest. It is important to begin by building a foundation. First, the student needs to understand mitzvah as a word and as a concept.

Begin by asking the student for a definition of "mitzvah." A Hebrew School student may offer the definition "good deed." A yeshiva or day school student may talk about categories of mitzvot, such as *bein adam la-Makom* (human to



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divine) and *bein adam le-havero* (human to human). Some students may note that they will soon be obligated to fulfil mitzvot. (Fasting on Yom Kippur is usually mentioned – with both pride and dread.)

Introduce the fact that “mitzvah” is a word in three languages. Hebrew, Yiddish, and Aramaic. If the child mentioned “good deed” as a definition, affirm that this is the primary Yiddish meaning. If a child did not also mention “commandment” as a definition, ask them to recite the Shabbat or Hanukah candle blessings. Then translate: “...who has made me holy through your mitzvot and “good deed-ed” me to light the Shabbat/Hanukah candles.” Most students will catch on quickly and correct you. If not, you can look at the English translation in a prayerbook, which will usually use the phrase “who has commanded us.” To drive the point home, mention the “Ten Good Deeds” that we received at Mt. Sinai; hopefully, you will be corrected. (The Hebrew, of course, translates literally as the “Ten Sayings,” but the common English rendering is helpful.)

With regard to the Hebrew definition of “mitzvah,” explore the notion of commandment and commandedness. Ask if there are any “musts” at home. (If parents are present, this is a particularly fun conversation.) I usually talk about the fact that “good deed” is generally a more beloved concept than “commandment,” especially in the United States where individualism and independence are valued - and people don’t like to be told what to do. Explain that the “must” quality of a mitzvah raises its urgency and importance. Tzedakah is a good example. We all know it’s a good deed to give money to people and causes in need, but if it weren’t also a must to do so, then many of us could justify postponing our giving until “a better time.” We all have unexpected expenses, and some of us consistently have too much month at the end of the money. But because tzedakah is a commandment, it is firmly established as a non-negotiable given. For most of us, there are other budget items that we regard as “musts” such as paying taxes or rent, or giving kids their allowance, or returning money borrowed from a friend. Even in tough times, something extraordinary would have to happen before we would renege. It’s in this sense that tzedakah is a must. It sets a giver’s borders and boundaries – just as the “musts” and the “must nots” at home set the borders and boundaries for a family.

Few students will know that “mitzvah” in Aramaic can be translated as “connection.” Depending on the child and the curriculum, ask them (or inform them) what major Jewish books and prayers are written in Aramaic (e.g., parts of Daniel and the Haggadah, most of the Talmud, the Kaddish). How does a mitzvah



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help you create connections across geography (e.g., studying the Torah portion unites Jews all over the world) and across time (e.g., the mitzvah of *brit milah* (circumcision) goes all the way back to Abraham)? What are some examples of mitzvah connections among people (*bein adam lechavero*), within people (*ben adam l'atzmo*), and between people and God (*bein adam lamakom*)? Notice how one mitzvah can connect you in all directions.

To continue with the example of tzedakah, explore the idea that giving connects us to the people who are helped and to the people cooperating and donating with us; it connects us to our souls and to the spirit of generosity and caring within each of us; and it connects us to God, because this is what God has asked us to do, and we are helping to care for God's children.

Now take some examples of mitzvot from upcoming holidays, the child's Torah portion, and/or mitzvot s/he is studying in school. Alternatively, make a game of this (and imitate traditions of bibliomancy) by dealing a "mitzvah card"¹³ from a mitzvah card deck or opening to a random number or page in a listing of the 613 mitzvot. Ask about each mitzvah you choose: what connections does it help to make?

Next play a game where everyone in the room writes down a mitzvah - any mitzvah s/he first thinks of - on a slip of paper. Brainstorm about how this mitzvah is a good deed, a must, and a connection.

- For good deed explore: Why is it good? Who benefits by it? Who *else* benefits by it?
- For a "must" explore: Why is this an imperative for the person doing it? Why is it raised to this level or urgency for/on behalf of others? Why do God/Torah/the Jewish community name this as a "must"?
- For connections explore: Which other people does it connect you to? What values and/or historical events does it connect you to? How does it help you connect to God or to your own soul?

(If you are breaking this lesson into more than one session, this would be a good place to break.)

Review the number of mitzvot. Explain (or for a day school student - elicit) that there are 365 "thou shalt nots" in the Torah. Ask: "what does the number

¹³ Mitzvah cards by Rabbi Goldie Milgram can be found at reclaimingjudaism.com or mazon.com.



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365 remind you of?" Solicit ideas about why there are as many *lo ta'asehs* (thou shalt nots) as there are days in the year. I usually share the perspective that if you want to lead a holy life, you will have to say "no" to yourself about something every day. You can introduce or review Maimonides' prioritization of *lo ta'aseh* over *aseh* (thou shalt). This can be related to the Hippocratic Oath: First, do no harm.

Challenge the student to do mental math (or math on paper) to determine the number of *mitzvot aseh*. I usually explain that while that number doesn't mean much to us today, in the ancient world, people identified 248 separate body parts. So the message in the *gematria* (numerology) is that mitzvot are meant to have an impact on all your time (365) and your entire body (248).

Then, look at the word *Bar* or *Bat*. Take the literal meaning of "bar/bat mitzvah" seriously: What does it mean to be a child of the commandments? Until now, a youngster has been the son or daughter only of his or her parents. I assure families (to the delight of most parents and the chagrin of most teens) that being the "kid" or even the "baby" to your parents will never end. (We often share embarrassing stories about cheek-pinching relatives and jokes on the subject.) In fact, we call people up to the Torah for the first time - and for the rest of their lives - as the child of their parents: Child's name, son or daughter of Father's name and Mother's name.¹⁴ Yet, at the time of Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the young person becomes a child of the mitzvot themselves, as well as a child of two (and sometimes more) parents. Now he or she will be responsible to – as well as for – the mitzvot. The age of 12 for girls and 13 for boys is traditionally called *gil mitzvot*, the age of [accountability for] commandments. Bar or Bat Mitzvah marks the point when a Jew officially begins an unmediated relationship with the mitzvot. They become responsible for honoring the mitzvot, as well as their parents. Now, during preparation for becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, is when a young person begins seriously developing his or her own independent relationship to Torah and its commandments. In this light, we can offer a loving explanation of the traditional parents' blessing when the child reaches the age of mitzvot: "*Baruch she-petarani me-onsho shel zeh* – Blessed is the One who has released me from the consequences of this one's behavior."

Until children reach the age of mitzvot, parents make most important decisions on their behalf – and take most of the responsibility for their children's

¹⁴ A non-gender-specific option is to call up someone for an aliyah using the term *mibeit* (from the house of) the parents, rather than *ben/bat* (son/daughter of) the parents.



behavior. Similarly, in American law, parents are accountable for truancy and vandalism by young children; however, after a certain age (often around the time of Bar/Bat Mitzvah), young people themselves are held responsible. Reaching the "age of mitzvot" means that children are now mature enough to be considered liable for their actions and obligated to the commandments. Until now, parents and teachers have largely directed a child's Jewish education. Bar/Bat Mitzvah publicly marks an important milestone in the gradual process by which responsibility for Jewish learning, observance, and identity is gradually handed off to the child.

Discuss these notions with the family. What about the new status is exciting? What is daunting? Ask the family for examples of new privileges and new responsibilities in the public realm. For example, being counted in a minyan is a privilege; coming out on a school night to help make a *shiva minyan* is a responsibility. Having a phone and/or social media accounts is a privilege; using them wisely and considerately is a responsibility; misusing them would make the student culpable. Discuss how new privileges come with new responsibilities in relation to Bar/Bat Mitzvah and the life of the family. Are there any expectations for what a child will do with Bat/Bar Mitzvah checks and gift cards - whether in terms of contributing to family finances, saving for college, or giving tzedakah? What responsibilities come with the privilege of babysitting? of driving?

As a "homework" assignment, ask students to

1. scroll through one or two lists of 613 mitzvot.¹⁵ Point out to students that the lists may be organized by topic, or divided into "thou shalts" and "thou shalt nots," or named in the order that they appear in the Torah.
2. notice the range of mitzvot. 613 is a big number! A lot is covered: holidays, the Land of Israel, food, sexuality, business ethics, just to name a few.
3. pick any five mitzvot that interest you for any reason: because it's your grandmother's favorite, because it's new to you, because you did it once,

¹⁵ The Chofetz Chaim's *Sefer Hamitzvot* is available in a facing Hebrew and English translation from Feldheim publishers under the title *The Concise Book of Mitzvoth: The Commandments Which Can Be Observed Today*, Charles Wengrov, ed. Berel Bell's translation of Maimonides' list, which differs in minor ways from the enumeration of others, can be found [here](http://chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/940226/jewish/Positive-Commandment!.htm). http://chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/940226/jewish/Positive-Commandment!.htm Multiple listings of the 613 mitzvot by topic, verse order, and "positive" (thou shalt) and "negative" (thou shalt not) commandments can be found online.



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because you do it every week, because it doesn't make sense to you, because you think it's easy, or "just because" – *any* reason.

Remind the student that he or she will ultimately choose one mitzvah to become an expert in as part of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation. However, there will be many other subjects and opportunities to choose - beyond the five mitzvot and this step. This reduces the pressure of the assignment and allows the student to explore the world of mitzvot more freely, without an agenda.

Beginning to Build: Investigating Specific Mitzvot

The discussion of chosen mitzvot, as well as mitzvot in the student's Torah and Haftarah readings, typically require two to four 40-minute sessions, depending on time, temperament, interest and Torah portion. I usually like to meet once every week or two during this discussion of mitzvot. Of course, it's always possible to adjust the length, number, and frequency of meetings.

In the following session, review the homework. Ask the student to describe the range of mitzvot s/he discovered. Did s/he find anything surprising on the list of mitzvot? Review the five mitzvot that the student chose. Delve into why the student was interested in these particular mitzvot. Did they touch on a memory? Do they speak to a particular interest? Each selection will have its own story – and backstory. Take some time to listen. You will likely learn a lot about the student's history, personality, and spirituality. Ask the student to name any common thread they can discern among their choices. Parents and rabbi can also weigh in on themes that they notice - and other mitzvot (particularly mitzvot from the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's Torah portion) that share those themes.

Once the student has considered what motivated his or her choices, go back and teach on the different mitzvot. Review the context of where each appears in Torah. Teach vocabulary. Describe applications. Discuss *ta'amei hamitzvot* (reasons that have been given for these commandments). Distinguish, when relevant, between *hukim* (mystical, super-rational laws) and *mishpatim* (laws that could be explained entirely by reason and logic). Pull out a commentary and study relevant verses together. Be guided, of course, by the abilities and interests of the student.

Choose one or more of the following assignments for the student to work on at home, depending, again, on ability and interest, as well as the amount of time until your next meeting:



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- Assign readings or research about one or more of the mitzvot already discussed.
- Ask the student to choose additional mitzvot from the listing of 613. For subsequent sessions, the basic structure outlined above can be repeated.
- Ask the student to make a list of the mitzvot that appear in his/her Torah portion and, if relevant, Haftarah.

In a subsequent meeting(s), discuss the assignments. Take the time to imagine performing the mitzvot named in the Torah portion. Add to the student's list of mitzvot, if necessary, pointing to relevant chapters and verses. Pull out commentaries about the mitzvot in the Torah and Haftarah readings. Introduce a case study of one of the mitzvot. Discuss the good deeds, musts, and connections that are involved.

Becoming an Expert in One Mitzvah

To prepare for Bar or Bat Mitzvah, we wouldn't dream of asking tweens to study the entire Torah. It would be absurd! We ask them to become experts in one Torah portion. This gives them confidence as well as knowledge, and teaches them the essential skills they will need to study and chant other Torah portions in the future. The preparation and ceremony also tie them forever to Torah and Haftarah portions that (usually) fall near their birthdays.

We can use a similar strategy for mitzvot. We would never ask children to learn about all 613 mitzvot, but we can guide students to choose one mitzvah to become expert in, and that mitzvah can then be a portal into all the others. While the Bar or Bat Mitzvah Torah portion is usually chosen merely according to date of birth and the community calendar of events, the choice of a single mitzvah is anything but random. Choosing a mitzvah to learn about and putting a mitzvah project into action can therefore give Bat and Bar Mitzvah students a strong sense of agency, commandedness, and leadership.

After the mitzvah definition and exploration session(s) described above, ask if the child is beginning to lean toward one mitzvah which she or he would like to delve into more deeply. If so, name that as a mitzvah to become an expert in, and then assign readings and research accordingly. If not, ask the student to narrow down his or her choices to two or three for the next session. They may have made a selection by the time you see them. If they have difficulty deciding, interview them about their mitzvah choices to this point and about their general



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interests and activities. Listen carefully for what makes them light up. Guide them to choose the mitzvah with the highest "wattage" or, if you can't discern that, the mitzvah that has a personal connection for them – because it interests them, affects their family, is part of how they imagine their future, and/or comes from their Torah portion.

Between sessions, students should always be doing some work at home to deepen their knowledge of the mitzvah they have chosen. Of course, some students will be more motivated than others. *Short readings* usually work best. You can assign Torah verses, a few lines of traditional commentary, and selections from books, such as those mentioned below. Students can also be asked to do research online, or to interview someone for information.

Depending on the mitzvah and the child, consider asking the student to keep a diary of ideas or observations about when a particular mitzvah is needed, practiced, and/or violated. A diary is a great tool for learning about *lashon hara* (gossip or bad speech), for example. Keeping track of when Jewish laws against gossip are observed (or not) reinforces lessons about what constitutes gossip according to Jewish law. It also helps children to become more aware of their own patterns of speech and conversation, so they can better practice the mitzvah of pure speech.

The following are a few books about mitzvot that have content suitable for students this age:

- Bradley Shavit Artson and Adam Siegel, *It's a Mitzvah: Step-by-Step to Jewish Living*.
- Susan Freeman, *Teaching Jewish Virtues: Sacred Sources and Arts Activities*.
- Sorel Goldberg Loeb and Barbara Binder Kadden, *Teaching Torah: A Treasury of Insights and Activities*.
- Danny Siegel, *Mitzvahs*.
- Ron Wolfson, *God's To-Do List: 103 Ways To Be An Angel and Do God's Work on Earth* or (for those reading below grade level) *God's To-Do List for Kids*.
- Barbara Binder Kadden and Bruce Kadden. *Teaching Mitzvot: Concepts, Values and Activities (revised edition)*.
- Kerry M. Olitzky and Rachel T. Sabbath, *Striving Toward Virtue: A Contemporary Guide for Jewish Ethical Behavior*.



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- Joseph Telushkin, *The Book of Jewish Values: A Day-by-Day Guide to Ethical Living*.

The last two books have some sections that may not work for middle schoolers, but there is a lot of wonderful and accessible content.

It can be inspiring to talk to families about people who became known for a single mitzvah in which they were experts, such as the Chafetz Chaim for proper speech or Henrietta Szold for health and welfare in Israel. One of my congregants in Los Angeles, Michael Chusid, has a passion for Shofar. He studied and eventually wrote extensively about it. Over the years, he has taught thousands of people to blow Shofar. And every year during Elul and Tishrei, he travels to hospitals and prisons to blow Shofar for people who cannot get to synagogue. The Talmud prizes the performance of one mitzvah in glowing terms: "Those who perform a single commandment—it is good for them, their days are lengthened, and they inherit the Land." (Mishnah Kiddushin 1:10)

It is exciting to imagine that a student's choice of mitzvah could become a life-long passion, but that is certainly not the only desirable result. I emphasize to students that they are going into some depth about just one out of 613 mitzvot. It may stick for a lifetime or be one in a series of explorations. Likewise, their mitzvah project might become a personal signature and spiritual legacy - or one of many different ways they contribute over time. For students who study a mitzvah (and/or conduct a mitzvah project) related to the problem of slavery, Passover comes as an annual reminder and usually renews interest, commitment, and leadership.

Selecting a Mitzvah Project

Any "mitzvah to become an expert in" can be grown organically into a mitzvah project. Even a mitzvah that is no longer practiced can inspire a project that reflects the concerns and ideals behind it. Biblical laws around sacrifices have a lot to teach us about regularity and discipline (*olah*), gratitude (*sh'lamim*), forgiveness (*hatat*), taking care of the poor (*ma'aser ani*), sharing with our neighbors (*pesah*), and supporting our spiritual leaders (*t'rumah*). All sacrifices required giving, connecting with others in the community, and coming closer to God (*korban*) through ritual. Those same values apply today in a wide array of Jewish practices.



Mitzvot that may not seem particularly "actionable" always have applications, even if indirect. For example, when I first asked students to become experts in a single mitzvah, one child chose "thou shalt not murder." His reasoning was "You said to choose anything I want, and this sounded easy." We ended up studying the difference between killing and murder – in the Hebrew language and in Jewish and American law.

He learned about cities of refuge, the affirmative requirement to save a life, allowances for killing in the cases of just wars and self-defense, and the rabbinic comparison of murder to embarrassment. The student who wanted the easiest possible mitzvah ended up becoming highly engaged. He connected "do not murder" to his dream of becoming a doctor and the affirmative mitzvah to protect life. For his mitzvah project, he raised money and awareness for organ donation. He argued in his Bar Mitzvah speech that failing to donate our organs, when they can help to save a life, should be considered negligent homicide.

Most students do not begin with a preference for a mitzvah to study, but many do arrive to the rabbi's or tutor's office with a mitzvah project in mind. They know they want to work in a food pantry, collect items for an animal shelter, raise money for cancer research, or help to free slaves, but they have not thought about the underlying mitzvot of those projects – beyond the fact that they are all good deeds. If a child comes in with a passion to work on a particular need or in a particular setting, it's important to honor and reinforce that. However, I still recommend beginning with helping them understand the layers of meaning in the word "mitzvah," exploring the range of mitzvot, and conducting a mini-lesson on five mitzvot, as described above. After doing that and exploring the mitzvot in their Torah portion, students can turn to the mitzvah project with a richer understanding of the mitzvot. This, in turn, will prime them to understand what makes their project Jewish.

The Mitzvah in the Mitzvah Project

As students pursue a mitzvah project, they are busy with many tasks. The role of the rabbi, cantor, or educator advising them is to help them meet goals and a time-line *while continuing to study and explore with them the spiritual meaning of their project*. Key questions that will be asked in Part Two, to focus on modern slavery, can also be asked about a mitzvah project with any other focus. Here are some general questions to help each student relate personally and Jewishly to his/her project:



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- How is the mitzvah of your project relevant to your Torah portion, Haftarah, and/or the news?
- What does the Jewish tradition teach about the project you have chosen - including the reasons behind it, the people who benefit from it, and the process by which it is carried out?
- What is the essence of the mitzvah in your mind and in your practice?
- Why do you care about the process and/or the cause of this mitzvah project?
- How can you bring the mitzvah of your project into the preparation for your ceremony and the party following it?
- How might you continue with this mitzvah after your ceremony and party?
- How might you reprise this mitzvah project on the first anniversary of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

When people of any age approach the same commandment, they may come to it with very different ideas, intentions, and associations. Likewise, people engaging in the same task (say, cooking for the homeless) may be motivated by different values and drawing on different virtues when they meet together in the shelter kitchen. Over the years, many of my B'nai Mitzvah students have funded cancer research, using their talents and interests to raise money in a variety of ways. The diversity in their motivations was equally remarkable. One student wanted to honor the relative he was named after, who had died of cancer before he was born. Several students wanted to show love and caring for relatives who were undergoing cancer treatment. Some had no personal connection with the disease but wanted to help kids with cancer or to provide hope for people living with cancer or to fund Israeli cancer research because they saw that as a "double mitzvah."

Different motivations favor different courses of study. A student who regularly visits a chronically ill grandparent might be directed to study prayers for healing or laws and stories about visiting the sick. A student who chose to fund cancer research because of a keen academic interest in the subject might instead study Maimonides' prayer for the physician. A student raising money because his mother is in mourning for *her* mother (a deceased grandmother) might study the mitzvah of honoring parents. For a student funding cancer research because his



friend has cancer, a rabbi might introduce biblical and rabbinic texts on friendship. Studying the many meanings of *haver* and its Hebrew root (friend, member, collective, community, connection) is particularly powerful to do in *hevruta* (paired study).

Whatever mitzvah project a student chooses, it's important to explore what the mitzvah means to that child and the family. The student's relationship with the mitzvah will naturally suggest certain topics and texts for study and discussion. These, in turn, will enhance, deepen, and sometimes even change the way s/he relates to the mitzvah and the project. A fuller discussion of how rabbis can guide this kind of exploration follows in Part Two.

Part Two: Contemporary Slavery as a Focus for the Mitzvah Project: A Case Study for Finding the Mitzvah in the Mitzvah

Goals

Goals for the Student

With modern-day slavery as the focus for a mitzvah project, the student will

- Develop compassion in general and for slaves in particular
- Learn the scope and underlying causes of contemporary slavery
- Study and connect with mitzvot that concern themselves with slaves, strangers, fair treatment, economic justice, human dignity, etc.
- Create and execute an action plan to liberate people now enslaved, keep them free, and/or prevent slavery
- Understand Torah as a source of morality for the Western world and a guide to social justice today
- Discover layers of history, meaning, and connection in mitzvot that distinguish a mitzvah project from a secular service project

Goals for the Rabbis, Cantors, and Educators

- Have at their fingertips many ideas and all the major biblical citations for any student who wants to pursue mitzvah learning and/or a mitzvah project related to modern slavery
- Incorporate the resources provided in teaching and preaching about many Torah portions and topics, including Shabbat, Passover, Jubilee, and



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the Jewish values of pursuing justice, loving the stranger, and protecting the vulnerable

- Apply these teachings with Bar and Bat Mitzvah students, and also in other contexts and with different populations, thereby expanding the circle of people who are educated about Jewish history and values as they relate to ending slavery
- Approach mitzvah projects not only as good deeds and service projects but as an opportunity to teach about mitzvot and help young people form a personal, life-long connection to them
- Use this model of engagement with the underlying mitzvah for mitzvah projects that have nothing to do with slavery or related themes and mitzvot.

The Mitzvah in the Torah Portion

How would a student come to choose combating slavery as a mitzvah project? Perhaps a child has learned about contemporary slavery in school through the synagogue's Social Action Committee or the *Next Year, Free!* curriculum for elementary school grades.¹⁶ Or perhaps the Bar or Bat Mitzvah date is *Shabbat Ha-Gadol* (the week before Passover), or Passover is the child's favorite holiday. In many cases, the Torah portion itself will raise issues related to slavery.

The Torah portions of the Exodus story are the most obvious - but by no means the only - points of connection with modern-day slavery. In fact, most Torah portions mention slavery explicitly and/or provide an opportunity for delving into various aspects of this topic, such as loving the stranger, pursuing justice, or providing Shabbat rest to all. *Please consult Index A, immediately following this Article, which lists verses by Torah portion, and Index B, also following, which organizes verses by theme.* The list of Torah verses by portion also includes some thematically relevant material from the Haftarot, and the thematic lists include a few rabbinic sources.

Depending on the Torah portion and the student, you could take one session *or* many to explore the aspects of slavery and liberation that appear in a young person's Torah portion (and possibly in the portion of the week that

¹⁶ *Next Year, Free!: A Modern Slavery Curriculum* is available at www.FreeTheSlaves.net/Judaism



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matches your meeting time). The listing in the index gives you a starting point. You can then discuss the verses, study commentaries on them, pose questions about them, and/or compare them with other, thematically-related verses from the topical list.

The Mitzvah in the News

Along with Torah perspectives, it's important to establish an understanding of contemporary needs and issues. FreetheSlaves.net has many resources, including one-page fact sheet that can be found at [Slavery and Trafficking Fact Sheet](#).¹⁷

You can also screen dozens of videos about contemporary slavery from that website. Or share the TED Talk [Be One Person: Vivienne Harr at TEDx](#)¹⁸ and/or a [video about a former child slave now freeing child slaves](#)¹⁹ described below, in the final section, below, "Young People Inspiring Young People."

Slavery is regularly in the news, although it is not always called by that name. In the last couple of years, you have probably read newspaper stories about workers who were unpaid and unable to leave from nail salons, farms, massage parlors, restaurants, quarries, fishing boats, construction sites, factories, hotels, prostitution rings, and private homes.

The Focus of the Mitzvah Project

Explore with students: What do *you* want to do to help? What, exactly, has grabbed your attention about this cause? What inspires you? What makes you mad? What do you want most and first to fix? What talents or skills would you enjoy using to help in this cause?

It's wonderful when students come up with their own ideas independently. However, many students will need to hear a few examples first in order to spark their own creative thinking. Here are some project ideas to share:

¹⁷ <https://freetheslaves.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Trafficking-ans-Slavery-Fact-Sheet-April-2018.pdf>

¹⁸ [youtube.com/watch?v=LBZc3t4BIhY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBZc3t4BIhY)

¹⁹ [youtube.com/watch?v=17zimKnqCtE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17zimKnqCtE)



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- Get money to rescuers on the ground, so they can free people and keep them free. [*Free the Slaves*](#)²⁰ works with local partners in the countries most affected by slavery and has an excellent track record of using resources effectively, to help people become – and stay – free.
- Support an individual "mitzvah hero" working to free people. Look into Evan Robbins, featured in chapter 5, who founded [*Breaking the Chain Through Education*](#).²¹ Through grit, a few grants, and amazing dedication, he has enlisted hundreds of High School students and adults to help him free child slaves in Ghana, build a school for them, and ensure their long-term wellbeing. Raise money to travel to Ghana and help Evan on his next mission trip. Visit [btcte.org](#) and contact him to learn more. Or research leaders in other countries, including those who have won international awards for their work to end slavery.
- Approach your synagogue board or school board and advocate for buying Fair Trade foods, so that a Shabbat *oneg* or school lunch doesn't nourish us while it harms someone else. Do the research to see how much more Fair Trade would cost and raise money to make up the difference. Visit [www.fairtradejudaica.com](#) and [knowthechain.org](#) to get the information you need.
- Talk to your teacher or principal about enhancing your model seder this year. Create a presentation about slavery today as it relates to Passover. Distribute information and a few seder readings and activities about contemporary slavery that students can take home and use at their family seders. For a compilation of ideas, visit [www.freetheslaves.net/Judaism](#) and scroll down to Seder Starters.
- Help fund microloans or support fair lending in other ways, so that people will have a reasonable way to borrow, and won't end up as indentured servants. Visit [www.kiva.org](#)²² to get started.
- Volunteer with an organization that is working on the problem of modern slavery. *E.g.*, [Jewish Women International](#)²³ the [New Jersey Coalition Against Human Trafficking](#),²⁴ or T'ruah ([www.truah.org](#)). Or contact your

²⁰ <https://www.freetheslaves.net>

²¹ <http://www.btcte.org>

²² <http://www.kiva.org>

²³ <http://www.jwi.org>

²⁴ <http://www.njhumantrafficking.org>



local JCRC (Jewish Community Relations Council) at your Jewish Federation or UJA office.

Even if a student favors an option that a rabbi or other teacher presents, ask the prospective bar/bat mitzvah to come up with at least two more alternatives before choosing the focus of their project.

The Mitzvah in the Mitzvah: What Is the Essence of the Mitzvah for You?

Discuss in detail with the student and their parents: What is this mitzvah project about *for you*?

- Is it about education? Be specific: Learning about modern-day slavery? Learning what Judaism teaches about slavery? Helping kids now enslaved to go to school? Educating an American public that doesn't know much about slavery today?
- Is it about imitating God, or walking in God's ways? (After all, God freed us, and God loves the stranger.)
- Is it about developing and expressing compassion for people who are vulnerable?
- Is it about sharing and expressing gratitude for the freedom that we enjoy?
- Is it about redeeming captives or freeing kidnapping victims?
- Is it about making the world a more just place?
- Are you fighting oppression?
- Are you learning from history ("remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt")?
- Are you refusing to be a silent partner with slave-holders? ("do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor")
- Are you loving the stranger? Are you affirming the equal and infinite value of every person?



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- Do you associate this mitzvah more with Shabbat (give everyone rest) or more with Passover (redeem people out of the house of bondage)?

These are just some of the mitzvot involved in freeing slaves and helping people stay free. *See Index B, below, for a thematic listing of Torah verses that will help in identifying other relevant mitzvot.*

The discussion of mitzvot should open up – not end – once the mitzvah project is chosen. Work with students to study different themes, texts, and mitzvot that support the project they have chosen. Acknowledge the validity of many motivations, and then ask students: “Which of these speaks to your heart the most? Where does the mitzvah lie *for you*?” Focus subsequent text study and discussion on that touch point.

Every time you check in with students about their mitzvah projects, I recommend that you spend some time in each of three areas:

- a. ask for an update about tasks, organization, benchmarks, and deadlines. This promotes responsibility, and helps students stay on track. Don’t step in to fix what goes wrong, but assist them if they need help to develop a new plan.
- b. ask how they are educating and involving other/more people with their project. This promotes leadership and encourages them to connect with peers in doing good. Again, coach only as needed.
- c. introduce and discuss some new text about their “touch point.” This promotes Torah learning and a deeper spiritual connection to their mitzvah project. The rabbi or other educator takes the lead - and hopefully the most time - with this third task.

Fueling the Mitzvah Project with Passion

When selecting a project, don't neglect passions or interests that may seem unrelated to modern slavery. Here are some examples to inspire students:

- Love to bake? Run a bake sale to raise microloan money.
- Enjoy writing? Write an article for your school paper or synagogue newsletter to raise awareness about modern-day slavery.
- Dance till you drop? Run a dance-a-thon or sock-hop to benefit Free the Slaves.



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- Artist? A fact sheet about slavery illustrated with your original drawings could be a great, eye-catching tool for education, advocacy, and fundraising.
- Facebook fanatic? Use social media to publicize the plight of modern slaves and share what you are going to do about it.

The following websites offer mitzvah project inspiration, and most of them are searchable by hobby as well as cause.

- [Areyvut](#)²⁵
- [Mitzvah Market](#)²⁶
- [The Mitzvah Bowl](#)²⁷
- <https://www.goodpeoplefund.org> offers annual reports that are full of inspiration for mitzvah projects, as the fund (formerly known as *Ziv Tzedakah*) specializes in small-scale organizations that make a big difference. Click on Bar/Bat Mitzvah Projects under "Learn About Tzedakah."

The Mitzvah in the Preparation, The Mitzvah in the Party

Another inquiry: How might you integrate this mitzvah into your Bar or Bat Mitzvah preparation and celebration? Here are a few ideas to get the brainstorming started:

- Track the supply chain of your Bar Mitzvah suit or Bat Mitzvah dress.
- Make your centerpieces out of Fair Trade foods and then donate them to a local food pantry.
- Serve Fair Trade foods at your *oneg* and party.
- Put colorful padlocks and information sheets on slavery on every table.
- Select "freedom" as the party theme.
- Place an extra chair and table setting at each table with the name card of a real slave²⁸ to bring attention to the "invisible" problem of slavery.

²⁵ <https://www.areyvut.org/programs/mitzvah-projects/>

²⁶ <http://www.mitzvahmarket.com>

²⁷ <https://www.themitzvahbowl.com>

²⁸ General information can be found at FreetheSlaves.net and polarisproject.org. Names and biographies of former slaves now working to free others can be found at.



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Ask the student (or family) to generate more ideas and then select at least one.

Through Whom Is the Mitzvah Realized?

Optional: Once you have selected both a project plan and a mitzvah focus, discuss the qualities a person should ideally have to do this mitzvah with excellence.

Ask the student: What personal qualities (*middot*) would you like to develop? Would it be beneficial – to you and to the people you are trying to help – to grow in compassion, generosity, discipline, courage, or some other quality? Would you be more effective in this mitzvah project if you developed your organizational skills, public speaking skills or fundraising skills? Assist the student in whatever areas he or she identifies as a "growing edge."

I rarely pursue such questions explicitly, because I find that, in most cases, growth happens organically, driven by the student's passions, the project plan, and the mitzvah focus. It is good for adults to keep these questions in mind, however, for our own growth and to assist the Bar/Bat Mitzvah students.

Young People Inspire Young People

Part of the message of any mitzvah project is that everyone can – and must – make a difference. The following four young heroes have set important and inspirational examples in their efforts to eradicate slavery. Consider sharing their stories - or the story of other young mitzvah heroes - with students:

James Kofi Annan²⁹ was sold into slavery at age six. He worked in Ghana's fishing villages, usually 17 hours a day. Food and shelter were scant. Abuse was constant. Seven years later, James escaped and returned to his village. At 14, James still couldn't read or write. He believed that if he could only learn English, his life would improve. He befriended kindergartners and borrowed their school books to learn to read. He worked to feed himself and pay for school. On standardized exams his scores broke records in Ghana that have yet to be topped. James persevered and graduated college. His academic excellence landed him a well-paying job at Barclays Bank.

<https://www.freetheslaves.net/page.aspx?pid=668>. Names are also included in books like *A Crime So Monstrous*, *Disposable People*, and *The Slave Next Door*.

²⁹ Text adapted from FreetheSlaves.net



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In 2003, James founded [Challenging Heights](http://www.challengingheights.org)³⁰ to empower children through education. Every day, vulnerable children turn to *Challenging Heights* for homework help, sports, and the arts. James has created innovative peer programs, with children and adults in villages educating their neighbors about how to keep local children in school and away from traffickers. James used to fund *Challenging Heights* with more than half of his bank salary. Eventually, he quit his lucrative job to dedicate himself to *Challenging Heights* full-time.

James opened a new school where dozens of former child slaves study with children vulnerable to trafficking. The former slaves begin to heal in this safe setting. The other children learn their stories and guard vigilantly against trafficking. James was honored with the Frederick Douglass Award, given by Free the Slaves. He also won the World's Children's Prize. See a YouTube video by searching for James Kofi Annan - World's Children Prize 2013 or [clicking here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7zimKnqCtE).³¹

Sina Vann^[6] was betrayed by a family friend and sold into slavery at age 13. A native of Vietnam, she woke up covered in blood in a strange room in Cambodia. She had been drugged and was trapped in a brothel. Sina was raped by 20 to 30 men nearly every day. If she didn't smile and pretend she was happy, she was beaten. If she hesitated to please a customer, she was tortured. Sina was rescued during a raid organized by anti-slavery activist Somaly Mam.

Sina is emerging as one of Cambodia's leading activists combating sex slavery. She has a third-grade education, so she is also studying to complete her schooling. She speaks out on behalf of sex slaves who can't speak for themselves. Sina has dedicated her life to helping others. She now walks back into her own worst nightmare. She helps sex slaves escape and provides condoms and health advice for those not yet able to break free. On the street, she is fearless and confident, defying the memories that still haunt her. She knows first-hand how difficult it can be to overcome the trauma of sex slavery, so her discussions with other survivors are especially effective. Sina hopes that someday she will meet the people who enslaved her. She has a message she wants to deliver. "I want to say thanks to them for helping me to be who I am now."³²

³⁰ <http://www.challengingheights.org>

³¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7zimKnqCtE>

³² Text excerpted from FreetheSlaves.net. Sina was honored with the Frederick Douglass Freedom Award.



Vivienne Harr is an inspiring and inspired girl! By age 9, she had given a TED talk and established a beverage company. But she wasn't interested in business, so much as "giveness" – a term she coined. After seeing a picture of two slave boys carrying heavy rocks, she started a lemonade stand – to take a *stand* against slavery. She worked that stand, with her brother, for an entire year. Eventually, her persistence garnered a lot of publicity and support. Her goal was to free 500 slaves. She met and exceeded that goal. She was able to bottle lemonade and sell it commercially – in order to free slaves. Vivienne wrote a book about her experience called *When Life Gives You Lemons, Change The World*. It's a small book for young kids with a lot of big ideas and inspiration for older kids and adults. Her TED Talk is called "Be One Person" and you can find it on YouTube ([Be one person: Vivienne Harr at TEDxFiDiWomen - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBZc3t4BIhY)).³³

Jessica Baer began working to free slaves at age 10, after seeing a video on modern-day slavery at Jewish summer camp. She not only ending up with a Bat Mitzvah project – she changed her life, expanded her horizons, traveled to Ghana, raised thousands of dollars, involved her entire family, and freed 50 slaves – so far. [Click here to read an article about Jessica from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency](http://www.jta.org/2014/03/06/life-religion/teenheroes/jessica-baer-is-helping-eradicate-slave-trafficking-in-ghana).³⁴

Every Person Can Make a Difference!

I hope that this essay has provided both tools and inspiration for helping young people to direct their minds, hearts, and actions toward mitzvot - and thereby to change themselves and the world for the better.

*"Hineni muchana umezumenet lekayem mitzvot*Behold, I am prepared and ready to uphold the mitzvah of" With the help of rabbis, parents, and other educators, b'nai mitzvah students will be able to fill in that blank very meaningfully for themselves.

Indexes arranged by Torah portion and by topic follow.

May we merit many mitzvot!

³³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBZc3t4BIhY>

³⁴ <http://www.jta.org/2014/03/06/life-religion/teenheroes/jessica-baer-is-helping-eradicate-slave-trafficking-in-ghana>



Index A: List of Slavery-Related Verses by Torah Portion

B'reisheet – Genesis 1:27, 2:1-4, 5:1-2

Lech L'cha – Genesis 15:12-14

Va-Yetzei – Genesis 29:15-30, 30:25-32:3. Genesis 31:15 can be connected to Exodus 23:9, Leviticus 19:34, Deuteronomy 10:19, et al. ^[1] (The Haftarah also reinforces the value of fair wages without deception as a human right. See Hosea 12:7-10.) ³⁵

Va-Yishlah – Genesis 34:27-29. Also read subsequent biblical judgments of Simon and Levi's acts against the person and people of Shekhem: Deuteronomy 21:11f, 22:28-29, 49:5-7.

Va-Yeishhev – Genesis 37:27-28, 36; 39:1-23, 40:14-15, 23.

Sh'mot – throughout and especially Exodus 1:2-15; 3:7-22, 19-23, 31; 5:1-6:1.

Va-Eira – throughout Exodus 6:2 – 9:35.

Bo – throughout Exodus 10:1-13:16.

Be-Shallah – throughout and especially Exodus 13:17-18; 14:4 -15:21; 16:4-30; 17:3-7.

Yitro –18:8-12; 20:2, 8-11, 14. The Haftarah for *Yitro* can also be an inspiration for one person to make a difference. Isaiah's initial fear and subsequent willingness to lead can be compared to that of Moses – and of all of us, including the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student. See Isaiah 6:8.

Mishpatim – Exodus 21:1-11, 16, 20-21, 23-32 (cf. the Code of Hammurabi, where the social status of both perpetrator and victim determines the consequences imposed for an assault); 22:20, 25-26; 23:6,9-15. The haftarah from Jeremiah continues the theme of freeing indentured servants after a maximum of six years. See Jeremiah 34:13-18.

Ki Tissa – Exodus 31:12-18, 34:18, 21. The connection between Shabbat rest and freedom can be better understood by considering the fourth of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. In addition, inherent in the

³⁵ This verse connects "stranger" (nokhri, ger, etc.) with "slave" (eved, amah, etc.) as do, unmistakably, all the verses that remind us "for you were a stranger(s) (ger, gerim) in the land of Egypt." Ger can also be interpreted in other ways – including, sometimes, as a convert to Judaism. For the purposes of exploring this mitzvah, I generally interpret "stranger" to mean "slave."



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state of enslavement is that a slave cannot set his or her own schedule; consider Moses' commandment to the Jewish people on the eve of the Exodus: Exodus 12:12.

K'doshim – Leviticus 19:3, 13, 30, 33-37. The two alternate Haftarot for *Aharei Mot / K'doshim* emphasize the value of social justice and of Shabbat observance and the penalties for ill-gotten gains (Ezekiel 22:6-19), as well as the infinite value of all people, regardless of race or background (Amos 9:7). The Haftarah for *K'doshim* refers to God's caring as expressed through liberation from Egypt (Ezekiel 20:6, 10) and through the gift of Shabbat (Ezekiel 20:12, 20).

Emor – Leviticus 23:3-8, 23:37-38, 24:22. The Haftarah mentions Shabbat and justice; see Ezekiel 44:24.

Be-Har – Leviticus 25:1-55, 26:2. The Haftarah for *B'har* includes Jeremiah 32:21: "You freed your people Israel from the land of Egypt with signs and marvels, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with great awesomeness."

Be-Hukotai – Leviticus 26:34-35, 45.

Naso – Numbers 7 (on the equal value of all).

Be-Ha'alotekha – Numbers 9:1-14; 11:1-20

Sh'lakh – Numbers 14: 1-4, 15:14-16, 26, 29-30, 32-36, 41.

Korah – Numbers 16:13-14. The Haftarah mentions how God lifted our ancestors out of Egypt and brought them to the Land of Israel; see I Samuel 12:8.

Hukkat – Numbers 20:14-17, 21:5.

Balak – Numbers 22:5, 11; 24:8. The Israelites' liberation and size makes them frightening to those who wish to control them. A free and growing population is also their blessing and their identity through God and Torah. The Haftarah for *Balak* and for a *Hukat/Balak* double portion includes a mention of Egyptian liberation as a sign of God's love and care; see Micah 6:3-4.

Pinhas – Numbers 27:1-7, 28:16-25.

Mattot – Numbers 31:3-30. This episode, highly disturbing to modern sensibilities, sets limits on who may be captured and how they and their property must be treated.



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Mas'ei – Numbers 33:3-49. Recalling the journey of escape – whether across the Red Sea or through the Underground Railroad – is part of our history and worth repeating, lest we forget. The haftarah for both Ashkenazim and S'fardim includes a rebuke to Israel for taking liberation for granted and not being grateful for the miracles that God wrought to free us; see Jeremiah 2:5-6. Enslavement is also mentioned as a terrible form of degradation; see Jeremiah 2:14.

D'varim – Deuteronomy 1:30-32. The haftarah upholds the cause of people who are vulnerable to mistreatment; see Isaiah 1:17.

Va-Ethanan – Deuteronomy 4:9, 32-34; 5:6, 12-15, 18; 6:12, 20-25; 7:7-8. In the *haftarah*, Isaiah 40:23-24 can be read as a reference to God's dominion over Pharaoh. No person ultimately rules over another; only God rules.

Ekev – Deuteronomy 10:12-19; 11:2-7. In the haftarah, God promises to redeem contemporary captives from current tyrants, just as God redeemed the Hebrew slaves from Egypt. See Isaiah 49:24-25. The Jews are also called "pursuers of justice" in 51:1.

R'eh – Deuteronomy 14:29, 15:1-18; 16:1-8, 16-17. The haftarah promises in Isaiah 54:14: "You shall be saved from oppression; you shall have no fear."

Shoftim – Deuteronomy 16:18-20; 17:14-18; 20:10-19.³⁶ The haftarah speaks against dread of the oppressor, and of God's power to liberate us. See Isaiah 51:13-14, 52:3ff.

Ki Teitzei – Deuteronomy 21:10-14, 23:16-17, 20-21; 24:6-7, 10-15, 17-22.

Ki Tavo – Deuteronomy 26:3-10, 12-13; 27:19; 28:43-44, 47-48; 29:1-3. The Haftarah provides a beautiful picture of a hopeful future, which contrasts with a history of oppression, degradation, and enslavement; see Isaiah 60:18-22.

Nitzavim – Deuteronomy 29:9, 30:3-4. The haftarah refers to the Exodus; see Isaiah 63:7-9.

³⁶ Many will find the verses in chapter 20 troubling. It's worthwhile to explore a variety of interpretations and alternative viewpoints offered within – and beyond – the Torah. In light of verse 18, when do we need to eradicate an external force for evil, and when do we need to – instead? – take responsibility for our own temptation? In light of verse 5, might we consider ourselves to be building a "house of freedom" or "house of peace," and therefore to be exempt from participating in conquest? Many say that this entire section applied only to the generation of the initial conquest and not to subsequent periods.



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Va-Yelekh – Deuteronomy 31:10-13.

Ha'azinu – Deuteronomy 32:7, 10-12. David's story and thanksgiving in the haftarah parallel the story of the Exodus and the Song of the Sea; see II Samuel 22:7, 38, 40, 47ff.

Ve-Zot Ha-B'rakhah – Deuteronomy 34:11-12. The Torah ends by recalling the miracles of the Exodus from slavery in Egypt.

Index B: Topical Listing (in alphabetical order) of Torah Verses

Debt Bondage/Indentured Servitude & Fair Lending

- Exodus 21:2-11 – Biblical limitations and discouragements to debt bondage.
- Exodus 22:24-26 – The ideal is to charge no interest to fellow Jews. Do not take a garment in pledge overnight, even if you are owed – i.e., don't extract collateral you could be entitled to, if it makes the debtor's life miserable.
- Leviticus 25 – This chapter sets limitations on debt bondage and prohibits Israelites from enslaving one another for any other reason. (Holding non-Jewish slaves was allowed in biblical times, but this, too, had its restrictions. See Leviticus 27:28.)
- Deuteronomy 15:1-3, 12-15. – Not only is the slave freed in the sixth year, but additional rights (including a severance payment) are extended. Compare to Exodus 21.
- Deuteronomy 23:20-21 – Do not take interest from a fellow Jew.
- Deuteronomy 24:6, 12 – Do not demand collateral that harms that borrower.
- Deuteronomy 24:11 – Protect the dignity of the borrower
- Deuteronomy 28:43-44 – Sinking into debt is a curse.



Do Not Oppress or Allow Oppression

- Exodus 1:15 -21 – The midwives defy authority when Pharaoh enacts genocide against the Hebrews.
- Exodus 22:20-23 – You shall not wrong a stranger, nor oppress him; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. Do not afflict the widow or the orphan. I will surely hear the vulnerable and oppressed people who cry out to me.
- Exodus 23:9 – “Do not oppress the stranger, for you know the soul of a stranger....”
- Leviticus 19:20-22, 29 – A woman who is a slave cannot be treated as if she were the sexual property of her master, nor may a daughter be sexually trafficked.
- Leviticus 19:33-35 – “When a stranger lives among you, do not wrong him. The stranger who lives among you shall be as the home-born among you...You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, nor in weights or measurements.”
- Leviticus 25:15, 25, 35-41 (and throughout the chapter) – Do not oppress a fellow Israelite, nor take advantage of difficult straights in which he may find himself.
- Numbers 11:10-20 – Even Moses becomes angry and overwhelmed when overworked and abused. God shows compassion and offers relief.
- Deuteronomy 26:13- A declaration about tithing: “I have given to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, just as You commanded me.”
- Deuteronomy 23:15 – “You shall not deliver a run-away slave to his master, who has come to you to be saved. He shall dwell in the midst of you, in the place he shall choose within one of your gates, where it is good for him. You shall not wrong him.”
- Deuteronomy 27:19 – “‘Cursed be he who subverts the right of the stranger, the orphan, and the widow.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’”



Despair and Dehumanization Are Tools of Oppression

- Exodus 1:11, 14, 22 – Pharaoh introduces cruel strategies, designed to induce despair.
- On Exodus 1:19 – Pharaoh can be fooled into thinking that Israelite women give birth to litters of children, because he had already dehumanized the Hebrews.
- Exodus 5:5-19 – Slaves seeking relief are punished with yet more cruelty.

Develop Compassion for the Vulnerable

- Exodus 23:9 - “Do not oppress the stranger – and *you know the soul of a stranger*, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”
- Leviticus 19:34 – “The stranger who lives among you shall be to you as the home-born among you, and *you shall love him as yourself*, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am Adonai your God.”
- Leviticus 25:25, 35, 39, 47 – If an Israelite is in “financial straits,” offer support. Do not exploit vulnerability.
- Deuteronomy 10:16 – Cut away the thickening [literally, foreskin] around your hearts . . .”
- Deuteronomy 10:18-19 – God loves strangers, widows, and orphans, and so should we.
- Deuteronomy 14:29 – Provide enough food for Levites, strangers, orphans, and widows to eat their fill.
- Deuteronomy 15:9-10 – “Beware lest you harbor the base thought, ‘the seventh year, the year of remission is approaching,’ so that you look on your needy kinsman negatively and don’t give him anything. He will cry out to God against you, and you will incur guilt. [Lend] to him readily and don’t let it seem bad to you when you do so.”
- Deuteronomy 22:1-4, 6-8, 10, 13-19, 25-29 – Various laws protect people who are vulnerable for a variety of reasons.
- Deuteronomy 24:6, 11-12 – Put yourself in the shoes of a desperately poor person.



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Equality

- Genesis 1:27, 2:1-4, 5:1-2 – The story of creation repeatedly emphasizes the equality of all human beings.
- *Mishnah Sanhedrin* 4:5 – My ancestors are not better than yours; every human being is uniquely “coined” in the image of God.
- Exodus 12:49 – There shall be one law for you and for the stranger.
- Exodus – 21:20-32 – An indentured servant is not mere chattel. He has rights, and his master has restrictions. (Contrast this with the Code of Hammurabi, in which a master has unlimited control and is not required to offer compensation, should a slave be hurt.)
- Leviticus 19:20-22 – A woman who is a servant is not the sexual property of her master.
- Leviticus 19:34 – “The stranger who lives among you shall be to you as the home-born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am Adonai your God.”
- Numbers 7 – All the gifts brought by the tribes are the same, but they are mentioned individually, to reinforce the message that each tribe and each individual is equally precious to God, regardless of status or material possessions.
- Numbers 9:14 – “When a stranger who resides with you offers a Passover sacrifice to God, he must do it in accordance with the rules and rites of the Passover sacrifice. There shall be one law for you – for the stranger and for the citizen of the country.”
- Numbers 15:15-16 (see also 15:26, 29) – “There shall be one law for you and for the resident stranger: it shall be a law for all time and throughout the generations. You and the stranger shall be alike before Adonai. The same ritual and the same rule shall apply to you and to the stranger who lives among you.”

God Cares About and Wants to Free Slaves

- Exodus 3:7-10– God hears and sees the plight of the Israelite slaves.
- Exodus 3:16-17 – God intervenes with miracles to release and redeem them.



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- Exodus 18:8-12 – Witnessing liberation promotes faith in God.
- Exodus 20:2 & Deuteronomy 5:6 – God’s identity is Liberator. The first of the Ten Commandments set this as a priority and key message.
- Exodus 22:20-23 – You shall not wrong a stranger, nor oppress him; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt . . . *I will surely hear oppressed and vulnerable people who cry out to me.*
- Leviticus 19:34 – “The stranger who lives among you shall be to you as the home-born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am Adonai your God.”
- Leviticus 19:37 – “I am Adonai your God who took you out of the Land of Egypt.”
- Leviticus 25:55 – “For it is to Me that the Israelites are servants [not to one another or any earthly master]. They are My servants whom I freed from the land of Egypt, I am Adonai your God.”
- Leviticus 26:45 – Even when punishing Israel’s disobedience, God still remembers “the covenant with the ancients, whom I freed from the land of Egypt in the sight of all the nations to be their God.”
- Numbers 15:15: “You and the stranger shall be alike before Adonai.”
- Numbers 15:41 – (third paragraph of the *Shema*) “I am Adonai your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am Adonai your God.”
- Deuteronomy 1:30-32 – God showed love and care, carrying us up out of Egypt and through the wilderness, yet we have been insensible to those gifts.
- Deuteronomy 7:7-8 – The redemption of the Israelites from slavery was an expression of love for the Jewish people in particular, although God also shows love for slaves generally. (To maintain humility, compare with Deuteronomy 9:6.)
- Deuteronomy 10:17-18 – “The Lord of lords, the Almighty, great, supreme, and awesome God . . . upholds the cause of the fatherless and the widow and loves the stranger.”
- Deuteronomy 29:9, 13 – The stranger is included in the covenant.



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- Various Torah laws uplift, protect, and free enslaved people –e.g.,
 - Exodus 12:49 – One law for you and for the stranger.
 - Exodus 21:2-11 – Indentured servants to be released after a maximum of six years.
 - Exodus 21:16, Deuteronomy 24:7 – Kidnapping and enslaving people is a capital offense.
 - Deuteronomy 23:15 – You shall not deliver a run-away slave to his master.

The Insecurity of Freedom

- Exodus 13:17-18, 14:11-12 – Israelites are afraid of and insecure in their freedom.
- Exodus 16:3f, 17:3-7 – Hunger, thirst, and the lack of basic resources make people vulnerable to re-enslavement.
- Numbers 11:4-10 – Sometimes, people are tempted back into slavery, if that is the only way they believe they can care for themselves and their families. Offering real options and then helping to make people aware of those options are two strategies used by God, Moses, and modern-day liberators. (The Israelites had manna, but until they understood its value and how to use it, it wasn't a blessing to them.)
- Numbers 14:1-4 – People who have no hope may return to slavery as a means of subsistence.
- Numbers 16:13-14, Numbers 20:2-5, Numbers 21:5 – More despair by former slaves:

Justice

- Exodus 12:49 – One law for you and for the stranger.
- Exodus 22:20 – “You shall not wrong a stranger, nor oppress him...”
- Leviticus 19:23-25 – “When a stranger lives you, do not wrong him. The stranger with lives among you shall be as the home-born among you . . . You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, nor in weights or measurements.”
- Deuteronomy 15:13 – “When you set him free, do not let him go empty-handed.”



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- Deuteronomy 16:18 – “Justice, justice you shall pursue....”
- Deuteronomy 17:14-17 – Place restrictions on the Israelite King to prevent unfair distribution of wealth and wild excess.
- Deuteronomy 23:16 – “You shall not deliver a run-away slave to his master, who has come to you to be saved. He shall dwell in the midst of you, in the place he shall choose within one of your gates, where it is good for him. You shall not wrong him.”
- Deuteronomy 24:22 – “Do not pervert the justice due to the stranger, orphan, and ... widow. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and that Adonai your God redeemed you from there. Therefore, I command you to do this.”
- Deuteronomy 24:6 – “A handmill or upper millstone [to make basic food] shall not be taken in pawn, for that would be taking someone’s life in pawn.”
- Deuteronomy 24:7 – Kidnapping and enslaving people is an “evil that must be swept out from your midst.”
- Deuteronomy 24:17-18 – “You shall not subvert the rights of the stranger or the orphan. You shall not take the widow’s garment in pawn. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and that Adonai your God redeemed you from there. Therefore, I command you to do this thing. ”

Love the Stranger

- Genesis 31:14 – Leah and Rachel identify with strangers who are vulnerable and taken advantage of economically.
- Exodus 22:20 – “You shall not wrong a stranger, nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”
- Exodus 23:9 – “Do not oppress the stranger, for you know the soul of a stranger...” Let your own experience of slavery make you compassionate. Be better, not bitter, because of what you went through.
- Leviticus 19:34 – “The stranger who lives among you shall be to you as the home-born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am Adonai your God.”
- Deuteronomy 14:29 – Provide enough food for Levites, strangers, orphans, and widows to eat their fill.



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- Deuteronomy 24:22 – “Do not pervert the justice due to the stranger, orphan, and ... widow. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and that Adonai your God redeemed you from there. Therefore, I command you to do this.”

Love Others As You Do Yourself

- Leviticus 19:18 – “You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am Adonai.”
- Leviticus 19:34 – “The stranger who lives among you shall be to you as the home-born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am Adonai your God.”
- Leviticus 25:25, 35, 39, 47 – Think of the “other” as your “brother.” If *your brother* continues in financial straits, offer support. Do not exploit vulnerability.

Moral Courage (and Outrage) in the Face of Slavery

- Exodus 1:15 -21- Civil disobedience of the midwives.
- Exodus 2:2-10; *Sotah* 12a; *Shmot Rabbah* 1:25 – courageous and decisive action by Miriam, Yocheved, Pharaoh’s daughter, Pharaoh’s daughter’s servant.
- Exodus 2:11-12 – Moses intervenes with fatal results.
- Exodus 3:11 – Moses is afraid to intervene.
- Numbers 33:3 – For our ancestors in Egypt and until today, anywhere there are slaves, it takes tremendous moral courage for a slave to walk away from a master.
- Deuteronomy 23:16-17 – Do not return a run-away slave. Have the courage to align with a powerless slave and risk offending a powerful slaveholder.

Passover Story & Observance

- Exodus 1:1-15:21 – Exodus narrative.
- Exodus 23:15 – Eat no unleavened bread, for you came out of Egypt; do not appear empty-handed at the Temple on the pilgrimage festival day.



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- Numbers 9:1-13 – Those who cannot celebrate freedom today will get a “make-up” celebration. All who respect the ritual and read themselves into the story must be included.
- Numbers 9:14 – “When a stranger who resides offers a Passover sacrifice to God, he must do it in accordance with the rules and rites of the Passover sacrifice. There shall be one law for you – for the stranger and for the citizen of the country.”
- Numbers 20:14-17 – The Passover narrative is explained to other nations.
- Numbers 28:16 -25 – Passover rites.
- Deuteronomy 6:20-25 – Tell the story to your children. (These verses are quoted in the “four sons” section of the Haggadah.)
- Deuteronomy 10:2-7 –Remember the victory wrought by God against Egypt and speak to the next generation about the miracles you have witnessed with your own eyes.
- Deuteronomy 16:1-8, 16-17– Instructions are repeated with extra details and motivations “for you departed from the land of Egypt hurriedly,” “so that you may remember the day of your departure from the Land of Egypt all the days of your life.” (The latter phrase is a subject of discussion in the Haggadah.)
- Deuteronomy 26:3-10 – The ritual recitation for bringing first fruits on Shavuot summarizes all of Jewish history in five verses, with the narrative of the Exodus at its center. This text is quoted in the Passover *Haggadah*.

Prisoners of War

- Genesis 34:27-29 – The women of Shechem are taken captive in a manner that is condemned within and beyond chapter 34. See also Deuteronomy 21:11f, 22:28-29; Gen. 49:5-7.
- Numbers 31:3-30 – This episode, highly disturbing to modern sensibilities, sets parameters on who may be captured and how they and their property must be treated.
- Deuteronomy 20:10-19 –This is a troubling, yet rich passage that can help us engage our complex history with regard to slavery, as well as conquest.
- Deuteronomy 21:10-14 – Women captured in war are not “free for the taking”/raping. Their humanity must be acknowledged by allowing them to



mourn their dead. If married by a captor and then divorced, the former wife must be freed.

Redeeming Captives

- Rabbinic sources infer that *pidyon shevuyim* (redeeming captives) is a vital *mitzvah* from several verses, including:
 - Leviticus 19:16 – “Do not stand idly by the blood of your brother.”
 - Leviticus 19:18 – “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
 - Deuteronomy 15:7 – “You shall not harden your heart.”
 - And even . . . Exodus 20:12, 5:16 – “You shall not murder.”
- Deuteronomy 30:3-4 – God will gather up the exiles, “even if your outcasts are at the ends of the world.”
- See *Bava Batra* 8b on the horror of captivity and the importance of this *mitzvah* and *Gittin* 45a on possible limits.
- Since Jews were often held for ransom in the middle ages, this was not a theoretical *mitzvah*. It takes on new relevance today with Boko Haram and other groups kidnapping even young children.

Responsibility to Assist Non-Jews

- Exodus 23:9 – Loyalty to and compassion for strangers – *i.e.*, non-Jews.
- All the readings about strangers and compassion, above, attest to a deep responsibility toward non-Jews, along with a primary responsibility toward Jews.
- Israelites were freed because of the efforts of non-Jews – and we have an obligation to free human beings to whom we are tied only by our common humanity
 - Pharaoh’s daughter – Exodus 2:5.
 - Midwives’ heritage is ambiguous – Exodus 1:15.
 - Pharaoh’s advisors ultimately argued for liberation – Exodus 10:7.
- *Gittin* 61a – We have an obligation to sustain the non-Jewish poor along with the Jewish poor and visit the non-Jewish sick along with the Jewish sick, and bury the non-Jewish dead along with the Jewish dead for the sake of peace.



- When we give, as Jews, to help free slaves, it is a “triple mitzvah”: it saves people, it uplifts God’s name and reputation in the world, and it tells people around the world – friends, enemies, and those who will never meet a Jew – what Jews stand for.

Remember That You Were Slaves and Were Liberated

- Exodus 13:3 – “Remember this day, when you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slaves, for by strength of hand Adonai brought you out from this; no leaven shall be eaten.”
- Exodus 22:20 – You shall not wrong a stranger, nor oppress him; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.
- Exodus 23:9 – “Do not oppress the stranger – and you know the soul of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”
- Exodus 34:18 – The Passover festival and matzah are eternal reminders.
- Leviticus 19:34 – “The stranger who lives among you shall be to you as the home-born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am Adonai your God.”
- Leviticus 23:4-8 – Details of how and when Passover shall be observed from year to year.
- Numbers 33:3-49. Recalling the journey of our escape is part of our history and worth repeating, lest we forget.
- Deuteronomy 10:19 – “Love the stranger for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”
- Deuteronomy 4:9, 32-24 – Liberation from Egypt was a stunning and paradigmatic event, meant to inspire all generations.
- Deuteronomy 6:12 – “Be careful, lest you forget Adonai your God, who took you out of the Land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves.”
- Deuteronomy 6:20-25 – This is the original source of the language of the “four sons” section of the Haggadah.



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- Deuteronomy 15:15 – “Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt and God redeemed you. Therefore, I enjoin this commandment [of manumission in the sixth year] upon you today.”
- Deuteronomy 17:16 – “[An Israelite King] shall not keep many horses, nor send people back to Egypt to add to his horses, for Adonai has warned you, ‘you must not go back that way again.’”
- Deuteronomy 24:22 – You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt. Therefore, I command you today to [leave crops for the stranger, widow, and orphan].
- Deuteronomy 28:48 – You risk becoming enslaved again, if you forget to be grateful for your freedom. Slavery is a horrible curse, in which you have to serve an enemy “in hunger and thirst, naked, and lacking everything.” How much better it is to serve God with joy and gratitude!
- Deuteronomy 29:1-3 – The gift of liberation is unfathomable.
- Deuteronomy 31:10-13 – A poetic summary of the Exodus prefaced by the words (in verse 7) “remember the days of old, consider the years of generations past. As your father, and he will say; your elders, and they will tell you.”

Shabbat Rest for All

- Exodus 16:23-30 – Advance collection of manna and Shabbat rest are contrasted with slavery.
- Exodus 12:2 – Freedom depends on setting your own schedule, following God’s timing and not Pharaoh’s.
- Exodus 20:8-12 – Ten Commandments. Shabbat rest is modeled on God’s rest after Creation. Servants rest on this holy day.
- Exodus 23:12 – Servants and strangers deserve Shabbat, to refresh their souls.
- Exodus 31:12-18 – Includes *Veshamru*. Shabbat rest is a sign between God and the children of Israel forever.
- Exodus 34:21 – Rest for all, in all economic seasons and conditions.
- Leviticus 19:3, 30 – Shabbat observance is emphasized.



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- Leviticus 23:2 – “Keep My Sabbaths and venerate My sanctuary. I am Adonai.”
- Leviticus 23:3 – Refrain from work on Shabbat throughout your settlements.
- Deuteronomy 5:12-15- Ten Commandments. Shabbat rest is based on the liberation of the Exodus. “Torah That your servant may rest, just like you.”

Sabbatical Liberation

- Exodus 23:10-11 – Rest, sabbatical, and care for the poor in the seventh year.
- Exodus 21:2-11 – The sets a maximum of six years of indentured servitude, regardless of debt.
- Rashi on Exodus 21:6 & *Kiddushin* 22b – The ear is pierced because the message of Sinai against slavery has not been heard (by the master, who violated the eighth commandment against stealing/kidnapping) and by the servant (who violated the first, which reminds us that God is the One who took us out of Egypt).
- Leviticus 25 – This chapter describes both Sabbatical and Jubilee manumission.
- Leviticus 26:34-35 – If the land and people are not allowed to rest, an enforced “rest” through desolation will be imposed.
- Deuteronomy 15:1-11 – Rest, preparation for the Sabbatical, and extra vigilance to care for the poor are needed throughout the seven-year cycle.
- Deuteronomy 31:10-13 – On Sukkot of the Sabbatical year, read the Torah before everyone – “the men, the women, the children, and your stranger who is within your gates” – so that all may learn and develop reverence for God’s ways.

Workers’ Rights/Women’s Rights/Fair and Prompt Wages

- Genesis 29:15-30, 30:25-32:3 – Jacob has a right to be paid for his labor.
- Leviticus 19:13 – “The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning.” Pay people when services are rendered.



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- Numbers 27:1-8– Women can inherit land and thus avoid destitution, dependency, and/or vulnerability to slavery. (Their independence is preserved but attenuated in Numbers 36:1-10.)
- Deuteronomy 24:14-15 – “Do not abuse a needy and destitute laborer, whether a fellow countryman or a stranger in one of the communities of your land. You must pay him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets, for he is needy and urgently depends on it. Let him not cry out to God, so that the sin lies with you.”
- “Did you conduct business and commerce fairly?” is the first of just a few questions that *Rava* suggests you will be asked in Heaven. See Shabbat 31a.



Curriculum and Programming - High School

Let the People Go: Modern-Day Slavery and Jewish Responses for Informal Education and Youth Groups

Amy Dorsch

The following set of sessions are intended for teens in an informal setting: summer camp, youth group, teach-ins and the like. While the tie-in to Passover is obvious, it is possible to make connections with other times of the year as well: Today in light of the news . . . ; today, because we are studying "love the stranger". . . ; today, because it is *Parashat Shoftim* . . . ; or today, in our *Tikkun Olam* class The themes are relevant and urgent every day.

Three Sessions at a Glance

Session 1: Yesterday We Were Slaves . . . Today, *They* Are

- Modern-Day Slavery: Facts and Definitions
- Jewish Responses to Slavery: Why Should We Care?

Session 2: The Faces of Modern-Day Slavery

- Who is a slave: Real people, real stories
- *Seder* Starters: Bringing these stories to life at the Pesah seder

Session 3: Taking it Home: Being a Consumer with a Conscience (Optional social action activity)

- Use facts, stories and Fair Trade information to help teens act on this issue, starting with Fair Trade as a first step.
- What can we do in our own homes and in Jewish communal spaces?



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Session One: Yesterday We Were Slaves; Today, They Are

Materials

- Headings of types of slavery on separate pieces of paper
- Jewish concepts with one text defining the concept
Human Rights
- Squares sheet and pens. [To modify for traditional Shabbat observance: One copy of Human Rights Squares per person]
- One copy of sheet labeled as "Activity
2: Human Rights"
- One copy of each of the Jewish
Responses texts
- Adhesive tape. [To modify for
traditional Shabbat observance:
Stickers to post Jewish responses on
walls.]
- Pens and post-it notes [To modify for traditional Shabbat
observance: Omit.]

Goals

Participants will learn facts about modern-day slavery.

Key questions:

- *What are some examples of modern-day slavery?*
- *What is happening worldwide that we should be aware of?*

Participants will study Jewish responses to slavery and understand the Jewish obligation to combat modern-day slavery, specifically through the Passover message of remembering that we were once slaves.

Key questions:

- *Why should we, as Jews, care about modern-day slavery?*
- *What does our tradition teach us?*

Objectives

Participants will be able to

- describe at least three examples of modern-day slavery



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- recognize the Jewish obligation to combat slavery rooted in our national narrative (Exodus/Passover story) and tradition (Jewish core concepts and values)
- Identify Jewish responses to slavery through key concepts such as *Avadim Hayinu* (Exodus narrative), Jewish responsibility, identifying with the suffering of others, and fair treatment of the worker

Session Outline or Program Procedure

Materials

- Copies of Human Rights Squares and a pen for each person. [To modify for traditional Shabbat observance: One copy of Human Rights Squares.] Human Rights squares are used courtesy of FreetheSlaves.net.

Set Induction / Opening Exercise / Setting the Stage

Have participants walk around and get answers and initials for each of the squares (or for 4-5 to save time).

[To modify for traditional Shabbat observance: Have everyone walk around the room. When you call out "freeze," they should stop in front of a partner. Ask them to share their responses to any of the statements/human rights squares (repeat exercise 4-5 times).]

Discuss the Theme – Questions to Pose

- What does it mean to have rights or to be free?
- What rights do you need to live a life where you have **choices** and have **control** over your own life?
- What freedoms and rights do you have that give you some control over your life (*examples: the right to vote, to a fair trial, to travel, to free speech, etc.*)
- What are the conditions that make it difficult for a person to assert these rights? Who or what is working against these rights? (*powerlessness, lack of education or awareness, inequality, poverty*)
- What does it look like when one is not free?

Transition Point/Explanation

The opposite of freedom is oppression. The opposite of freedom is slavery.



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Each year on *Pesach*, we recall our bondage in Egypt. We recount the Exodus stories to remind ourselves not to oppress the stranger, as we were once slaves in Egypt. Yet slavery still exists today, and many people are indifferent to it or unaware to it. Today, we will change that.

Activities/Games/Discussion

True or False: Estimates for the number of slaves in the world range from 20-42 million.

TRUE! There is a big range, because it's hard to measure illegal activities. And some people count forced marriage as slavery, whereas others do not. Approximately 25% of today's slaves are children.

True or False: Because it is illegal, slavery is practiced in secret.

FALSE: Although slavery is illegal, in many countries it is practiced quite openly.

True or False: Slavery exists in the U.S.

TRUE! The government tracks numbers. Slavery has been identified in U.S. farms, hotels, restaurants, massage parlors, nail salons, brothels, and homes, among other places.

Slavery Fact Sheet

Show electronically or print out the [Trafficking and Slavery Fact Sheet](https://www.freetheslaves.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Trafficking-ans-Slavery-Fact-Sheet-April-2018.pdf)³⁷ from Free the Slaves. Ask participants to share which statistic surprises or shocks them the most.

Statistics are facts and numbers, but what defines slavery? What determines these statistics in terms of what constitutes slavery?

Defining Slavery

Explain that some of these "true or false" facts may be shocking or may even sound familiar. What, though, do we consider to be slavery in modern terms? Do you picture ancient Egypt and Israelites building pyramids? Movies like *12 Years a Slave*? African Americans and white slave owners in 1850? Am I a slave because I have to follow my parents' rules and I have to go to school and am a slave to my teachers' homework assignments?

³⁷ <https://www.freetheslaves.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Trafficking-ans-Slavery-Fact-Sheet-April-2018.pdf>



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Ask for definitions and then provide this definition from
<https://www.freetheslaves.net/our-model-for-freedom/faqs-glossary/>.³⁸

"Slavery is the holding of people at a workplace through force, fraud or coercion for purposes of sexual exploitation or forced labor so that the slaveholder can extract profit. Person X makes money by exploiting and forcing person Y to do something against their will."

HANDOUT 1: EXAMPLES OF SLAVERY

Distribute pages with headings of types of slavery (see below) to different people.

Option 1: Ask participants to rise, and ask for volunteers to stand next to someone with a type of slavery they think they can define.

Option 2: Read examples of types of slavery labeled as "Activity 2: Types of Slavery," and ask participants to try to name the type of slavery this example provides.

When each person has attempted to provide a definition or to name a type of slavery, read the actual definition or type (adapted from freetheslaves.net):

Contract slavery: a worker is deceived into slavery through the use of a false employment contract. Slaveholders create contracts to lure individuals with promises of employment, yet once they arrive at the workplace they are forced to work for no pay and cannot escape.

Sex trafficking: an adult is caused to engage in commercial sex acts, such as prostitution, by means of force, fraud, threat or coercion. If threat or force has been applied, the act cannot be consensual. Child sex trafficking differs from adult sex trafficking in that children can never be considered to have consented to the sale of sex acts. Sex trafficking or forced prostitution constitutes 12-20 percent of slavery practiced today.

Forced or servile marriage: a person, usually a woman or girl, is forced into marriage against her will. The girl may be sold by her family, given to repay a family debt, or given to restore the girl's "honor."

³⁸ <https://www.freetheslaves.net/our-model-for-freedom/faqs-glossary/>



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Domestic servitude: household workers, such as maids, are not permitted to leave the household in which they work. They receive little or no pay and are frequently abused.

Child labor: children are held in forced labor, made to engage in prostitution or pornography, or caused to participate in illicit activities.

Child soldiers: children are forced, coerced or persuaded to become soldiers and to engage in combat in violation of international norms forbidding the use of children as members of armed forces.

How Do We Respond? Guided by Judaism

Explain: Judaism offers us responses to real-world issues. We use the Torah to guide us in response to what is going on around us. Slavery is no exception. Our own origin story begins with our release from bondage.

Responses:

- Passover: Yesterday we were slaves; today we are free. Do not oppress a stranger, for we were strangers in the land of Egypt. Moses identifies with the suffering of others.
- Jewish values / key concepts that teach us why we, as Jews, should care about this issue: Jewish Responsibility, In the Image of God, Responsibility to Another (refer back to Moses and the Egyptian taskmaster), Redeeming Captives, Free Will of the Worker / Fair Treatment of the Worker. See texts below, "Jewish Responses #1 - 5"

Instructions for text study

First, ask for six volunteers to help you post the Jewish responses on the walls around the room. Give each participant a couple of post-it notes and a pen. Ask them to walk around and read the Jewish responses and texts and choose one text that jumps out at them. Ask them to write down one question or response to that chosen Jewish concept. [To modify for traditional Shabbat observance: Have participants read each Jewish response and stand by the one that provokes a question, emotion or concern for them.]

Which text makes you wonder, think, care, question; which one may bother you or standout for you? Have a few of them share their choices.



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Activity 1: Community Campaign Instructions

Divide participants into small groups to create community campaigns or commercials to inspire and educate friends and family on a) the modern-day slavery issue; or b) the Jewish community's obligation to care and respond: Why should we, as Jews, care about this issue?

You want your commercial to be informative, emotional and engaging. What would make YOU pay attention?!?!

Assessment/Measurable Results: Share commercials.

Film the commercials and email out to parents and any other interested adult group as an advocacy step. Knowledge is power, and sharing what we've learned is one step toward advocating against slavery.

[To modify for traditional Shabbat observance: Have each group act out the commercials for the other participants.]

Following each commercial, ask the members of the other groups to share one thing they took away from that presentation as the "viewer." Would this motivate you to act in any way? What would?

Wrap Up: We have the information, we understand the Jewish obligation. Now what?

If this is a stand-alone session, share some ideas of next steps, including special readings and activities at Seders, conscientious consumerism, fundraising and awareness-raising. If moving on to next session, allude to putting a face to the issue, making it more real by meeting its victims.

Activity 2: Types of Slavery

Adapted from FreetheSlaves.net

From the examples given, identify what type of slavery each story describes.

1. An eleven-year-old child in Pakistan is forced to weave carpets to repay a debt his father owes. He works 14 hours a day and sleeps by his loom. If he tries to leave the carpet factory, he will be caught and beaten.
-



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2. A poor young woman from Thailand is tricked into going to Europe with a promise of a job in a restaurant. When she arrives, she is forced to work as a prostitute and is prevented from leaving because she has no identity papers.

-
3. A twelve-year-old girl in India is married to a 60-year-old man. She has no choice in this and must work as a servant in his household.

-
4. A twenty-year-old man is owned by a farmer in Benin, West Africa. His father, mother, brothers and sisters are also owned by this man. They all work on his farm; they are given a little food but no pay.

-
5. A prisoner in Burma is forced to work building roads for the government. He is chained to his fellow-prisoners and is given no pay for his work. He is often beaten by guards.

-
6. A man in India is forced to work in a mine to repay a debt to the mine-owner, but the interest he is charged means that he will never be able to repay the loan. He is trapped.
-



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Activity 3: Human Rights Squares

Adapted from FreetheSlaves.net

Aim: To review the topic of human rights and stimulate discussion around the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and categories of rights.

Method:

1. **Getting Going:** Give everyone a copy of "Sheet 1: Human Rights Squares." Everyone has to get an answer and a signature from a different person for each square. Stop after 5-10 minutes, depending on the group. Alternatively, fill in the squares in pairs or small groups.
2. **Unpack the game:**
 - Which were the easiest squares to find answers for? Which were the most difficult? Why?
 - Which squares had global answers? Which had national answers? Which had local or community answers?

3. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Divide the whole group into smaller groups of two or three. Give each group a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see below). Can they match any of their answers on the Human Rights Squares sheets to articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Ask them to write the number(s) of the article(s) in the Human Rights Squares.



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Which of the squares are related to civil and political rights? Which are related to social, economic and cultural rights?

Name a human right	Country where human rights are violated	Document that proclaims human rights	Group in your country that wants to deny rights to others	Country where people are denied rights because of their race or ethnic background
Initial:	Initial:	Initial:	Initial:	Initial:
Organization that fights for human rights	Film/video that is about rights	Singer/group who sings about rights	Right your parents have/had that you do not	Country where human rights situation has improved recently
Initial:	Initial:	Initial:	Initial:	Initial:



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Type of human rights abuse that most disturbs you	Book about rights	Right sometimes denied to women	Right all children should have	Country where people are denied rights because of their religion
Initial:	Initial:	Initial:	Initial:	Initial:

Human right not yet protected for everyone in this country	People denied right to have their own nation or homeland	Human right not being achieved around the world	Right of yours that is respected	Someone who is a defender of human rights
Initial:	Initial:	Initial:	Initial:	Initial:



Universal Declaration of Human Rights (selections)

- **Article 1.** All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.
- **Article 2.** Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.
- **Article 3.** Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
- **Article 4.** No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.
- **Article 5.** No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- **Article 6.** Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.
- **Article 7.** All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.
- **Article 8.** Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.
- **Article 9.** No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.
- **Article 10.** Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.
- **Article 11.**
 - Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defense.
 - No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under



national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

- **Article 12.** No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.
- **Article 13.**
 - Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
 - Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.
- **Article 14.**
 - Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
 - This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.
- **Article 15.**
 - Everyone has the right to a nationality.
 - No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.
- **Article 16.**
 - Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
 - Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
 - The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.
- **Article 17.**
 - Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
 - No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.
- **Article 18.**
 - Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief,



and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

- **Article 19.**
 - Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.
- **Article 20.**
 - Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
 - No one may be compelled to belong to an association.
- **Article 21.**
 - Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
 - Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
 - The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.
- **Article 22.** Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.
- **Article 23.**
 - Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
 - Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
 - Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
 - Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.



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- **Article 24.** Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.
- **Article 25.**
 - Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his 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.
 - Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.
- **Article 26.**
 - Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
 - Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
 - Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.
- **Article 27.**
 - Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
 - Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.
- **Article 28.** Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.
- **Article 29.**
 - Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.



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- In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.
 - These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.
- **Article 30.** Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.



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Jewish Response #1: Jewish Responsibility

Key term: **Ahrayut**: To be human means to look out for the other

<p>B'reisheet / Genesis 3:9 God asks Adam: "Where are you?" <i>Where are we while others are suffering? Why aren't we working on creating a world where all are free?</i></p>	<p>וַיִּקְרָא ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶל-הָאָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֵיכָה.</p>
<p>Vayikra / Leviticus 26:37 "And they shall stumble one upon another, as it were before the sword, when none pursues; and you shall have no power to stand before your enemies." Talmud, Sanhedrin 27b (responding to Leviticus 26:37) Why do people stumble, struggle or fall? So that we may rely on one another.</p>	<p>וְכָשְׁלוּ אִישׁ-בְּאָחִיו כַּמִּפְנֵי-חֶרֶב וְרָדְף אֵין. וְלֹא-תִהְיֶה לָכֶם תְּקוּמָה לִפְנֵי אִיְבֵיכֶם.</p> <p>Talmud: וכשלו איש באחיו איש בעון אחיו מלמד שכולן ערבים זה בזה התם שהיה בידם למחות ולא מיחו</p>
<p>Talmud, Gitten 61a "The rabbis taught: We sustain the non-Jewish poor along with the Jewish poor and visit the non-Jewish sick along with the Jewish sick, and bury the non-Jewish dead along with the Jewish dead for the sake of peace."</p>	<p>Talmud: ת"ר מפרנסים עניי נכרים עם עניי ישראל ומבקרים חולי נכרים עם חולי ישראל וקוברין מתי נכרים עם מתי ישראל מפני דרכי שלום</p>



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**Levinas, Emmanuel. *Humanisme de l'autre homme*, p. 97; *Collected Philosophical Papers*
149**

Emmanuel Levinas taught that every conscious person has an "infinite responsibility to others."

Questions you may have:



Jewish Response #2: Be-tzelem Elohim / In God's Image

When humans were created, we were created as equals. The Torah doesn't mention race or appearance, skin color or any other distinguishing features that would separate one human being from another.

<p><i>B'reisheet / Genesis 1:26-28</i></p> <p>"And God said: 'Let us make the human in our image [<i>b'tsalmeinu</i>], after our likeness [<i>kid'muteinu</i>]; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' And God created the human in God's image, in the image of God, God created him; male and female God created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them: 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creeps upon the earth.'"</p>	<p>וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ וַיְרִדּוּ בִדְגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל- הָאָרֶץ. וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם. וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וּכְבֹּשֶׁהָ וַרְדּוּ בִדְגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל-חַיָּה הָרֹמֶשֶׁת עַל-הָאָרֶץ.</p>
<p><i>B'reisheet / Genesis 5:1-3</i></p> <p>"This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made God him. Male and female created God them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth."</p>	<p>זֶה סֵפֶר תּוֹלְדֹת אָדָם בְּיוֹם בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם בְּדְמוּת אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָאם. וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם וַיִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמֵם אָדָם בְּיוֹם הַבְּרָאָם. וַיְחִי אָדָם שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֵד בְּדְמוּתוֹ כְּצַלְמוֹ וַיִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ שֵׁת.</p>



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Questions you may have:



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Jewish Response #3: Passover Connection

<p>Avadim Hayinu (Haggadah)</p> <p>"We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and Adonai, our God, brought us out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. If the Holy Blessed One had not brought our ancestors out of Egypt, then we, our children, and our children's children would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt. Therefore, even if we were all wise, all insightful, all old, and all knowledgeable in the Torah, we would still be commanded to discuss the exodus from Egypt. "Moreover, the one who elaborates on the exodus from Egypt is worthy of praise."</p>	<p>עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים ויוציאנו ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, בְּיָד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרוֹעַ נְטוּיָה. וְאֵלֹהֵינוּ לֹא הוֹצִיא הָרָדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, הָרִי אֲנוּ וּבְנֵינוּ וּבְנֵי בְנֵינוּ מִשְׁעָבָדִים הָיִינוּ לַפַּרְעֹה בְּמִצְרַיִם. וְאִפְּלוּ כָלֵנוּ חֲכָמִים, כָּלֵנוּ נְבוֹנִים, כָּלֵנוּ זְקֵנִים, כָּלֵנוּ יוֹדְעִים אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה, מִצְוָה עָלֵינוּ לְסַפֵּר בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם, וְכָל הַמְרָבָה לְסַפֵּר בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם, הָרִי זֶה מְשֻׁבָּח:</p>
<p><i>The Passover seder reminds us that because we were once slaves and relive the Exodus each year at Passover, so much more so must we be concerned about the enslavement of others today.</i></p>	
<p>Exodus / Sh'mot 23:9</p> <p>"And a stranger you shall not oppress; for you know the heart of a stranger, seeing you were strangers in the land of Egypt."</p> <p>Deuteronomy / D'varim 10:19</p> <p>Love the stranger; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.</p>	<p>וְגֵר לֹא תִלְחָץ וְאִתָּם יִדְעַתֶּם אֶת־נַפְשׁ הַגֵּר כִּי־גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.</p> <p>וְאָהַבְתֶּם אֶת־הַגֵּר כִּי־גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.</p>
<p><i>As a people, we recall that we were once slaves.</i></p> <p><i>We must identify with those who are still enslaved by their own Pharaoh.</i></p>	



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Deuteronomy / D'varim 24:17

You shall not deprive the foreigner of justice, or the fatherless; nor take the widow's cloak as a pledge.

לֹא תִטֶּה מִשְׁפַּט גֵּר יְתוֹם וְלֹא תִחַבֵּל בְּגָד
אַלְמָנָה

*Not only should we not oppress strangers, but we should look
out for them and uphold their rights.*

Questions you may have:



Jewish Response #4: Redeeming Captives

Key Concept: *Pidyon Sh'vuyim*

To be held captive means to be held against your will. The redemption of captives is a key Jewish value and is pursued by Israel today when one of its soldiers is captured in war. We extend the same concern to any human being held against his or her will.

<p><i>Talmud, Bava Batra, 8b</i></p> <p>The Talmud tells us that <i>pidyon sh'vuyim</i> (redeeming captives) is a "<i>mitzvah rabbah</i>" (great <i>mitzvah</i>), and says that captivity is worse than starvation and death.</p>	<p>פדיון שבויים מצוה רבה היא אמר ליה רבא לרבה בר מרי מנא הא מילתא דאמור רבנן דפדיון שבויים מצוה רבה היא א"ל דכתיב (ירמיהו טו) והיה כי יאמרו אליך אנה נצא ואמרת אליהם כה אמר ה' אשר למות למות ואשר לחרב לחרב ואשר לרעב לרעב ואשר לשבי לשבי</p>
<p><i>Maimonides/ Rambam</i></p> <p>Maimonides (<i>Rambam</i>) felt that the <i>mitzvah</i> of redeeming captives subsumes other <i>mitzvot</i>, including feeding the hungry, not standing idly by the blood of our neighbors, and helping the poor.</p> <p>Maimonides also taught that one who delays in ransoming a captive is considered like a murderer.</p>	<p>פדיון שבויים, קודם לפרנסת עניים ולכסותן; ואין לך מצוה רבה כמו פדיון שבויים: שהשבוי הרי הוא בכלל הרעבים והצמאים, ובכלל הערומים; ועומד בסכנת נפשות.</p> <p>כל רגע שמאחר לפדות השבויים היכא דאפשר להקדים הוי כאילו שופך דמים</p>

Questions you may have:



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Jewish Response #5: Free Will of the Worker / Fair Treatment of the Worker

Judaism forbids forced labor of any kind. A worker has to follow an employer's orders to receive payment, but can resign at any time. Free Will of the worker is a Jewish value found in Leviticus and expounded upon in the Talmud.

<p>Leviticus/ Vayikra 25:55</p> <p>"The Children of Israel are servants unto Me [God]; they are My servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am Adonai your God."</p>	<p>כִּי-לִי בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדִים עֲבָדֵי הֵם אֲשֶׁר-הוֹצֵאתִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.</p>
<p>The Talmud (Bava Kama 116b) adds to this: "and are not servants to servants."</p>	<p>הוא דכתיב (ויקרא כה) כי לי בני ישראל עבדים ולא עבדים לעבדים</p>
<p>Deuteronomy/ D'varim 24:15</p> <p>"You shall not abuse a needy or destitute laborer, whether a fellow countryman or a stranger in one of the communities of your land. You must pay him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets, for he is needy and his life depends on it; or else he will cry to Adonai against you and you will incur guilt."</p>	<p>לֹא-תַעֲשֶׂק שֹׁכֵר עֲנִי וְאֶבְיֹן מֵאֲחִיד אוֹ מִגֵּרָךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּאַרְצְךָ בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ.</p> <p>בְּיוֹמוֹ תִּתֵּן שָׂכָרוֹ וְלֹא-תָבוֹא עָלָיו הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ כִּי עֲנִי הוּא וְאֶלָּיו הוּא נֹשֵׂא אֶת-נַפְשׁוֹ וְלֹא-יִקְרָא עָלֶיךָ אֶל-יְהוָה וְהָיָה בְּךָ חַטָּא.</p>
<p><i>We cannot benefit from degrading others:</i> Talmud, Bava Metzia 83a</p> <p>"Some porters negligently broke a barrel of wine belonging to Rava bar Rav Huna. He seized their garments, so they went and complained to Rav. "Return their garments," ordered Rav. "Is that the law?" Rava bar Rav Huna asked. "Even so (do the right thing)," Rav replied, "So you may walk in the way of good men." (Proverbs 11:20). Their garments having being returned, the men observed, "We are poor and have worked all day, and are in need. Do</p>	<p>רבה בר בר חנן תברו ליה הנהו שקולאי חביתא דחמרא שקל לגלימיהו אתו אמרו לרב אמר ליה הב להו גלימיהו אמר ליה דינא הכי אמר ליה אין (משלי ב) למען תלך בדרך טובים יהיב להו גלימיהו אמרו ליה עניי אנן וטרחינן כולה יומא וכפינן ולית</p>



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we get nothing?" Rav ordered: "Go and pay them."
"Is that the law?" Rav bar Rav Huna asked. "Even
so," Rav replied. "'And keep the path of the
righteous.'" (Proverbs 11:2).

לן מידי אמר ליה זיל הב אגרייהו
א"ל דינא הכי אמר ליה אין
(משלי ב) וארחות צדיקים
תשמור:

*No one is allowed to place himself or herself in any
situation which threatens his or her own health or
safety.*

Deuteronomy / D'varim 4:15

"Take good care of yourselves--for you saw no
manner of form on the day that Adonai spoke unto
you in Horev out of the midst of the fire."

ונשמרתם מאד, לנפשותיכם: כי
לא ראיתם, כל-תמונה, ביום דבר
ה' אליכם בחרב, מתוך האש

Questions you may have:



Six Types of Slavery

Contract Slavery



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Sex Trafficking



Forced/ Servile Marriage



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Domestic Servitude



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Child Labor



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Child Soldiers



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Session Two: The Faces of Modern-Day Slavery

Goals

- Participants will use the *Maggid* section of the Haggadah as a conduit to learning the stories of modern-day slaves. Just as we recall our own enslavement by Pharaoh, we use Passover as an opportunity to hear the voices of modern-day slaves oppressed by their own "Pharaohs."
- Using a number of Haggadah supplements about modern-day slavery as inspiration, participants will create their own "seder conversation starters" and apply seder concepts to modern-day slavery issues.

Objectives

- Participants will be able to hear real-life voices of modern-day slavery and give this issue a "voice" (emotion: empathy/compassion).
- Participants will be able to interpret various parts of the seder through issues of modern-day slavery; to bring home their own "seder conversation starters"; and to add modern meaning to our tradition and ritual.

Materials

Four copies of each of the following T'ruah Seder Supplements:

[Pesach/Passover](#)

[A Plan Devised Against Them: Oppression and Justice, Then and Now](#)

[Ten Plagues of Forced Labor](#)

[Fact Sheet from Free The Slaves](#)³⁹

Real people tell their stories: Four copies of each person's story

Different materials to create seder supplements such as paper, markers, pens, pencils, crayons, index cards, craft paper, etc. [Omit for traditional Shabbat observance]

³⁹ <https://www.truah.org/holiday/pesachpassover/>
<https://www.truah.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Plan-devised-against-them.pdf>
<https://www.truah.org/wp-content/uploads/TrHaggadah/OSOTS-8-ten-plagues.pdf>
<https://www.freetheslaves.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Trafficking-ans-Slavery-Fact-Sheet-April-2018.pdf>



Program/Procedure

Opening exercise

Set the stage with a game called "In Their Shoes."

- Have participants form a circle.
- Ask participants place their shoes in front of them.
- On the count of three, have everyone change places with the person opposite so that they are standing in front of another person's shoes.
- Ask someone to explain the expression "to stand in another's shoes." *What does it mean to identify with the experiences of another? What does it mean to sympathize or empathize with the plight or struggles of another?*

Connect to Passover: B'khol Dor va-Dor

Explain:

On Passover we put ourselves in the shoes of our ancestors and recall our enslavement and miraculous exodus from bondage. It is commanded in the Haggadah that "in every generation, one must regard oneself as if one personally left Egypt."

We are required to remember that we were once slaves, and we must also remember, especially in the Passover season, that there are still some 21 to 36 million people who are still slaves to their own Pharaoh today. Here are a few of their stories. We can listen to their voices and bring their plight to light. It is often difficult to feel compassion for tens of millions of people at once, but we can start with the voices of three individuals. Each slave has a story.

Hear Their Voices: Slaves' Stories

- a. Split the group into three "voices" or small groups.
- b. Give each group one of the three stories of a real-life modern slave.
- c. Ask them to read the person's story and choose one or two questions on the sheet to discuss.

Jigsaw / Teach Each Other

- A. Form three new groups, re-dividing the original groups so that each of the new groups has all three stories represented.
- B. Ask them to teach each other by sharing each story and the discussion that took place prompted by the question chosen.



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Apply Concepts That Have Been Learned to the Passover Experience: Connecting Our Maggid (Telling) with Theirs

1. Distribute samples of seder resources and sheets listing the steps of the *seder*.
2. Choose a section/step of the seder and apply that concept or section to the modern-day slave story.
3. You can write a letter, a poem, or an imagined "interview" of the person. Or you can create a diary entry from that person's point of view, relating what you write to that step of the seder.
4. Write down ideas of how you could bring the issue of modern slavery to a family *seder* in at least three of the seder steps OR in other creative ways such as items you put on the table or other information in addition to the *seder* steps.
5. Examples are provided on Seder Steps handout (10 plagues/10 types of modern slavery; four "children,"/four voices of modern-day slavery)

Modification for traditional Shabbat observance:

1. Distribute samples of seder resources and steps of the seder sheets.
2. Pick which resources you'd like to use if you hosted a seder that focused on modern-day issues.
3. Apply different resources to various parts of the seder.
4. Come up with ideas to add your own elements that tell the modern-day slaves' story correlated with the seder steps, and present them to the others.
5. What else could you brainstorm that you could include at your family seder that would shed light on modern-day slavery and connect our *Maggid* with theirs?

Remind students that they must use the information/handouts provided so that there is content integrated into their creativity.

Present Ideas In the Order of the Seder Steps

Have groups present their ideas in order of the Passover seder steps. Some groups may have repeated steps, but hopefully you will have covered all steps.

Kadesh (sanctification of the day) - *Kiddush*

Urhatz (handwashing with no blessing)



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Karpas (eating the green vegetable)

Yahatz (breaking the matzah)

Maggid (telling the story) - includes *Mah Nishtanah*, *Avadim Hayinu*, 10 plagues

Rahatzah (handwashing with a blessing)

Motzi (blessing before eating *matzah*) and *Matzah* (the commandment of eating the *matzah*)

Maror (eating the bitter herb)

Korekh (Hillel's sandwich)

Shulhan Orekh (eating the meal)

Tzafun (eating the *afikomen*)

Barekh (blessing after eating)- *Birkat ha-Mazon*

Hallel (songs of praise)

Nirtzah (conclusion)

Instruction: Come up with new ways to correlate modern-day slavery with at least three steps of the seder.

Ideas to prime the pump (adapted from Rabbi Gilah Langner, Rabbis for Human Rights Anti-Slavery Campaign Haggadah supplement):

- Plagues (*Hoshekh*): Remaining blind to the suffering of others relates to the issue of modern-day slavery. The Egyptians literally could not see through the darkness, but also figuratively remained blind to the suffering of the Israelites around them.
- Four Questions: Why make this seder different from other seders? Because we may be free, but there are tens of millions of people who are not. This year, in their honor, we will sit upright rather than reclining.
- Pharaoh hardens his heart: Why make things more difficult for people who are already suffering? Slavery affects poor people, immigrants, and other vulnerable populations the most.



Maggid: Telling Their Stories

Handout #1: Shauna Newell, 17

From "Shauna's Story of Slavery" by Mari S. Krueger, Independent News, 7 June 2007.

The room was dark when Shauna Newell, 17, woke up, her clothes torn from her, a man over her, raping her. She yelled for him to stop. She looked into the faces of the four men watching, looked to her friend Jana, looking for a sign that one of them would help her. Instead, she got a gun pressed to her head. Then she blacked out again. She woke up to the same horrifying nightmare again and again, but it was real. The pain told her it was happening. Shauna is a real person. Shauna is her real name. She's . . . lived in Pensacola as long as she can remember. She's white, middle-class. She was held against her will for four days from April 29 to May 2, 2006.⁴⁰ Shauna's friend Jana invited her to hang out at her dad's home, a house in Shauna's neighborhood, four blocks from her own home. When they got to the house Shauna found five men. She felt uncomfortable and asked for some water. She drank it. Then she blacked out. When she was rescued after four days of rape, abuse, starvation and water deprivation, Shauna had lethal amounts of cocaine, crystal meth, marijuana, the date rape drug and ecstasy in her system, so much so that no one thought she'd survive.

Maggid: Telling Their Stories

Handout #2: Kwesi, from Ghana

Adapted from Free the Slaves, Case Study: Kwesi

When Kwesi was 8 years old, his world was turned upside down. His father died, and his mother, Yaba, did not even have enough money for a funeral. Desperate and grieving, Yaba accepted the aid of a neighbor for pay for the funeral. Once the funeral was over, the neighbor demanded payment for his aid. Yaba could barely afford to feed her eight children, let alone pay off this debt. The neighbor threatened to call the police and have the terrified mother jailed.

⁴⁰ While this can and does happen to young women in middle class neighborhoods living at home with their families in the United States, that scenario is exceedingly rare. Most underage sex trafficking victims in the U.S. are runaways living on the streets, immigrants brought here under false pretenses, or vulnerable because of such factors as poverty, drug addiction, legal status, and pre-existing abuse.



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Kwesi, who overheard the confrontation and was scared of losing his mother immediately after his father, offered to work off his mother's debt. "Three years," the man told him. "You will have to work for three years." Kwesi went to the fishing community of Yeti, where he began work at eleven o'clock at night. He was forced to cast nets until the early hours of the morning, when he would gather the nets in, only to work on gutting fish through the day. The 8-year-old worked with little food and water, and was frequently beaten by the trafficker with heavy boat paddles. On one terrifying day, Kwesi almost drowned after getting his foot caught in one of the nets. When he came up coughing water, the trafficker beat him with the paddle for his slow work. Kwesi bears a scar on his lip to this day.

After being enslaved for just over a year and a half, Kwesi was approached by two representatives from a Free the Slaves partner, Challenging Heights. After asking Kwesi a number of questions, they went to question the trafficker. They quickly returned to Kwesi to tell him that he is now free. After confirming that they met with his mother, Kwesi joined the several other children whom Challenging Heights liberated, and returned to his home village. At home with his mother and siblings, Kwesi now studies hard at math and dreams of being a bank manager.

Maggid: Telling Their Stories

Handout #3: Forced Marriage, Child-Mothers

What it's like to be a mum and wife at 13: The vicious cycle of child marriage

They are only girls, but they already have children of their own. Many of the babies are born with complications, far from the nearest hospital, and the mortality rate for mother and infant is sky-high. Nor does the future look rosy. The daughters of these child brides are born into a cycle of systemic abuse, violence and poverty.

"I thought I'd have a better life, but at the end, it didn't turn out that way," says Aracely, who was married to a 34-year-old when she was 11. When she was four months pregnant, her husband left, declaring the child wasn't his. Now 15, she is raising her son on her own.

"During the time I was pregnant, he didn't give me any money," she says. "He hasn't even come to see the boy now that he's a year old."



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Aracely is one of the girls who feature in photojournalist Stephanie Sinclair's *Too Young To Wed* project on Guatemala, where it's legal for a girl to marry as young as 14 – and many are married far younger than that.

The UNFPA [United Nations Population Fund]⁴¹ says one in nine girls in developing nations will marry before 15, with 50 million likely to marry before their 15th birthday in this decade. They are usually poor, less educated and living in rural areas – and their early marriages make life even worse.

The girls struggle with motherhood because they are far from physically and psychologically ready, say health workers. Their undeveloped bodies make labor and breastfeeding dangerous and difficult.

"Motherhood is hard," 14-year-old Saida told Ms. Sinclair. "When they get sick, you don't know why. I don't have experience and don't know what to do with him."

The young mums face an increased risk of sexually transmitted illnesses, physical and sexual violence and a premature end to their education. Human rights organizations believe changing the norms that legitimize child marriage should be a priority. "These [social norms] can and do start to change, once parents and communities understand the harm that child marriage does and once they are able to identify alternatives," reads the UNFPA report.

Equality Now's 2014 report, *Protecting the Girl Child*, calls on governments to end child and forced marriages and related human rights violations. "Child marriage does not take place within a vacuum," says director Jacqui Hunt. "It is part of a continuum of abuse experienced by a girl and is often linked with female genital mutilation, sex trafficking or force-feeding before marriage, rape, domestic violence and the removal of future opportunities. When a child bride gives birth, the vicious cycle of poverty, poor health, curtailed education, violence, instability, disregard for rule of law and legal and other discrimination often continues into the next generation, especially for any daughters she may have.

"Sadly, child marriage directly affects approximately 14 million girls a year, and in the process legitimizes human rights violations and the abuse of girls under the guise of culture, honor, tradition, and religion. It is part of a sequence of discrimination that begins at a girl's birth and continues throughout her entire life."

⁴¹ <https://www.unfpa.org/child-marriage>



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In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the law provides that the wife is obliged to live with her husband and follow him wherever he sees fit to reside. In Malta, if a kidnapper "after abducting a person, shall marry such person, he shall not be liable to prosecution."

Ms. Hunt adds: "As long as a girl or woman is not equal in the text of a country's law and its legal system, she cannot fully participate, or be valued equally, in society. Legally, she is of lesser importance."

Session Three: Taking It Home: Being A Consumer With A Conscience

Goal

- Recognizing that we consume products that are produced by enslaved or exploited workers. Judaism forbids unethical treatment of laborers, yet we consume products made by children or slave labor. How can we learn to be conscientious consumers?
- Participants will learn to make ethical consumer choices. Participants will understand that making ethical choices may mean sacrificing what one may want, or may require additional funds, but allows one to consume with a clear conscience.

Sources

Definition of Fair Trade / Ethical Labeling

- [Chocolate Moses](http://ChocolateMoses.org/fair-trade-and-ethical-labeling)⁴²

Consuming with a Conscience: Jewish sources

- [Hekhsher Tzedek](http://magentzedek.org)⁴³ (very brief mention)

*Choose which sources you would like to use for this activity and print according to choices

⁴² <http://ChocolateMoses.org/fair-trade-and-ethical-labeling>

⁴³ <http://magentzedek.org>



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Materials: Party planning sheet – one for every group of three

- Jewish sources from *Hekhsher Tzedek* powerpoint
- Fair Trade FAQs info <http://www.fairtradeusa.org> (summarized in this document)
- pens [to modify for traditional Shabbat observance: stickers]
- stickers or tape for Fair Trade FAQs
- Samples of Fair Trade chocolate or images of the wrappers for participants to identify what a Fair Trade label looks like
- One copy of "shopping list" for every two people and pens [to modify for traditional Shabbat observance: omit pens]

Fair Trade Activity

Step 1: Set Induction / Opening Exercise:

Think about the last thing you purchased. Was it a frappuccino at a coffee shop? A new pair of boots? New sneakers? Do you know how your product got to you? Was your T-shirt produced by a child laborer? Where did the cacao beans for your frappuccino come from? Does it matter to you? Should it?

What would ethical consumerism look like to you? Would knowing where your products come from change the way you shop? Or is this just "the way of the world"? Today we're going to explore what it means to "consume with a conscience" and whether this is ideal or real in our own lives.

Step 2: Introduction to Fair Trade

Explain: In previous sessions, we discussed child labor or exploitation of workers as a form of modern-day slavery. You consume products, on a daily basis, that have been brought to you as a result of exploitation of workers or child labor.

You are the beneficiary of another's exploitations. BUT the choices you make can help alleviate the exploitation. You can make conscious ethical consumer choices, first by understanding what that means, and then by making more intentional choices by applying your knowledge to your shopping habits.



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Step 3: Learn the information

Preliminary: hang up Fair Trade FAQs around the room (see below). Hand out copies of the directions on the page entitled "Fair Trade FAQs" (see below.)

Explain to the group that you are shopping at an open air market. In pairs, walk around the room and read the Fair Trade FAQs as you "shop." Write down the answers that you find most interesting on your personal "shopping list."

[Modification for traditional Shabbat observance: simply discuss your answers with your partner.]

Step 4: Fair Trade and Jewish responses

Ask participants to share one or two facts they picked up while "shopping." What is Fair Trade and why would it matter to us? Why would one spend more money or seek out specialty products such as Fair Trade chocolate, when non-Fair Trade is cheaper and easier to obtain?

Share a couple of examples of Jewish texts as Jewish responses to ethical employment and exploitation of laborers. Explain that when we shop, we can do so mindfully and make Jewish consumer choices. Our consumer choices can help end the exploitation of child laborers, for example, and help alleviate poverty of farmers who grow our food.

Example: "Do not withhold a person's benefit" (*Mishlei* / Proverbs 3:27 and numerous commentaries on this verse)

Explain *Hekhsher Tzedek*: the Kosher certification seal that ensures the ethical treatment of the laborers involved in production as well as the satisfaction of kashrut standards.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Magentzedek.org



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Step 5: Introduction to Activity: Fair Trade Shuk

Explain: *Fair Trade aims to improve the lives of the workers and protect the environment. When workers are exploited by overseas marketers, the consumer benefits (receives artificially low prices), while the worker suffers. One small way we can improve the lives of those enslaved by overseas marketers is by making more ethical, conscientious consumer choices. Every purchase matters.*

Handout: Consumers with a Conscience

Challenge: You are planning a party for 50 people. You need the following items at your party but are on a limited budget of \$500. How do you make ethical shopping choices with limited resources?

Step 6: Share Party Choices

- Discussion. Session leader should challenge students' choices by offering counter argument or "devil's advocate" responses to challenge whether their decisions are realistic or just ideal. What was difficult about this exercise?
- Do you think that it is possible to shop with a conscience? What preferences did you feel you sacrificed for ethical consumer choices? Or do we have to be more realistic and understand the constraints?
- Do we consume unethically because it is simply more convenient, or do you think it is because so many people are unaware of where our products come from?
- Would your desire for certain products be affected if you knew that someone your age, maybe someone you knew, had been enslaved in order to get that product to you?
- Is there any product you would consider buying in a Fair Trade version?
- Add other questions depending on student responses.

Summary/Wrap Up

Discussion should be a great debate and decisions should be difficult and debatable. If participants stay within budget, they will have accomplished the task, but is their plan realistic? Is this a party they would want to attend, never mind plan? Can they make SOME Fair Trade or ethical shopping choices, if not all?



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The leader should also remind the students that they may not personally have control over all purchasing in their family. What would be a respectful way to raise the issue with those who do the shopping, and pay for it, in the family?

It's not easy, but every purchase matters! Small steps can and often do lead to big change.

As a follow-up, send everyone an email of the Fair Trade symbols and a link to knowthechain.org, so they can check out the supply chain of common and favorite products.



Preparing in Hebrew High School or Confirmation Class to Respond at the Seder to Slavery and Trafficking

Rabbi Cheryl Weiner

Session One: Slavery Today

Session Two: Customizing a *Haggadah*

Objectives

Knowledge/ Content:

- Students will know general statistics related to contemporary slavery.
- Students will be able to make connections among aspects of social, economic, and political forces that combine to make slave trade and trafficking possible and acceptable today.
- Students will be able to state what the various types of contemporary slavery are and what industries support slavery today.
- Students will be able to identify which countries, states, and local communities participate in modern slavery.
- Students will be able to identify relevant Jewish texts related to the Haggadah and their relationship to modern slavery.

Skills:

- Students will be able to use research information that is given to them or find other materials on the web to construct their Haggadah.
- Students will be able to work in *hevruta* groups to determine what materials are relevant to their Haggadah.
- Students will be able to construct a Haggadah that uses texts, music, and art to discuss modern-day slavery, drawing on Jewish sources.
- Students will be able to engage in persuasive dialogue in discussing modern slavery.
- Students will be able to develop an action plan to address modern slavery.



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Affect Regarding Material Studied:

- Students will be able to relate to stories that bear witness to contemporary slavery.
- Students will be able to discuss their feelings regarding the construction of the *Haggadah* and its content.
- Students will want to do something to address the issues of slavery.

Session One: Slavery Today

1. Set Induction (5 minutes)

- What is the meaning of Passover?
- What is the Haggadah?
- Who were the slaves in Egypt?
- Who are the slaves today?
- Goals of these two sessions. Students will construct their own *Haggadah* about Modern Slavery.

2. Video

TED Talk by Kevin Bales, Co-founder of Free the Slaves⁴⁵ (20 minutes) - or another selection of your choice.

3. Definition of Slavery:

Brainstorm and then use the definition that follows.

Someone is in slavery if they are:

- forced to work – through mental or physical threat;
- owned or controlled by an ‘employer’, usually through mental or physical abuse or the threat of abuse;
- dehumanized, treated as a commodity or bought and sold as ‘property’;
- physically constrained or restricted in his/her freedom of movement.

⁴⁵ https://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_bales_how_to_combat_modern_slavery?language=en



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Slavery is a violation of human rights.

Adapted from antislavery.org's definitions of modern slavery found [here](#).⁴⁶

4. Hevruta Teams around the various types of slavery (20 minutes)

Teams of students will each investigate one of the following types of slavery:

- Bonded labor: India and Nepal
- Child slavery: Senegal and Ghana
- Early and forced marriage: India and Afghanistan
- Forced labor : Uzbekistan and Thailand
- Descent-based slavery: West Africa
- Sex trafficking: U.S. and Thailand

The teams will each list three statistics or points of interest regarding the type of slavery they have investigated.

5. Summary and Wrap Up (5 minutes)

- Review Definition.
- Review types of slavery and locations/ industries.
- Look at Free the Slaves Confirmation Social Action Plan and choose something to do as a Confirmation Class to end modern slavery. (Attached)

⁴⁶ <https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/modern-slavery/>



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CONFIRMATION CLASS SOCIAL ACTION CAMPAIGN

(Modify this flyer for your congregation and confirmation class.)

Do not stand idly by when your neighbor's life is in danger.

– Leviticus 19:16w

In the Jewish Tradition we respond to slavery from two different perspectives along a continuum of social action. We address the direct needs of individuals, families, and community through social service. We address the underlying causes of slavery through social justice. Our sages understood also that no one can do it all, but each of us can do--and is morally obligated to do--something. Thus, we invite you to find a way to respond personally to the need for social action around issues of contemporary slavery and human trafficking along the continuum from social service to social justice.

Social Action Options: Choose one and commit to the eradication of slavery and human trafficking locally, nationally, or internationally.

- Take this [slavery footprint survey](#)⁴⁷ and talk about the results in your family.
- Figure out the family's "slavery imprint" and donate that amount to an antislavery or anti-trafficking organization.
- When your congregation has a *tzedakah* drive, donate to an anti-slavery or antitrafficking organization. Figure out the congregation's "slavery imprint" and donate that amount to an anti-slavery or anti-trafficking organization. As a confirmation class, choose an anti-slavery or anti-trafficking organization to donate to on Shabbat, holidays, or special occasions.
- As a family, choose an anti-slavery or anti-trafficking organization to donate to on Shabbat, holidays or special occasions.
- Volunteer with your confirmation class to take a specific action to combat slavery and trafficking, or to raise awareness.
- Volunteer with the congregation on *Mitzvah* Day to take a specific action to combat slavery and trafficking, or to raise awareness.
- Create a *d'rash* for Martin Luther King or Human Rights Shabbat (see T'ruah <http://www.truah.org>), or create a special tribute in honor or

⁴⁷ http://slaveryfootprint.org/#where_do_you_live



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- memory of someone on Shabbat or a holiday, with the theme of modern-day slavery.
- Identify organizations that support the eradication of slavery and human trafficking and donate to them to aid local resourcefulness, or contact them to ask what you can do to advocate on their behalf. See if they have any campaigns that you can join as an individual, a confirmation class, or a congregation.
- Join a national advocacy campaign to support the passage of the International Women Against Violence Act in Congress. E.g., American Jewish World Service "I Believe" Campaign at www.AJWS.org⁴⁸ or [ATEST](http://ATEST.org).⁴⁹
- Support the advocacy campaigns in your local area regarding slavery and human trafficking related issues.

Session Two: Customizing a Haggadah

Session Two invites students in High School to customize a Haggadah or supplement focused on Modern Slavery. The Haggadot listed below are freely available to be copied and shared with the students.

Parts A – D of Section Two feature different modalities by which you could customize a Haggadah: stories, songs, art, and social action. The teacher may choose one or more of these modalities to pursue, or may allow the students to choose according to their individual preferences. If time permits, the group may choose to do all four modalities.

You will need to begin by selecting (or asking students to help you select) a Modern Haggadah or Haggadah Supplement to review and enhance. A listing of downloadable options follows:

*Haggadah for a Chocolate Seder*⁵⁰

By Rabbi Deborah R. Prinz. This Haggadah uses chocolate as the entry point to issues of global justice, including workers' rights, child labor in cocoa fields, poverty, and modern slavery. Through a partnership with T'ruah and Fair Trade Judaica, Equal Exchange's Fair Trade chocolate is now available for use on Pesach.

⁴⁸ <http://www.ajws.org>

⁴⁹ <http://www.endslaveryandtrafficking.org/coalition-partners>

⁵⁰ onthechocolatetrail.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/A-Haggadah-for-a-Chocolate-Seder.pdf



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*Haggadah I'Yom Zechuyot Shel Adam: A Human Rights Haggadah*⁵¹

By Rabbi Margaret Holub and Rabbi Sheila Weinberg and edited by Gilah Langner. You can think of using the Haggadah in a variety of settings: a special service in synagogue, kiddush following Shabbat services or at a family gathering at home.

*Invisible: The Story of Modern Slavery, A Social Justice Haggadah*⁵²

Created by the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, this Haggadah focuses on stories of modern slavery.

*Passover Economic Justice Haggadah*⁵³

This Haggadah on economic human rights for use in the Pesah Seder was brought together and edited as a Shalom Center project by Lee Moore, on behalf of, and for distribution by, Rabbis for Human Rights North America and Rabbis for Human Rights Israel in 2003.

*The Freedom Haggadah An Anti-trafficking Seder*⁵⁴

Edited by the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, this Haggadah focuses on sex-trafficking, a specific aspect of modern slavery.

*The Other Side of the Sea: A Haggadah for Fighting Modern-Day Slavery*⁵⁵

This is the most recent complete Haggadah with a focus on trafficking.

*Seder Starters from Passover Partners of Free the Slaves*⁵⁶

Seder Starters curates the most extensive list of full Haggadot and individual readings and activities related to modern-day slavery. All resources listed can be accessed via links on the online version of *Seder Starters*.

⁵¹ <https://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/haggadah-I%E2%80%99yom-zekhuyot-shel-adam-human-rights-haggadah>

⁵² <https://rac.org/invisible-story-modern-slavery-social-justice-haggadah>

⁵³ http://www.truah.org/documents/rhr_haggadah.pdf

⁵⁴ <https://www.jcastchicago.org/passover-resources/>

⁵⁵ <https://www.truah.org/resouces/the-other-side-of-the-sea>

⁵⁶ <http://www.FreeTheSlaves.net/Judaism>



Session Two: Customizing a Haggadah

1. Set Induction (5 minutes)

- What is your favorite part of the seder?
- If you had been a slave and are now free, based on your research from last week, what would you like to celebrate and commemorate in a seder?

2. Selecting and/or Presenting a Haggadah (10-30 minutes, depending)

Depending on time, you can select or ask students to help you select a Modern Haggadah or Haggadah Supplement to review and enhance. As you are choosing, or after you have chosen, point out a few meaningful sections. Alternatively, ask students to choose a section they particularly like and share why with a partner or in small groups.

3. Creating New Material for our Haggadah

Depending on the time available and the inclinations of the participants, the teacher or the students can choose among the following options, or do all of them.

Part A: Stories and Testaments - Stories (30 minutes)

Resources:

- [Polaris – Survivor Stories](http://www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/client-services/survivor-stories)⁵⁷
- [SAAS – Stories of Modern-Day Slaves](https://saastucson.com/misconceptions-about-human-trafficking/#stories)⁵⁸

Students will compose a story that is based on their hevruta team research to illustrate aspects of the challenge in their type of slavery, OR students will compose a skit based on a true story of slavery that they have read.

Part B: Music (30 minutes)

Students will compose a song (with a borrowed a tune, if desired) about aspects of the type of slavery their hevruta team investigated.

⁵⁷ <http://www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/client-services/survivor-stories>

⁵⁸ <https://saastucson.com/misconceptions-about-human-trafficking/#stories>



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Alternatively, they can choose a folk or contemporary song whose lyrics fit the message they want to convey.

Part C: Art (30 minutes)

Students will create artistic representations to illustrate the type of slavery they investigated in their *hevruta* teams. Students may create drawings, cartoons, collages, paintings or any other two-dimensional media.

Part D: Action (30 minutes)

Students will develop suggested action plans based on what they have learned. These may include advocacy, fundraising, or sets of action-oriented *tikkun olam* projects to be included in the Haggadah. See the Confirmation Class Social Action Campaign. The plans should be realistically designed to be doable and to inspire people to want to do them.

4. Construct the Customized Haggadah (20 minutes)

- Where would students add their statistics in the Haggadah about modern slavery that they chose to work with?
- Discuss where to insert the stories, music, artwork, and social action plans throughout the Haggadah that is being used.

5. Summary and Wrap Up (5 minutes)

- What are the most important things that they want people to take away from their seder?
- How do the stories, songs, artworks and social action plans lend themselves to the effectiveness of the seder?
- Will people be receptive to undertaking the actions suggested? Why or why not?



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SOCIAL ACTION CAMPAIGN

(Modify this Flyer for your congregation and confirmation class.)

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-Leviticus 19:16

In the Jewish tradition, we respond to slavery from two different perspectives along a continuum of social action. We address the direct needs of individuals, families, and community through **social service**. We address the underlying causes of slavery through **social justice**. Our sages understood also that no one can do it all, but each of us can do something. Thus, we invite you to find a way to personally respond to the need for social action around issues of contemporary slavery and human trafficking along the continuum from social service to social justice.

Social Action Options: Choose one and commit to the eradication of slavery and human trafficking locally, nationally, or internationally.

- [Take the slavery footprint survey](#)⁵⁹ and talk about the results in your family.
 - Figure out our "slavery imprint" and donate that amount to.....
- Through our congregation, whenever we have a tzedakah drive, please donate to the following organizations.....
 - Figure out our "slavery imprint" and donate that amount to.....
- As a confirmation class, choose an organization to donate to on Shabbat, holidays, or special occasions...
- As a family, choose an organization to donate to on Shabbat, holidays or special occasions...
- Volunteer with your confirmation class to do
- Volunteer with the congregation on Mitzvah Day to do
- Consider creating a *drash* for Martin Luther King or Human Rights Shabbat (See *T'ruah*⁶⁰) or creating a special tribute in honor or memory of someone on Shabbat or a holiday.

⁵⁹ <http://slaveryfootprint.org/#where-do-you-live>

⁶⁰ www.truah.org



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- Analyze which organizations support the eradication of slavery and human trafficking and donate to them to aid local resourcefulness or contact them to ask what you can do to advocate on their behalf. See if they have any campaigns that you can join as an individual, a confirmation class, or a congregation.
- Join a national advocacy campaign to support the passage of the International Women Against Violence Act in Congress.
 - [American Jewish World Service, I Believe Campaign](#)⁶¹
 - [ATEST](#)⁶²
- Support the advocacy campaigns in your local area regarding slavery and human trafficking related issues.
 - [American Jewish World Service, I Believe Campaign](#)
 - [ATEST](#)

RESOURCE WEBSITES

JEWISH RESOURCES RELATED TO ANTI-SLAVERY/ ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- [American Jewish World Service](#)
- [Sefaria](#)⁶³
- [T'ruah](#)⁶⁴
- [Free the Slaves](#)
- [NFTY](#)⁶⁵
- [Chocolate Moses](#)
- [Rabbinical Assembly](#)

⁶¹ https://ajws.org/who-we-are/resources/?utm_source=sefaria_on1foot&utm_medium=link

⁶² <http://www.endslaveryandtrafficking.org/coalition-partners>

⁶³

<https://www.sefaria.org/search?q=slavery&tab=text&tvar=1&tsort=relevance&svar=1&ssort=relevance>

⁶⁴ <https://www.truah.org/>

⁶⁵ https



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AMERICAN AND WORLD-WIDE RESOURCES RELATED TO ANTI SLAVERY/ ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- ATEST is a diverse alliance of U.S.-based human rights organizations, acting with a shared agenda to end all forms of modern-day slavery and human trafficking domestically and globally.
- [Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking \(CAST\)](#)⁶⁶
- [Coalition of Immokalee Workers \(CIW\)](#)⁶⁷
- [ECPAT-USA](#)⁶⁸
- [Futures Without Violence](#)⁶⁹
- [International Justice Mission](#)⁷⁰
- [National Domestic Workers Alliance \(NDWA\)](#)⁷¹
- [National Network for Youth \(NN4Y\)](#)⁷²
- [Polaris](#)⁷³
- [Safe Horizon](#)⁷⁴
- [Solidarity Center](#)⁷⁵
- [UNICEF](#)⁷⁶
- [Verité](#)⁷⁷
- [Vital Voices Global Partnership](#)⁷⁸

⁶⁶ <http://www.castla.org/>

⁶⁷ <http://ciw-online.org/>

⁶⁸ <http://www.ecpatusa.org/>

⁶⁹ <http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org>

⁷⁰ <http://www.ijm.org/casework/forced-labor-slavery>

⁷¹ <http://www.domesticworkers.org>

⁷² <http://www.nn4youth.org/about-us/national-network-youth>

⁷³ <http://www.polarisproject.org>

⁷⁴ <http://www.safehorizon.org>

⁷⁵ <http://www.solidaritycenter.org/?s=slavery>

⁷⁶ <http://www.unicef.org>

⁷⁷ <http://www.verite.org>

⁷⁸ <http://vitalvoices.org>



Not Free to Desist:

Day School Sessions for Grades 9-12 on Contemporary Slavery and Jewish Responsibility

Rabbi Nathaniel Helfgot

Session One: Contemporary Slavery and Jewish Values

Session Two: What *Can* We Do? What Can *We* Do?

Session One: Contemporary Slavery and Jewish Values

Goals

Students will become aware of the reality of modern-day slavery and its evils. They will gain and appreciation of this reality and what Judaism teaches us about our responsibility towards empathy for those suffering as well responsibility to change that reality.

Opening Discussion (5-10 minutes)

Ask the Students:

What are your favorite things to do on a day of the week when you have vacation from school or on a Sunday when you have no school work?

Go around the circle to hear their thoughts.

Students will list things like sleeping late, go to the mall, watch a movie, play ball or go swimming at the JCC, hang out with friends, play xbox, make yourself a really great breakfast with waffles and eggs etc.

Now imagine your life where none of that existed- meaning there were no Sundays off, no school, no friends, no x-box, no going to the mall, no sleeping late, no money in your pocket, just hard physical labor for no pay, from 7 in the morning till late at night, 24/7 with no vacation, no life and no future, constant beatings and fear.

When many of us think of the word "slavery" we imagine the large plantations in the American South pre-Civil War and the slave auctions, and chattel slavery or if we think in Jewish terms we recall our slavery in Egypt and maybe movies we have seen that depict those horrendous times and conditions, but we rarely think about in the world we live in today.



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What is the difference between a slave and a free person? List all the things that you can think of, but at least 5 aspects that define slavery.

Students will hopefully list: not being paid for your work, being restricted in where and when you can go or leave where you work, abusive conditions, fear for one's life, no control of your future etc.



The Story of James Kofi Anan from Ghana, Africa (15-20 minutes)

Read and discuss what is revealed in the short biography below. The text is from a sermon by Rabbi Gordon Tucker found [here](#).⁷⁹

James's story began in a way that is also familiar from the Torah. Exodus 21:7 -- "should a man sell his daughter as a maidservant...." Why would someone do that to his daughter? The answer is sad and simple: too many mouths to feed. And so it was with James, the twelfth child in his family, not in ancient times, but in the 1980s. And he told us his own story as we drove towards the ugly history of the Cape Coast castle.⁸⁰ At age six, James was sold into indentured bondage, working involuntarily in Ghana's Volta region's fishing villages. He worked as much as 17 hours a day. Food and shelter were scant. Abuse was constant. And as he grew in age and was somewhat stronger, the tasks became more back-breaking and more perilous. He would routinely be sent diving down into the river beds to free fishing nets that had gotten caught below. The dangers included bites from lethal water snakes, or encounters with other very vicious and treacherous fish. Worst of all was the very real possibility (it often happened to other children) of getting caught in the nets and never making it to the surface. In his early teens, James decided to escape, and he succeeded.

James couldn't read or write, like every other member of his family. But he decided that he needed to learn English, so he borrowed books from young children in school so he could begin to teach himself to read. He worked in order to pay for his own schooling, more than ten years after the normal age for schooling . . . But he proved that the illiteracy in his family, as in so many others, is usually not a matter of ability, but of economic circumstance. In an astonishingly short period of time, he broke national records for scores on standardized exams. He went to college and graduated.

⁷⁹ <https://www.truah.org/resources/slavery-then-and-now/>

⁸⁰ Cape Coast Castle is one of about thirty "slave castles," or large commercial forts, built on the Gold Coast of West Africa (now Ghana) by European traders. It was originally built by the Swedes for trade in timber and gold, but later used in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Other Ghanaian slave castles include Elmina Castle and Fort Christiansborg. They were used to hold slaves before they were loaded onto ships and sold in the Americas, especially the Caribbean. This "gate of no return" was the last stop before crossing the Atlantic Ocean. (from Wikipedia)



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Questions for Discussion:

1. Why did James find himself in slavery?
2. Read the entire story carefully - what basic rights do you think that James was denied?
3. Did James' slavery have all the elements you listed above?

Facts about Contemporary Slavery (10-15 minutes)

Trigger Questions:

- How many slaves do you think exist in the world today?
- What might different types of slavery that exist, which are not exactly like the slavery of pre-civil war America?

Read the following q & a and definitions, adapted from Free The Slaves, and discuss:

How many people are in slavery?

Because slavery is a crime and a fugitive enterprise, it is difficult to get exact estimates of its magnitude. The International Labor Organization (ILO) puts the figure at 42 million (worldwide) . . . According to the ILO, about a quarter of the slaves are children. The majority are women and girls. Slavery exists in every country - no country is immune. However, the vast majority of slaves are to be found in south Asia (India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh) and sub-Saharan Africa.

What does slavery look like?

Slavery manifests in different ways. Here are the most common forms of slavery:

Debt bondage – also called bonded labor. This typically involves a person accepting a loan from a moneylender. The borrower (and often his or her family as well) is expected to “work off” the loan. In practice, the amount owed continues to grow over time and the loan can never be repaid.

Contract slavery – where a worker is deceived into slavery through the use of a false employment contract. Slaveholders create contracts to lure individuals with promises of employment, yet once they arrive at the workplace they are forced to work for no pay and cannot escape.



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Sex trafficking – when an adult engages in commercial sex act, such as prostitution, as a result of force, fraud, threat or coercion. The “consent” of the victim is not relevant – if threat or force has been applied the act cannot be consensual. Child sex trafficking differs from adult sex trafficking in that children can never be considered to have consented to the sale of sex acts.

Forced or servile marriage – when a person, usually a woman or girl, has been forced into marriage against her will. The girl may be sold by her family, given to repay a family debt, or given to restore the girl’s “honor.”

Domestic servitude – where household workers, such as maids, are not permitted to leave the household in which they work; they typically receive little or no pay and are frequently abused.

Worst forms of child labor – these are situations in which children are held in forced labor, or forced into prostitution, pornography, or other illicit activities.

Child combat –in violation of international norms forbidding the use of children as members of armed forces.⁸¹

Slavery unfortunately exists in the United States as well. Read this passage from a column by Nicholas Kristoff in *The New York Times* in 2013:

“Who are these modern American slaves?

“One survivor I met last month in New Orleans, Clemmie Greenlee, had her life taken over by a pimp at age 12. She said she spent years having sex with up to 50 men a day. On average, she was beaten 10 times a month, for not meeting her daily quota or other offenses.

“Why didn’t she run away? Because, she says, of a mix of fear, Stockholm syndrome, emotional manipulation by pimps, hopelessness fueled by drug addiction and distrust of the authorities.

“Eventually, Greenlee was able to escape that life, and she now runs a residential program called Eden House⁸² to help other women start over. An African-American, she says that what trafficked women endure is absolutely an echo of what her ancestors endured on plantations.

⁸¹ from www.freetheslaves.net

⁸² <http://www.edenhousenola.org>



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"If you're putting a whip on my back because I'm not picking enough cotton, or if you're beating me because I'm not earning my quota, it's the same thing," she said. "It's slavery."

Slavery isn't as formal or as widespread in the United States today as it was in the 1850s, of course, but it's still easy to find. Go to backpage.com, the leading website for prostitution advertising and search for your hometown. Some of the women selling sex there are adults voluntarily in the business, but many are women or girls under the control of pimps who take every penny they earn, brand them with tattoos and beat them if they don't earn enough.

Empathy and Awareness in the Jewish Tradition

The Torah was revealed and given to the Israelites in a world in which slavery existed for many centuries and was deeply entrenched in the very fabric of all of society. The Torah did not abolish slavery as it conceded to the human realities of the time, but it did seek to limit its scope and limits its cruelties. In doing that it opened the door to slowly undermine and eventually bring the world to a rejection of this evil phenomenon. These values eventually became the basis that drove many of the abolitionists throughout the western world to work for the eradication of slavery.

Read below these passages from the Torah and rabbinic wisdom that point us in the type of empathy we should have and cultivate, specifically because we as a people experienced the pain and suffering of slavery and should use that to make the world a better place.

Biblical Sources

Exodus 22

ט וגר, לא תלחץ; ואתם,
ידעתם את-נפש הגר--כי-
גרים הייתם, בארץ
מצרים.

9 And a stranger shalt thou not oppress; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.



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Deuteronomy 15

יב כִּי-יִמְכַר לְךָ אֲחִיד
הָעֶבְרִי, אוֹ הָעֶבְרִיָּה--
וְעָבַדְךָ, שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים; וּבִשְׁנָה,
הַשְּׁבִיעִת, תְּשַׁלְּחֶנּוּ חֲפָשִׁי,
מֵעִמְךָ.

יג וְכִי-תְשַׁלְּחֶנּוּ חֲפָשִׁי,
מֵעִמְךָ--לֹא תְשַׁלְּחֶנּוּ,
רִיקָם.

יד הַעֲנִיק תַּעֲנִיק, לוֹ,
מִצֹּאֲנֶךָ, וּמִגֶּרְנְךָ וּמִקֶּבֶךָ:
אֲשֶׁר בֵּרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ,
תִּתֶּן-לוֹ.

טו וְזָכַרְתָּ, כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ
בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, וַיִּפְדֶּךָ, יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֶיךָ; עַל-כֵּן אֲנֹכִי מְצֻדָּה,
אֶת-הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה--הַיּוֹם.

טז וְהָיָה כִּי-יֹאמַר אֵלֶיךָ,
לֹא אֵצֶא מֵעִמְךָ: כִּי אֶהְבְּךָ
וְאֶת-בֵּיתְךָ, כִּי-טוֹב לוֹ
עִמְךָ.

יז וְלָקַחְתָּ אֶת-הַמַּרְצֵעַ,
וְנָתַתָּה בְּאָזְנוֹ וּבִדְלֹתָ,
וְהָיָה לְךָ, עֶבֶד עוֹלָם; וְאִף
לְאִמְתְּךָ, תַּעֲשֶׂה-כֵן.

יח לֹא-יִקָּשֶׁה בְּעֵינֶיךָ,
בְּשַׁלְּחֶךָ אֶתוֹ חֲפָשִׁי מֵעִמְךָ--
כִּי מִשְׁנֶה שְׂכָר שְׂכִיר,
עָבַדְךָ שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים; וּבִרְכֶּךָ ה'
אֱלֹהֶיךָ, בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה.

12 If thy brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, he shall serve thee six years; and in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.

13 And when thou let him go free from thee, thou shalt not let him go empty;

14 thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy threshing-floor, and out of thy winepress; of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him.

15 And thou shalt remember that thou was a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee; therefore I command thee this thing to-day.

16 And it shall be, if he say unto thee: 'I will not go out from thee'; because he love thee and thy house, because he fares well with thee;

17 then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear and into the door, and he shall be thy bondman forever. And also unto thy bondwoman thou shalt do likewise.

18 It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou let him go free from thee; for to the double of the hire of a hireling hath he served thee six years; and the LORD thy God will bless thee in all that thou does.



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Rabbinic Sources

לפִּיכֶךָ נִבְרָא אָדָם יְחִידִי בְּעוֹלָם,
לְלִמְדָּךְ, שְׁכָל הַמֵּאֲבָד נֶפֶשׁ אַחַת,
מֵעַלִים עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב כָּאֵלֹו אֶבֶד עוֹלָם מְלֵא.
וְכָל הַמְּקִיִּים נֶפֶשׁ אַחַת, מֵעַלִים עָלָיו כָּאֵלֹו קִיִּים עוֹלָם מְלֵא.
וּמִפְּנֵי שְׁלוֹם הַבְּרִיּוֹת,
שֶׁלֹא יֵאמֶר אָדָם לַחֲבֵרוֹ: אֲבָא גָדוֹל מֵאַבְיָךְ.
וְשֶׁלֹא יֵאמְרוּ הַמִּינִים, רְשׁוּיֹת הַרְבֵּה בְּשָׂמִים.
לְהַגִּיד גְּדֻלָּתוֹ שֶׁל מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא,
שֶׁאֲדָם טוֹבֵעַ מֵאֵה מְטַבְּעוֹת בְּחוֹתָם אֶחָד וְכָלֹן דּוֹמִין זֶה לָזֶה,
מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא טוֹבֵעַ אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּחוֹתָמוֹ שֶׁל
אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן וְאִין אֶחָד מֵהֶם דּוֹמֵה לַחֲבֵרוֹ.
לפִּיכֶךָ לְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד לּוֹמֵר: בְּשִׁבְלִי נִבְרָא הָעוֹלָם. (משנה סנהדרין פרק
ד:ה)

"The original man was created a single individual in order to promote peace among the creatures, so no man could say to his fellow, 'my progenitor is greater than your progenitor' . . . [and] to declare the greatness of the King of kings, the Holy One blessed be He, for a man mints one hundred coins on a single mold and they all are identical to one another, but the King of kings, the Holy One blessed be He, mints every human being in the mold of primeval Adam, yet none is identical to his fellow. Accordingly, each can say, 'For my sake the world was created!'" (*Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5*)

Thus, from Creation itself the Torah teaches us that all men are truly equal. Maimonides read it as follows: "The mold of primeval Adam" – the form of the human species, within which lies man's humanity and in which all human beings



share."⁸³ However, humanity went astray. Men subjugated one another and distinguished between slaves and masters.

These distinctions of status lack substance and are not grounded in reality, for the Creator regards them all as equal. Only one whose imagination is depraved will disregard the fact that all mankind share in Adam's mold; and only the wicked will rule that the status of a slave is sub-human. "If I despise the cause of my servant or of my maid-servant when they contend with me, what shall I do when God rises up? When He remembers, what shall I answer Him? Did not He that made me in the womb make him? Did not the One fashion both of us in the womb?" (Job 31:13- 15)

The Torah revolutionized the institution of slavery. Some fundamental principles could not be violated, and they set a floor that prevented descent to the vile conduct of the nations. So, for example, in contrast to the laws of other nations, the slave's life did not become the master's property but remained that of the Master of all: "If a man strike his slave or his maidservant with a rod, causing death, the death shall be avenged." The slave may be given over to labor for the master, but the Torah remains concerned about the slave's soul as well. The Sabbath is sacred not only for the master but also for the slave. "On the seventh day you shall rest" – referring to the master; but also "so that your ox and ass may rest and the child of your maidservant and the stranger may be refreshed. You are obligated to provide rest even for the animals that work for you, but the Sabbath affords the slave more than rest and respite from enslavement; in his case, Scripture says "be refreshed," and you are obligated to allow him to cease working."⁸⁴

Talmud, Bava Metzia 10a

והאמר רב פועל יכול לחזור בו אפי' בחצי היום אמר ליה כל כמה דלא הדר ביה כיד בעל הבית הוא כי הדר ביה טעמא אחרינא הוא דכתיב (ויקרא כה:נה) כי לי בני ישראל עבדים עבדי הם ולא עבדים לעבדים

A laborer may resign from his work even in the middle of the day? — He [R. Nahman] answered him [again]: Yes, but as long as he does not retract [and he continues in the employment] he is like the hand of the employer. When he does retract [he can withdraw from the employment] for another reason, for it is written:

⁸³ Commentary to the Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:5

⁸⁴ from an essay by Rabbi Nahum Rabinovitch, The Way of the Torah



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For unto me the children of Israel are servants; they are My servants — but not servants to servants.

Some take-aways from these passages:

- What is the moral basis in our tradition against slavery?
- How does the *Torah* try to get us there?
- What lessons are we supposed to take from our experience in Egypt?
- Can one be forced to work against his or her will?

Wrap Up (2-3 minutes)

In this session we have examined the reality of slavery in the contemporary world in which we live in. Sadly, slavery is not simply a thing of the past but affects millions of people, including many kids who are the same age as you are and have dreams and hopes just as you do, but are forced into slavery and often are stuck there for decades.

We learned about some of these harsh realities that currently exist in the world and some different variations on slavery that are part of our world. We examined some sources in the Jewish tradition that direct us toward the *Torah's* ultimate teaching about slavery and our attitude of empathy that we should have.

The second part of this session will focus on actions we can and should take as Jews and human beings in the face of these realities.

Session Two: What *Can* We Do? What *We* Can Do

Part One: Introduction (10 minutes)

You have a really big project due in school in a month or a project to do at home, like writing 150 thank you notes to friends and family (many of whom you don't really know) for your b'nai mitzvah gifts.

What are the biggest obstacles to getting those things done?

Students may list things like: "It is really hard, I have so many other things to do, It is too much to do and it is overwhelming, I am lazy."



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Consider this story:

The fool walks into the study hall and sees everyone studying Torah and asks: "how does one learn Torah?" to which he is answered, "first you begin with the Torah, and then after that you go on to the prophets and then you go on to *ketuvim*, and then to the Mishnah, and then to Talmud, etc." The fool says, "when do I have time to learn all that?" and leaves.

Now consider this parable:

A loaf of bread was hanging from the rafters, the fool says: "it is impossible to get it, while the intelligent person says: "did not someone put it up there?" and he brings a ladder or a stick and brings it down. So too, the fool says, "when will I learn all of the Torah?" and leaves, while the wise person - what does he do? He studies one portion each day, until he completes the entire Torah." - *Devarim Rabbah* 8:3

- What element is keeping the fool from becoming a scholar?
- The story potentially has a "happy ending" if a person puts in the daily effort to learn Torah. Can you think of projects or work in your own life that progressed in a similar, gradual fashion?
- Is there value to doing a project even when you don't know if you will actually achieve all the goals or the work?
- Can we think we think of some big projects in human history that might have seemed impossible, but with effort day in and day out, and hope, the project was accomplished?

Examples the instructor might introduce include:

- *Putting a man on the moon within ten years of announcing it*
- *Eradicating polio from the western world after centuries when people thought it would be with us forever*

The examples and teachings all point to the danger of giving up hope: *יאוש*. Many thinkers have noted that giving up hope is one of the greatest impediments to achieving positive things in one's own personal life or in affecting the world. Famous examples of this idea include the Hasidic teaching of R. Nachman of Braslav (early 19th century) in Yiddish:



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גוועלט, יידן, נישט מייא זיין

"For the sake of Heaven, Jews, do not ever give up hope" (this phrase was later scrawled on the walls of the Breslaver Shteibel in Warsaw during World War II) and is at the heart of the famous statement of Rebbe Nachman that became a mantra and a song among all youth groups:

כל העולם כולו גשר צר מאד , והעיקר לא לפחד כלל

"The whole world is a very narrow bridge, and the essential thing is not to have fear at all."

Of course, in our own contemporary history, the founding and flourishing of the State of Israel is a testament to the hope of 2,000 years of yearning and longing for a return to our homeland. Indeed the very national anthem of the State of Israel and the Jewish people for the last hundred years is called *HaTikvah*, התקווה which concludes with the words:

As long as the Jewish
spirit is yearning deep in
the heart,

With eyes turned toward
the East, looking toward
Zion,

Then our hope - the two-
thousand-year-old hope -
will not be lost:

To be a free people in our
land,

The land of Zion and
Jerusalem.

כל עוד בלבב פנימה
נפש יהודי הומייה
ולפאתי מזרח
קדימה
עין לציון צופיה.

עוד לא אבדה
תקוותינו

התקווה בת שנות
אלפיים
להיות עם חופשי
בארצנו

ארץ ציון וירושלים



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In the pursuit of lofty religious, spiritual, social and political goals. It is critical not to be overwhelmed by the size and dimension of the problem and to have a vision of what can be changed. This applies to our issue as well of tackling contemporary slavery.

Part Two: Going Deeper, Generating Ideas (20 minutes)

רבי טרפון אומר, היום קצר והמלאכה מרבה, והפועלים עצלים, והשכר הרבה,
ובעל הבית

דוחק: הוא היה אומר, לא עליך המלאכה לגמור, ולא אתה בן חורין לביטל
ממנה.

Rabbi Tarfon used to say, "The day is short and there is much work to accomplish, and the workers are lazy and the reward is great and the Master (i.e. God) is demanding.

He used to say: "You are not required to finish the job; neither are you free to desist from it."

-Pirkei Avot 2:15-16

This famous rabbinic dictum points us to a second element in our responsibility to the world. We may not be able to achieve all our goals, and may not have a "happy ending" to all our struggles. However, we have a responsibility to make the world a better place, even incrementally, from the one we found when we came into it.

Let's now focus on our topic of contemporary slavery that we learned about in our first session/lesson.

[Watch this short clip](#)⁸⁵ from a number of years back about modern-day slavery. The reality is still with us.

Note that this video was made in 2013. Today's estimates on the number of slaves have been revised upward – to 42 million.

⁸⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0xWMXaYdBk>



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Ask the students:

Can you think of ideas or projects that we here in the west, both adults and teens might do to help change this reality of contemporary slavery, even in small measures?

Students might list or discuss:

- Lobby or write to their congressmen or the President about these practices throughout the world and ask them what they are doing to try to change them.
- Research what the U.N. and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are doing about it and what programs they can get involved in to help raise awareness or change the status quo.
- Find out what companies in the U.S. rely on slave labor in other countries to produce their goods and services. Consider letter campaigns, protest marches, or rallies encouraging them to change their practices.
- Go on a mission to other parts of the world or the United States and see conditions for oneself.
- Contact local anti-trafficking groups and find out what can be done in our area.

Part Three: Concrete Suggestions and Action Plans (10 minutes)

Why does slavery exist today?

In almost all countries in the world today, on a formal level slavery is prohibited. However, in many instances these laws are not enforced. Thus, people who are living in great poverty, or do not have minimal educational backgrounds are often taken advantage of by unscrupulous people who exploit them for monetary gain and cheap labor.

So what can we do?

- Educate ourselves more and more about the problem and realities and what we can do. There are terrific websites like <http://www.freetheslaves.net> and <http://www.notforsalecampaign.org> that have a wealth of information for us to read and absorb and act upon.



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- Donate money and time to organizations like Free the Slaves, Breaking the Chain Through Education, or Challenging Heights that liberate people and work to abolish slavery. They educate vulnerable populations about their rights, put pressure on governments to enforce the anti-slavery laws, and help poor people obtain education and credit, so they will be less vulnerable to enslavement and exploitation.
- Support groups that work with survivors of slavery and human trafficking – including those mentioned above and, here in the United States, Polaris Project, among others.
- Consider where our clothing and food comes from and investigate whether the companies and stores we patronize are beneficiaries of slave labor or other exploitive practices. Visit knowthechain.org to find out about the products you use.

Read this passage below from the last section of Rabbi Gordon Tucker's sermon cited in the first part of these sessions and think about what we should think about each and every day, even if we can't do anything "big."

"There is a rabbinic text that became even more vivid for me on that powerful day on the Ghanian coast. It comes from what is probably a ninth-century compilation of *midrashim* entitled "*Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*." In chapter five of that work, there is a fantastic embellishment of what the *Torah* says happened on the third day of creation, when the waters were pushed aside and down to the deep, in order to make dry land and the sustenance of life on earth possible. Here is part of what it imagines: "At the beginning of day three, the earth was as flat as a board, with the waters covering it entirely. But when the word came forth from on high, mountains and hills arose from the sides of the earth, and the waters were scattered about, as valleys were formed and the waters flowed into the valleys . . . and . . . there are deep waters beneath the surface of the earth, on which the earth rides. Rabbi Joshua said that the depth of the earth is a distance of sixty years' walk. And there is one fountain that sits immediately over *Gehinnom* (i.e. a fiery hell), which flows from there, producing [warm] waters that provide pleasure for human beings." My first reaction when I first encountered this text a few years ago was to say, "Wow, they found a way to rehabilitate the reputation of *Gehinnom*, hell; at least it provides some pleasure after all!" And then I realized that this was not at all what Rabbi



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Joshua and his colleagues were trying to tell us. This was no idle speculation and word play. And they were not rehabilitating *Gehinnom*. In fact, they were doing the exact opposite – they were reminding us to be aware of the fact **that the pleasures of many of our paradises are often situated right above somebody else's hell, and are made possible by those hells.** That's how it was in the slave castle, where the commander's and ship captain's quarters were beautifully apportioned spaces, appointed in a most lovely way on the upper floor, literally right over the dungeons and the tunnels. Delicacies were served above, sea breezes came in through the windows, views of the inland hills abounded, and the *Gehinnom*, the hell, of thousands of human beings at any moment – and millions of them over time – were kept out of sight. The beloved Christian hymn "Amazing Grace," I learned, was written by John Newton, who was once a captain of one of these slave ships. No doubt he took many meals and slept soundly on the upper floors of one of these castles on the African Atlantic coast, right over the dungeons. And that's what he meant, years later, when he awoke to what he did in his "wretched" year and wrote in this hymn: "was blind, but now I see." It is a Jewish idea, this business of awakening to that to which we were blind. We would have written the hymn a little differently, though. In Jewish vocabulary, it would not be "grace" that opens our eyes, but rather responsibility. Rabbi Joshua noted drily that it's sixty year's walk down into the depths. What he no doubt meant was that we'd like to think so. And it might as well be for all we think about it. But it's not true. James's hell and those of others like him cannot possibly be unconnected in this global world and economy from my and your pleasures and privileges. It is not sixty year's walk any more, and it never really was. Perhaps my biggest lesson was the responsibility to open the eyes. The clothes that we buy cheaply because of sweat shops overseas, the carpets that are made by indentured child laborers in India, the ways in which we arrogantly consume so much of the world's resources and insist that we have a right to low energy costs – these and multiple other phenomena (which we can, and should, think of) are the ways in which our pleasures flow from hells elsewhere. You might protest, correctly, that the same interconnection that makes this true also prevents us from being completely pure in our lives. How could we possibly eliminate all hellish taint from the things that we acquire to live and the investments that we make? The answer is: we can't be 100% pure. But there is something that we can do, and indeed have a responsibility to do. We can be open-



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eyed, and compassionate, and caring, and not insular. We can reject the temptation to say of any suffering in the world that it's not our fault and thus none of our responsibility. We may not be able to avoid all harm in the world. But since it is always distinctly possible that the fires of suffering anywhere are warming the springs in which we luxuriate, we must pay attention to the ways in which we can help alleviate the suffering, even if it lessens our own pleasures. We can do no less as members of the human race made in God's image."

Conclusion and Challenge

Discuss and write about the following:

What is your personal plan and commitment for what you can realistically do?



Curriculum and Programming: **College, University, and Adult Learning**

America's Legacy of Slavery

Rabbi Lev Meirowitz-Nelson

Session One: Photo-Text Study

Session Two: Museum of Motivation

Goals

- Reach a target audience of adults, including college students and upper-grade high school students
- Establish an enduring understanding that America's economy, from its earliest beginnings until the present day, has been built, in part, by exploiting workers at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. This longstanding legacy is directly implicated in the continued existence of slavery today.
- After the sessions, students will be able to:
 - Explain how different forms of slavery continued into the present day, and articulate their feelings about that fact.
 - Articulate the role that collective memory plays in shaping a society, and express an opinion about how America remembers its legacy of slavery.
 - Use Jewish language to express why slavery is wrong.

Materials

- 2 sheets poster paper and markers (session 1)
- Images for photo text study (session 1)
- Text on forgetting and remembering (session 1)
- Texts on Jews and slavery in America; copy "5 ways to get involved" on reverse (session 2)
- Signs for Museum of Motivation (session 2)



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Timeline

Session One:

- 10-15 min Induction
- 30-45 min Photo text study and Slavery information
- 5-10 min Summing up

Session Two:

- 20-30 min *Hevrutah* study
- 15-20 min Museum of Motivation
- 10 min Action steps

Session One: Photo-Text Study

Process/Activities

1. Induction

On one large sheet of paper (poster-size), write the word “Slavery” in the center. On another, write the word “Remember” and in Hebrew “זכור”. Split the group in half and invite each half to cluster around one of the sheets, using markers to free-associate based on the central word. After a few minutes, have the groups switch and work on the other poster, then allow a few more minutes for them to look back at the first sheet and see what the other half of the group added there. Bring the group back together for a brief discussion on what stood out for them on each sheet.

What to look for:

Slavery

- Presumably, many people will believe that slavery ended at the Civil War. If anyone has indicated something more recent, ask what they know about it.
- Draw out key images—slave ships, manacles, overseers, etc.

Memory

- If no one has brought up Shabbat (“Remember the Sabbath day...” Exodus 20:8), raise it yourself. What does the command of remembering Shabbat entail? It means we do active things to



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instantiate Shabbat, to make Shabbat part of our society; it's not a passive memory. This is the key take-home point.

- It's possible the Holocaust will come up. If it does, it's an opportunity to discuss remembering something awful and making sure that others remember it. Depending on the politics of your community, you may or may not want to talk about African-American slavery as a form of genocide. Even if you don't (that's fine), it's still fair to draw an analogy about a terrible crime perpetrated by a society. If the Holocaust does not come up organically, you might choose to bring it up or not.

2. Visual text study

We're now going to look at three snapshots of slavery in different periods of American history. You can print these out, project them on the wall, or both.



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Newspaper article

ATLANTA, GA., WEDNESDAY, MAY 27 1903

NEGROES HELD IN SERVITUDE

Alleged That Peonage Is Being Practiced in Alabama.

United States Government Is Investigating the Charge—Chief Wilkie Gives Details of the Working of the Peonage System.

Washington, May 26.—At the request of the department of justice, the United States secret service has undertaken the work of investigating the charge of peonage, or holding another in servitude to work out a debt, which has been made against persons living in the vicinity of Montgomery, Ala. The punishment provided by the statute for this crime is a fine of not less than \$1,000 nor more than \$5,000, or imprisonment of not less than one year nor more than five. One man.

FUNDS FOR CAMP RATHER SH

But Governor Will Use of the State Militia Fund.

Governor Terrell and Adjutant Robertson are very much worried by the news that they have received from Washington to the effect that there is only \$25,000 available for the expenses of the encampment of the Georgia troops, instead of the \$125,000 they supposed was there. It is, however, that they were mistaken on the subject, and now, as the encampment is being completed for the end of the month, they have just been notified that they are \$100,000 less than they had calculated. This state of affairs necessitates the question of an encampment for all the troops in some doubt. Governor Terrell does not know yet what steps he will take in the matter, but he will not know until the calculation of the expenses of the encampment has been completed and laid before him. This work is now being done by W. G. O'Neal, inspector general, and will not be completed until the first of the week.



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Check that everyone has noticed where and when the article is from (at the top—Atlanta, 1903).

Have someone read the article aloud.

Ask for initial reactions.

If anybody asks, or you want to add these data to the conversation, a 1903 fine of between \$1000-\$5000 in 2013 dollars, would be worth roughly \$60,000-\$300,000.⁸⁶

Check that everyone understands the system being described. A person who owed a debt and could not pay it, or was arrested and owed a fine or court fees and could not pay them, was “leased out” to perform unpaid manual labor and work off the debt.

By a show of hands, how many people know debt peonage was still practiced in this country as late as 1903? Would they be surprised to know it was not finally fully discontinued until 1944?

The legal ownership of people is called “chattel slavery.” How is this system similar to chattel slavery? How is it different? Any opinions on if it is better or worse?

Documentary

Share a quote from a Florida grower, who said the following in the 1960 documentary *Harvest of Shame* (1960): “We used to own our slaves. Now we just rent them.”

Explain the background: *Harvest of Shame* was a Peabody Award-winning documentary by CBS journalist Ed Murrow. The entire 52-minute broadcast is [available on YouTube](http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/youtube.com/watch?v=yJTVF_dya7E).⁸⁷

How do students respond to the quote from the farm owner (which airs within the first few minutes of the documentary)?

⁸⁶ Based on <http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare>

⁸⁷ youtube.com/watch?v=yJTVF_dya7E



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Apartment building image



Photo by the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking, 2004. Used by permission.

This looks like an ordinary apartment building in Los Angeles, but in fact it's a sweatshop in which seventy-two Thai women were enslaved for eight years, from 1987-1995^[1]. A group of traffickers lured the women in with promises of good wages, then forced them to work up to eighteen hours a day making clothing for well-known brands for leading department stores. The workers were not allowed to leave the compound.

What do you notice about this picture? Does anything surprise you? [It is totally ordinary-looking.] What does this picture tell you about trafficking in the United States today? [Trafficking hides in plain sight.]



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Capitol Image

Photo by Fritz Myer, June 2010, Courtesy of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

First, make sure people have noticed the title on the truck. The Florida Modern Slavery Museum was created by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW—the tomato farmworkers’ organization based out of the town of Immokalee—rhymes with broccoli—Florida). It is housed in the same kind of truck that 15 workers were locked in overnight by their employers/slaveholders in 2008.

Ask for reactions to the idea that slavery still exists in America today.

- Ask for reactions to the juxtaposition of images—the slavery museum and the Capitol. You can raise the temperature, if needed, by reminding people that the Capitol building was built, in part, using slave labor. What does this image say about the history of slavery in our country?



- Locking workers in a truck is the exception, not the rule of today's slavery in the United States. What other ways can people think of that slaves might be held? (Answers to look for: debt real or invented, fear, psychological manipulation, threats to family back home.)

3. Modern Slavery Facts

Briefly share some information about modern slavery:

- It's hard to get accurate counts of numbers of slaves in the United States, because slavery is often a hidden crime. According to a conservative estimate by Kevin Bales and Ron Soodalter⁸⁸ at any given time there are about 50,000 slaves in the US. Between 14,000 - 17,000 new slaves arrive in the country every year. They work in every industry imaginable, in all fifty states.
- The International Labor Organization estimated in 2018 that there are 42 million slaves worldwide. Even though the vast majority of slaves are outside the U.S., we still benefit from them when products that we buy cheaply are made by slave labor.
- Take the time to tell people that the CIW's Fair Food Program has made a huge difference in the lives and working conditions of tomato farmworkers in Florida. From being called "ground zero for modern-day slavery" by Senator Bernie Sanders in the 1990's, it is now "probably the best working environment in American agriculture," according to Susan L. Marquis, dean of the Pardee RAND Graduate School, a public policy institution in Santa Monica, CA⁸⁹. Since the program's implementation in 2011, not a single case of slavery has come to light, even though it is now easier than ever for workers to report abuses. While this is not mostly a lesson about the CIW, they are a bright spot in an otherwise bleak discussion, and show that change is possible.

⁸⁸ in *The Slave Next Door*, 2009, p.7

⁸⁹ http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/25/business/in-florida-tomato-fields-a-penny-buys-progress.html?_r=0



4. Summing Up: How We Remember America

By way of starting to wrap up, ask: How do we benefit today from the legacy of slavery in this country?

- Slavery helped to build our country's economy.
- Money and power consolidated in the hands of European-Americans.
- We can buy fruits and vegetables, clothing, rugs, electronics and other consumer goods cheaply because of slavery or related, less extreme forms of worker abuse.

Hand out the source sheet with biblical text and questions that immediately follows.



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Source Sheet

"A new king arose over Egypt
who knew not Joseph."
(Exodus 1:8)

וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ-חָדָשׁ עַל-מִצְרָיִם אֲשֶׁר
לֹא-יָדָע אֶת-יֹסֵף:

"God heard their cry, and God
remembered God's covenant
with Abraham, Isaac, and
Jacob. God saw the Israelites
and God knew." (Exodus 2:24-
25)

וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת-נַאֲקָתָם וַיִּזְכֹּר
אֱלֹהִים אֶת-בְּרִיתוֹ אֶת-אַבְרָהָם
אֶת-יִצְחָק וְאֶת-יַעֲקֹב:
וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּדַע
אֱלֹהִים:

- What do these verses teach us about forgetting and remembering?
- The sequence of verbs is God hears, remembers, sees, and knows. Do things you see and hear directly feel more real to you than simply reading or hearing about them? If slavery, both ancient and modern, is largely hidden from our sight, does that change how you relate to it?
- What do we most often remember about the history of slavery in America? What do we most often forget? Why do you think this is the case?
- What steps does America take to craft a certain kind of memory of our country's history? What alternate steps might we take to better remember the legacy of slavery?

Session Two: Museum of Motivation

In Session One, we looked at slavery in American history and its continued presence in the U.S. Today, we look more closely at the Jewish role in this story, and how it shapes our understanding of America.

Hevrutah Study

Ask people to split into pairs and read and discuss the following two excerpts.

Excerpt #1

"Jews Mostly Supported Slavery—Or Kept Silent—During Civil War," by Ken Yellis.
The Forward, 7/5/13



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Although few Jews, like other Americans, opposed slavery at the war's outset, many came to feel that the suffering of the war needed to be about something important: the end of slavery and the creation of a different America. The experience of Jews in New York City is indicative of this process in some ways. By far America's largest Jewish community, New York's Jews were overwhelmingly pro-southern, pro-slavery, and anti-Lincoln in the early years of the war. Increasingly, however, as both the toll of the war and the North's military victories mounted, feelings began to shift toward "Father Abraham," his party, the Union and eventually, emancipation. Close to 2,000 Jews from New York State joined the Union forces.

As historian Howard Rock sums up, "The war was a transformative moment for Jews' understanding of American democracy"...The outcome of the nation's great existential crisis made possible the open and most welcoming society Jews had ever encountered...

The Jews caught up in that crisis were transformed by it and, in turn, helped transform the America that emerged from it.

Discussion Questions

- Are you surprised to learn that northern Jews largely supported slavery? Why or why not?
- How do you think Jews have helped transform America?
- How is Passover part of the lens through which you understand American democracy? What are the strengths and drawbacks of this lens?

Excerpt #2

"Passover in the Confederacy," by Sue Eisenfeld, *New York Times*, 4/17/14

Rabbi Lance J. Sussman, senior rabbi at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park, Pa., and visiting professor of American Jewish history at Princeton, [says]...The Passover narrative...didn't become an abolitionist-related story until after World War II and the Civil Rights era. "Originally, Passover was theological. It's about redemption and the power of God. It's not really about setting human beings free in a universal way. The text says that God frees the Hebrew slaves because God loves the Hebrews. God doesn't free all slaves for all of humanity or send Moses out to become the William Lloyd Garrison of the ancient free world."



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Discussion Questions

- Does the universalizing of the Passover story strengthen or diminish its power for you? Why?
- Modern slavery is enmeshed in a web of social issues. These excerpts hint at some of them. What do you notice? What other factors do you think create the circumstances that allow modern slavery to thrive?

Museum of Motivation

Place the following quotes around the room. Give learners time to walk around and read all of them—as well as discussing in *hevrutah* (study pairs) if time permits—and then have them stand next to the one that they feel best motivates them (and could be used to motivate others) in the fight against slavery. (*Hevrutah* pairs are free to disagree and each pick different quotes.) Ask learners to delve more deeply into the quote they picked—not just to accept it as a slogan but to ask themselves/each other what the ramifications are if we take this teaching seriously.

Quote #1

Genesis 1:27

כֹּז וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם
בְּצִלְמוֹ, בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא
אֹתוֹ: זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה, בָּרָא אֹתָם.

Image of God

27 And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.

Quote #2

Leviticus 25:42

מִבְּכִי-עֲבָדֵי הֵם, אֲשֶׁר-
הוֹצֵאתִי אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ
מִצְרָיִם; לֹא יִמְכְּרוּ, מִמִּכְרַת
עֶבֶד.

For they are My slaves

42 For they are My servants, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as bondmen.

Quote #3

Maimonides Laws of Slaves 9:8

It is permitted to work a non-Jewish slave harshly, but even though this is the law, it is the way of loving-kindness and wisdom to be merciful and pursue



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justice by not making a slave carry a heavy yoke, nor cause them distress, and one should give [a slave] all foods and beverages...the *Torah* has given them over to slavery, but not to humiliation.

A person should not speak [to a slave] with much shouting and anger—rather, he should speak to him pleasantly and should listen to his complaints, as is evident from Job's good ways for which he was praised...

Cruelty and arrogance are only found among non-Jewish idolaters, but the descendants of our father Abraham—Israel, to whom God gave the good influence of the *Torah* and commanded them laws and statutes—are righteous and merciful to all.

Quote #4

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 4

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

Quote #5

Deuteronomy 10:19

Love the stranger

(similar commandments appear at least 35 other places in the Torah)

יִט וְאַהֲבַתְּם, אֶת-הַגֵּר: כִּי-
גֵרִים הֵייתֶם, בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם.

19 Love ye therefore the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.



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Discussion Guide

#1 (image of God) roots the argument in the creation of the world, something inherent in the human-divine relationship, as opposed to #2, which is rooted more in the “historical” action of God redeeming Israel. #5 is more about empathy and remembering the experience of being slaves, whereas #2 is more about to whom we remain slaves to today; it questions unconditional freedom. #3 is unique in acknowledging the reality that slavery can be part of the social order, but what is its underlying message about how human beings (Jews in particular) should behave? #4 is a secular source (though some might say it has spiritual or moral power), which leads to an interesting question about the relative power of religious vs. non-religious arguments.

If one or more quotes have nobody standing at them, ask learners why they didn’t choose those quotes.

Wrapping up: Action Opportunities

There’s a lot that needs to be done, and it certainly can seem overwhelming. Distribute the following list and invite *hevrutah* partners to read and discuss it. What questions do they have? What obstacles do they foresee? Can they hold each other accountable for doing at least one of the things on the list? At least two? Three?

Five simple ways to get involved in fighting human trafficking:

1. **Learn more.** Visit trusted websites like www.freetheslaves.net, www.truah.org/slavery, and www.polarisproject.org. There you can find recommendations for books and articles to read, to a level that meets your interest.
2. **Talk about it.** Tell friends, family, and acquaintances what you’re learning and why you care about this topic. Use social media to amplify the message. Many people believe slavery ended in the 19th century.
3. **Tell Congress.** You don’t need to be an expert; just call your Representative’s and Senators’ offices and tell the staffer who answers that you’re a constituent and you’d like to see Congress do more to end human trafficking.
4. **Donate.** Even if you can’t give much, including one or more anti-trafficking organizations in your list of annual *tzedakah* makes a difference.



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5. **Look into supply chains.** Buy Fair Trade where you can (e.g., coffee, chocolate), and peruse the website <http://www.knowthechain.org> to see what companies you patronize regularly have robust anti-trafficking policies in place—and which don't.

Ending on Hope

By way of closing, acknowledge for everyone that it is easy to feel discouraged.

"There's so much to be done—I can't handle it—might as well not bother" is a common feeling. But taking the work one step at a time, and joining together into networks of activists, can make ending slavery possible. End with this quote from Kevin Bales' book *Ending Slavery*:

It can happen. Five thousand years of slavery can end forever. Two hundred years of pretending we don't have slaves anymore can end forever...Yes, \$13 billion a year in slave-made products and services is a lot of money, but it is exactly what Americans spent on Valentine's Day in 2005...No industry or corporation, no political party, no state or country or culture is dependent on slavery...Never has the world been so rich, never have travel and communication been so easy, never have so many countries been ready to work together, never has the world had the end of slavery so easily within its grasp.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ *Ending Slavery*, 2007, p. 3-4



Chocolate Moses/Modern Slavery: College Students’ Guide to a Salon

Rabbi David Spinrad

What is a Salon?

Salons began hundreds of years ago in Europe as small gatherings of intelligent, opinionated people exchanging ideas about important topics of the day. The word “salon” comes from “salone,” the large reception room in Italian mansions where hosts would welcome their guests and share conversation. But you don’t need to live in a mansion to host a salon. Your living room will do just fine.

The issue of modern slavery and human trafficking is a pressing matter of our time and is worthy of our attention. The material in the Chocolate Moses Salon provides a launching point to discuss the issue of modern slavery through a Jewish lens and gives participants opportunities for further learning and ways to take action.

This material makes no assumptions regarding Jewish knowledge or beliefs. Instead, the salon provides introductory background materials for host/facilitators and gives participants interesting content, stimulating questions, and tangible ways to take action – all designed to help make the salon a success. All that is required from facilitators and participants is passion, an opinion, and a willingness to be a part of the conversation.

Part I: Introduction

Welcome to the Chocolate Moses Salon! Thank you for turning out and taking action to end modern slavery and human trafficking.

Rules of Engagement

The content of the material is best read aloud by salon participants, and there should be plenty of room for questions and reflections. The more participation, the better the salon.

First, a few simple ground rules:

- Please put your phones away and turn off ringers if you can.
- Confidentiality is key; our conversations tonight remain in this room.



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- Speak in the first-person, making “I” statements based on experience and personal truths.
- Assume the best about each other and what is shared.
- No interrupting. Let people speak.
- No giving advice.
- Allow for silence.

Part II: Modern Slavery and Jewish Responsibility

The following excerpt appeared in January 18, 2008 edition of the Ft. Myers News-Press:

In one of the largest slavery prosecutions Southwest Florida has ever seen, authorities arrested a sixth suspect Wednesday, charging her with making money off unpaid illegal immigrant farm workers.

“Slavery, plain and simple,” said Chief Assistant U.S. Attorney Doug Molloy.

For two years, federal prosecutors claim, (the defendants) held more than a dozen people as slaves on their property. They made them sleep in box trucks and shacks, charged them for food and showers, didn't pay them for picking produce and beat them if they tried to leave.

“In the past 10 years, prosecutors have handled several slavery cases, but none as large as this. According to the federal indictment, the defendants threatened the immigrants, held their identification documents, created debit accounts they couldn't repay and hooked them on alcohol and drugs to keep them working. The documents list 13 instances when the workers were beaten. ‘Some of the folks have been there for years,’ Molloy said. ‘It is their hope to send back money to their families, and they hang on to that hope. It's just a situation that's difficult to get out of. Sadly, this is the worst of what happens when you have across-the-board degradation of labor and conditions that allow slavery to take root and flourish,’ said Laura Germino of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, which has helped prosecute six slavery cases that freed more than 1,000 workers in the past decade.”

(The main defendants in this case, Cesar and Geovanni Navarrete, were subsequently convicted and sentenced to 12 years in prison.)



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FACTS

In 2018, according to the International Labour Organization's global estimate of forced labor, there were 42 million slaves.

A slave...

- Cannot express free will.
- Is controlled through a combination of violence, threats and manipulation.
- Suffers extreme economic exploitation at the hands of slaveholders.
- Receives no payment for work other than basic sustenance.

Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery involving recruiting, harboring, transporting, supplying or obtaining a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of involuntary servitude or slavery.

From the Jewish Tradition

טז וְהַבָּאִים, זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה
מִכָּל-בֶּשֶׂר בָּאוּ, כְּאִשֶּׁר צִוָּה
אֱתוֹ, אֱלֹהִים; וַיִּסְגֹּר יְהוָה,
בַּעֲדוֹ.

16 And they that went in [to Noah's Ark],
went in male and female of all flesh, as God
commanded him; and the LORD shut him in.

– Genesis 7:15-16

According to the French-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, God had to close the door for Noah because it would have been impossible for Noah to shut the door and remain safe while all the other people were doomed to die. "A human being does not retreat into himself. Man's humanity is a responsibility for the other," said Levinas. Our humanity depends on being responsible for, and reaching out to, the other.

For Reflection

- In the article above, what were the ways the situation in Southwest Florida fulfilled the definition of slavery?
- In your opinion, what does it mean to be responsible for others?
- How are we responsible for what happened in Southwest Florida?



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Take Action!

Write a paragraph exploring the boundaries of your responsibility. Do you prioritize Jewish or universal responsibility? Is your focus local, national, or global? Why?

Part III: The Work of Slaves, Who Were Created in the Image of God

Gayan, a 15-year-old boy, was a school dropout who was recruited by a broker promising him a good job in the Jharsuguda district (in India). Instead, Gayan, along with other boys, was confined to a factory to work, given little food, severely beaten, branded, burned with cigarettes, and allowed only a few hours' sleep each night.⁹¹

Saeeda, a deaf Pakistani woman, was ten years old when she left Pakistan for Manchester, England for a job as a domestic worker. For nearly a decade, she was abused, raped and beaten by her employers, a Pakistani couple. Now in her twenties, Saeeda told the courts that she was confined to a cellar and forced to work as a slave.⁹²

FACTS

Modern slaves toil primarily in these four areas:

- Forced labor in agricultural and industrial settings
- Bonded labor
- Involuntary domestic servitude
- Sex trafficking and forced prostitution

The 2012 U.S. Department of Labor's List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor states that child and forced labor exists in 74 countries. This number does not include countries, the United States among them, where girls are forced into sexual servitude.

According to 2019 estimates, approximately 25% of slaves around the world are under the age of 18. 71% are women and girls.

⁹¹ 2012 U.S. State Department Trafficking in Missing Persons Report, page 14.

⁹² 2012 U.S. State Department Trafficking in Missing Persons Report, page 18.



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From the Jewish Tradition

כִּז וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם
בְּצַלְמוֹ, בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא
אֹתוֹ: זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה, בָּרָא אֹתָם.

27 And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.

– Genesis 1:27

Gayan and Saeeda were both created in the image of God. Those who enslaved them were, too.

According to Levinas, *B'tzelem Elohim* does not mean we live in a world where we are all fundamentally the same. When we look at another person, we do not see a reflection of ourselves or the image of God, but only a “trace of the Infinite.” In that trace is a sign of God Who imposes responsibility for the other onto us. And in acting on this responsibility, we fulfill our responsibility to God and honor our Covenant.

For Reflection

- What are some ways to think about what it means to be created “in the image of God?”
- Does Levinas’ reading of “*B'tzelem Elohim*” change your understanding of the verse?
- Does his interpretation change your relationship to Gayan and Saeeda or how you might respond?
- How do you reconcile the enslaved, the enslavers, and “in the image of God?”

Take Action!

Visit Slavery Footprint (<http://www.slaveryfootprint.org>). Take the survey to find out how many slaves work for you.



Part IV: Know the Price of Slavery, Because We Were Once Slaves

"Migrant workers from Nepal and other countries are like cattle in Kuwait. Actually, cattle are probably more expensive than migrant workers there. No one cares whether we die or are killed. Our lives have no value."

– Nepalese man trafficked to Kuwait, during interview with Amnesty International⁹³

Consider this: In the 1800s typical Southern agricultural slave was an investment, selling for \$1,000 to \$1,800 (around \$50,000 to \$100,000 in today's money). Slaveholders had to balance the violent control they inflicted on their slaves against the risk of an injury and lost profits. **Today, a slave can be bought for a few hundred dollars or less. To their owners, they are disposable.**

FACTS

Over the course of servitude, a slave earns \$8,700 in Brazil and \$2,000 in India for the slaveholder. A sex slave in Thailand earns \$18,000 for the slaveholder and earns \$49,000 in Los Angeles.⁹⁴

According to International Labour Organization estimates of a few years ago, 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.

As of 2019, it is estimated that traffickers earn \$150 billion annual and that the United States government spends \$150 million annually to stop them.

From the Jewish Tradition

כא עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפָרְעָה
בְּמִצְרַיִם; וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ ה'
מִמִּצְרַיִם, בְּיָד חֲזָקָה.

21 We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

– Deuteronomy 6:21

⁹³U.S. Department of Labor, *2012 Trafficking in Missing Persons Report*, page 33.

⁹⁴ Kara, Siddharth. *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery*. New York. Columbia University Press, 2009.



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*"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-JIR⁹⁵

In addition to reminding us of our history of enslavement, the *Torah* also

- forbids us from oppressing others (Leviticus 19:13, Deuteronomy 24:15):

Leviticus 19

יג לא-תעשק אֶת-
רֵעֶךָ, וְלֹא תגזל; לֹא-
תֵלִין פְּעֻלַּת שְׂכִיר,
אֶתְךָ--עַד-בֹּקֶר.

13 Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbor, nor rob him; the wages of a hired servant shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.

Deuteronomy 24

טו בְּיוֹמוֹ תִתֵּן שְׂכָרוֹ
וְלֹא-תָבוֹא עָלָיו
הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, כִּי עֲנִי הוּא,
וְאֵלָיו, הוּא נֹשֵׂא אֶת-
נַפְשׁוֹ; וְלֹא-יִקְרָא עָלֶיךָ
אֶל-ה', וְהָיָה בְּךָ חָטָא.

15 In the same day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and sets his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the LORD and it be sin in thee.

- commands us to uphold the stranger's rights (Exodus 23:9):

ט וְגַר, לֹא תִלְחָץ;
וְאַתֶּם, יִדְעֶתֶם אֶת-
נַפְשׁ הַגֵּר--כִּי-גֵרִים
הֵייתֶם, בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.

9 And a stranger shalt thou not oppress; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

- instructs us to befriend the stranger (Deuteronomy 10:19):

⁹⁵ *Huffington Post, February 2012.*



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יט וְאֶהְבֶּתֶם, אֶת-
הַגֵּר: כִּי-גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם,
בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם.

19 Love ye therefore the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

For Reflection

- Does knowing the price of modern slavery make your relationship to it more tangible?
- Does our collective historical memory of enslavement in Egypt influence your connection to modern slavery? How?

Take Action!

You can help end slavery by writing to the President, your Senators and Representatives. As one of their constituents, let them know this is important to you and ask them to take action against slavery.

To email the President, U.S. Senators, and U.S. Representatives, [visit this link](#).⁹⁶

Part V: Spotting the Signs of Slavery and Redeeming Captives

FACTS

The U.S. government estimates that 14,500 to 17,500 people are brought into the U.S. annually to be used as slaves.

"I urge all Americans to educate themselves about all forms of modern slavery and the signs and consequences of human trafficking. Together, and in cooperation with our partners around the world, we can work to end this terrible injustice and protect the rights to life and liberty entrusted to us by our forebears and owed to our children."

– U.S. President Barack Obama⁹⁷

⁹⁶ <http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml>

⁹⁷ 2012 U.S. State Department Trafficking in Missing Persons Report, page 33.



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Questions to Consider in Potential Situations of Slavery

- Does this person enjoy freedom of movement?
- Does this person appear to be held against his or her 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 she or he working when that person should be in school?
- Does this person control his or her earnings?
- Was this person cheated into payment of debt upon arrival in the U.S.?
- Has this person had his or her 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 or she seem disoriented, confused, malnourished or frightened?⁹⁸

From the Jewish Tradition

The commandment of *Pidyon Shvuyim* (redeeming captives) obliges Jews to redeem other Jews who have been taken captive. Chocolate Moses universalizes this duty and extends our Jewish responsibility to everyone in need.

If we ignore our duty to liberate the enslaved, we violate the commandments to:

- Open our hands to the poor (Deuteronomy 15:7, 11):

כִּי-יְהִיָּה בְךָ אֶבְיוֹן מֵאַחַד
אֶחָיְךָ, בְּאַחַד שְׁעָרֶיךָ,
בְּאַרְצְךָ, אֲשֶׁר-ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן
לְךָ--לֹא תִאֲמָץ אֶת-לִבְּךָ,
וְלֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת-יָדְךָ, מֵאֶחָיְךָ,
הָאֶבְיוֹן.

7 If there be among you a needy man, one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy God gives thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy needy brother;

⁹⁸ Bales, Kevin and Ron Soodalter. *The Slave Next Door*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 2009. p. 41.



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ח כִּי-פֶתַח תִּפְתַּח אֶת-יָדְךָ,
לוֹ; וְהֶעֱבַט, תַּעֲבִיטֵנוּ, דִּי
מִחֲסָרוֹ, אֲשֶׁר יִחְסֹר לוֹ.

8 but thou shalt surely open thy hand unto
him

- Let our brothers and sisters live by our side (Leviticus 25:36):

לוֹ אֶל-תִּקַּח מֵאֲתוֹ נֶשֶׁךְ
וְתִרְבִּית, וְיֵרָאֵת מֵאֲלֹהֶיךָ;
וְחִי אִחִיךָ, עִמָּךְ.

36 Take thou no interest of him or increase;
but fear thy God; that thy brother may live
with thee.

- Love our neighbors as ourselves (Leviticus 19:18):

יִח לֹא-תִקֵּם וְלֹא-תִטּוֹר
אֶת-בְּנֵי עַמְּךָ, וְאֶהְבֵּת לְרֵעֶךָ
כָּמוֹךָ: אֲנִי, ה'.

18 Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor
bear any grudge against the children of
thy people, but thou shalt love thy
neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD.

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

For Reflection

- Why would Maimonides place a greater priority on redeeming captives than on feeding the hungry or clothing the poor?
- If you thought someone was enslaved, what might keep you from action?

Take Action!

If you believe you have seen or know someone who is enslaved, your best first step is to call:

- 911 to alert your local law enforcement agency and/or
- 888-373-7888 for The National Human Trafficking Resource Center information hotline



Part VI: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Free Will of the Worker

At a carpet factory in Nepal, Nayantara met a labor broker who promised her a good job as a domestic worker in Lebanon. The broker convinced her to take the job opportunity, assuring her that she did not have to pay anything. He instead took Nayantara to India, confiscated her passport, and sold her to a brothel where she was forced to have sex with at least 35 men each day with only five hours of sleep. When she tried to refuse, the brothel owner would beat Nayanthara with an iron pole until she gave in. She was not allowed to contact her family or anyone else outside of the brothel and her freedom of movement was constantly controlled.⁹⁹

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Modern Slavery

In the wake of the horrors of WWII, the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on December 10, 1948. In vowing to never again allow a repeat of the war's atrocities, the international community complemented the UN Charter with a road map guaranteeing the rights of every individual. The UDHR addresses slavery directly and the conditions of slavery several times:

- Article 1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
- Article 4. **No one shall be held in slavery or servitude;** slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.
- Article 5. No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- Article 13. (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.
- 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. (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an

⁹⁹ 2012 Trafficking in Missing Persons Report, page 23.



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existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

- Article 24. Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

From the Jewish Tradition

Regarding worker's rights, the UDHR echoes Judaism. Judaism forbids denying the free will of the worker, meaning that a person cannot be enslaved and that she maintains the right to stop her work. Judaism also maintains workers have the right to satisfy their physical needs and they must be protected in hazardous situations.

In her relationship to her employer and to her labor, the free will of the worker originates with the verse:

<p>Leviticus / Vayikra 25:55</p> <p>The Children of Israel are servants unto Me [God]; they are My servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.</p>	<p>כִּי-לִי בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, עֲבָדִים--עֲבָדֵי הֵם, אֲשֶׁר-הוֹצֵאתִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: אֲנִי, ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.</p>
<p>The <i>Talmud (Bava Kama 116b)</i> adds to this:</p> <p>"and are not servants to servants"</p>	<p>הוא דכתיב (ויקרא כה) כי לי בני ישראל עבדים ולא עבדים לעבדים</p>

For Reflection

- Where do rights originate?
- How were Nayanbara's rights violated from the perspective of the UDHR?
How were they violated from the perspective of Judaism?
- How do rights and responsibilities complement each other?



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Take Action!

Encourage your local city council to pass a municipal resolution in support of better-coordinated national anti-slavery measures. To learn how to effectively engage your city council, visit: <http://ejusa.org/act/resolutions/city>.

Part VII: Unfair Treatment of Workers and the Persistence of Slavery

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

– 2008 Union for Reform Judaism Resolution on Worker Rights

FACTS

Slavery does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, it is a net result of a globalized, rapidly industrializing planet with an insatiable need for cheap, consumer goods. In addition, these factors contribute to the persistence of slavery:

- *Exploding population growth.* Between 1999 - 2011 the global population grew from 6 billion to 7 billion.
- *Tremendous economic inequality and devastating global poverty.* 76% of the world's population lives on less than \$2 a day.
- *Incessant, armed conflicts.* Wars drive people from their homes and leave them vulnerable to predatory traffickers.
- *Government corruption.* When officials responsible for maintaining law and order turn a blind eye and accept bribes, slavery goes unimpeded.
- *Gender discrimination.* Women have a more difficult time finding employment, leaving them vulnerable to abuses and enslavement.
- *Ethnic and racial discrimination.* Discrimination towards certain castes and ethnicities makes opportunities fewer and increases the likelihood of enslavement.

Every one of these conditions contributes to global slavery and conspires to deny the fair treatment of workers.



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From the Jewish Tradition

*"Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest;
that your ox and your ass may have rest, and the son of your handmaid,
and the stranger, may be refreshed."*

– Exodus 23:12

According to the Torah, work is sacred. In fact, Rabbi Judah HaNasi compares work in importance to Shabbat in a comment on the verse, "Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor . . . (Exodus 23:12)." He said, "Just as the Jewish people were given the positive commandment of Shabbat, so were they given the commandment of working."

– *Mekhilta of Shimon bar Yohai*

Since work is an essential part of the human condition, we have a responsibility to protect the dignity and rights of workers. We cannot accept that modern slavery and human trafficking are unavoidable outcomes of globalization. To acquiesce violates *k'vod ha'briyot*, basic human dignity.

For Reflection

- What does it mean for work to be sacred?
- What are some ways for you to honor the sacred work that went into providing your food and consumer goods?

Take Action!

Write a short fictional story or draw a picture that expresses your feelings and frustrations about why slavery persists. Ask God "why?" and create your own dialogue between yourself and God.



Part VIII: Complexities of Cocoa and Slavery

Periodically, the agricultural cocoa industry has captured public attention for its use of child labor in the harvesting of cocoa beans. Several documentaries, including *The Dark Side of Chocolate* and a series of CNN special reports, have reported on the prevalence of child trafficking and child slave labor in Ivory Coast and Ghana.

In an interview with Malian diplomat Abodoulaye Macko, author Carol Off reported:

" . . . Macko pulled out a heavy sack from beside his chair. He had brought photo albums...containing evidence of what he discovered on the farms. The photographs are startling. Page after page reveals groups of dusty, frightened children...there are scores of boys in the pictures, ranging in age from about ten to eighteen; dozens of photos show the shoulders and backsides of youths with their open sores and cuts...Most of the boys had been on these farms for months or even years before Macko found them.

His most depressing discovery was of a boy who was nearly dead. 'I saw something hidden under a pile of leaves. At first I couldn't believe it, but it was a child. He was sick, his pants were covered in excrement, and they had left him out in the field to die'. "¹⁰⁰

As an example of the horrible abuses perpetrated against children, this story should and does shock us. Yet, not all of the children who labor in the cocoa fields on the Gold Coast of Africa are slaves. According to an extensive, 2009 Tulane University study:

- An estimated 800 thousand people in Ivory Coast and almost 1 million in Ghana work in cocoa each year.
- More the 500,000 worked in violation of the International Labour Organization's guidelines regarding minimum age.
- Only 5-10% worked for pay.
- There appeared to be little evidence of slavery.

¹⁰⁰ Off, page 123-124.



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Children did labor in the cocoa fields. They did not receive pay. They frequently suffered injuries. But these conditions have complex causes and explanations. Sometimes, parents in the neighboring countries of Mali and Burkina Faso send their children across the border into Ivory Coast and Ghana because they cannot feed them. While their children are unpaid for their labor, they do receive food and shelter, however meager. It may be their best option... for now.

Our assumption that the Western concept of childhood is universally appropriate is culturally biased. The stance that children should only be in school and not working is not always true and the two are not mutually exclusive. For example, the small, family-run cocoa farms in Ghana rely on contributions from every member of the family, and many of these children both go to school and help on farms. Children are not only vital to production, their farm work establishes maturity, responsibility, and holds an educative value that prepares a child for adulthood. Because of these complexities, it is easier to identify a problem than it is to solve it.

Until we recognize that there are no simple solutions, we are destined to be frustrated in our efforts to effect real change.

Child labor in the cocoa fields requires a holistic approach to approach to reducing global poverty and economic injustice. These changes would have great impact:

- Free, fair democratic elections
- More efficient farming techniques that produce better yields
- An economic shift from monoculture to greater diversity among the crops grown by farmers (making them less vulnerable to economic conditions and the forces of nature)
- Education of workers to make them aware of their rights as well as to help to lift them and their communities out of poverty
- Reduction of corruption and strife



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For Reflection:

The problem of child labor in the cocoa fields cannot be solved with well-intentioned consumer campaigns such as boycotts. Ask yourself:

- If prices for cocoa are already so low that unpaid child labor is an attractive option for cocoa farmers, what would be the effect of a reduced demand for cocoa?
- Would this lower or raise the price of cocoa? Who would be most directly affected by this boycott?

From the Jewish Tradition:

אמרו רבותינו: כל היסורין לצד אחד, והעניות לצד אחד.

"Our teachers have said: If all the troubles of the world are assembled on one side and poverty is on the other, poverty would outweigh them all."

– Midrash Shemot Rabbah 31:12

Take Action!

The next time you buy chocolate:

- Note which brands offer fair trade certification.
- Compare the actual price paid (vs. the markup) from both your grocer and the chocolate manufacturer.
- Investigate how much of the cost of Fair Trade chocolate goes to the farmers you are trying to help. Compare brands on this issue.
- Purchase the chocolate that serves workers best - and enjoy!

Part IX: The Limits of Fair Trade and Forbidden Unethical Goods

To be Jewish today is to recognize that every person is created in the image of God and that our purpose in living is to be a reminder of God. A Jew must be sensitive to the pain of all human beings. A Jew cannot remain indifferent to human suffering, whether in other countries or in our own cities and towns. The mission of the Jewish people has never been to make the world more Jewish, but to make it more human.

– Elie Wiesel



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As Wiesel wrote, we cannot remain indifferent to suffering, and our mission is to make the world more human. **Buying Fair Trade is one such way to fulfill this mission.** It seeks an equitable and just commercial, cooperative partnership between marketers in developed countries and producers of both raw and finished goods in the developing world. It strives to assist in poverty reduction, to aid local community development, and to create sustainable agricultural and commercial processes.

But Fair Trade is an incomplete solution. Some unscrupulous businesses fail to live up to Fair Trade promises, but, even properly fulfilled, Fair Trade does not challenge the underlying structure of the global economy. This fundamental structure of our economy is at the root of poverty, underdevelopment and slavery.

From the Jewish Tradition

Even as we acknowledge the limits of Fair Trade, as Jews we accept that we are responsible for knowing where the goods we purchase and consume come from. Those origins must be consistent with the demand that they be ethically produced, and this includes the fair treatment of the worker.

אמר רבא בשעה שמכניסין אדם לדין אומרים לו נשאת ונתת באמונה

According to Raba, "The first question a person will be asked by the heavenly court after he or she dies will be: "Did you deal honestly in business?"

– Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat 31a*

לולב הגזול והיבש, פסול. של אשרה ושל עיר הנדחת, פסול

A stolen lulav or a dried out lulav is invalid (to use to fulfill the mitzvah). [If it comes from an] *asheirah* (a tree used for idolatry) or from a city condemned for idolatry, it is invalid.

– *Mishnah Sukkah 3:1*

To deny a person his wage is akin to stealing, taking something for nothing. According to the Rabbis, a stolen lulav is comparable to the lulav that was connected to idolatry. **Idolatry is the denial of God.**



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For Reflection

- What is Wiesel's definition of justice?
- Why does the Mishnah compare a stolen lulav to one used for idolatry?
- What is our relationship to God and responsibility when we benefit from unethically obtained good?

Take Action!

Encourage Jewish organizations that purchase coffee and chocolate to discuss the merits of buying Fair Trade versions of those products.

Part X: Conclusion

רבי טרפון היה אומר, לא עליך המלאכה לגמור, ולא אתה בן חורין לבטל ממנה.

Rabbi Tarfon used to say, "You are not required to finish the job; neither are you free to desist from it."

-Pirkei Avot 2:21

It Is Time to Roll Up Our Sleeves and Get to Work

"The problem of modern trafficking may be entrenched, and it may seem like there is no end in sight. But if we act on the laws that have been passed and the commitments that have been made, it is solvable."

– U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, June 28, 2011

Change is not simple and in our finite capacities we are hard-pressed to solve the problems of global slavery and human trafficking. But based on these principles, Jews have a responsibility to make every effort:

- Every human was created in the image of God
- We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt
- We have a responsibility to the Other
- We are obligated to redeem captives
- We have a duty to honor the free will of the worker
- We are commanded to treat the worker fairly
- We are prohibited from benefitting from unethically obtained goods



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What Are Some Next Steps?

- Visit [the Chocolate Moses website](http://www.chocolatemoses.org).¹⁰¹ The site contains more complete information regarding each of the subjects discussed tonight, materials to host your own Chocolate Moses Salon and materials to augment your Passover Seder, as well as links for further learning.
- Review the "Take Action!" steps in this guide and put them into practice.

וכל המקיים נפש אחת מישראל מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו קיים עולם מלא

"Each who saves just one life is like one who has saved an entire world."

– Babylonian *Talmud*, *Sanhedrin 37a*

¹⁰¹ <http://www.chocolatemoses.org>



Study Sessions for the Three *Shabbatot* Before *Pesah*:

Shabbat Parah, Shabbat HaHodesh, and Shabbat HaGadol

Rabbi Jane Rachel Litman

The three *Shabbatot* leading up to Passover – *Shabbat Parah, Shabbat HaHodesh*, and *Shabbat HaGadol* – are dedicated to purifying the community in preparation for the holiday. The texts and questions of this three-session study course employ central themes of these special *Shabbatot* to focus on how Jewish women can engage the fight against contemporary slavery in order to fulfill the message of liberation expressed by Passover. Each study session brings together traditional Jewish texts, information about slavery in the modern world, and some guiding questions, in order to facilitate the mitzvah of *pidyon shvuyim*, redeeming the captive. These sessions could also be used effectively by a Rosh Hodesh group.

Study Session One: *Shabbat Parah*

Theme: Preparation and Purification

Shabbat Parah begins the process of cleansing for Passover. The special *Torah* reading, Numbers 19:1-22, elaborates a complex ancient ritual, using the ashes of a red heifer for purification. Since the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (70CE), the need for this particular priestly ritual has lapsed.

The prophetic reading for *Shabbat Parah* is Ezekiel 36:16-38, which contains the verse (36:26), “I will give you a new heart and a new spirit; I will take the heart of stone out from you and give you a heart of flesh.” This verse may be best understood as part of the rabbinic view that subsequent to the destruction of the Temple, study and acts of loving-kindness replace animal sacrifice in Jewish religious practice. Thus this course of study about modern-day slavery is itself a form of contemporary preparation and purification for Passover, the holiday of liberation.

The ritual of the red heifer specifies the sacrifice of a female cow. Normally sacrifices used male animals. The Sages take note of the difference and comment upon it in order to express some thoughts about Jewish cultural expectations of women in a world in which slavery is commonplace.



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Text I

Why are all the sacrifices male, and this one female? Rabbi Aibu explained: A handmaid's toddler once soiled the floor of the royal palace. Said the king: "Let his mother come and clean up her child's filth." By the same token, God says: "Let the red heifer purify for the golden calf."

- Pesikta Rabbati, Hukat

Discussion Questions

1. Who is the king in this parable? What is the "soil" and its relationship to the golden calf? Who is the toddler? The handmaid?
2. Are Jews particularly called upon to clean up moral messes? Are women?
3. What is the relationship of the handmaid to the king? To her child?

Text(s) II

Rabbi Ammi said, "Why is the account of Miriam's death placed next to the ritual of the red heifer? To teach that even as the red heifer gave purification, so does the memory of the righteous give purification."

- Moed Katan 28a

Rabbi Abba b. Abina enquired, "For what reason is the section recording the death of Miriam placed in close proximity to that dealing with the ashes of the Red Heifer? Simply this, to teach that as the ashes of the heifer effect atonement, so the memories of the righteous effect atonement."

- Vayikra Rabbah 20:12

Discussion Questions

1. Miriam is a symbol of moral leadership. What were some particularly memorable examples of her leadership?
2. How do these memories inspire the Israelite community to purify and atone?
3. Tell your own inspiring memory about a woman.

Text III

Our Rabbis taught: There was once a Jew who owned a red heifer, with which he used to plow. He fell on hard times, so he sold her to a non-Jew. The



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non-Jew took her out and plowed with her for six days of the week. On Shabbat he took her out to plow; he placed her under the yoke, but she would not budge from her place. So he beat her, and she still would not move. When the non-Jew saw this, he went to the Jew who sold him the red heifer and told him, "Take back your cow. She must be injured, for no matter how much I beat her, she will not move from her place."

The Jew understood that it must be because of Shabbat, since the cow was accustomed to rest on Shabbat. He said, "Come and I will get her moving." When they got there, the Jew went over to the cow and said in her ear "Cow, cow, you know that when I owned you, you ploughed during the week, and rested on Shabbat. Now due to my sins, I lost my money and had to sell you. Now you are owned by a non-Jew. Please, I ask you, get up and plough." The red heifer arose and ploughed.

The non-Jew said, "I still ask of you, please take back the cow, but first please tell me what you said in her ear. I exhausted myself and beat the animal and she would not get up." The Jew tried to placate the non-Jew, and said, "It is not magic and the cow is not possessed, but this is what I said in her ear . . . and as a result she got up and ploughed."

The non-Jew immediately became frightened; he said, "How can a cow who cannot speak understand the will of her Creator, while I, created in God's image, have ignored it?" He immediately went and converted.

He studied and became a great scholar. They called him Yohanan ben Torta (literally, son of the ox), and until this very day the Sages teach in his name. And if you are astounded how a red heifer brought one person under the wings of the Shekhinah (feminine immanent presence of God), it is by virtue of a red heifer that the entire community of Israel is purified.

- Pesikta Rabbati, Hukat

Discussion Questions

1. What do the characters of the Jew, the non-Jew and the cow represent?
2. How does the cow bring one person under the wings of the *Shekhinah*?
3. According to Torah, human beings are created in the image of God. What does this mean?
4. What is represented by the conversion of the non-Jew? Are we required to remember the humanity of those engaged in wrongdoing? Do you agree?



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Oral Torah

Read aloud from [*Slavery Still Exists and It Could be in Your Backyard*](#).

Slavery in America

It is hard to imagine that slavery still exists in America, but it does. The U.S. government estimates that 14,500 – 17,500 people are brought into the U.S. each year to be used as slaves. Free the Slaves and UC Berkeley research indicates there are tens of thousands of people living in slavery, in America, right now. This is real slavery, [in which] people [are] forced to work against their will under violence or threat of violence and are paid nothing. Like the slaves of the past, slaves in America cannot walk away. They have lost control of their lives, and they are being exploited and brutalized in terrible ways.

Why is there slavery in the United States?

Trafficking victims are often tricked into slavery through promises of work. Human traffickers tend to prey on impoverished people who live in countries with little access to education, health care or jobs. When traffickers disguise themselves as legitimate recruiters or employment brokers and promise paying work, many people are willing to sign on. Parents desperately want to work so they can feed their hungry families. Young people want to work so they can pay for their schooling or that of their younger brothers and sisters. They are tricked into believing they will be paid for their work. The basic rule of this global traffic in slaves is that victims flow from poorer countries to richer countries. While it is true that most slaves in the US are trafficked in from other countries, US citizens are also forced into slavery around the country. A recent study found the citizens of more than 35 countries enslaved in the US, with the greatest numbers coming from China, Mexico, and Vietnam.



Study Session Two: Shabbat HaHodesh

Theme: Women's Activism and Leadership

Shabbat HaHodesh continues the process of preparation for Passover. The special reading is Exodus 12:1-20, which designates the sacred day of *Rosh Hodesh*, the first day of each month in the year. *Rosh Hodesh* is a particularly holy for women, since it commemorates the refusal of the Israelite women to collude in the sin of building the golden calf. Today there are numerous *Rosh Hodesh* groups throughout the Diaspora and Israel.

Text I

Aaron said: "Take the earrings from your wives, sons and daughters, and bring them to me" (Exodus 32:2). The women heard and refused to give the jewelry to their husbands, saying, "You want to make a calf with no power to save? We will not listen to you." God gave them reward in this world that they keep Rosh Hodesh, and in the next world they merit to renew themselves like the New Moon.

- Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer

Discussion Questions

1. What is the relationship in this *midrash* between actions and rituals?
2. What does the worship of the golden calf symbolize? Does it have additional significance in our day? What is the connection between the symbolism of the golden calf and modern-day slavery?
3. When is a time that you personally, or a group to which you belonged, refused to collude in a wrong?
4. Compare the refusal to give in this instance with the generosity of the women in building the *mishkan* (sacred tabernacle) as described in Exodus 35:20-29. What does this teach about allocation of resources?

Text(s) II

The Pharaoh of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphras and Puah, "When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live." The midwives, however, were in awe of God and did not do what the Pharaoh had told them to do; they let the boys live. Then Pharaoh summoned the



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midwives and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?" The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive."

- Exodus 1:15-19

The praise of the midwives here goes beyond the praise given them in the first part of the verse. Not only did they not do what Pharaoh told them, but they even dared to do deeds of kindness for the children they saved. On behalf of poor mothers, the midwives would go to the houses of rich mothers and collect water and food, which they gave to poor mothers and thus kept their children alive.

- Shmot Rabbah 1:15

Discussion Questions

1. What does the Torah mean by the phrase "awe of God."
2. What is the relationship between faith and action according to these texts? How does it compare with the previous text?
3. The *midrash* states that the praise of the midwives is "beyond" even their refusal to collude in genocide. What positive actions to they take to protect the slaves?

Text III

What is the significance of Deborah judging Israel and prophesying for them? Did not Pinhas ben Elazar take this stand: "I testify by the Heavens and the Earth, whether non-Jew or Israelite, whether man or woman, whether a male-slave or a handmaid, all is according to the merit of his or her deed--so the Ruah HaKadosh (Holy Spirit) rests upon him or her."

- Tanna debe Eliyahu, parashah 10

Discussion Questions

1. *Deborah* is yet another example of Biblical women in leadership. According to *Pinhas ben Elazar* what is the moral significance of women in leadership?
2. What does this text say about human equality?
3. What is the theological message of this text?
4. Is there anything special or significant about women's leadership in our day?



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Oral Torah

Read aloud from [Community Based Model for Fighting Slavery, pp.1-9](#).¹⁰²

¹⁰² <https://www.freetheslaves.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Community-BasedModelforFightingSlaverybooklet-web.pdf>



Study Session Three: Shabbat HaGadol

Theme: Redemption

Shabbat HaGadol is the final *Shabbat* leading up to Passover. The prophetic reading for *Shabbat HaGadol* is *Malakhi* 3:4-24, which culminates with this exhortation: "Behold, I will send the prophet Elijah before that great and awe inspiring day of God, when God will turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the hearts of their children to their parents." This passage has been interpreted to refer to the Jewish vision of a messianic era of redemption at the end of time. Judaism teaches that the messianic era of peace and prosperity is brought about through righteous behavior in the here and now.

Text I:

Redeeming captives takes precedence over providing food and clothing for the poor. There is no greater mitzvah than redeeming captives, for captives are in the category of the starving, the thirsting, and the naked, indeed in danger of losing their own lives.

The woman precedes the man in being fed and sheltered and redeemed from captivity because the man is usually returned, while the woman is not, and her shame is greater.

One who remains indifferent to the captive's redemption transgresses these mitzvot: "Do not harden your heart," and "Do not clench your hand," and "Do not stand idly by blood of your fellow," and "he shall rule ruthlessly in your sight," and "You shall open your hand to your poor," and "Your fellow shall live with you," and, "Love your neighbor as yourself," and "Save those taken to their death." There is no more inclusive mitzvah than redeeming captives.

- Maimonides *Mishneh Torah*

Discussion Questions:

1. How does gender impact slavery, according to Maimonides?
2. Why does Maimonides view the redemption of slaves as the most inclusive of the mitzvot? Do you agree?
3. According to Maimonides, slavery is life threatening. From your readings on modern-day slavery, explain how this is still true today.



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Text II:

Is it anything else but a deed of Amalek, rebellion against God, to enslave human beings created in His image, and to degrade them to a state of beasts having no will of their own? Is it anything else but an act of ruthless and wicked violence, to reduce defenseless human beings to a condition of merchandise, and relentlessly to tear them away from the hearts of husbands, wives, parents, and children...?

- Rabbi David Einhorn, speaking for abolition in the United States

Discussion Questions:

1. During the period when the Israelites wandered in the desert, Amalek came from behind and killed the women and children, the most vulnerable. How does slavery prey on the most vulnerable?
2. Einhorn, like the third text in session one, emphasizes that human beings are made in the image of God. What is the significance of this belief in terms of ending slavery?
3. What is the relationship between the golden calf and “reducing defenseless human beings to a condition of merchandise?” What are the economic forces that support slavery?
4. How does slavery impact families?

Text III:

Excerpts from the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, Resolution on Combating Human Trafficking in the United States

- *The Jewish community has a moral and ethical responsibility to combat modern-day slavery in the U.S. and around the world and has a strong record of working for a commitment to human rights.*
- *Comprehensive action is needed to create a grassroots movement within the U.S. at the local, state, and national levels to end modern-day slavery.*
- *Laws, regulations, and enforcement must be strengthened at all levels of government to deter and combat human trafficking; facilitate the rescuing of survivors; and ensure prosecution of perpetrators and users of slaves.*
- *The Jewish community should lead in working with faith communities, ethnic and community-based organizations, health professionals, service*



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providers, educators and other stakeholders to create an abolitionist movement against slavery.

- *Large sporting events are associated with an increase in trafficking and therefore efforts and opportunities to deter the demand and educate the community should be heightened in preparation for these events.*
- *Businesses and not-for-profit organizations should participate in the fair-trade movement and ensure that policies and protocols are in place so the products we purchase are not made by slave labor.*

Discussion Questions:

1. Is freedom a human right? What does that mean?
2. Talk about some people you know who might be interested in information about modern-day slavery.
3. Talk about some organizations and leaders in your community who might be interested in joining the fight against slavery.
4. What can you do, as individuals and as a group, to abolish slavery?

Oral Torah

Read aloud: Taking Action to End Slavery

[Found here](#) ¹⁰³

And: Free the Slaves Fundraiser Guide

[Found here](#) ¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ <https://www.freetheslaves.net/tag/taking-action-to-end-slavery/>

¹⁰⁴ https://www.freetheslaves.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/FTS_FundraisingGuide_141026_V2.pdf



Author Biographies

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Amy Dorsch is a Hebrew and Tefillah educator at the Epstein School in Atlanta, GA. Previously, Amy served as the Director of Empowerment of Families with School Age Children for the Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning in New Jersey. Amy enjoyed sharing her passion and talent for Jewish learning and living as the National Education Director for United Synagogue Youth, the teen branch of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. Amy is an alumna of the Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education at JTS, and a very proud mommy to Zev and Haley.

Helfgot, Rabbi Nathaniel

Rabbi Nathaniel Helfgot is chair of the Department of Talmud and Rabbinics at Salanter Akiba Riverdale High School in New York City and is on the faculty of Yeshivat Chovevei *Torah* Rabbinical School and the Drisha Institute of Jewish Education. He serves as rabbi of Congregation Netivot Shalom in Teaneck, New Jersey and is on the faculty of the Wexner Heritage Foundation. He has written and edited a number of volumes in various areas of Jewish studies and lectures widely throughout the country. He holds undergraduate and graduate degrees with honors from Yeshiva University and serves on the boards of many communal institutions and organizations.

Kaplan-Mayer, Gabrielle

Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer is an experienced Jewish educator, having worked as an education director, curriculum writer, teacher, author, and youth director/advisor in various capacities for over 20 years. At Jewish Learning Venture, she works as Program Director for Special Needs and also as a Program Director for Family Engagement in the Kehillah of Center City. Gabby also runs an award-winning Shabbat family education program *Celebrations!* at Congregation Mishkan Shalom for children with special needs and their families. Her most recent book, *The Kitchen Classroom* is a cookbook for children with special needs, based on the inclusive cooking classes that she has taught for six years. Gabby holds a



B.F.A. in theatre and creative writing from Emerson College and an M.A. in Jewish Studies from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.

Litman, Rabbi Jane Rachel

Rabbi Jane Rachel Litman has served Conservative, Reconstructionist, Reform and Gay Outreach congregations and institutions, and has been a consultant on moral education for diverse families for national Jewish institutions, the National Council of Churches and the Metropolitan Community Church. In addition to her rabbinate, Jane was a professor of Religion and Women's Studies at California State University at Northridge and Loyola Marymount College, and currently teaches at the California Institute for Integral Studies.

Widely published in the fields of Jewish women's history, queer theory and contemporary theology, Jane's book, *Lifecycles 2: Jewish Women on Scriptural Themes in Contemporary Life*, co-edited with Rabbi Debra Orenstein, won prestigious academic and community awards. Her most recent work includes *Krovai Elohim: All in God's Family* for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and her essay "Bisexual Identity: A Guide for the Perplexed" in *The Sacred Encounter* published by the CCAR Press.

Meirowitz-Nelson, Rabbi Lev

Rabbi Lev Meirowitz Nelson is Director of Rabbinic Training at T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights. In 2017, he was honored by the Covenant Foundation with a Pomegranate Prize, which recognizes early-career Jewish educators. Lev was ordained in 2013 from Hebrew College, where he was a Wexner Graduate Fellow. Before attending rabbinical school, he taught fifth grade at the Solomon Schechter School of Manhattan for three years. Lev holds an AB in Geology from Brown University and is the author or editor of several T'ruah publications, including *The Other Side of the Sea: A Haggadah on Fighting Modern-Day Slavery*, *A Handbook for Jewish Communities Fighting Mass Incarceration*, and *Mikdash: A Jewish Guide to the New Sanctuary Movement*. He lives with his wife Eliana and their children Barzilai Khalil (aka Buzz) and Tav Hadar in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Kensington.



Middleberg, Maurice

Maurice Middleberg is the former Executive Director of Free the Slaves and has spent almost forty years engaged in the struggle for a more just world. Recently retired, he continues to do tikkun olam as a calling and avocation. He co-founded the Passover Project with Debra Orenstein and works with her to engage the Jewish community on the subject of slavery.

Orenstein, Rabbi Debra

Rabbi Debra Orenstein pursues her passion for teaching *Torah* as a guest speaker and scholar-in-residence across North America and as spiritual leader of her home synagogue, Congregation B'nai Israel in Emerson, New Jersey. Now an instructor at the Academy for Jewish Religion, she formerly taught in the rabbinical, graduate school, undergraduate, conversion, Elderhostel, and continuing education programs at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles, California. She received her training at Princeton University (A.B. summa cum laude), University of Judaism (B.H.L.), The Jewish Theological Seminary of America (M.A. and ordination), and The Meisner-Carville School (Two-year Program).

Debra is the author or editor of *Lifecycles 1: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones*, *Lifecycles 2: Jewish Women on Biblical Themes in Contemporary Life* (co-edited with Rabbi Jane Rachel Litman), and *From Generation to Generation* (co-authored with Rabbi Israel Mowshowitz). She is a columnist for *The Jewish Standard* and has written essays for *Etz Hayim Humash* (2001), *The Women's Prophets Commentary* (2004), *Making Prayer Real: Leading Jewish Spiritual Voices on Why Prayer is Difficult and What To Do About It* (2010), among others. Debra has also published CD's of her lectures on a variety of themes through ShareWonder Media.

Ever since she read *A Crime So Monstrous: Face-to-Face with Modern-Day Slavery* in 2013, Debra has focused on freeing slaves. That same year, Debra read about Jessica Baer of Fair Lawn, NJ, who helped to free 30 enslaved children in Ghana as part of her Bat Mitzvah project. Since then, Debra's question – to herself and to others – has been: this is what a 12-year-old did; what can you do?



Spinrad, Rabbi David

Rabbi David Spinrad joined Beth El Hebrew Congregation in Alexandria, Virginia, as its sixth senior rabbi in June 2018 after serving from 2013-2018 as an associate rabbi and the director of the Rothschild Social Justice Institute at The Temple in Atlanta, Georgia.

After spending his first year at Beth El becoming acquainted with the congregation through an extensive series of one-on-one values-based conversations called "Project LOVED: Living Our Values Every Day," Rabbi Spinrad is now focused on partnering in the ongoing creation of a House of God ("Beth El") in Alexandria. At Beth El, he works for the day in which all who seek meaning through Jewish wisdom and living experience it through loving relationships with the Eternal and with each other while also offering the best of themselves to build a relevant and responsive congregation. His mission points to a vision of individuals, families, and a community transformed by wise, loving, and soulful Jewish living.

Highlights of Rabbi Spinrad's Atlanta tenure included his partnership with fellow clergy and lay leadership in the establishment of the Rothschild Social Justice Institute. He also successfully challenged the assumption that pre-family, young Jewish adults are not interested in synagogue life by co-founding The Well, the premiere monthly late Shabbat service for Atlanta's in-town young adult community. Rabbi Spinrad also revitalized The Temple's biannual Israel adult trips by creating the Israel Mind and Body Experience.

While a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Rabbi Spinrad was a Schusterman Rabbinic Fellow, an American Jewish World Service Kol Tzedek Fellow, and created the educational and advocacy website www.chocolatemoses.com, a contemporary Jewish response to modern slavery and human trafficking.

Prior to the rabbinate, Rabbi Spinrad operated a personal training business in San Francisco and worked with clients ranging from competitive athletes to cancer survivors and people living with HIV. His training practice was shaped by three questions that still guide his rabbinate and animate his life today: What does it mean to live life well? How do we live in healthy relationships with ourselves and with each other? And, how do we use the gifts of our lives to shine on the world?

He recently served the Reform Movement as a member of the Board of Trustees for the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) and on the



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national planning committee for the CCAR's annual convention. He currently serves on the Religious Action Center's Commission on Social Action.

Rabbi Spinrad lives in Alexandria with his wife and their two children.

Weiner, Rabbi Cheryl

Rabbi Cheryl Weiner, PhD, BCC, serves as a Rabbi, Educator and Chaplain, specializing in curriculum development, experiential education and creative rituals. As a Rabbinic Fellow for the American Jewish World Service and member of the Miami Jewish Community Relations Council, Rabbi Weiner has joined advocacy teams in Washington D.C. and the State of Florida supporting legislation to increase human rights, end human trafficking and to pass the International Violence Against Women's Act (IVAWA). She is the Chair for the Tikkun Olam Committee of Ohalah and is a Vice President of the Rabbinical Association of Greater Miami. Currently, she serves as a Staff Chaplain and Community Rabbi for Mishkan Miami, the Connection for Jewish Spiritual Support of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation, and is on the faculty of the Miami Melton Adult Program. As President of Transitions and Transformations, she leads programs on spiritual development and paradigm shifting.



Resources and Bibliography

a. Rabbinical Assembly Facts and Action Sheet

This one-sheet (two sides of a page) resource is ideal to hand out to any and all congregants, students, fellow clergy, teachers, and/or staff. Use it to begin education and discussion on the issue of modern slavery and its connection to Jewish values, history, and community today.

b. Rabbinical Assembly Sources and Resources Sheet

This one-sheet (two sides of a page) resource is a “deeper dive” into the connection between the Jewish community and the issue of slavery. It contains programming and teaching ideas that will be relevant for rabbis to use and to share with fellow community leaders, including cantors, principals, teachers, board members, and social action committee chairs.

c. Rabbinical Assembly Trafficking Resources Online

Our online resources include this guide and two one-pagers on understanding human trafficking, along with resources to share with schools, social justice committees, boards, and other lay and professional leaders.

Visit <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/ending-slavery-resources-human-trafficking> to access resources a., b., and c.

d. Passover Resources

Please visit <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/tzedek/slavery-and-human-trafficking/passover-resources> to access various Passover resources.

Resources and Assistance for Students Who Want to Get Involved on Their College Campuses

Visit www.freetheslaves.net/take-action/students-ending-slavery/ for downloadable resources to help you make a difference on your campus and in the world. Free the Slaves staff are available to assist Hillel staff and students in forming a campus organization or organizing a lecture, fundraiser, or ongoing engagement. Contact Free the Slaves via FreeTheSlaves.net or (202)775-7480.



e. Index A: Listing of Slavery-Related Verses by Torah Portion

Please see pages 49-51 for this preaching and teaching resource, which also includes some information on Haftarat.

f. Index B: Topical Listing (in alphabetical order) of Torah Verses Related to Slavery

Please see pages 53-65 for this preaching and teaching resource, which also includes some Rabbinic references.

g. Lessons for Younger Children

Next Year, Free!: A Modern Slavery Curriculum contains lessons for younger children, from kindergarten through elementary school, to learn about modern-slavery in relation to the Passover story. Two lessons are supplied for every age-group.

In addition, *Next Year, Free!* includes bonus sessions and material organized to teach

- Shabbat
- The Weekly Torah Portion
- The Book of Exodus
- Mitzvot
- Jewish Values

as they relate to slavery and freedom.

View online or download the curriculum at www.FreeTheSlaves.net/Judaism.¹⁰⁵

h. Passover Seder Resources

Recent years have seen a wonderful proliferation of full *Haggadot* (most recently from T'ruah) and individual readings and activities that creatively incorporate the issue of contemporary slavery into the Seder. Most of the best of these resources have been curated into one convenient online directory (complete with links) called **Seder Starters** available at www.FreeTheSlaves.net/Judaism.

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.FreeTheSlaves.net/Judaism>



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If you know of - or have created - Seder resources not listed in **Seder Starters**, please contact Rabbi Debra Orenstein at RabbiDebra@icloud.com, as she plans to add material for future updates by Free the Slaves and the Rabbinical Assembly.