

INVISIBLE

The Story of Modern Day Slavery *A Passover Seder Supplement*

*What you make of liberation
- That is the trick.*

Can you, unshackled, set someone else free?

Human trafficking, also known as trafficking in persons, is the illegal trade of people for exploitation or commercial gain. Over twenty million people, including five million children, are victims of human trafficking each year. This Passover, consider supplementing your seder with the following readings to remember that slavery didn't end in Egypt as many people around the world are victims of modern day slavery and human trafficking.

INTRODUCTION

Readings for the Start of the Seder

We are together because we know that justice and freedom are indivisible. Yet we are living in the midst of a tragic paradox: no longer is there an underground network to guide slaves to freedom, but rather, there is an underground criminal network to entrap people and sell them into slavery. Until we unite to confront this grave violation of human rights, it will continue to plague the world and feed off vulnerable men, women, and children.

- *The Freedom Center*

They came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up,
because I wasn't a Communist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up,
because I wasn't a Jew.
Then they came for the Trade-Unionists, and I didn't speak up,
because I wasn't a Trade-Unionist.
Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up,
because I was a Protestant.
Then they came for me, and by that time,
there was no one left to speak up.

- *Reverend Martin Niemoeller.*

To celebrate the Seder is not merely to recall the Exodus; it is to recapture it. We are taught that, "In every generation all of us are obliged to regard ourselves as if we ourselves went forth from the land of Egypt." (Exodus 13:8) So it is not enough to remember; we must ourselves enter the story and, through prayer and song and symbol and ceremony, make it our own. We must feel the lash and feel the hope that defeats its pain. We must feel the water at our feet, and the fresh breeze of freedom on our face. 7 Group And as we do, then our hearts will be open to all today who still live in Pharaoh's domain, and to all those for whom the Exodus has not yet happened. The greatest gift, freedom, was given to us. These miracles were done for us. For us the waters parted. Let us merit what has been given us by becoming the agents of freedom for all God's children who dwell in darkness.

URCHATZ

Ritual Washing of the Hands

Washing hands is a cleansing process and often regarded as symbolic of this purpose, perhaps cleansing ourselves of certain aspects of our day or of this world. However, instead, we might regard it as a focus on hands themselves; the labor of human endeavor and the skillful creations crafted, both of which contributed to this meal. There is a particular significance in focusing on this aspect of the ritual tonight, as we consider the human endeavor exploited in the act of enslavement.

The hands are washed without a blessing

Today, it is still possible to buy and sell another human being. The price of a slave, adjusted for inflation, has actually dropped compared to the time of the American Civil War. In our time, human life is cheap. It's another commodity, to be bought and consumed. Like our ancestors in Egypt, every day voices cry out to God for freedom. Will we hear them? Will we help them be free? Or will we harden our hearts?

- Rabbis for Human Rights, Passover and Human Rights.

THE FOURTH CUP OF WINE

I will take you as my People

Reader: As our Seder draws to an end, we take up our cups of wine one last time. The redemption is not yet complete. The fourth cup recalls us to our covenant with the Eternal One, to the tasks that still await us as a people called to the service of God, to a great purpose for which the people of Israel lives: the preservation and affirmation of hope.

Group: So we dedicate this fourth cup to all those who labor for the common good in large ways and small, regardless of their origin, station, or faith. And we take heart from the fact that there will yet come a day that all those who yearn for the good and who help sustain it will yet prevail.

Reader: Each day, around the world and here at home, there are cries going unanswered by our fellow human beings. We must work to bring freedom to those still in the depths. It will not be easy. To truly address slavery, we cannot just free individual slaves but must also address the root causes of poverty, prejudice, and inequality that make slavery possible. Our eyes are now open: let us take action on what we see.

- Adapted from Rabbis for Human Rights

SUPPLEMENT

A Poem

Make Those Waters Part

Let us retell the story of our struggle for the promised land
Let us remember how freedom is won so our children will understand
Once we were slaves in Egypt, our people and our land were apart
But when Moses stood before that troubled sea, he could
Make those waters part

Once we were slaves in America,
we were given white men's names
They scattered our families,
they shattered our lives,
while they kept us bound in chains.
Then we marched strong in Selma,
we looked the racists right in the heart,
And when Martin stood before that troubled sea,
he could make those waters part.

Somewhere tonight lives a free man
Somewhere else freedom's just a song of the heart,
We must find the river flowing between them,
And we must make those waters part.

Now we are slaves in our own time
The many at the hands of the few,
And we who've crossed the sea of slavery before,
Must remember what we must do:
In the name of the falsely imprisoned,
In the name of all the homeless at heart,
In the name of all the history that binds us,
We must make those waters part.

Troubled seas rising around us
Sometimes the promised land seems hidden from view
So we retell these stories, that's how we start –
To make those waters part.

- Doug Mishkin

SUPPLEMENT

Stories of Modern Day Slavery

For two years, twelve Mexican and Guatemalan field workers in south Florida were enslaved by the Navarretes, a family of traffickers. The family beat them, chained them to a pole, and at night, locked them in boxes and truck trailers, with little food and no plumbing, while keeping them in ever-increasing debt. During the day, they were taken to work in the tomato fields of two of the state's biggest growers- Six Ls and Pacific, both members of the Socially Accountable Farm Employers program, SAFE for short, which was created to prevent worker abuse. When their day's work was done, they were taken back to their prison. Finally, one of the workers pounded a hole through the trailer and crawled out; he got a ladder, and helped the others to escape. The Navarretes were arrested and indicted on trafficking charges. They pled guilty, and were sentenced to jail, and ordered to pay their victims \$ 240,000 in restitution. Officials at Six Ls and Pacific could not be reached for comment. The chief Assistant U.S. Attorney on the case, Doug Molloy, called it one of southwest Florida's "ugliest slavery cases ever," and added, "we have a number of similar-and ongoing- investigations." And yet, despite the successful prosecution of seven slavery cases involving 1,000 workers, and despite the successful pressure from organizations as Amnesty International USA, until recently, Governor Crist refused to acknowledge the presence of slavery in Florida's fields.

- Ron Soodalter, *The Slave Next Door*

A group of Thai women were brought to the U.S. and enslaved initially in a series of brothels and massage joints. The customers often didn't realize that the women were enslaved, for they weren't chained and spent much of their time smiling...They may have been promised a job in a restaurant, but they arrive without knowing the language, without any legal status...While you are in this state—dizzy, disoriented—your boss takes you to a place that isn't a restaurant or a factory and tells you to unpack your few belongings in a dingy back room. He tells you that this is where you will work to pay off your debt. You will be a prostitute, he explains, and by the way, you will be charged for room and board while you are paying off that \$30,000. When you protest, he beats you, starves you, or keeps you awake for days on end. Then, just to make himself clear, he holds up a picture of your son or your parents or your sister and tears it in half. Or maybe he just says, "We hear your father has a bad heart."

- Nicholas Kristof, *A Window Into Human Trafficking in Texas*