

Passover Social Action Guide

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Passover is rich in social justice themes. It is impossible to study the Jewish story of redemption and not feel compelled to eradicate injustice in the world today. Among the primary social justice themes found in the Exodus story and in the Passover observance are hunger, homelessness, oppression, and redemption.

At Passover, we are reminded of a time when Jews were once restricted to eating only matzah, considered the “bread of affliction,” due to the hasty retreat from Egypt. This experience with hardship following the exodus from Egypt is an inspiration to consider those who eat the metaphorical “bread of affliction” in present times.



In the Babylonian Talmud, we are taught, “Even the poorest person in Israel may not eat until he reclines, and they must not give him less than four cups of wine.” This is a reminder that it is imperative to take care of everyone in the community, even the poorest person. The requirement that even poor Jews be provided with ample wine – and presumably with all of the holiday’s ritual foods and practices – leads to the expectation that Jews should help the poor and the hungry not just during Passover but throughout the year

Passover also serves as a painful reminder that the Jewish people were seen as strangers in the land of Egypt and spent 40 long years of wandering in the wilderness without a home. These elements of the Passover story remind us of current issues of immigration and refugee concerns, and the memory of being displaced instills in us a desire to eradicate homelessness in the modern era.

At Passover, we read, “This year we are slaves. Next year, may we all be free.” Jews are commanded to be directly present in the Passover story, remembering what it was like for the Children of Israel to be slaves in the land of Egypt. This personal experience is a motivation to examine the current international situation and wrestle with cases of injustice, oppression, and modern-day slavery. Thus, Passover provides us an opportunity to raise awareness of contemporary examples of slavery and oppression throughout the world, such as human trafficking, the sex trade, and even domestic violence, which traps victims within their homes, limiting their freedom as surely as if they were enslaved.

You can incorporate social action themes into your Passover observance in the following ways.

Advocate for the Needs of Coronavirus Patients

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, this year's celebration of Passover will look markedly different than it has in years past – and so many of us are feeling helpless during such an uncertain and stressful time.

If you live in the U.S., one easy, impactful way you can help is by urging your members of Congress to prioritize

expire in May, but these programs *need* emergency funding to fully respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our simple action alert tool makes it easy to contact your elected officials.