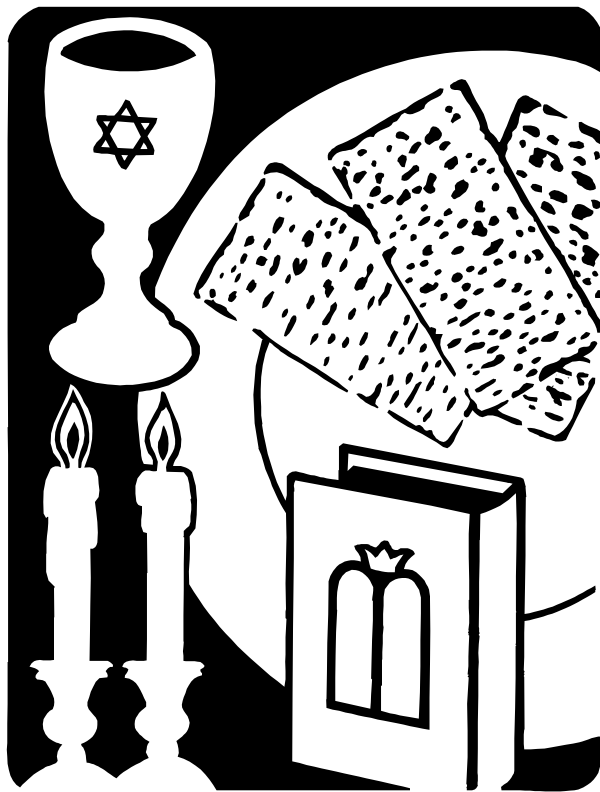


PASSOVER

During Passover we join friends and family around the seder table to celebrate the Exodus from Egypt. Recalling the generations of slavery leading up to the Exodus, we call this holiday “Z’man Cherutenu,” meaning “the season of our freedom.” We are each supposed to include ourselves among the generations of Israelite slaves; according to Mishna Pesachim 10:5, “In every generation, we are obligated to see ourselves as though we personally had gone out of Egypt.” At Pesach we recognize that injustice happened to us in the not-too-distant past; this helps us see that contemporary enslavement and injustice happen around us all the time.



Program: Responding to our Modern-Day Plagues

Adapted from the University of Southern California

The plague of darkness is one ancient plague that still affects our world; that is, the darkness of ignorance about the most important issues facing our generation. As you celebrate your people's liberation, encouraging your community to liberate their minds and think more deeply about modern plagues.

- Identify ten modern "plagues:" AIDS, breast cancer, domestic violence, environmental destruction, homelessness, homophobia, hunger, illiteracy, racism, and xenophobia (these are just examples)
- Contact one organization from the community that deals with these social problems; for example, the Anti-Defamation League regarding racism, and the campus Gay and Lesbian Center regarding homophobia
- Invite each organization to send two representatives and any pertinent literature to the program
- To make participation in the event open to everybody on campus, reserve space, tables, and chairs along a walkway in the center of campus; the organizations will set up shop there, enabling all passersby to stop at any of the booths to pick up information and ask questions of the representatives
- Order T-shirts, buttons, and bumper stickers ahead of time with slogans calling for action against the issues that the program deals with; selling these at the program will help pay for everything.
- Hand out sheets explaining the link between the Passover story and the Modern Plagues of Today event (see below)

What are my issues?

- AIDS: American Foundation for AIDS Research (www.amfar.org)
- Breast cancer: National Alliance of Breast Cancer Organizations (www.nabco.org)
- Children's Issues: Children's Defense Fund (www.childrensdefense.org)
- Domestic violence: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (www.ncadv.org)
- Environmental destruction: Student Environmental Action Coalition (www.seac.org)
- Homelessness: National Coalition for the Homeless (www.nationalhomeless.org)
- Homophobia: National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce (www.nglftf.org)
- Hunger: Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger (www.mazon.org)
- Illiteracy: Student Coalition for Action in Literacy Education (www.unc.edu/depts/scale)
- Racism: Anti-Defamation League (www.adl.org)

Who can be my community partners?

- All campus organizations that deal with these issues
- University Health System
- The national organizations listed on previous page

What advocacy/awareness can I add to the program?

- The entire program is an awareness-based program.
- At the program have opportunities for students to sign petitions and write letters to Congress about specific legislation dealing with the many issues at hand.

What meaningful service components can I include?

- Have a community service project during the event, whether it is painting a mural for the children's hospital, making packages for the homeless, or having some type of collection drive – remember to always think of your community and their needs!
- Encourage organizations to have sign-up sheets so students that walk by can also get involved following the program.
- Invite local high school seniors; these issues are also relevant in their lives.

How can I incorporate Jewish content?

- At the booths provide a sheet explaining the concept of the Ten Plagues as it relates to the Passover story. Refer to Exodus chapters 7-12 to get a sense of the narrative. Include a listing of the original plagues: Blood, Frogs, Lice, Pestilence, Wild Animals, Boils, Hail, Locusts, Darkness, Slaying of the First-Born.
- You can order t-shirts, buttons, and/or bumper stickers ahead of time and imprinted with Jewish quotes about a call to action.
 - If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am [only] for myself, what am I? And if not now, when? – Pirkei Avot 1:14
 - Do not stand idly by the blood of your brother. –Leviticus 19:16

What is my issue?

Poverty

Program: “Let My People Grow”

Adapted from the University of Maryland

This is a great program to do in the weeks leading up to Passover. It involves a diverse student body and is a wonderful opportunity to work with numerous community partners. To begin your program, work with your partners to create an introductory presentation framing the program. This can take the form of a humorous skit, song, or a short discussion emphasizing the religious times of the year (Ramadan, Passover, and Lent) that involve restrictions on food. Use this introduction to make the point that while many people may go without food for a short amount of time during certain holidays, some people experience hunger 365 days a year.

At your program serve a variety of kosher for Passover food for people to eat and to also demonstrate that what we want for ourselves (in this case, a variety and choice in the food we eat) we should want for everyone. This program directly relates to the story of Passover because the Jews in Egypt faced the same issue of people in poverty – what it means to be free.

Question One: What is poverty and where is it found?

This question can lead to a general discussion on poverty.

Questions Two: What causes poverty?

You can split the group into smaller discussion groups and answer this question by creating their own list of the 10 Plagues of Poverty. Some examples of plagues are: lack of dignity, mental illness, language barrier, political jargon, lack of transportation, lack of education due to malnutrition and inequality, and the hidden nature of poverty. After 10 minutes of brainstorming, each group can then present each of their 10 plagues and then as a group you can compile a group consensus of the 10 plagues.

Questions Three: What major things need to change within our society?

Share with the participants current legislation that Congress is discussing and then write letters to Congresspersons about a current issue, such as federal food stamp regulations.

Question Four: What can I do individually?

Have some type of collection drive either prior to the event (remember to call the local shelters and ask what their needs are) and then at the program create put together the materials that you collect to be donated. Then coordinate a time that the group could go and drop off the contribution.

Who can be my community partners?

- Christian campus groups
- Muslim campus groups
- Mazon (www.mazon.org)
- National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness (www.nscanh.org)

What advocacy/awareness can I add to the program?

- The entire program is an advocacy/awareness-based program.
- Following the program have the participants work together to create an ongoing campaign aimed at one of the issues of poverty discussed in your program.

What meaningful service components can I include?

- Create a long-term direct service opportunity dealing with the issue of poverty in your community (e.g., going to local shelter).

How can I incorporate Jewish content?

- At the conclusion of the event, you can make matzoh sandwiches building upon the sage Hillel's idea of combining the bitter and the sweet. For your program, give the Hillel sandwich a social justice twist! Although the reality of poverty and social injustice is bitter like the maror and solutions are difficult to implement, the constructive work is sweet, like charoset. The matzot symbolize a coming together of people for a common cause.

What is my issue?

The connection between the Civil Rights movement and the Exodus

Program: *At the River I Stand*

Adapted from Jews United for Justice (www.jufj.org)

On the secular calendar, it is customary to honor great leaders and teachers on the anniversary of their birth. But in the Jewish community, it is tradition to honor those who have passed on the anniversary of their death. This year, we invite you to honor the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. on the anniversary of his assassination April 4th, which usually falls near or around Passover.

At the River I Stand is a powerful film that documents the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis during the final days before his assassination. In the following pages you will find: a supplementary video discussion guide, and a haggadah insert for use at your Passover seder (you can find the video at a local video store or by calling (202) 884-7635). We encourage you to host a viewing and dialogue with members of your campus community to discuss the parallels between the Civil Rights movement and the Exodus story.

In March of 1968, just ten days before he was shot down in Memphis, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke before the annual meeting of the Rabbinical Assembly of the Conservative movement. While introducing Dr. King, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel—who had walked arm and arm with King in Selma—said to his colleagues: "Where in America do we hear a voice like the voice of the prophets of Israel? Martin Luther King is a sign that God has not forsaken the United States of America...I call upon every Jew to hearken to his voice, to share his vision, to follow his way."

Passover reminds us of our ancestors struggles for liberation. This video reminds us that in modern times we need to stand with people in their struggles for a just world. We hope this will help deepen your understanding of and commitment to social justice!

To access more information about *At the River I Stand* and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered this speech in support of the striking sanitation workers at Mason Temple in Memphis, TN on April 3, 1968 go to <http://www.afscme.org/about/kingspch.htm>.

To access more information about the program plus discussion materials, please contact Jews United for Justice, Javera Temsky at (202) 88-7635.

Thank you to Jews United for Justice and Laura McSpedon of the Student Labor Action Project. This program was composed by Liz Richman and Andy Shugerman of Jews United for Justice.

AT THE RIVER I STAND

VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

To prepare for discussion:

- ♦ View video so that you gain familiarity with the subject matter ahead of time.
- ♦ Have flip chart paper available to record answers during the discussion.
- ♦ Jewish tradition is to honor life by commemorating *yahrzeits* rather than birthdays; remembering MLK around Pesach is a fitting Jewish response. You may want to light a memorial candle to open or close your *avont*

PRE – VIDEO: GROUP BRAINSTORM

1. What issues do we associate with the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.?
possible answers: equality before the law, diversity, civil rights, rallying people through religion, strength in numbers
2. What issues do we associate with the Passover celebration?
possible answers: freedom from Egypt, getting into the Promised Land, plagues, Pharaoh, God, Moses, Red Sea, strength in numbers

VIEW VIDEO

POST – VIDEO: IMMEDIATE REACTIONS

The purpose of this section is to elicit initial reactions to the video.

- ♦ If group is 15 people or less, stay together as a group and ask each person in turn to give a brief reaction to the video.
- ♦ If group has more than 15 people, break into pairs and have individuals speak for 3-5 minutes on their initial reactions to the video.

POST – VIDEO: FACILITATED DISCUSSION

1. What parallels do you see between the video and the Passover story?
possible answers: workers freeing themselves from oppressive conditions, a pharaoh-like leader
2. What do you think King meant by “the Promised Land?”
possible answers: racial harmony, fair wages, good working conditions
3. What were the plagues in 1968 as seen in the video?
possible answers: racism, unsafe working conditions, intimidation
4. What plagues do you see around you today? What plagues exist today for low-wage workers?
5. What plagues today are like the plagues during 1968? What plagues today are unlike the plagues during 1968? Why have these either persisted or changed, (i.e. attitudes, legislation, world events)?
6. What is your vision of a Promised Land today? What would it look like? What do we need to do to get there?
7. How can we as Jews serve as partners in this work?
possible answers: join in social justice campaigns with other groups on your campus or community, gather with friends to discuss an issue of concern and develop an action plan, educate the Jewish community through letters to editors, community forums, etc. on social justice issues

Jews United for Justice, 1424 16th St., NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036
phone: 202-884-7635 fax: 202-483-1945 jufj@earthlink.net, www.jufj.org

Read during Seder before or after Maggid, the telling of the Passover Story

DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT AND THE LEGACY OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

As we see the broken *matzah* before us, we call to mind our ancestors' exodus from enslavement and suffering in Egypt. We also remember that the *haggadah* teaches us of our obligation to see ourselves as having personally taken part in the bitterness of bondage and the sweetness of liberation. But it is not enough simply to remember, for the *seder* is, and has always been, a call to action against injustice and oppression.

Indeed, the biblical Exodus narrative inspired one of this past century's most significant struggles for social and economic justice, the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. April 4, 2001, three days before Passover, will mark the 33rd anniversary of the death of our country's brave and beloved hero in that cause, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Because Jewish tradition honors the lives of our great teachers by commemorating the anniversary of their deaths, it is especially fitting to think about the parallels between the Exodus story and the history of the Civil Rights Movement.

When he was assassinated, Dr. King was supporting the 1300 mostly African-American sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, who had gone on strike in February 1968 to protest the dangerous working conditions and dismal pay that kept most of them on welfare. Leaders in the Civil Rights movement quickly realized that the strike reflected a broader struggle for respect and economic justice for working people across the country. The focus of the Poor People's Campaign led by Dr. King quickly expanded to include economic issues in the Civil Rights agenda.

Dr. King and many others died fighting for the right of all people to respect, fair treatment, dignity, and a voice in the workplace and in the community. Today these goals are not yet fulfilled as the gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow. To honor Dr. King's legacy and to continue his still-unfinished crusade for social and economic justice, this Passover *seder* tonight offers us the opportunity to ask ourselves how we will make the coming year – and not just tonight – different from all others.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/READINGS

1. How do Jewish perspectives on liberation from Egypt compare to Dr. King's struggle for social and economic freedom?

"It's all right to talk about streets flowing with milk and honey, but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here and His children who can't eat three square meals a day. It's all right to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day God's preacher must talk about the new New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, the new Memphis, Tennessee. This is what we have to do."
From "I've Been to the Mountaintop" - Dr. King's last speech; in Memphis, TN, April 3, 1968

2. What lessons do we learn about our Jewish and human obligations to others from the story of the biblical Exodus, the seder, and Dr. King's leadership?

"Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force...many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And, they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone."
From "I Have a Dream" - Dr. King's address at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963

3. What types of specific/concrete actions and storytelling can we do now to advance King's legacy and the themes of Passover?

"We are all Pharaohs or slaves of Pharaohs. It is sad to be a slave of a Pharaoh. It is horrible to be a Pharaoh. Daily we should take account and ask: What have I done today to alleviate the anguish, to mitigate the evil, to prevent humiliation? Let there be a grain of prophet in every man!"
From Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's *The Insecurity of Peace* (pp. 97-98); Heschel marched with King from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in the 1965 Voting Rights campaign.