

## Passover Sermon/Discussion Starters for Clergy

Connecting the issue of hunger to important passages from the Haggadah:

- ***Ha Lachma Anya*** – This is the bread of poverty, which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. What does poverty look like today? Tens of million Americans, including millions of seniors and children, face food insecurity each and every day. Speak about who is hungry in America and why, using these [resources](#) and [stories](#) from MAZON.
- ***Let all who are hungry come and eat.*** – We begin the Magid with a formidable exhortation, “Let all who are hungry come and eat” — this is how we set the tone for telling the story of Passover. We cannot learn, we cannot celebrate, we cannot move forward in the seder if anyone is hungry. What is asked of me in the moment? What will I do to ensure all who are hungry come and eat? Then the story of Passover begins not with Moses’s birth, or even Joseph’s arrival in Egypt, but with Abraham. We go back to the beginning of our history as a people and reflect. How have the circumstances of our history shaped this defining moment of the Exodus and our present? On this night, we ask: What lessons from our history should guide our nation’s approach to ending hunger?
- ***Dayenu*** – This year, let us say *dayenu*, enough. We have had enough and now it is time to do something to help end hunger. Speak with your congregation about MAZON’s [advocacy campaigns to protect the federal food safety net](#). Encourage them to urge members of Congress to protect essential nutrition programs, like SNAP, and ensure individuals and families have enough nutritious food to lead healthy lives.
- ***B’chol dor v’dor*** – In every generation, we are obligated to view ourselves as if we were the ones who went out from Egypt. We were there, and yet we are also here, part of the unfolding story of pursuing justice in our own time. We retell and remember what was, and at the same time we continue to shape what will be. Hunger is one of the most pressing challenges facing our generation and it is up to each of us to lift our voices and speak out to ensure that vital nutrition safety net programs are sufficiently funded and that there is a Jewish voice speaking out against hunger on Capitol Hill. Encourage members of your congregation to make generous [tzedakah contributions](#) to MAZON to help support our work on this vital issue.

- **Let my people go.** – Moses stands before Pharaoh to demand, to reason, to implore: Let my people go. Young and old, a whole community in the balance. Pharaoh considers, only to harden his heart and refuse Moses once again. It's high drama. It's compelling. And it's tragic. Everyone suffers, and suffers needlessly. The millions of people experiencing food insecurity in our nation are challenged at every turn. By the circumstances that brought this moment — a cut in hours at work, an elderly parent in need of care, a childcare disruption. By the litany of systemic issues that engender individual hardships and generational poverty. By a global pandemic and climate emergency, impacting health and safety on an overwhelming scale. But we know these challenges could be softened with thoughtful, compassionate, and sometimes revolutionary interventions. So together we ask, when will the needs of those who are hungry come before the whims of the powerful? And this question surfaces more — who are the hungry, and who are the powerful? Is it whom we expect? And perhaps most importantly — what piece of this work lies in our hands?
- **Mitzrayim** – The Exodus story begins in Mitzrayim, “the narrow place.” L’dor v ‘dor, from generation to generation, we are asked to consider: We too, were slaves in Egypt. We too, were in the narrow place. And today, in this country, we must confront that we are in the narrow place because our systems are failing too many of our neighbors. Today, millions of Americans are bound by the burden of hunger. If none of us are free until all of us are free, so too are all of us in the narrow place, living with policies that ask — at best — how people can survive, rather than how they can thrive. Freedom and food are inextricably tied in the Haggadah. We cannot discuss our own freedom, we cannot begin the Magid (telling the story) and continue the rest of the seder until we heed the command to “let all who are hungry come and eat.” And so together we ask: How will we find our way to freedom and justice? With millions of Americans facing hunger, what actions can we take today so that next year, everyone can share in abundance?
- **Retelling the story** – Each Passover we retell the defining story of our people: our exodus from Egypt. It's a story of wealth and want, of an individual and of a community, of justice denied and justice prevailing. How will we retell the story of this past year, and all it has wrought? The past few years have changed us profoundly, revealing and exacerbating the breadth of hunger and human need. How will we retell this story? How will we retell the story of this past year, and all we have learned? It is our responsibility to channel the stark clarity that has been so catastrophically thrust upon us into a

demonstration of our values. We will fight against the barriers faced by millions to accessing food. We will fight the stigma that discourages people from getting the help they need. We will fight any policy, school of thought, or kernel of doubt that challenges the notion that people deserve to feed themselves with dignity, no matter their circumstances. L'dor v'dor, from generation to generation, we will remember and retell how a plague of disease begat a plague of inequity, and we will respond, together.

- ***The Four Questions*** – Each Pesach we ask, why is this night different than all other nights? We should ask, why is every other night not held to the same standard – that all who are hungry come and eat? And to truly add insult to injury, why do we allow those who struggle with hunger to be shamed? Shame is insidious. Shame prevents Americans whose stomachs cramp with hunger from seeking out the benefits they are eligible for. Shame erodes those very rights – when policymakers ascribe to it, they perpetuate it in the systems meant to protect the most vulnerable among us.