

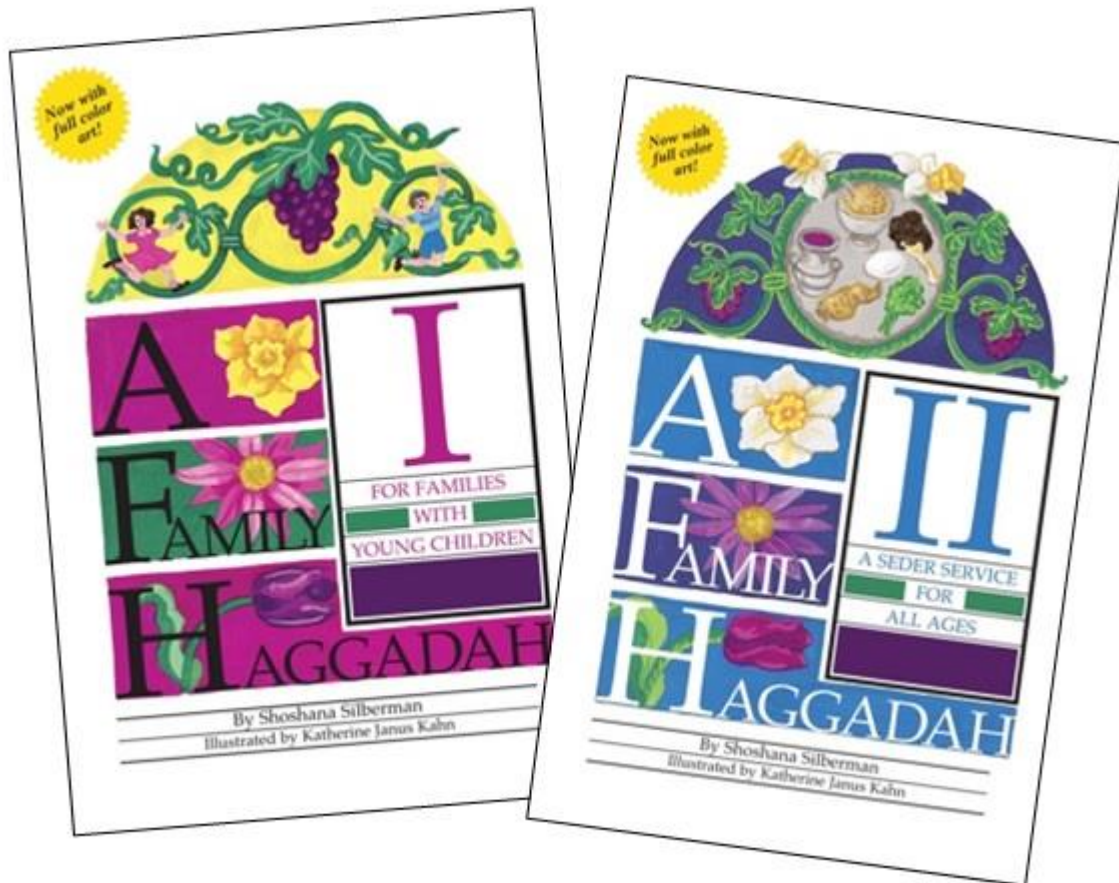
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## Passover Lesson Plan for 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

Resources for Teachers and Students



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241 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55401

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eSource by Shoshana Silberman

**Introduction to Modern Slavery**  
**Lesson One for Third – Fourth Grade**  
Dr. Shoshana Silberman

Author's notes:

*This is written as two lessons, however each lesson is itself divided into two sections. Depending on how much time you have with your students, you may opt to teach it as either two or four lessons.*

*Modern slavery can be a difficult and scary topic for children of this age. It must be handled with sensitivity. Students need to be informed, but at the same time do not need to know all facts and every detail about this tragic situation. Teachers must use discretion, at all times.*

**Lesson One, Part A      Defining Ancient and Modern Slavery**

**Goals:**

Students will know that slavery is defined as holding people against their will. They will learn about the slavery in ancient Israel, as described in the *Torah*, as well as the slavery that took place in the USA. They will know facts about modern slavery today and the reason it occurs.

Students will feel the connection between the slaveries in the past (Biblical and USA) and modern slavery in the world today.

They will experience surprise as to the extent of modern slavery in the world.

**Activity One: What Slavery Is**

*Teachers cannot assume that students have an understanding of what slavery means. The following activities can serve as a way of introducing this topic:*

- Ask the students to share what they think slavery is, *i.e.* what happens when someone is a slave.
  
- *The main point to get across is that a person is controlled by someone else (sometimes referred to as a master) and therefore cannot do what he or she wants to do.*
  
- Ask the students to share what they know about American slavery.

*The key points are that Africans were captured, chained, and brought over on ships. They were sold to masters, primarily in the South, and many worked on plantations picking cotton (which was very hard work) as well as other difficult tasks. The slaves could not leave. Their husbands, wives, parents, or children could be sold to another master and never seen again.*

- Have students guess when the slaves were freed in the United States. *When you explain/confirm that the date is 1865, ask them to raise their hands if they are surprised that slavery existed in the United States until this time.*
- Ask students to share what they know about the Biblical story of our slavery. *A brief summary of the story of the Exodus (a good term for them to learn) can be found in lesson 2, part A. You can choose to read it at this point if you think it would be helpful.*

If the students already have some knowledge of the story, you may choose to read the story later when you are doing lesson 2.<sup>1</sup>

- Have the students guess when they think the Exodus from Egypt occurred. *Some think the date was 1446 BCE; other scholars put the date at between 1250 and 1200 BCE.*
- Have the students do the math to understand how long ago this happened.
- Ask the students why they think we still celebrate Passover each year and retell the story of the Exodus.

### **Activity Two: Modern Slavery**

- To introduce the topic of modern slavery, ask the students to “vote” by raising their hands if they think slavery happened in the past, but no longer exists today. Then ask them to raise their hands if they think that slavery still exists. Explain that we do indeed have slavery today, but do not provide details at this point. Instead, do an activity with the class called *Active Knowledge Sharing*.

This is a way to immediately draw students into the topic of modern slavery. It is designed to spark their interest. It will also help you assess their knowledge, so that you can teach what they do not already know, and not waste time.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*Active Jewish Learning*. Shoshana Silberman & Mel Silberman. Torah Aura, 2009.

- Provide the following list of questions and ask students to answer these **by themselves** (no talking or peeking during this part of the activity.) This will give students an opportunity to think about the topic, as well as make them enthusiastic about the next part of the activity. Tell the children that you do not expect them to know most of the answers and that they can -and actually should- guess. Also explain that it is not a test and that you will never see their papers.

## MODERN SLAVERY

1. How many slaves are there today? About . . .
  - a) 2 thousand
  - b) 21 thousand
  - c) 21 million
  
2. Are there children who are slaves  
  
Yes  
  
No
  
3. Slavery happens only in faraway countries.  
  
True  
  
False
  
4. Why do some people make other people become slaves? Write down your thoughts.

The next step involves student **collaboration**.

Give the students enough time to finish, but not too much time.

Then have them walk around the classroom and find others with whom they can get answers, improve their answers, or just think about which answers might be the correct ones.

You may wish to have a rule that students can only discuss one answer with one other student.

Students can sign their names next to the question they discuss with another student.

Give them a time limit (10 minutes) and then have them return to their seats.

If you see that most are done earlier, have them end the activity sooner.

Another way to perform this activity is to inform the students that after they answer the questions by themselves, they should form trios and discuss the questions and answers in their small groups.

The final step is **processing the questionnaire** with the **whole class**. This is the important part! Hopefully, their previous work, both alone and in collaboration, will provoke the curiosity of the students and they will be eager to learn the answers from you.

The following are the correct answers:

- 21 million (though some experts estimate that the number is closer to 30 million). In the conservative estimate, that's 3 out of every 1000 people in our world today! Incredibly, more people are enslaved today than at any other time in history!<sup>3</sup>
- Yes, there are, sadly, 5.5 million children who are enslaved today. One example is children who are frequently forced into slavery in the Ivory Coast and Ghana, to harvest cocoa.<sup>4</sup>
- Today, modern slavery is happening all over the world. People are enslaved in 74 countries, including the United States and Israel. People of different races, religions, and ethnic groups are targeted. Often they are the minorities in their countries. They are often kept isolated – away from the rest of the population.<sup>5</sup>
- There is *no* "right" answer to question D.

*Note: Children are likely to say that people make other people slaves because they are bad (which is true). However, we need to explain that a major reason they do this is greed. Great sums of money are made from the slave trade. The work slaves do provides no benefit to them,*

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<sup>3</sup> [www.RAC.org](http://www.RAC.org)

<sup>4</sup> [www.ChocolateMoses.org](http://www.ChocolateMoses.org)

<sup>5</sup> [www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org)

*but can provide great wealth to those who kidnap/capture and use these people to work for them, usually at difficult or unsafe jobs. The slave trade is a multi-billion dollar industry. For some who capture and/or use slaves, this gives them the feeling of power, which is hard to give up. Also, there has been a low risk of getting caught. Other possible reasons: lack of empathy, a sense of entitlement, and blindness to the humanity of the other person because the slave is of a different race or caste.*

You may wish to end the lesson at this point and begin the next section at the next class. Follow the time framework that is best for your class.

## **Lesson One, Part B: How and Why Children and Adults Become Slaves**

### **Goals**

- Students will know the reasons adults and children can become slaves.
- They will imagine and empathize with those who are tricked or forced into slavery.

### **How and Why Children and Adults Become Slaves**

The next section focuses on how adults and children become slaves and why they cannot easily escape. We know that people use force or tricks to make others become slaves. People are taken to places, sometimes far away, where they are forced to do difficult and sometimes unsafe jobs for their new masters. There is no need to go into details about the violence involved in this. Also, in the following scenarios, I have not included information about the sex trade, as this would not be age appropriate. However, a teacher must be prepared to react if a student brings this up. My recommendation is to say something like... “These evil people do a lot of bad things. We’re not going to talk about all of them. This is something for an older class to discuss.” You may also wish to discuss how to handle this with your rabbi and/or principal.

### **Activity One: Envisioning**

*Have children sit quietly and close their eyes. This will keep them focused and not distracted. Ask them to imagine the following:*

Imagine you are a loving mom who has children to feed, but there is not enough food and not enough money to buy the school uniforms that are required to send your children to school.

You wish you could give your children enough food and a good education! One day, a man comes by and tells you he is looking to hire young men just your oldest son’s age. He will give your son a well-paying job in a factory – and it comes with lunch every day included. He will need to learn to read in order to do his job well, but there is a free training program for that.

This seems like a dream come true. Your son is excited and promises to send money home to help the family. But you don't know that this man is a slaveholder. There is no factory. Your son will be taken to a dangerous mine to dig out minerals. And this man will never pay him or teach him to read.

Imagine a man who is very poor. He is told that he will have a wonderful job on a farm. The captor also offers to pay off his debt (money he owes.) Each month, he is told, an amount will be deducted (taken from) from his salary. In this way he can pay it back and soon be free to return home. When he arrives, he discovers that the conditions on the farm are not so nice or even safe. His work is long and hard, and he must sleep in a shack with other slave workers. He receives minimum food and clothing. He can't pay off his debt because he receives little or no money. He has no way of contacting anyone about his situation. He also can't tell anyone about his problem because he does not speak the language of the country he is now living in.

Imagine a teenage girl who has run away from home. Perhaps her family was so poor that there was not enough to eat for all family members. Perhaps the father was often drunk or hurt her. Or perhaps the mother was on drugs and was not capable of taking care of the children. The girl meets someone who says he can make them wealthy. Maybe he promises an exciting job being a model, or a well-paying job at a store. When they arrive, she finds that the job is being a dishwasher at a restaurant. No pay is given, and at the end of the day she is locked in a room with other young slaves. They all are afraid to speak up because they have been threatened. They have been told that they will be beaten or their families back home will be harmed if they talk to anyone. They may be shown a weapon, which makes them very frightened.

As you can see in all three cases (based on stories of those who have been enslaved), it is almost impossible to escape on one's own. Slaves are understandably frightened or do not see a way out.

These stories should be discussed with a partner. All three may be discussed together with one partner or each story with a different partner (preferable), depending on available time.

Here are the discussion questions:

- Were you surprised by what happened to each of these people in the three stories?
- How does each story make you feel?
- If you were in the shoes of these people, what would you hope would happen?



## Lesson Two, Part A: Jewish Values and Slavery

### Goals:

- Students will learn what our central narrative story, the Exodus, teaches about the importance of freedom.
- Students will feel inspired by the stories of freedom in the Exodus story.
- Students will experience pride in our tradition of telling the story of freedom each year at Passover, to enable us to make the Biblical story our own.

The Exodus is the key narrative of the Jewish people. It is impossible to consider Judaism without this story. There are numerous references, and laws in the *Torah* that are based on this experience of slavery. This section should be used to teach the values that can motivate and inspire students to become involved with the issue of modern slavery.

I would suggest reading the story of Exodus to the students in a clear and dramatic voice. You could use the abbreviated version that follows. A good alternative for day school students would be to read the original text.

The discussion questions can be done collaboratively in groups of two or three and then shared with the entire class.

If students have already studied the story in the previous lesson, they can review it in the following ways:

- Have one student start and stop at some point and have another student volunteer to continue.
- Ask students to volunteer to relate different parts of the story, for example, “Who wants to tell the part about the midwives?”
- Or, have students pick a card out of a hat that will inform them about which part they will tell.

### Questions for the Exodus Story:

- Below is a list of brave people in the story.
  - Shifra and Puah
  - Amram and Yocheved
  - Miriam
  - Pharaoh’s daughter
  - Moses and Aaron
  - The Israelites who left with Moses

- What did each of them do that was so brave?
- How do you think they found the courage to act bravely?
- If time allows, take the names of the brave people listed above, and have the students rank them as to how important they think they were in enabling the Israelites to be free.
- Then have them compare their rankings to those of other classmates, explaining why they made their choices.
- Ask students to share a time that they were courageous or someone they know was. What made them act in this way or why do they think the person they know acted courageously?

### **The Story of Passover<sup>6</sup>**

Abraham, the first Jew, came from a family of idol worshippers. He broke with their tradition and became a believer in the One God, who promised him and his wife Sarah that their descendants would become a great people, as numerous as the stars in the sky. God renewed this promise with their son Isaac and his wife Rebecca, and with their son Jacob and his wives Rachel and Leah.

God led Abraham and Sarah across the river Euphrates to the land of Israel (then called Canaan), but warned that their descendants would be strangers in a strange land, enslaved for 400 years.

Indeed, this prophecy came true. Joseph, the son of Jacob and Rachel, came to live in Egypt after being sold by his jealous brothers to a caravan of merchants. Because of his ability to interpret dreams, he rose to power as an advisor to Pharaoh. Joseph told him to build storehouses and fill them with grain. When years of famine struck, there was still food to eat in Egypt. Pharaoh was so grateful that when Joseph's brothers came in search of food, he invited them to settle in the area called Goshen. Jacob's household, known as Israelites, multiplied greatly and lived peacefully in Egypt. Years later, a new Pharaoh came to rule, who did not remember Joseph and all he had done for the Egyptian people. He feared that the Israelites were becoming too numerous and too powerful and might side with the enemy if there should be a war.

### **Slavery in Egypt**

This Pharaoh made the Israelites slaves. He forced them to do hard labor, building cities with bricks made from clay and straw. The people knew neither peace nor rest, only misery and

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pain. The cruelest decree of all was Pharaoh's order that every baby boy born to an Israelite woman be drowned in the River Nile. The midwives, Shifra and Puah, feared God and did not do as the Pharaoh had ordered, but allowed the infants to live.

One couple, Amram and Yocheved, hid their newborn at home for three months. When his cries became too loud, Yocheved placed him in a basket on the river. Their daughter Miriam watched to see what would happen. When Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe in the river, she discovered the basket. Feeling pity for the helpless child, she decided to keep him as her own and named him Moshe (Moses), meaning "drawn from the water."

Bravely, Miriam asked the princess if she needed a nurse to help her with the baby. The princess said yes, and so it happened that Yocheved was able to care for her own son and teach him about his heritage.

### **Moses Becomes a Leader**

Moses would have lived at the Pharaoh's palace forever, but he could not ignore the suffering of his people. Once, when he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite slave, he was unable to control his anger, and he killed the Egyptian. Knowing his life would be in danger once the news of this deed spread, Moses fled to the land of Midian, where he became a shepherd.

One day, while tending sheep on Mount Horeb, Moses saw a bush that seemed to be on fire, but was not burning up. From the bush, he heard God's voice calling him. God said, "I am the God of your ancestors. I have seen the suffering of the Israelites and have heard their cries. I am ready to take them out of Egypt and bring them to a new land, a land flowing with milk and honey."

God told Moses to return to Egypt to bring the message of freedom to the Israelites, and to warn Pharaoh that God would bring plagues on the Egyptians if he did not let the slaves go free. Moses was so humble that he could not imagine being God's messenger. "I will be with you," God promised him. With his assurance and challenge, Moses set out for Egypt.

### **The Ten Plagues**

When Moses asked Pharaoh to free the Israelites, he refused, so God brought ten plagues on the Egyptians. Each one frightened Pharaoh, and each time he promised to free the slaves. But when each plague ended, Pharaoh did not keep his word. It was only after the last plague, the death of the firstborn of the Egyptians, that Pharaoh agreed to let the Israelites go.

We fill our wine cups to remember our joy in being able to leave Egypt. Yet our happiness is not complete, because the Egyptians, who are also God's children, suffered from Pharaoh's evil

ways. Therefore, we spill a drop of wine from our cups (with a finger or a spoon) as we say each plague.

<i>Blood</i>	<i>Dahm</i>
<i>Frogs</i>	<i>Tz'fardaya</i>
<i>Lice</i>	<i>Kinim</i>
<i>Beasts</i>	<i>Arov</i>
<i>Cattle Disease</i>	<i>Dever</i>
<i>Boils</i>	<i>Sh'hin</i>
<i>Hail</i>	<i>Barad</i>
<i>Locusts</i>	<i>Arbeh</i>
<i>Darkness</i>	<i>Hoshekh</i>
<i>Plague of the Firstborn</i>	<i>Makat B'h<sup>o</sup>rot</i>

### Crossing the Sea

Soon after Pharaoh let the Israelites leave Egypt, he regretted his decision and ordered his army to bring them back. His soldiers caught up with the Israelites by the banks of the Sea of Reeds. When they saw the Egyptians, the Israelites were afraid and cried out. God told Moses to lift his staff. When he did, a strong east wind drove back the sea, leaving space for the Israelites to go across on dry land. The Egyptians came after them into the sea.

Moses again lifted his staff, and the waters rushed back, covering the Egyptians and their horses and chariots.

Then Moses' sister Miriam led the women in joyous dance and song, thanking God for saving their lives.

Thus *Adonai* our God brought us out of Egypt, not by an angel, nor by a seraph, nor by any messenger, but alone – with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with great terror, and with signs and wonders.

### Food for Thought - Teachings and Questions:

These can be first discussed in pairs and then with the class. By working in pairs first, the students are more likely to share more thoughtful comments with the whole group.

- The *midrash* tells us that, at first, the Israelites were afraid to enter the Sea of Reeds. They stood at the shore, not moving. Finally one man named *Nah<sup>o</sup>son Ben Aminadav*, found the courage to take the first step into the Sea, and all of the Israelites followed. What does this *midrash* teach us? (This is a wonderful opportunity to discuss leadership and taking the initiative.)
- The *Haggadah* says that "We were slaves in Egypt and now we are free." How does this relate to the slavery that exists today? Are you comfortable talking only about our

freedom and ignoring the fact that others are not free today? How can we treat others, as we would want to be treated, when it comes to the issue of slavery?

- The Hebrew slaves were forced to do hard labor to build the Egyptian cities of Pithom and Ramses. They used bricks made from clay. After Moses and Aaron first requested that God free the slaves, Pharaoh, in revenge, announced that the slaves would now not only have to build the cities, but would also have to make their own bricks. Their work had to be done in the same amount of time as before. This was very cruel. What in the three modern stories (in lesson #1), seems especially cruel to you? How do modern slaveholders threaten to make things worse for people, and how do they actually make them worse?

### Brainstorming:

- Ask students to name the *seder* plate items and what they symbolize. Point out that most of the symbols refer to both slavery and freedom. Eggs are for birth and a sacrifice offered in the Temple, but they also remind us of the sad parts of the cycle of life (round foods for *shiva*, our history of slavery). *Haroset* is for the mortar (slavery, building cities against our will.<sup>7</sup> The shankbone reminds us of the frightening first Passover, when we were not yet free and sacrificed a lamb, as well as of the outstretched arm of God that saved us and the sacrifices we offered once we were free.
- Why do we need to include and even combine symbols of slavery with symbols of freedom at the *seder*? (For example the salt water (tears) with the parsley (promise of spring)?)
- *Matzah* symbolizes both the bread of poverty and the bread of freedom. Ask students to share ideas as to why this is so.
- Challenge students as to why some people are putting a padlock on their *seder* tables? *The padlock reminds us that there are those who are locked in their rooms after work and cannot escape.*
- Though the Egyptians were suffering from the plagues, Pharaoh did not want to give up his work force. How does this remind you of what modern taskmasters are doing to the slaves they hold?
- The Ten Commandments begins with the words, “I am *Adonai* your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” This is the first thing God wants us to know. Why?

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<sup>7</sup> Many people only know the association to slavery of *haroset*, not its association with freedom. But the *Talmud* gives two reasons, one hopeful and one mournful. See BT *Pesahim* 116a and Debra Orenstein and Jane Rachel Litman, eds., *Lifecycles 2: Jewish Women on Biblical Themes in Contemporary Life* (Jewish Lights Publishing), 113-122.

## Enrichment Activities

Below are some additional activities for your class.

- Role-play Moses and Aaron telling Pharaoh to “Let my people go!” Consider making costumes and filming your presentation. (This can be done in groups of three, or rotating actors.) Other students can be ministers in Pharaoh’s court.
- Perhaps using some of the same costumes and props, role-play intervening to help modern slaves (in the three scenarios described).
- Create a large mural by dividing the story of the Exodus into sections. Have a small group of students work on each section.
- Create a picture book *Haggadah* for younger students.

*If you are breaking lesson two into two parts, end here and continue Part B at the next class.*

## Lesson Two, Part B      How Can Kids Help?

### Goals:

1. Students will know about organizations that work to free modern slaves. They will learn ways that even children can help eliminate modern slavery.
2. Students will feel motivated to become activists to eliminate modern slavery.
3. Students will experience a need to keep learning about slavery and being involved in this important work.

*We cannot give the illusion that the problem of modern slavery will be solved by children alone. Yet their awareness is crucial. They will become the leaders in the future. There are, however, things that children can do even now to help bring an end to modern slavery.*

רַבִּי טַרְפוֹן הָיָה אוֹמֵר, לֹא עֲלִיד הַמְּלָאכָה לְגִמּוֹר, וְלֹא אַתָּה בֶּן חוֹרִין לְבָטֵל מִמְּנָה.

*Rabbi Tarfon used to say, “You are not required to finish the job; neither are you free to desist from it.”*

*-Pirke Avot 2:21*

We can inform students about organizations (such as Polaris, Chocolate Moses, Free the Slaves, Breaking the Chain Through Education, Atzum) that help modern slaves. Here are some of the things that these organizations do:

- They provide “hotlines” for people in trouble to use, or for people who suspect a problem to call.
- They help survivors to start over after they have been freed. They also help survivors who are homeless or have other emergencies.
- They provide government officials with information about modern slavery, so new laws can be created to help prevent the problem, as well as to help victims.
- They help those in the court system to understand the situation. For example, children, who are forced to sell drugs need help, not punishment.
- They urge the courts to prosecute traffickers, to deter others from become traffickers in the slave trade.
- They provide information to educators and other people who want to know about modern slavery and learn how they can help.
- There are groups that actually do interventions to free victims of modern slavery around the world. They raid restaurants, quarries, factories, farms, and fishing boats, and take people who are enslaved to a safe place.
- They inform people about Fair Trade products from around the globe. Purchasing Fair Trade products rewards businesses that do not use slave labor.

By learning about modern slavery and telling others (including their peers and family members), as well as supporting these organizations financially, students can be helpful.

Students this age usually do not have much in the way of funds to donate, but even a small amount from their allowance can help. They can, though, organize a fundraiser, to make money to donate. A fundraiser also has the potential of raising awareness about the problem of modern slavery. A good family education project would be for students and their parents together to explore, online, organizations that are dealing with the problem, to decide to which ones they would like to donate. I would recommend Free the Slaves, Breaking the Chain Through Education, Atzum, and Chocolate Moses.

It would also be beneficial for parents to have an educational session, with the teacher, principal or rabbi, on the topic of modern slavery, to both learn about this tragic problem as well as to discover and share what their children are learning.



Children can be shown the trailer for *Stand With Me*, a movie that chronicles how a girl their age began with a goal to free 500 slaves and has already saved many more than that. Parents can be shown the entire movie while their children are in Hebrew School. Find the trailer and download at [www.standwithmemovie.com](http://www.standwithmemovie.com).

The class (or students individually) could also compose a prayer for those who are enslaved today, that can be recited at their family *sedarim*. If parents also understand the problem, they will be more likely to include and appreciate it.

### **A Final Note**

The book of Genesis teaches that we are all created *B'tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God. This does not mean that we are all the same. It means that we all need to respect each other. Therefore, how can we ignore the tragedy of modern slavery?

Maimonides, who lived in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, taught something important that applies today – that it is a great mitzvah to redeem slaves. Since Biblical times, Jews have been doing this. The chain should not be broken today!

### **ABOUT THIS CURRICULUM**

Visit [www.freetheslaves.net/Judaism](http://www.freetheslaves.net/Judaism) and download [Seder Starters](#), a collection of readings and activities that you can integrate into your seder. Engage everyone around the table, enhance the conversation, and help slaves on our Festival of Freedom.

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