

# "LET ALL WHO ARE HUNGRY COME AND EAT" HUNGER AND FOOD INSECURITY: PASSOVER 2023/5783

A Collaboration of the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan + West Side Campaign Against Hunger

**How to use this supplement:** Include this in your Passover seder where you read *Ha Lachma Anya* and the Ten Plagues, typically in the *Magid* (storytelling) section.

הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיָּא דִּי אֲכָלוּ אַבְרָהָמָא בְּאַרְעָא דְמִצְרַיִם.  
*Ha lachma anya di achalu avhatana b'ara d'mitzrayim.*

This is the bread of poverty which our ancestors ate  
in the land of Egypt.

כָּל דְּכָפִין יֵיתִי וַיִּיכַל, כָּל דְּצָרִיךְ יֵיתִי וַיִּפְסַח.

*Kol dichfin yeitei v'yeichol, kol ditzrich yeitei v'yifsach.*

All who are hungry, let them come and eat. All who are  
in need, let them come and share our Passover meal.

This Pesach, we add a new facet to our retelling of the traditional story of the Exodus. **Passover highlights a powerful thread that has followed the Jewish people since ancient times: the experience of hunger, of food insecurity.** The people of Israel, escaping the suffering of slavery, could not wait for their bread to rise; they rushed into the desert knowing they did not have enough food to face the unknown journey. Their hunger pains followed them; they never felt secure that their need for food, their most basic necessity, would be met.

For many of us, feelings of constant gnawing hunger and anxiety are just literary details. However, for others—many more than we realize—this aspect of the Passover story is very real. It touches those of us who are Jewish, those who are not, and those who recognize that until all of us experience liberation, not one of us is truly free.

This year, we expand our story to highlight the hard work of partners who dedicate themselves to increasing access to fresh food and essential resources. One of those partners is **West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH)**, a leading emergency food provider headquartered on the Upper West Side for 43 years. [In 2022, WSCAH distributed nearly 4 million pounds of food to 75,000 individuals; 55% was fresh produce.](#) WSCAH also helped their customers access millions of dollars in public benefits such as SNAP (food stamps) and rental assistance. Most importantly, WSCAH does this all in accordance with its core tenets: Dignity, Community, Choice.

WSCAH doesn't do this alone. Over 1,000 volunteers dedicate nearly 20,000 hours annually, helping WSCAH receive, pack and distribute millions of pounds of healthy food. [JCC volunteers](#) and donors are an essential part of this effort. But the work is never done—as *Pirkei Avot* teaches us, it is not up to us to finish the task, but neither are we free to count ourselves out of it.

We rededicate our efforts to action and to words at this pivotal point in the Jewish calendar. We hear the call for our gifts; of attention, time, service, as well as *tzedakah* and fundraising. We recast our rituals on this night which is **not** like other nights to learn, teach, and change.

## A MODERN TEN PLAGUES

Adapted from [MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, Hunger Seder 2021](#)

On Passover, we read about the ten plagues God unleashed on the Egyptians. The plagues we see today are not punishments from God, but ones of our own doing, because ending hunger is not a matter of resources but of political will. **As we read each of these plagues aloud, dip a finger into the wine and touch a drop onto your plate.** This reminds us that, even as we celebrate freedom, our freedom is not complete when hungry people still suffer.

### **All read together:**

- 1. INDIFFERENCE**, the failure to recognize food insecurity in our own communities
- 2. SHAME**, the undue burden we place on hungry people
- 3. INDIGNITY**, the failure to treat hungry people with the respect they deserve
- 4. STEREOTYPING**, the persistence of harmful misinformation about who is hungry
- 5. ABSENCE**, the lack of data showing the true scope of this problem
- 6. HUMILIATION**, the pain parents feel when they cannot provide enough food for their children
- 7. FATIGUE**, the exhaustion from the constant cycle of poverty and hunger
- 8. ANXIETY**, the lingering fear that public benefits will not last the whole month
- 9. BUREAUCRACY**, the system that prevents rapid action on this issue
- 10. APATHY**, the greatest plague of all—the failure to make ending hunger a national priority

## DAYENU

In our seder, we pause to reflect on what we have in our lives for which we are grateful. After each blessing, we take a moment to say “Dayenu—it would have been enough.”

We are grateful for each day that we do not suffer from the oppression and hardship of hunger. *Dayenu*

We are grateful for the leadership of WSCAH and other vital non-profits which direct our attention to the injustice of hunger and involve us in their work towards solutions and support for those who experience hunger. *Dayenu*

We are grateful to those who use their hands to provide for those in need, their footprints to encourage others to follow their commitment, and their voices to demand justice. *Dayenu*

We are grateful we made the time at this important moment in the Jewish calendar to educate ourselves and become inspired to act. *Dayenu*

We are grateful for each other—alone we are limited, but together we are powerful advocates for change. *Dayenu*

יָדֵינוּ

*Day Day-enu, Day Day-enu, Day Day-enu  
Dayenu, Dayenu (x2)*

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Scan the QR code or visit [wscach.org/donate](https://wscach.org/donate) to donate to WSCAH and help New Yorkers access healthy food and essential services.



*If you or someone you know is in need of food, please come to WSCAH: 263 West 86th St. Tuesdays–Fridays from 9 am to 1 pm. Our Benefits Access team is here to help with connections to SNAP, health insurance, and rental assistance. Call 212.362.3662 x126 or email [benefitsaccess@wscach.org](mailto:benefitsaccess@wscach.org).*