

Shortly after the Israelites leave Egypt, God commands a census, which counts 603,550 men fit for military service. (I can only hope that the women, children, and elderly were counted too and simply not reported in the text.)

A census symbolizes more than a statistical or military endeavor; enumerating our population is a prerequisite for living together and governing a community that provides for all. What does a census have to do with slavery? Slaves suffer in part when societies choose to leave them undocumented, uncounted, unidentified, and forgotten.

My work as a population health physician has taught me this: Governments can shed their responsibility for delivering and protecting the freedoms of undocumented and uncounted people by excluding them from censuses and statistics. A nation can appear healthy if the ill are not seen; it can appear wealthy if the poor do not report their income; it can appear literate if the uneducated do not complete a survey; and it can appear free if the slaves are not counted. Counting is the seed of accountability. Truly inclusive statistics can be a tool of resistance.

- Dr. Aaron Orkin,  
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“If God had gathered us before Mt. Sinai but not given us the Torah, Dayeinu.”

The grand vision of Sinai is not enough; it needs to be fleshed out with the entire body of Torah in all its specifics. Immediately after the Ten Commandments comes *parashat Mishpatim*, with all the particulars of how to construct a just society. As Dr. Orkin and Judge Safer Espinoza reflect, the goal of ending slavery must be backed up by a mass of details.

As a Jew with whom the themes of freedom and systemic change resonate deeply, I have the opportunity to honor some of our best traditions by serving as director of the Fair Food Standards Council. The Council is charged with monitoring and enforcing the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' agreements, including a human rights-based Code of Conduct. FFSC does the unglamorous, extremely detailed, yet very beautiful work of ensuring that systemic change is implemented and made real in the fields for the men and women who harvest the food we eat. Exodus from Egypt is a powerful metaphor for the transformation we see on Fair Food Program farms that have put an end to modern-day slavery, sexual assault, physical abuse, wage theft, and dangers to workers' health and safety. It is a privilege to serve this groundbreaking partnership between workers, growers and buyers as it truly brings about a “new day.”

- Judge Laura Safer Espinoza,  
Director, Fair Food  
Standards Council

## Dayeinu

Dayeinu is a symmetrical song. The first seven lines describe the Exodus, culminating with drowning the Egyptians in the sea. The second seven describe the building of a just and self-sustaining society, culminating with the building of the Temple. Only when the system is stable can we really say “dayeinu.”

In the same way, the work of fighting slavery does not end the moment a slave is freed. In the short term, we must provide for their basic needs, as Dayeinu describes God doing: first basic care, manna, and rest, then on to larger issues. The work continues for years into the future as we help survivors heal and support themselves, and as we build social and economic systems that no longer rely on or allow exploitation.

A rabbi once taught me that Judaism was a “system for goodness.” Over the years, I have learned to recognize that I am a part of systems that are often far less than good; systems that privilege few and hurt many. Our society's demand for cheap products and services, and my mere participation in modern commerce, implicates me in the cycle of exploitation. It is this recognition that drives me to work to reform our public institutions so that they enable others to enjoy the same freedom that we celebrate around the Seder table.

The ability to rejoice in our freedom carries with it great responsibility, for we cannot truly be free unless all people are free. Let us direct ourselves towards fixing systems that exploit vulnerable members of our communities and bring a time of liberation from these narrow places for all people.

- Keeli Sorensen,  
Director of National Programs,  
Polaris Project