

RABBIS IN ACTION

At Yavneh's core is the belief that the Jewish values and ethics the students learn are only realized when put into action, so integrated throughout our curriculum are opportunities to practice these values in real life situations. Specifically, our middle school students engage in a three-year Jewish social justice curriculum, in which they examine how they can contribute to the world, responding to the needs of their own community through direct service and making a difference globally through philanthropy and advocacy.

T'ruah's Human Rights Shabbat has become an annual tradition at our school, in which our middle school students teach the elementary school students. In the last few years, we have closely examined the issue of human trafficking in America and the Jewish teachings that categorically make it an imperative for Jews to be involved. Our students have made tomato plates for their seder tables; engaged in inter-disciplinary learning researching the history of agriculture in America, calculating fair wages, and writing letters to Congress; and created presentations to raise awareness in the community.

- Rabbi Laurie Hahn Tapper,
Director of Jewish Studies
and School Rabbi,
Yavneh Day School,
Los Gatos, Calif.

צפון Tzafun

Tzafun, which literally means “hidden,” is the part of the seder where we seek what is not obvious, when we look for something other than what is in front of our faces. It is also when we return to that which was broken earlier in the evening and try to make it whole again. **In this way, *Tzafun* serves as the organizing principle of the second half of our seder, where we ask ourselves what world we want to see. Then we commit ourselves to making it real.**

By moving one little dot, *Tzafun* becomes *Tzafon*, North. What North Star will guide your work to bring about the world you want to see?

צפון ← צפון

It's no accident that one of the leading national anti-trafficking organizations is named Polaris, after the North Star.

נשלחן עוררן Shulchan Orekh

As we enjoy our Pesach meal, we thank all of the people who labored to bring this food to our table, from the workers who planted our food to the people who served it.

1. How many different roles can you think of in this chain of food production?
2. Over dinner, turn to someone near you and ask each other how your values affect your buying choices.

CIW member Gerardo Reyes Chavez reflects, “Why do I spend every day harvesting food for the rest of America and then have to wait in line at a food pantry on Thanksgiving for a plate of food?” How would you respond? How can we change this reality?

There are three movies that have affected me so deeply that I couldn't move afterwards, their impact so deep that a new journey opened up. One was “The Dark Side of Chocolate,” which I saw in Fall 2010. It documents the role of trafficked child labor in the cocoa fields in the Ivory Coast, where half our chocolate comes from. I was stunned to learn that this most delicious and heavenly food was being produced by slave labor! Two things were immediately obvious: the connection to a contemporary Pesach story and the fact that there was no chocolate we could eat on Passover that wasn't probably tainted by child labor. Sitting there after the movie, I decided to launch “The Bean of Affliction Campaign” through Fair Trade Judaica. After two years, a rabbinic ruling identified the first Fair Trade and Kosher for Passover chocolate product, which is now widely available through the Jewish Fair Trade Project with T'ruah and Equal Exchange.

The Conservative Movement recognizes many varieties of Equal Exchange dark chocolate as kosher for Passover if purchased before the start of the holiday. For more information: <http://shop.equalexchange.coop/pesach>

- Ilana Schatz, Founder,
Fair Trade Judaica



In the third paragraph of *birkat hamazon* (*Rachem...*), we appeal to God for our most basic needs — sustenance and shelter. We pray,

וְנָא אֶל תַּצְרִיכֵנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 לֹא לִיּוֹדֵי מַתָּנַת בֶּשֶׁר וְדָם
 וְלֹא לִיּוֹדֵי הַלְוָאָתָם.

Please do not make us depend, Adonai our God, on the gifts of flesh and blood or their loans.

While in context this means gifts or loans from other people, it could also be understood more literally as actual “loans” of flesh and blood, such as take place in prostitution and forced labor. This reading cuts to the core of this paragraph’s concluding plea, “שְׁלֹא נִבְוֵשׁ וְלֹא נִכְלָם לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד” “that we should never suffer embarrassment nor humiliation.” This is, at base, what we all desire: a life of dignity. Unfortunately, the threat of becoming a gift of flesh and blood looms as largely today all over the world as it did for our ancestors.

– Rabbi Raysh Weiss, PhD,
 Congregation Beth-El,
 Yardley, Pa.; T'ruah
 Summer Fellowship 2013;
 Bronfman Fellow 2001

1. Why might a shepherd be inclined to say a simpler, shorter form of this blessing?

2. Later authorities added the phrase “Sovereign of the World” to Benjamin’s original prayer. In the context of slavery and freedom, why does it matter that every blessing remind us that God is the ultimate Sovereign? How does our sense of the sacred or the Divine inspire our actions to build a world of *chesed*, lovingkindness?

Bless and drink the third cup.

Pour the third cup. (Those wishing to say the full *birkat hamazon* can find its text easily in whatever siddur or bencher is handy.)

*Brich rachamana malka
 d'alma marei d'hai pita.*

ברוך רחמנא מלכא דעלמא
 מריה דהאי פיתא

**Blessed is the Merciful One,
 Sovereign of the world,
 Master of this bread.**

This one-line Aramaic blessing can be used as a shorthand form of *birkat hamazon* under less-than-ideal circumstances (*b'di avad*). It has its origins in this Talmudic discussion about the shortest text that fulfills one’s obligation to say a blessing after eating (*Berachot* 40b):

Benjamin the shepherd made a sandwich and said, “Blessed is the Master of this bread.” Rav said he fulfilled his obligation. [Really?] But hasn’t Rav said, “Any blessing which does not mention the divine name is not a blessing”? Rather, [Benjamin] said, “Blessed is the Merciful One, Master of this bread.”

בנימין רעיא כרך ריפתא
 ואמר בריך מריה דהאי
 פיתא אמר רב יצא
 והאמר רב כל ברכה
 שאין בה הזכרת השם אינה
 ברכה דאמר בריך
 רחמנא מריה דהאי פיתא