

Four More Questions - Confronting Our Criminal Justice System

Contributed by [Temple Israel of Boston](#)

Source: Temple Israel of Boston

To be read following the chanting of the Four Questions.

1. The Torah demands, “Justice, justice shall you pursue!” (Deut 16:20). What are the obstacles to fulfilling this commandment in the context of criminal justice?
2. The Sage Hillel taught: “That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow” (BT Shabbat 31a). At the heart of our Passover story is the remembrance of being slaves in Egypt. How do we internalize this narrative of “imprisonment” and express it in our own public lives?
3. In Genesis we read that God created human beings, “b’tzelem Elohim, in God’s image.” How does institutionalized racism undermine this teaching? Do you feel obliged to assign this teaching to all human beings, including those who have committed heinous crimes?
4. The Talmud teaches, “The person who destroys one life, it is as though that person has destroyed the whole world; and the person who saves one life, it is as though that person has saved the whole world” (JT Sanhedrin 4:1). It is naive to overlook the societal necessity of a working criminal justice system. Imagine a criminal justice system that fulfills the supreme Jewish value of saving lives: What does it “look like”?