

Hunger Seder: Four Questions

Contributed by [MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger](#)

Source: Mazon: Hunger Seder

The Four Questions we ask at our Hunger Seder challenge us to consider what is different about this night. Only when we ask the right questions can we understand the causes of hunger and take action to end this unnecessary plight.

1. Why during this seder do we focus on hunger?

Hunger remains a painful physical reality for far too many of our friends, neighbors, and family members. Hunger is an oppressive force that holds individuals back from realizing their full potential in life and limits our society from making greater progress. The Passover seder celebrates liberation from bondage and the joy of freedom. But in communities across our country, millions of Americans struggle to put enough nutritious food on the table and are bound by the hardships of their circumstances. As long as Americans continue to struggle with food insecurity, we will continue to dedicate this Hunger Seder to the goal of ending hunger and its causes.

2. Why isn't it better for local charities to feed people, instead of the government?

Charitable organizations — including MAZON's nationwide partners on the front lines — are not set up to feed every hungry person in their communities. Food pantries and soup kitchens were created to provide support during temporary or emergency situations, not to solve systemic problems. Many are open only a few days a week and for a few hours of each day. They are largely volunteer run, often out of basements or closets at their local houses of worship, and they primarily distribute food that has been donated from within their communities. They simply could never have the capacity to feed the number of people who need help. Government nutrition programs, on the other hand, have the ability to help millions of people get the food they need to lead healthy lives.

3. What are the costs of hunger for our country?

Being hungry can be all-consuming and distracting, which in turn decreases productivity in working adults and negatively impacts the ability for unemployed individuals to find work. Seniors are particularly vulnerable when it comes to food insecurity and face serious health risks from nutritional deficiencies. Without sufficient food and proper nutrition, children are at a much greater risk for developmental problems, chronic health conditions, and poor academic performance, and face reduced prospects for economic and professional achievement later in life. The many personal costs of hunger are magnified at the national level. Bread for the World Institute estimated in its 2016 Hunger Report that hunger and food insecurity increased health expenditures in the United States by \$160 billion in the previous year alone, largely due to preventable diet-related chronic diseases. In both the short and long term, having a substantial population of people struggling with hunger impedes our country's economic prosperity for everyone.

4. How could so many individuals and families still suffer from hunger when we live in a society of tremendous wealth?

The best adjective to accurately describe the amount of food available in the United States is abundant. Yet food insecurity affects more than 1 out of every 8 men, women, and children in America. Hunger persists in this country not because of a lack of food, but because of a lack of political will. Now is the time to act and ensure that all people have access to affordable, nutritious food.