

Ten Modern Plagues

Contributed by [Jewish Women's Archive](#)

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The traditional Haggadah lists ten plagues that afflicted the Egyptians. We live in a very different world, but Passover is a good time to remember that, even after our liberation from slavery in Egypt, there are still many challenges for us to meet. Here are ten "modern plagues":

Inequity - Access to affordable housing, quality healthcare, nutritious food, good schools, and higher education is far from equal. The disparity between rich and poor is growing, and opportunities for upward mobility are limited.

Entitlement - Too many people consider themselves entitled to material comfort, economic security, and other privileges of middle-class life without hard work.

Fear - Fear of "the other" produces and reinforces xenophobia, anti-immigrant sentiment, antisemitism, homophobia, and transphobia.

Greed - Profits are a higher priority than the safety of workers or the health of the environment. The top one percent of the American population controls 42% of the country's financial wealth, while corporations send jobs off-shore and American workers' right to organize and bargain collectively is threatened.

Distraction - In this age of constant connectedness, we are easily distracted by an unending barrage of information, much of it meaningless, with no way to discern what is important.

Distortion of reality - The media constructs and society accepts unrealistic expectations, leading to eating disorders and an unhealthy obsession with appearance for both men and women.

Unawareness - It is easy to be unaware of the consequences our consumer choices have for the environment and for workers at home and abroad. Do we know where or how our clothes are made? Where or how our food is produced? The working conditions? The impact on the environment?

Discrimination - While we celebrate our liberation from bondage in Egypt, too many people still suffer from discrimination. For example, blacks in the United States are imprisoned at more than five times the rate of whites, and Hispanics are locked up at nearly double the white rate. Women earn 77 cents for every dollar earned by a man. At 61 cents to the dollar, the disparity is even more shocking in Jewish communal organization.

Silence - Every year, 4.8 million cases of domestic violence against American women are reported. We do not talk about things that are disturbing, such as rape, sex trafficking, child abuse, domestic violence, and elder abuse, even though they happen every day in our own communities.

Feeling overwhelmed and disempowered - When faced with these modern "plagues," how often do we doubt or question our own ability to make a difference? How often do we feel paralyzed because we do not know what to do to bring about change?