

## **Jewish Core Values for the Passover Seder**

**READER:** Care for our fellow human beings is a fundamental of the Torah's outline for human life. One of the first key teachings of the Torah is that humankind was created by God in the "Tzelem Elokim" – the Divine Image. This means that all humans are worthy of respect and love. The rabbis in the Midrash teach us that only one human being was originally created. This reminds us that each one of us is equal, precious and beloved in the eyes of the Holy One. It is because of this idea that the Talmud tells us, "One who has saved a life, it is as if he has saved an entire world." Rabbi Akiva in the Talmud suggested that the verse, "V'ahavta l'reacha kamocha" – "Love your neighbor as you would love yourself" is a fundamental rule of the Torah. Thus, we are bidden to treat everyone we encounter with respect and dignity.

**ALL:** I will seek to respect others, and to earn the respect of others. I will remember that my own personal dignity is devalued if I treat others with contempt or intolerance. I will remember that all people are deserving of love and respect, even those who are different from me or hold different beliefs.

**READER:** The care for families in Jewish sources includes honoring one's father and mother - and training a child according to their way. This reminds us that our community has a distinct responsibility to help and honor families – parents and children. The last verse of the prophet Malachi reminds us that one of the Messianic goals of our people is to bring the hearts of parents and children together. As we gather for the holidays, we should remember to honor and celebrate these fundamental relationships, which are at the center of our lives.

**ALL:** I will seek to show love and respect to my family, both the family that I was born into, and the family I have created around myself through deep friendship. I will remember to tell my family members how grateful I am for their love, counsel, and company.

**READER:** Our values should push us to strive for the highest ethical behavior in all aspects of our lives. The Torah tells us “Tzedek Tzedek Tirdof “ – “Righteousness, Righteousness shall you pursue”. Besides the literal emphasis on just and righteous behavior, Rabbinic teaching in the Talmud and commentaries suggest that this refers to seeking peace as well as justice. Chasidic thought interprets this verse to read that both means and ends should be just and righteous. Our ideals should reflect Judaism’s desire to create and sustain a community based on righteousness and peace.

**ALL:** I will seek to be a source of peace and fairness in my life, at home, and in my community. I will try and support others who are working for peace and justice in the world.

**READER:** A community has a sacred obligation to reach out to the vulnerable members of our society. Every time we do this personally or professionally, we are engaged in Holy Work, imitating the One Above who sets the example for us. “As God is merciful, so too should you be merciful,” says the Talmud. By emphasizing kindness to others, we are not merely being charitable, we are actually imitating God. Elsewhere the Talmud gives specific examples of this: Just as God clothes the naked, visits the sick, buries the dead and comforts the bereaved, so too should we do these things. At a festive holiday table, we should actively remember that not all people in the world have the luxury of such

abundance. When we are given opportunities to show kindness to those in need, we should welcome the chance to show our gratitude for all our blessings by helping others.

**ALL:** I will fill my life with acts of kindness, empathy, compassion, and charity. I am grateful for the blessings I have received in my life, and will embrace opportunities to share those blessings with others.

**READER:** The core values written about in Jewish teachings are values that members of any community should hold dear. Regardless of belief or religion, these values are an essential part of being a good citizen of the world. Just as the Passover Seder is an annual reminder to the Jewish people of where we have come from, in order that it shall inform where we are going, so too are these values a reminder of the best possible attributes of any member of the global community.

**ALL:** I will move forward with these values firmly embedded in my heart and mind. I will remember that my basic humanity insists upon respecting others, appreciating my family and friends, striving to be ethical, helping those who are in need, celebrating my personal blessings, and showing essential kindness whenever and wherever I can. This is my commitment to myself, to my community, and to the world.

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