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**Daniel Greenberg**

**Script for BBC Thought for the Day**

**24 April 2019**

**Slavery Ancient and Modern**

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Good morning.

There are three connections between commercial carwashes and the Festival of Passover, or Pesach, which Jews around the world are in the middle of celebrating.

First there is the purely pragmatic connection that in order to ensure complete removal of leavened food (broadly speaking, food containing yeast) from our possession before Pesach, many Jews have their cars cleaned.

The second connection follows from that: earlier this month it was widely reported in the media that an app developed by the Church of England, in response to a report from the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, had highlighted hundreds of instances of car-wash employees being treated in a manner amounting to modern slavery. Passover celebrates the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in ancient Egypt: it would be a cruel irony if we allowed our preparations to facilitate exploitation of workers. So hopefully we all took care to have our pre-festival carwash carried out in outlets that exhibit none of the warning signs that workers are being exploited or enslaved. The resurgence of slavery around the world should trouble everyone; but it will resonate particularly with those of us from backgrounds that have experienced persecution over the years.

The final connection is an interesting similarity between the key ritual laws of Passover and the Jewish prohibitions on the exploitation of workers. In relation to leavened food, the Torah imposes two separate requirements: that we must not possess leaven over Passover and that it should not even be seen in our possession. The idea is to go the extra mile: not simply to avoid technical ownership but to go to all possible lengths to disassociate ourselves and our homes from leavened food (including having the car vacuumed). Similarly, the Torah enacts two laws about paying workers: a positive requirement to pay workers on time; and a negative commandment against holding on to any wages we owe them. The normally concise Biblical text uses two commandments where one would have done, again to encourage us to go the extra mile: to disassociate ourselves from exploitative practices of any kind.

So one of the things I try to take away from Passover is a reminder that slavery and exploitation are unhappily very much not matters of ancient Egyptian past, but are all around us; and that I can use my everyday consumer choices and routine business practices to try to ensure fair and decent treatment and opportunity for all.