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Pesach Seder 2024:
Safe Routes

The four questions explore the stories of Pesach, that of enslavement and the journey to freedom. Many of us are familiar with the Ma Nishtana— we ask about the past, and our role in commemorating it at present.

Tonight, we are adding a call to reflect on the present and the implication it will have on the future. This Pesach we invite you to consider the stories of today, of the refugees and asylum seekers who arrive in the hope of asylum, and the freedom many of us take for granted.

The current UK asylum system threatens the concept and experience of freedom that Pesach commemorates. Jewish history demonstrates the multiple ways in which despite many experiences of marginalisation and discrimination - like in the story of Pesach and Pharoah’s response to the ‘Jewish problem’ through enslavement - it was compassion and adherence to basic humanity that ensured our people’s salvation.

Tonight, a night different from other nights, as we remember our journey from oppression to freedom, it is important to recognise that at present, many communities are struggling with an unsafe and dangerous environment around them. Escaping persecution remains one of the most prominent reasons for seeking refuge and asylum. Yet, our doors remain closed.

Pesach is when the journey to freedom began. Many people’s journey to the UK lacks the possibility of a similar outcome. Explore what this looks like today through this resource.

**WE INVITE YOU TO DISCUSS:**

**QUESTION 1**
"We may not sit down to celebrate our freedom while other families can’t afford to do so. Freedom for some is not true freedom"
(Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg)

What does freedom mean to you?

**QUESTION 2**
In Judaism, it is a mitzvah to welcome someone into our Seder, we open our door to guests, offering a sense of belonging.

How do we ‘open the doors’ to refugees and asylum seekers?

**QUESTION 3**
‘Other people’s dignity should be as precious to you as your own’ (Rabbi Eliezer)

As a people that has sought safety and refuge to survive, what can we be doing for other in a similar situation today?

**QUESTION 4**
‘Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state’
Article 13, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

What can we do to ensure that this right is upheld?
WHAT ARE SAFE ROUTES?

The establishment of ‘safe routes’ would offer safe alternatives and legal pathways for refugees and asylum seekers to seek safety and protection in the UK. Whether in the form of resettlement programs, humanitarian visas, family reunification schemes or community sponsorship initiatives, these safe and legal pathways prevent the risks associated with irregular migration, such as human trafficking, exploitation, and hazardous journeys.

From the Nationality and Boarders Act criminalising refugees to penalising asylum seekers and refugee who travel to the UK through ‘irregular’ means by sending them to Rwanda, the lack of safe and legal routes furthers the UK’s hostile environment. The UK currently operates two main safe routes for refugees and their families: ‘resettlement’ and ‘refugee family reunion’. However, these safe routes are operated to such a limited capacity that currently limits the access to refugee to those coming from only four countries: Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria and Hong Kong. Thus excluding refugees and asylum seekers fleeing war or persecution from other countries.

Safe routes stand for a welcoming and compassionate society that welcomes those seeking safety. They strive to ensure that refugees can access asylum in a dignified and secure manner, in line with international humanitarian principles and human rights standards.

One of the most famous ‘safe routes’ offered in the UK was the Kindertransport, a British scheme to rescue nearly 10,000 predominantly Jewish children from Nazi-occupied territories. This ‘safe route’ was not operated by the British government but rather by individuals and charities such as World Jewish Relief and Quakers, who acted as ‘guarantors’ for those children.

This year marks the 85th anniversary of the Kindertransport. We see this as an opportunity to call on the government to expand safe and legal routes to the UK. As a Jewish community that has historically and consistently sought refuge and asylum, we see it as imperative that the UK makes the lives of those fleeing persecution easier, not harder.

TAKE ACTION:

- Read briefing on safe routes
- Write to MP on implementing safe routes
- Donate culturally appropriate food for Passover
- Use and share this resource at your seder and with family