



# Seder Night Supplement

At our Passover Seder, we remember that we were once refugees. We retell the story of our search for a safe home and the experience of freedom that. The following activities were designed to shine a light on the world's current refugees.

## ACTIVITY 1: A 5<sup>th</sup> Question (After the 4 Questions)

*“You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 23:9)*

On most other nights, the suffering of refugees and displaced people tend to pass us by. The sheer magnitude of tragedy in the world is often too much to contemplate and so we suppress it in order to carry on with our daily lives. But on this night, as we contemplate the suffering of our own people, the plight of recent refugee struggles are drawn into sharp focus. And we then contemplate our responsibility of protecting the stranger, because we were once strangers in Egypt.

Discuss around the table: *How can we make this year different from all other years?*

## ACTIVITY 2: Precious Objects (Beginning of the Telling of the Story)

Like the Jews in the Haggadah, refugees often have to leave their homes very quickly without time for careful planning or even time to let the bread rise.

As we are commanded to imagine that we ourselves left the house of bondage, we should give a thought to the experience of the sudden flight.

Discuss around the table and include the children: If you had to leave your homes with little notice, which one item might you take with you and why? What is the importance to you of the object you have chosen?

## ACTIVITY 3: Today's Refugees (Before Dayenu)

Tonight, we sing **Dayenu** – *it would have been enough*. Some consider this refrain to be a question rather than a statement. *‘Would it have been enough?’* If he had split the sea, but hadn't led us through to dry land, would it have been enough? Perhaps, it would not.

Read the following two stories of asylum seekers who regularly attend the New London Synagogue Drop-In and then reflect on what exactly is enough.

### **Ussamane's Story**

Ussamane fled his country, Guinea Bissau in West Africa, after taking part in a failed military coup against a cruel and oppressive government. He was imprisoned and tortured but managed to escape.

Without time to say goodbye to his beloved wife and children, he planned to flee to Portugal, which had a favourable record on refugees from its former colonies. He bought a ticket to Lisbon connecting via London. But when he arrived at Stansted, unable to speak a word of English, he was arrested and jailed for travelling on false documents.

When he emerged from jail, his immigration lawyer failed to challenge the criminal conviction and his asylum claim was refused. Without any support from the Home Office, Ussamane found a basic shelter in Haringey, which he had to leave during the day.

He had no money for transport and the Bike Project gave him a bike. One day a car hit him, his leg was broken in three places and he needed urgent surgery. It later emerged that there had been medical negligence when he had his surgery but so far he has not been able to put it right. To this day, he can only walk short distances with the help of a crutch.

His suffering continues. Yet, despite being the unluckiest man in the world, his spirit is strong and he fights on. He attends every drop-in, often cracking jokes and greeting us with a big smile on his face.

### **Elsa's Story**

Elsa fled Eritrea ten years ago after being jailed and tortured for resisting enforced military conscription. Her husband was also jailed and she has never heard any news of him since.

She managed to escape and after a difficult journey arrived in the UK where she claimed asylum. Despite the overwhelming evidence of torture in Eritrea the Home Office refused her case.

She was forced to sleep in the street, where one night she was attacked by a stranger. She became pregnant and needed accommodation urgently. After a protracted battle the council agreed to house her. A few months later the Home Office granted her and her new baby refugee status.

Her case is heartbreaking but she has a wonderfully positive disposition, has bonded well with her baby and is now moving forward with her life.

## **ACTIVITY 4: The 5th Cup (anytime following the 4th cup)**

Pass an empty cup around your Seder table, in which everyone should add a drop of wine or juice. Then say the following blessing:

*“Tonight we celebrate refugees. Let us commit ourselves to supporting them as they rebuild their lives, and to championing their right for protection. Just as our own people now eat the bread of liberation, we pray that today’s refugees will find safety and freedom in the year to come.”*

# NLS Asylum Drop-In Centre

