TASK FORCE ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING
המטה למאבק בסחר בנשים

Jerusalem
Pesach 5766

Dear Activist,

Thank you for agreeing to include a discussion of human trafficking, and trafficking in Israel, in your Pesach *seder* this year. The Task Force on Human Trafficking has prepared the enclosed packet to help facilitate that discussion. Included in the packet, you will find:

- ***Table Card***

  Like many elements of the traditional *seder* table, this card is designed to peak the curiosity of participants and encourage them to ask questions. It can be placed on the table and used at any point to start a dialogue about human trafficking.

- ***D'var Torah***

  This *d'var Torah* explores the connection between Pesach and the problem of human trafficking. It is appropriate to read on its own, or accompanied by the Activism Activity.

- ***Activism Activity***

  This activity is especially appropriate for a large, model *seder* activity. Participants write personal letters to key public officials, asking them to take a stand against human trafficking.

- ***Testimony Reading***

  This reading gives *seder* participants the opportunity to hear testimony from a victim of human trafficking in Israel. Anna, a young woman from Uzbekistan, shares her personal story. ***Please note:*** *the testimony contains graphic material and should be used with mature audiences only.* *Seder* leaders should review the testimony carefully before sharing it with participants.

We encourage you to choose from among the elements in this packet to design a discussion that will be effective at your *seder*. All of the elements can be used individually, or in tandem, to create a meaningful discussion of human trafficking. For more information and resources, please visit our website, www.tfht.org.

Wishing you a healthy and happy Pesach,

The Task Force on Human Trafficking

A Joint Project of ATZUM, Justice Works and Kabiri-Nevo-Keidar law offices
US tax-deductible Donations:
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D'VAR TORAH

Around our *seder* table, we fulfill the *mitzvah* to remember the Exodus from Egypt:

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-הָעָם, זָכוֹר אֶת-הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר יְצָאתֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים, כִּי בְּחֹזֶק יָד, הוֹצִיא יְהוָה אֶתְכֶם מִזֶּה; וְלֹא יֵאָכֵל חָמֵץ. (שמות יג, ג)

And Moses said unto the people: "Remember this day, in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place; therefore shall no leavened bread be eaten." (Ex. 13:3)

Why are we commanded to remember the Exodus? One lesson that the *Torah* commands we learn from the Exodus story is to treat strangers in our midst with dignity and compassion:

וְגֵר לֹא-תוֹנֶה, וְלֹא תִלְחָצֶנּוּ: כִּי-גֵרִים הֱיִיתֶם, בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם. (שמות כב, כ)

And a stranger you shall not wrong, neither shall you oppress him; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Ex. 22:20)

These verses teach us that Passover should be a time to focus on our treatment of the oppressed in society. Even the word Passover, פסח, teaches us this lesson of compassion. God tells the Israelites, וּפָסַחְתִּי עֲלֵכֶם, *I will <u>pass over</u> you* (שמות כב, כג, Ex. 12:13). Onkelos translates this phrase as וַאֲחוּס עֲלֵיכוֹן, *I will have mercy on you*. Rashi explains וחמלתי עלכם, *I will have mercy on you*. The *Talmud* goes on to teach that human beings must imitate God by engaging in our own acts of mercy and compassion (*Sotah* 14a). We must ensure that others do not suffer the pain that we suffered in Egypt.

Yet, tragically, there are many among us today who are suffering the torment of slavery and oppression. It is estimated that between 700,000 and 1,000,000 people, most of them women and children, are victims of human trafficking **every year**!

Human trafficking is modern-day slavery. The victims, desperately seeking escape from a life of poverty, are lured to a foreign country by the false promise of high paying jobs and safe passage. They are then forced into sexual or labor exploitation, working under slave-like conditions in prostitution or other forms of involuntary labor.

Israel too is a destination country for human trafficking. Many thousands of women have been brought to Israel from the former Soviet Union and forced to work as prostitutes. At every stage in the process, the victims are abused and exploited, suffering severe beatings, rape and even starvation. Many are physically caged in brothels; others are kept chained by traffickers and pimps through threats on their lives and the lives of their families. The victims won't turn to the often unsympathetic police for fear that they will be prosecuted as illegal aliens and put in prison.

Can we stand idly by as thousands of women are forced to work as sexual slaves in Israel? Can we allow Israel to escape responsibility for the suffering in her midst?

Early Zionist leader Michael Halperin once inherited a large sum of money and immediately proceeded to purchase all of the prostitutes of his town, put them on a train, and set them free. His story teaches us that those who love Israel must act to correct injustice in her midst. We must free the slaves living in Israel today.

This Passover, please remember your obligation to the victims of human trafficking in Israel. and throughout the world Write and call your congressman and senators. Help raise awareness of this issue in your synagogues, university campuses and other Jewish organizations. Show Israeli leaders and public officials that you care deeply about this issue and want them to take action!

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ACTIVISM ACTIVITY

Writing a personal letter to a public official demonstrates public concern about an issue. The more people who write letters about human trafficking, the more likely the problem will receive greater attention. Use the sample letter and "talking points" below to draft a letter to one of the following:

His Excellency Ambassador Daniel Ayalon
Embassy of Israel in Washington
3514 International Dr. N.W.
Washington DC 20008

Mr. Ehud Olmert
Acting Prime Minister
Knesset
Kiryat Ben-Gurion
Jerusalem 91950
Israel

Talking Points:

- It's time to end slavery in Israel.
- Israel is a destination country for human trafficking. Thousands of women have been smuggled into the State of Israel for purposes of sex slavery. Victims are exploited in a cruel and inhumane manner, beaten, raped and starved.
- Israel must do more to eradicate sex slavery. Authorities can do more to crack down on perpetrators, shut down brothels and assist victims. Israel must close its borders to the smuggling of trafficking victims.
- More resources need be directed towards fighting this atrocity. Human trafficking is a threat to the moral fiber of Israel and a stain on the country's reputation. Ending slavery must become a top priority for the country. Israel can and should become a world leader in this fight against modern slavery.

Sample Letter:

Your Excellency/Mr. Olmert:

I am writing to you as someone who cares deeply about Israel and its reputation in the international community.

I am appalled by the phenomenon of human trafficking in Israel. Thousands of women have been smuggled into the country annually to "work" as sex slaves. These women are beaten, raped, starved and caged. The State of Israel cannot and must not allow slavery to exist within its borders.

The government must make this issue a national priority. More resources need to be dedicated to cracking down on perpetrators, assisting victims and preventing the continued smuggling of women across the Egyptian border.

As a member of the American Jewish community, I call upon the Government of Israel to step up its efforts to fight this atrocity. Israel must invest greater time and resources to become a world leader in the fight to end modern slavery.

I urge you to use every opportunity to help raise this issue to the top of the national agenda.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

PARENTS - PLEASE NOTE: This reading contains graphic and disturbing descriptions and is not appropriate for children

TESTIMONY READING

My name is Anna. I'm twenty-six years old, from Ukraine, in the Former Soviet Union. A few years ago, I decided to leave Ukraine to make money and help support my family. I met a woman who told me that she could get me into Israel without a visa, and that I could find work there cleaning and babysitting. So I traveled to Moscow and then to Egypt, on a forged tourist visa. I was with seven other girls.

I had been told that when we landed in Egypt, a jeep would pick us up and take us to Israel, a two-hour drive from the airport. But after we landed, we drove through Egypt until nightfall. We found ourselves in a desert, and we were passed over to Bedouins, who screamed at us to lie down in their jeep. We were scared, and they were armed, so we did as we were told. They covered us with a blanket, and we drove for several hours. At some point, we passed through a checkpoint, but no one looked under the blanket. Then we stopped, in the middle of the desert, for three or four days.

By this point, I understood that they had tricked me and that I wasn't going to Israel to do domestic work. The other girls told me what awaited us in Israel. It was a nightmare. It was February, and cold at night, and all eight of the girls had to share that one blanket. We were forced to walk many kilometers in the terrible cold and wind. It was like hell. How could I escape? I didn't know where I was, and the desert was all around me. The Bedouins had all the water and food. I kept going.

At dawn on the fourth day, we crossed the border into Israel. The Bedouins moved us into another jeep, this one with a roof, and we drove very fast until we crossed the border. There was shooting. Then, on the Israeli side of the border, there was a car waiting for us, a service taxi.

So I thought I would just make a little money and then run away. Maybe they would return my passport, and then I would be able to escape. The next morning, a man named David came with a bag of money, bundles of bills, about $5000.

David took me to a four-room apartment in Bat Yam. It was completely empty—empty fridge, no TV, no nothing, just a bed. There were bars on the windows, and he locked me in. He said that I would stay there until my wounds and blisters healed. I slept for two full days. He brought me a roll and canned goods and left again. That's how it continued. He came every two or three days with food. The hunger, being in a strange place, not speaking to anyone. I sat alone, no TV, no food. They treat you like a dog, like garbage. It was like that for a full month.

After a month, David again came to the apartment in Bat Yam. He took me to the mall, bought me clothes, took me to the hairdresser, fixed me up the way they wanted me to look. After that, I started to work from 9:00 PM through to the morning. It was 250 shekels for an hour, 150 shekels for half an hour, more for group and lesbian sex. The first time was in a hotel in Ashdod. There was an old man there…it was awful. I had never performed oral sex or anything like that before. David made us do everything. Some of the girls cried.

Fourteen months later, the brothel in which Anna was held was raided by police. The brothel owners were not arrested, but Anna was taken into police custody and sent to a detention center, where she lived under horrible conditions. Soon, it became clear that Anna had contracted multi-drug resistant tuberculosis. Because of the intervention of NGOs, Anna was taken to a hospital but the doctors could not heal her. It was clear that Anna was going to die. Before her death, she spoke out about she had endured.. This is her testimony.

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We were slaves in Egypt.

They are slaves in Israel.

End Human Trafficking in Israel

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