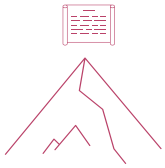
T'ruah
the rabbinic call for human rights

OMER 5782: COUNTING ON ASYLUM RELIEF

Friday, May 20, 2022

A Major Change in Immigration Policy is Coming on the 37th Day of the Omer, And We Need To Act



Between Passover and Shavuot, we number the days by counting the Omer. Each day, though, is more than a number—it is another step towards the revelation at Sinai. In our civic society we assign numbers to our legislation and laws. Each law, too, is more than a number—each has the potential to support or diminish individual lives and the wellbeing of a population.

This year the number 42 has significance: During the Trump Administration, Title 42 was invoked to restrain immigration under the guise of public health. The Biden Administration has revoked that order, an action that is to take effect May 23, the 37th day of the Omer. However, a bipartisan group of lawmakers is hoping to undo Biden's actions, and we need your help to stop them.

TITLE 42: A POLICY THAT MUST END



The Biden administration announced the end of a dangerous, immoral Trump-era policy called Title 42. For over two years, this opaque policy was used to block migrants from seeking asylum at the U.S. southern border under the dubious claim that doing so would prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Seeking asylum is a human right—and Title 42 has ended that right at our southern border. So the Biden administration's announcement was a welcome one. But the anti-immigrant contingent is already mobilizing to keep asylum out of reach. Bipartisan bills have been introduced in the House and the Senate that would block the Biden administration from repealing the policy. The Public Health and Border Security Act (H.R. 7458/ S. 4036) would codify this inhumane policy—unless we stop it, together.

AN OFFERING FOR YOUR SERMONS THIS WEEK:



In the midst of counting the Omer, our Torah portion this week, Behar, focuses us on counting years as well. Overwhelmingly concerned with shmita and yovel, Behar is fundamentally about the release of land and people. The Torah is very explicit: "The land must not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine and you are but resident strangers." (Lev. 25:23) In other words, we are all resident strangers, and national borders must pale beside God's ownership and stewardship of the land.

And by forcing asylum seekers back into Mexico and Central America, Title 42 returns asylum seekers to the distress they sought to escape. As Americans, we bear responsibility. As citizens of the world, we must empathize as we are all dwellers on God's land. And, as those held in bondage are redeemed during shmita and yovel, protecting asylum seekers from the unjust rule of Title 42 is a redemption of our cousins who are seeking freedom from oppression and harm in their countries of origin.

WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT TITLE 42 THIS WEEK?

May 23rd—the **37th day of the Omer**—is President Biden's announced date for ending Title 42.

The **42nd day of the Omer** is the next Shabbat, Friday, May 27.

WHAT WE'RE COUNTING DURING THIS SEASON:

Title 42 has resulted in approximately **1.7 million** expulsions of asylum seekers back to harm, which has disproportionately impacted Black migrants, and dramatically infringed on the human right to seek asylum.

Nearly **10,000** documented instances of people being kidnapped, tortured, assaulted, and murdered due to being turned away at our border in accordance with Title 42.

100+ pages of the U.S.'s plan for accepting asylum seekers through ending Title 42—countering the bizarre narrative that somehow the U.S. "isn't ready" to lift the policy.

24 cosponsors of the pro-Title 42 bill in the House and **11** in the Senate

2 separate asylum seeking processes: Title 42 was lifted for Ukrainians, as it should be. But it's still in place for all other asylum seekers—this is not a just or equitable system.

0 public health justifications for this policy.

ACTION

Tell your Members of Congress to support asylum and repeal Title 42.

Send a pre-written email to your elected officials using this link: bit.ly/TruahTitle42