



# Exploring Immigration through the Lens of Jewish Wisdom *Facilitator's Guide*

## Topic

- This is a guide for using Jewish texts as tools to respectfully discuss issues related to immigration

## Grade Level(s)

- Junior high school - Adult

## Big Ideas

- Ancient wisdom and traditional texts can offer a rich framework for exploring contemporary ethical and political concerns.
- The narrative of the Exodus from Egypt lives in the collective memory of the Jewish people and stokes a collective obligation to pursue justice and help others.

## Materials / Technology Needed

- Computer, projector/screen and WI-FI access to show HIAS video (<https://www.hias.org/blog/leon-rodriguez-welcoming-refugees-more-just-humanitarian-obligation>)
- Copies of *Exploring Immigration through the Lens of Jewish Wisdom* text study sheets (separate download)

## Background for Teachers

**Read through these articles to deepen your knowledge of current events:**

Definitions for Refugee, Asylum Seeker, Migrant and Internationally Displaced Person: [https://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/definitions\\_and\\_top\\_5\\_facts\\_0.pdf](https://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/definitions_and_top_5_facts_0.pdf)

US State Department's policy statements on migration:  
<https://www.state.gov/other-policy-issues/international-migration/>



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HIAS's response to both the presidential determination (the 18,000 refugee cap) <https://www.hias.org/news/press-releases/hias-statement-proposed-fy20-refugee-admissions-18000> AND [the executive order that was signed allowing states and municipalities to deny the resettlement of refugees in their communities](#)

Interfaith Welcome Coalition's listing of resources and relevant information:  
<https://interfaithwelcomecoalition.org/resources/>

### Facilitated Dialogue Guidelines

Discussions on this topic can get opinionated, emotional, and political very quickly. Introduce and use these facilitated dialogue guidelines to help keep learners focused, respectful, and on topic. The conversation should center around Jewish responsibility toward the stranger.

- **We will speak for ourselves and allow others to speak for themselves**, with no pressure to represent or explain a whole group, or to agree with the experience of the person speaking.
- **We will seek understanding**; instead of making statements about others' comments or beliefs (e.g., "You just believe that because..."), we will ask clarifying questions without accusation (e.g., "Do you believe that because...?" or "What leads you to that belief?").
- **We will share airtime** and be mindful of allowing enough space for others and for ourselves to speak and process.
- **We will not interrupt** except to say that we cannot or did not hear a speaker, **and we will "pass" or "pass for now"** if we are not willing or ready to respond to a question.
- When we discuss our experience or things that were said in discussion with people who are not present, **we will not use names or other identifying information unless we have permission to do so.**



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### Description of Activities

- Create a common understanding by defining the words *Refugee*, *Asylum seeker* and *Migrant*. Use the Helpful Definitions sheet as a guide.  
(separate download or go to:  
[https://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/definitions\\_and\\_top\\_5\\_facts\\_0.pdf](https://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/definitions_and_top_5_facts_0.pdf).)
- Ask participants to share what they know about asylum seekers, refugees, and the situation at the US Southern border. If applicable, call on a few learners from different age groups to share their thoughts.
- Continue by watching the video, León Rodríguez: Welcoming Refugees is More Than Just a Humanitarian Obligation from HIAS. Ask for reactions.
- Have learners get into age-diverse groups of 4-8 people (if people are participating as families, pair two families together to form a group)
- Pass out text study sheets (you may choose to project the text study sheet as well)
- Give groups time to work through each section text and accompanying questions, breaking to have groups volunteer to share their answers with the community before moving on to the next text.
- End the lesson by asking what people know about Jewish views on asylum seekers, refugees, and the situation at the US Southern border that they didn't know before.