



Exploring Immigration through the Lens of Jewish Wisdom

Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:34	ויקרא יט: לד
The stranger who resides with you shall be like a citizen with you. You shall love him like yourself for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; I am YHVH your God.	כְּאֶזְרַח מִכֶּם יְהִי לְכֶם הַגֵּר הַגֵּר אֶתְכֶם וְאַהֲבַתְּ לוֹ כְּמוֹדְךָ כִּי־גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי יי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם :
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• According to this text, who is a stranger?• When have you felt as if you are a stranger?• What might it mean to love someone as yourself?• How might our having been strangers in Egypt shape our obligation to today's immigrants?	

Shulhan Aruch, Orah Haim 329:6	שלחן ערוך אורח חיים שכט:ו
In a border city, even if [non-Jews] approach you to deal with straw and hay [i.e. for commercial purposes], one violates Shabbat on account of them [lest they take over the city and proceed to conquer the land].	...ובעיר הסמוכה לספר אפילו לא באו אלא על עסקי תבן וקש מחללין עליהם את השבת :
<p>This text comes from a section about a border city that is under siege.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How might a siege mentality affect one's interactions with strangers?• What factors might influence how one feels about strangers at one's borders?• How and why might people who are centrally located in a land feel different about strangers than people who live in a border city?• How might it be possible to treat the stranger humanely when under siege? When and to what extent does security take priority over welcoming the stranger?	



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Tractate Bava Batra 21b	בבא בתרא כא :
Rav Huna the son of Rav Yehoshua said, "It is quite clear to me that the resident of a town can prevent the resident of another town [from coming to town to set up a competitive business]. But if he pays the tax of [the first town], he may not prevent him. And a resident of an alley may not prevent another resident of the alley [from setting up a competitive business in the alley]."	אמר רב הונא בריה דרב יהושע פשיטא לי בר מתא אבר מתא אחריתי מצי מעכב ואי שייך בכרגא דהכא לא מצי מעכב בר מבואה אבר מבואה דנפשיה לא מצי מעכב
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How would you view the different populations represented in the American immigration situation (undocumented, documented, childhood arrivals, etc) through the lens of Rav Huna?	

Excerpt from a statement put out by Sen. Lindsey Graham (R- South Carolina) January 12, 2018
<p>"I've always believed that America is an idea, not defined by its people but by its ideals.</p> <p>The American ideal is embraced by people all over the globe. It was best said a long time ago, E Pluribus Unum – Out of Many, One. Diversity has always been our strength, not our weakness. In reforming immigration we cannot lose these American Ideals.</p> <p>The American people will ultimately judge us on the outcome we achieve, not the process which led to it."</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does this statement reflect similar ideas to those expressed in the Jewish texts?• How does it express different ideas?



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Continuing the Conversation

Restate the opinions on immigration expressed in these texts. What values underpin these opinions?

Do you think any of these values could potentially be in conflict? How might you prioritize potentially conflicting values?

How would you compare them to what is happening with modern American immigration policy?

With a partner, organize them from what you would consider to be the most conservative to the most liberal.

With your partner, join another pair and use one of these texts, either by agreeing with or arguing against it, to explain your stance on immigration to the rest of your group. Feel free to discuss your stances respectfully.