



Compassion for Strangers

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

“You shall have one standard for migrant and citizen alike: for I the LORD am your G-d.” (Leviticus 24:22)

“You too must befriend the migrant, for you were migrants in the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 10:18-19)

The Torah calls us to center compassion in how we view and treat the sojourners among us. We are commanded to extend to “strangers” the same dignity we seek for ourselves. Migrants are entitled to equal protection under the law—and our faith teaches that we are obligated to ensure they receive care and empathy, adequate food, clothing, shelter, and fair and just wages.

Our liturgy continually reminds us that we were strangers in the land of Egypt. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks teaches that this foundational narrative anchors us in the responsibility to treat others with dignity and compassion, to care for those with less privilege, and to pursue social justice relentlessly. These are not abstract ideals—they are urgent calls to action.

Living a Jewish life through our values means recognizing the moments that demand courage and moral clarity. This is one of those moments. Our tradition insists that we hold ourselves—and our leaders—to a higher standard than what we see in cities across the country today. Silence is not an option. If we truly believe in the sanctity of human dignity, then we must speak, advocate, and act to ensure that those who come seeking refuge are met not with hostility, but with humanity.