



## Letter to Congregation

December 2025/Kislev 5785 | Rabbi Michael Wolk and Cantor Shira Lissek

Dear Friends,

This has been a turbulent week in Charlotte, and it has been upsetting to see our city in the national spotlight, as Federal Border Patrol agents carry out an intensified enforcement operation across our city. Experiencing directly or via videos, the sight of agents arresting people has created a climate of fear in our community and among our neighbors.

As Jews, the experience of immigration is part of our tradition. From our earliest stories of the Jewish people in Egypt, we know the feeling of fear as a government acts against minority populations. Because of our experiences from ancient times until today, the Torah tells us repeatedly to honor the Ger or the stranger; a person who takes the risk of starting over again in a new country. Many of us knew our ancestors who came to this country seeking better lives and who worked diligently to give their children the opportunities they have today. Jewish tradition recognizes the vulnerability of an immigrant and urges us to empathize even if we ourselves are not immigrants because we are all created in the image of God.

This is an incredibly complex issue nationally and from the Jewish perspective. We also value the rule of law. *Dina D'Malchuta Dina* (the law of the land is the law), the Talmud teaches. We respect that there is a process for seeking residency and citizenship in this country and we expect that the authorities will protect us from those who would break the law and cause harm.

While the current operation in Charlotte is alleged to be focused on public safety, what we are witnessing seems to tell a different story. The apparent cruelty, violence, and lack of due process or respect for rights is terrifying. Individuals and families with no criminal history are deeply scared for their safety.

Jews have the responsibility both to respect the law and authorities of this country and to support the *gerim* among us. If you would like to learn about how you can help or offer support, we recommend learning from these organizations with expertise in the immigration system.

The [Carolina Migrant Network](#) offers legal services and education to people involved in the United States immigration system. [Our Bridge for Kids](#) offers services to refugee and immigrant children with the goal of helping them adjust and thrive.

Not every Jewish story is the same. Our community includes people whose families have been in the United States for several generations and first- generation immigrants. Charlotte as a city, and our temple, are enriched by people from all over the world who have made this city their home. If you are feeling fear right now, we are here for you. Please reach out to your clergy if you need support.

Each Shabbat we pray, “Help our leaders understand the rules of justice You have decreed, so that peace and security, happiness and freedom, will never depart from our land.” We pray for a country that is committed both to justice and safety, and to welcoming and kindness.