



MIGRANT WORKERS

In the 1990s, Israel opened its borders to migrant workers, who initially replaced Palestinians in the bottom tier of the labor market. Today, more than 180,000 workers from developing nations live and work in Israel as caregivers, agricultural laborers, and construction workers. Approximately 90,000 are considered illegal, lacking a contract with an employment agency and a visa.

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Viewing the employment of migrant workers as a short-term solution to its labor problem, Israel has never created comprehensive long-term labor policies for these workers. This has created a legal vacuum, and made them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation by their employers. Most migrant workers have no representation or access to institutional help, and they are often unable to advocate effectively for themselves because they do not speak Hebrew and are not Israeli citizens. There is also a lack of clear immigration policies for non-Jews.

CHALLENGES

Exploitation by employers

- Recruited overseas by local contractors who charge exorbitant fees, migrant workers often remain in debt for years. Many workers, legal and illegal, are subjected to unsuitable living conditions, withheld salaries, non-payment of overtime wages, payment below minimum wage, and illegal confiscation of their passports by employers.
- The Supreme Court ruled against the “binding policy” that chains migrant workers to their employers in March 2006. However, this policy was renewed in 2011. Migrant workers, mostly in the caring professions, are confined to specific geographical areas and restricted in the number of times they can change employers. This legal system makes it difficult for workers to escape abusive conditions, thus facilitating exploitation by their employers.



Sigal Rozen of the Hotline for Migrant Workers with migrant child

Detainment

- There have been many instances of police brutality during the arrest and detention of migrant workers.
 - Many migrant workers do not have access to state-funded legal aid or interpreters in judicial and deportation hearings.
 - Police have detained and deported legal migrant workers in order to meet quotas to reduce the migrant worker population.

MAKING PROGRESS

In April 2011, Israel's High Court of Justice cancelled an Israeli government order that required migrant workers to return their infant to their home country within three months of giving birth in order to retain their work visa. This ruling followed a petition by NIF grantees *Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI)*, *Kav Laoved - Workers Hotline*, *Hotline for Migrant Workers in Israel* and *Physicians for Human Rights*.

Deportation of children

- Many children of migrant workers (today numbering around 2000), some of them born in Israel, consider themselves Israeli and speak Hebrew as a first language (some do not even know the language of their home country). Yet there is no official policy regarding their long-term status.
- The government has granted one-time amnesty to a limited number of children who meet specific criteria. However, if a child misses the deadline, or does not meet the criteria, he/she may be deported. Hundreds of children are at risk of deportation.
- Some children are held in detention centers where the quality of government care is questionable.



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REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Since 2005, an estimated 40,000 refugees and asylum-seekers – many fleeing conflicts in Eritrea, Sudan, and elsewhere in Africa – have crossed into Israel. Israel lacks refugee legislation and the country's nascent refugee system is collapsing under the weight of recent arrivals. Though signatory to the [1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees](#), the Israeli government has not yet adopted asylum legislation and the asylum process is marked by unclear policies and procedures. While 600 refugees from Darfur have received status, the rest are stuck in on-going limbo regarding their futures. Although the plight of these individuals has touched the hearts of many Israelis – both leaders and ordinary citizens – some Members of Knesset, rabbis, and other public figures have issued [xenophobic statements against the refugees](#).

CHALLENGES

Detention and lack of basic rights

- The vast majority of refugees entering Israel, including women and children, are detained for indefinite periods. Conditions at detention facilities are severely lacking, and the risk of psychological injury, especially to those who experienced trauma in their home countries and en route to Israel, is high.
- When the prisons are filled to capacity, asylum seekers are released into Israeli city centers without any assistance. Asylum-seekers' access to basic services, such as health care, housing, education, vocational training and employment ranges from very limited to none at all. Hundreds of new arrivals, including pregnant women, children and unaccompanied minors have remained homeless. A majority of asylum-seekers cannot obtain permission to work, so few are able to secure work, and those who do are vulnerable to exploitation and exposed to the dangerous working conditions.



Deterrence

The government has introduced a number of interrelated measures designed to deter further arrivals. These include:

- threatening to [fine employers](#) of asylum seekers without a work permit,
- the proposed construction of a detention centre for asylum seekers,
 - the erection of a [border fence](#) due to be completed in 2012, and
 - the passage of the [Anti-Infiltration Bill](#) in January 2012

MAKING PROGRESS

The practice of "hot returns", expulsion of asylum-seekers to Egypt (which reportedly deported some of these refugees back to the Sudan and Eritrea and imprisoned others), was successfully challenged in court by human rights groups.

Reluctance to grant status

- Israel has no law regulating the status of asylum-seekers and attempts to enact a law have been met with government resistance.
- Since Israel's establishment, fewer than 150 individuals have been recognized as refugees under the Refugee Convention. Some 600 refugees from Darfur have been granted temporary resident status to be renewed every year, though not official refugee state.

Per ACRI: "The State of Israel certainly has the right to protect the integrity of its borders, to establish rules regarding entry into the country, and to monitor those who come knocking on its gates. But as a country that was established, in part, to grant a home to Jewish refugees, and as a country that was closely involved in the drafting of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, it must take into account the moral and legal obligation not to imprison refugees and asylum seekers, rather than seeking to punish them."

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES

With the aim of promoting a just and compassionate society in Israel, NIF works to protect the human rights of migrant workers and their families. Examples of organizations making a difference on the ground include:

Association of Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI)

Established in 1972, ACRI (www.acri.org.il) is Israel's oldest and largest human rights organization and the only one dealing with the entire spectrum of rights and civil liberties issues in Israel and the Occupied Territories. ACRI advocates in the legal and public spheres for the rights and fair treatment of migrant workers, refugees and asylum-seekers.

Hotline for Migrant Workers (HMW)

The Hotline for Migrant Workers (www.hotline.org.il) was established in 1998 to protect the human rights of migrant worker and combat trafficking in women in Israel, and has since expanded its mission to include refugees and asylum-seekers. In addition to public consciousness-raising, HMW works to safeguard the rights of migrant workers facing detention and deportation and advance alternative employment policies for migrant workers. HMW provides refugees and asylum-seekers with humanitarian aid and para-legal representation, and files precedent-setting suits on topics such as detention conditions, illegal detention, deportation to Egypt, and judicial review.

African Refugee Development Center (ARDC)

The mission of the African Refugee Development Center (www.ardc-israel.org) is to protect and empower refugees and asylum seekers in Israel. The ARDC seeks to ensure access to basic social services, and to facilitate refugee and asylum seeker integration, self-sufficiency and ownership in matters affecting their lives.

Israel Religious Action Center of the Reform Movement (IRAC)

IRAC's work (www.irac.org) focuses on both the legal and the humanitarian fronts. "Keren B'Kavod", a project involving Reform congregants, provides humanitarian assistance to Sudanese refugees and migrant workers, provides life skills training for refugee women, and educates the public about refugees. IRAC fights incitement to racism against refugees and migrant workers, including incitement by rabbis, through the courts and the Knesset.

Refugees' Rights Forum

These organizations, along with four others, are members of the Refugees' Rights Forum, which works to promote the development of comprehensive and humane refugee legislation and policy. The Forum lobbies key decision-makers on legislation implementing the international obligations Israel committed to when signing the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

Sources: This information is based on current events, government policies and the work of NIF grantees that work on this issue. Information was provided primarily by the *Hotline for Migrant Workers*, the *Association for Civil Rights in Israel* and the *African Refugee Development Center*.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Background Information from NGOs and Other Sources

African Refugee Development Center (ARDC): <http://www.ardc-israel.org/en/content/refugees-israel>

Association for Civil Rights in Israel 2011 Annual Report, Pages 15-23, 31-33, 57-58
<http://www.acri.org.il/en/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/ACRI-State-of-Human-Rights-2011-ENG.pdf>

Hotline for Migrant Workers (Migrants and Refugees): www.hotline.org.il

Physicians for Human Rights – Israel (Migrants and Refugees): <http://www.phr.org.il>

US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report, Pages 15-20 (protection of refugees), 39-42 (workers' rights)
<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/nea/154463.htm>

Articles and Videos

Video on the work of ARDC (6.5 minutes): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0H5nAmi9GE>

Video of song protesting the deportation of children of migrant workers, with Israeli public figures (Hebrew lyrics and English translation available from NIF): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCiHKarFqRQ>

Video by the Hotline for Migrant Workers against the Infiltration Law:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBqk5I5hNTw&feature=youtu.be>

The tragedy and threat of African refugees in Israel:
<http://972mag.com/the-tragedy-and-threat-of-african-refugees-in-israel/46282/>

Police distort crime data, inciting violence against refugees:
<http://972mag.com/police-distortion-of-crime-data-encourages-rising-violence-against-refugees/46236/>

Israel Police chief: Letting migrants work would reduce crime:
<http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/israel-police-chief-letting-migrants-work-would-reduce-crime-1.431382>

Threats made against south Tel Aviv aid workers after Yishai remarks:
<http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/threats-made-against-south-tel-aviv-aid-workers-after-yishai-remarks-1.430920>

Article on the director of the African Refugee Development center:
<http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/anglo-file/from-asylum-seeker-to-community-leader-1.428178>

Dreaming in Hebrew, Facing Deportation (article on the award-winning documentary on the children of foreign workers in Israel and the awareness it has spread about children facing deportation): <http://www.forward.com/articles/136814/>

Flow of African migrants poses dilemma for Israel: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/flow-of-african-migrants-poses-dilemma-for-israel/2011/04/14/AFsxuyjD_story.html

No country for refugees (article on a newspaper aiming to change Israelis' perceptions of asylum seekers):
<http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/magazine/no-country-for-refugees-1.356153>

Sparing a thought on Passover for the refugees in Israel:
<http://www.haaretz.com/jewish-world/sparing-a-thought-on-passover-for-the-refugees-in-israel-1.422573>

Shoah survivors: Kids' deportation inhumane: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3932047,00.html>

Hundreds march in Tel Aviv to protest deportation of foreign workers' kids:
<http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/hundreds-march-in-tel-aviv-to-protest-deportation-of-foreign-workers-kids-1.347179>

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article XV

- (1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.
- (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

- What goal is this declaration attempting to achieve?
- Is that goal in-line with what you perceive to be Jewish values?

The Kuzari 1:26-28

הכוזרי א: כ"ו-כ"ח

<p>26. Al Khazari: If this be so, then your belief is confined to yourselves?</p> <p>27. The Rabbi: Yes; but any Gentile who joins us unconditionally shares our good fortune, without, however, being quite equal to us. If the Law were binding on us only because God created us, the white and the black man would be equal, since He created them all. But the Law was given to us because He led us out of Egypt, and remained attached to us, because we are the pick of mankind.</p> <p>28. Al Khazari: Jew, I see thee quite altered, and thy words are poor after having been so pleasant.</p>	<p>כו. אמר הכוזרי: אם כן אני רואה שתורתכם אינה נתונה כי אם לכם.</p> <p>כז. אמר החבר: כן-הוא, וכל הנלוח אלינו מן האמות בפרט יגיעהו מן הטובה אשר ייטיב הבורא אלינו, אך לא יהיה שנה עמנו. ואלו היה חייב התורה מפני שבראנו היה שנה בה הלכו והשחור, כי הכל בריאותיו. אך התורה מפני שהוציאנו ממצרים, והתחברות כבודו אלינו, מפני שאנחנו נקראים הסגלה מבני אדם.</p> <p>כח. אמר הכוזרי: אני רואה אותך מתהפך, היהודי, וכבר שב דברך רזה אחר שהיה שמן:</p>
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The Kuzari 5:20

הכוזרי ה:כ

<p>The fourth principle expresses the conviction that existing beings are of higher or lower degree. Everything that is possessed of feeling and perception is higher than those creatures which lack those, since the former are nearer the degree of the Prime Cause which is Reason itself. The lowest plant occupies a higher rank than the noblest mineral, the lowest animal is higher than the noblest plant, and the lowest human being is higher than the noblest animal. Thus the lowest follower of the divine law occupies a higher place than the noblest heathen. For the divine law confers something of the nature of angels on the human mind, a thing which cannot be acquired otherwise. The</p>	<p>וההקדמה הרביעית, ההודאה כי למציאות מדרגות עליונות ותחתונות, וכל מה שיש לו הרגש והשגה וחוש, מעולה מאשר אין לו זה, בעבור קירבתו ממדרגת הסיבה הראשונה, אשר הוא השכל בעצמו</p> <p>וכי הפחות שבצמח יותר מעולה במדרגה מן המעולה שבמוצאים, והפחות שבבהמה יותר מעולה במדרגה מן המעולה שבאדם יותר מעולה במדרגה מן המעולה שבבני תורת האלוקים יותר מעולה במדרגה מן המעולה שבאומות שאין להם תורת האלוקים, כי התורה שהיא מאת האלוקים, מקנה הנפשות מנהג המלאכים ותכונתם, וזה מה שאין משיגים אותו בלמוד. והראיה על זה, כי ההתמדה על מעשה</p>
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<p>proof is that prolonged practice of this law leads up to the degree of prophetic inspiration, than which there is no nearer degree to God for man.</p> <p>Even a rebellious member of the people which received the Torah is preferable to one who has no share in the Torah. For the Divine Torah has already given him the potential of leading a spiritual life and reaching the level of the angels. Even though his rebelliousness has disturbed his potential and tarnished it, traces of his essence remain, and the fire of his yearning far it is constant. Even if he were given the choice, he would never choose to join the ranks of those who were not given the Torah. No more would a sick, pain-racked person accept the choice of being a horse or a fish or a bird in order to be happy and pain-free, at the cost of surrendering the intelligence which allows him to approach the Divine.</p>	<p>התורה ההיא מביאה אל מדרגת הנבואה, אשר היא הקרובה שבמדרגות האנושיות אל האלוקים</p> <p>אם כן בעל התורה הממרה טוב מאשר אין לו תורה, כי הוא כבר הקנתהו תורת אלוקים מנהג מלאכותי, השקיף בו על מדרגת המלאכים, אף על פי שמריו בלבב אותו עליו והפסידו, נשאר לו ממנו רשמים ונשאר באש הכוסף אליו, אבל אם היו נותנים לו הבחירה, לא היה בוחר שיהיה במדרגת מי שאין לו תורה, כאשר האדם כאשר יחלה ויעונה במכאוביו, אילו היו נותנים לו הבחירה שיהיה סוס או דג או עוף מתענג בלי מכאוב, ויובדל בינו ובין השכל אשר יקרבהו אל מדרגת האלוהות, לא היה בוחר בו.</p>
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Rav Kook, "The Lights of Rebirth" Chapter 5

הרב קוק, אורות התחיה, פרק ה

<p>The retreat from recognition of our preferred status is a fundamental mistake, ceasing to recognize that 'You have chosen us'.</p> <p>We are not only different from other nations different and distinguished in life and our distinguished history for which there is no comparison in any other nation, rather we are elevated and much greater than every nation.</p> <p>If we acknowledge this greatness then we will know ourselves but if we forget our greatness we will lose our identity. And a nation that loses its identity is certainly insignificant and weak. And only when we lose our identity do we become weak. And losing our identity is losing our greatness. Our soul encompasses the world and all that is in it and displays itself through the unity of the One Above. Therefore, it is perfect and all embracing and there are no contradictions or complications in it which are present in other nations.</p> <p>We are one nation which is like the Oneness of the World. This is the depth of our spiritual nature which we have very strongly, and the way of our history which goes in many directions through which passes through the</p>	<p>טעות יסודית היא החזרה מכל היתרון שלנו, החדלון מההכרה של "אתה בחרתנו".</p> <p>לא רק משונים אנחנו מכל העמים, משונים ונבדלים בחיים הסתוריים מצוינים, שאין דוגמתם בכל עם ולשון, כ"א גם מעולים וגדולים מאד מכל עם.</p> <p>אם נדע את גדולתנו אז יודעים אנו את עצמנו, ואם נשכח את גדלנו אנו שוכחים את עצמנו, ועם שישכח את עצמו בודאי הוא קטן ושפל. רק בשכחת עצמנו הננו נשארים קטנים ושפלים, ושכחת עצמנו היא שכחת גדולתנו.</p> <p>נשמתנו מקפת עולם ומלאו ומצגת אותו על בסיס אחדותו העליון, ומשום כך היא בקרבה תמה וכוללת, ואין בה כלל אותם הנגודים וההרכבות השונים, הרגילים בנשמות עם ולשון. גוי אחד אנחנו, אחד כיחודו של עולם. זהו עומק טבענו הרוחני שיש בנו בכח, והדרך ההיסטורית שלנו ההולך את מהלכו בדרכים שונים, בדרכי אורה העוברות בין הררי חושך וצלמות, הוא מדריך אותנו להוציא את עומק טבע הויתנו מן הכח אל הפועל.....</p> <p>הננו חזקים מרוח הזמנים, איתנים מכל איתני תבל. הננו שואפים לקום לתחיה באותו הגודל של אבותינו, ולהיות עוד גדולים ונשאים מהם. מוסר השפענו רב בעולם, והננו נכונים להשפיע עמו ג"כ עונג וחיים רעננים. את האנושיות כולה הננו מקפלים ברוחנו בגלוי, ואת כל המציאות כולה</p>
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<p>mountains of darkness and the shadow of death it leads us to expose the depths of our nature from the potential to reality.</p> <p>We are strong from the spirit of our times our strength from all the strength of the world</p> <p>We strive to arise to the greatness of our fathers and to be even greater than them. We have had great ethical influence on the world and we are prepared to influence the whole of contemporary mankind through fresh life which is encapsulated within us. And everything that is and which has always been part of us it will all be live, something which will not disappear, Our spirit is not afraid of the times, it forms the times and shapes them.</p>	<p>במצפוננו, וכל מה שיש עמנו, ושהיה חי מאז בקרבנו, הכל יהיה מלא וחי, דבר לא יעדר רוחנו איננו ירא מפני הזמנים ; הוא יוצר את הזמנים ומטביע עליהם את צורתו.</p>
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Exodus 22:19-23

שמות כ"ב: י"ט-כג

- *Is there a difference between Jews and others according to the Kuzari or Rav Kook?*
- *How does the presence or absence of a difference affect how we should treat others?*
- *Is this attitude resonant or dissonant with how you act in the world?*

<p>19 One who sacrifices to the gods, save other than the Lord shall be utterly destroyed. 20 You shall not wrong a stranger; neither shall you oppress him; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. 21 You shall not afflict any widow, or orphan. 22 If you afflict them in any way and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry- 23 My wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.</p>	<p>יט זבח לאֱלֹהִים, וְחָרַם--בְּלִתֵּי לִיהוָה, לְבַדּוֹ. כִּי וְגַר לֹא-תוֹנֶה, וְלֹא תִלְחָצֶנּוּ: כִּי-גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם, בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם. כא כָּל-אֲלֻמָּנָה וְיָתוֹם, לֹא תַעֲנוּן. כב אִם-עֲנָה תַעֲנֶנָּה, אִתּוֹ--כִּי אִם-צַעַק יִצְעַק אֵלַי, שָׁמַע אֲשָׁמַע צַעֲקוֹתוֹ. כג וְחָרָה אַפִּי, וְהָרַגְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּחֶרֶב; וְהָיוּ נְשֵׁיכֶם אֲלֻמָּנוֹת, וּבְנֵיכֶם יִתְמָיִם.</p>
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Mishna, Bava Metzia, 4:10

משנה בבא מציעה ד'

<p>Just as oppression is forbidden in the world of commerce, so too it is forbidden in conversation. A person may not say "How much does this thing cost?" If he does not intend to buy it. If a person becomes religious one may not say to him: "Remember your old ways". If a person was descended from converts, you may not say to them, "Remember that your fathers were like" for it is written, <i>You shall not wrong a stranger nor oppress him</i> (Shemot XXI: 20)</p>	<p>כשם שהונאה במקח וממכר, כך הונאה בדברים: לא יאמר לו בכמה חפץ זה, והוא אינו רוצה ליקח. ואם היה בעל תשובה, לא יאמר לו זכור מעשיך הראשונים. ואם היה בן גרים--לא יאמר לו זכור מעשה אבותיך, שנאמר "וגר לא תונה, ולא תלחצנו: כי גרים הייתם, בארץ מצריים" (שמות כב, כ).</p>
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Rashi, Exodus 22**רש"י שמות פרק כ"ב**

If you oppress him, he can oppress you in return and say to you: "You too are descended from strangers". Don't complain about a blemish in your friend when you have the identical problems

The term "stranger" always refers to someone who was not born in that county but come from another state to live there.

כי גרים הייתם - אם הוניתו, אף הוא יכול להונותך ולומר לך אף אתה מגרים באת, מום שבך אל תאמר לחברך. כל לשון גר, אדם שלא נולד באותה מדינה, אלא בא ממדינה אחרת לגור שם :

Ramban, Exodus 22**רמב"ן פירוש על שמות פרק כ"ב**

The correct interpretation to me seems to be He is saying: Do not wrong the stranger or oppress him in the mistaken belief that no one can save him from you. For you know that you were strangers in Egypt and I saw how the Egyptians oppressed you and I avenged your cause on them. For I see the tears of the oppressed who have no comforter while their oppressors have power, and I deliver each one from whoever is too strong for him. Likewise, do not afflict the widow and the orphan for I will hear their cry for all these people do not rely on themselves and depend on me. And in another verse it says, *For you know the soul of a stranger since you were strangers in the Land of Egypt*, that is to say, you know that every stranger feels depressed and is constantly sighing and crying and his eyes are directed towards God, therefore, He will have mercy upon them just as He showed mercy to you as it is written, *The children of Israel sighed because of their bondage and their cry ascended to God from their bondage*. This means that he does not have mercy on them because of their merits, but only because of the slavery.

והנכון בעיני כי יאמר, לא תונה גר ולא תלחצנו ותחשבו שאין לו מציל מידך, כי אתה ידעת שהייתם גרים בארץ מצרים וראיתי את הלחץ אשר מצרים לוחצים אתכם ועשיתי בהם נקמה, כי אני רואה דמעת העשוקים אשר אין להם מנחם ומיד עושקיהם כח, ואני מציל כל אדם מיד חזק ממנו. וכן האלמנה והיתום לא תענו כי אשמע צעקתם, שכל אלה אינם בוטחים בנפשם, ועלי יבטחו. ובפסוק האחר הוסיף טעם ואתם ידעתם את נפש הגר כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים (להלן כג ט). כלומר, ידעתם כי כל גר נפשו שפלה עליו והוא נאנח וצועק ועיניו תמיד אל ה' וירחם עליו כאשר רחם עליכם, כמו שכתוב (לעיל ב כג) ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבודה ויצעקו ותעל שועתם אל האלהים מן העבודה. כלומר לא בזכותם רק שרחם עליהם מן העבודה :

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, Commentary on Torah

All your misfortunes in Egypt were caused by that you were foreigners there and that as such in the view of the other nations you had not right to land, honour or existence there, so that anyone could deal with you as he chose, Because you were aliens, you were outlawed in Egypt: this was the cause of enslavement and affliction, Therefore we are warned to see to it that when you have a state of your own, you do not make the rights of any foreigner in your midst dependent upon anything other than the pure human quality inherent in every person. As soon as you abridge this basic human right, you open the door to all the abominations of tyranny and abuse that were practiced in the land of Egypt.

- *Why are we demanded to be so caring to the stranger?*
- *How might the Kuzari and Rav Kook read these obligations?*
- *Whom in today's society are we obligated to care for?*

Babylonian Talmud, Avoda Zara 64b

עבודה זרה סד:

<p>Who is a Ger Toshav? Any Gentile who takes upon himself in the presence of three <i>haverim</i> not to worship idols. Such is the statement of Rabbi Meir;</p> <p>But the Sages declare: Any Gentile who takes upon himself the seven precepts which the sons of Noah undertook.</p> <p>Others maintain: These do not come within the category of a Ger Toshav; but who is a Ger Toshav? A proselyte who eats of animals not ritually slaughtered, i.e., he took upon himself to observe all the precepts mentioned in the Torah apart from the prohibition of eating the flesh of animals not ritually slaughtered.</p> <p>We may leave such a man alone with wine, but we may not deposit wine in his charge even in a city where the majority of residents are Israelites. We may, however, leave him alone with wine even in a city where the majority of residents are heathens; and his oil is like his wine.'</p>	<p>מיתבי איזהו גר תושב כל שקיבל עליו בפני ג' חברים שלא לעבוד עבודת כוכבים { עבודה זרה } דברי ר"מ וחכ"א כל שקיבל עליו שבע מצות שקבלו עליהם בני נח אחרים אומרים אלו לא באו לכלל גר תושב אלא איזהו גר תושב זה גר אוכל נבילות שקבל עליו לקיים כל מצות האמורות בתורה חוץ מאיסור נבילות מייחדין אצלו יין ואין מפקידין אצלו יין ואפי' בעיר שרובה ישראל אבל מייחדין אצלו יין ואפי' בעיר שרובה <עובדי כוכבים> { גוים }</p>
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Rabbi Jonathan Sacks – Covenant and Conversation – Exodus pp 185-6

Whichever way we look at it, there is something striking about this almost endlessly iterated concern for the stranger – together with the historical reminder that "you yourselves were slaves in Egypt". It is as if in this series of laws we are nearing the core of the mystery of Jewish existence itself. What is the Torah implying?

Concern for social justice was not unique to Israel. What we sense, however, throughout the early Biblical narrative, is the lack of basic rights to which outsiders could appeal. Not by accident is the fate of Sodom and the cities of the plain sealed when they attempt to assault Lot's two visitors. Nor can we fail to feel the risk to which Abraham and Isaac believe that they are exposed when they are forced to leave home and take refuge in Egypt or the Land of the Philistines. In each of the three episodes, (Genesis chapters 12, 20, 26) they are convinced that their lives are at stake; that they may be murdered so that their wives can be taken into the royal harem.

Jacob's daughter is raped and abducted when she wanders into the territory of Shehem. There are repeated implications in the course of the Joseph story that in Egypt the Israelites are regarded as pariahs . . . One verse in particular – when the brothers visit Joseph a second time- indicates the distaste with which they were regarded:

They served him (Joseph) by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who were with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews for that is detestable to Egyptians (Genesis 43: 32)

So it was in the ancient world. Hatred of the foreigner is the oldest of passions, going back to tribalism and the prehistory of civilization. . .

This fact lies at the very heart of the Jewish experience; It is no coincidence that Judaism was born in two journeys away from the two greatest civilizations of the ancient world. Abraham's from Mesopotamia, Moses and the Israelites' from Pharaonic Egypt. The Torah is the world's great protest against empires and imperialism. There are many dimensions to this protest. One dimension is the protest against the attempt to justify social hierarchy and the absolute powers of rulers in the name of religion. Another is the subordination of the masses to the state - epitomized by the vast building projects first of Babel, then of Egypt, and the enslavement they entailed. A third is the brutality of nations in the course of war (the subject of Amos' oracles against the nations). Undoubtedly though, the most serious offence - for the prophets as well as the Mosaic books – was the use of power against the powerless: the widow, the orphan and above all, the stranger.

To be a Jew is to be a stranger. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that is why Abraham was commanded to leave his land, home and father's house; why, long before Joseph was born, Abraham was already told that his descendants would be strangers in a land not their own; why Moses had to suffer personal exile before assuming the leadership of the people; why the Israelites underwent persecution before inheriting their own land; and why the Torah is so insistent that this experience - the retelling of the story on Passover, along with the never-forgotten taste of the bread of affliction and the bitter herbs of slavery – should become a permanent part of their collective memory . . .

The Torah asks why should you not hate the stranger? Because you once stood where he stands now. You know the heart of the stranger because you were once a stranger in the land of Egypt. If you are human, so is he. If he is less than human, so are you. You must fight the hatred in your heart as I once fought the greatest ruler and the strongest empire in the ancient world on your behalf. I made you into the world's archetypal strangers so that you would fight for the rights of strangers – for your own and those of others, wherever they are, whoever they are whatever they are, and whatever the colour of their skin or the nature of their culture, because though they are not in your image, says God, they are nonetheless in Mine. There is only once reply strong enough to answer the question Why should I not hate the stranger? Because the stranger is me.

- *Is the Torah's demand in relation to strangers particular or universal?*
- *What reasons might there be to not treat foreigners as equals?*
- *How do we balance those concerns with the positive obligations towards strangers?*

Amos 3:1-2

עמוס ג: א-ב

<p>Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you O children of Israel against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt saying You alone have I known from all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your sins.</p>	<p>א שָׁמְעוּ אֶת-הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה, אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם-- בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: עַל כָּל-הַמִּשְׁפָּחָה, אֲשֶׁר הֵעֵלִיתִי מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר. בֵּרַק אֶתְכֶם יְדַעְתִּי, מִכֹּל מִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאָדָמָה; עַל-כֵּן אֶפְקֹד עֲלֵיכֶם, אֵת כָּל-עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם.</p>
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Isaiah 42:5-8

ישעיהו מ"ב:ה-ח

<p>Thus says God the Lord, He that created the heavens and stretched them out, He that spread forth the earth and that which comes out of it, He that gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk on it. I the Lord have called you in righteousness and will hold your hand and keep you and give you a covenant of the people for a light of the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison and them that sit in the darkness of the prison house. I am the Lord that is my name and I will not give my glory to another neither my praise to carved idols.</p>	<p>ה כֹּה-אָמַר הָאֵל יְהוָה, בּוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנוֹטִיָּהֶם, רֹקַע הָאָרֶץ, וְצֹאֲצְאֶיהָ; נֹתֵן נְשָׁמָה לְעַם עֲלֵיהָ, וְרוּחַ לַהֲלֹכִים בָּהּ. וְאֲנִי יְהוָה קָרָאתִיד בְּצַדִּיק, וְאֶחְזֹק בְּיָדוֹ; וְאֶצְרֶה, וְאֶתְנַדֶּה לְבְרִית עִם--לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם. ז לְפָקֶחַם, עֵינַיִם עֲוֹרוֹת; לְהוֹצִיא מִמִּסְגַּר אֲסִיר, מִבַּיִת כְּלֹא יִשְׁבִּי חֹשֶׁךְ. ח אֲנִי יְהוָה, הוּא שְׁמִי; וְכִבְדֹּי לֹא אֶחָר לֹא-אֶתֶן, וְתִהְלֶתִי לְפִסְלִים.</p>
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