



Welcoming the Stranger: Jewish Values, Immigration, & Refugees

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STUDY MATERIALS

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I. Helpful Definitions

<i>Ger</i>	גר	Stranger / Alien / Foreigner / Migrant
<i>Ger Toshav</i>	גר תושב	Resident Alien / Immigrant
<i>Ger Tzedek</i>	גר צדק	Righteous convert
<i>Nokhri</i>	נכרי	Non-Jew
<i>Oved Kochavim</i>	עבוד כוכבים	Idolater (“star worshipper”)
<i>Ezrakh</i>	אזרח	Citizen
<i>Yisrael</i>	ישראל	Israelite / Jew
<i>Achichah</i>	אחיך	Your Brother (i.e. someone of your kind)
<i>Ben / B’nei Brit</i>	בן ברית	Son / Children of the Covenant
Seven Noachide Laws	שבע מצוות בני נח	<p>According to the rabbinic tradition, laws that are binding for all of humanity:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish courts of justice 2. Don’t curse the name of God 3. Don’t worship idols 4. Don’t commit adultery 5. Don’t commit murder 6. Don’t steal 7. Don’t eat flesh from a living animal

II. Before We Begin: Warnings & Caveats

1. A Warning /Caveat before applying “Jewish values” to Contemporary Situations

Justice, Politics, and the Risks of Religious Rhetoric, Rabbi Josh Yuter

When Judaism is invoked to support policy, the implication is that God desires or demands a certain course of action. It suggests that those who disagree are, to put it bluntly, bad Jews. But civil legislation is not written directly out of Jewish texts, which means that details essential to the holistic system of *halakhah* (Jewish law) will inevitably be excluded.

To claim or imply that such a policy authentically represents Judaism is to disregard the parts of the Torah which one finds inconvenient or anachronistic, thus creating a misrepresentation of the Torah itself. While these sources may not make for good modern policy, [we] cannot pretend they do not exist.

I am not suggesting here that religious leaders cannot or should not advocate for what they think is best, nor that people cannot be inspired by the religious texts of their choosing. However, there is a significant difference between using canonical texts and interpretations to influence one’s opinion and claiming that one’s opinion is synonymous with the canon.

2. What Happens When pro-Trump Christians Weaponize the Bible

James Martin, Ha'aretz - May 18, 2018

The key to an intelligent use of the Bible for believers is, first, to read the Scriptures with an appreciation for the historical context in which they were written. And, second, to have an appreciation for the overall themes and values consistently repeated in the Bible.

And what are these themes? Among them: God loves each of us, desires the well-being of each person, and asks us to care for the poor, the sick, and the stranger. A few of the overarching values of the Bible are faith, love, mercy, compassion, forgiveness and care for the poor and marginalized.

Any use of the Bible that does not incorporate these themes should be suspect, as is any obvious "cherry picking" of Bible verses that does not take into account those values.

3. There Is Nothing Jewish About Protecting Refugees

Anshel Pfeffer, *Ha'aretz* - July 5, 2018

Every Jewish denomination picks and chooses from tradition, according to their political needs: Deport, absorb, protest, stay quiet. On one of the great defining issues of Western politics today, there's simply no one true Jewish take...

The differences are theological, ideological and political. Progressive rabbis will repeatedly remind us that the Torah exhorts us to welcome and love the *ger* - the stranger living among us, 36 times, more than any other commandment. But even they will admit that this is a new reading of the Torah. The standard translation of *ger* has always been a person who has chosen to live beside the Jewish people and abide by the Torah's commandments. Not just any random stranger...

Just as the progressive rabbis are simply clothing their western liberal values in biblical or Talmudic quotations, so are the Orthodox ideologies modern concepts. There is of course no such thing as authentic Judaism...

There is no true Jewish attitude to immigration, one of the greatest defining issues of Western politics in our age. There are competing visions of what it means to be a Jew today and where we stand on refugee rights is intrinsically related to how we see our Judaism and humanity.

III. What's This all About? Why do we Care?

1. Mishnah *Pesachim* 10:5 (2nd C. CE Jewish Legal Text, section of Laws on Passover, Land of Israel)

In every generation, a person is obligated to see themselves as though they came forth from Egypt.

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאלו הוא יצא ממצרים

2. Maimonides *Laws of Leavened Bread and Matzah* 7:6 (12th C., Spain & North Africa)

In every generation, a person is obligated to show themselves as though they came forth from Egypt.

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם להראות את עצמו כאלו הוא יצא ממצרים

3. R' Joseph Soloveitchik, *Festival of Freedom: Essays on Pesach & the Haggadah* (20th C., USA)

The standard text reads, "In each generation, one is duty-bound, *lirot et atzmo*, to consider himself, as if he had been delivered from Egypt bondage." Instead of the reflexive verb *lirot et atzmo*, signifying an inner experience, Maimonides substitutes the verb, *l'harot et atzmo*, to *demonstrate*, to *behave* in a manner manifesting the experience of finding liberty after having been enslaved for a long time.

4. Genesis 15:13

For your offspring will be strangers (*ger*) in a land that is not theirs, and they will be enslaved and oppressed...

כי גר יהיה זרעך בארץ לא להם ועבדום וענו אותם

5. Deuteronomy 27:19

Cursed be the one who subverts the rights of the stranger (*ger*), the orphan, and the widow. And all the people shall say: "Amen."

אָרוּר מַטֵּה מִשְׁפָּט גֵר־יְתוּם וְאַלְמָנָה וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן:

6. Babylonian Talmud *Bava Metzia* 59b (Civil, tort, and property law)

One who verbally mistreats the *ger* violates three prohibitions, and one who oppresses them in other ways violates two...

It is taught that Rabbi Eliezer the Great says: "For what reason did the Torah issue warnings in thirty-six places, and some say in forty-six places, with regard to causing any distress to a convert? It is due to the fact that a convert's inclination is evil, i.e., he is prone to return to his previous way of living."

What is the meaning of that which is written: "*And you shall not mistreat a ger nor oppress him, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt*" (Exodus 22:20)? Rabbi Natan says: A defect that is in you, do not mention it in another. Since the Jewish people were themselves strangers, they are not in a position to demean a *ger* just because they are a stranger in their midst.

תנו רבנן המאנה את הגר עובר בשלשה לאוין והלוחצו עובר בשנים... תניא רבי אליעזר הגדול אומר מפני מה הזהירה תורה בל"ו מקומות ואמרי לה במ"ו מקומות בגר מפני שסורו רע. מאי דכתיב וגר לא תונה ולא תלחצנו כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים (תנינא) רבי נתן אומר מום שבך אל תאמר לחברך

7. Rashbam on Exodus 22:20 (Commentator on Torah, 12th Century, France)

Due to your personal experience of such a status, you, better than anyone else, know that seeing that the oppression of strangers is a great wrong, the punishment for violating such a commandment is equally harsh.

כי גרים הייתם - כמו שמפורש לפנינו ואתם ידעתם את נפש הגר. כי גרים הייתם - ולפי שצרתו מרובה עונשו מרובה.

8. Ibn Ezra on Exodus 22:20 (Commentator on Torah, 12th Century, Spain)

And a stranger – once the stranger accepts not to worship idolatry, you cannot oppress them in your country/land, because you are more powerful than them. And remember! You were strangers like them. And the same way that the text reminds you that the stranger does not have power, so too the widow and the orphans, who are Israelites, have no power.

וגר. כאשר יקבל הגר שלא לעבוד עבודת כוכבים לא תונהו בארצך. בעבור שיש לך כח רב ממנו. וזכור כי גרים הייתם כמוהו. וכאשר הזכיר הגר שאין לו כח ככה היתום והאלמנה שהם ישראלים ואין להם כח.

9. Leviticus Rabbah 27:5 (Midrash/Interpretation on Torah, 5th-7th Century, Land of Israel)

Always “God seeks that which is pursued” (Ecclesiastes 3:15):

The Holy One demands satisfaction for the blood of the pursued at the hands of the pursuers:

Abel was pursued by Cain and the Holy One chose Abel...

Noah was pursued by his generation, and the Holy one chose Noah.

Abraham was pursued by Nimrod, and the Holy One chose Abraham.

Isaac was pursued by the Philistines, and the Holy One chose Isaac.

Jacob was pursued by Esau, and the Holy One chose Jacob.

Joseph was pursued by his brothers, the Holy One chose Joseph.

Moses was pursued by Pharaoh, and the Holy One chose Moses.

David was pursued by Saul, and the Holy One chose David.

Saul was pursued by the Philistines, and the Holy One chose Saul.

Israel are pursued by the nations, and the Holy One chose Israel.

In the case of the sacrifices, it is also like this:

The Holy Blessed One said: ‘The Ox is pursued by the lion, the goat is pursued by the leopard, the lamb by the wolf; do not offer unto Me from those that pursue but from those that are pursued.’

IV. Who is a *Ger Toshav* / *Ger Tzedek*?

1. Babylonian Talmud *Avodah Zarah* 64b (Laws pertaining to Jews living amidst non-Jews and idolatry)

Who is a *ger toshav*? It is anyone who – in front of three people devoted to the meticulous observance of Jewish law – has accepted upon themselves to not worship idols.

The Sages say: Anyone who has accepted upon themselves observance of the seven commandments that the descendants of Noah accepted upon themselves is a *ger toshav*.

Others say: These have not entered the category of *ger toshav*. Rather, who is a *ger toshav*? This is a convert who eats unslaughtered animal carcasses (which are not kosher) but who has accepted upon themselves to observe all of the commandments that are stated in the Torah, *except* for the prohibition against eating unslaughtered carcasses.

איזהו גר תושב? כל שקיבל עליו בפני ג' חברים שלא לעבוד עבודה כוכבים, 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.

2. Babylonian Talmud *Bava Metzia* 111b (Civil, tort, and property law)

The verse states: “You shall not oppress a hired labourer who is poor and needy, whether they are from your brothers (*i.e. a fellow countryman*), or a stranger (*ger*) in one of the communities of your land.” (Deuteronomy 24:14)

This is interpreted as follows: The term “from your brothers” serves to exclude others, *i.e.*, non-Jews, who are not your brothers. As for the term “stranger,” this is referring to a righteous convert (*ger tzedek*).

The term “within your gates,” refers to a *ger toshav* who lives in the Land of Israel and eats unslaughtered animal carcasses.

תניא: מאחריך - פרט לאחרים, גרך - זה גר צדק, בשעריך - זה אוכל נבילות

V. Just how different are “they” from “us”?

1. Jerusalem Talmud *Yevamot* 8:1 (Laws about widowhood and conversion to Judaism)

A *ger toshav* is like a non-Jew for all purposes.

גר ותושב הרי הוא כגוי לכל דבר.

2. Leviticus 24:22

You shall have one standard for stranger and citizen alike: for I Adonai am your (*plural*) God.

משפט אחד יהיה לכם פגר פאזרח יהיה פי אני יהיה אלהיכם:

3. Numbers 15:15-16

There shall be one law for you and for the resident alien; it shall be a law for all time throughout the ages. You and the stranger shall be alike before Adonai. The same ritual (*Torah*) and the same rules (*system of justice*) shall apply to you and to the resident alien among you.

תקנה אחת לכם ולגר הגר תקנה עולם לדורתיכם פכם פגר יהיה לפני יהוה: תורה אחת ומשפט אחד יהיה לכם ולגר הגר אתכם:

4. Deuteronomy 29:9-12

You stand this day, all of you, before Adonai your God – your tribal heads, your elders and your officials, all the men of Israel, your children, your wives, **even the stranger within your camp**, from woodchopper to water drawer – to enter into the covenant of Adonai your God, which Adonai your God is striking with you this day, with its sanctions; to the end that God may establish you this day as God’s people and be your God, as God promised you and as God swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני יהוה אלהיכם ראשיכם שבטיכם זקניכם ושטריתכם כל איש ישראל: טפכם נשיכם וגרף אשר בקרב מתגורר מחטב עציף עד שאב מימיה: לעברך בכרית יהנה אלהיך ובאלתו אשר יהנה אלהיך פרת עמך היום: למען הקים אתך היום | לו לעם והוא יהיה לך לאלהים פאשר דבר-לך וכאשר נשבע לאבותיך לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב:

5. Isaiah 56:3, 6-7

Let not the foreigner (*nekher*) who has attached himself to Adonai, say: “Adonai will keep me apart from His people”... As for the foreigners (*nekher*) who attach themselves to Adonai, to serve God, and to love the name of the Adonai, to be God’s servants – all who keep Shabbat and do not profane it, and who hold take hold of My covenant – I will bring them to My sacred mountain and let them rejoice in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices Shall be welcome on My altar; for My House shall be called A house of prayer for all peoples.”

וְאַל-יֹאמַר בְּנוֹ-הַגֵּר הַגִּלְגָּה אֶל-יְהוָה לֵאמֹר הַבְּדֵל יַבְדִּילֵנִי יְהוָה מֵעַל עַמּוֹ... וּבְנֵי הַגֵּר הַגִּלְגָּה עַל-יְהוָה לִשְׁרָתוֹ וְלִאֲהַבָה אֶת-שְׁמֵ יְהוָה לְהִיּוֹת לוֹ לְעֹבְדִים כְּלִ-שִׁמְר שְׁבֹת מִחֻלְלוֹ וּמִחֻזְיָקִים בְּבְרִיתִי: וְהִבִּיאוּתָיִם אֶל-יְהוָה קֹדְשֵׁי וְשִׁמְחָתִים בְּבֵית תְּפִלָּתִי עוֹלְתֵיהֶם וְזָבְחֵיהֶם לְרִצּוֹן עַל-מִזְבְּחֵי כִּי בֵיתִי בֵּית-תְּפִלָּה יִקְרָא לְכָל-הָעַמִּים:

6. Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael *Mishpatim 18* (~135 CE, Israel & Babylonia)

Beloved are *gerim*, since by every description that Israel is called, *gerim* are also called.

Israelites are called *servants*: “For unto Me the children of Israel are servants.” (Leviticus 25:55) And *gerim* are called *servants*: “to love the name of the Lord and to be servants to God.” (Isaiah 56:6)

Israelites are called *ministers*: “And you, 'priests of the Lord' shall you be called; 'ministers of our God' will it be said of you.” (Isaiah 6:6) And *gerim* are called ministers: “and the *gerim* who join Adonai to minister unto God.” (Isaiah 56:6)

Israelites are called *lovers*: “the seed of Abraham, My lover.” (Isaiah 41:8) And *gerim* are called *lovers*: “And God loves the stranger.” (Deuteronomy 10:18)

Covenant is written of Israel: “And My covenant (i.e., circumcision) shall be in your flesh.” (Genesis 17:13) And it is also written of *gerim*: “and they hold fast to My covenant.” (Isaiah 56:4)

Acceptance is written of Israel: “for acceptance for them before Adonai.” (Exodus 28:38) And *acceptance* is written of *gerim*: “their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices for acceptance upon My altar.” (Isaiah 56:7)...

Beloved are the *gerim* (i.e., the proselytes), as evidenced by Abraham’s not being circumcised until the age of ninety-nine. If he had been circumcised at twenty or thirty, a *ger* could convert only if he were younger than thirty. Therefore God delayed commanding Abraham until he was ninety-nine, so as not to bar the door to future converts.

וגר לא תונה ולא תלחצנו כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים...חביבין הגרים שבכל מקום הוא מכנן כישראל; נקראו בני ישראל עבדים, שנאמר +ויקרא כה נה+ כי לי בני ישראל עבדים, ונקראו גרים עבדים, שנאמר +ישעיה נו ו+ לאהבה את שם יי' להיות לו לעבדים; נקראו ישראל משרתים, שנאמר +שם /ישעיה/ סא ו+ ואתם כהני יי' תקראו משרתי אלהינו יאמר לכם, ונקראו הגרים משרתים, שנאמר +שם /ישעיה/ נו ו+ ובני הנכר הנלוים על יי' לשרתו; נקראו בני ישראל אוהבים שנאמר [שם /ישעיה/ מא ח+ ואתה ישראל עבדי יעקב וגו'] זרע אברהם אוהבי, ונקראו הגרים אוהבים שנאמר ואוהב גר; נאמר בישראל ברית, שנאמר +בראשית יז יג+ והיתה בריתי בבשרכם, ונאמר בגרים ברית, שנאמר +ישעיה נו ו+ מחזיקים בבריתי; נאמר בישראל רצון, שנאמר +שמות כח לח+ לרצון להם לפני יי', ונאמר בגרים רצון, שנאמר +ישעיה נו ז+ עולותיהם וזבחייהם לרצון על מזבחי...חביבין הגרים, שלא מל אברהם אבינו אלא בן תשעים ותשע שנים, שאלו מל בן עשרים או שלשים, לא היה גר יכול להתגייר אלא בפחות מבן שלשים, לפיכך גלגל המקום עמו עד שהגיעו לתשעים ותשע שנים, שלא לנעול דלת בפני הגרים הבאים, וליתן שכר ימים ושנים, לרבות שכר עושי רצונו, לקיים מה שנאמר +ישעיה מב כא+ יי' חפץ למען צדקו יגדיל תורה ויאדיר

7. Sifra Achrei Mot 7:12 (Midrash on Leviticus, ~250-350 CE, Israel & Babylonia)

“Any person”—Could this include a non-Jew? Scripture teaches: “*ger*.” If a *ger*, could this include a *ger toshav*? Scripture teaches: “citizen”—Just as the citizen is a member of the covenant, so too the *ger* is a member of the covenant.

וכל נפש יכול אף הגוי תלמוד לומר גר, אי גר יכול אף גר תושב תלמוד לומר מה אזרח מה אזרח בן ברית אף גר בן ברית .

VI. What General and Specific Obligations do we Have?

1. Leviticus 19:33-34

When a stranger (*ger*) resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress them. The stranger (*ger*) who resides with you shall be to you like one of your citizens; you shall love them as yourself, for you were strangers (*gerim*) in the land of Egypt: I, Adonai, am your God.

וְכִי־יָגִיר אִתְּךָ גֵר בְּאַרְצְכֶם לֹא תוֹנֶנּוּ אֹתוֹ: כְּאֶזְרָח מִכֶּם יִהְיֶה לְכֶם הַגֵּר וְהַגֵּר אִתְּכֶם וְאַהֲבַתְּ לּוֹ כְּמֹדֶךָ כִּי־גֵרִים הֵייתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

2. Leviticus 25:35

If your brother (*or: countryman*) is in dire straits (*literally: falls low*) and comes under your authority (*literally: his hand slips*), hold him (*literally: strengthen him*) as though he were a resident alien (*ger*), and let them live by your side.

וְכִי־יָמוּד אָחִיךָ וּמָטָה יָדוֹ עִמָּךָ וְהִחֲזַקְתָּ בּוֹ גֵר וְתוֹשֵׁב וְנָחִי עִמָּךְ:

3. Deuteronomy 24:17-21

You shall not subvert the rights of the stranger (*ger*) or the orphan; you shall not pawn a widow's clothing.

Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and that Adonai your God redeemed you from there; therefore do I command you to do this thing.

When you reap the harvest in your field, if you forget a sheaf in the field, do not return to pick it up; it shall go to the stranger (*ger*), the orphan, and the widow, in order that Adonai your God may bless you in all your endeavors (*literally: in all the works of your hands*).

When you beat down the fruit of your olive trees, do not go over the branches again – that produce shall go to the stranger (*ger*), the orphan, and the widow.

When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not pick over the vines again – they shall go to the stranger (*ger*), the orphan, and the widow.

Always remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore do I command you to do this thing.

לֹא תִטֶּה מִשְׁפַּט גֵּר יְתוֹם וְלֹא תִחַבֵּל בְּגֵד אִלְמָנָה: וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיִּפְדֶּךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִיָּד מִצְרַיִם לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה: כִּי תִקְצֹר קִצְרֶיךָ בַשָּׂדֶה וְשָׂכַחְתָּ עֹמֵר בַּשָּׂדֶה לֹא תָשׁוּב לִקְרָאתוֹ לְגֵר לְיְתוֹם וְלִאִלְמָנָה יְהוָה לְמַעַן יִבְרַכְכָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ: כִּי תִחַבֵּט זֵיתָךְ לֹא תִפְאֵר אַחֲרָיִךְ לְגֵר לְיְתוֹם וְלִאִלְמָנָה יְהוָה: כִּי תִבְצֹר כַּרְמְךָ לֹא תַעֲדֹל אַחֲרָיִךְ לְגֵר לְיְתוֹם וְלִאִלְמָנָה יְהוָה: וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי־עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עַל־כֵּן אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה

4. Deuteronomy 26:11-12

You shall enjoy, together with the Levite and the *ger* in your midst, all the goodness that Adonai your God has bestowed upon you and your household. When you have set aside, in full, the tenth part of your yield... and have given it to the Levite, the *ger*, the orphan, and the widow, that they may eat their fill in your settlements...

וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַתְּ לָךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּלְבֵיתְךָ אַתָּה וְהַלְוִי וְהַגֵּר אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ: כִּי תִכְלֶה לְעֵשֶׂר אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֶׂיךָ תְּבוּאָתְךָ בַּשָּׂנָה הַשְּׁלִישִׁת שָׁנַת הַמַּעֲשֶׂר וְנָתַתָּה לְלוֹי לְגֵר לְיְתוֹם וְלִאִלְמָנָה וְאָכְלוּ בַשְּׂעֵרִי וְשָׂבְעוּ:

5. Ezekiel 47:21-23

This land you shall divide for yourselves among the tribes of Israel. You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the resident aliens among you, who have had children among you. You shall treat them as Israelite citizens; they shall receive allotments along with you, among the tribes of Israel. You shall give the stranger an allotment within the tribe where they reside, declares Adonai, God.

וְחִלְקֶתֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לָכֶם לְשִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וְהָיָה תְּפִלּוֹ אוֹתָהּ בְּנַחֲלָהּ לָכֶם וְלַהַגְרִים הַגְּרִים בְּתוֹכְכֶם אֲשֶׁר־הוּלְדוּ בְּנֵימֵי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְהָיוּ לָכֶם כְּאִזְרָח בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אַתְּכֶם יִפְּלוּ בְּנַחֲלָה בְּתוֹךְ שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וְהָיָה בְּשֹׁבֵט אֲשֶׁר־גָּר הַגֵּר אִתּוֹ שָׁם תִּתְּנוּ נַחֲלָתוֹ גַּם אֲדָגְנֵי יְהוָה:

6. Nachmanides - Critique of Maimonides' *Sefer Hamitzvot* (13th C., Spain)

We have been commanded to sustain in life the *ger toshav*, to save them from anything bad that may happen to them. If they were drowning in a river, or if a building collapsed on them, we must expend all of our efforts to save them. If they are sick, we must work to heal them. And this is all the more true with respect to a fellow Jew or a *ger tzedek* to whom we are obligated in all these matters. These are matters of saving someone's life, for which one even pushes off Shabbat.

מצוה יו שנצטוינו להחיות גר תושב להציל לו מרעתו שאם היה טובע בנהר או נפל עליו הגל שבכל כחנו נטרח בהצלתו ואם היה חולה נתעסק ברפואתו וכל שכן מאחינו ישראל או גר צדק שאנו מחוייבים לו בכל אלה והוא בהם פקוח נפש שדוחה שבת

8. Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin 109a* (Criminal & Common Law, Court Proceedings, Jurisdiction)

The people of Sodom said: "Since we live in a land from which bread comes and has the dust of gold, we have everything that we need. Why do we need travelers, as they come only to divest us of our property? Come, let us cause the proper treatment of travelers to be forgotten from our land"

אמרו וכי מאחר שארץ ממנה יצא לחם ועפרות זהב לו למה לנו עוברי דרכים שאין אלינו אלא לחסרינו [ממונגן] בואו ונשכח תורת רגל

9. Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, III 39:6 (Major 12th C. philosophical text)

Mercy is also the object of the law, "You shall not deliver back to their master a servant that has escaped from their master." (Deuteronomy 23:15); but it teaches besides a very useful lesson, namely, that we must always practice this virtue, help and protect those who seek our help, and not deliver them unto those from whom they flee.

And it is not sufficient to give assistance to those who are in need of our help; we must look after their interests, be kind to them, and not hurt their feeling by words. Therefore, the Torah says: "They shall live with you, even among you, in that place which they shall choose in one of your gates, where they like it best: you shall not oppress them." (Deuteronomy 23:16)

This we owe to the lowest among people, to the slave; how much more must we do our duty to the freeborn, when they seek our assistance?

But, on the other hand, when sinners and evildoers seek our help, it must not be granted; no mercy must be shown to them, and the course of justice must not be interfered with...

אמרו "לא תסגיר עבד אל אדוניו" עם היותו רחמנות יש בזאת המצוה תועלת גדולה והיא שנתנהג בזאת המידה הנכבדת והוא - שנעזור מי שיעזר בנו ונשמרהו ולא נסגירהו ביד מי שברח ממני. ולא די שתעזור מי שיעזר בך אלא שאתה חייב לעיין בתיקוניו ותיטיב לו ולא תכאיב לבבו בדברים - והוא אמרו ית' "עמך ישב בקרבך... באחד שעריך בטוב לו לא תוננו". ועוד שחייב זה הדין בפחות שבבני אדם והוא העבד - כל שכן אם יעזר בך איש נכבד שראוי לך לעשות מה שראוי לו. ונגד זה הענין - שהעובר המעול כשיעזר בנו לא יעזר ולא ירוחם ולא יחסרו ממנו דין...

VII. Are There Limits?

1. Deuteronomy 23:4-5

No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted into the congregation of Adonai; none of their descendants, even in the tenth generation, shall ever be admitted into the congregation of Adonai, because they did not meet you with food and water on your journey after you left Egypt...

לֹא־יָבֹא עַמּוֹנִי וּמוֹאָבִי בְּקִהְלֵי יְהוָה גַּם דּוֹר עֲשִׂירֵי לֹא־יָבֹא לָהֶם בְּקִהְלֵי יְהוָה עַד־עוֹלָם: עַל־דִּבְרֵי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־קָדְמוּ אִתְּכֶם בְּלֶקְחֵם וּבְמֵימִם בְּדַרְדָּרֵי בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם...

2. Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael *Beshalah, Amalek* (~135 CE, Israel & Babylonia)

R. Eliezer says: God swears by the Throne of Glory: If someone from the nations of the world comes to convert, they should be accepted; but Amalek and his household will not be accepted.

ר' אליעזר אומר נשבע המקום בכסא הכבוד שלו שאם יבא אחד מכל אומות העולם להתגייר שיקבלוהו ולעמלק ולביתו לא יקבלוהו

3. R' Menahem Hameiri, *Beit HaBechirah Bava Kama 37b* (13th-14th C, Provence)

If a Jew's ox gores a non-Jew's ox, the Jew is exempt from paying damages, because of the principle of "his neighbour" (i.e.: the non-Jew is not legally a "neighbour") and if a non-Jew's ox gores the ox of a Jew... the non-Jew pays full damages, because they have no regard for other people's possessions, so we penalize them so that they will not become accustomed to destroy things.

According to what it says in the Talmud, this applies only to nations who are not bounded by the ways of religion and norms, as it says about them in the Talmud: "God saw that since the descendants of Noah did not fulfill the seven commandments that they had accepted upon themselves, God permitted their permitted their possessions to be given to the Jews," provided they deserve this.

If they do follow the seven commandments, our dealings with them should be as their dealings with us. We should show ourselves no favors in cases with them. It is thus obvious that the same is true of nations bound in the ways of religion and norms.

שור של ישראל שנגח שור של נכרי פטור מדין רעהו ושל נכרי שנגח של ישראל בין תם בין מועד משלם נזק שלם מתוך שאין חסים על ממון זולתם קונסין אותם שלא ירגילו עצמם להזיק ולפי מה שנאמר בגמרא דוקא בעממים שאינם גורים בדרכי דתות ונימוסים כמו שאמר עליהם בגמרא ראה שבע מצות שקבלו עליהם בני נח שלא קיימום עמד והתיר ממנם כל שעה שהדין מחייבם בכך הא כל ששבע מצות בידם דינם אצלנו כדיננו אצלם ואין נושאים פנים בדין לעצמנו ומעתה אין צריך לומר שכן באומות הגדורות בדרכי דתות ונימוסים :

4. Deuteronomy 23:20-21

You shall not deduct interest from loans to your countrymen, whether in money or food or anything else that can be deducted as interest; but you may deduct interest from loans to foreigners (*nokhri*). Do not deduct interest from loans to your countrymen, in order that Adonai your God may bless you in all your endeavors (*literally: in all the works of your hands*).

לֹא־תִשָּׂא לְאֶחָיו גִּשְׁתָּה גִּשְׁתָּה אֶכֶל נֶפֶשׁ כָּל־דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר יִשָּׂא: לְנֹכְרֵי תִשָּׂא וּלְאֶחָיו לֹא תִשָּׂא לְמַעַן יִבְרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכֹל מַשְׁלַח יָדְךָ...

5. Babylonian Talmud *Bava Batra 21b* (Laws of Property Rights)

Rav Huna, son of Rav Yehoshua, says: It is obvious to me that a resident of one town can prevent a resident of another town from establishing a similar business in the locale of the first individual. But if they pay the tax of that first town, they cannot prevent them from doing business there, as they too are considered a resident of the town.

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

6. *Sifrei Bamidbar 78* (Midrash Commentary on Numbers, 200 CE, Land of Israel & Babylonia)

“To the place which Adonai said: ‘I give it to you’” (Numbers 10:29): *gerim* have no allotment in it.

But how, then, do we justify: “You shall give the stranger an allotment within the tribe where they reside”? (Ezekiel 47:23)

If this verse cannot be understood as referring to an inheritance, understand it as speaking of atonement: that if the *ger* lived among the tribe of Judah, they would be atoned along with the communal offerings of the tribe of Judah...

Another interpretation: If this verse cannot be understood as referring to an inheritance, understand it as speaking of burial: that *gerim* are allotted burial in the Land of Israel.

אל המקום אשר אמר ה' אותו אתן לכם ואין לגרים בו חלק ומה אני מקיים והיה השבט אשר גר הגר אתו שם תתנו נחלתו
(יחזקאל מז כג) אלא אם אינו ענין לירושה תניהו ענין לכפרה שאם היה בשבט יהודה מתכפר לו בשבט יהודה בשבט בנימין
מתכפר לו בשבט בנימין ד"א אם אינו ענין לירושה תניהו ענין לקבורה ניתן לגרים קבורה בארץ ישראל .

7. Exodus 12:43, 48-49

Adonai said to Moses and Aaron: This is the law of the Passover offering: No foreigner (*nekher*) shall eat of it... If a resident alien among you would offer the Passover sacrifice to Adonai, all his males must be circumcised; then he shall be welcomed to offer it; he shall then be as a citizen of the country. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it. There shall be one law for the citizen and for the stranger who dwells among you.

ויאמר יהוה אל־מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן זֹאת תִּקַּח תִּפְסַח כָּל־בְּנוֹנֵכָר לֹא־יֹאכַל בּוֹ... וְכִי־יִגְוֹר אִתְּךָ גֵר וְעָשָׂה פֶסַח לַיהוָה הַמּוֹלֵל לּוֹ כָּל־זֶכֶר
וְאֵל יִקְרַב לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ וְהָיָה כְּאִזְרַח הָאָרֶץ וְכָל־עֶרְל לֹא־יֹאכַל בּוֹ: תּוֹרַה אִחַת יְהִיָּה לְאִזְרַח וְלַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם:

8. Maimonides, *Laws of Kings* 10:12 (12th C., Spain & North Africa)

When a Jew and an idol worshiper come before us in a court case, if it will be better for the Jew in their legal system, we decide the case according to their legal system. If it will be better for the Jew in our legal system, we decide the case according to Torah law and we say, “that is our law.”

But it seems to me that one does not do this with a *ger toshav*; rather, we always decide the case according to their laws. And it also seems to me that one should deal with *geri toshav* with decency and kindness just like one would with a Jew, for we are commanded to sustain them in life, as it says: “Give [an animal that has died a natural death] to the *ger* who lives in your gates to eat.”

(Deuteronomy 14:21) And when the Sages say that one does not return the greeting of a Gentile, they meant an idolater, not a *ger toshav*.

היה ישראל ועכו"ם אם יש זכות לישראל בדיניהן דנין לו בדיניהם, ואומרים לו כך דיניכם, ואם יש זכות לישראל בדינינו דנין לו דין תורה ואומרים לו כך דינינו, ויראה לי שאין עושין כן לגר תושב אלא לעולם דנין לו בדיניהם, וכן יראה לי שנוהגין עם גרי תושב בדרך ארץ וגמילות חסדים כישאל, שהרי אנו מצווין להחיותן שנאמר לגר אשר בשעריך תתננה ואכלה, וזה שאמרו חכמים אין כופלין להן שלום בעכו"ם לא בגר תושב.

8b. Deuteronomy 14:21

You shall not eat anything that has died a natural death; give it to the stranger (*ger*) in your community to eat, or you may sell it to a foreigner (*nokhri*). For you are a people consecrated to Adonai your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

לֹא תֹאכְלוּ כֹל־נֶבֶלָה לְגֵר אֲשֶׁר־בְּשַׁעְרֵיךָ תִתְּנֶנָּה וְאֹכְלָהּ אוֹ מָכַר לְנֹכְרִי כִי עִם קְדוֹשׁ אֲתָה לֵיהִנֶּה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא־תִבְשֹׁל גְּדִי בְחֵלֶב אִמּוֹ:

9. Malbim on Ezekiel 47:22 (19th C., Russian Biblical commentator)

“There is a (linguistic) difference between a *ger b'tochachem* (a *ger* amidst you), and a *ger it'chem* (a *ger* to you). A *ger b'tochachem* is one who has already converted. A *ger it'chem* is one who will convert soon. Therefore, there is a condition to receive an inheritance along with the Israelites. It says “*ger b'tochachem*” to indicate only if they have already converted. We learn from this - when they have had children. But with which tribe should they receive an inheritance? With the tribe with whom they resided most recently, even if they only lived there for a few days. This is why it says “within the tribe where they reside.”

הגרים בתוכם, אשר גר הגר אתו. כבר בארתי בס' התו"ה (אחרי סי' ע"ה) שיש הבדל בין הגר בתוכם, ובן הגר אתכם, שהגר בתוכם הוא שנתגייר מכבר, והגר אתכם הוא שנתגייר מקרוב, ולכן לתנאי שיקח נחלה בישראל אמר הגרים בתוכם, רק אם נתגיירו מכבר, כמ"ש אשר הולידו בנים, אבל באיזה שבט יקח הוא בשבט שגר בזמן האחרון, אף שגר בין השבט רק ימים מעטים, ועז"א אשר גר אתו:

10. Sifra Kedoshim 3:8 (Midrash on Leviticus, ~250-350 CE, Israel & Babylonia)

If a person comes and says, “I am a *ger*”, is it possible that we accept him? Scripture teaches: “**with you**” – i.e.: one who is established to you.

If witnesses come, how do we know that you accept the *ger*? Scripture says: “When a *ger* lives **in your land**.”

From this, we only know that this is true *in* the land, how do we know that it is true *outside* of the land as well? Scripture teaches: “**with you**,” implying *wherever you are*. So why did it also say “in your land”? In the land, the *ger* must bring proof, outside of the land, the *ger* does not need to bring proof.

“You shall not oppress them.” This means – don’t say to the *ger*: “yesterday you were worshipping idols and now you entered under the shelter of the divine presence?!”

“Like a citizen”—Just as the citizen accepted upon themselves all the words of the Torah, so too the *ger* has accepted on themselves all the words of the Torah. From this, we learn that a *ger* who accepted all the words of the Torah on themselves, *except* for one thing should not be accepted.

א) בא ואמר לו גר אני יכול קיבלו תלמוד לומר אתך במוחזק לך את שבאו עדים מנין תלמוד לומר וכי יגור בארצכם, אין לי אלא בארץ, בחוצה לארץ מנין תלמוד לומר אתכם בכל מקום שאתם, אם כן למה נאמר בארצכם אלא בארץ צריך להביא ראייה, ובחוצה לארץ אין צריך להביא ראייה. (ב) לא תונו אותו שלא תאמר לו אמש הייתה עובד עבודה זרה ועכשיו נכנסת תחת כנפי השכינה. (ג) כאזרח מה אזרח שקיבל עליו את כל דברי התורה, אף גר שקיבל עליו כל דברי התורה, מיכן אמרו גר שקיבל עליו את כל דברי התורה חוץ מדבר אחד אין מקבלים אותו, רבי יוסי ברבי יהודה אומר אפילו דבר קטן מדקדוקי סופרים. (ד) והיה לכם הגר הגר אתכם ואהבת לו כמוך כשם שנאמר לישראל ואהבת לרעך כמוך, כך נאמר לגרים ואהבת לו כמוך כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים דעו מנפשו של גרים שאף אתם הייתם גרים בארץ מצרים.

VIII. Closing Thoughts

On the Refugee Crisis by Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks (21st C, Former Chief Rabbi of United Kingdom)

You would have to be less than human not to be moved by images of the refugee crisis threatening to overwhelm Europe: the scenes in Budapest, the 71 bodies found in the abandoned lorry in Austria, the 200 people drowned when their boat capsized off the coast in Libya and, most heartbreaking of all, the body of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi, lifeless on a Turkish shore: an image that will linger long in the mind as a symbol of a world gone mad.

This is the greatest humanitarian challenge faced by Europe in decades. Angela Merkel was not wrong when she said: “If Europe fails on the question of refugees, its close connection with universal civil rights will be destroyed.”...

...I used to think that the most important line in the Bible was “Love your neighbour as yourself”. Then I realised that it is easy to love your neighbour because he or she is usually quite like yourself. What is hard is to love the stranger, one whose colour, culture or creed is different from yours. That is why the command, “Love the stranger because you were once strangers”, resonates so often throughout the Bible. It is summoning us now...