

House of Sages

JUDAISM AND THE STRANGER

20TH JULY, 2025

COME & LEARN

וְגַר לֹא־תוֹנֶה וְלֹא תִלְחָצֶנּוּ כִּי־גֵרִים הֵיִתְּם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

You shall not wrong or oppress a stranger, for you were strangers
in the land of Egypt.

Exodus 22:20



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SOURCE 1 – BAVA METZIA 59B

It is taught in a baraita 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 stranger? It is due to the fact that a stranger's inclination is evil, i.e., he is prone to return to his previous way of living.

תְּנִיא, רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַגָּדוֹל אוֹמֵר: מִפְּנֵי מָה הַזְהִירָה תּוֹרָה בְּשָׁלְשִׁים וְשָׁשָׁה מְקוֹמוֹת, וְאָמְרֵי לָהּ: בְּאַרְבָּעִים וְשָׁשָׁה מְקוֹמוֹת, בְּגֵר? מִפְּנֵי שְׁסוּרוֹ רַע.

SOURCE 2 – EVAN SHOSHAN CONCORDANCE

The word ger appears in the Torah 68 times in 61 verses

FRAMING AND CONTEXT:

Ben Zion Katz breaks down the concordance's sources into a variety of categories, below we will follow his breakdown to better understand what the Torah is truly teaching us about the stranger (גר). This source sheet will follow five categories of sources that include all of these references

CATEGORY 1: VERSES ARE ABOUT JEWS THEMSELVES

6 verses

SOURCE 3 – GENESIS 15:13

And [God] said to Abram, "Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years;

וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָם יְדַע תְּדַע כִּי־גֵר | יְהִיָּה זְרַעְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם וְעִבְדוּם וְעָנּוּ אֹתָם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה:

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CATEGORY 2: VERSES THAT SPECIFICALLY STATE TO BE GOOD TO THE STRANGER BECAUSE WE WERE STRANGERS IN EGYPT

9 verses

SOURCE 4 – DEUTERONOMY 24:21-22

When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterwards; it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

כִּי תִבְצֹר כֶּרֶמְךָ לֹא תַעֲוֹלֵל אַחֲרָיֶךָ
לְגֵר לִיתּוֹם וְלֹא לְמִנְהַיְהִיָּה:

And thou shalt remember that thou wast a slave in the land of Mizrayim: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
עַל־כֵּן אֲנֹכִי מְצַוְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־
הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה:

CATEGORY 3: VERSES THAT PARALLEL THOSE IN CATEGORY 2 (THAT SPECIFICALLY SITE EGYPT) BUT OMIT THE RATIONAL

6 verses

SOURCE 4 – LEVITICUS 19:10

And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather the single grapes of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord your God.

וְכִרְמְךָ לֹא תַעֲוֹלֵל וּפְרֹט כֶּרֶמְךָ לֹא
תִלְקֹט לְעַנְי וְלְגֵר תַעֲזֹב אֹתָם אֲנִי
ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

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CATEGORY 4: VERSES INSTRUCTING KINDNESS TO THE STRANGER WITHOUT GIVING A REASON

6 verses

SOURCE 5 – LEVITICUS 25:35

And if thy brother grow poor, and his means fail with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee.

וְכִי־יִמּוֹךְ אַחִיךָ וּמָטָה יָדוֹ עִמָּךְ
וְהִחֲזַקְתָּ בּוֹ גֵר וְתוֹשֵׁב וְחִי עִמָּךְ:

CATEGORY 5: VERSES STATING THE STRANGER MUST BE TREATED EQUALLY UNDER THE LAW

23 verses

SOURCE 5A – NUMBERS 15:14-16

And when, throughout the ages, a stranger who has taken up residence with you, or one who lives among you, would present an offering by fire of pleasing odor to God —as you do, so shall it be done by

וְכִי־יִגֹּר אִתְּכֶם גֵּר אֹו אֲשֶׁר־
בְּתוֹכְכֶם לְדַרְתֵּיכֶם וַעֲשֵׂה אִשָּׁה
רִיח־בַּיִחֹחַ לֵה' כַּאֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשׂוּ כֵן
יַעֲשֶׂה:

the rest of the congregation. There shall be one law for you and for the resident stranger; it shall be a law for all time throughout the ages. You and the stranger shall be alike before God;

הַקֵּהֶל חֻקָּה אַחַת לָכֶם וְלִגֵּר הַגֵּר
חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדַרְתֵּיכֶם כְּכֶם כִּגֵּר
יְהִיה לִפְנֵי ה':

the same ritual and the same rule shall apply to you and to the stranger who resides among you.

תּוֹרָה אַחַת וּמִשְׁפָּט אֶחָד יְהִיה
לָכֶם וְלִגֵּר הַגֵּר אִתְּכֶם:

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SOURCE 5B – DEUTORONOMY 1:16

And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him.

וְאָצְוָה אֶת־שֹׁפְטֵיכֶם בְּעֵת הַהוּא
לֵאמֹר שְׁמַע בֵּין־אֲחֵיכֶם וּשְׁפֹטֵתֶם
צֶדֶק בֵּין־אִישׁ וּבֵין־אָחִיו וּבֵין־גֵּרוֹ:

REFLECTION QUESTION

1. Why do you think this would be the most repeated Mitzvah in the Torah?
2. What do these different categories teach us about the Jewish view on “the stranger”?

SOURCE 7 – KITCHEN TABLE WISDOM

"Kitchen Table Wisdom" by Rachel Naomi Remen is a collection of true stories that explore the themes of healing, resilience, meaning, suffering, love, faith, and miracles.

Remen recounts a conversation with a Holocaust survivor named Yitzak, who attends a healing retreat where he struggles with intimacy and openness in the group context. As the weeklong retreat came to a close he finally is able to open up through a dialogue with God as he walked along the beach.

“...I say to Him, ‘God is it okay to luff strangers?’

And God says to me, ‘Yitzak, vat is dis strangers? You make strangers. I don’t make strangers.’”

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