

The [Daily Office Lectionary](#) has been taking us through the book of Leviticus for the past couple of weeks. When I read these verses from Leviticus 19 a few days ago, I was struck, as I always am, by the chasm between the vision of welcome that they represent and our current public discourse on immigration. As we approach [World Refugee Day](#) on June 20, I've been reflecting on what it might look like to take seriously God's instructions on how refugees and immigrants are to be treated by the inhabitants of the "Promised Land."

Treat the Foreigner the Same as the Native

These verses regarding the treatment of immigrants occur in the midst of a long section of Leviticus. In this section God instructs the people of Israel on how they are to live together in the Promised Land. God is telling these former slaves how to live as free people in a land that is overflowing with more than they could ever need. When a person from a foreign land comes among you to live, God tells them, treat that person as though they are one of you. Afford them all of the opportunities that the land has to offer. Do not restrict them from living the same free and abundant life that you yourselves live in this land.

Love Them Like One of Your Own

Okay, it's one thing to offer foreigners equal access to rights and opportunities, but love? That's asking a bit much, don't you think?

But what if it's not asking too much? What if approaching every single human being from a posture of love is just what we're supposed to do? Especially as people who are, ourselves, loved beyond measure? God tells the people of Israel that one of the things that free people do is treat others with love. I wonder how our attitude towards those whom we consider "other" would change if we took God's command seriously to love them as kin.

Remember That You Were Once Foreigners

God reminds the people of Israel how it felt to live as foreigners in a hostile land. He bids them not to forget that feeling when they encounter foreigners in their own land. The God who freed Israel from slavery desires that same freedom for all of God's people. Refugees flee their homes because they are seeking freedom. Freedom *from* poverty, violence, and oppression, and freedom *for* peace, prosperity, and flourishing. Remembering the ways in which we ourselves have sought and encountered freedom will help us to [respond](#) more faithfully to those who seek freedom in our midst.

God's instructions for how to treat refugees and immigrants is clear – we are to welcome and love them as our own, never forgetting that our freedom is a gift and that we did not earn, and so cannot claim exclusive right to, the Promised Land.



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