

# The Biblical Issue of Immigration

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David joins us today to help us discuss the topic of immigration, and how it applies to our lives as Christians.

## **Genesis 40:15**

*[Joseph said,] "For in fact I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon." (For context, read 40:12-15.)*

After Joseph son of Jacob was sold to human traffickers by his own brothers, he was taken to Egypt, where he served as a slave, was falsely accused of attempted rape, and imprisoned. While he was incarcerated, he told his story to a fellow convict, the king's cupbearer, in the hope that he would speak for him upon his release. The text is part of his affidavit that describes his experience as kidnapping and unlawful imprisonment.

Advocates say that even refugees fleeing for their lives who have followed the law in seeking asylum at recognized ports of entry to the United States, who "have done nothing that should have put them into the dungeon," have been detained and separated from their children at our border.

**Questions:** What, if anything, should the church do about alleged violations of the human rights of such refugees? Have you ever been falsely accused and punished unfairly for something you did not do? What role, if any, did your faith play in helping you through that experience?

## **Leviticus 19:30-34**

*You shall keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD. Do not turn to*

*mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God. You shall rise before the aged, and defer to the old; and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD. When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.* (For context, read 19:1-37.)

Leviticus 19 contains a variety of laws for God's people, ranging from honoring one's parents to being honest in business dealings. Some of these laws are easy for us ("Do not turn to mediums or wizards") while some are more difficult ("you shall love the alien as yourself"), but all are designed to make us holy servants of a holy Lord (v. 2).

**Questions:** Why is the treatment of aliens a part of God's law for his holy people? What are God's expectations for us as we interact with those who are not like ourselves, culturally or religiously? How does the experience of the Hebrews in Egypt shape God's expectation of us?

### **Exodus 22:21**

*You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.* (no context needed)

Exodus 22 is essentially a list of rules for God's people preceding the more formal laws of Leviticus. This rule of how to deal with "resident aliens," or as we might say, immigrants, is underscored by the statement that God's people were all once immigrants as well.

**Questions:** Is there a difference between this rule set forth to the Israelites and how we should feel about immigration today? Do you think this rule would have been underscored in the same way if many generations had passed since the Israelites were resident aliens in Egypt?

### **Ezekiel 47:22**

*You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who reside among you and have begotten children among you. They shall be to you as citizens of Israel; with you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel.* (for context read 47:13-23)

This is from the command from the prophet Ezekiel on how to divide up the land which the Lord had given the Israelites. Here the prophet includes those who are not native Israelites, but who have immigrated to live among them, and their children.

### **Galatians 5:14**

*For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* (no context needed)

In Paul's letter to the Galatians he specifically commands them to treat each other with respect. Using the word "neighbor" specifically invokes the story of the Good Samaritan, in which Jesus outlines that anyone needing our help is our neighbor.

**Question:** Can we love those from other countries while still turning them away at our border?