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Congregation Shaarei Shamayim
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Some issues are complicated. Others are not. Protecting the rights of immigrants is not a complicated issue. It is a moral obligation.

The Hebrew Bible calls on us no less than 36 times not only to welcome, but to love the *ger*, the stranger, the immigrant.

Note that our sacred scriptures do not call on us to blame immigrants for our nation's ills. Or to cultivate a climate of racism and xenophobia. Or to perpetuate the myths that immigrants do not pay taxes, that they steal the jobs of American-born workers, that they drain public services.

Jewish tradition calls on us to welcome immigrants, to love them as our own, to care for them, and to protect them. To help them make this country their country.

I work in the Jewish community and we are a community that is keenly aware of what it means to be an immigrant. Jews have at times chosen to leave their homes, and at other times been forced to leave their homes, moving from country to country, for centuries. We're always looking for a safe place we can call home. It was only three generations ago that it was our relatives at the U.S. border.

I am from a family of immigrants, and I am one of the lucky ones.

The United States welcomed waves of Jewish immigrants for 40 years. When they came here they lived in bitter poverty, worked in unsafe conditions, and made this country their home. But after those 40 years the borders closed and so many Jews were turned away. In my community we all know the stories – stories of loved ones who were told to go back to where they came from – even though too often they had nowhere else to go.

Too many faced closed borders, shut doors. Entry denied.

It is a Jewish value to remember the past. And because of our immigrant past we are really invested in making sure that our immigrant neighbors have the same opportunities that we did.

We understand, from our own history and religious tradition, that when one group is threatened, we are all threatened. When one group is unsafe, we are all unsafe. When one group is targeted we are all targeted.

That is why almost 200 members of the Jewish community of Madison have signed a public pledge to stand in solidarity with our Latino neighbors. It reads in part: "When they threaten to build walls across our border, round people up in camps for deportation, and create registries based on where people are from or what they believe, we will not remain silent."

Today we stand with Voces de la Frontera, Wisconsin's leading immigrant rights organization, in their struggle for justice and dignity.

We stand with them to resist detention and deportation.

We stand with them to say no to Republican state legislators who are targeting sanctuary cities.

We stand with them to say no to Sheriff Clarke's efforts to implement the 287(g) program, allowing local law enforcement to detain people believed to be in violation of federal immigration laws.

Our sacred scriptures call for creating a just, loving, compassionate society: V'ahavta l'reyacha kamocha – love your neighbor as yourself.

We will not only love our neighbors, but we will stand with them.

And we will resist together.