# COVENANT BORDERS, COVENANT MERCY

## *A Tanakh Response to the Immigration Crisis in America*

What Yahweh Says About Nations, Boundaries, Strangers, and Justice

**Miqdash Bethel Covenant Assembly**
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The immigration crisis in America is one of the most divisive issues of our time. On one side, there is a documented, factual record of sovereign-border failure that cannot be dismissed. On the other side, there is a documented record of human cruelty in enforcement that cannot be excused. Both sides are selecting their facts and ignoring the Tanakh.

Miqdash Bethel stands on the Tanakh alone — and the Tanakh speaks to both sides with equal force. It affirms the right of nations to have defined borders. It commands the just and merciful treatment of the stranger within those borders. It condemns both the chaos of lawless entry *and* the cruelty of lawless enforcement. It names the covenant standard that transcends both political parties — and it calls every person on every side of this debate to answer for how they have treated the human being made in the image of **Elohim**.

This study presents the documented facts of the crisis, then applies the Tanakh's covenant standard to everything it reveals. No partisan agenda. No denominational filter. The Word of **Yahweh** governs.

## SECTION I — THE FACTUAL RECORD: WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

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### The Biden-Era Border Crisis: The Numbers

The immigration crisis that reached its peak between 2021 and 2024 is not a matter of political opinion. It is a matter of documented federal statistics from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and

independent research institutions including the Pew Research Center and the Migration Policy Institute.

> **10.8 million** — Total nationwide CBP encounters from FY2021 through FY2024, including 8.72 million at the Southwest border. By comparison, the entire 2017-2020 period recorded approximately 3 million nationwide encounters — a more than 360% increase.
>
> **14 million** — Pew Research Center's estimate of unauthorized immigrants living in the United States as of 2023, the highest recorded level in U.S. history. Unauthorized immigrants represented 27% of all U.S. immigrants — up from 22% in 2021.
>
> **2 million per year** — Average annual illegal border crossings from 2021-2023, according to the Washington Post.
>
> **~2 million gotaways** — Estimated migrants who entered without any encounter with Border Patrol during the Biden era, by DHS's own admission.
>
> **160+ countries** — Nationalities apprehended crossing the Southwest border, including nationals from State Sponsors of Terrorism. More than 390 individuals on the terrorist watchlist were apprehended at the Southwest and northern borders during FY2021-2024 — a 3,000% increase over FY2017-2020.
>
> **650,000 criminal aliens** — On ICE's Non-Detained Docket as of July 2024, according to ICE data — individuals with criminal convictions present in the U.S. without custody.

Key policy decisions drove this surge. The Biden administration ended or significantly modified several Trump-era enforcement mechanisms, including:

• The **Remain in Mexico** policy (Migrant Protection Protocols), which required asylum seekers to wait in Mexico during immigration proceedings

• **Title 42** public health expulsions, which ended in May 2023

• **Catch-and-release** policies that allowed millions to enter with notices to appear, most without adequate vetting

• The **CHNV parole program** (Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, Venezuela), which admitted approximately 530,000 migrants under temporary protected status

It is equally accurate to note that by late 2024, the Biden administration began implementing restrictions. After a June 2024 executive order limiting asylum claims, monthly border encounters dropped from 137,000 in March 2024 to 47,000 in December 2024. The crisis was real — and it was also, to some degree, addressed before the administration ended. Both facts belong in the record.

## The Trump Enforcement Era: The Numbers and the Conduct

President Trump took office in January 2025 promising the largest deportation operation in U.S. history. The documented record shows significant enforcement activity — and significant documented abuse.

> **~200,000** — People deported by ICE alone through August 2025, per CNN reporting. The administration claimed 140,000 as of April 2025.
>
> **Border crossings plummeted** — From a Biden-era high of approximately 2,869 daily encounters in the last week of January 2025 to 1,041 in the first week of the Trump administration — a drop of approximately 63%.
>
> **66,000+** — People held in ICE detention by December 2025, a 75% increase from the 40,000 held when Trump took office — the highest in U.S. history.
>
> **~75,000** — People with no criminal record arrested by ICE between January 20 and October 15, 2025, according to the UC Berkeley Deportation Data Project.
>
> **170+ U.S. citizens** — Confirmed detained by federal immigration agents as of October 2025, according to ProPublica. The deportation of U.S. citizens is illegal under American law.
>
> **Deadliest year on record** — 2025 was confirmed as the deadliest year in ICE detention history, with more people dying in detention than in the previous four years combined.
>
> **For-profit tent camps on military bases** — including Fort Bliss, where ACLU interviews of 45 detainees reported beatings and sexual abuse from officers.

The enforcement record also shows that the administration's stated goal — targeting the "worst of the worst" — does not match the statistical reality. ICE data shows the majority of those arrested were Mexican nationals (85,000), Guatemalan (31,000), and Honduran (24,000). The majority had no criminal record. As of May 2025, ICE had arrested 752 people convicted of murder and 1,693 convicted of sexual assault out of the 435,000 criminal aliens ICE itself identified on its Non-Detained Docket — meaning the vast majority of violent criminals remained at large while ICE pursued non-criminal community residents.

The Two-Witness Standard of **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** requires that we present both sides of the documented record — because the Tanakh does not allow us to apply the truth selectively. The border surge was real. The cruelty in enforcement is also real. Both are in the record. Both require a covenant response.

# SECTION II — WHAT YAHWEH SAYS ABOUT NATIONAL BORDERS

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## Yahweh Established the Nations and Their Boundaries

The Tanakh is unambiguous: national boundaries are not a human invention. They are a covenant establishment by **Yahweh** Himself.

> ***"When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples."*** — Devarim (Deuteronomy) 32:8

This text is definitive. **Yahweh** — the Most High — is the One who divided the nations and set their boundaries. The Hebrew word used is **gvul** (גְּבוּל) — a boundary line, a border, a territorial limit. **Yahweh** established gvul for the nations. National boundaries are not merely political constructs. They are part of the covenant order **Yahweh** built into creation.

> ***"You shall not move your neighbor's landmark, which the men of old have set, in the inheritance which you will inherit in the land that Yahweh your Elohim is giving you to possess."*** — Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:14

The prohibition on moving the landmark — the boundary marker — is a Torah law. Boundaries are to be respected. They mark the inheritance of peoples, the territory of nations, the covenant ordering of the earth. Moving them without authorization is a covenant violation.

> ***"He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings — so that they should seek Yahweh."*** — Ma'asei HaShlichim (Acts of the Apostles) 17:26-27

This text — which reaches the same conclusion from within the first-century covenant framework — confirms that **Yahweh** determines both the timing of nations and the boundaries of their territories. The purpose given is not political: it is that every people might seek **Yahweh**. National distinctions are not barriers to **Yahweh's** reach. They are the framework within which He calls every people to Himself.

## The Covenant Conclusion on Borders

A nation that does not govern its borders is not exercising covenant responsibility over the territory **Yahweh** has entrusted to it. Open borders are not a covenant position. They represent an abdication of the stewardship obligation that comes with national sovereignty. The Tanakh supports the right — and the responsibility — of a nation to

know who enters its covenant territory, to govern that entry according to just law, and to protect the people who dwell within it.

This does not mean cruelty. It means governance. The same **Yahweh** who set the boundaries also commanded how the people within those boundaries are to be treated — including those who entered without authorization. Those two commands stand together. You cannot use one to cancel the other.

## SECTION III — WHAT YAHWEH SAYS ABOUT THE STRANGER

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### The Ger: The Stranger Within the Covenant Community

The Hebrew word for the foreigner or sojourner dwelling within Israel's community is **Ger** (גֵּר). The Torah's commands regarding the Ger are among the most repeated in the entire Tanakh — appearing more than 36 times in the five books of Torah alone. **Yahweh** is not silent on how those who cross into a covenant community's territory are to be treated.

> ***"When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am Yahweh your Elohim."*** — Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:33-34

This is covenant law, not sentiment. The same chapter that contains the command to love your neighbor as yourself (**Vayikra 19:18**) contains the command to love the stranger as yourself (**Vayikra 19:34**). The Hebrew word is the same in both commands: **v'ahavta** — you shall love. **Yahweh** applies the same love standard to the stranger that He applies to the neighbor.

> ***"You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt."*** — Shemot (Exodus) 22:21 [Hebrew 22:20]
>
> ***"He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt."*** — Devarim (Deuteronomy) 10:18-19
>
> ***"You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge."*** — Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:17

The pattern in all these texts is the same: **Yahweh** grounds the command to treat the stranger justly in Israel's own memory of being strangers in Egypt. The experience of

vulnerability, displacement, and dependence on the mercy of another — that is the empathy **Yahweh** calls His people to maintain toward every person who finds themselves in that position.

### One Law for the Native and the Stranger

One of the most politically significant provisions in the entire Torah on this subject is the equality of legal standing between native-born and stranger:

> ***"You shall have one law for the sojourner and for the native, for I am Yahweh your Elohim."*** — Vayikra (Leviticus) 24:22
>
> ***"For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you, a statute forever throughout your generations. You and the sojourner shall be alike before Yahweh."*** — Bemidbar (Numbers) 15:15

One law. One standard. The stranger before **Yahweh** has the same legal standing as the native-born. This does not mean there are no distinctions between a citizen and a sojourner in terms of civic participation. But it means the foundational covenant protection — the right to just treatment under the law — belongs equally to both. A two-tiered legal system that applies due process to citizens and strips it from strangers is not a covenant system. It is a violation of **Vayikra 24:22**.

## SECTION IV — THE COVENANT RESPONSE TO BOTH SIDES

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### To Those Who Defend Open Borders in the Name of Compassion

The Tanakh does not support the position that national sovereignty is itself cruel or that borders are inherently oppressive. **Yahweh** established the nations and their boundaries (**Devarim 32:8**). A nation that cannot govern who enters its covenant territory is not exercising covenant stewardship. Open-border ideology, however compassionate its motivation, collapses the very covenant structure that **Yahweh** built into creation.

Furthermore, the chaos produced by uncontrolled entry does not serve the stranger. It creates a lawless environment in which the most vulnerable — women and children crossing dangerous territory with criminal cartels — are the most harmed. The documented evidence that criminal gangs, traffickers, and terrorists exploited the open-border conditions of 2021-2024 is not a right-wing talking point. It is a factual record. The Tanakh's protection of the Ger is inseparable from the covenant order that makes that protection enforceable. You cannot protect the stranger while dismantling the legal framework that gives protection its force.

The covenant position is not "open borders." It is **just governance** — a legal framework that is orderly, humane, and equally applied to all who come.

## To Those Who Conduct or Celebrate Enforcement Cruelty

The Tanakh is equally direct with those who use the legal authority of national sovereignty as license for dehumanization. The documented record of the Trump enforcement era — tent camps where detainees report beatings and sexual abuse, the detention of U.S. citizens without accountability, the arrest of 75,000 people with no criminal record, the deadliest year in ICE detention history — is not defensible under any covenant framework.

> ***"You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous."*** — Devarim (Deuteronomy) 16:19
>
> ***"Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow."*** — Devarim (Deuteronomy) 27:19

The Hebrew word here is **mateh** (מַטֵּה) — to bend, pervert, or distort justice. **Yahweh** places a covenant curse on those who bend the justice owed to the sojourner. Not on open borders. Not on lawless entry. On those who *pervert the justice* that is owed even to the one who entered without authorization.

Every image-bearer of **Elohim** — whatever their legal status, whatever their national origin, whatever the circumstances of their entry — carries **Bereishit (Genesis) 1:26-27** in their person. You cannot beat a human being in a detention tent and tell yourself you are serving the covenant. You cannot deport a U.S. citizen and claim you are upholding the rule of law. You cannot lock 66,000 human beings in facilities with deteriorating conditions, strip their access to legal counsel, and call it justice.

> ***"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does Yahweh require of you but to do justice (mishpat), to love kindness (hesed), and to walk humbly with your Elohim?"*** — Mikhah (Micah) 6:8

Mishpat — justice. Hesed — covenant lovingkindness. These two cannot be separated. A nation can enforce its borders with mishpat and hesed simultaneously. The Tanakh requires both. The choice between covenant order and covenant mercy is a false choice that **Yahweh** never authorized.

## To the Immigrant — Legal and Undocumented

The Tanakh speaks to the stranger as well. The Ger who dwells in the covenant community is not merely a passive recipient of protection. The Torah gives the Ger

responsibilities as well as rights. **Bemidbar (Numbers) 15:15-16** places both native and sojourner under *one law* — meaning the stranger shares in the obligations of the covenant community, not only its protections.

> ***"One law and one rule shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you."*** — Bemidbar (Numbers) 15:16

The covenant invitation to the stranger is not an invitation to exploit the generosity of the host nation. It is an invitation to enter into the covenant order — to become, as **Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 47:22** says, as native-born among the people, with inheritance alongside them. That is a profound inclusion. But it comes with the same covenant obligations that the native-born carry: to live justly, to respect the law of the land, and to seek the *shalom* of the community that has received you.

To those who have entered without legal authorization: the Tanakh does not romanticize that choice or treat it as without consequence. But it also does not strip you of your humanity, your legal rights, or the protection that **Yahweh** has commanded your host nation to provide. You are not subhuman. You are a person made in the image of **Elohim**. You deserve justice. And if this nation's government will not provide it, **Yahweh** will hold them accountable — as He has done to every nation in every generation that has perverted the justice of the sojourner.

## SECTION V — ROOT CAUSES: WHY ARE THEY COMING?

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The Tanakh's covenant framework requires asking the question that neither political party wants to answer fully: *why* are millions of human beings making the desperate choice to cross deserts, pay criminal cartels, and enter a foreign country illegally? The answer is not simply a desire for a better life — though that is real. It is largely traceable to decades of American foreign policy in Central and South America.

The majority of those crossing the U.S. Southwest border during the 2021-2024 surge came from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. These are nations that the United States — through CIA operations, support for military coups, economic destabilization, and cartel-enabling drug demand — has systematically undermined for decades. The documented record includes:

• **Operation PBSUCCESS (1954)** — CIA-orchestrated overthrow of Guatemala's democratically elected President Jacobo Árbenz, installing a military dictatorship that set the stage for 36 years of civil war and mass atrocity

• **Honduras** — decades of U.S. military presence and support for governments that have produced the conditions making Honduras one of the most violent countries on earth

• **El Salvador** — U.S. support for military governments during a brutal civil war (1979-1992) that killed 75,000 people and displaced hundreds of thousands more

• **The drug war** — American drug consumption funds the cartels that control migration corridors and terrorize the populations fleeing northward

The prophet **Amos** names this principle in **Amos 1:3-2:3**: **Yahweh** judges the nations that have created conditions of violence and displacement for other peoples. The Tanakh does not permit the United States to destabilize Central American nations for generations and then express outrage that the people of those nations are appearing at its border. This is not an argument for open borders. It is a covenant accounting: you cannot separate the crisis at the border from the foreign policy that created the conditions producing that crisis.

## SECTION VI — THE SEVEN COVENANT STANDARDS FOR IMMIGRATION POLICY

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Drawing from the full testimony of the Tanakh, Miqdash Bethel identifies seven covenant standards against which any nation's immigration policy must be measured.

### Standard One: Yahweh Established Borders — Honor Them

A nation has a covenant right and responsibility to govern its borders. **Devarim 32:8** and **Devarim 19:14**: the boundaries **Yahweh** established are to be respected. Any policy that results in millions of unknown entries — unvetted, untracked, and unaccountable — is a failure of covenant stewardship over the territory **Yahweh** has entrusted to the nation.

### Standard Two: One Law for All — No Two-Tiered Justice

Legal standing and due process belong equally to native and sojourner. **Vayikra 24:22**, **Bemidbar 15:15**. Any enforcement system that strips immigrants — documented or undocumented — of due process, legal counsel, or basic rights violates the covenant standard of one law for all. The detention of U.S. citizens. The deportation of individuals without hearings. These are not covenant governance. They are covenant violation.

### Standard Three: Do Not Pervert the Justice of the Sojourner

A covenant curse is pronounced on those who pervert the justice owed to the stranger. **Devarim 27:19**. Reports of beatings, sexual abuse, and inhumane conditions in ICE detention facilities are not acceptable under any covenant framework. *The ends do not justify the means*. Enforcement cruelty does not produce covenant order — it produces covenant judgment.

## Standard Four: Do Not Oppress the Stranger — Remember Egypt

The repeated command not to oppress the stranger is grounded in historical memory: *"you were strangers in the land of Egypt"* (**Shemot 22:21 [Hebrew 22:20]**, **Devarim 10:19**). **Yahweh** requires empathy as the foundation of immigration policy. Any enforcement official, any political leader, any citizen who cannot look at a family separated at the border and feel the weight of that memory is operating outside the covenant framework **Yahweh** established.

## Standard Five: Protect the Vulnerable — Widow, Orphan, Stranger

The Tanakh's most consistently protected class is the triad: widow, orphan, and stranger — those with no institutional power to protect themselves. **Devarim 10:18**, **Mikhah 6:8**. Any immigration enforcement system that targets the most vulnerable — families, children, workers without criminal records — while the 435,000 criminal aliens on ICE's own docket remain at large, is not covenant enforcement. It is covenant inversion.

## Standard Six: Address Root Causes — Do Not Plant and Then Reap in Outrage

The Tanakh's prophetic tradition holds nations accountable for the consequences of their foreign policy. **Amos 1:3-2:3**. A nation that destabilizes other nations through covert operations, economic coercion, and military intervention, and then expresses moral outrage at the refugees those policies produce, is accountable to **Yahweh** for the full chain of cause and effect. Covenant justice requires addressing root causes, not simply managing symptoms at the border.

## Standard Seven: The Goal Is Shalom — For All Parties

The Tanakh's ultimate standard for governance is shalom — the wholeness and flourishing of all parties. **Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 29:7**: seek the shalom of the city where you dwell, for in its shalom is your shalom. The shalom of the American nation and the shalom of the immigrant are bound together. A nation that treats its immigrants with cruelty destroys its own moral covenant. A nation that cannot govern its borders

destroys the legal framework that makes shalom possible. Both failures destroy shalom. Covenant governance pursues the wholeness of all parties simultaneously — because that is the only framework **Yahweh** established.

## CONCLUSION — WHAT YAHWEH REQUIRES

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The immigration crisis in America will not be solved by more cruelty. It will not be solved by more permissiveness. It will be solved — to whatever degree human governance can solve it — by covenant alignment: governance that is orderly, just, humane, impartial, and grounded in the recognition that every human being crossing that border carries the image of **Elohim** in their person.

> ***"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me."*** — Mattityahu (Matthew) 25:35
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> ***"He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt."*** — Devarim (Deuteronomy) 10:18-19
>
> ***"Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause."*** — Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 1:17

Miqdash Bethel does not endorse any political party or political candidate. We do not stand with the Democratic Party's record of border chaos. We do not stand with the Republican Party's record of enforcement cruelty. We stand with the Tanakh — which holds both accountable and calls both to covenant repentance.

The covenant standard is not complicated. **Yahweh** established the nations and their borders. **Yahweh** commands the just and merciful treatment of every human being who stands within those borders, regardless of how they arrived. **Yahweh** holds every ruler, every enforcement officer, and every citizen accountable for how they treated the stranger, the widow, the orphan, and the vulnerable.

That standard has not changed. It will not change. It stands — as **Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 40:8** declares:

> ***"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our Elohim will stand forever."***

*Peace and Blessings,*

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*Authority: The Tanakh — The Word of Yahweh Alone | Standard: Devarim 19:15 — Two or Three Witnesses*