

Funding the Future

On strangers, and our duty to them

Published: January 13, 2026, 12:06 pm


I have been looking at the etymology of the word 'stranger'. The context is, [I hope, obvious.](#)

I started with this:



Then I looked at strange, and got this:

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 **strange**
/streɪn(d)ʒ/

adjective
adjective: **strange**; comparative adjective: **stranger**; superlative adjective: **strangest**

1. **unusual or surprising; difficult to understand or explain.**
"children have some strange ideas"

Similar: [unusual](#) [odd](#) [curious](#) [peculiar](#) [funny](#) [bizarre](#) [weird](#) [▼](#)

• slightly or undefinably unwell or ill at ease.
"her head still felt strange"

Similar: [ill](#) [unwell](#) [poorly](#) [indisposed](#) [not \(very\) well](#) [not oneself](#) [▼](#)

2. **not previously visited, seen, or encountered; unfamiliar or alien.**
"she was lost in a strange country"

Similar: [unfamiliar](#) [unknown](#) [new](#) [alien](#) [previously unencountered](#) [▼](#)

• **ARCHAIC**
[unaccustomed](#) to or [unfamiliar](#) with.
"I am strange to the work"

It is easy to see how the word is used to describe a foreigner, or migrant: the alien, the unfamiliar or alien.

But this ignores another interpretation, which comes from the term 'ger'.

The [St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology](#) has this to say on that issue:

The commandment to protect the ger, often translated as stranger, is asserted several times in the Torah. The book of Exodus requires the Israelites ‘not to do wrong to a ger or oppress them’ (22:21). Leviticus teaches that a ger who resides with Israelites shall be treated as an Israelite citizen, and that the people of Israel should have ‘one standard for ger and citizen alike’ (24:22). But what exactly is a ger?

The quote [from Leviticus](#) says this:

22 You are to have the same law for the foreigner and the native-born. I am the Lord your God.

[Other versions](#) suggest stranger should be read as 'sojourner'.

Sojourner means:

sojourner

Entry

Discussion

Citations

English

[edit]

Etymology

[edit]

From *sojourn* + *-er*.

Pronunciation

[edit]

• (Received Pronunciation) IPA^(key): /ˈsɒdʒənə/

• (General American) IPA^(key): /ˈsoʊdʒənə/, /soʊˈdʒənə/

Noun

[edit]

sojourner (plural **sojourners**)

1. A person who **resides temporarily** in a place. [quotations ▼]

A temporary resident, then. Or migrant, perhaps. Quote possible an economic migrant, for how else would;d they sustain themselves?

As the St Andrew's commentary concludes:

In conclusion, the concept of ger in the Hebrew Bible and its subsequent development within the Talmud and various interpretations throughout Jewish history reflect the evolving dynamics of inclusivity, identity, and justice. From its origins as a legal category to its symbolic resonance in addressing marginalized individuals and promoting social justice causes, the ger offers a lens through which to understand the values and complexities of the Jewish tradition. As contemporary debates continue to unfold, invoking the figure of the ger challenges us to navigate the intricate interplay between tradition and the evolving needs of a diverse and interconnected world. In striving to embody the Torah's injunctions of compassion, kindness, and respect for the ger, Jews today engage in an ongoing conversation that bridges ancient wisdom with the pursuit of justice and humanity in the present and future.

In other words, the ethical response to the stranger is to treat them as an equal, and with compassion and kindness. The obligation is to accommodate.

The exact opposite of what Starmer is doing, in other words, where he is using the word to divide, to fuel hate, and to discriminate.

And he lives in a Jewish family.

Thanks to Andrew Dickie for sending me down this route. I will return to it again later, as there is more to learn. This is a first take.