

POLITICAL RETRIBUTION¹⁰

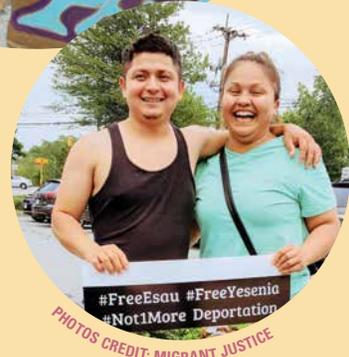
Enrique Balcazar, Zully Palacios and Alex Carillo are organizers with Migrant Justice, a dairy farmworkers rights group in Vermont with which T'ruah works. All three are undocumented. In March 2017, the three were arrested—two shortly after leaving the Migrant Justice office—and detained for deportation proceedings. “It’s clear to us this is political retaliation,” said Will Lambek, another Migrant Justice organizer. In the days that followed, hundreds of supporters, including T'ruah rabbis, rallied in person; thousands sent emails to the director of the Boston regional ICE office. Enrique and Zully were released on bail, while Alex was held longer and ultimately deported to Mexico, leaving his 4-year-old child and pregnant wife behind.

Three months later, a similar story: Yesenia Hernández-Ramos and Esau Peche-Ventura, also both undocumented, were arrested right after they finished leading a 13-mile march to Ben and Jerry’s headquarters to demand the company sign onto the “Milk with Dignity” program. (The company signed in October, 2017.) Yesenia and Esau ultimately had their removal proceedings terminated in 2018. In November 2018, Migrant Justice filed a lawsuit against ICE for infringing on activists’ First Amendment rights by deliberately targeting leaders of the organization.¹¹

10 <http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/local/2017/03/28/aclu-ice-arrests-jeff-sessions-defunding-threats-migrant-justice-rally-burlington/99704610/>

http://www.truthdig.com/eartotobeground/item/demonstrators_protest_arrest_of_immigrants_after_ben_jerrys_march_20170620

11 <http://migrantjustice.net/MJ-v-ICE>



TEXT STUDY: WHEN THE GOVERNMENT COMES TO TAKE YOU AWAY

A NOTE FOR THE FACILITATOR:

This Talmudic story is excerpted on T'ruah's Sanctuary Mezuzah. It features a powerful government forcefully removing a vulnerable person—in this case, a Roman convert to Judaism—from a place of refuge. When considered in the context of sanctuary, it becomes almost eerily analogous to modern ICE raids. As you explore the text, consider some of the following questions:

- How is Onqelos as a convert similar to and different from an undocumented immigrant in the United States?
- Why do you think Caesar wants Onqelos back?
- What does this story say about the power and dangers of speech? Can you imagine some biblical verses that Onqelos might have used to convert the first troop of soldiers?
- What does this story have to say about hierarchy and power?
- Where do you envision this story taking place? Might we imagine it as a proto-“sanctuary synagogue”?
- What role do the verses from Exodus and Psalms play? Do they conjure any larger images or narratives?

When The Government Comes To Take You Away

BABYLONIAN TALMUD, AVODAH ZARAH 11A

Onqelos bar Kalonymous converted [to Judaism]
Caesar sent a troop of Roman soldiers after him.
He enticed them with biblical verses and they converted.
[Caesar] again sent another troop of Roman soldiers after him, saying to them:
Do not say anything to him.
When they were taking [Onqelos] away he said:
Let me tell you a simple word about the world—
The torchbearer carries the light before the royal litter, the litter[-bearer] before the duke, the duke before the hegemon, the hegemon before the Chief Minister.
Does the Chief Minister carry the torch before the people?
They said to him:
No.
He said to them:
The Holy Blessed One carries the torch before Israel, as it says, “The ETERNAL walked before them by day as a pillar of smoke, to show them the way, and by night as a pillar of fire...” (Ex. 13:21)
They all converted.
[Caesar] sent a third troop of Roman soldiers after him, saying:
Do not have any conversation with him!
When they were taking him away, [Onqelos] saw a *mezuzah* on the doorpost. He touched it with his hand and said to them:
What is this?
They said:
You tell us.
He said to them:
The way of the world is that a human king sits within and his servants guard him from without.
But the Holy One puts [us, the] servants at the center and protects us from without, as it says,
“The ETERNAL will guard your comings and your goings, now and forever.” (Ps. 121:8)
They converted.
[Caesar] sent after him no more.

אונקלוס בר קלונימוס איגייר
שדר קיסר גונדא דרומאי אבתרי
משכינהו בקראי איגיור
הדר שדר גונדא דרומאי [אחרינא] אבתריה אמר להו
לא תימרו ליה ולא מידי
כי הוּו שקלו ואזלו אמר להו
אימא לכו מילתא בעלמא
ניפיורא נקט נורא קמי פיפיורא פיפיורא לדוכסא דוכסא
להגמונא הגמונא לקומא
קומא מי נקט נורא מקמי אינשי
אמרי ליה
לא
אמר להו
הקב"ה נקט נורא קמי ישראל דכתיב
(שמות יג, כא) וה' הולך לפניהם יומם וגו'
איגיור [כולהו]
הדר שדר גונדא אחרינא אבתריה אמר להו
לא תשתעו מידי בהדיה
כי נקטי ליה ואזלי חזא מזוזתא [דמנחא אפתחא] אותיב
ידיה עלה ואמר להו
מאי האי
אמרו ליה
אימא לן את
אמר להו
מנהגו של עולם מלך בשר ודם יושב מבפנים ועבדיו
משמרים אותו מבחוץ
ואילו הקב"ה עבדיו מבפנים והוא משמרן מבחוץ שנאמר
(תהלים קכא, ח) ה' ישמר צאתך ובואך מעתה ועד עולם
איגיור
תו לא שדר בתריה