

A Discussion Guide for Sukkot and the Dream Act

וּפְרַשׁ עֲלֵינוּ סֶכֶת שְׁלוֹמָךְ

Spread over us your shelter of peace

“You shall dwell in booths for seven days...that your generations may know that I made the Children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.” (Leviticus 23:42-43)

During the evenings of Sukkot, we are commanded to share a meal in the Sukkah, and even to sleep overnight in the Sukkah where we can look up through the open canopy onto the stars of the autumn sky.

Why are we commanded to build a Sukkah with an open roof that provides little shelter from the elements? Because the Sukkah is not simply meant to symbolize peace; the Sukkah also reminds us that rather than stay enclosed and shut away from the world, we must look outward at the world beyond our own lives. As Jews, we must always remember that no shelter is truly complete until every shelter is complete.

What do we mean when we say no shelter is truly complete until every shelter is complete?

“While you are eating and drinking on the festival, you must feed the stranger, orphan, and widow, along with the other unfortunate poor... [If you do not] you are not enjoying a mitzvah, you are only pleasing your stomach.” (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Festivals 6:18)

Why does Maimonides remind us in the Mishneh Torah to feed the “stranger” during the festival of Sukkot? What does this text teach us about the obligation to the others in our midst? What is challenging about this obligation? Why do we seldom reach this ideal? During this Sukkot of 5778, how can we ensure we are

“There shall be one law for you and for the resident ger (stranger), it shall be a law for all time throughout the ages. You and the ger (stranger) shall be alike before God” (Numbers 15:15-16)

fulfilling the mitzvah of providing for the most vulnerable?

Who are the strangers who live in our midst: people who play a vital role in our communities but who we treat as the “other?”

What is our obligation to our neighbors and the “strangers” in our midst? How has the world changed in ways that make it harder to live up to this obligation? What can we, as Reform Jews, do to live out this sacred imperative?

How can we view the Dream Act (which would provide permanent resident status on a conditional basis to individuals who know no other home than the United States) through the lens of the Torah's imperative? How would the Dream Act allow for a more complete shelter?

Background: DACA and the Dream Act

On September 5, 2017, the Trump administration announced its decision to terminate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. This decision undermines our nation's identity as a haven for those fleeing

- meaningful legislation that will provide a more permanent foundation to individuals who know no other home than the United States.

Background on DACA:

- In a 2012 executive order, President Obama created the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, allowing DREAMers, the nearly 800,000 undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children, to obtain work permits and attend school, contributing to the only country they know as home without fear of deportation. Because DACA was put into place by an executive order, the current administration had the ability to rescind it at any time.
- On September 5, 2017, the Trump administration rescinded DACA, calling on Congress to enact legislation to improve our current immigration system. With the end of the program, DREAMers face a heightened risk of deportation. Participants in and applicants to DACA trusted the federal government with their names and contact information when applying to the program – information that makes them especially vulnerable to deportation now.
- A 2016 survey of DACA recipients found that about 87 percent are in the workforce. If DACA workers were to lose their work permits and jobs, the Center for American Progress recently estimated that the cumulative U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) would be reduced by \$433.4 billion over the following 10 years.
- At a moment of racial and political strife in our nation, our leaders should be sending a message of unity, rather than making policy changes that further division and suspicion. We must act with our immigrant justice partners to show the strength and breadth of the community and encourage Congress to step up and support DREAMers where the administration has failed.
- With the September 5 announcement, the administration stopped accepting any new applications for DACA. For youth already enrolled in the program, all renewal applications – which has to happen every two years – must have been filed by October 5, 2017. No renewals are being accepted after October 5. Any DACA recipient whose current protections expire after March 5, 2018 will lose their protections as soon as their benefits expire, unless Congress acts now.

Call on Congress to pass the clean Dream Act:

- Congress must act now to codify protections for DREAMers. The bipartisan Dream Act of 2017 (S.1615/H.R.3440) would grant DACA recipients permanent residence status on a conditional basis and provide a pathway to citizenship for DREAMers who attend college, work in the U.S. or serve in the military.
- The Dream Act must pass without any attached funding for enhanced enforcement or funding for a border wall.
- Urge your Representative and Senators to immediately pass the bipartisan Dream Act of 2017 without any added enforcement provisions. Visit RAC.org/DreamAct to contact your representatives, and/or call the Capitol Switchboard three times and ask to be connected to your Representative and Senators: (202) 224-3121.