

What Do We Do with These Memories?

A teaching by Rabbi Ezra Dangoor of Baghdad (1848 to 1930)

"You know the soul of the stranger"

"You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 22:20)

"You know the soul of the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 23:9)

Rabbi Ezra Dangoor on Exodus 22:20

"כי גרים הייתם", כמו שמפורש לפנינו: "ואתם ידעתם את נפש הגר כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים". ומי שהיה בצרה וצוקה וה' הצילו, ראוי שירחם על כל הבא במצוקה ההיא, וכן הוא בתולדות נפש האדם, שיכמרו רחמיו בראותו את רעהו במכאוב שהרגיש הוא בעצמו לשעבר.

"For you were strangers," as it is explained to us: "You know the soul of the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." Whoever was in trouble and distress and was rescued by God should have compassion for everyone who comes into that same distress. So it is with the human soul: a person's compassion should be stirred upon seeing a friend in pain that they themselves once felt.

From *Adei Zahav*, Rabbi Ezra Dangoor's commentary on the Torah, Exodus, Mishpatim. Translated by JIMENA.

About Rabbi Ezra Dangoor

Ezra Reuben Dangoor was born in Baghdad in 1848. He studied with the great Iraqi sage Rabbi Abdallah Somekh, served as rabbi of the Jewish community of Rangoon, Burma, in the 1890s, and opened a Hebrew printing press in Baghdad in the early 1900s that published religious books in the Iraqi tradition. In the 1920s he served as chief rabbi of Baghdad. He died in 1930, two decades before most of Iraq's Jews were forced to leave.

1 How does Rabbi Dangoor say people who have suffered should treat others?

2 Why might memories of suffering lead some people to compassion, and others to anger or fear?

3 What do you think the children and grandchildren of refugees can do when they see suffering in the world today?
