I want to talk about immigration tonight – I want to talk about it tonight when no one is talking about it because this is not a political talk, this is a Torahitic talk. Tonight is not about politics, it is not about feasibility , elect ability or criminality – tonight is about responsibility. Jewish responsibility.

I want to talk about immigration tonight because our Torah portion has been talking about it all week and our B'nai Mitzvah will read and sing about it tomorrow morning. I want to talk about immigration tonight because our tradition commands me to talk about it tonight and on nights that are different from every other night.

This weeks Torah portion, Ki Tavo contains the passage "My father was a fugitive Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there; there he became a great and populous nation" Does it sound familiar? I gave you a hint just a few sentences ago, do you recognize where this comes from?

The Passover hagadah, we sit together with our families many months from now and read this line. We read it at Passover and we read it on this Shabbat. Therefore either or both times demand that we talk about it understand it, confront it.

What does it mean? What does it mean to say my father was a fugitive aremian? The biblical commentators struggled with this line. In the Hebrew the words are very straight forward, the translation is not in dispute, Amri Oved Avi – Arimean – caused to be lost – my father. But while the translation is clear the meaning is not so easily understood. Who are we talking about whose father. One view would be that it was Jacob and other that is was Abraham. But the problem is that Abraham was not a fugitive and Jacob was not an Aramean.

We don't know who the father is that is being referenced but we do know who the children are, it is us, we are the children of a

fugitive immigrant. And what does the Torah command of us, not only that we remember this passage, but in this weeks parsah we are commanded by Moses that when we step foot in the land of Israel, when we make it back to our homeland as a people we are to proclaim in a loud voice this sacred line, ASmri Oved Avi – my father was a fugitive aramean, he went down to Egypt with meager numbers and settled there, eventually he became a great and very populous nation. The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and oppressed us , they imposed heavy labor upon us. We cried out to God and God heard our cries and redeemed us.. and brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

A political discussion of the immigration issue would and has dealt mostly with what immigrants are running to. How they would impact our society our economy our way of life. A Torahitic discussion of the issue however must focus on what they are running from, what hardship is so compelling that they would

leave there homes, there families – give up everything, risk everything and set out for a new land.

Why are Jews commanded to read this passage on Shabbat, to proclaim it around the relative comfort of our Seder tables, to recite it when we enter the land of Israel for the first time? Because we must be ever mindful of what we left behind, what we risked, what we endured to arrive where we are, in this sanctuary, at that seder table, in our own land. Like so many things the journey becomes the lesson.

(Story of rabbi and student and sign post)

We are talking Torah not politics, I don't know the political solution to this issue and I am not an expert in politics – truth be told I am not sure such a person exists – politics is messy – the making sausages analogy comes to mind. But I do know a little

Torah, and I do know my peoples history and through that lens I also know the history of this country, indeed many countries.

We are all fugitive arameans, some of us are still running from the persecution of our past, others have arrived and reap the benfits of what our ancestors had to endure, and others still would do well to acknowledge that one day they too may have to run, they too may be of the generation that has to leave it all behind and start over.

If you want to know where you are going all you need to do is remember where you have been, where you come from. What can we do regarding immigration in this country – I have no idea and I have many ideas. What should we do, we should remember where we came form and be guided by that in our policy and our approach.

My father was a fugitive arimena, and so was yours and so was yours and so was yours, if it was your father running from

hopelessness, if it was you, what would you want our country to do?

Our tradition teaches *Vahavtah l'reyecha kmocha,* you shall love your neighbor as yourself, why does the text say, *kmocha*, as yourself? Because they are as we are. We are not strangers to each other we are all brothers, we all come from the same father, the family of humankind. If you want to understand another person you have to stand in there shoes, we have stood in those shoes, they were sandals and the sand was hot and it burned out feet and the sun was hotter still and it dried our throat and our skin. But we stood in those shoes and we walked we walked across a desert, we sailed across a sea, we stowed away on a ship so that we could give our family a future, so we could go form hopelessness to hope, for slavery to redemption. There has been enough wandering in the history of the world, there need to be more welcoming. Why do we say this line at Seder time because the line that follows it as we sit around our Seder table, plates and dishes

piled high with food, is this is the Seder meal let all who are hungry come and eat. It is as if to say we have plenty to share, and we open the door for Elijah and we welcome in the stranger, the wanderer the one who has nothing, because we have so much –we have enough to share. There has been enough wandering – let all who are hungry come and eat, or to put it another way give me your tired, your poor your huddled masses yearning to break free. Indeed both are Torah