

Tending the Shire and the Covenant

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · 19 October 2026

Numbers, culture and integration in Britain's immigration debate, read through Torah and republican thought

By Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren

The interview

On 24 September 2026 Nick Freitas released a conversation with Konstantin Kisin titled “Britain’s Immigration Crisis is More Extreme Than You Think.” Kisin, himself an immigrant who came to Britain in the mid-1990s, does not say Britain is lost. His claim is narrower and harder: numbers matter, culture matters and integration matters, and for years anyone who said so was treated as an extremist.

His most striking line is comparative. He says more people arrived under Tony Blair's governments (2 May 1997 to 27 June 2007) than in the centuries from 1066 to the mid-twentieth century. That is his framing, and critics note that medieval data are thin and populations were far smaller. Even so, against Britain's own modern record, the speed of change after 1997 stands out.

What the numbers show

The Office for National Statistics puts net migration at a peak of 944,000 in the year ending March 2023, falling to a provisional 171,000 in the year ending December 2025 (ONS, 21 May 2026). The Migration Observatory at Oxford reported on 21 May 2026 that just under one in five UK residents was born abroad. Inflows have fallen. The change already made has not.

Kisin adds an incentive argument, summed up in a saying he quotes: “If you want to work, go to America; if you want benefits, go to Europe.” Welfare design shapes who comes. Fiscal studies, including Migration Advisory Committee work, find that the long-run fiscal effect differs sharply by skill and integration. These are averages, and every individual is judged on his own merit.

The Torah's architecture of membership

The Torah commands love of the stranger (Vayikra 19:34) and also sets terms of membership. The ger toshav accepts the Noahide laws and lives under the host's law (Rambam, Hilchot Melachim 8). Full belonging asks more. Hospitality is a mitzvah. Absorption that leaves the host unable to pass on its own norms is not.

Jewish history teaches this from both sides. In exile, a people survived by keeping its inner boundaries while living honestly under the law of the land. Boundaries without ethics corrupt. Openness without boundaries dissolves.

Non-domination

Republican political theory, from James Harrington to Philip Pettit, holds that a free people must be able to set the rules of its own membership. When those rules are fixed by processes the public cannot change, citizens are managed rather than self-governing. That is the deeper stake beneath the statistics.

What can be done

A full reversal is impossible. Practical steps are not: bringing net migration toward historical norms, tying permanent residence to language and civic integration, ending benefit incentives for non-citizens, and restoring Parliament's power to set the terms. The Shire is tended by those who live in it.

Sources

- Freitas–Kisin interview, 24 September 2026
- ONS, Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending December 2025 (21 May 2026)
- Migration Observatory press release, 21 May 2026
- Rambam, Hilchot Melachim 8 (Sefaria)
- Vayikra 19:34 (Sefaria)

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