

FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH TO THE
MODERN GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS:
HOW DO WE WELCOME THE STRANGER?

A SHAVUOT STUDY SESSION



RUTH AS A STRANGER

RUTH 1:4

וַיֵּשְׂאוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים מֵאֲבוֹת שֵׁם הָאֶחָת עֹרְפָה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית רוּת וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם כְּעֶשְׂרֵת שָׁנִים :

[Naomi's two sons] married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth, and they lived there about ten years.

RUTH 1:22

וַתָּשָׁב נְעָמִי וְרוּת הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּה כָּלְתָהּ עִמָּה הַשָּׂבָה מִשְׂדֵי מוֹאָב וְהָמָּה בָּאוּ בֵּית לָחֶם בְּתַחֲלַת קַצִּיר שְׁעָרִים :

Thus Naomi returned from the country of Moab; she returned with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabite. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

RUTH 2:2

וַתֹּאמֶר רוּת הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּה אֶל־נְעָמִי אֲלַכְהֶנָּה וְאֶלְקַטָּה בַּשָּׂבִלִים אַחַר אֲשֶׁר אֶמְצָאֲחֹן בְּעֵינָיו וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ לְכִי בְתִי :

Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "I would like to go to the fields and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone who may show me kindness." And [Naomi] said to her, "Go, my daughter."

RUTH 2:6

וַיַּעַן הַנָּעַר הַנֹּצֵב עַל־הַקּוֹצְרִים וַיֹּאמֶר נַעֲרָה מוֹאֲבִיָּה הִיא הַשָּׂבָה עִם־נְעָמִי מִשְׂדֵּה מוֹאָב :

The servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is a Moabite girl who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab."

RUTH 2:21

וַתֹּאמֶר רוּת הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּה גַם | כִּי־אָמַר אֵלַי עַם־הַנְּעָרִים אֲשֶׁר־לִי תִדְבָּקִין עַד אֲסִכְלוּ אֶת כָּל־הַקַּצִּיר אֲשֶׁר־לִי :

Ruth the Moabite said, "He even told me, 'Stay close by my workers until all my harvest is finished.'"

RUTH 4:5

וַיֹּאמֶר בְּעֹז בְּיוֹסֵקְנוֹתַי הַשָּׂדֶה מִיַּד נְעָמִי וּמֵאֵת רוּת הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּה אֲשֶׁת־הַמֵּת קָנִיתִי [קָנִיתָהּ] לְהַקִּים שְׁמֵהֶם עַל־נַחֲלָתוֹ :

Boaz continued, "When you acquire the property from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabite, you must also acquire the wife of the deceased so as to perpetuate the name of the deceased upon his estate."

RUTH 4:9-10

ט וַיֹּאמֶר בְּעֵז לְזִקְנִים . . . י וְגַם אֶת־רוֹת הַמַּאֲבִיָּה אֲשֶׁת מַחְלוֹן קָנִיתִי לִי לְאִשָּׁה לְהַקִּים שֵׁם־
הַמֵּת עַל־נַחְלָתוֹ וְלֹא־יִכָּרֵת שֵׁם־הַמֵּת מֵעַם אָחִיו וּמִשְׁעַר מְקוֹמוֹ עֲדִים אַתֶּם הַיּוֹם :

⁹And Boaz said to the elders . . . ¹⁰I am also acquiring Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, as my wife, so as to perpetuate the name of the deceased upon his estate.

RUTH 1:14-19

יד . . . וְרוֹת דָּבְקָה בָּהּ : טו וַתֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה שָׁבָה יְבָמְתְךָ אֶל־עַמָּהּ וְאֶל־אֱלֹהֶיהָ שׁוֹבִי אַחֲרַי יְבָמְתְךָ :
טז וַתֹּאמֶר רוֹת אֶל־תַּפְּגָעֵי־בִי לְעִזְבֶּךָ לָשׁוּב מֵאַחֲרֶיךָ כִּי אֶל־אֲשֶׁר תִּלְכִּי אֵלַיךָ וּבְאֲשֶׁר תִּלְיִנִי אֶלַיִן
עִמָּךְ עַמִּי וְאֱלֹהֶיךָ אֱלֹהֵי : יז בְּאֲשֶׁר תִּמּוֹתֵי אָמוֹת וְשֵׁם אֶקְבֹּר כֹּה יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה לִי וְכֹה יִסִּיף כִּי
הַמּוֹת יִפְרִיד בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ : יח וַתֵּרָא כִּי־מִתְאַמְצָת הִיא לָלֶכֶת אִתָּהּ וַתַּחֲדֹל לְדַבֵּר אֵלֶיהָ :
יט וַתִּלְכְּנָה שְׁתֵּיהֶם עַד־בֶּאֱנָה בֵּית לָחֶם וַיְהִי כִּבְאֱנָה בֵּית לָחֶם וַתֵּהֶם כָּל־הָעִיר עָלֶיהֶן
וַתֹּאמְרָנָה הַזֹּאת נְעָמִי :

¹⁴Ruth clung to [Naomi]. ¹⁵So [Naomi] said, "See, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and her gods. Go follow your sister-in-law." ¹⁶But Ruth replied, "Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus and more may Adonai do to me if anything but death parts me from you." ¹⁸When [Naomi] saw how determined she was to go with her, she ceased to argue with her; ¹⁹and the two went on until they reached Bethlehem.

RUTH ZUTA 1:8

מפני מה היתה מחזרת אותן כדי שלא תתבייש בהן שכן מצינו עשרה שווקים היו בירושלים.
ולא היו מערבין אלו עם אלו . . . ניכרים בלבושיהם בשווקים, מה שאלו לובשין לא היו אלו
לובשין.

Why did Naomi want to return [her daughters-in-law]? So that she would not be embarrassed by them. We find that there were ten markets in Jerusalem, and they [i.e., the classes of people who shopped at each] never intermingled . . . The people were recognized by their clothing - what one class wore, another would not . . .

HOW RUTH IS ASSISTED AS A STRANGER: BOAZ TAKES DIRECT AND IMMEDIATE ACTION

RUTH 2:5-10; 15-16

ה וַיֹּאמֶר בְּעֵז לְנַעֲרוֹ הַנֹּצֵב עַל־הַקּוֹצְרִים לְמִי הַנַּעֲרָה הַזֹּאת: וַיַּעַן הַנַּעַר הַנֹּצֵב עַל־הַקּוֹצְרִים וַיֹּאמֶר נַעֲרָה מוֹאֲבִיָּה הִיא הַשִּׁבָּה עִם־נַעֲמִי מִשְׂדֵּה מוֹאָב: ז וַתֹּאמֶר אֶלְקָטָה־נָּא וְאֶסְפְּתִי בְּעִמְרֵים אַחֲרֵי הַקּוֹצְרִים וַתְּבוֹא וַתַּעֲמֹד מֵאֹז הַבֶּקֶר וְעַד־עֵתָה זֶה שְׁבֵתָה הַבַּיִת מֵעַט: ח וַיֹּאמֶר בְּעֵז אֶלְרוֹת הַלֹּא שְׁמַעַת בְּתִי אֶל־תִּלְכִי לְלָקֵט בְּשֵׂדֵה אַחַר וְגַם לֹא תַעֲבוּרִי מִזֶּה וְכֹה תִדְבְּקִין עִם־נַעֲרָתִי: ט עֵינֶיךָ בְּשֵׂדֵה אֲשֶׁר־יִקְצְרוּן וְהִלַּכְתְּ אַחֲרֵיהֶן הַלֹּא צְוִיתִי אֶת־הַנַּעֲרִים לְבִלְתִּי נִגְעֶךָ וְצָמְתָּ וְהִלַּכְתְּ אֶל־הַכְּלָיִם וְשִׁתִּית מֵאֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאַבוּן הַנַּעֲרִים: י וַתִּפֹּל עַל־פְּנֵיהָ וַתִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֶרְצָה וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מִדּוּעַ מִצָּאתִי חַן בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְהַכְיִרְנִי וְאֲנֹכִי נְכַרְיָה: . . . טו וַתִּקַּם לְלָקֵט וַיְצוּ בְּעֵז אֶת־נַעֲרָיו לֵאמֹר גַּם בֵּין הָעִמְרִים תִּלְקָט וְלֹא תִכְלִימוּהָ: טז וְגַם שְׁלֵתֶשְׁלוּ לָהּ מִרְהַצְבֹּתִים וְעֲזַבְתֶּם וְלָקָטָה וְלֹא תִגְעְרוּבָהּ:

⁵Boaz said to the servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose girl is that?" ⁶The servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is a Moabite girl who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. ⁷She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers.' She has been on her feet ever since she came this morning. She has rested but little in the hut." ⁸Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen to me, daughter. Don't go glean in another field. Don't go elsewhere, but stay here close to my girls. ⁹Keep your eyes on the field they are reaping, and follow them. I have ordered the men not to molest you. And when you are thirsty, go to the jars and drink some of [the water] that the men have drawn." ¹⁰She prostrated herself with her face to the ground, and said to him, "Why are you so kind as to single me out, when I am a foreigner?" . . . ¹⁵When she got up again to glean, Boaz gave orders to his workers, "You are not only to let her glean among the sheaves, without interference, ¹⁶but you must also pull some [stalks] out of the heaps and leave them for her to glean, and not scold her.

LEVITICUS RABBAH 34:8

אמר ר' יצחק: למדתך תורה דרך ארץ שכשיהא אדם עושה מצוה יהא עושה אותה בלב שמח. . . . ואלו היה יודע בועז שהקדוש ברוך הוא מכתוב עליו ויצבט לה קלי עגלים פטומים היה מאכילה.

R. Isaac commented: The Torah teaches you that when a person performs a good deed he should do so with a cheerful heart. . . . If Boaz had known that the Holy One, blessed be God, would have it written of him that he "Gave her parched corn" (Ruth 2:14), he would have given her fatted calves!

BABYLONIAN TALMUD, BAVA BATRA 91a

אמר רבה בר רב הונא אמר רב אבצן זה בעז מאי קמ"ל . . . מאה ועשרים משתאות עשה בעז לבניו שנאמר (שופטים יב, ט) ויהי לו שלשים בנים ושלשים בנות שלח החוצה ושלשים בנות הביא לבניו מן החוץ וישפט את ישראל שבע שנים ובכל אחת ואחת עשה שני משתאות אחד בבית אביו ואחד בבית חמיו ובכולן לא זימן את מנוח אמר כודנא עקרה במאי פרעא לי תאנא וכולן מתו בחייו.

Rabbah, son of R. Huna, said in the name of Rav: lbzan is Boaz. What does he come to teach us [by this statement]? . . . Boaz made for his sons a hundred and twenty wedding feasts, for it is said, "And he [lbzan] had thirty sons, and thirty daughters he sent abroad, and thirty daughters he brought in from abroad for his sons; and he judged Israel seven years" (Judges 12:9); and in the case of everyone [of these] he made two wedding feasts, one in the house of the father and one in the house of the father-in-law. To none of them did he invite Manoah, [for] he said, 'Whereby will the barren mule repay me?' All these died in his lifetime.

THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD: MAKING SYSTEMIC CHANGE

NUMBERS 27:1-5

א ותקרבנה בנות צלפחד ברחפר ברגלעד ברמכיר ברמנשה למשפחת מנשה בריוסף ואלה שמות בנותיו מחלה נעה וחגלה ומלכה ותרצה: ב ותעמדנה לפני משה ולפני אלעזר הכהן ולפני הנשיאים וכלהעדה ופתח אהלמועד לאמר: ג אבינו מת במדבר והוא לאהיה בתוך העדה הנועדים עליה בועדתקרח כיבחטאו מת ובנים לאהיו לו: ד למה יגרע שם אבינו מתוך משפחתו כי אין לו בן תנהלנו אחזה בתוך אחי אבינו: ה ויקרב משה אתמשפטן לפני יהוה:

¹The daughters of Zelophehad, of Manasite family - son of Hopher son of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh son of Joseph - came forward. The names of the daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. ²They stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the chieftains, and the whole assembly, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and they said, ³"Our father died in the wilderness. He was not one of the faction, Korah's faction, which banded together against Adonai, but died for his own sin; and he was left no sons. ⁴Let not our father's name be lost to his clan just because he had no son! Give us a holding among our father's kinsmen!" ⁵Moses brought their case before Adonai.

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ותקרבנה בנות צלפחד, כיון ששמעו בנות צלפחד שהארץ מתחלקת לשבטים לזכרים ולא לנקבות נתקבצו כולן זו על זו ליטול עצה אמרו לא כרחמי בשר ודם רחמי המקום בשר ודם רחמיו על הזכרים יותר מן הנקבות אבל מי שאמר והיה העולם אינו כן אלא רחמיו על הזכרים ועל הנקבות רחמיו על הכל שנאמר נותן לחם לכל בשר וגו' (תהלים קלו: כה) נותן לבהמה לחמה וגו' (תהלים קמז: ט) ואומר טוב ה' לכל ורחמיו על כל מעשיו (תהלים קמה: ט)

When the daughters of Zelophehad heard that the Land was being divided among the tribes – but only for males, not for females – they gathered and took counsel. They decided that . . . flesh and blood is apt to be more merciful to males than to females. But The One who spoke and the world came into being is different – God's mercies are for males as well as females.

TODAY'S STRANGER: THE GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS

WHO IS A REFUGEE?

A refugee is a person who has been forced to flee their home country due to persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group (e.g., members of the LGBTQ community). The persecution a refugee experiences may include harassment, threats, abduction or torture. A refugee is often afforded some sort of legal protection, either by their host country's government, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or both.

The few refugees who are resettled in the United States are hand-selected by the U.S. government and are screened in advance. They are subject to background checks and security screenings by multiple U.S. agencies. Only after everything is approved are they brought to the U.S. to reside permanently.¹

¹ Based on "Who is a refugee?" from <http://www.hias.org/FAQ/HIAS>.

NARRATIVE FROM RAMI ABOU JABR, A 37-YEAR OLD VETERINARIAN AND REFUGEE WHO FLED HOMS, SYRIA IN 2012 AND RESETTLED IN AURORA, ILLINOIS IN 2015².

When the rockets came to Homs, we had to go to another city, and then another. I try to find safe hospital for my father for dialysis. He is suffering kidney failure. But there is nowhere safe.

I decide I must take my family to Turkey. We travel across the desert, but not by regular roads. It should take 2 days, but it takes us 10. We find more safety there, but my father passed away after two months. It is very expensive in Turkey and as refugees, we have no authority to work. But we have no assistance and work 15 hours a day anyway. I am driver. My wife and sisters sew clothes for company. We have no other life but to bring food to our children and the family.

In 2013, we register with UN and we have two interviews over six months. They ask us everything about life from when we are born until when we arrive in Istanbul. Six months later, we begin interviews with US officials. We have five interviews and we answer all the same questions. They ask us everything, about my family, why I leave Syria, my life in Syria, if I have problem with government, with people that make revolution, everything. It takes one more year of interviews to give us the results that we can come to America.

When we arrive in Chicago, World Relief brings me and my family to a house in Aurora; to a home. They take my children to a school and they take us to classes to learn English and to make a driver's license and to find work in America and to know the laws of America.

We are so happy here. The people we meet want to share with you and know about you. We don't feel different. We don't feel like refugees or strangers. I work hard now and I want to make new degree for veterinarian. America has helped us begin a new life here. I feel as I born anew."

² <http://www.unhcrwashington.org/syrian-voices-america/rami-abou-jabr>.



FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT THE GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS

- There are over **60 million** internally displaced people, asylum seekers, and refugees worldwide. As of June 2015, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or UNHCR, identified **19.5 million** refugees worldwide. Of the total global refugee population, **less than 1% are resettled** each year; in Fiscal Year 2014, **0.42% were resettled in the United States**.
- **86%** of the world's refugees live in **developing countries**.
- Each day, **42,500 people** are displaced from their home due to violence and persecution.
- From 2013 - 2015, the **majority of the world's refugees** came from the following countries: Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Myanmar, Eritrea, and Iraq.”
- The maximum number of refugees resettled in the U.S. in a given year, which is referred to as the **ceiling for refugee admissions**, is determined by the annual **Presidential Determination**. For the last few years, the annual ceiling was set at 70,000. Recently, the administration announced that the ceiling will rise to 85,000 for 2016 and 100,000 for 2017, which includes both Syrian refugees and refugees from all other countries.
- There are **9 refugee resettlement agencies in the United States**: HIAS, Church World Service, Episcopal Migration Ministries, Ethiopian Community Development Council, International Rescue Committee, Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Service, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and World Relief. HIAS is the only Jewish agency among them. Any refugee resettled in the U.S. is resettled through one of these nine agencies.

WAYS TO TAKE ACTION AND MAKE CHANGE

STAY INFORMED on the latest developments in the global refugee crisis. Visit www.hias.org/getinvolved to sign up for HIAS email updates.

SPEAK OUT so that Congress hears a strong Jewish voice in support of welcoming refugees to the US. Visit www.hias.org to sign petitions advocating for the protection of refugees around the world and for instructions and talking points on how to contact your Member of Congress.

VOLUNTEER with refugees and asylum seekers in your own city. Fill out the form at www.hias.org/volunteer, and HIAS will contact you with more information.

GIVE TZEDAKAH to assist refugees around the world at www.hias.org/donate.

INVOLVE YOUR COMMUNITY by using HIAS' *How Congregations and Communities Can Help* guide to learn more and become part of the Jewish response to the refugee crisis. Download the guide - as well as other resources such as FAQs, fact sheets, and Jewish texts - from our resource page at www.hias.org/resources. This spring, join HIAS' Welcome Campaign. Learn more at www.hias.org/congregations-welcome.