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

A SHAVUOT STUDY SESSION

FROM HIAS
Ruth as a Stranger

Ruth 1:4

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

Ruth 1:22

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

Ruth 2:2

Ruth the Moabitite 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.”

Ruth 2:6

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

Ruth 2:21

Ruth the Moabitite said, “He even told me, ‘Stay close by my workers until all my harvest is finished.’”

Ruth 4:5

Boaz continued, “When you acquire the property from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitite, you must also acquire the wife of the deceased so as to perpetuate the name of the deceased upon his estate.”
And Boaz said to the elders... I 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.

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...
Ruth 2:5-10; 15-16

5 Boaz said to the servant who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose girl is that?” 6 The servant in charge of the reapers replied, “She is a Moabite girl who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. 7 She 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.” 8 Boaz 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. 9 Keep 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.” 10 She 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?” 11 When 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, 12 but 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

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!
Rabbah, son of R. Huna, said in the name of Rav: Ibzan 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 [Ibzan] 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 ומכקבנה בנות צלופחד ברוחשה ברימכיה ברפיכיה וברמ网小编 בנספחא ל işlemנשא ברנייקא יהא שמה בנות מצקבנה שמה ומקבלת ובריה: מות图片来源 ל��˶.OrderByDescending מ.toFixed תחלא: וברת המ.getTable בראש מ 저는 במקבר וברת מעיתות בוtower עליות ברברתקח ברמביטאר ואת בנים התורהו ל: בולק וער ירש:אברנוז
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MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM...
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.
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.”

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2 http://www.unhcrwashington.org/syrian-voices-america/rami-abou-jabr.
FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT THE GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS

• There are over **65 million** internally displaced people, asylum seekers, and refugees worldwide. As of June 2016, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or UNHCR, identified **21.3 million** refugees worldwide. Of the total global refugee population, **less than 1% are resettled each year.**

• Each day, nearly **34,000 people** – 24 people per minute – are displaced from their homes due to violence and persecution.

• From 2013 – 2015, **the majority of the world’s refugees** came from the following countries: Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Myanmar, Eritrea, and Colombia.

• 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 many years, the annual ceiling was set at 70,000. The Obama administration raised this number to 85,000 for 2016 and 110,000 for 2017. The Executive Order issued by the Trump administration on March 6, 2017 dropped this number to 50,000. As of March 29, 2017, a judge in Hawaii issued a preliminary injunction against the Executive Order, which, in part, restored the ceiling to 110,000 for 2017. Due to various factors – like unknown budget allocations and continued attempts to reduce the ceiling – the number of refugees resettled in the U.S. in 2017 is expected to be significantly less than 110,000.

• There are **9 refugee resettlement agencies in the U.S.**: 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 9 agencies.

WAYS TO TAKE ACTION AND MAKE CHANGE

• Add your voice and advocate for the most needed policies to protect refugees at [www.hias.org/take-action](http://www.hias.org/take-action).

• Call your elected officials to tell them that you support refugees and ask them to act to ensure that refugees are welcomed and protected in the United States. Instructions and script at the link below.

• Publicly show your support for refugees by attending rallies and town meetings with signs downloadable at [www.hias.org/hias-signs](http://www.hias.org/hias-signs).

• Ask your synagogue to join the hundreds of synagogues stepping up for refugees through HIAS’ Welcome Campaign at [www.hias.org/hias-welcome-campaign](http://www.hias.org/hias-welcome-campaign).

• Educate yourself and others using HIAS’ FAQs, fact sheets, holiday resources, Jewish sources, and more on [www.hias.org/resources](http://www.hias.org/resources).

• Volunteer locally with refugees in your community.

• Donate to support HIAS’ vital work helping refugees rebuild their lives in the U.S. and around the world at [www.hias.org/donate](http://www.hias.org/donate).

Visit [www.hias.org/helprefugees](http://www.hias.org/helprefugees) for more information about all of these ways to help refugees.