

Refugee Shabbat 2026 Book and Film Recommendations

With the immigration landscape changing so quickly, it can be hard to keep up with the latest information and what we know can so quickly feel out of date. But while knowing the facts and figures is important, it is equally important to center humanity and the lived experience of displacement. Please explore the selection below and use it as a starting point to engage with the stories and experiences of refugees, asylum seekers, and forcibly displaced persons.

Books

1. [Everyone Who is Gone is Here: The United States, Central America, and the Making of a Crisis](#) by Jonathan Blitzer intertwines a comprehensive history of modern U.S. border policy and involvement in Central America with stories of the lives of real human beings impacted by this cycle of political conflict and violence. Thorough, clear, and humanizing, *Everyone Who is Gone is Here* is a must read for a deeper understanding of what created the current immigration “crisis” and its ongoing impact on the lives of so many looking for safety.
2. [Everything Sad Is Untrue \(a true story\)](#) by Daniel Nayeri is an autobiographical middle grade novel, written by the brother of [The Ungrateful Refugee](#) author Dina Nayeri. In an Oklahoma middle-school classroom, Daniel tries to tell the unbelievable story of his life, even as the kids around him only see a strange boy whose truths sound impossible. Moving between the chaos of American adolescence and the rich, perilous history of his family’s flight from Iran, he weaves a tale that becomes both his shield and his claim to who he truly is as he processes his experiences as a refugee navigating a new life.
3. [The Undocumented Americans](#) by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio. Villavicencio set out across the country to write openly about being undocumented and to capture the complex, unseen lives of others like her. Blending intimate reporting with personal revelation, she illuminates stories of resilience, love, chaos, and survival that redefine what it means to be considered expendable—and profoundly American.
4. [The Refugees](#) by Viet Thanh Nguyen, author of the Pulitzer Prize winning novel *The Sympathizer*, comes a collection of short stories set across Vietnam and California intimately depicting the lives of those impacted and displaced by the Vietnam War. Nguyen deftly explores questions of home, family, immigration, and the American experience.
5. [Across So Many Seas](#) by Ruth Behar is a middle grade novel that follows four generations of Jewish girls in the same family navigating exile, displacement, and reinvention as they journey from Spain to Istanbul, Cuba, Miami, and finally back to Spain. Despite the centuries and distances between them,

each seeks belonging and draws strength from the courage and memories of the women who came before her.

Films and Videos

1. [Human Flow](#) - Ai Weiwei's *Human Flow* traces a yearlong, global journey through 23 countries to reveal both the immense scale of the refugee crisis and the intimate human stories within it. Through scenes of displacement, resilience, and the search for safety, the film challenges viewers to consider whether our world will choose fear and isolation or embrace compassion, openness, and shared humanity. While the number of displaced persons globally has only increased since the film's release, the portrait of displacement continues to be a poignant depiction of what is at stake.
2. [The Brutalist](#) - *The Brutalist* follows Hungarian-Jewish architect and Holocaust survivor László Tóth as he arrives in the United States in 1947, chasing artistic ambition and the promise of a new beginning; only to find himself alone in a bewildering new world. Settling in Pennsylvania, he's embraced by a powerful industrialist who recognizes his talent—but the pursuit of legacy soon reveals a price far heavier than he imagined.
3. [Minari](#) - *Minari* draws from director Lee Isaac Chung's own childhood to tell the tender, far-reaching story of a South Korean immigrant family who moves to an Arkansas farm in search of their American Dream. As they weather instability and the rugged realities of the Ozarks, the film reveals the quiet resilience of family and what truly makes a home.
4. [For Sama](#) - Most of what we hear about refugees focuses on what happens after they leave their country of origin. *For Sama* instead shows the desperate struggle to stay. Filming her surroundings in Syria as Aleppo fell into increasing violence and conflict, this documentary shows Waad al-Kateab's life happening – falling in love, getting married, and having children – with the backdrop of war raging in the background. A love letter to her daughter and to her home of Aleppo, *For Sama* captures the impossible choices people face when having to choose between home and survival. Content note – contains graphic images.
5. [Stranger at the Gate](#) - A story of redemption and the transformative power of compassion, the documentary short *Stranger at the Gate* tells the story of a former U.S. marine who goes from planning a terrorist attack on a local mosque to becoming a beloved member of the community thanks to the warmth and love shown to him by a family of Afghan refugees.