

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

וַיֵּשְׂאוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים מֵאֲבוֹת שֵׁם הָאֶחָת עֹרְפָה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית רוּת וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם כְּעֶשֶׂר 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 כֻלָּתָהּ עִמָּהּ הַשָּׂבָה מִשְׂדֵי מוֹאָב וְהָמָּה בָּאוּ בֵּית לָחֶם בְּתַחֲלַת קָצִיר 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 אֶלְנַעֲמִי אֲלַכְהֶנָּה וְאֲלַקְטָהּ בַּשָּׂבָלִים אַחַר אֲשֶׁר אֲמַצְאֶחֶן בְּעֵינָיו וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ לְכִי בְּתִי :

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."

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 עִסְנַעֲמִי מִשְׂדֵה 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 אֶל־כִּי־אָמַר אֵלַי עִסְנַעֲרִים אֲשֶׁר־לִי תִדְבָּקִין עַד אִסְכְּלוּ אֶת כָּל־הַקָּצִיר 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 בְּיוֹם־קְנוֹתֶךָ הַשְּׂדֵה 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 הַמֹּאֲבִיָּה אֵשֶׁת מַחְלוֹן קָנִיתִי לִי לְאִשָּׁה לְהַקִּים שֵׁם־
הַמֵּת עַל־נַחְלָתוֹ וְלֹא־יִכָּרֵת שֵׁם־הַמֵּת מֵעַם אָחִיו וּמִשְׁעַר מְקוֹמוֹ עַד־יָמַי 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 יְבַמְתָּךְ אֶל־עַמָּהּ וְאֶל־אֱלֹהֶיהָ שׁוֹבִי אַחֲרַי יְבַמְתָּךְ :
טז וַתֹּאמֶר רוֹת אֶל־תִּפְגְּעֵי־בִי לְעִזְבֶּךָ לְשׁוֹב מֵאַחֲרֶיךָ כִּי אֶל־אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכִי אֶלְךָ וּבְאֲשֶׁר תֵּלִינִי אֵלָיוֹן
עִמָּךְ עַמִּי וְאֱלֹהֶיךָ אֱלֹהֵי : יז בְּאֲשֶׁר תִּמּוֹתִי אֲמוֹת וְשֵׁם אֲקַבֵּר כֹּה עַשֵׂה יְהוָה לִי וְכֹה יִסִּיף בִּי
הַמָּוֶת יִפְרִיד בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ : יח וַתֵּרָא בְּיַמְתָּאֲמֻצָת הָיָא לְלֶכֶת אֶתָּה וַתַּחְדָּל לְדַבֵּר אֵלֶיהָ :
יט וַתֵּלַכְנָה שְׁתֵּיהֶם עַד־בֹּאֲנָה בֵּית לָחֶם וַיְהִי כַּבֹּאֲנָה בֵּית לָחֶם וַתִּהְיֶה כְּלֹהָעִיר עָלֶיהֶן
וַתֹּאמְרָה הַזֹּאת מַעֲמִי :

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 ויאמר בעז לנערו הנצב עליהקוצרים למי הנערה הזאת: ו ויען הנער הנצב עליהקוצרים ויאמר נערה מואבית היא השבה עסנעמי משדה מואב: ז ותאמר אלקטהנא ואספתי בעמרים אחרי הקוצרים ותבוא ותעמוד מאז הבקר ועדעתה זה שבתה הבית מעט: ח ויאמר בעז אלרות הלוא שמעת בתי אלתלכי ללקט בשדה אחר וגם לא תעבורי מזה וכה תדבקין עסנערת: ט עיניך בשדה אשר יקצרון והלקת אחריהן הלוא צויתי אתהנערים לבלתי נגעך וצמת והלקת אליהכלים ושתית מאשר ישאבון הנערים: י ותפל עלפניה ותשתחו ארצה ותאמר אליו מדוע מצאתי חן בעיניך להכירני ואנכי נכריה: יי ותקם ללקט ויצו בעז אתנערו לאמר גם בין העמרים תלקט ולא תכלימוה: יז וגם שלתשלו לה מרהצבתים ועזבתם ולקטה ולא תגערויבה:

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: Ibzán 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 [Ibzán] 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 בן־חפר בן־גלעד בן־מכיר בן־מנשה למשפחת מנשה בן־יוסף ואלה שמות בנותיו מחלה נעה וחגלה ומלכה ותרצה: ב ותעמדנה לפני משה ולפני אלעזר הכהן ולפני הנשיאים וכל־העדה פתח אהל־מועד לאמר: ג אבינו מת במדבר והוא לא־היה בתוך העדה הנועדים עליה בַעֲד־תִּקְרַח כִּי־בַחֲטָאוֹ מֵת וּבָנִים לֹא־הָיוּ לוֹ: ד לָמָּה יִגְרַע שֵׁם־אֲבִינוֹ מִתּוֹךְ מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ כִּי אֵין לוֹ בֵּן תִּנְהַלְנוּ אַחֲזָה בְּתוֹךְ אַחֵי אֲבִינוֹ: ה וַיִּקְרַב מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מִשְׁפָּטוֹן לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:

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 וגוי' (תהלים קלו: כה) נותן לבהמה לחמה וגוי' (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 **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.
- 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.
- Ask your synagogue to join the hundreds of synagogues stepping up for refugees through HIAS' Welcome Campaign at 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.
- 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.

Visit www.hias.org/helprefugees for more information about all of these ways to help refugees.