



Ruth: An Immigration Story

The Book of Ruth is a double immigration story. In what is effectively the prologue, Naomi and her family flee famine in Canaan for Moab. The bulk of the book then focuses on what happens when Naomi and Ruth return. Read these excerpts in light of America's current policy towards immigrants and asylum seekers, especially regarding detention and family separation.

CHAPTER 1 (TRANSLATION: NJPS)

1 In the days when the chieftains ruled, there was a famine in the land; and a man of Bethlehem in Judah, with his wife and two sons, went to reside in the country of Moab.

2 The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and his two sons were named Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. They came to the country of Moab and remained there.

3 Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons.

4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth, and they lived there about ten years.

...

22 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.

CHAPTER 2

9 "Keep your eyes on the field [my girls] 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 [Ruth] 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 Boaz said in reply, "I have been told of all that you did for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband, how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth and came to a people you had not known before.

12 May the ETERNAL reward your deeds. May you have a full recompense from the ETERNAL, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have sought refuge!"

FOR DISCUSSION:

- From the clues in chapter 1, how do you imagine Naomi and her family were received as immigrants (or refugees) in Moab?
- From the interaction between Boaz and Ruth, what reception do you think Ruth receives as an immigrant (or refugee) in Canaan?
- What do you think Boaz means in verse 12, that Ruth has taken shelter under the wings of God? What might that say about our role vis-à-vis immigrants?

פרק א

(א) ויהי בימי שפט השפטים ויהי רעב בארץ ויילך איש מבית לחם יהודה לגור בשדי מואב הוא ואשתו ושני בָּנָיו :

(ב) ושם האיש אלימלך ושם אשתו נעמי ושם שני בָּנָיו מחלון וכליון אֶפְרַתִּים מִבֵּית לָחֶם יְהוּדָה וַיָּבֹאוּ שָׂדֵי מוֹאֵב וַיְהִיו שָׁם :

(ג) וימת אלימלך איש נעמי ותשארה היא ושני בָּנָיהָ :

(ד) וישאו להם נשים מאביות שם האחת ערפה ושם השנית רות וישבו שם כעשר שנים :

...

(כב) ותשב נעמי ורות המואבית כלתה עמה השבה משדי מואב והמה באו בית לחם בתחלת קציר שָׁעִרִים :

פרק ב

(ט) עיניך בשדה אשר יקצרו והלכת אחריהן הלא צויתי את הנערים לבלתי נגעך וצמת והלכת אל הכלים ושתיית מאשר ישאבון הנערים :

(י) ותפל על פניה ותשתחו ארצה ותאמר אליו מדוע מצאתי חן בעיניך להכירני ואנכי נכריה :

(יא) ויען בעז ויאמר לה הגד הגד לי כל אשר עשית את חמותך אחרי מות אישך ותעזבי אבִיךָ ואִמֶךָ וְאַרְצְךָ מוֹלְדָתְךָ וּתֵלְכִי אֵל עַם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַעְתָּ תְּמוֹל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם :

(יב) ישלם ה' פעלך ותהי משכרתך שלמה מעם ה' אלקי ישראל אשר באת לחסות תחת כנפיו :

Continue your discussion with the text study "The Sin of Sodom," on pages 30-31 of the revised edition of T'ruah's *Mikdash: A Jewish Guide to the New Sanctuary Movement*, which further explores the responsibilities of a society to vulnerable people who arrive seeking shelter. Download the guide at www.truah.org/mikdash.

LITURGICAL RESOURCES FOR REMEMBERING DETAINED MIGRANT CHILDREN

PRAYER FOR IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES BY RABBI SHARON COHEN ANISFELD

Elohei haruchot l'chol basar

God of the spirits of all flesh

We came here from all over this great country and beyond

To say no.

To say no to those who would tear children from their parents' arms.

To say no to those who are in no rush to reunite them now.

To say no to a policy that deprives people of all ages
of the basic international human right to seek asylum in our country.

To say no to those making our border famous for brutality and heartbreak.

But more than that

Av Harachamim

Father of all fathers

Mother of all mothers

Source of all compassion—

We are here to say yes.

Yes to children and to families.

Yes to the sanctity, to the preciousness, to the dignity of all life, created in Your image.

Yes to the truth of Your Oneness, and ours.

Yes to the breathtaking beauty of our world—

And yes to the vital moral fabric of our lives.

To those who would tear that fabric apart,

We are here to say—we will always show up to stitch it back together.

We walk in the footsteps of our ancestor Abraham

Who “stitched worlds together”

Who saw connection everywhere

Who was commanded to be a blessing to all the families of the earth.

We know that it is so much easier—and faster—to tear things apart

Than it is to stitch them together.

But we will keep showing up for as long as it takes.

Because we are parents ourselves

Because we are teachers

Because we are witnesses

Because we are weavers

Because we are threads

in the tapestry of Your creation.

We will stitch together what has been torn apart.

Dear God, please give us strength. Give us wisdom. Give us courage.

Gather us all in the embrace of your unending love.

Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad.

Listen, you who struggle,

And bear witness to the One God who holds us all.

NAMES OF THE SIX IMMIGRANT CHILDREN WHO HAVE DIED IN THE PAST YEAR IN THE CUSTODY OF U.S. IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS, TO BE SAID BEFORE KADDISH.

Darlyn Cristabel Cordova-Valle, 10

Jakelin Caal Maquin, 7

Felipe Gomez Alonso, 8

Juan de Leon Gutierrez, 16

Wilmer Josué Ramírez Vásquez, 2

Carlos Hernandez Vazquez, 16