

## THE BIBLE SPEAKS ABOUT MIGRANTS, IMMIGRANTS, AND REFUGEES

Some of the most renowned people in the Bible — including Jesus Himself — were migrants, immigrants, or refugees at some point during their lives.

- Abram and Sarai (first to Bethel and the Negev – **Genesis 12:1-9**; then to Egypt – **Genesis 12:10**; then away from Egypt – **Genesis 12:19-20**)
- Hagar and Ishmael (into the desert – **Genesis 21:14-16**)
- Isaac and Rebekah (to land of Philistines because of famine – **Genesis 26:1-3**)
- Jacob and his family (to Egypt – **Genesis 46:1-7**)
- Moses, Aaron, and Miriam (from Pharaoh – **Exodus 2:15**; from Egypt to desert – **Exodus 12**)
- Elimilech and Naomi and their two sons (to Moab – **Ruth 1:1-5**)
- Naomi and Ruth (to Bethlehem – **Ruth 1:6-22**)
- David (multiple occasions and places – **1 Chronicles 29:14-15**)
- Elijah (to Jordan – **1 Kings 17:3-4**; to Sidon – **1 Kings 17:7-9**; to the wilderness – **1 Kings 19:3-4**)
- Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego (to Babylon/Persia – **Daniel 1:1-6**)
- Esther and Mordecai (to Babylon – **Esther 2:5-7**)
- Nehemiah (to Babylon – **Ezra 2:4-5**)
- Ezra (to Babylon – **Ezra 7:6-9**)
- Joseph, Mary, and Jesus (to Egypt – **Matthew 2:13-15**)
- Philip and many Christians from Jerusalem (**Acts 8:4-5**)
- Priscilla and Aquila (to Corinth – **Acts 18:1-2**)
- John the Apostle (exiled to Patmos – **Revelation 1:9**)
- Many other people of God and early Christians (**Hebrews 11:37-38**)

-One of the earliest commands God gave to His people, the Israelites, has shades of the Golden Rule: *“Do not oppress a foreigner, you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt.”* (**Exodus 23:9, see also 22:21**)

-God also gave practical instructions, like intentionally leaving extra food available on the edges, grounds, and vines of one’s fields so that the foreigner or poor person who may pass through will find nourishment: *“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God.”* (**Leviticus 19:9-10**).

-In the formative days of the first Hebrew communities, God commanded his people: *“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”* (**Leviticus 19:33-34**).

-God also commanded them to defend the defenseless foreigner and to provide him or her with food and clothing: *“He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to*

*love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.”*  
**(Deuteronomy 10:18-19)**

*“The Lord watches over the foreigner  
and sustains the fatherless and the widow,  
but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.”* **(Psalm 146:9)**

-Solomon prayed that God would answer the prayers of any foreigner who might enter the Temple, calling out for help, so that all peoples from every nation would know God’s name and worship Him with reverence: *“As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name— for they will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm—when they come and pray toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name.”* **(1 Kings 8:41-43)**

*“If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever.”* **(Jeremiah 7:5-7)**

-*“This is what the Lord Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.’”* **(Zechariah 7:9-10)**

-Late in the Old Testament story, God commanded His people to fight for justice on behalf of the foreigner: *“So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,”* says the Lord Almighty.” **(Malachi 3:5)**

-Jesus’ parents were forced to flee with him to Egypt to seek refuge for two years because of the threat of persecution by a powerful political leader: Herod the Great. **(Matthew 2:13-15)**. According to **David Platt**, “In the first story we have about [Jesus] after His birth, he flees to Egypt. Like a refugee, Jesus was driven to a foreign country by a murderous king.” (Platt, 1/31/17, [radical.net](http://radical.net))

-In the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus makes it clear that our ‘neighbor’ includes the stranger and anyone fleeing persecution and violence, regardless of their faith or country. **(Luke 10:25-37)**

-When Jesus comes in disguise as a needy person, in the “least of these” passage, He says: *“I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”* **(Matthew 25:31-46)**

-Romans 13, which is often used by people to justify following the laws they prefer but not the ones they don't, makes clear that the most fundamental Law to be followed was given by God: *"The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not covet,' and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."* (**Romans 13:1-10**)

-*"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."* (**Philippians 3:20-21**)

-*"Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it."* (**Hebrews 13:2**)