

When I was a
stranger ...



bible society
of south africa

... you welcomed me

Matthew 25:35c

Immigrants and refugees looking for a safer place to stay, have become a common sight in South Africa today. Their lives are often characterised by loss, rejection and even violence. However, concern for uprooted and homeless people runs deep in the Bible.

We are all strangers

In Hebrews we read that we are “only strangers and foreigners on this earth” (11:13b) and as such, are “looking forward to a better home in heaven” (11:16a). Our journey begins with Adam and Eve being sent away from paradise to start again in a new place.

So the LORD God sent them out of the Garden of Eden, where they would have to work the ground from which the man had been made. **Genesis 3:23**

Then Abram is called from Ur to occupy a new land.

Leave your country, your family, and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you. **Genesis 12:1b**

The journey continues with Joseph being sold into Egypt. After 400 years, his descendants wander through the desert into a new land where they are repeatedly reminded of their alien status.

My ancestor was homeless,
an Aramean who went to live in Egypt.
There were only a few
in his family then,
but they became great
and powerful,
a nation of many people.

Deuteronomy 26:5b

Jesus was a stranger

Centuries later, Jesus our Lord, made the ultimate journey from heaven to earth but there was no room for him. He was disowned by his followers and crucified by his own people.

Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens, and birds have nests. But the Son of Man does not have a place to call his own."

Matthew 8:20

They all agreed that he should be put to death.

Mark 14:64b

What does the Bible teach about the treatment of aliens and refugees?

Throughout the Old and the New Testaments, we read that God is the God of all nations. The theme of justice and caring for strangers and the outcast runs through the Bible like a golden thread. God's law says:

Don't ill-treat any foreigners who live in your land. Instead, treat them as well as you treat citizens and love them as much as you love yourself. Remember, you were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 19:33-34

***Scripture verses taken from the Contemporary English Version**

Nothing can separate us from the love of God

St Paul assures us of God's love in whatever befalls us. His Spirit will comfort and strengthen us.

In everything we have won more than a victory because of Christ who loves us.

Romans 8:37

God promises to deliver everyone who is a stranger on earth

God is our mighty fortress,
always ready to help
in times of trouble.

Psalms 46:1

But you, LORD,
are a mighty soldier,
standing at my side.

Those troublemakers
will fall down and fail —
terribly embarrassed,
for ever ashamed.

Jeremiah 20:11

At night we may cry,
but when morning comes
we will celebrate.

Psalms 30:5b



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