

Ruth



This short book presents the simple story of the love and dedication between a young Moabite widow named Ruth and

Naomi, her Israelite mother-in-law. It tells of their journey together to Naomi's hometown in Judah and how Ruth would find a new husband and eventually have a son whose own grandson would one day be Israel's greatest king.

Ruth Is Loyal to Naomi

1 ¹⁻² Before Israel was ruled by kings, Elimelech from the tribe of Ephrath lived in the town of Bethlehem. His wife was named Naomi, and their two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. But when their crops failed, they moved to the country of Moab. And while they were there, ³ Elimelech died, leaving Naomi with only her two sons.

⁴ Later, Naomi's sons married Moabite women. One was named Orpah and the other Ruth. About ten years later, ⁵ Mahlon and Chilion also died. Now Naomi had no husband or sons.

⁶⁻⁷ When Naomi heard that the LORD had given his people a good harvest, she and her two daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab and go to Judah. As they were on their way there, ⁸ Naomi said to them, "Don't you want to go back home to your own mothers? You were kind to my husband and sons, and you have always been kind to me. I pray that the LORD will be just as kind to you. ⁹ May he give each of you another husband and a home of your own."

Naomi kissed them. They cried ¹⁰ and said, "We want to go with you and live among your people."

¹¹ But she replied, "My daughters, why don't you return home? What good will it do you to go with me? Do you think I could have more sons for you to marry? ¹² You must go back home, because I am too old to marry again. Even if I got married tonight and

later had more sons, ¹³ would you wait for them to become old enough to marry? No, my daughters! Life is harder for me than it is for you, because the LORD has turned against me."¹⁴

¹⁴ They cried again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth held on to her. ¹⁵ Naomi then said to Ruth, "Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her people and to her gods! Why don't you go with her?"

¹⁶ Ruth answered,

"Please don't tell me
to leave you
and return home!
I will go where you go,
I will live where you live;
your people will be my people,
your God will be my God.

¹⁷ I will die where you die
and be buried beside you.
May the LORD punish me
if we are ever separated,
even by death!"¹⁸

¹⁸ When Naomi saw that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her, she stopped urging her to go back.

¹⁹ They reached Bethlehem, and the whole town was excited to see them. The women who lived there asked, "Can this really be Naomi?"

²⁰ Then she told them, "Don't call me Naomi any longer! Call me Mara, because God has made my life bitter. ²¹ I had everything when I left, but the LORD has brought me back with nothing. How can you still call me Naomi, when God has turned against me and made my life so hard?"

²² The barley harvest was just beginning when Naomi and Ruth, her Moabite daughter-in-law, arrived in Bethlehem.

Ruth Meets Boaz

2 ¹⁻³ One day, Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me see if I can find someone who will let me pick up the grain left in the fields by the harvest workers."

Naomi answered, "Go ahead, my daughter." So Ruth immediately went out to pick up grain in a field owned by Boaz. He was a relative of Naomi's husband Elimelech, as well as a rich and important man.

⁴ When Boaz left Bethlehem and went out to his field, he said to the harvest workers, "The LORD bless you!"

They replied, "And may the LORD bless you!"

⁵ Then Boaz asked the man in charge of the harvest workers, "Who is that young woman?"

⁶ The man answered, "She is the one who came back from Moab with Naomi. ⁷ She asked if she could pick up grain left by the harvest workers, and 'she has been working all morning without a moment's rest.'"

⁸ Boaz went over to Ruth and said, "I think it would be best for you not to pick up grain in anyone else's field. Stay here with the women ⁹ and follow along behind them, as they gather up what the men have cut. I have warned the men not to bother you, and whenever you are thirsty, you can drink from the water jars they have filled."

¹⁰ Ruth bowed down to the ground and said, "You know I come from another country. Why are you so good to me?"

¹¹ Boaz answered, "I've heard how you've helped your mother-in-law ever since your husband died. You even left your own father and mother to come and live in a foreign land among people you don't know. ¹² I pray that the LORD God of Israel will reward you for what you have done. And now that you have come to him for protection, I pray that he will bless you."

¹³ Ruth replied, "Sir, it's good of you to speak kindly to me and make me feel so welcome. I'm not even one of your servants."

¹⁴ At mealtime Boaz said to Ruth, "Come, eat with us. Have some bread and dip it in the sauce."

At once she sat down with the workers, and Boaz handed her some roasted grain. Ruth ate all she wanted and had some left over.

¹⁵ When Ruth got up to start picking up grain, Boaz told his men, "Don't stop her, even if she picks up grain from where it is stacked. ¹⁶ Be sure to pull out some stalks of grain from the bundles and leave them on the ground for her. And don't speak harshly to her!"

¹⁷ Ruth worked in the field until evening. Then after she had pounded the grain off the stalks, she had a large basket full of grain. ¹⁸ She took the grain to town and showed Naomi how much she had picked up. Ruth also gave her the food left over from her lunch.

¹⁹ Naomi said, "Where did you work today? Whose field was it? God bless the man who treated you so well!" Then Ruth told her that she had worked in the field of a man named Boaz.

²⁰ "The LORD bless Boaz!" Naomi replied. "He> has shown that he is still loyal to the living and to the dead. Boaz is a close relative, one of those who is supposed to look after us."

²¹ Ruth told her, "Boaz even said I could stay in the field with his workers until they had finished gathering all his grain."

²² Naomi replied, "My daughter, it's good that you can pick up grain alongside the women who work in his field. Who knows what might happen to you in someone else's field!" ²³ And so, Ruth stayed close to the women, while picking up grain in his field.

Ruth worked in the fields until the barley and wheat were harvested. And all this time she lived with Naomi.

Naomi Makes Plans for Ruth

3 One day, Naomi said to Ruth: It's time I found you a husband, who will give you a home and take care of you.

² You have been picking up grain alongside the women who work for Boaz, and you know he is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be threshing the grain. ³ Now take a bath and put on some perfume, then dress in your best clothes. Go where he is working, but don't let him see you until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ Watch where he goes to spend the night, then when he is asleep, lift the cover and lie down at his feet. He will tell you what to do.

⁵ Ruth answered, "I'll do whatever you say." ⁶ She went out to the place where Boaz was working and did what Naomi had told her.

⁷ After Boaz finished eating and drinking and was feeling happy, he went over and fell asleep near the pile of grain. Ruth slipped over quietly. She lifted the cover and lay down near his feet.

⁸ In the middle of the night, Boaz suddenly woke up and was shocked to see a woman lying at his feet. ⁹ "Who are you?" he asked.

"Sir, I am Ruth," she answered, "and you are the relative who is supposed to take care of me. So spread the edge of your cover over me."

¹⁰ Boaz replied:

The LORD bless you! This shows how truly loyal you are to your family. You could have looked for a younger man, either rich or poor, but you didn't. ¹¹ Don't worry, I'll do what you have asked. You are respected by everyone in town.

¹² It's true that I am one of the relatives who is supposed to take care of you, but there is someone who is an even closer relative. ¹³ Stay here until morning, then I will find out if he is willing to look after you. If he isn't, I promise by the living God to do it myself. Now go back to sleep until morning.

¹⁴ Ruth lay down again, but she got up before daylight, because Boaz did not want anyone to know she had been there. ¹⁵ Then he told her to spread out her cape. And he filled it with a lot of grain and placed it on her shoulder.

When Ruth got back to town, ¹⁶ Naomi asked her what had happened, and Ruth told her everything. ¹⁷ She also said, "Boaz gave me this grain, because he didn't want me to come back without something for you."

¹⁸ Naomi replied, "Just be patient and don't worry about what will happen. He won't rest until everything is settled today!"

Ruth and Boaz Get Married

4 In the meanwhile, Boaz had gone to the meeting place at the town gate and was sitting there when the other close relative came by. So Boaz invited him to come over and sit down, and he did. ² Then Boaz got ten of the town leaders and also asked them to sit down. After they had sat down, ³ he said to the man:

Naomi has come back from Moab and is selling the land that belonged to her husband Elimelech. ⁴ I am telling you about this, since you are his closest relative and have the right to buy the property. If you want it, you can buy it now. These ten men and the others standing here can

be witnesses. But if you don't want the property, let me know, because I am next in line.

The man replied, "I will buy it!"

⁵ "If you do buy it from Naomi," Boaz told him, "you must also marry Ruth. Then if you have a son by her, the property will stay in the family of Ruth's first husband."

⁶ The man answered, "If that's the case, I don't want to buy it! That would make problems with the property I already own. You may buy it yourself, because I cannot."

⁷ To make a sale legal in those days, one person would take off a sandal and give it to the other. ⁸ So after the man had agreed to let Boaz buy the property, he took off one of his sandals and handed it to Boaz.

⁹ Boaz told the town leaders and everyone else:

All of you are witnesses that today I have bought from Naomi the property that belonged to Elimelech and his two sons, Chilion and Mahlon. ¹⁰ You are also witnesses that I have agreed to marry Mahlon's widow Ruth, the Moabite woman. This will keep the property in his family's name, and he will be remembered in this town.

¹¹ The town leaders and the others standing there said:

We are witnesses to this. And we pray that the LORD will give your wife many children, just as he did Leah and Rachel, the wives of Jacob. May you be a rich man in the tribe of Ephraim and an important man in Bethlehem. ¹² May the children you have by this young woman make your family as famous as the family of Perez, the son of Tamar and Judah.

¹³ Boaz married Ruth, and the LORD blessed her with a son. ¹⁴ After his birth, the women said to Naomi:

Praise the LORD! Today he has given you a grandson to take care of you. We pray that the boy will grow up to be famous everywhere in Israel. ¹⁵ He will make you happy and take care of you in your old age, because he is the son of your daughter-in-law. And she loves you more than seven sons of your own would love you.

¹⁶ Naomi loved the boy and took good care of him. ¹⁷ The neighborhood women named him Obed, but they called him "Naomi's Boy."

When Obed grew up he had a son named Jesse, who later became the father of King David. ¹⁸⁻²² Here is a list of the ancestors of David: Jesse, Obed, Boaz, Salmon, Nahshon, Amminadab, Ram, Hezron, and Perez.

Notes

Phrases enclosed in half square superscript brackets (‘¹’) are those that are difficult to translate from the original Hebrew with great certainty. Consequently, the English rendering given should be understood as only one possible way of translating such texts.

- ▷ **1.13** *Life ... me*: Or “I’m sorry that the LORD has turned against me and made life so hard for you.”
- ▷ **1.17** *even by death*: Or “by anything but death.”
- ▷ **2.20** *He*: Or “The LORD.”
- ▷ **3.15,16** *When ... her*: Some Hebrew manuscripts and two ancient translations; most Hebrew manuscripts “Boaz went back to town. ¹⁶ Naomi asked Ruth.”
- ▷ **4.14,15** *We pray that ... famous ...* ¹⁵ *He will*: Or “We pray that the LORD will be praised everywhere in Israel. ¹⁵ Your grandson will.”