

Ruth 1

New Living Translation Charles Dailey © 2017 CPS
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Introduction to the Book.

1. The Hebrew name is *Rutt*, “a friend.” Ruth was well named.
2. The author is not named, but is widely believed to have been Samuel, the prophet of Israel.
3. The date of the events is discussed in conjunction with verse 1.
4. The book was finished during David’s time (4:22). Ruth 1:1 shows the time of the Judges was past when the writing took place.
5. Ruth is one of two books named for a Gentile (the other was Job) and one of two books named for a woman, *Esther* being the other one. There are contrasts:
 - Ruth was a gentile, Esther was a Hebrew.
 - Ruth was a gentile who lived among the Jews, and Esther was a Jew who lived among the gentiles.
 - Ruth was a daughter of a foreign nation and brought to the Promised Land, Esther was a daughter of the Promised Land but brought forth within a foreign nation.
 - Ruth eventually married a *Jew*, while Esther eventually married a *gentile*.
 - God's name is mentioned a number of times in the book of the gentile Ruth, but it is not mentioned even once in the book of the Jewish Esther. However in both cases the women are characterized as having great faith and so are greatly blessed by the God of Israel, and both play pivotal roles in Israel's salvation history.
6. The non-Jewish part of the lineage of Jesus is revealed in this book. Matthew 1:5:

Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab). Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth). Obed was the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon (whose mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah). Matthew 1:5-6 NLT

7. The *canonicity* of Ruth — does the book belong in the Bible?
 - a) It is endorsed by Matthew in Matthew 1:5.
 - b) It connects with the welfare plan of Israel. Leviticus 19:9-10
 - c) It connects with the plan for a widow to marry a kinsman. Deuteronomy 25:5-10
 - d) It alludes to Rachel and Leah. Genesis 38:25-30
 - e) It alludes to Judah and Tamar. Genesis 38:24-39.
 - f) The book harmonizes with other inspired books and does not contradict any. This is one test for being in the canon.
 - g) Ruth was read in the Jewish synagogues during the celebration of Pentecost.
8. This 85-verse book is remarkable.
 - No miracles; angels do not appear and prophets do not speak for the Lord.
 - But a Jewish lady has a broken heart and believes the Lord has punished her. The book closes with her hopes realized and with security and love to finish her earthly sojourn.

NAOMI IS WIDOWED

Ruth 1:1 In the days when the judges ruled in Israel, a severe famine came upon the land. So a man from

Bethlehem in Judah left his home and went to live in the country of Moab, taking his wife and two sons with him.

- The writer is not precise about who was judge at the time because it's not important to the story, but the days of the Judges were dark days in Israel's history. This story sheds a ray of light.
- The **famine** was in the land of **Judah** and its food source: **Bethlehem**, *house of bread* or probably in the broader sense, *house of food*. This is the same **Bethlehem** where Jesus was born centuries later.
- Today we think of **famines** as being caused by lack growing conditions, but there is no record of bad growing conditions. But some famines were caused by neighboring nations stealing the food supply. Midianites may have destroyed Israel's food so they could weaken and conqueror them. Consider:

Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, marauders from Midian, Amalek, and the people of the east would attack Israel, camping in the land and destroying crops as far away as Gaza. They left the Israelites with nothing to eat, taking all the sheep, goats, cattle, and donkeys.

Judges 6:3-4 NLT

We can rightfully believe that the famine was caused by disobedience to God's instructions. God had promised good crops to obedient people:

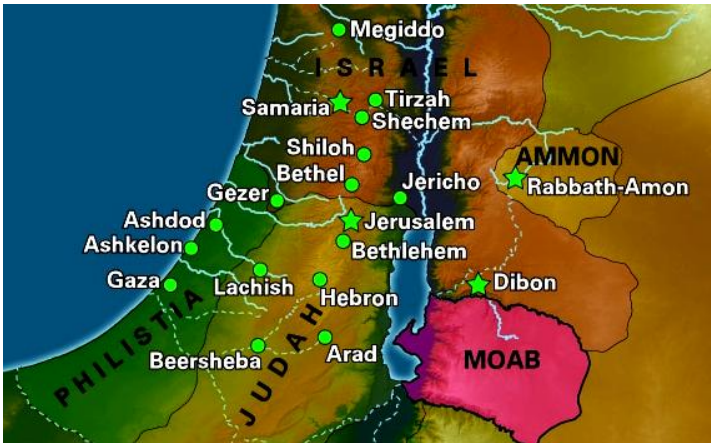
"If you carefully obey all the commands I am giving you today, and if you love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and soul, then He will send the rains in their proper

seasons -- the early and late rains -- so you can bring in your harvests of grain, new wine, and olive oil. He will give you lush pastureland for your livestock, and you yourselves will have all you want to eat. "But be careful. Don't let your heart be deceived so that you turn away from the LORD and serve and worship other gods. If you do, the LORD's anger will burn against you. He will shut up the sky and hold back the rain, and the ground will fail to produce its harvests. Then you will quickly die in that good land the LORD is giving you. Deuteronomy 11:13-17 NLT

- Elimelech and Naomi became sojourners in **Moab**. They were long-term visitors who intended to return to Israel when conditions improved at **Bethlehem**.
- While the *government* of **Moab** had been conquered by Israel at an earlier time, the *people* remained, though the government no longer functioned. The **Moabites** had retained their pagan religion and culture while living in separate towns among the tribes of Reuben and Gad.

(2) The man's name was Elimelech, and his wife was Naomi. Their two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in the land of Judah. And when they reached Moab, they settled there.

- **Ephrath** is an older name for **Bethlehem**, Genesis 35:19, so these men were staunchly local men and land owners.
- The four went to where the food supplies were better in the land of **Moab**, east of the Dead Sea, and settled.

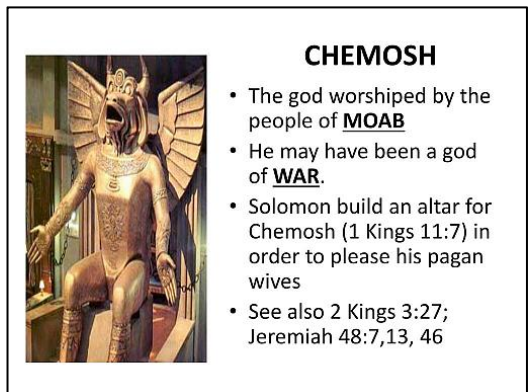


(3) Then Elimelech died, and Naomi was left with her two sons.

- In this event, **Naomi** became a widow with two marriageable **sons**. It was natural that they would look for wives among their friends and neighbors.
- Sometimes we move to escape our problems, but no matter where we go, we bring ourselves and problems continue -- but just in a different location.

(4) The two sons married Moabite women. One married a woman named Orpah, and the other a woman named Ruth. But about ten years later,

- To say they were **Moabite women** indicates they were of that pagan culture including worshiping its god *Chemosh*.



(5) both Mahlon and Kilion died. This left

Naomi alone, without her two sons or her husband.

- The widow **Naomi** now lost her beloved sons—her only means of support. Her “Social Security” was gone. She was alone among people who did not worship the Lord.

RUTH IS LOYAL TO NAOMI

(6) Then Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had blessed His people in Judah by giving them good crops again. So Naomi and her daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab to return to her homeland.

- **Naomi** is to be commended for making a plan to better her circumstances and putting it into action. She could have complained and died in poverty in **Moab**.
- **Naomi** chose to **return** to Bethlehem where she and Elimelech owned some land and she had heard that God was blessing His people with **crops again**.
- **Naomi** still identified with the **people** of God and **the Lord** was prominent in her worldview.

(7) With her two daughters-in-law she set out from the place where she had been living, and they took the road that would lead them back to Judah.

- The travel plan was Naomi's. The **daughters-in-law** were tagging along.

(8) But on the way, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back to your mothers' homes. And may the LORD reward you for your kindness to your husbands and to me.

- It was normal for a young widow to return to her parent's **home** until she could remarry.
- The young ladies had been **kind** to their deceased **husband's** and to **Naomi**.

(9) May the LORD bless you with the security of another marriage." Then she kissed them good-bye, and they all broke down and wept.

- Naomi prayed for **the Lord**, her God, to enable them to find **the security of another marriage**.
- The good-bye **kiss** brought **weeping**. There was an air of finality about this separation. Naomi was clearly the emotional hub of the threesome.
- For Naomi there was no hope of a husband. Rather a trip into the unknown which would include poverty for the final years of her life. Ruth and Orpah had a problem that had a solution, but the outlook was bleak for Naomi.

(10) "No," they said. "We want to go with you to your people."

- Both young widows objected to Naomi's permission to return home and remarry. Naomi had lived a decade in a foreign land and now they were willing to become foreigners in Israel in order to stay with Naomi. Such love!

(11) But Naomi replied, "Why should you go on with me? Can I still give birth to other sons who could grow up to be your husbands?"

- **Naomi** showed the ridiculous outcome for Ruth and Orpah. Would they wait for **Naomi** to have more **sons**? That would take years. Implied is that no young Jewish male in Bethlehem would marry a Moabite (therefore gentile) widow.

(12) No, my daughters, return to your parents' homes, for I am too old to marry again. And even if it were possible, and I were to get married tonight and bear sons, then what?
(13) Would you wait for them to grow up and refuse to

marry someone else? No, of course not, my daughters! Things are far more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD Himself has raised His fist against me."

- Naomi wants Ruth and Orpah to return to their **parents' homes** in Moab.
- She claims that she is too old to remarry.
- The girls wouldn't **wait** to **marry** until she had **sons** even if she did **marry**. Remember there are *financial security* issues at stake.
- Naomi saw life as **bitter** and that the **Lord** had raised **His fist against** her.
- Sadly, Naomi was convinced that the loss of her three men was a punishment from the **Lord**. The writer of Ruth does not even hint of this being true.
- Commentators have debated this issue and some believe the family should have stayed at Bethlehem and weathered the famine as others obviously did.
- Perhaps Naomi was the main force in the family to want to go to Moab. She didn't blame the move on her husband. She thought that God had an issue with her, not Elimelech. She had no idea of how amply God would bless her in the coming months.

(14) And again they wept together, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye. But Ruth clung tightly to Naomi.

- Following another round of tears, **Orpah** kissed **Naomi good-bye** and left for home in Moab. But **Ruth** stayed.

(15) "Look," Naomi said to her, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. You should do the same."

- Using Orpah as an example, **Naomi** urged Ruth to head back to her village **and her gods**.

- Naomi was *grieving*. Orpah was *leaving*. Ruth was *cleaving*.

(16) But Ruth replied, "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God."

- **Ruth** has decided. She will go with Naomi and become a foreigner in Israel. She will stay with Naomi wherever she goes. She would adopt Naomi's people and most importantly, she would worship Naomi's **God**.
- Naomi's life has been a credit to the God of Heaven and **Ruth** is more than willing to build the same kind of relationship with **God**.
- This verse is the basis for Guy Singer's "*Whither Thou Goest*," published in 1954. It is sung at weddings.

(17) Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!"

- Looking ahead, Ruth knows that both of them will eventually **die** and she wants to be with her mother-in-law through **death** and be buried in Israel, too. Now Naomi's future is not bleak. Ruth will be with her no matter what. Ruth will use her youth and strength to provide for Naomi.
- Now Ruth makes a covenant out of these promises to Naomi and invokes the name of **the Lord**, not Chemosh. She has begun her life of living for the **Lord**. She has forsaken her past to rely entirely on God.

(18) When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more.

- **Ruth's determination** convinced **Naomi** and she stopped trying to persuade **Ruth** to return to her people.

- When in an era where all hope that a woman has of sustenance, family, prosperity, protection, comfort, and fulfillment rested on the males, here we have a God-inspired story of a woman who preferred to give up such hope in favor of helping an old woman who had no such hope available to her.
- **Naomi** has tested **Ruth's** commitment to the Lord and she passed the test. **David Guzik** writes:

Yet as soon as Naomi stood and said, "I'm going back to the God of Israel, I'll put my fate in His hands" Ruth stood with her. If you think you will persuade your friends or relatives to Jesus by your compromise, you are mistaken. Perhaps you are sincere, but you are mistaken. Only a bold stand for Jesus will really do it.

NAOMI RETURNS TO BETHLEHEM WITH RUTH

(19) So the two of them continued on their journey. When they came to Bethlehem, the entire town was excited by their arrival. "Is it really Naomi?" the women asked.

- The trip was about 75 miles over steep roads, including the climb from Jericho to Jerusalem, until they finally reached their destination. That would have been a severe trip for **Naomi** alone, but now she had a young and dedicated companion.
- The **women** of **Bethlehem** were amazed. They could hardly believe their eyes. They hadn't expected to see her again.

(20) "Don't call me Naomi," she responded. "Instead, call me Mara, for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me.

- She announced that she had a change of name. It was no longer **Naomi** (pleasant) but **Mara** (bitter) Note Exodus 15:23. She was **bitter** because of God's dealings with her.
- **Almighty**. El Shaddai, the God of the Mountain, had dealt her a hand and she did not like it and there was no higher court to appeal to.

(21) I went away full, but the LORD has brought me home empty. Why call me Naomi when the LORD has caused me to suffer and the Almighty has sent such tragedy upon me?"

- She went out **full** in that she was married and had a family; the goal of nearly all Hebrew women. Now she is returning without a family. She adds, "Don't call me pleasant, because I'm an afflicted woman."
- **Naomi** sees her loss as a punishment from the **Lord**. She does not turn against God, but recognizes His sovereignty. God does as He chooses. She is merely reporting the world as she sees it.

(22) So Naomi returned from Moab, accompanied by her daughter-in-law Ruth, the young Moabite woman. They arrived in Bethlehem in late spring, at the beginning of the barley harvest.

- Two widows had come to **Bethlehem**. They had no income but a little property.
- The ladies arrived at the **beginning of barley harvest**, the time of the Feast of Pentecost. For this reason, the Book of Ruth is read in synagogues each year during Pentecost.

THE STORY APPLIES

1. The Lord abundantly provides for a lady who believed she had displeased the Lord by moving to Moab.
2. Naomi did not turn away from the Lord because of the heartaches in her life.
3. Though her support system for food was gone, the Lord still provided for her.
4. The Lord brought a supporter into Naomi's life that no one could foresee by bringing in Ruth.

Lovers of Biblical Fiction will love *The Field of Grace* by Tessa Afshar and sold by Amazon as a Kindle download. The author weaves a plausible story around the

facts that we read in the Book of Ruth. Ms. Afshar was raised in a Muslim home in Iran and turned to Christ as an adult.

