

## The BOOK of RUTH

Rth 1:1) Once upon a time--it was back in the days when judges led Israel--there was a famine in the land. A man from Bethlehem in Judah left home to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. (2) The man's name was Elimelech; his wife's name was Naomi; his sons were named Mahlon and Kilion--all Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They all went to the country of Moab and settled there. (3) Elimelech died and Naomi was left, she and her two sons. (4) The sons took Moabite wives; the name of the first was Orpah, the second Ruth. They lived there in Moab for the next ten years. (5) But then the two brothers, Mahlon and Kilion, died. Now the woman was left without either her young men or her husband. (6) One day she got herself together, she and her two daughters-in-law, to leave the country of Moab and set out for home; she had heard that GOD had been pleased to visit his people and give them food. (7) And so she started out from the place she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law with her, on the road back to the land of Judah. (8) After a short while on the road, Naomi told her two daughters-in-law, "Go back. Go home and live with your mothers. And may GOD treat you as graciously as you treated your deceased husbands and me. (9) May GOD give each of you a new home and a new husband!" She kissed them and they cried openly. (10) They said, "No, we're going on with you to your people." (11) But Naomi was firm: "Go back, my dear daughters. Why would you come with me? Do you suppose I still have sons in my womb who can become your future husbands? (12) Go back, dear daughters--on your way, please! I'm too old to get a husband. Why, even if I said, "There's still hope!" and this very night got a man and had sons, (13) can you imagine being satisfied to wait until they were grown? Would you wait that long to get married again? No, dear daughters; this is a bitter pill for me to

swallow--more bitter for me than for you. GOD has dealt me a hard blow." (14) Again they cried openly. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye; but Ruth embraced her and held on. (15) Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law is going back home to live with her own people and gods; go with her." (16) But Ruth said, "Don't force me to leave you; don't make me go home. Where you go, I go; and where you live, I'll live. Your people are my people, your God is my god; (17) where you die, I'll die, and that's where I'll be buried, so help me GOD--not even death itself is going to come between us!" (18) When Naomi saw that Ruth had her heart set on going with her, she gave in. (19) And so the two of them traveled on together to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem the whole town was soon buzzing: "Is this really our Naomi? And after all this time!" (20) But she said, "Don't call me Naomi; call me Bitter. The Strong One has dealt me a bitter blow. (21) I left here full of life, and GOD has brought me back with nothing but the clothes on my back. Why would you call me Naomi? God certainly doesn't. The Strong One ruined me." (22) And so Naomi was back, and Ruth the foreigner with her, back from the country of Moab. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Rth 2:1) It so happened that Naomi had a relative by marriage, a man prominent and rich, connected with Elimelech's family. His name was Boaz. (2) One day Ruth, the Moabite foreigner, said to Naomi, "I'm going to work; I'm going out to glean among the sheaves, following after some harvester who will treat me kindly." Naomi said, "Go ahead, dear daughter." (3) And so she set out. She went and started gleaning in a field, following in the wake of the harvesters. Eventually she ended up in the part of the field owned by Boaz, her father-in-law Elimelech's relative. (4) A little later Boaz came out from Bethlehem, greeting his harvesters, "GOD be with you!" They replied,

"And GOD bless you!" (5) Boaz asked his young servant who was foreman over the farm hands, "Who is this young woman? Where did she come from?" (6) The foreman said, "Why, that's the Moabite girl, the one who came with Naomi from the country of Moab. (7) She asked permission. 'Let me glean,' she said, 'and gather among the sheaves following after your harvesters.' She's been at it steady ever since, from early morning until now, without so much as a break." (8) Then Boaz spoke to Ruth: "Listen, my daughter. From now on don't go to any other field to glean--stay right here in this one. And stay close to my young women. (9) Watch where they are harvesting and follow them. And don't worry about a thing; I've given orders to my servants not to harass you. When you get thirsty, feel free to go and drink from the water buckets that the servants have filled." (10) She dropped to her knees, then bowed her face to the ground. "How does this happen that you should pick me out and treat me so kindly--me, a foreigner?" (11) Boaz answered her, "I've heard all about you--heard about the way you treated your mother-in-law after the death of her husband, and how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth and have come to live among a bunch of total strangers. (12) GOD reward you well for what you've done--and with a generous bonus besides from GOD, to whom you've come seeking protection under his wings." (13) She said, "Oh sir, such grace, such kindness--I don't deserve it. You've touched my heart, treated me like one of your own. And I don't even belong here!" (14) At the lunch break, Boaz said to her, "Come over here; eat some bread. Dip it in the wine." So she joined the harvesters. Boaz passed the roasted grain to her. She ate her fill and even had some left over. (15) When she got up to go back to work, Boaz ordered his servants: "Let her glean where there's still plenty of grain on the ground--make it easy for her. (16) Better yet, pull some of the good stuff out and leave it for her to glean. Give her special

treatment." (17) Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. When she threshed out what she had gathered, she ended up with nearly a full sack of barley! (18) She gathered up her gleanings, went back to town, and showed her mother-in-law the results of her day's work; she also gave her the leftovers from her lunch. (19) Naomi asked her, "So where did you glean today? Whose field? GOD bless whoever it was who took such good care of you!" Ruth told her mother-in-law, "The man with whom I worked today? His name is Boaz." (20) Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Why, GOD bless that man! GOD hasn't quite walked out on us after all! He still loves us, in bad times as well as good!" Naomi went on, "That man, Ruth, is one of our circle of covenant redeemers, a close relative of ours!" (21) Ruth the Moabitess said, "Well, listen to this: He also told me, 'Stick with my workers until my harvesting is finished.'" (22) Naomi said to Ruth, "That's wonderful, dear daughter! Do that! You'll be safe in the company of his young women; no danger now of being raped in some stranger's field." (23) So Ruth did it--she stuck close to Boaz's young women, gleaning in the fields daily until both the barley and wheat harvesting were finished. And she continued living with her mother-in-law.

Rth 3:1) One day her mother-in-law Naomi said to Ruth, "My dear daughter, isn't it about time I arranged a good home for you so you can have a happy life? (2) And isn't Boaz our close relative, the one with whose young women you've been working? Maybe it's time to make our move. Tonight is the night of Boaz's barley harvest at the threshing floor. (3) "Take a bath. Put on some perfume. Get all dressed up and go to the threshing floor. But don't let him know you're there until the party is well under way and he's had plenty of food and drink. (4) When you see him slipping off to sleep, watch where he lies down and then go there. Lie at his feet to let him know that you are available to him for marriage. Then wait and see what he

says. He'll tell you what to do." (5) Ruth said, "If you say so, I'll do it, just as you've told me." (6) She went down to the threshing floor and put her mother-in-law's plan into action. (7) Boaz had a good time, eating and drinking his fill--he felt great. Then he went off to get some sleep, lying down at the end of a stack of barley. Ruth quietly followed; she lay down to signal her availability for marriage. (8) In the middle of the night the man was suddenly startled and sat up. Surprise! This woman asleep at his feet! (9) He said, "And who are you?" She said, "I am Ruth, your maiden; take me under your protecting wing. You're my close relative, you know, in the circle of covenant redeemers--you do have the right to marry me." (10) He said, "GOD bless you, my dear daughter! What a splendid expression of love! And when you could have had your pick of any of the young men around. (11) And now, my dear daughter, don't you worry about a thing; I'll do all you could want or ask. Everybody in town knows what a courageous woman you are--a real prize! (12) You're right, I am a close relative to you, but there is one even closer than I am. (13) So stay the rest of the night. In the morning, if he wants to exercise his customary rights and responsibilities as the closest covenant redeemer, he'll have his chance; but if he isn't interested, as GOD lives, I'll do it. Now go back to sleep until morning." (14) Ruth slept at his feet until dawn, but she got up while it was still dark and wouldn't be recognized. Then Boaz said to himself, "No one must know that Ruth came to the threshing floor." (15) So Boaz said, "Bring the shawl you're wearing and spread it out." She spread it out and he poured it full of barley, six measures, and put it on her shoulders. Then she went back to town. (16) When she came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, "And how did things go, my dear daughter?" (17) Ruth told her everything that the man had done for her, adding, "And he gave me all this barley besides--six quarts! He told me, 'You can't go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law!'"

(18) Naomi said, "Sit back and relax, my dear daughter, until we find out how things turn out; that man isn't going to fool around. Mark my words, he's going to get everything wrapped up today."

Rth 4:1) Boaz went straight to the public square and took his place there. Before long the "closer relative," the one mentioned earlier by Boaz, strolled by. "Step aside, old friend," said Boaz. "Take a seat." The man sat down. (2) Boaz then gathered ten of the town elders together and said, "Sit down here with us; we've got some business to take care of." And they sat down. (3) Boaz then said to his relative, "The piece of property that belonged to our relative Elimelech is being sold by his widow Naomi, who has just returned from the country of Moab. (4) I thought you ought to know about it. Buy it back if you want it--you can make it official in the presence of those sitting here and before the town elders. You have first redeemer rights. If you don't want it, tell me so I'll know where I stand. You're first in line to do this and I'm next after you." He said, "I'll buy it." (5) Then Boaz added, "You realize, don't you, that when you buy the field from Naomi, you also get Ruth the Moabite, the widow of our dead relative, along with the redeemer responsibility to have children with her to carry on the family inheritance." (6) Then the relative said, "Oh, I can't do that--I'd jeopardize my own family's inheritance. You go ahead and buy it--you can have my rights--I can't do it." (7) In the olden times in Israel, this is how they handled official business regarding matters of property and inheritance: a man would take off his shoe and give it to the other person. This was the same as an official seal or personal signature in Israel. (8) So when Boaz's "redeemer" relative said, "Go ahead and buy it," he signed the deal by pulling off his shoe. (9) Boaz then addressed the elders and all the people in the town square that day: "You are witnesses today that I have bought from Naomi everything that belonged to Elimelech

and Kilion and Mahlon, (10) including responsibility for Ruth the foreigner, the widow of Mahlon--I'll take her as my wife and keep the name of the deceased alive along with his inheritance. The memory and reputation of the deceased is not going to disappear out of this family or from his hometown. To all this you are witnesses this very day." (11) All the people in the town square that day, backing up the elders, said, "Yes, we are witnesses. May GOD make this woman who is coming into your household like Rachel and Leah, the two women who built the family of Israel. May GOD make you a pillar in Ephrathah and famous in Bethlehem! (12) With the children GOD gives you from this young woman, may your family rival the family of Perez, the son Tamar bore to Judah." (13) Boaz married Ruth. She became his wife. Boaz slept with her. By GOD's gracious gift she conceived and had a son. (14) The town women said to Naomi, "Blessed be GOD! He didn't leave you without family to carry on your life. May this baby grow up to be famous in Israel! (15) He'll make you young again! He'll take care of you in old age. And this daughter-in-law who has brought him into the world and loves you so much, why, she's worth more to you than seven sons!" (16) Naomi took the baby and held him in her arms, cuddling him, cooing over him, waiting on him hand and foot. (17) The neighborhood women started calling him "Naomi's baby boy!" But his real name was Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David. (18) This is the family tree of Perez: Perez had Hezron, (19) Hezron had Ram, Ram had Amminadab, (20) Amminadab had Nahshon, Nahshon had Salmon, (21) Salmon had Boaz, Boaz had Obed, (22) Obed had Jesse, and Jesse had David.

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