

RUTH

Author and date:

Ancient Jewish tradition indicates Samuel as the author, but there is no proof either for or against this, and there is no certainty about the time of writing.

Themes:

One theme is the kindness and love between individuals and the resulting rewards. Another theme is how a foreign woman joined the people of Israel by faith in the one true God and became an important person in their history, an ancestress of King David and the Lord Jesus Christ. Another theme is the office of kinsman-redeemer. The kinsman-redeemer is a type or picture of Christ. See the note at 2:20. This redeemer had to be a blood relative. Christ our Redeemer became man (Heb 2:9-18), and so our relative. The kinsman-redeemer had to have enough means to purchase a person's lost possession (Ruth 4:2-10). Christ alone was able to pay the price of redemption for us (Ps 49:7-9; 1 Pet 1:18-19). The kinsman-redeemer had to be willing to pay the price of redemption (Ruth 4:4,6,9). Christ was willing to pay the price for us (Matt 20:28; John 10:11,17,18). The kinsman-redeemer had to be willing to marry the wife of the dead relative. In a spiritual sense Christ fulfills this also. See Rom 7:1-4.

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1 Now it came about in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live for a time in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. ²And the man's name was Elimelech and his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. *They were Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah, and they came into the country of Moab and stayed there.*

³And Naomi's husband Elimelech died, and she and her two sons were left. ⁴And they married *two* of the women of Moab. The name of one was Orpah and the name of the other was Ruth. And they stayed there about ten years. ⁵And both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

⁶Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return *home* from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited his people by providing food for them. ⁷Therefore she, and her two daughters-in-law with her, left the place where she was and set out on the road to return to the land of Judah.

⁸And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go. Each of you return to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with

you, just as you have dealt with *those now* dead, and with me. ⁹May the LORD grant that each *of you* find rest in the house of her husband". Then she kissed them; and they raised their voice and wept.

¹⁰And they said to her, "We will certainly return with you to your people".

¹¹And Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters. Why will you go with me? *Are there any more* sons still in my womb, that they may become your husbands? ¹²Turn back, my daughters. Go on *your* way. For I am too old to get a husband. If I should say, 'I have hope', if even tonight I would have a husband and would also bear sons, ¹³would you wait for them until they were grown up? Would you refrain from marrying for them? No, my daughters; for I am very much grieved for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me".

¹⁴And they raised their voice and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law but Ruth clung to her.

¹⁵And Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Go back after your sister-in-law".

¹⁶And Ruth said, "Do not ask me to leave you or to go back from following you, for where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people *will be* my people

1:1 "*Ruled*"— or "judged" (the Hebrew word means both of these). The judges led Israel for more than 300 years.

"*Famine in the land*"— this famine is not mentioned in the book of Judges. It must have been very severe to cause people to leave their homes and inheritances and go to another country. The cause of the famine is not given here, but during the times of the judges the people often forsook God, broke His laws and worshiped idols (Jud 2:16-19). It is no surprising thing that a famine came on them (compare Lev 26:25-26; Deut 28:15,23,24; 1 Kings 8:35; 2 Kings 8:1; Jer 14:10-12; 24:10; Ezek 5:16; 14:21; Amos 8:11).

1:2 "*Naomi*"— a Hebrew name meaning "Pleasant".

"*Ephrathites*"— Bethlehem was located in an area called Ephrathah – Micah 5:2.

"*Moab*"— note on Moab at Gen 19:36-38. The Moabites, being descended from Abraham's nephew Lot, were "cousins" of the Israelites.

1:6 "*From...Moab*"— evidently Naomi and her daughters-in-law at first agreed to go together to Judah, but after setting out on the journey Naomi changed her mind. Possibly this was

because the thought struck her that there was probably no future in Israel for these widowed Moabite women.

"*Providing food*"— God gave rain and good crops once more in Israel.

1:8 "*With me*"— 2:11-12. Compare Ps 18:25-26; 62:12. We have no right to expect God to be kind to us if we are not kind to others. From one point of view this book of Ruth is the story of kindness and its rewards (v 8; 2:11-12,15,20; 3:10). On kindness see 1 Cor 13:4; Eph 4:22

1:11 "*Husbands*"— see Deut 25:5-6. An illustration of this is found in Gen 38:6-11.

1:13 "*Against me*"— vs 20,21; Jud 2:15; Job 19:21. Naomi assumed that her suffering in the famine in Bethlehem, and the loss of her husband and both sons meant that God's hand was against her. But this may not have been so. See note at Job 6:4; 7:17-19; 19:21-22. Troubles that come to individuals may, it is true, be judgments of God, but they may be blessings in disguise and intended for some great good. Notes at Gen 50:20.

1:15 "*Her gods*"— the Moabites were idolaters. Chemosh was their principal god (notes at 1 Kings 11:7).

and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal *harshly* with me, and worse also, *if anything* but death parts you and me".

¹⁸When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, then she said no more to her.

¹⁹So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they arrived in Bethlehem, it came about that the whole city was stirred concerning them and they said, "Is this Naomi?"

²⁰And she said to them, "Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. ²¹I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty. So why should you call me Naomi, seeing the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

²²So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, coming back from the country of Moab. And they arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

2 And Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's *side*, a wealthy man of the family of Elimelech, and his name was Boaz.

²And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Let me now go to the field and glean heads of grain after *someone* who looks on me with favour". And she said to her, "Go, my daughter".

³And she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to a part of the field *belonging* to Boaz, who was a relative of Elimelech.

⁴And just then Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "The LORD *be* with you". And they answered him, "The LORD bless you".

⁵Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman *is* this?"

⁶And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, "It *is* the Moabite girl who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. ⁷And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came and has stayed from morning until now, *except* that she sat for a while in the house".

⁸Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field and do not go away from here, but stay here close to my servant girls. ⁹Keep your eyes on the field that they are reaping and go after them. Have I not ordered the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the water pots and drink what the young men draw".

¹⁰Then she prostrated herself, bowing down to the ground, and said to him, "Why have you looked on me with favour to take notice of me, since I *am* a foreigner?"

1:16 "My God"— this speaks well of both Ruth and Naomi – of Ruth because she showed unselfish loyalty and love to her mother-in-law, of Naomi because evidently she had lived in such a way that her daughter-in-law was attracted to both her and the God she worshiped. Ruth left her homeland, her father and mother (2:11) and their gods to go on into the unknown with Naomi. This determination is an illustration of what our attitude should be towards the Lord Jesus – Matt 4:18-22; Luke 14:33; John 6:66-68. **1:17** 2 Sam 15:21.

1:19 "Naomi"— at least 10 years had passed since Naomi left Bethlehem (v 4), and she was without husband or sons, and sorrow had doubtless left its mark on her face.

1:20 "Mara"— this Hebrew word means "bitter". Naomi is saying "Don't call me 'the pleasant one', but 'the bitter one.'" This means that her experiences had filled her with sorrow, not that she was bitter against God. If she had been bitter against God, it is very unlikely that Ruth would have wanted Naomi's God to be her God (v 16). On Mara see Ex 15:23-25.

"Almighty"— in Hebrew "Shaddai" – Gen 17:1.

1:21 "Empty"— when she left she had husband, sons, and hope.

"Afflicted"— v 13; Job 30:11; Ps 88:7; Lam 3:1.

1:22 "Beginning of barley harvest"— in Israel in those days this would have been sometime in March or April.

2:2 "Grain"— see Lev 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut 24:19-21. God put these instructions in His law because He is concerned for the poor (Ex 22:25; Ps 41:1; 82:3-4; Prov 14:21; Luke 6:20; Jam 2:5). Ruth's suggestion shows that she and Naomi were without any means of support. It shows also that she was willing to do the lowliest of jobs because of her love for her mother-in-law – a thing all too rare in this world.

2:3 "Happened to come"— God guided her there, as Naomi realized when she heard it (vs 19,20). God was answering the prayer of Naomi in 1:8.

2:4 This was in the days of the judges when Israel was often sunk in sin, defeat and apostasy (Jud 2:16-19). But there were lamps in that darkness and Boaz was one of them – as every believer should be (Matt 5:14-15; Phil 2:15). Evidently Boaz was a man who honored God and was honored by his workers and peers (4:11-12).

¹¹And Boaz answered and said to her, “It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and *how* you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth and have come to a people whom you have not known before this. ¹²May the LORD repay you for your work and may a full reward be given to you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to trust”.

¹³Then she said, “Let me find favour in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and have spoken kindly to your maid servant, even though I am not like one of your maid servants”.

¹⁴And Boaz said to her, “At mealtime come here and eat bread and dip your pieces in the vinegar”. And she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted *grain*, and she ate and was satisfied and left.

¹⁵And when she got up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, “Let her glean among the sheaves and do not embarrass her. ¹⁶And also let *some* handfuls intentionally fall for her and leave *them*, so that she can glean *them*. And do not rebuke her”.

¹⁷So she gleaned in the field until evening and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. ¹⁸And she picked *it* up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. And she took it out and gave to her what she had left after she had been satisfied.

2:11-12 1:8.

2:12 “*A full reward*”— 1 Sam 24:19; 26:23; Prov 25:21-22; 10:32; Luke 6:38; Heb 6:10.

“*Under whose wings*”— 1:16; Ps 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4; Matt 23:37.

2:13 “*Your maid servant*”— Ruth obviously means herself.

2:15 Boaz was a kind man willing to give more to the poor and needy than the law required (v 2). He is in great contrast to some men who want every grain for themselves.

2:17 “*Ephah*”— an ephah equals about one half of a large bushel or 22 liters.

2:19 It was obvious to Naomi that the owner of the field had left a large amount of grain for Ruth to glean.

2:20 “*Being kind*”— 1:8.

“*Closest kinsmen*”— here is another large theme in this small book. Closest kinsman is one word in Hebrew – “goel” – and could be translated “kinsman-redeemer”. This Hebrew word appears in Ruth 2:20; 3:9,12,13; 4:1,3,6,8,14. In other

¹⁹And her mother-in-law said to her, “Where did you glean today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you”. And she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, “The name of the man with whom I worked today *is* Boaz”.

²⁰And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “*May he be* blessed by the LORD, who has not ceased being kind to the living and to the dead”. And Naomi said to her, “The man *is* a near relative of ours, one of our closest kinsmen”.

²¹And Ruth the Moabitess said, “Also he said to me, ‘Stay close to my young men until they have finished all my harvest.’ ”

²²And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law Ruth, “It *is* good, my daughter, that you go out with his maid servants, so that *some men* do not happen to meet you in another field”.

²³So she kept close to the maid servants of Boaz to glean to the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

3 Then her mother-in-law Naomi said to her, “My daughter, shall I not look for a *place* for you to rest, so that it will be well with you? ²And now *is* not Boaz, with whose maid servants you have been *working*, our relative? Look, tonight he will be winnowing barley in the threshing floor. ³Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself and dress yourself, and go down to the *threshing* floor. *But*

places in the Old Testament the word refers to a near relative who takes vengeance on anyone who had killed a member of the family. The “goel” was not only a redeemer but an avenger. The responsibilities of the “goel” are found in Lev 25:25-28,47-49; Num 35:19-21; Deut 25:5-10. He was to look after the best interests of his family and relatives in every way consistent with justice and holiness.

The Lord Jesus is the Goel of all those who trust under the shadow of His wings. He redeems them from slavery to sin, restores what they lost by sinning, gives them an inheritance with Himself, and avenges them against their enemies. **3:1-2** 1:9; 2:20.

3:1 “*For you to rest*”— Naomi means a home and family of her own.

3:3-4 Naomi was not suggesting that Ruth should try to seduce Boaz. Both Boaz and Ruth were godly, moral people (v 11). Naomi’s idea was that Ruth should appeal to Boaz as her kinsman-redeemer (v 9; 2:20).

do not make your presence known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴And let it be *like this*: when he lies down, notice the place where he is lying, and you go in and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do”.

⁵And she said to her, “I will do everything you tell me”. ⁶And she went down to the *threshing* floor and did everything that her mother-in-law had ordered her.

⁷And when Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. And she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸And it so happened at midnight that the man was startled, and he turned and saw a woman lying at his feet.

⁹And he said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am your maid servant Ruth. So spread your covering over your maid servant, for you are a near kinsman”.

¹⁰And he said, “May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter, for this last kindness you have shown is greater than the first. You have not gone after the young men, whether poor or rich. ¹¹And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I will do for you all that you need, for all the people in the city know that you are a virtuous woman. ¹²And now it is true that I am your near kinsman, but there is a kinsman nearer than I. ¹³Stay tonight, and in the morning it will be that if he acts as the kinsman-redeemer toward you, all right, let him redeem you. But if he will not act as the kinsman-redeemer toward you, then, as the LORD lives, I will act as the kinsman-redeemer toward you. Lie down until morning”.

¹⁴And she lay at his feet until morning, then rose up before one could recognize another. And he said, “Don’t let it be known that a woman came into the *threshing* floor”.

3:9 “Near kinsman”— in this way Ruth was asking for his protective care as a husband. There was no brother of her husband living to marry her in accordance with Deut 25:5-10, so this responsibility passed to the nearest relative.

3:10 “The first”— 2:11-12.

3:11-13 Boaz expresses his willingness to marry her and buy the family property, but he would not be able to do so if the man who was a closer relative of Naomi’s family wished to act as “goel”.

¹⁵He also said, “Bring the veil that you have on and hold it out”. And when she held it out, he measured six *measures* of barley and laid it on her; and she went into the city.

¹⁶And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, “How *did it go with* you, my daughter?” And she told her all that the man had done for her.

¹⁷And she said, “He gave me these six *measures* of barley, for he told me, ‘Don’t go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”

¹⁸Then said she, “Sit quietly, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out. For the man will not rest until he has finished the matter this very day”.

4 Then Boaz went out to the gate and seated himself there, and when the kinsman of whom Boaz had spoken came by Boaz said to him, “Come, *friend*, turn aside, sit down here”. And he turned aside and sat down.

²And he brought ten of the elders of the city and said, “Sit down here”. And they sat down. ³And he said to the kinsman, “Naomi, who has returned from the country of Moab, is selling a plot of land which *belonged* to our brother Elimelech. ⁴And I thought to inform you *and say*, Buy it in the presence of those sitting *here* and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not redeem it, *then* tell me, so that I may know. For *there is* no one besides you to redeem it, and I am after you”. And he said, “I will redeem it”.

⁵Then Boaz said, “On the day that you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead man, to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance”. ⁶And the kinsman said, “I cannot redeem it for myself. If I did I would put my own

3:14 Rom 14:17; 2 Cor 8:21.

4:1 Gen 34:20.

4:2 This was a public transaction of official business.

4:3 “*Selling*”— it was the duty of the kinsman-redeemer to see that the land was kept in the family and not sold to outsiders. Naomi’s plan, of course, was not simply to sell the land but to obtain a good husband for Ruth.

“*Brother*”— here means relative, as the Hebrew word sometimes does.

inheritance at risk. You redeem my right for yourself, for I cannot redeem it”.

⁷Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging land: to confirm anything a man took off his sandal and gave it to the one next to him. And this was a testimony in Israel.

⁸Therefore the kinsman having said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself”, he took off his sandal.

⁹And Boaz said to the elders and to all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi everything that belonged to Elimelech, and everything that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. ¹⁰Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabite, the former wife of Mahlon, to be my wife to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased is not cut off from among his brethren and from the gate of his place. You are witnesses this day”.

¹¹And all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who will come into your house like Rachel and like Leah, the two who built the house of Israel. And may you be mighty in Ephrath and famous

in Bethlehem, ¹²and may your house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the LORD gives you by this young woman”.

¹³So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. And when he went in to her, the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she bore a son. ¹⁴And the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the LORD who has not left you this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. ¹⁵And may he renew you in your life and sustain you in your old age, for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth”.

¹⁶And Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom and became its nurse. ¹⁷And the neighbour women gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi”. And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

¹⁸Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begot Hezron, ¹⁹and Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab, ²⁰and Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon, ²¹and Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed, ²²and Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

4:6 “My own inheritance”– he wanted Naomi’s property but he didn’t want to marry Ruth. If he married her and only one son was born to them, that one would take the name of Ruth’s first husband and become the heir not only of Elimelech and Naomi but of the kinsman-redeemer also, and so all the property of the kinsman would come into the hands of the family of Elimelech (compare Deut 25:5-6; Gen 38:9). This kinsman was not willing for this to happen.

4:11 “Rachel and Leah”– Jacob’s two wives who between them had many children (Gen 29; 30; 35:16-18). In other words, the elders are expressing the wish that Boaz and Ruth might have a large family.

4:12 “Judah”– Genesis chapter 38. Perez became

a leader of the tribe of Judah and an ancestor of Boaz, David, and the Lord Jesus.

4:13 “Conceive”– it is possible that Ruth, like some other famous women in the Bible had been unable to have children (Gen 11:30; 29:31; 1 Sam 1:2,5; Luke 1:7). She had none by her first husband.

4:15 To say that Ruth was better to Naomi than seven sons was to give Ruth the highest praise.

4:17 “Obed”– means “servant”. Giving this name doubtless revealed their desire that their son should become a true servant of God.

4:18-21 Matt 1:3-6. Because of her kindness to her mother-in-law and her faith in the God of Israel, this foreign widow became one of the ancestors, not only of King David, but of the Lord Jesus. Such is God’s great grace.

