

# Ruth

## *Introduction*

*In this story, Naomi, an Israelite woman, moved with her husband and 2 sons to the country of Moab. The people of Moab were called Moabites but they were not good friends with the people of Israel. Then Naomi's 2 sons both married Moabite women, and this was against God's law. The people of Israel were supposed to marry people from Israel, not people from other nations.*

*When both Naomi's husband and her sons died, Naomi made up her mind to leave Moab and go back to Israel. One of Naomi's daughters-in-law, Ruth, wanted to go back to Israel with Naomi. And Ruth wanted to leave her Moabite gods and follow Naomi's God, the God of Israel.*

*In those days, widows had no way to get food for themselves. So Ruth looked after Naomi by getting food for her. Ruth did this by going to a paddock where food seeds were being grown. When the seeds on the grass plants were ready to be picked, the workers cut the grass and tied them up. God's law said that when people did this, they had to leave any seeds that had dropped on the ground. They were not allowed to pick them up. Those seeds that were on the ground were for strangers or people that didn't have much money.*

*The paddock where Ruth picked up seeds belonged to a man named Boaz. Boaz was a close relation of Naomi's husband who had died. And part of the Hebrew culture was that when a*

*married man died, a close relation was meant to marry the widow. That way the woman was looked after and the children from that marriage would carry on the family line.*

*Ruth, the woman from Moab, was the great-grandmother of King David. And so she is in Jesus' family line.*

*The story of Ruth teaches us about God's kindness, and how he cares for people that are having a hard time.*

*Elim-elek (Elimelech) and Naomi left their homeland and went to a country called Mo-ab*

<sup>1-2</sup> This story comes from a long time ago when the leader for the Israelite people was called a Judge.

There was a man named Elim-elek who was from the Ef-rath (Ephrath) clan. And he lived in the town of Bethlehem in the country that belonged to the tribe of Judah.

Elim-elek was married to Naomi and they had 2 sons, Mah-lon and Kill-e-on (Kilion).

There came a time when there was not much food growing in the country of Israel, and all the people were really hungry. So Elim-elek took his wife and his 2 sons to live for a while in a country called Mo-ab.

<sup>3</sup> Some time later, Elim-elek died and Naomi was left all alone with her 2 sons.

<sup>4</sup> Those 2 young men married women from Mo-ab. One woman's name was Or-pah and the other woman's name was Ruth.

They all lived together in Mo-ab for about another 10 years,

<sup>5</sup> but then both Mah-lon and Kill-e-on died. And so Naomi was all alone. She had lost her husband and now she had lost her 2 sons.

*Naomi went back to Bethlehem*

<sup>6</sup> Later on, someone told Naomi that the Lord had helped his people in Israel and had given them food. So Naomi and her daughters-in-law got ready to leave Mo-ab and go back to Bethlehem.

<sup>7</sup> Naomi, Or-pah and Ruth left their home in Mo-ab, and they started to walk along the track that went back to the land of Judah in Israel.

<sup>8</sup> Then Naomi stopped and said to her daughters-in-law, "I want you to go back and stay with your mothers. I will pray and ask the Lord to be kind to you, just like you have been kind to me and my 2 sons.

<sup>9</sup> I will ask the Lord to give each of you a new husband to look after you and to keep you safe." Then Naomi kissed them and said goodbye to them, and they all started to cry out loud.

<sup>10</sup> Both the young women said, "No, we don't want to do that, we want to go with you and live with you and your people."

<sup>11</sup> But Naomi said, "Why do you want to come with me? I cannot have more sons so that you can marry them. No, go home my daughters.

<sup>12</sup> Go back to your families. I might get married today and have 2 more sons straight away, but I am too old for that to happen. And even if I can have 2 more sons straight away,

<sup>13</sup> you cannot wait for them to grow up. No, you cannot wait that long to have a husband. I think

the Lord has turned against me. I am too sad and angry, and I don't want you to feel like that too!"

<sup>14</sup> They all cried out loud again. Then Or-pah kissed her mother-in-law to say goodbye and she started to walk back to her family in Mo-ab. But Ruth grabbed Naomi and held onto her.

<sup>15</sup> Naomi said to her, "Ruth, Or-pah is going back to her people and to her gods. I want you to go with her."

### *Ruth made a strong promise to Naomi*

<sup>16</sup> But Ruth said, "Don't force me to leave you, and don't stop me from following you. This is my strong promise to you. Wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you live, I will live there too. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God.

<sup>17</sup> Where you die, I will die there too. Where you are buried, I want to be buried in the same place. If I leave you before I die, then I ask the Lord to really punish me."

<sup>18</sup> When Naomi saw that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her, she stopped talking.

<sup>19</sup> Then they walked together until they got to Bethlehem and everyone in the town was very excited to see them. All the women said, "Is that really you Naomi?"

<sup>20</sup> But Naomi said, "Do not call me Naomi. That name means that I am happy, but I am not happy. Call me Mara. That name means that I am not happy, I am like food that has gone sour. God All Powerful has made my life very hard.

<sup>21</sup> I left this country a happy person, but now the Lord has made me come back here and I have nothing. The Lord All Powerful has sent me too much trouble, so do not call me Naomi!”

<sup>22</sup> That is how Naomi and Ruth, her daughter-in-law from Mo-ab, came home to Bethlehem.

They got there when the people in that country started to go out to their paddocks to cut all the long barley grass. The people grew that barley grass to make food from the seeds.

## 2

### *Ruth met Boaz*

<sup>1</sup> At that time there was a man living in Bethlehem and his name was Boaz. He was an important man from the same clan as Naomi's husband, Elim-elek (Elimelech).

<sup>2</sup> One day, Ruth the young woman from Mo-ab, said to Naomi, “Can I go to the paddocks where they grow the barley grass? Someone might be kind to me and let me pick up some of the grass that has dropped onto the ground.”

And Naomi said, “Yes, go and do that my daughter.”

<sup>3</sup> So Ruth went to a paddock where some workers were cutting the barley grass and she started to pick up the grass that had fallen onto the ground. Ruth didn't know that the paddock belonged to Boaz who was a close relation for Elim-elek.

<sup>4</sup> Later on, Boaz went out from Bethlehem and walked to his paddock.

When he got near to his workers he said, “I pray that the Lord is close to all of you today.”

And the workers said back to him, “We pray that the Lord will be good to you.”

This is how people said hello to one another in those days.

<sup>5</sup> Then Boaz said to the leader of the workers, “Who is that young woman? What family does she come from?”

<sup>6</sup> The leader said, “She is the young woman from Mo-ab that came back with Naomi.

<sup>7</sup> This morning she came and said to me, ‘Can I follow behind your workers and pick up the barley grass that has dropped onto the ground?’

She has worked very hard all morning and she has only stopped to have a short rest under our tent.”

<sup>8</sup> So Boaz walked over to Ruth and said to her in a friendly way, “I want you to listen to me. I would like you to stay in my paddocks to pick up the barley grass. Stay close to my women workers and do not go to paddocks that belong to someone else.

<sup>9</sup> You must watch where my women are working and follow along behind them. I have told my men workers to leave you alone. And when you get thirsty, get a drink from those billycans my men have filled with water.”

<sup>10</sup> Ruth got down on her knees in front of Boaz and put her face close to the ground to show him respect. She said, “Why are you so good to me? I am a stranger in this country.”

<sup>11</sup> Boaz said, “Yes, I know you are a stranger, but people have told me that you have been very

good to your mother-in-law after her husband died. You left your country, and you left your mother and your father to come to this country where you do not know anyone.

<sup>12</sup> You have come into God's country and he will look after you just like a mother bird looks after her babies and puts them under her wings. I pray that the Lord will be good to you for all the good things you have done for Naomi.”

<sup>13</sup> Ruth said to him, “Thank you my master, I know that I am not one of your workers but you have said kind words to me and now I feel happy.”

<sup>14</sup> When it was time to eat, Boaz said to Ruth, “Come over here and sit with us. Come and have something to eat. Take some of this bread and put some nice sauce on it.”

So she sat down and ate with the workers, and Boaz gave her some cooked seeds to eat. She ate as much as she wanted and then kept the rest for later.

<sup>15</sup> When they finished eating, Ruth got up and went back to work.

Then Boaz said to the men cutting the grass, “When you tie up the long barley grass, let that young woman pick up the grass on the ground and do not try to stop her.

<sup>16</sup> And when you have tied up the grass, pull some of it out and drop it on the ground so that she can have it. Do not tell her to stop.”

<sup>17</sup> Ruth worked hard until the sun went down. She took all the barley grass that she had picked up and then she hit it with a stick to make the

seeds fall off. When Ruth had finished hitting the grass, there were so many seeds that she filled up a really big billycan.

<sup>18</sup> Then she carried the seeds back to the town and showed them to Naomi. And she gave Naomi the cooked seeds she saved from the meal that she had in the middle of the day.

<sup>19</sup> Naomi asked Ruth, “Where did you get all these seeds? Where did you work today? I pray that God is good to the person that let you have this food.”

Ruth said to Naomi, “I have been working in a paddock that belongs to Boaz.”

<sup>20</sup> Straight away Naomi said, “I want the Lord to bless Boaz and do good things for him. The Lord always keeps his promise to people that are alive and to people who are dead. Yes, I want him to do good things for Boaz.”

Naomi said to Ruth, “Boaz is a close relation for us. In our culture he is someone that has to look after us.”

<sup>21</sup> Then Ruth, the young woman from Mo-ab, said, “Boaz told me to stay close to his workers every day until they have finished cutting the grass and all the seeds are put into his shed.”

<sup>22</sup> And Naomi said, “Yes, that is a good idea my daughter. It is much better that you stay with his women workers. If you went to work in another person's paddock, somebody might do the wrong thing to you.”

<sup>23</sup> So, Ruth lived with Naomi and went to work every day until all the long grass was cut and the barley and other food seeds were put into the

shed. And she did what she was told, she stayed close to the women that worked for Boaz.

### 3

#### *Naomi had a plan to get a husband for Ruth*

<sup>1</sup> One day, Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, I want you to have a good life and a safe place to live after I die. And so I am going to find the right man for you to marry.

<sup>2</sup> You have been picking up the barley grass behind the women that work for Boaz, and he is our close relation. Boaz and his workers have finished getting all the grass from his paddocks. And they have put the grass in the place where people hit the grass with a stick to make the barley seeds fall off. Tonight Boaz and his workers will throw all the seeds into the air so that the wind will blow the rubbish away and the seeds will fall to the ground.

<sup>3-4</sup> This is my idea. I want you to have a wash, put on your best clothes, and some perfume or some nice smelling oil. Then go down to where Boaz is working, but do not let him see you. Wait until he has finished his supper and watch where he lies down to sleep. That way you can find him in the dark. And when he is really asleep, go and take the blanket off his feet and lie down there. He will tell you what to do."

<sup>5</sup> Ruth answered, "I will do everything you have said."

<sup>6</sup> Later, Ruth washed herself, changed her clothes and put on some nice smelling oil. She

went down to where Boaz was working and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.

<sup>7</sup> Boaz finished his supper and after he had something to drink, he was happy and tired. He lay down next to a heap of seeds and went to sleep. Ruth waited until Boaz was really asleep, then she walked quietly over to where he was lying down. She moved the blanket off his feet and lay down.

<sup>8</sup> In the middle of the night, something made Boaz wake up and he got a big shock when he found a woman lying next to his feet.

<sup>9</sup> He said, "Who are you?"

Ruth said to him, "My master, it's me, Ruth. You are a close relation and you have to look after me. That is why I took the blanket off your feet and lay down. I am asking you to look after me and to marry me."

<sup>10</sup> Boaz said, "I want the Lord to be good to you, Ruth. You are being very kind to me and showing our family great respect. You have been very kind to Naomi and her family. And now you are showing more kindness, you are being kind to me. You might have looked for a much younger man to marry. He might have had a lot of money or he might have had nothing, but you did not look for a younger man. You have asked me.

<sup>11</sup> Don't be frightened Ruth, everyone in our community knows that you are a good woman and so I will do what you have asked me. I will help you.

<sup>12</sup> Yes, it is true that I am a close relation and it is my job to look after you, but there is another

man that is a closer relation than me. He is the one who has to look after you and marry you.

<sup>13</sup> But stay there and sleep at my feet. In the morning I will find out if that man will follow our culture and look after you. If he wants to look after you and marry you, that is alright. But if he does not want to marry you, then I will do the right thing and I will marry you. I am making this promise to you and the Lord is my witness. Lie down there until morning.”

<sup>14</sup> Ruth lay down at Boaz's feet all night and in the morning she got ready to leave before the sun got up. She did this so that no-one would see her. Boaz said to himself, “No-one must know that a woman came to this work place at night.”

<sup>15</sup> And so he said to Ruth, “Bring your coat here and I will put some seeds into it.”

So Ruth held out her coat and Boaz put a lot of barley seeds into it. He tied the coat up and put it on her back and then she went home.

<sup>16</sup> When Ruth got home, her mother-in-law said, “What happened Ruth?”

So Ruth told Naomi everything that had happened. Ruth said, “I did everything you said, but Boaz told me that there is a closer relation who should look after me and marry me. And then Boaz promised me that he would talk to that man. He said, ‘If the other man does not want to marry you, I will marry you.’”

<sup>17</sup> Boaz gave me these barley seeds. He said, ‘You must take a present home for your mother-in-law.’ ”

<sup>18</sup> Then Naomi said, “We must wait and see what happens. Boaz will not stop until he has made everything right. He will talk to that man and see if he will marry you.”

## 4

### *Boaz married Ruth*

<sup>1</sup> Later that morning, Boaz sat down in the meeting place near the town gate, and waited for his close relation to walk past. This was the man that Boaz had told Ruth about. He was the man who should look after her.

When Boaz saw his relation, he called out to him and said, “Can you come and sit down with me? I want to talk to you.”

The man walked over to Boaz and sat down.

<sup>2</sup> Then Boaz asked 10 of the town elders to have a meeting with him and his relation.

<sup>3</sup> They all sat down and Boaz said to the man, “Elim-elek’s (Elimelech’s) wife Naomi, has come back from Mo-ab. Naomi wants to sell the land that belonged to our relation, Elim-elek.

<sup>4</sup> And so I thought I would tell you. You are the closest relation for Elim-elek and you are the right person to buy that land. If you want to buy the land, you can do that here in front of all these elders right now. They will be witnesses that you own that land. But, if you do not want to buy the land, tell me, and I will buy it. You know that I am the next one in line.”

The close relation said, “Yes I will buy that land from Naomi.”

<sup>5</sup> Then Boaz said, “That is good, but you have to remember that when you buy the land, you have

to marry Ruth, the woman from Mo-ab. She was married to Mah-lon, Elim-elek's son who passed away. That way she can have children to carry on Elim-elek's family line and the land will still belong to them.”

<sup>6</sup> The other man said, “If that is what has to happen, I cannot buy that land. If I buy Elim-elek's land, it will still belong to Elim-elek's family and my own children will miss out. No, I will not buy that land. You are free to buy it.”

<sup>7</sup> In those days, the Israelite people had a way of showing that someone was the new owner of some land. The person selling that land took off their shoe and gave it to the person buying the land. They did this in front of witnesses to show that the deal was finished and legal in Israel.

<sup>8</sup> So the close relation took off his shoe and gave it to Boaz. He said to Boaz, “Here, you can buy that land.”

<sup>9</sup> Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people standing there, “You are witnesses for me today. I am buying from Naomi everything that belonged to her husband Elim-elek and her 2 sons, Kill-e-on (Kilion) and Mah-lon.

<sup>10</sup> And I am going to marry Ruth, the woman from Mo-ab who was married to Mah-lon. I am doing this so that Elim-elek's land will stay in his family and Ruth's children will carry on his family name. That way, his relations and the people from his hometown will not forget Elim-elek. You are all witnesses to what I have said here today.”

<sup>11</sup> All the elders and people at the meeting said to Boaz, “Yes, we are your witnesses. This is our prayer for you and Ruth as you get married and live together. We ask the Lord to give Ruth a lot of children like Rachel and Leah, our grandmothers from a long time ago. They had a lot of children with Jacob, and from those children the nation of Israel got really big.

Boaz, we ask the Lord to give you a good life here with the Ef-rath (Ephrath) clan. We ask the Lord to make you an important man here in Bethlehem so that everyone respects you.

<sup>12</sup> Remember your grandfather Perez from a long time ago. He was Tamar and Judah's son. We ask the Lord to give you and your wife a family like Perez had.”

<sup>13</sup> So Boaz took Ruth home to be his wife. He slept with her and the Lord gave her a baby boy.

<sup>14</sup> The women in Bethlehem said to Naomi, “Thank you Lord! Naomi, the Lord has given you a grandson to carry on your family line. We ask the Lord to make a way for everyone in Israel to know him and respect him.

<sup>15</sup> Your daughter-in-law Ruth loves you so much. She has done more to help you than if you had 7 sons to look after you. Now, she has given you a grandson. This little boy will make you feel young again and later on he will look after you.”

<sup>16</sup> Naomi held the baby close to her and she loved him like he was her own baby.

<sup>17</sup> The women that lived near to Naomi said, “Naomi has another son,” and they named him

Obed. When Obed grew up he had a son named Jesse and later on again, Jesse had a son named David.

<sup>18</sup> This is the family line for Perez who was the grandfather from a long time ago for Boaz.

Perez was the father of Hezron,

<sup>19</sup> Hezron was the father of Ram,

Ram was the father of A-min-a-dab,

<sup>20</sup> A-min-a-dab was the father of Nah-shon,

Nah-shon was the father of Salmon,

<sup>21</sup> Salmon was the father of Boaz,

Boaz was the father of Obed,

<sup>22</sup> Obed was the father of Jesse,

and Jesse was the father of David. David was a king of Israel.

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