

Ruth

Introduction

The Book of Ruth is arguably the greatest short story ever written, though of course, it is history and not fiction. Judges and Ruth are so different in tone that it is amazing that they take place during the same time period. In contrast to the murder and lust of Judges, there is the wonder of how much Ruth endeared herself to people who should have been strangers. A miracle quietly transpires in this story, and people who might have considered Ruth an enemy because of her Moabite ancestry, were instead drawn to her by the cords of G-d's love. Love is a wonderful thing. The story of Ruth is saying, look how G-d's love binds people together, with a bond that even death cannot sever, for G-d is the G-d of the living, and even the dead are not beyond his protective, redemptive hand. See 1C 15:3-4. Look at Ruth's story. Ruth's husband Mahlon is dead; he left her no son, Naomi he left no grandchildren. Mahlon's property is languishing untilled in Bethlehem. All seems hopelessly lost. Who can help Naomi? Who can help Ruth? Who can reclaim the land and bring a harvest of prosperity again? Who can redeem the dead? No one, it seems. The land has seen famine, the dead are gone. But is anything too hard for HASHEM? Read the story and watch G-d go into action! Watch him redeem the lost property and put the deed of ownership back into the name of the deceased. All right, you say, G-d

can redeem the land perhaps. But can G-d redeem the dead? Can a corpse have a child? As we read the whole story, we find that not only can a child be given to the corpse, but also that in this child is the promise of a Moshiach who himself will be raised from the dead with the ultimate promise that every corpse sleeping in the grave will be raised from the dead, even the corpse in this story, Mahlon, the deceased husband of Ruth! Now the story is saying, after all that, you, reader, should believe that G-d is the G-d of the living, who can redeem the world and the land and who can make alive even the dead. Ruth had neither a Jewish mother nor a Jewish father! But she has entered Ideal Israel (Yeshuron Yisroel, meaning “upright one” or “law-upholding one,” a poetic name for the true Israel — see Isa 44:2; Dt 32:15; 33:26; 33:5) by faith alone (Ga 2:15-21), by an individual choice to turn away from the former heathenish direction she was going and by making a personal decision to turn back and join the people of G-d and to take their G-d as her G-d in true teshuva (1:16-17). (Moab symbolizes for Naomi a heathenish neglect of G-d’s people and G-d’s House, because Bethlehem means “House of Bread,” and Naomi has felt the covenant curses of famine, death, and childlessness as a result of her moving in a heathenish direction that neglects G-d’s House — Dt 28:18,21,24). But Ruth has become a “supernatural Jew” through the new birth identity in HASHEM, entering “Upright” Israel by what alone made her upright, that is, emunah (Hab 2:4; Gn 15:6; Ps 106:31; Ga 2:16), and Ruth has en-

tered Upright Israel ahead of those who say they are Jews but are still spiritually uncircumcised, still blindly heathen at heart, as Naomi seems to be in Moab until she is provoked to jealousy by seeing G-d bless in Bethlehem one of the Gentiles, her daughter-in-law Ruth (contrast Ruth 1:15 and Ruth 2:20). Ruth's regenerated, circumcised heart made her part of the true circumcision, and we who are regenerated in the Brit Chadasha kehillah have also entered Yeshurun Israel with Ruth the Moabitess and with Rahab in order to provoke the Jewish people to jealousy, to turn them back to the true G-d, the G-d revealed in the Holy Bible. The point that the story is leading to is how great G-d's blessing is on this non-Jewish woman — more than she could ever see in her lifetime. Ruth became a direct ancestor of King David and, through him, Ruth became a direct ancestor of the promised Moshiach! The irony of G-d's hand on a Gentile's life in the midst of Jewish people is a theme of the story. HASHEM's providential care for her, the way her footsteps are literally ordered by the L-rd (Ps 37:23), the gracious way her faith is answered by His provision — these are all highlighted by the fact that she is an outsider, alone, a widow, a non-Jew, a foreigner, a member of the excluded, (cursed by the Law — Dt 23:3) Moabite people, a pagan who had known only death and a false religion and was now poor and helpless in a strange land. G-d's special providential care toward those on their way to salvation is a theme of Ruth. Everywhere this Gentile widow turns, she is blessed, because she

has been given a heart to bless G-d's people (Gn 12:2). Just as she does not forget her mother-in-law, G-d does not abandon His chesed (covenant-keeping loving kindness) with Ruth and with both the living and the dead (Ruth 2:20). G-d makes everything work together for good for Ruth, even a famine, even a death in the family, even three deaths in the family (Ro 8:28). G-d uses the famine in Israel to get Ruth's future mother-in-law Naomi to move from Bethlehem to where Ruth could meet her in Moab, making Naomi an unwitting "Jonah to the Ninevites," a light to the nations. G-d uses the death of Ruth's husband to free Ruth to begin a spiritual pilgrimage that is nothing short of salvation. G-d, who withdraws the rain, now brings the early rain and the later rain to end the famine and bless the land with the harvest, which is a reward for covenant-obedience (Dt 28:4). But, here is where the wonder really begins. G-d leads the two widows back to Bethlehem for a harvest greater than they could ever imagine, a world harvest led by the Moshiach (Mt 28:19-20), the world Harvester "to whom the nations belong" (Gn 49:10). (Notice carefully the Goel redeemer son of Judah at the threshing floor in Ruth 3:2). The World Harvester, the Moshiach will be born there in Bethlehem a thousand years later (see Mic 5:1-2). G-d gives Ruth a strange and marvelous love. G-d gives Ruth a supernatural love for her mother-in-law and for the people of G-d. G-d gives her the courage to say good-bye to her heathen sister and to go to Israel with her mother-in-law. Then G-d brings her to a very special man, a man of substance, a man of destiny, the most

wonderful husband she could ever have dreamed of, in fact a husband far beyond her imagination, an absolutely unique man of royal blood, the only man in the world who was Ruth's contemporary and was at the same time destined to become a direct ancestor of King David and of the Moshiach. And the wonder is that G-d led this Gentile woman Ruth to find favor in his sight and become related to him in holy covenant love. For this man (Boaz) from the Messianic tribe of Judah became Ruth's kinsman Go'el (redeemer), protecting the family, the dead as well as the living. This man from the tribe of the Moshiach married Ruth and redeemed (bought back) the land of Ruth's dead husband and raised up an heir to carry on the dead man's name. So the dead man's inheritance was not wiped out. G-d is the G-d who saves the living and the dead (1C 15:51; 1Th 4:15-17) through a Redeemer from the tribe of Judah. Here it is important to remember that the PEDUT (the payment of ransom for geulah redemption as in Ro 3:24) comes about through the Go'el Moshiach Tzidkeinu. Had Moshiach not paid the ransom of his korban Pesach blood (Isa 53:7) as our Go'el (Redeemer), we could never have been bought back from sin and death and judgment. Our plight would have been more hopeless than Ruth and Naomi, these two tragic almanot. In the Bible, G-d is also the protector of almanot. In Bible times, a woman without the covering of a husband was in danger of exploitation or of sexual molestation or even being carried off. Because of our sin nature and our sin practices, we were carried off and on the slave market auction block of sin. We

needed a redeemer to buy us back. Moshiach Ben Dovid is rich and can do that because Moshiach is free from a sin nature tie to Adam* and rich in mercy. If we humble ourselves like a poor widow and turn to him to redeem us, he will put the wings of his garment over us and protect us from all doom and loss. Moshiach will be to us what Boaz was to Ruth and Naomi. This book of the Bible is extremely important because it shows the tribe of Judah and a coming redeemer of the Jews and Gentiles, the Moshiach, who will fulfill Gn 49:10. The secret of Ruth's blessing was her faithfulness. She continued working where G-d placed her. She refused to leave her mother-in-law, she remained with her in life and refused to leave her in death (1:16-18). Ruth remained in faith where G-d placed her. She remained in Boaz's field. Boaz said, "Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain," (2:21) and she obeyed him. Ruth didn't go to the field of someone else where she might have been harmed (2:22). If we stay close to the harvesters, and refuse to leave the harvest field where G-d has placed us, we will be blessed like this lowly and loving and faithful mevasseret (lady evangelist) Ruth who won a Jewish lady to the L-rd (Ro 11:11; Ruth 1:15).

¹ Now it came to pass in the yamim when HaShofetim (*the Judges*) ruled, that there was a ra'av (*famine*) in the land. And a certain ish (*man*) of Beit-Lechem Yehudah went to sojourn in the

* : Gn 3:15; Isa 7:14

sadei Moav, he, and his isha (*wife*), and his two banim (*sons*).

² And the shem (*name*) of the ish (*man*) was Elimelech, and the shem (*name*) of his isha (*wife*) Naomi, and the shem of his two banim Machlon and Kilyon, Ephrathites of Beit-Lechem Yehudah. And they came into the sadei Moav, and continued there.

³ And Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left (*alive*) and her two banim.

⁴ And they took them wives of the nashim (*women*) of Moav; the shem (*name*) of the one was Orpah, and the shem (*name*) of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about eser shanim (*ten years*).

⁵ And Machlon and Kilyon died also both of them; and the isha was left (*alive*), surviving with neither her yeladim nor her ish.

⁶ Then she arose with her kallot, that she might make teshuvah (*return*) from the sadei Moav: for in the sadeh of Moav she had heard how that HASHEM had visited His people in giving them lechem (*bread*).

⁷ Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two kallot with her; and they set on the derech (*way, road*) to make teshuvah (*return*) unto Eretz Yehudah.

⁸ And Naomi said unto her two kallot, Go, go back each to her beis em (*mother's house*): may HASHEM show chesed (*lovingkindness*) to you, as ye have dealt with hamesim (*the dead ones*), and with me.

⁹ HASHEM grant you that ye may find menuchah (*resting place*), each of you in the bais of her ish.

Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.

¹⁰ And they said unto her, Surely we will make teshuvah (*return*) with thee unto thy people.

¹¹ And Naomi said, Turn back, my banot; why will ye go with me? Are there yet any more banim in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

¹² Turn back, my banot, go your way; for I am too old to have an ish. If I should say, I have tikvah, if I should have an ish halailah (*tonight*), and should also bear banim,

¹³ Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? Would ye stay from having ba'alim (*husbands*) for them? Nay, my banot; for it is more mar (*bitter*) for me than you, for the Yad HASHEM has gone out against me.

¹⁴ And they lifted up their voice, and wept again; and Orpah kissed[†] her chamot; but Ruth clung unto her.

¹⁵ And she said, Hinei, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her g-ds; return thou after thy sister-in-law.

¹⁶ And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy G-d shall be Elohai;

¹⁷ Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried. HASHEM do so to me, and more also, if anything but HaMavet part thee and me.

¹⁸ When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left urging her.

[†] 1:14 cf Mt 26:49

¹⁹ So they two went until they came to Beit-Lechem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beit-Lechem, that kol ha'ir (*all the town*) was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?

²⁰ And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi,‡ call me Mara;§ for Shaddai hath dealt very bitterly with me.

²¹ I went away full and HASHEM hath brought me back empty; why then call me Naomi, seeing HASHEM hath testified against me, and Shaddai hath made me very bitter?

²² So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her kallah, with her, which returned out of the sadei Moav; and they came to Beit-Lechem in the beginning of katzir seorim (*barley harvest*).

2

¹ And Naomi had a relative of her husband's, an ish gibbor chayil, of the mishpochah of Elimelech; and shmo was Boaz.

² And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the sadeh, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I shall find chen (*grace, favor*). And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.

³ And she went, and came, and gleaned in the sadeh behind the kotzerim (*harvesters*); and it so happened that she came on a part of the sadeh belonging unto Boaz, who was of the mishpochah of Elimelech.

⁴ And, hinei, Boaz came from Beit-Lechem, and said unto the kotzerim, HASHEM be with you.

‡ 1:20 Pleasant § 1:20 Bitter

And they answered him, Yevarech'chah Adonoi (HASHEM *bless thee*).

⁵ Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the kotzerim, Whose na'arah is this?

⁶ And the servant that was set over the kotzerim answered and said, It is the na'arah from Moav that came back with Naomi out of the sadeh of Moav.

⁷ And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the kotzerim among the omarim (*sheaves*); so she came, and hath worked steadily from the boker even until now, except for a short rest in the bais.

⁸ Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another sadeh, neither go from hence, but abide here close by my ne'arot;

⁹ Let thine eyes be on the sadeh that they do reap, and go thou after them; have I not charged the ne'arim that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the kelim (*vessels*), and drink of that which the ne'arim have drawn.

¹⁰ Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found chen (*favor, grace*) in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a nokhriyah (*foreigner, alien*)?

¹¹ And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shown me, all that thou hast done unto thy chamot since the mot (*death*) of thine ish; and how thou hast left thy av and thy em, and the eretz moledet, and art come unto an Am (*people*) which thou knewest not heretofore.

¹² HASHEM recompense thy work, and a full

reward be given thee of HASHEM Elohei Yisroel, under Whose wings thou art come to seek refuge.

¹³ Then she said, Let me find *chen* (*favor, grace*) in thy sight, adoni; for that thou hast brought *nachamah* (*comfort*) to me, and for that thou hast spoken to the lev of thine *shifcha*, though I be not like unto one of thine *shfakhot*.

¹⁴ And Boaz said unto her, At et *haokhel* (*meal-time*) come thou hither, and eat of the *lechem*, and dip thy morsel in the *chometz*. And she sat beside the *kotzerim*; and he offered her roasted grain, and she did eat, and was filled, and had left over.*

¹⁵ And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his *ne'arim*, saying, Let her glean even among the *omarim*, and reproach her not;

¹⁶ And let fall also some† of the handfuls on purpose for her; and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.

¹⁷ So she gleaned in the *sadeh* until the *erev*, and she threshed what she had gleaned; and it was about an *ephah* of *seorim*.

¹⁸ And she took it up, and went into the town; and her *chamot* saw what she had gleaned; and she brought forth, and gave to her the left over‡ after she had been filled.

¹⁹ And her *chamot* said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned *hayom* (*today*)? And where did you work? Baruch be he who did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her *chamot* with whom she had worked, and said, Shem HaIsh with whom I worked *hayom* (*today*) is Boaz.

* **2:14** *shirayim* † **2:16** out from the *omarim* ‡ **2:18** *shirayim*

²⁰ And Naomi said unto her kallah, Baruch hu l'HASHEM asher lo azav chasdo et haChayyim v'et haMesim (*Blessed be he of HASHEM who hath not abandoned his chesed to the living and to the dead*). And Naomi said unto her, The man is karov unto us. MiGoaleinu hu (*he is one of our kinsmen redeemers*).

²¹ And Ruth the Moabite said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep close by my ne'arim, until they have ended kol HaKatzir that is mine.

²² And Naomi said unto Ruth her kallah, It is tov, my daughter, that thou go out with his ne'arot, because in someone else's sadeh you might be harmed.

²³ So she kept close by the ne'arot of Boaz to glean unto the end of katzir haseorim and of katzir chittim; and dwelt with her chamot.

3

¹ Then Naomi her chamot said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek manoach (*a resting place*) for thee, that it may be well with thee?

² And now is not Boaz our relative, with whose ne'arot thou wast? Hinei, he winnoweth haseorim halailah in the threshing floor.

³ Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the threshing floor; but make not thyself known unto the Ish, until he shall have done eating and drinking.

⁴ And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the makom (*place*) where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay

thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.

⁵ And she said unto her, Kol that thou sayest unto me I will do.

⁶ And she went down unto the threshing floor, and did according to kol that her chamot bade her.

⁷ And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his lev was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

⁸ And it came to pass in the middle of the night, that the man was afraid, and turned himself; and, hinei, an isha lay at his feet!

⁹ And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid; spread therefore thy robe over thine amah (*handmaid*); for thou art a Go'el (*Redeemer*).

¹⁰ And he said, Berukhah at laHASHEM, my daughter; for thou hast showed more chesed in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not the bochurim, whether poor or rich.

¹¹ And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest; for kol sha'ar ami doth have da'as that thou art an aishes chayil* (*virtuous woman*).

¹² And now it is true that I am thy Go'el; howbeit there is a Go'el karov mimeini (*Redeemer nearer than I*).

¹³ Tarry this night, and it shall be in the boker, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a Go'el, well; let him do the Go'el's part; let him redeem you. But if he will not do the part of a Go'el to thee,

* **3:11** Prov 31

then will I do the part of a Go'el to thee, as HASHEM liveth. Lie down until HaBoker.

¹⁴ And she lay at his feet until HaBoker; and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that an isha came into the threshing floor.

¹⁵ Also he said, Bring the mitpachat (*shawl*) that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of seorim (*barley*) and laid it on her; and she went into the town.

¹⁶ And when she came to her chamot, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that HaIsh had done to her.

¹⁷ And she said, These six measures of seorim gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty-handed unto thy chamot (*mother-in-law*).

¹⁸ Then said she, Wait, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall; for HaIsh will not rest until the matter is settled HaYom.

4

¹ Then went Boaz up to the sha'ar, and sat him down there; and, hinei, the Go'el of whom Boaz spoke came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! Turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down.

² And he took a minyan of the zekenim of the town, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.

³ And he said unto the Go'el, Naomi, that is come again out of the sadeh of Moav, selleth a share of sadeh, which was achinu (*our brother*) Elimelech's;

⁴ And I thought to advise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the zekenim of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it; but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it.

⁵ Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the sadeh of the hand of Naomi, thou must acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the eshet hamet (*wife of the dead man*), lahakim (*to raise up, resurrect*) the shem hamet upon his nachalah (*inheritance*).

⁶ And the Go'el said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own nachalah; redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it.

⁷ Now this was the manner in former time in Yisroel concerning the geulah (*redemption*) and concerning the temurah (*the substitute, exchange*), for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his sandal, and gave it to his neighbor; and this was an attestation in Yisroel.

⁸ Therefore the Go'el said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his sandal.

⁹ And Boaz said unto the zekenim, and unto kol haAm, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Kilyon's and Machlon's, of the hand of Naomi.

¹⁰ Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Machlon, have I purchased to be my wife, lahakim (*to raise up, resurrect*) the shem hamet (*name of the dead man*) upon his nachalah, that the shem of the dead man be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the sha'ar of his place; ye are edim (*witnesses*) HaYom.

¹¹ And kol HaAm that were in the sha'ar, and the zekenim, said, We are edim. HASHEM make the isha haba'ah (*the woman coming*),* into thine bais† like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the Bais Yisroel; and do thou worthily in Ephrat, and be famous in Beit-Lechem;

¹² And let thy bais be like the bais of Peretz, whom Tamar bore unto Yehudah, of the zera‡ which HASHEM shall give thee of this na'arah.

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his isha; and when he went in unto her, HASHEM gave her conception, and she bore ben.§

¹⁴ And the nashim said unto Naomi, Baruch HASHEM, which hath not left thee this yom without a Go'el. May shmo be famous in Yisroel.

¹⁵ And may he restore your nefesh and be a nourisher of thine old age; for thy kallah, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than shiva banim, hath born him.

¹⁶ And Naomi took the yeled, and laid him in her kheyk (*bosom*), and became omenet (*nurse*) unto it.

¹⁷ And the women her shchenim gave him a name, saying, There is a ben born to Naomi; and they called his name Oved; he is the father of Yishai, the father of Dovid.

¹⁸ Now these are the toldot of Peretz; Peretz fathered Chetzron,

¹⁹ And Chetzron fathered Ram, and Ram fathered Amminadav,

* **4:11** See Gn 3:15; Isa 7:14 † **4:11** i.e. Bais Dovid ‡ **4:12** Gn 22:18; Ga 3:16 § **4:13** See Isa 7:14

²⁰ And Amminadav fathered Nachshon, and Nachshon fathered Salmon,

²¹ And Salmon fathered Boaz, and Boaz fathered Oved,

²² And Oved fathered Yishai, and Yishai fathered Dovid.*

* **4:22** T. N. This genealogy is important not only because it is Dovid's, but also because it is Moshiach's. See 1Chr 2:4; 3:5 and the genealogy in Mt 1 of Yehoshua/Yeshua Ben Dovid. The sandal exchanged (Ruth 4:7) fell on the genealogical line that would inherit the earth (Ro 4:13), crush Satan's head (Gn 3:15), and make the temurah (substitution) to redeem the living and the dead (Ro 4:25), even as Elimelech stood up alive vicariously through his Goel to reclaim the allotted inheritance of his redemption.

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