
A Stranger Finds Love in Bethlehem

An EasyEnglish Version with Notes (1200 word vocabulary) on the Book of Ruth

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Words in boxes are comments on the text.

The translated Bible text **has been** through Advanced Checking.

A word list at the end explains words with a *star by them.

About this book

This book is about a woman called Ruth. She was an *ancestor of King David and of Jesus. We do not know who wrote the book. Ruth was a good woman who was kind to her husband's mother, Naomi. Naomi's and Ruth's husbands died. They were very poor and Naomi was very sad. But they obeyed God. A man called Boaz helped them. He married Ruth. God was good to Ruth and Boaz. They had children and Naomi became happy again.

Chapter 1

v1-2 There was a time when *judges ruled Israel. There was not enough food for the people to eat. A man, called Elimelech, lived in Bethlehem in Judah. Elimelech had a wife and two sons. Elimelech's wife was called Naomi and his sons were called Mahlon and Kilion. They were *Ephrathites. Because there was not enough food, Elimelech and his family left Bethlehem. They went to live in Moab.

The country called Moab was a good place for a farm. *Wheat grew well in one part of Moab. Grass grew well in another part of the country. So farm animals had good health.

v3 Elimelech died while they were living in Moab. Naomi and her two sons remained there and **v4** Naomi's sons married women from Moab. Mahlon married a woman called Ruth. And Kilion married a woman called Orpah. **v5** Both Mahlon and Kilion died after they had all lived in Moab for about ten years. Naomi was completely alone, without her husband or her sons.

When the women were alone, they could not work on their land any longer. They needed help from the men in their *families.

v6 Naomi received news from Judah that God had helped his people. There was now enough food in Judah again. Naomi decided to return to Judah. **v7** She and her sons' wives left their home in Moab. They began to travel together along the road towards Judah.

v8 On the way to Judah, Naomi spoke to Ruth and Orpah. She said, 'Return to your mothers' homes and stay there. Your husbands are dead now. But you were kind to them when they were alive. And you have been kind to me. I pray that God will be as kind to you. I also pray that God will give each of you another husband and a new home.' **v9** Naomi kissed them and Ruth and Orpah began to cry.

v10 They said to Naomi, 'No! We will go with you to your people.'

v11 But Naomi said, 'Return to your own country, my daughters. You should not want to come with me. I will not have other sons. You cannot marry them. **v12** Return to your own country, my daughters. I am too old to have another husband. Think about this. I might even marry another husband tonight. Then I might give birth to sons. Those sons would grow up and they would become men. Then you could marry them. **v13** But I am sure that you do not want to wait for so many years, my daughters. This is painful for you. It is more painful for me. God has caused bad things to happen to me.'

v14 Ruth and Orpah wept again. Orpah kissed Naomi and she said goodbye. But Ruth would not leave Naomi. She held on to Naomi.

v15 Naomi said to Ruth, 'Orpah has returned to her family. She has returned to the gods of Moab. Go with her.'

v16 Ruth said to Naomi, 'Do not say that I must leave you. I want to go with you. I want to live with you. You belong to Israel's people. I will belong to them also. Your God will be my God. **v17** I want to die in the place where you die. I want someone to bury me there. Even when I die, I want to be with you. I must not leave you before I die. If I do, God should be very angry with me.' **v18** Naomi understood that Ruth would not return to her own country. Then Naomi stopped saying that Ruth should leave her.

v19 Naomi and Ruth travelled together to Bethlehem. The people in Bethlehem were very surprised when they saw them. The women from the town said, 'Is this really Naomi?'

v20 Naomi said to them, 'Do not call me Naomi. Call me Mara. God has made my life very sad.

v21 I left here with my husband and my two sons. God has brought me back here without them. You should not call me Naomi. God has caused trouble to happen to me.'

The name Naomi means happy. The name Mara means sad.

v22 So Naomi returned from Moab with Ruth. Ruth was from Moab, and she was the wife of Naomi's son Mahlon. Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem when the people were cutting down *barley in the fields.

People plant *barley for food. The plants make many seeds. People cook the seeds and they eat them.

Chapter 2

Ruth meets Boaz

v1 Boaz was an important man. He was in the *family of Elimelech, Naomi's husband.

v2 Ruth, the woman from Moab, said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the fields. I will walk behind anyone who lets me. Then I will pick up the *barley that he lets fall.' Naomi said, 'Go my daughter.' **v3** So she went to the fields. And she began to pick up the *barley that the men let fall. It happened that she worked in one of Boaz's fields. Boaz was from Elimelech's *family.

When the workers cut the *barley in the fields, they did not cut to the edge of the field. Also they must leave *barley that dropped on the ground. They left *barley in the fields. Poor people and people from other countries could pick up this *barley. God's *Law said that the workers must do these things. We can read about this in Leviticus 23:22 and in Deuteronomy 24:19-22.

v4 Just then, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and he spoke to the workers. 'I ask God to be with you', he said. 'We pray that God will do good things for you', they said.

v5 Boaz asked the leader of his workers, 'Whose young woman is that?'

v6 The leader said, 'She is that young woman from Moab, who returned from Moab with Naomi. **v7** She asked, "Please let me walk behind the workers. Then I can pick up the *barley that they let fall." She has worked in the field from morning until now. She only had a short rest in the hut.'

v8 Boaz said to Ruth, 'Young woman, listen to me. Do not go and pick up *barley in another field. Do not go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. **v9** Watch where the men work. And walk behind the girls. I have said that the workers should not touch you. The workers have filled the jars with water. When you need water, go to those jars. And drink from the jars.'

v10 Ruth went down on her knees in front of Boaz. She said, 'Why did you choose to be kind to me? I am a foreign woman.'

v11 Boaz said, 'People have told me all about you. When your husband died, you did many things for Naomi. You left your father and your mother and your country. You came to live with people who were strangers to you. **v12** You have done many good things. I pray that God will do good things for you. You have come to Israel to be safe. I pray that the God of Israel will give you many good things.'

v13 Ruth said, 'Master, you have caused me to feel good by your kind words. I am not as important as one of your servant girls. But you have been kind to me. I hope that you will continue to be kind to me.'

v14 When it was time to eat, Boaz said to Ruth, 'Come here. Take some bread and make it wet with the *wine vinegar.'

When she sat down with the workers, Boaz gave her some food. It was *barley seeds that someone had cooked. She ate all that she wanted. And there was more than she could eat. **v15** After this, she returned to work in the field. Boaz said to his workers, 'If she picks up *barley near you, do not hurt her. **v16** It would be good to help her. You can let some *barley drop for her to pick up. And do not be angry with her.'

v17 Ruth worked in the field until evening. Then she hit her *barley with a stick until the seeds came out. She had about 22 *litres of seeds.

This was a very large amount of seeds for one day's work.

v18 She carried the seeds to the town. Naomi saw how much Ruth had picked. Ruth also gave to Naomi the *barley seeds that Ruth could not eat.

v19 Naomi asked her, 'Where did you work today? I want God to do good things for the man who was kind to you.' Then Ruth told Naomi about the man that she had worked with. 'The man that I worked with today is called Boaz', she said.

v20 'I pray that God will do good things for him', said Naomi to Ruth. 'God has not stopped being kind to people who are alive. He is kind to those who are dead too. That man is in my husband's *family. He is one of our *kinsmen-redeemers.'

At that time, a *kinsman-redeemer was a person in a *family. If there were poor people in a *family, the *kinsman-redeemer was good to them. If his brother died, he had to marry his brother's wife. Someone in the *family might have to sell themselves as a servant or as a slave. Then the *kinsman-redeemer would buy them back. A poor person in the *family might have to sell their land. Then the *kinsman-redeemer would buy the land back. Then the *family would not lose that land.

A person's *kinsman-redeemer was their nearest male in the *family. We can read about *kinsmen-redeemers in Leviticus 25:25-28, 47-49 and in Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

v21 Then Ruth, the woman from Moab, said, 'He even said to me, "Stay with my workers until they have finished the work."'

v22 Naomi said to Ruth, 'It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls. The workers in another field might hurt you.'

v23 So Ruth worked next to Boaz's servant girls until they finished the work. She lived with Naomi.

Chapter 3

Ruth finds a husband

v1 One day, Naomi said to Ruth, 'My daughter, I must find a home for you. There you will have everything that you need. **v2** You have worked with Boaz's servant girls. Boaz is in our *family. Tonight he will *winnow *barley on the *threshing floor.'

Boaz has grown *barley in his fields. He has brought all his *barley from his fields to a special place called the *threshing floor. The *barley has two parts called the seed and the chaff. The chaff is the light part round the seed. The farmer will use the seed of the *barley to make food. He must make the seed separate from the chaff. He throws the *barley up, and the wind blows away the chaff. This is what the word 'winnow' means. Boaz will take all the good seed from the *barley. And he will keep it safe in the buildings on his farm.

v3 'Wash yourself', said Naomi. 'Put oil that has a beautiful smell on yourself. Put on your best clothes. Then go down to the *threshing floor. Do not let him know that you are there. Wait until he has finished his food and drink. **v4** After that, he will lie down. Then you will see where he is lying. Go and lift the cloth from his feet. Lie down. Then he will say what you should do.'

v5 'I will do whatever you say', said Ruth. **v6** So she went down to the *threshing floor. And she did everything that Naomi had asked her to do.

At that time, a woman could do this. Ruth was asking Boaz to marry her. Naomi wanted Boaz to marry Ruth.

v7 Boaz was happy when he had finished his food and drink. He had put the *barley seeds together in one place. Boaz lay down next to the seeds. Ruth was very quiet and she went to him. She lifted the cloth that covered his feet. Then she lay down. **v8** In the middle of the night, something caused Boaz to feel afraid. He moved. Then he saw a woman who was lying at his feet.

v9 'Who are you?' he asked. 'I am your servant Ruth', she said. 'Put the corner of the cloth that covers your feet over me. You are a *kinsman-redeemer.'

v10 'Young woman, I pray that God will do good things for you', he replied. 'You were kind to Naomi earlier. Now you have been more kind to me. You have seen young men who are rich. And you have seen young men who are poor. You have not tried to marry any of these. **v11** And now, young woman, do not be afraid. All the people in this town know that you are a good woman. So I will do everything for you that you ask. **v12** It is true that I am in your *family. But there is another *kinsman-redeemer who is nearer to you. **v13** Stay here for the night. In the morning, if he wants to help you, let him do it. If he will not do it, I will do it. As God is alive, I will do it. Lie here until the morning.'

v14 So she lay at his feet until morning. But she got up before anyone could see her. Boaz said to her, 'Nobody must know that a woman came to the *threshing floor.'

v15 He also said, 'Bring me your small coat that you are wearing.' She brought the coat to him and Boaz poured *barley on to it. Then he put the coat on her. After that, he returned to the town.

We think that Boaz put *barley on to Ruth's small coat. Then he tied the corners of the coat together and he put it on her head. Then she could carry it to her home.

v16 When Ruth returned, Naomi asked, 'Ruth, what happened in the night?' Then Ruth told her everything that Boaz had done for her. **v17** Then she said, 'He also gave me all this *barley and he said, "Do not return to Naomi with empty hands."'

v18 Naomi said, 'Ruth, you must wait. Soon you will know what will happen. The man will be sure that he finishes everything today.'

Chapter 4

Boaz marries Ruth

v1 In the morning, Boaz went up to the gate of the town and he sat down. The *kinsman-redeemer that Boaz knew came to the gate. Boaz said to him, 'Come here, my friend, and sit down.' So, the man went to Boaz and the man sat down.

The gate of the town was an important place in the town. People met here to buy and to sell things. They also met to agree things about the *law.

v2 Boaz chose ten important men from the town and he said, 'Sit here.' So they sat down. **v3** Then he said to the *kinsman-redeemer, 'Naomi has returned from Moab. She wants to sell our brother Elimelech's piece of land. **v4** I thought that I should tell you about this. Now I ask you, in front of these important people, will you buy this land? If you want to buy it, then you should buy it. If you do not want to buy it, then you must tell me. Then I will know what you want to do. It is right for you to buy it. If you do not buy the land, then I can buy it.' The *kinsman-redeemer said, 'I will buy it.'

v5 Then Boaz said, 'On the day that you buy the land from Naomi and Ruth, you must marry Ruth. Then the name of Elimelech will stay with the land.'

v6 When Boaz said that, the *kinsman-redeemer replied. 'I cannot buy the land', he said. 'My family might lose my own land when I die. You buy the land yourself. I cannot buy it.'

The *kinsman-redeemer might marry Ruth and have a son. If the *kinsman-redeemer had no other sons, then Ruth's son would receive all his land. His land would then be in Elimelech's family. This would not be any different for Boaz. But Boaz wanted to be kind to Ruth and Naomi.

v7 At this time, in Israel, when a man sold land he removed his shoe. Then he gave it to the man who had bought the land. So then, everyone could see that the first man had sold the land. They had agreed this in the *law.

v8 So the *kinsman-redeemer said to Boaz, 'You buy the land.' And he removed his shoe.

v9 Boaz said to all the important people, 'You have all seen today that I have bought the land from Naomi. I have bought all the land of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. **v10** I will also marry Ruth, from Moab, who was the wife of Mahlon. His name and his land will stay together. Now his name will remain in his *family. And this town will not lose his name. Today you have seen all this happen.'

v11 Then the important men and all the other people at the gate said, 'We have seen all that has happened. We want God to be good to the woman who is coming into your home. We pray that he will make her like Rachel and Leah. They made the *family of Israel large. We pray that you will become an important man in Ephrathah. And we pray that you will become famous in Bethlehem.'

v12 God gave children to Perez. Perez was the son of Tamar and Judah. We pray that God will give children to you by this young woman like that.'

Rachel and Leah were the wives of Jacob. God had promised that Israel would be his people. He promised that the 12 sons of Rachel and Leah would begin large *families. These *families would be the 12 important *families in Israel.

Perez was one of Boaz's *ancestors. His father, Judah, had been a *kinsman-redeemer for Tamar. The *family of Judah (and Perez) became important in Israel. The *family of Boaz also became important. King David was in this *family.

The *family of David

v13 Boaz married Ruth. God did good things for her and she had a son. **v14** The women said to Naomi, 'Thank God! Today, he did not let you have no *kinsman-redeemer. We pray that Ruth's son will become famous everywhere in Israel! **v15** He will cause you to feel young again. He will be good to you when you are old. Ruth loves you. And she is better for you than seven sons would be. And now she has had this boy.'

v16 Naomi took the child. She held him in her arms. She was good to him as she would be to her own son. **v17** The women who lived there said, 'Naomi has a son.' They called him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David.

v18 So this is the *family of Perez.

Perez was the father of Hezron.

v19 Hezron was the father of Ram.

Ram was the father of Amminadab.

v20 Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.

Nahshon was the father of Salmon.

v21 Salmon was the father of Boaz.

Boaz was the father of Obed.

v22 Obed was the father of Jesse.

Jesse was the father of David.

Word List

ancestors ~ fathers and grandfathers, mothers and grandmothers, or people years ago that they were born to.

barley ~ a plant that makes seeds. People can cook and eat these seeds.

Ephrathites ~ people from the *family of Ephrath; or people who lived in Ephrath, the old name of Bethlehem.

family ~ family included more than a person's children. It included people who were born from those children. It included father, mother, brothers and sisters. It also included grandfathers and those who had been born before them.

judge ~ someone who says what is right or wrong.

kinsman-redeemer ~ see the notes after 2:20.

law ~ set of rules that people must obey.

litre ~ a way to measure something; about a quarter of a gallon.

thresh ~ to hit *barley plants until the seeds fall out.

threshing floor ~ the place where the farmer *threshed his plants.

wheat ~ a kind of plant for food.

wine vinegar ~ a drink that is not sweet.

winnow ~ after you *thresh plants, you winnow to get the seeds. You throw everything into the air. Then the wind blows away everything except the seeds.

Book List

D Atkinson ~ The Message of Ruth ~ The Bible Speaks Today series, Inter-varsity Press, 1983, ISBN 0-85110-740-0.

A G Auld ~ Joshua, Judges and Ruth ~ The Daily Study Bible (Old Testament), The Saint Andrew Press, 1984, ISBN 0-71520-535-8.

A E Cundall and L Morris ~ Judges and Ruth ~ Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Inter-varsity Press, 1968. ISBN 0-85111-824-0.

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This publication is written in EasyEnglish Level A (1200 words).

May 2010

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