

RUTH

*Ruth becomes a part of David's lineage*

SETTING

The Age of Judges (1370-1070 BC)

KEY VERSE

*"The women said to Naomi: “Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel!"*

4:14

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The Book of Ruth takes place in the time of the judges and becomes a bright spot in this dark period. In the Book of Ruth, all the characters are good people who fear God. It is clear what the theme of this short story is, as *"redemption"* is mentioned 23 times (either as a verb or a noun).

But the story begins tragically. Due to a famine, Elimelech and Naomi relocated from Bethlehem to Moab, a neighboring country to Israel. First Elimelech died, and eventually, their two sons also died. They left behind two Moabite widows: Ruth and Orpah. Naomi decided to go back to Bethlehem, and Ruth chose to go with her.

Two important laws that play into this story are:

Leviticus 25:23-25: *"The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers. Throughout the land that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land. If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem what they have sold."*

Deuteronomy 25:5-6: *"If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband’s brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel."*

The property that Naomi's husband had owned had to remain within the family and therefore had to be "redeemed" by a relative when Naomi could no longer farm the land herself. Boaz becomes this "redeemer", and in addition, he is also willing to marry Ruth and "redeem" her also as a young widow. Thus he became the father of Obed, who became heir to his grandfather Elimelech's property.

One thing that is special about the book of Ruth is that the author himself never mentioned God, even though the people in the story do. We see a bit of the interaction between what God does behind the scenes and people's choices. God directs things, and we choose things. God leads in secret because the book ends with "David". Because Ruth becomes an ancestor of David, the book is included in the Bible.

Since Ruth enters the genealogy of David, she also enters the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:5). They also went back to Bethlehem, which was later considered the "city of David", although we associate it mostly with Jesus (Micah 5:1, Matt 2:4-6). Boaz is a redeemer who points to Jesus, who is the great Redeemer, and Ruth is a Moabite who becomes part of God's people - a small taste of the promise to Abraham of blessing to all peoples (Genesis 12:3).