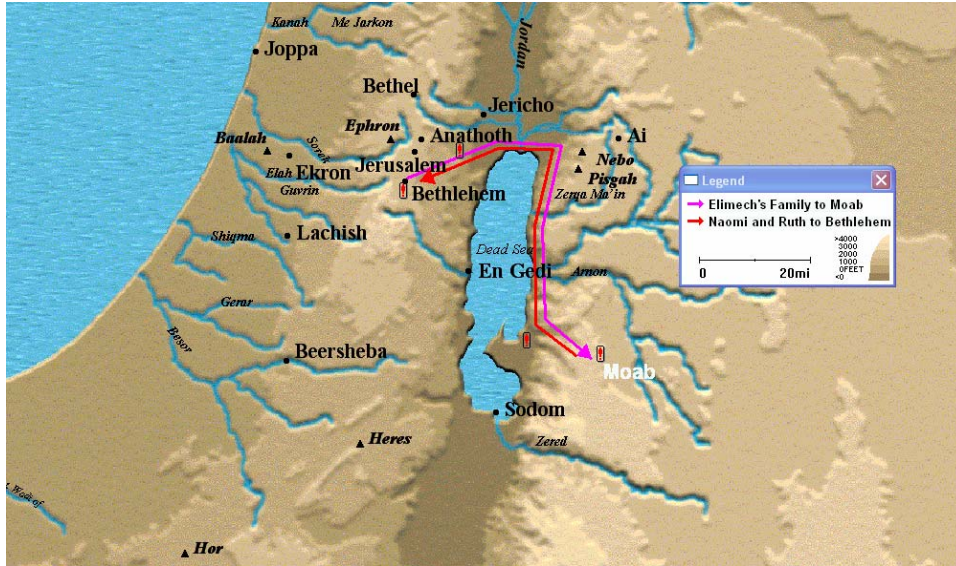


The Story of Ruth

St. Jerome Adult Bible Study

Notes and study questions



It's about 60 miles between Bethlehem and Moab – probably 3 to 5 days' journey.

Ruth marries Boaz and they have a son, Obed, who is the father of Jesse the father of David. Jesus, of course, is descended from David and, therefore, also, Ruth. Naomi takes Obed upon her lap thus giving him full Hebrew heritage.

Cast of Characters

Name	Meaning	Action	Ref
Naomi	"my pleasantness"	Hebrew woman from Bethlehem living in Moab because of a famine in Israel. When her husband and sons die, she returns to Bethlehem	Ruth 1:2
Elimelech	"my God is king"	Takes his wife and sons from Bethlehem to Moab because of the famine	Ruth 1:2
Mahlon	"sickness"	Husband of Ruth; Dies in Moab childless	Ruth 1:2
Chilion	"pining away"	Husband of Orpah; Dies in Moab childless	Ruth 1:2
Mara	"the bitter one"	A nickname Naomi gives herself	Ruth 1:20
Boaz	"lively"	Owner of corn fields in Bethlehem and wealthy relative of Elimelech	Ruth 2:1
Obed	"servant"	Son of Boaz and Ruth; descendent of King David and ancestor of Jesus	Ruth 4:17

- The story is set during the time of the Judges before Saul, so probably 1200 to 1100 BC. It was likely written in the 10th or 9th century BC. It is well-crafted and uses courtly, elegant language indicating that the author was highly educated.

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- This story shows, among much else, one of the many reasons the Law (of Moses) was so important to the Hebrews as well as why it was loved and, in many ways, fair. (Note that the Law was unknown in Moab.)
 - Possessions, especially land, were the very essence of a person and, thus, to have no children to whom to pass wealth was extremely distressing
 - If man died childless, the Law required his brother or other close relative to marry her:

Levirate Marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5 – 10)

⁵When brothers reside together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her, taking her in marriage, and performing the duty of a husband's brother to her, ⁶and the firstborn whom she bears shall succeed to the name of the deceased brother, so that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. ⁷But if the man has no desire to marry his brother's widow, then his brother's widow shall go up to the elders at the gate and say, "My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me." ⁸Then the elders of his town shall summon him and speak to him. If he persists, saying, "I have no desire to marry her," ⁹then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, pull his sandal off his foot, spit in his face, and declare, "This is what is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house." ¹⁰Throughout Israel his family shall be known as "the house of him whose sandal was pulled off."

- Further, there were laws to help the poor:

Gleaning (Deuteronomy 24:19 – 22)

¹⁹When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings. ²⁰When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.

²¹When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. ²²Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.

1. How important are male relatives for widows? Why?
2. Why does Naomi tell Orpah and Ruth to return to their mothers?
3. What are the two reasons Israelites hated the Moabites?
4. What is "gleaning"? Why does it give hope?
5. What is a "kinsman redeemer"?
6. How does Ruth's loyalty to Naomi and Boaz's loyalty to Ruth defy prejudices? How does this loyalty reflect God's?
7. Why does the closer "kinsman redeemer" reject Ruth?
8. Does this story speak of adoption? Who is "adopted" in the New Testament? How are we adopted?