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THE HOLY BIBLE **NKJV** REFERENCE GUIDE

OLD TESTAMENT

BOOK 8

RUTH



Ruth and Naomi by Jan Victors

SUMMARY

A man from Bethlehem named Elimelech was forced out of his home by famine and went to live in the land of Moab with his wife, Naomi, and two sons. He died and subsequently his sons married women from Moab, Orpah and Ruth. After 10 years the two sons also died, leaving Naomi and her two daughters-in-law as widows.

Naomi heard that the famine was over in Judea and decided to return to Bethlehem. She urged her daughters-in-law to remain in Moab and find husbands from among their own people. Orpah finally decided to stay, but Ruth was determined to go with Naomi. Again, Naomi urged her to return to her people and her gods.

But it seems Naomi had been faithful to God even while living among the pagan Moabites, and her example of faithfulness had a direct impact on Ruth. Ruth chose to be kind and loyal to her mother-in-law and to commit to her God—the true God. So Ruth replied to Naomi with the most famous lines from the book:

“Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me”.

The two women arrived in Bethlehem just in time for the early spring harvest. Ruth immediately went to work in the fields to support herself and her mother-in-law. While working in the fields she was noticed by Boaz, a wealthy landowner, who also happened to be related to the family of Naomi’s husband.

Boaz was deeply impressed by this industrious and devoted young widow working in his fields and introduced himself. He told her:

“It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge”.

The relationship developed further, and God used Boaz himself to fulfill this blessing as the redeemer (which serves as a type of the work of the Messiah). After satisfying some of the technicalities of the ancient laws concerning widows and inheritance, Boaz and Ruth wed.

We may at times think that God is only watching the really important people of this world, but the story of Ruth tells us otherwise. God is not impressed with our wealth, fame or power. He is most impressed with the quality of our character.

This marriage was one of the most significant in Jewish history because the great-grandson of Boaz and Ruth was none other than the most famous and loved ruler of Israel, King David. This also means Ruth was in the line of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

- 4:18** Now this is the genealogy of Perez: Perez begot Hezron;
4:19 Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab;
4:20 Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon;
4:21 Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed;
4:22 Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

CHARACTER Definitions

ELIMELECH - Elimelech was a member of the tribe of Judah, a native of Bethlehem Judah, a man of wealth and probably head of a family or clan. He lived during the period of the Judges, had a hereditary possession near Bethlehem, and is chiefly known as the husband of Naomi, the mother-in-law of Ruth and ancestress of David the king.

Because of a severe famine in Judea, he emigrated to the land of Moab with his wife and his sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Not long afterward he died, and his two sons married Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah.

Ten years in all were spent in Moab, when the two sons died, and the three widows were left. Soon afterward Naomi decided to return to Judah, and the sequel is told in the Book of Ruth.

NAOMI - Naomi lived during the time of the judges. She was the wife of a man named Elimelek, and they lived in Bethlehem with their two sons, Mahlon and Kilion. Naomi's life illustrates the power of God to bring something good out of bitter circumstances.

When a famine hits Judea, Elimelek and Naomi and their two boys relocate to Moab. There, Mahlon and Kilion marry two Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. After about ten years, tragedy strikes.

Elimelek dies, and both of Naomi's sons also die, leaving Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah widows. Naomi, hearing that the famine in Judea was over, decides to return home. Orpah stays in Moab, but Ruth chooses to move to the land of Israel with Naomi.

The book of Ruth is the story of Naomi and Ruth returning to Bethlehem and how Ruth married a man named Boaz and bore a son, Obed, who became the grandfather of David and the ancestor of Jesus Christ.

The name Naomi means "sweet, pleasant," which gives us an idea of Naomi's basic character. We see her giving her blessing to Ruth and Orpah when she tells them to return to their mothers' homes so that they might find new husbands: she kisses them and asks that the Lord deal kindly with them.

But her heartache in Moab was more than Naomi could bear. When she and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem, the women of the town greet Naomi by name, but she cries, Don't call me Naomi, Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter.

I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me. The name Mara means "bitter."

CHARACTERS Continued

The cup of affliction is a bitter cup, but Naomi understood that the affliction came from the God who is sovereign in all things. Little did she know that from this bitter sorrow great blessings would come to her, her descendants, and the world through Jesus Christ.

Ruth meets a local landowner, Boaz, who is very kind to her. Naomi again recognizes the providence of God in providing a kinsman-redeemer for Ruth. Naomi declares that the Lord has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.

Seeing God's hand in these events, Naomi encourages Ruth to go to Boaz as he slept in the threshing floor in order to request that he redeem her and her property. Naomi's concern was for Ruth's future, that Ruth would gain a husband and provider.

Naomi's bitterness is turned to joy. In the end, she gains a son-in-law who would provide for both her and Ruth. She also becomes a grandmother to Ruth's son, Obed.

Then the women of Bethlehem say to Naomi, Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.

Naomi was no longer Mara. Her life again became sweet and pleasant, blessed by God.

BOAZ - The son of Rahab (who may be Rahab of Jericho) and Salmon, Boaz was a wealthy landowner of Bethlehem in Judea, and kinsman of Elimelech, Naomi's late husband.

He noticed Ruth, the widowed Moabite daughter-in-law of Naomi, a relative of his, gleaning grain in his fields. He soon learns of the difficult circumstances her family is in and Ruth's loyalty to Naomi. In response, Boaz invites her to eat with him and his workers, as well as deliberately leaving grain for her to claim while keeping a protective eye on her.

Ruth approaches Boaz and asks him to exercise his right of kinship and marry her. Boaz accepts, provided that another with a superior claim declines. Since the first son of Ruth and a kinsman of her late husband would be deemed the legal offspring of the decedent and heir to Elimelech, the other kinsman defers to Boaz.

In marrying Ruth, Boaz revives Elimelech's lineage, and the patrimony is secured to Naomi's family. Their son was Obed, father of Jesse, and grandfather of David. According to Josephus, he lived at the time of Eli.

RUTH - Ruth was "of the women of Moab" but was genetically linked to Israel through Lot, the nephew of Abraham. Ruth had married the son of an Israelite family while they were living in Moab, but at some point, her father-in-law, her husband, and her husband's only brother passed away.

So Ruth had to make a decision whether to stay in Moab, her home, or to go with her mother-in-law, Naomi, to a land she had never known—Judah.

CHARACTERS Continued

Ruth loved her mother-in-law, and had great compassion for her, seeing that she had lost not only her husband, but both of her sons. Ruth's sister-in-law, Orpah, made the choice to go back to her people in Moab, but Ruth could not bear to part from Naomi or from the God of Israel that she had come to know.

They made the journey back to Judah to the city of Bethlehem, where they decided to settle. Ruth's testimony preceded her, for the owner of a nearby field, Boaz, had heard of her faithfulness, as recorded in Ruth 2:11:

Boaz replied, I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

The custom of Israel was that a man was to take his deceased brother's wife in order to continue the family line. Since Ruth's husband's only brother had also died, and there was not an available male relative to claim her as a wife, she and Naomi would have to fend for themselves.

Boaz not only noticed Ruth's beauty, inside and out, but he saw to it that she had companionship of other females, that she was protected, and that she had times of refreshing from her labor. Ruth reciprocated by displaying humility and appreciation, which only ingratiated her more to Boaz. And he continued to show her every courtesy.

Ruth and Boaz had come to know one another very well, but not in a romantic sense. They came to know each other's good character, loyalty, faithfulness, and sense of commitment, all of which go into making a strong foundation on which to build lasting relationships and marriages.

Naomi reminded Ruth that Boaz was a male relative, a kinsman of Elimilech, Naomi's husband; therefore, Boaz was qualified to become Ruth's husband. It was of the utmost importance in Israel to perpetuate the name of every family of Israel, so this gave Ruth the right to appeal to Boaz to fill that role.

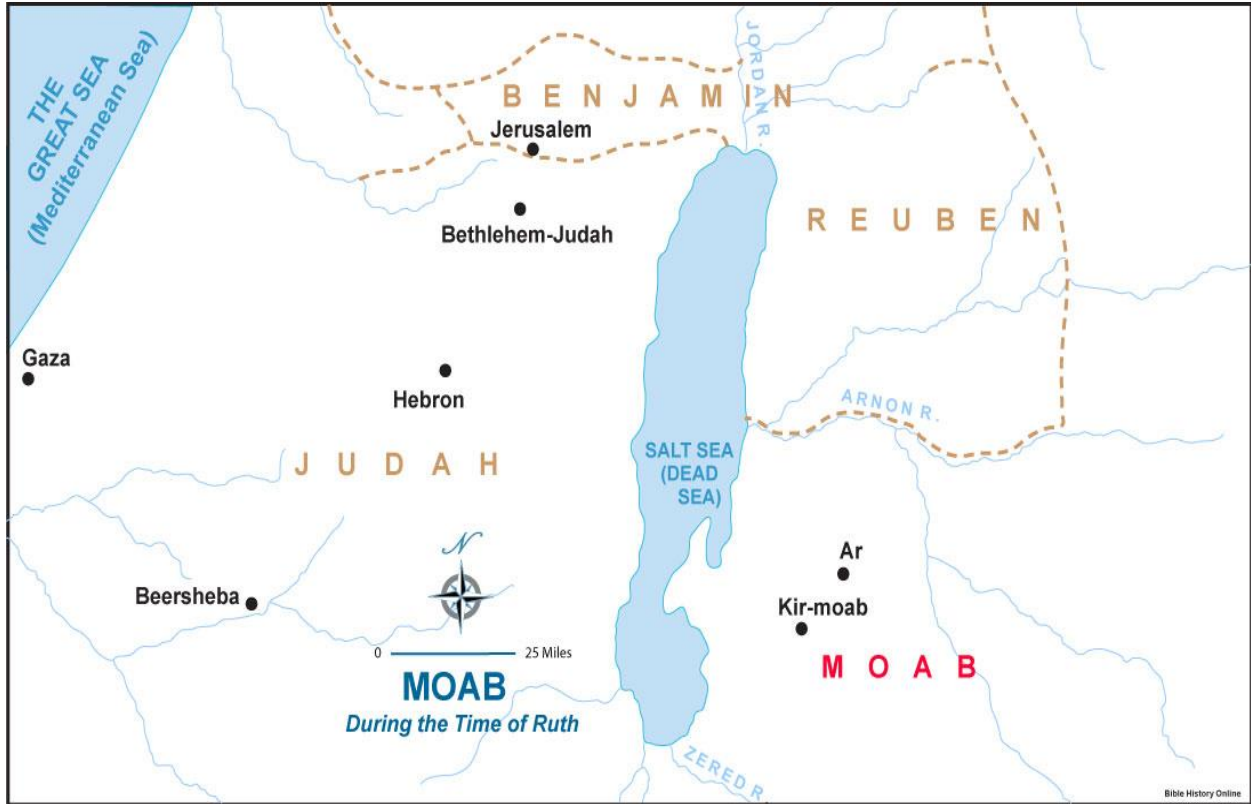
This is a custom that seems foreign to modern society; however, it goes to show just how important family ties and heritage are to God. This is why Satan continuously attacks the God-ordained family unit.

Ruth had an open mind and a teachable spirit, so she listened to her mother-in-law and took her advice. Ruth followed Naomi's instructions to the letter; she trusted the Lord, and He rewarded her faithfulness by giving her not only a husband, but a son (Obed), a grandson (Jesse), and a great-grandson named David, the king of Israel.

Besides these gifts, God gave Ruth the blessing of being listed in the lineage of Jesus.

BIBLE TIMELINE

MAP REFERENCES



FAMILY TREE of RUTH

RUTH 4 & MATTHEW 1

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