

# **THE BOOK OF RUTH**

**BY:**

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**With thanks to our study group**

**(As always, revisions are necessary when new  
information is obtained)**

## INTRODUCTION

The Book of Ruth is one of two books in our common Bible named after a woman, the other being Esther. The inclusion of this book in the Jewish canon reveals how special Ruth, with her faith and courage, is honored even though she is a Moabite woman from a nation that had been an enemy of Israel for centuries. The book appears in the third section of the Hebrew Bible, “The Writings.” Primarily, it’s inclusion in the canon is likely due to the account of the ancestry of King David.

The book is set in the period of the Judges and presents a time of relative peace between the two nations. A significant period of peace is described in Judges, chapter three, verse thirty during the rule of the judge Ehud. This would have been around 1150 B.C.E.

The book also mentions a famine in the land prompting Elimelech and his wife Naomi along with their two sons to migrate to Moab from the Bethlehem area. No famine is mentioned at any time in the Book of Judges, but in Judges, 6:1-6, we read,

1: Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD gave them into the hands of Midian seven years. 2: The power of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of Midian the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. 3: For it was when Israel had sown, that the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the sons of the east and go against them. 4: So they would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey. 5: For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, they would come in like locusts for number, both they and their camels were innumerable; and they came into the land to devastate it. 6: So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the LORD.”

Though this takes place well after the rule of Ehud, so many of Israel’s enemies who conquered the land dispossessed it and laid it to waste it is nearly impossible to pin down these events. And they are only an introduction and cause to the entire Moabite circumstance for this family, and not a key issue.

The introduction in the book itself is a condensed minimal explanation of the circumstances leading up to the relationship between Naomi and Ruth and subsequent events. This introduction is comprised of only five verses. Elimelech is mentioned six times, but only as a reference to the drama that unfolds. Mahlon and Chilion are mentioned sparsely for the same reason. We really know little about any of these men and no other mention of them is made in the Bible. Ruth is mentioned outside of the Book one time in Matthew, chapter one, where she is noted as an ancestor of David and placed in the messianic line of Jesus. The significance of this is that Ruth, a

Moabitess, is welcomed into the Davidic line without prejudice. The Jews, by tradition, came to despise non-Jews and had set them outside any hope of the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> This story proves that indeed God's blessing to Abraham that his descendants would bless all the nations (gentiles) had not been forgotten.<sup>2</sup> Peter noted this in Acts 10:34-35 after he witnessed the conversion of the Roman, Cornelius, that God receives everyone who comes to Him in faith. This understanding is repeated throughout the writings of the apostles.

Most scholars place the collection, formalization and production of the Old Testament during the time of David, Solomon and perhaps the early Kings of Judah.<sup>3</sup> This makes sense in many ways and in the case of Ruth, we have the genealogy of King David in 4:17-22. So, the book would have been compiled and produced during or shortly after David's rule.

This lovely story would have been told throughout the generations before David became king and some written accounts may have also been inscribed.

Over time this story has been a source of inspiration for multitudes. A portion of chapter one, verse 16 has been included in many wedding ceremonies where Ruth says to Naomi,

“...for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.”

The Book displays love, affection, commitment, faith and the power of simple women who have suffered, survived and prospered. It reveals the history of the times, the lineage of King David and thus the lineage of Jesus our Lord through Mary and the culture, customs and circumstances of the period. Plus, there is intrigue, romance, mystery, adventure, suspense, and drama, everything one could ask for in a short story.

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<sup>1</sup> The Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:22-28 knew of this hatred, but Jesus made it clear that her faith was precious.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 17:4-6; 12:2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Of course, this excludes books written and produced during and after this period.

# THE BOOK OF RUTH

## CHAPTER ONE

1:1-5, The introduction of the story.

1: “Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons. 2: The name of the man *was* Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons *were* Mahlon and Chilion,<sup>4</sup> Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there. 3: Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. 4: They took for themselves Moabite women *as* wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth.<sup>5</sup> And they lived there about ten years. 5: Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.”

1: See commentary introduction.

2: “Elimelech” means “God is King.” “Naomi” means “pleasant”, “delightful” or “lovely.” “Mahlon” seems to mean “sick” or “weak.” “Chilion” means “to come to an end” or “to destruction.” The family were from the tribe of Ephraim. The territory of Ephraim was north of Judah. After the national split during the rule of Solomon’s son Rehoboam the tribe became part of the nation of Israel. But Elimelech and his family resided in Judah in the city of Bethlehem, about six miles south of Jerusalem. From the order of the names, Mahlon would be considered the eldest son.

Due to the famine in the land, they sought refuge in Moab. Moab was southeast of the Dead Sea, now modern-day Jordan.

3-5: A brief account of the marriage of the two sons to Moabite women, the death of Naomi’s husband as well as the death of her two sons leaving her alone except for the companionship of her two daughters’ in law – Orpah and Ruth. Their sojourn in Moab and these events took place over a period of around ten years. (verse 4)

The name “Ruth” means “companion” or “friend” and the meaning of the name “Orpah” is uncertain but has a close association to the Hebrew word for “stubborn” or “stiff-necked.” Both would have been given Moabite names, so the names we see would be an adaptation.

A tragedy of this sort for Naomi would have left her without support as well as

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<sup>4</sup> Pronounced “kil-yon.” It is possible based on the order of the women’s names, Orpah was the eldest of the two.

<sup>5</sup> The Moabites are descendants of Lot who unknowingly impregnated his two daughters. Each bore a son, the eldest named her son Moab, and the younger named her son Ben Ammi who fathered the Ammonites. Both became enemies of Israel. Genesis 19:30-38

emotionally devastated. Losing one's husband and both sons would be a tearful and crushing blow. Naomi was no longer a young woman either.<sup>6</sup> What would she do? At least her daughters in law were there to comfort her even though both had lost their husbands.

But out of sadness and pain, the Lord would bring hope.

1:6-15,

6: "Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD<sup>7</sup> had visited His people in giving them food. 7: So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. 8: And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9: "May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. 10: And they said to her, "No, but we will surely return with you to your people." 11: But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 12: "Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons, 13: would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me." 14: And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her." 15: Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

6-7: The trip from Moab was not an easy one and Naomi needed support and accompaniment. There was likely a small caravan with helpers and supplies to complete the trip. The route was around the south end of the Dead Sea and then north to Bethlehem. At the Judean border, some 50-60 miles south of Bethlehem, and in the old river valley that went from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqabah (The Red Sea) Naomi stopped to bid farewell to Orpah and Ruth.

Though her reason for returning was the end of the famine, she may have held in the back of her mind that there were still friends - and hopefully family - there she could reconnect with to give her some fellowship and perhaps support.

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<sup>6</sup> See verse 12 of chapter one.

<sup>7</sup> This name all capitalized as "LORD" represents the covenant name of God, "Yahweh" in the Hebrew that is most often used to indicate a personal and bonded relationship with the party referenced, and often one of their faith in Him.

8-9: The striking thing is Naomi's statement, "... May the LORD deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me." The quality of these two daughters-in-law is apparent. And as much as Naomi would like to keep these women with her, she places no obligation upon them, but releases them to return home to their own mothers but blesses them in their search for a new husband. Such selflessness and kindness is a model for us all.

10-15: Their discussion shows their devotion for each other as well as the good character of the women's former husbands. In verses 12-13, Naomi's statement that she cannot bear sons for them to marry means, "I am not pregnant with sons, upon whom, as the younger brothers of Mahlon and Chilion, there would rest the obligation of marrying you, according to the Levirate law."<sup>8</sup> She so wishes this could be the case, but it is not to be. Thus, it is harder for Naomi to be able to bear sons for them to marry than it is for them to find husbands in their homeland. "The hand of the Lord has gone forth against me" means that she is beyond child bearing age as God has designed it.

Orpah saw the wisdom in this and sadly headed back to Moab.<sup>9</sup> But Ruth's love for Naomi superseded any drive to be married or have children even though that is what was expected, even required of her tradition. She would turn her back on all that for the sake of just being with Naomi and sharing in the culture and religion so far from her own.

1:16-18,

16: "But Ruth said, 'Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following

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<sup>8</sup> Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on The Old Testament. See: Deuteronomy 25:5 and Genesis 38:8.

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 states, "When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be *married* outside *the family* to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. 6: "It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. 7: "But if the man does not desire to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.' 8: "Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And *if* he persists and says, 'I do not desire to take her,' 9: then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, 'Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' 10: "In Israel his name shall be called, 'The house of him whose sandal is removed.'"

In 2009, a Hallmark movie entitled "Loving Leah" portrays a modern day setting where this is taking place.

Genesis 38:8, "Then Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife, and perform your duty as a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother."

<sup>9</sup> Orpah was most likely the eldest of the two daughters' in law married but married to the younger son of Naomi, Chilion. She would be less likely to find a new husband and in my opinion, in her mind, returning with Naomi would make it more difficult for her find a husband among Israelite men and elected to return home to find a husband there and raise a family, especially being a Moabitess.

you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God,<sup>10</sup> my God. 17: ‘Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me.’ 18: When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.”

16-17: An oft quoted passage even in weddings. Ruth’s love and devotion to Naomi speaks volumes about Naomi’s character. Then, for Ruth to abandon her homeland, family, friends and the god worshipped by the Moabites,<sup>11</sup> and commit herself and her life to the people, customs, traditions and God of the Israelites to the day she dies, is a total and complete transformation.

This model is the same as that God requires for people to be His and no others. In verse 16 Ruth uses the general name or title of God, “Elohim”, but in 17 she uses the personal and relational name of God, “Yahweh.” This shows that Ruth has committed herself to the true God of Israel and His people.

18: Thus, Naomi was satisfied that Ruth was indeed sincere and would be a fine addition to her family.

But imagine this. Here is an older Naomi<sup>12</sup> at the border of Moab and Israel in the miserable wilderness south of the Dead Sea with her two daughters in law. She encourages them to return home to their own family. Naomi is alone, desolate, having lost both her husband and her two sons and no hope of securing the estate and heritage of Elimelech for posterity as there would be none. As if she hadn’t lost enough, even more would be lost. The bitterness and hopelessness of this had to weigh heavily on her. We must try to sense her sadness. She expresses such emotions later on.

Yet, she looked out for the welfare of her two daughters in law dismissing any thought of herself. Naomi’s selflessness is a model and a lesson for us all. Orpah complies with Naomi’s reasonable instruction. But Ruth makes a decision for the sake of Naomi. She abandons everything just to be a help and companion for her. After Naomi tries to dissuade her, she accepts Ruth’s offer.

1:19-22

19: “So, they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, ‘Is this Naomi?’ 20: She said to them, ‘Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.’ 21: ‘I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?’ 22: So

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<sup>10</sup> This name, “God” is representative of the title and recognized character of God and is “Elohim” in the Hebrew.

<sup>11</sup> Chemosh was the deity worshipped by both the Moabites and Ammonites.

<sup>12</sup> Likely in her mid to late fifties.

Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.”

19: It had been over ten years since the people of Bethlehem had seen Naomi. Mostly it was the women of the city who took notice and commented about her return. The word “Stirred” is “hum” in the Hebrew, like a swarm of bees so the news sounded in the city. Naomi responded to their inquiry with bitter news.

20-21: “Mara” in Hebrew is “bitter” in contrast to “Naomi” meaning “pleasant.” Naomi is in mourning having lost her husband and both sons. Now, she has no one to care for her and no descendants to carry on the legacy of her husband and family. All is lost. Under this sad stress, in her mind, the Lord is the cause of her affliction. Naomi uses the word “Shaddai” (The almighty) in verses 20 and 21 as well as “Yahweh” (LORD) in verse 21. An extremely common perception in both the ancient world and the modern that God inflicts pain, suffering and evil upon people is held by most people. However, this is a way too common misconception.<sup>13</sup>

Still, would the Lord step in to give aid to the devastated Naomi?

22: The barley harvest took place in the Spring, after Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This would be in the period of late March to late April. Naomi’s home was still available and she moved back in.

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<sup>13</sup> For a study and discussion on this topic, please see the article on the problem of evil on my website, [www.bibleclassroom.org](http://www.bibleclassroom.org).

# THE BOOK OF RUTH

## CHAPTER TWO

2:1,

1: “Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.”

1: In the Bible, the Hebrew word for “kinsman” only occurs here and in Proverbs 7:4.<sup>14</sup> It means “close friend” or in this case, “distant relative.” We know this is the intent of the word from the phrase, “of the family of Elimelech” Naomi’s deceased husband. Traditionally, he was a nephew of Elimelech, not related directly to Naomi. This becomes critical as the story continues. He was a man of great importance in the community, having vast properties and wealth. His name was Boaz, meaning “Quick” or “Fleet of foot.”

2:2-3,

2: “And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, ‘Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.’ And she said to her, ‘Go, my daughter.’ 3: So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.”

2: “...the Moabitess” lest we forget that Ruth was of a foreign and despised nation. The term “glean” describes the practice of property owners having the corners and edges of their fields left unharvested so the poor could come in after the main harvest was completed and harvest the remainder for themselves. “Glean means to “pick up” or “gather up.” This was a command of God as found in Leviticus 19:9-10,

9: “Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10: Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God.”<sup>15</sup>

She would be following the harvesters (or reapers) and picking up sheaves of “grain” left for the gleaners. These harvesters are a team of male and female<sup>16</sup> under the supervision of a male “foreman.” The men go through the fields and cut the stalks

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<sup>14</sup> “Moh-dah” - מֹדָה

<sup>15</sup> See also; Leviticus 23:22 and Deuteronomy 24:18-22.

<sup>16</sup> See verses 8-9.

down with a scythe of sickle.<sup>17</sup> Behind them, women come and tie the stalks into bundles called sheaves. These sheaves are placed on an animal or a donkey pulled cart and taken to the threshing floor. The grain is separated from the stalks by walking cattle over them, or using an animal drawn sled or beating them by hand. Then the mixture is thrown into the wind with a fork or shovel allowing the wind to blow away the lighter chaff. This is normally handled by men, but women also can be involved in this work. The kind of grain it was is not specified here, but in verse 17 we see it is barley. (Also see: comment at 1:22)

3: Ruth may have been directed by Naomi to glean in a field a portion of which was owned by Boaz. According to the text, it was by chance (or happenstance) she found herself gleaning in the portion of the field owned by Boaz. Apparently, Ruth herself was not aware of this fact, but Naomi seems to be.

2:4-9,

4: "Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, 'May the LORD be with you.' And they said to him, 'May the LORD bless you.' 5: Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, 'Whose young woman is this?' 6: The servant in charge of the reapers replied, 'She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab. 7: 'And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while.' 8: Then Boaz said to Ruth, 'Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. 9: Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw.'"

4: Bethlehem is situated on the top of a hilly area about six miles south of Jerusalem. In the days of the Judges, the fields were down the hill and either on the hillslope or near the bottom of the hilly area. Sometimes the fields were terraced so the crops could grow on level ground.

Boaz' greeting is very warm, and he uses the personal and relational name of God (Yahweh) to do so. The reapers return the same greeting. This shows that they saw each other as part of a close-knit family in the Lord. It also tells us quite a bit about the character of Boaz and how he treated his workers. He came not just to see how well the harvest is coming along, but also to see to the welfare of his laborers.

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<sup>17</sup> Deuteronomy 16:9

5-6. Boaz spotted Ruth gleaning at the corners of the field. As God has commanded, Boaz' laborers had left ample gleanings to be gathered by the poor and Ruth had worked through much of the day. So, Boaz inquired of the foreman as to whom she belonged too. He had never seen her before. The foreman knew about the return of Naomi and Ruth as did everyone in the small town. The word had spread quickly.<sup>18</sup> Boaz used the term "young woman" in describing her suggesting he was considerably older than she was. We will see this again in verse eight.

7: He told Boaz who she was, and though we have no exact means as to how he knew this, verse 7 reveals that she had begged<sup>19</sup> the foreman's permission to glean the remains of the harvest and had told him who she was. The foreman, noting she was a Moabite, was not put off but in the manner of Boaz' character and knowing the family of Elimelech, he easily granted permission.

Ruth had been working much of the day it seems and was resting "in the house" for a while. This "house" was a shelter for the workers to rest in during the day and could have been a lean-to, a tent, or a small structure set in or near the field for the convenience of the workers.

8-9: Boaz approaches Ruth as she sat in the shelter addressing her as "my daughter" ('בת) (bat-ee). This again shows Boaz to be considerably older than Ruth, but we are not sure exactly how much older. My guess is twenty to twenty-five years older.

He instructs her to glean only in his part of the field following in the wake of his "maidens" who are apparently actually tying the bundles of the sheaves of the grain the men cut down. As they do this, the male workers gather up the bundles and take them to the threshing floor. These male "servants" are not to touch the maidens or Ruth while working with them in the field. She is not to wander into the field of another owner but remain on his land. When thirsty she is to help herself to the water supplied for the workers.

This instruction is clearly for her safety in order to protect her from any harassment or discomfort if she were to go to another field where Boaz had no authority. As a Moabitess, she would be especially vulnerable to attack.

2:10-13,

10: "Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, 'Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?' 11: Boaz replied to her, 'All that you have done for your mother-in-

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<sup>18</sup> Note the comment at 1:19.

<sup>19</sup> A better translation than "please." The word "na" means to "beg", "beseech" or "implore."

law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. 12: May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.’ 13: Then she said, ‘I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants.’”

10: After hearing Boaz kind directions, Ruth went to her knees and bowed to the ground, her face touching the earth. This is an act of deep respect and reverence found often in the Bible.<sup>20</sup>

She calls herself a “foreigner.” The word connotes not just a stranger, or from a foreign land, but carries with it the concept of someone who is not to be respected but is even disgraceful in the eyes of some. This would hold true with many in Israel as they despised the Moabites.

11: In Boaz’ eyes, none of that mattered because he had been fully apprised of Ruth’s compassion and care for Naomi committing herself to Naomi’s care even though she had to give up everything she had to do so.

12: Due to Ruth’s sacrifice, commitment to Naomi and the God of Israel, Boaz invokes a divine blessing on her.<sup>21</sup>

13: Ruth acknowledges the favor of Boaz to her as one who is a part of his household even though she recognizes that she isn’t. Yet, she will come to know that she actually is. She has yet to learn the ways and traditions of the people.

2:14-17,

14: “At mealtime Boaz said to her, ‘Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.’ So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left. 15: When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, ‘Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. 16: Also you shall purposely pull out for her *some grain* from the bundles and leave *it* that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.’ 17: So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.”

14: This appears to be a mid-day meal. The attention Boaz gave to Ruth was not due

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<sup>20</sup> See: Genesis 18:2; 19:1; 33:3-7; 43:26; 43:28; I Samuel 25:33; II Samuel 1:2; II Kings 2:15, etc.

<sup>21</sup> See Deuteronomy 32:11 and Psalm 91:4.

to his physical attraction to her, but because of her sacrifice and devotion to Naomi, one of his distant relatives. Boaz knew Naomi to be elderly now, and Ruth's care for her is appreciated by Boaz and so he assists her in the endeavor. Boaz' concern and kindness is really directed for Naomi's benefit. So, Ruth sat with the other field workers sharing in the bread and roasted grain.

15: Ruth is invited to leave off gleaning the "left-overs" and work in the main field with the other workers. While working near her, they are not to insult her or demean her because of her heritage.

16: Not only that, but they are to give her some of the sheaves they have themselves harvested. They are to do so without complaint, griping or backbiting.

17: So, Ruth worked hard gleaning until the sun began to wane and then took her sheaves to the threshing floor and beat them out and winnowed the grain herself...a job normally done by the male servants or the owner. She ended up with about eight to nine gallons of grain.<sup>22</sup>

2:18-23,

18: "She took *it* up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took *it* out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied. 19: Her mother-in-law then said to her, 'Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed.' So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, 'The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz.' 20: Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, 'May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead.' Again Naomi said to her, 'The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives.' 21: Then Ruth the Moabitess said, 'Furthermore, he said to me, 'You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.' 22: Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, 'It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that *others* do not fall upon you in another field.' 23: So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law."

18: The weight of this load was about forty to fifty pounds. Ruth carried it up into Bethlehem and gave it to Naomi. Naomi was no doubt surprised at the amount Ruth was able to glean and Ruth also gave Naomi what was left over from lunch.

19-20: This conversation reveals that Ruth said something to Naomi about how she

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<sup>22</sup> About 40-50 pounds more or less.

came to have all this grain because Naomi's response speaks of a man noticing Ruth and giving her the opportunity to glean much more than was expected. So, Ruth told Naomi the name of the man who helped her.

Naomi was quick to point out that Boaz was family, indeed close enough to be what Naomi knew to be a "kinsman-redeemer." This is an important element in the Story of Ruth as it broadens the history of Israel and effects the future dramatically. When Naomi used the Hebrew word מִגַּאֲלֵנִי (m-gah-al-ni) (translated "closest relative") the word means "the kinsman who redeems." Naomi uses a plural knowing that there is another who is also a close relative, but she prefers that Ruth goes to the field of Boaz.

The "Kinsman-redeemer" is designated by the Lord as a means of preserving the family line if the patriarch either fails to produce a male heir, or, as in this case, both the patriarch and his son or sons die before having children of their own. The "Kinsman-redeemer" will then wed the widow and produce the heir in the stead of her deceased husband. It is required that he be close family, willing to act in that role and meets the qualifications.

21-23: To which Naomi replied that Boaz, as a close relative, extends his kindness not just to Ruth and Naomi, but to the husbands of both Ruth and Naomi because Boaz has stepped in and provided what they could no longer provide, and is a candidate for the role of "Kinsman-redeemer." However, much has to be investigated before this is determined and then accomplished and quite a bit of time is required as well. That Ruth is a Moabitess is also a consideration to be evaluated.

Then one can sense the excitement growing as Ruth tells Naomi that she has been invited to glean in Boaz' field for the remainder of the harvest season. That would be about three months as the wheat harvest is included. (verse 23)

During this time Ruth was under the protection of Boaz and his laborers as Naomi pointed out and lived with Naomi through this entire period.

# THE BOOK OF RUTH

## CHAPTER THREE

3:1-4,

1: "Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? 2: "Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight. 3: "Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your *best* clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; *but* do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. 4: "It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do."

1: Naomi is speaking about more than just protection while gleaning. The gleaning time is done. (3:2) She is looking at the preservation of the estate of Elimelech as Boaz was a close relative of Elimelech not of Naomi. (2:1) Naomi is initiating an action that will provide "security" for Ruth. This word is from the same root as is found in 1:9 where Naomi tells both Ruth and Orpah, "May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Both husbands had died as we know, so Naomi is saying that each should go and find a new husband to care for them.

It is the same idea here. Naomi is telling Ruth that she needs to go and place herself before Boaz and indicate to him that she is willing for him to become the "Kinsman-redeemer."

2-4: So, Naomi gives Ruth specific instructions as to how to approach Boaz at the threshing floor. When Boaz is done for the day, he would have a meal, drink some wine and lie down to rest and sleep for the night. Ruth is to go to him and "uncover his feet" lying down across his uncovered feet. She would pull the remaining blanket over as much of herself as possible and wait.

This odd procedure is described by Jamieson-Fausset and Brown,

"This was a method, doubtless conformable to prevailing usage, of reminding Boaz of the duty which devolved on him as the kinsman of her deceased husband. Boaz probably slept upon a mat or skin; Ruth lay crosswise at his feet - a position in which Eastern servants frequently sleep in the same chamber or tent with their master; and if they want a covering, custom allows them that

benefit from part of the covering on their master's bed. Resting, as the Orientals do at night, in the same clothes they wear during the day, there was no indelicacy in a stranger, or even a woman, putting the extremity of this cover over her."<sup>23</sup>

3:5-12,

5: "She said to her, 'All that you say I will do.' 6: "So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her. 7: When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down. 8: It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. 9: "He said, 'Who are you?'" "And she answered, 'I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative.'" 10: "Then he said, 'May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich.' 11: 'Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.' 12: 'Now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.'"

5-6: So, Ruth obeys Naomi and goes to the threshing floor of Boaz in the middle of the night.

7-8: Boaz was out of it having drunk enough wine to make him "merry." So, he was not aware of Ruth's approach and did not stir until he felt the blanket being moved. Startled, he sat up and at his feet lay a woman. He had no idea what was going on or who she was.

9: No doubt coming out of his stupor and, in the dark, he asked, "Who are you?" He simply may not have been able to distinguish who it was in the dark, though he had seen her many times before. And Ruth answers him in an important way. After saying, "I am Ruth, your maid" she says, "...spread your covering over your maid for you are a close relative." The words "close relative" are the same as those Naomi used in 2:4 when she told Ruth to go and glean in the field of Boaz. The Hebrew means "'a kinsman redeemer."<sup>24</sup> Again, Jamieson-Fausset and Brown explain,

"She had already drawn part of the mantle over her; and she asked him now to do it, that the act might become his own. To spread a skirt over one is, in the

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<sup>23</sup> Jamieson-Fausset and Brown commentary on the Book of Ruth, E-Sword online.

<sup>24</sup> Many translations or versions use this or a similar term to translate the Hebrew. See: ASV, ESV, KJV, NIV, MKJV, NRSV, RV, YLT, JB.

East, a symbolical action denoting protection. To this day in many parts of the East, to say of anyone that he put his skirt over a woman, is synonymous with saying that he married her; and at all the marriages of the modern Jews and Hindus, one part of the ceremony is for the bridegroom to put a silken or cotton cloak around his bride.” (See: footnote 15)

10-11: Once Boaz saw and knew what was happening, he realized that Ruth was a candidate for the kinsman redemption. She was the daughter-in-law of Elimelech, Naomi’s deceased husband. Since both Naomi’s and her own husband were deceased, she qualified to become the wife of the closest relative to Elimelech.

This was so that a son could be born to become the heir of Elimelech’s estate and bear sons to continue the lineage. However, there were obstacles to overcome. One was that Boaz was not the closest relative and second, a son would have to be born by Ruth and the kinsman redeemer to continue the lineage. Plus, Ruth was a Moabite. This added another consideration to the matter.

So, Boaz began by blessing Ruth because, instead of going after younger men, perhaps even disregarding the family of Naomi, Ruth demonstrated her commitment to Naomi by choosing Boaz. Then Boaz promised Ruth that he would do whatever she asked and do so because she was a “woman of excellence.” The word “excellence” also carries with it the idea of determination, strength and valor. He would not do such a thing for a woman of less reputation.

12: But..... she must know, there is “kinsman-redeemer” even closer than him she must consider first. But Boaz had said to her, “do not fear.” The plot thickens.

3:13-18,

13: "Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning." 14: So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." 15: Again he said, "Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it." So she held it, and he measured six *measures* of barley and laid *it* on her. Then she went into the city. 16: When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done for her. 17: She said, "These six *measures* of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'" 18: Then she said, "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today."

13: Boaz is following the requirements of the Levitate law. The closest relative is the first candidate for the redeemer. He would get the first opportunity to take Ruth as his wife. But should he choose not to do so, Boaz would fill the role. His request that she remain at the shed that night was for her protection as returning to Bethlehem at that hour could subject her to danger.

14-15: Before sunrise, Ruth arose to return to Bethlehem. It sounds like a sleepless night for them both. No one would recognize her as coming from the threshing floor of Boaz that early and so any possible scandal will be averted.

Just before she leaves, Boaz pours about three and half gallons of barley into her cloak. She would hoist this over her shoulder and carry it back to Naomi's home.

16-17: Naomi is, of course, quite interested and concerned about the encounter and Ruth tells her all about it.

18: Naomi's confidence that Boaz will sort out the entire matter is sound and instructs Ruth just to wait until she hears about the outcome.

# THE BOOK OF RUTH

## CHAPTER FOUR

4:1

1: “Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, ‘Turn aside, friend, sit down here.’ And he turned aside and sat down.”

1: The gate of the city was the place where all the legal business took place and any personal disputes were settled either by the tribal Judge who may be called in to adjudicate a matter, or by the city elders. It depended on the severity of the conflict or the crime. The “gate” was just an opening entrance in a wall surrounding the city. We would call it a “gateway.”

In this case, Boaz, who knew who the closer relative was and aware of his daily routine, waited there until the closer relative (unnamed) came into or out of the gate. It came about that he “passed by” where Boaz was waiting. The words translated “friend” are “peloni-almoni.” The actual meaning is, “a specific unnamed person.” This shows that the quote attributed to Boaz’ address to this man is of the writer’s creation, the man’s name being unknown or deliberately unmentioned. So, the man sat down by Boaz. They probably sat on the ground.

The man knew that this was to be an important matter simply due to the long practice of sitting at the gate of the city.

4:2,

2: “He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down.”

2: Boaz either got up and went into the city to ask the family patriarchs to come to the gate or had someone do it for him. Meanwhile, the closer relative waited. When the ten elders had been selected, they all came to the gate where Boaz asked them to sit down with him and the other relative of Elimelech. These men did not delay coming as they knew their responsibility and took it seriously.

As we will see, this assembly also drew a crowd of people who gathered near to hear and witness the proceedings.

4:3-4,

3: “Then he said to the closest relative, ‘Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. 4: So I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy *it* before those who are sitting *here*, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem *it*, redeem *it*; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem *it*, and I am after you.’ And he said, I will redeem *it*. ”

3-4: Boaz is quite clever as he describes the basic situation to this man. First, he tells the man that Naomi must sell the land of her husband Elimelech, the “brother” of them both. Understood is that after Elimelech’s death, Mahlon would be the first to inherit. After his death, Chilion would be the heir. But he has also died.

From 4:10 we find that Ruth was married to Mahlon. Since Orpah chose to return to her family in Moab, Ruth remained the only candidate for the redemption, having been the wife of the first heir. But Boaz has left out the fact that Ruth, the Moabitess, is the major part of the deal.

So, at this point, the nearest man as the redeemer understands that he would be obligated to buy the land, increase his holdings, care for Naomi, and thus his own sons would be his heirs and receive his estate that now would include Elimelech’s. So, the man said, “I will redeem it.” He apparently had the wealth to do so as well as the obligation. This looks to be a good deal all around until....

4:5-7,

5: “Then Boaz said, ‘On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance.’ 6: The closest relative said, ‘I cannot redeem *it* for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem *it* for yourself; you *may have* my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem *it*’

5-6: The “deceased” would be Mahlon. The man’s duty would be to father children by Ruth who would then become the heirs of the estate of Elimelech. In doing so there would be problems for this man and his household. First, on the plus side, without Ruth in the equation, the gain would be the property upon which he could grow crops. His holdings would increase substantially. Naomi could not bear children, so there would be no conflict as to whom the beneficiaries would be – his own children would be assured the inheritance.

But, second, on the negative side, with Ruth now in the equation, he would have to put out capital to buy the land, and then spend it to plant and harvest crops, while all the

time support both Naomi and Ruth plus any children born to Ruth. Making matters even more difficult there would then be a division of assets when he died, so his children would not receive the full estate. In fact, considering the anticipated expenditures, they might get less than if he didn't do this at all. To make matters worse, there would be understandable contention in his household between his first wife and Ruth over many matters including the care of Naomi until her death, the distribution of the assets later on and so on. These must have been some of the items that flashed through the mind of this "nearest relative."

So, he said, "I don't think so."

4:7-8,

7: "Now this was *the custom* in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of *land* to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the *manner of attestation* in Israel. 8: So the closest relative said to Boaz, 'Buy *it* for yourself.' And he removed his sandal."

7-8: In order to make this official, Deuteronomy 25:5-10 gives the following instructions.

5: "When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be *married* outside *the family* to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. 6: "It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. 7: "But if the man does not desire to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.' 8: "Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And *if* he persists and says, 'I do not desire to take her,' 9: then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, 'Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' 10: "In Israel his name shall be called, 'The house of him whose sandal is removed.'"

In the event told to us here, neither Naomi or Ruth were present to accuse this man of failing in his duty or spitting in his face. So, the man removed his own sandal.

This custom represented the tradition that when a man took possession of a property he demonstrated this by treading upon it for the first time as an owner. So, taking off the

shoe and handing it to another was a symbol of the transfer of a possession or right of ownership.

[Verse 7 tells us that the writing of this Book took place long after the actual event. It tells of “former times in Israel;” “...and this *was* the *manner of* attestation in Israel” (the sandal ceremony.) This was no longer practiced in the time of the writing of Ruth.]

4:9-12,

9: “Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, ‘You are witnesses today that I have bought<sup>25</sup> from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. 10: ‘Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his *birth* place; you are witnesses today.’ 11: All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, ‘*We are* witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem.’

12: ‘Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the LORD will give you by this young woman.’”

9: In receiving the sandal, the right to the property is transferred to Boaz. Though the word translated “bought” is used in the NASB, it also means “acquired.”<sup>26</sup> This is a better translation. In essence he has acquired it from Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion, all deceased former owners.

10: But, was Ruth, a Moabitess, prohibited by Moses’ decree from even entering the assembly (citizenship) of the Lord? Deuteronomy 23:3-4 states,

3: “No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their *descendants*, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD, 4: because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.”

There is considerable discussion about this issue, but the general consensus is that the intent of the mandate deals with the male line of Moabites, not the female. In other

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<sup>25</sup> “Acquired”, not “bought.” A inaccurate translation.

<sup>26</sup> As translated in the NRSV. Verse 10 translates the exact same word as “acquired.” There is no record of a financial transaction involved.

words, a female Israelite is prohibited from marrying a Moabite man, but the reverse was acceptable. It was understood that any foreign male included in the assembly could bring with him the foreign influences and religious practices into the Israelite community. In those days, a foreign female was not allowed in those positions. Even if the mandate included women, Ruth's case might be considered an exemption as she had been already incorporated into the family by marriage; and left her own country, people, and gods, to become a proselyte to the true God in the land of Israel.

The Moabites were also under a curse brought upon themselves when they sought to entreat Balaam to curse Israel as they approached the "promised Land" and sought permission to do so through Moab. Deuteronomy 23:4-6 continues,

4: "...because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. 5: Nevertheless, the LORD your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the LORD your God loves you. 6: You shall never seek their peace or their prosperity all your days."

Not only that, but in Numbers 24:17-19, Balaam reverses the curse he was paid to bring against Israel and brings it upon the head of Balak, king of Moab and the nation he rules.

17: "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel, And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth."<sup>27</sup> 18: "Edom shall be a possession, Seir, its enemies, also will be a possession, While Israel performs valiantly. 19: "One from Jacob shall have dominion, And will destroy the remnant from the city."

Now, regarding Ruth, there was no objection to Boaz' proposal because Ruth had married an Israelite man, become a proselyte of the religion of Israel and had obeyed its traditions fully. Her reputation was no doubt well known in the city.

11: "Court" is the gate of the city. The elders were quite pleased with the outcome and blessed Boaz, who had fulfilled the duty of the redeemer, that he and Ruth might be as fruitful (Ephrathah) as Rachel and Leah (the wives of Jacob who bore him twelve sons).

12: Perez was born of Tamar and Judah and were the ancestors of Boaz.<sup>28</sup> Thus, Boaz

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<sup>27</sup> Though this is seen as messianic, the defeat of Moab took place under the reign of King David and is reported in II Samuel 8:2. "Sheth" is the Hebrew name of Adam's son "Seth" and represents the descendants of that line. The Moabites are one branch of that line.

<sup>28</sup> This fascinating story is found in Genesis, chapter 38. It would be interesting to follow the history of Perez and his brother Zerah. The lineage of Perez is found in 4:18-22. Also, see the chart in the appendix.

was of the house of Judah. The story of the birth of Perez and his brother Zerah is one to follow. Ultimately, the line of Zerah, the first born of Tamar and Judah, was eradicated due to the matter of the items of value taken from the ruins of Jericho that had been put under a strict ban. To violate this would result in death. But Achan, of the descendants of Zerah, took some of the items and was found out and the family of Achan was executed leaving no descendants left from Zerah. The story is told in Joshua, chapter seven.

The descendants of Perez, on the other hand, were trusted men in the history of Israel. There are no negative comments of this lineage.<sup>29</sup>

4:13-17,

13: “So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. 14: Then the women said to Naomi, ‘Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. 15: ‘May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.’ 16: Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse.<sup>30</sup> 17: The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, ‘A son has been born to Naomi!’ So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.”

13: This wedding was a big event in the life of Bethlehem. Though the text gives it no coverage, a wedding in ancient Israel was one of the most exciting times in the life of a city. After a year-long betrothal, the ceremony was carried out with as many guests as possible. This was followed with a sumptuous feast, often lasting over several days. For the city it was called a “joyous occasion.” Music, singing, dancing, eating and drinking were a big part of this time. This was a community party. The newly married couple were soon spirited away to their honeymoon. For Ruth and Boaz, the time came when she became pregnant and gave birth to a son.

This birth secured the estates of both Elimelech (and Naomi) as well as Boaz for a generation. Later we see that this secured the estate for many generations to come and preserved the family line and the lineage of Judah.

14-15: The women who gathered around Naomi were ecstatic for her. Contrary to Naomi’s shattered dreams, the Lord had planned from long ago to bring to her a

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<sup>29</sup> A small exception may be found in Job 32:1-3. 1: “Then these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. 2: But the anger of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram burned; against Job his anger burned because he justified himself before God. 3: And his anger burned against his three friends because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.” However, the lineage of Elihu is separate from the line of Boaz.

<sup>30</sup> Literally “caregiver.”

“redeemer.” This new born son of Ruth is who they are referring to, not Boaz.<sup>31</sup> It will be the new born son who is now redeeming/continuing the estate, lineage and name of Elimelech. The women pray that the “name” of this boy would become famous in Israel. By using the word translated “name” they included his posterity. This indeed came to pass.

16: The word “nurse” here is misleading. A new mother nursing her child is termed “yanaq.” Here the word is “aman” the same as “amen” and means something along the lines of “faithful guardian” in this context. She became a principal caregiver as a part of her role in the home of Boaz and Ruth.

17: Naming the new born son was normally done after the eighth day when the infant was circumcised and consecrated to the Lord. The eighth day ceremony was apparently attended by Boaz, Ruth, Naomi and a select group of close neighbors and friends.

At this point, the women of the city who were close to Naomi gave him the name of Obed, meaning “one who serves.” They noted that a son has been born to Naomi, not to Ruth and Boaz. The reason for this is due to the family lineage. In this case, it is the lineage of Elimelech that has been preserved, thus the son was born to him and Naomi.

They named the infant “Obed” because he became the one who serves the important role of redeemer and preserver of the lineage. Without this birth, all Naomi feared would be lost and the line of David the king would have never come to exist.

4:18-22,

18: “ Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron, 19: and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab, 20: and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon, 21: and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed, 22: and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.”<sup>32</sup>

18: Perez, is only known for being one of two sons of Judah’s unknown liaison with his daughter in law Tamar, the other son being Zerah. Zerah’s line came to an end at Jericho. Perez fathered Hezron and Hamul. Nothing more is said of Hamul except that he was the patriarch of the Hamulites.

19: Hezron is important because he is an ancestor of King David. There is also a city named after him of which he may have founded.<sup>33</sup> He fathered Ram who fathered Amminadab.

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<sup>31</sup> Verse 15.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew, chapter 1:2-6 reports this same lineage.

<sup>33</sup> Joshua 15:3

20: Amminadab fathered Nashon who was a military leader and leader of the people of Judah.<sup>34</sup> He fathered Salmon (pronounced “saul-mahn.”)

21: Salmon’s only claim to fame was being the father of Boaz. But seeing the character of Boaz, much can be said for his father and mother, as well as his grandparents. To Boaz and Ruth, but more importantly to Naomi was born Obed. Though little is said of Obed, Jesse, his son is frequently spoken of throughout I Samuel, chapters sixteen and seventeen because of his sons, especially David.

22: The writer is obviously writing during the time of King David and refers to David past tense as he reports the future of the lineage of Boaz and Ruth.<sup>35</sup>

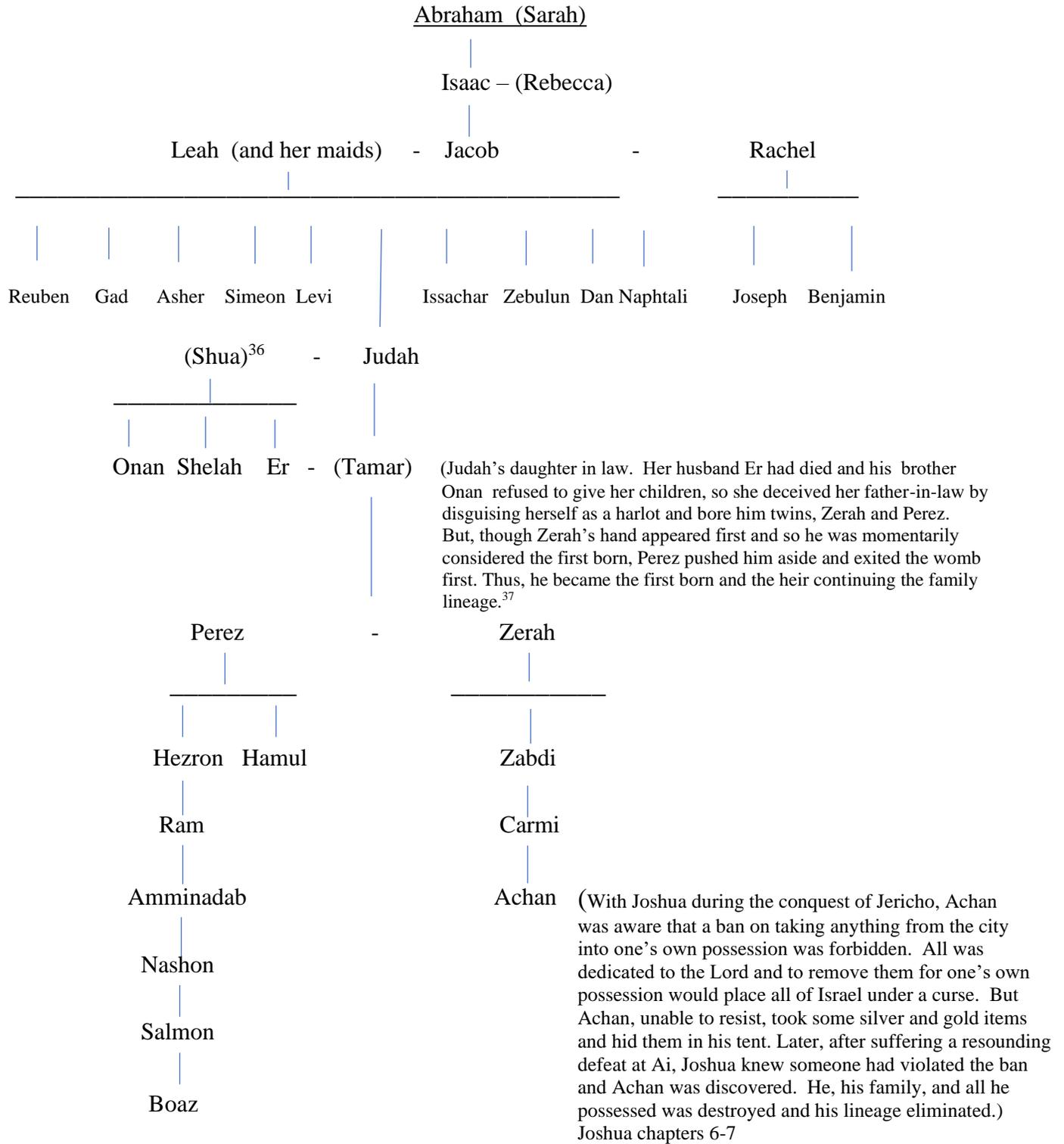
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<sup>34</sup> Numbers 10:14; I Chronicles 2:10

<sup>35</sup> The lineage of David from Abraham is so convoluted by some of his descendants, it is actually awesome to see how God used even sinful and immoral men to accomplish His will. For example, Moab and Ammon were born of incest (Lot through his daughters) yet the later cursed nation of Moab provided for Elimelech’s family and gave them Ruth. Esau sold his birthright to Jacob who had sons by a Canaanite woman, then also had children by his daughter in law because her husband’s brother refused to be the “kinsman redeemer.” So, she seduces her father-in-law. From the birth of two sons, one line (Zerah) ends up destroyed due to Zerah’s descendant Achan violating the ban on taking goods from Jericho and his entire lineage is eliminated while his brother’s descendants are honorable men and produce Boaz who takes a Moabite woman as a wife and continues the promised line all the way to Jesus. This occurs even though the royal line of David is similarly cursed and because of the sinfulness of King Jehoiakim four hundred years. Yet Jesus is born of the line of David, of the tribe of Judah through Mary who is impregnated – not by the cursed royal line of David to Joseph, but by the Holy Spirit. (See my explanation of this at: [www.bibleclassroom.org](http://www.bibleclassroom.org) Topical Studies: “The Miracle of the Virgin birth.” Our God is an awesome God!

APPENDIX

THE BOOK OF RUTH – LINE OF BOAZ



<sup>36</sup> Not an Israelite woman but a Canaanite woman.

<sup>37</sup> This account is eerily similar to the of Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25:19-34) There, the first born (Esau) gave up his birthright to Jacob, who was so named because he “supplanted” Esau by grabbing his heel at birth. It was Jacob who was blessed by Isaac as God had told Rebecca to arrange that blessing. And, ultimately, from Jacob comes Boaz.

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The Bible study group additions to the comments on the book. These people include: Mike Stewart, Matthew DeArcos, Chuck Marvin, Diane Marvin, Karen Loscavio, and Donna Stewart.