

Ruth



Ruth 1: Naomi, an Ephraimite, lived in Moab. Her husband and two sons died so she returned to Bethlehem with her daughter-in-law, Ruth.

Ruth 2: Naomi had a rich relative named Boaz. Ruth went to glean in his fields. Boaz gave her food and told his men to leave grain for her.

Ruth 3: Naomi told Ruth to go and sleep at Boaz's feet. When Boaz awoke, Ruth said, "You are my kinsman." Boaz said that he would marry her.

Ruth 4: Boaz settled the inheritance with another kinsman and married Ruth. Ruth bore a son, Obed. Obed was father of Jesse, father of David.

Do you know what gleaning is?

Deuteronomy 24:19-21

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

Leviticus 23:22

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien: I am the Lord your God.

The book of Ruth puts these laws into action.

Ruth 1:6-end

Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had considered his people and given them food. ⁷So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. ⁸But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. ⁹The Lord grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. ¹⁰They said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." ¹¹But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? ¹²Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, ¹³would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than

for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me.” ¹⁴ Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

¹⁵ So she said, “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.” ¹⁶ But Ruth said,

“Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you!

Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people, and your God my God.

¹⁷ Where you die, I will die— there will I be buried.

May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!”

¹⁸ When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

¹⁹ So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them; and the women said, “Is this Naomi?” ²⁰ She said to them,

“Call me no longer Naomi, call me Mara,
for the Almighty [☩] has dealt bitterly with me.

²¹ I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty;
why call me Naomi when the Lord has dealt harshly with me,
and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?”

²² So Naomi returned together with Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who came back with her from the country of Moab. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Why does the writer tell us that Ruth is a Moabite?

How do you feel about Naomi’s attitude to the daughters-in-law?

Where does her security come from?

Do you think badly of Orpah for not doing the same as Ruth?

Is Ruth renouncing her ‘otherness’ in 1:15-18

Why does Naomi change her name?

Some people think that Ruth was written in response to Ezra 10:

³ So now let us make a covenant with our God to send away all these wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. ⁴ Take action, for it is your duty, and we are with you; be strong, and do it.” ⁵ Then Ezra stood up and made the leading priests, the Levites, and all Israel swear that they would do as had been said. So they swore.

¹⁰ Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, “You have trespassed and married foreign women, and so increased the guilt of Israel. ¹¹ Now make confession to the Lord the God of your ancestors, and do his will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives.”

How do you feel about this?

Ruth 3

Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. ²Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. ³Now wash 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. ⁴When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do.” ⁵She said to her, “All that you tell me I will do.”

⁶So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her. ⁷When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and he was in a contented mood, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came stealthily and uncovered his feet, and lay down. ⁸At midnight the man was startled, and turned over, and there, lying at his feet, was a woman! ⁹He said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth, your servant; spread your cloak over your servant, for you are next-of-kin.” ¹⁰He said, “May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter; this last instance of your loyalty is better than the first; you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. ¹¹And now, my daughter, do not be afraid, I will do for you all that you ask, for all the assembly of my people know that you are a worthy woman. ¹²But now, though it is true that I am a near kinsman, there is another kinsman more closely related than I. ¹³Remain this night, and in the morning, if he will act as next-of-kin¹³ for you, good; let him do it. If he is not willing to act as next-of-kin for you, then, as the Lord lives, I will act as next-of-kin for you. Lie down until the morning.”

¹⁴So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before one person could recognize another; for he said, “It must not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.” ¹⁵Then he said, “Bring the cloak you are wearing and hold it out.” So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley, and put it on her back; then he went into the city. ¹⁶She came to her mother-in-law, who said, “How did things go with you, my daughter?” Then she told her all that the man had done for her, ¹⁷saying, “He gave me these six measures of barley, for he said, ‘Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’” ¹⁸She replied, “Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today.”

Do you think Naomi’s instructions are strange? What do you think about Ruth’s actions?

Do you think Ruth and Naomi are acting boldly?

What does it mean to act as 'next of kin'?

Ruth 4:13-17

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together, the Lord made her conceive, and she bore a son. ¹⁴Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin; and may his name be renowned in Israel! ¹⁵He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him." ¹⁶Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. ¹⁷The women of the neighbourhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Read 4:13-17

What do you think of this?

In what ways can this be considered a story of hope?