



Into the Bible

The purpose of into the Bible
is to get children into the Bible,
and to get the Bible into children.

STEP THREE: RUTH 1-4



Contents



GENERAL INTRODUCTION 3

RUTH 1-4

The Bible for Children 6

Introduction for Beginners 16

Bible Study for the Young..... 24

INDEX 55

General Introduction



INTO THE BIBLE is a way to help children and young people, and anyone for that matter, to understand the Bible better. It's a simple translation from the original languages of the Bible, together with explanations, to make the Bible more clear.

Each Step INTO THE BIBLE is made up of three parts:

- 1) A **translation**, so that children can understand the passage in order to be able to read it in their own Bible.
- 2) An **introduction** to the passage for Beginners, so that they can get to know the background to the passage they are reading. This includes the history, geography, the issues of the time, and people involved, the culture, etc.
- 3) A **Bible study** on the passage for young people, or for parents, or teachers to help them grasp what the point of each paragraph is, and what are the issues spoken about in the text .

For five years in my ministry God put me in a government high school where I **discovered how interested children were in understanding a passage of the Scriptures.** Class after class, year after year there was sustained interest and even excitement. Among thousands of learners, I never had a class not interested.

During that time three of our four school-going children died. They died of extremely rare diseases that strike once in several million cases, and all three cases were entirely different from one another.

These two factors, teaching at the high school, and at the same time losing our children, are where the idea of INTO THE BIBLE came from.

The method of INTO THE BIBLE is to consult the Hebrew or Greek lexicons (dictionaries) to find out what meaning of the Hebrew/Greek word best fits the context of the passage, and will also make clear sense to a young reader. Where a word is difficult to understand I may turn it into a sentence to make sense of it. Where an issue is rather complicated, I use a footnote to explain it.

Hebrew and Greek lexicons open up the meanings of words and phrases in such a way that one sees more clearly what the Bible is saying. My aim is to share this information with children, with people who are beginning to read their Bibles, and with anyone who wants to teach children or adults, or those who simply want to get to know the Bible better.

The main principle on which INTO THE BIBLE is based is that the Bible comes from God, and it leads us to God, and that the whole Bible is true, and is perfectly reliable. The Bible is what we need to get through life, and to face death. The Bible has God's authority and goodness behind it.

Therefore, it is vital that everyone can understand their Bible.

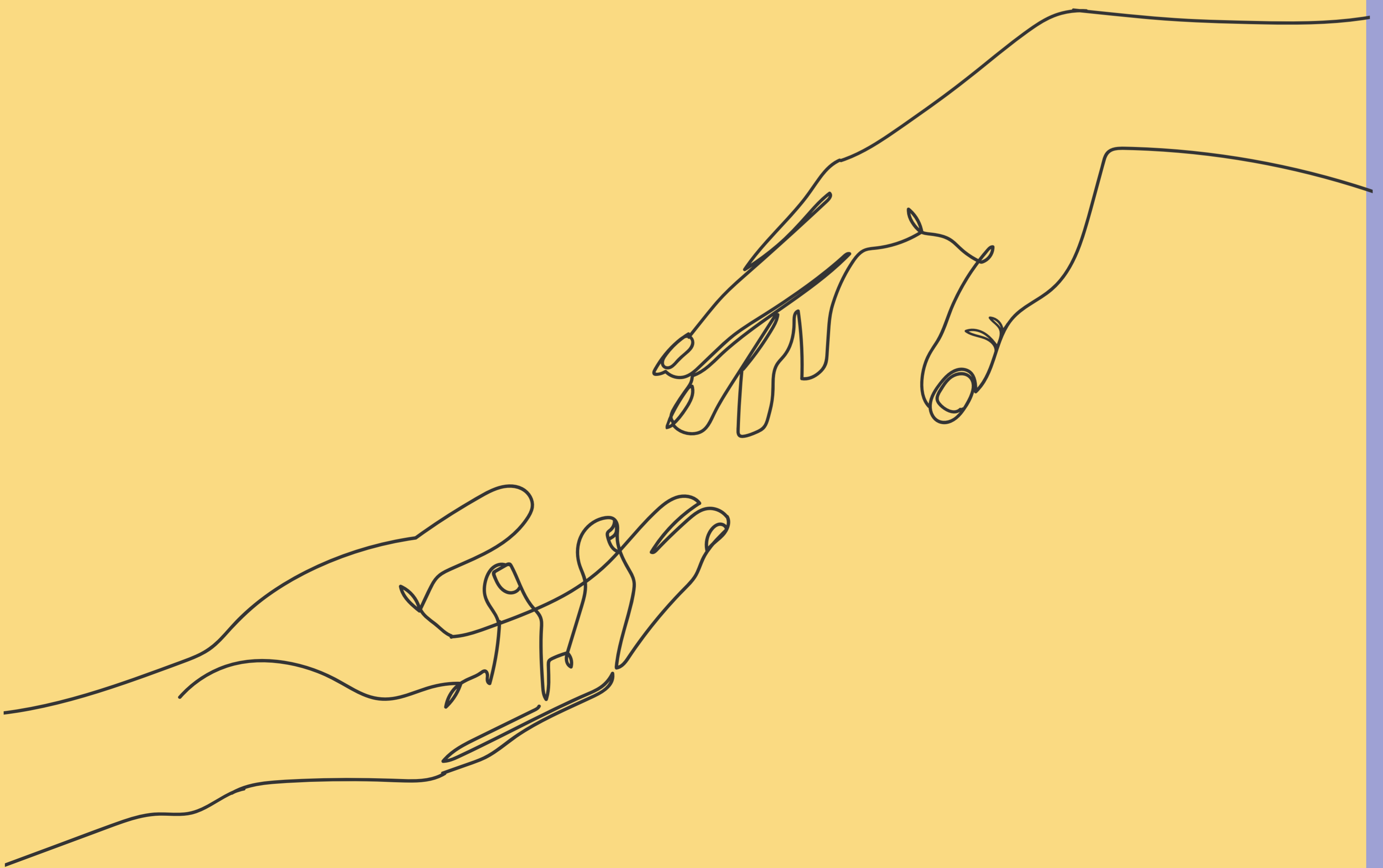
- **INTO THE BIBLE is intended to prepare youngsters to be able to read their own Bible.**
- **INTO THE BIBLE is planned to introduce children to most of the Bible.**
- **INTO THE BIBLE is educational. It is meant to develop their reading skills as well as their characters. It can also be used by parents or teachers to teach their children. The focus is on our children.**

Our children are our heritage from God, and the Bible is the heritage for our children, which is also from God. The purpose of Into the Bible is to get children into the Bible, and to get the Bible into children.

Yours in Christ,

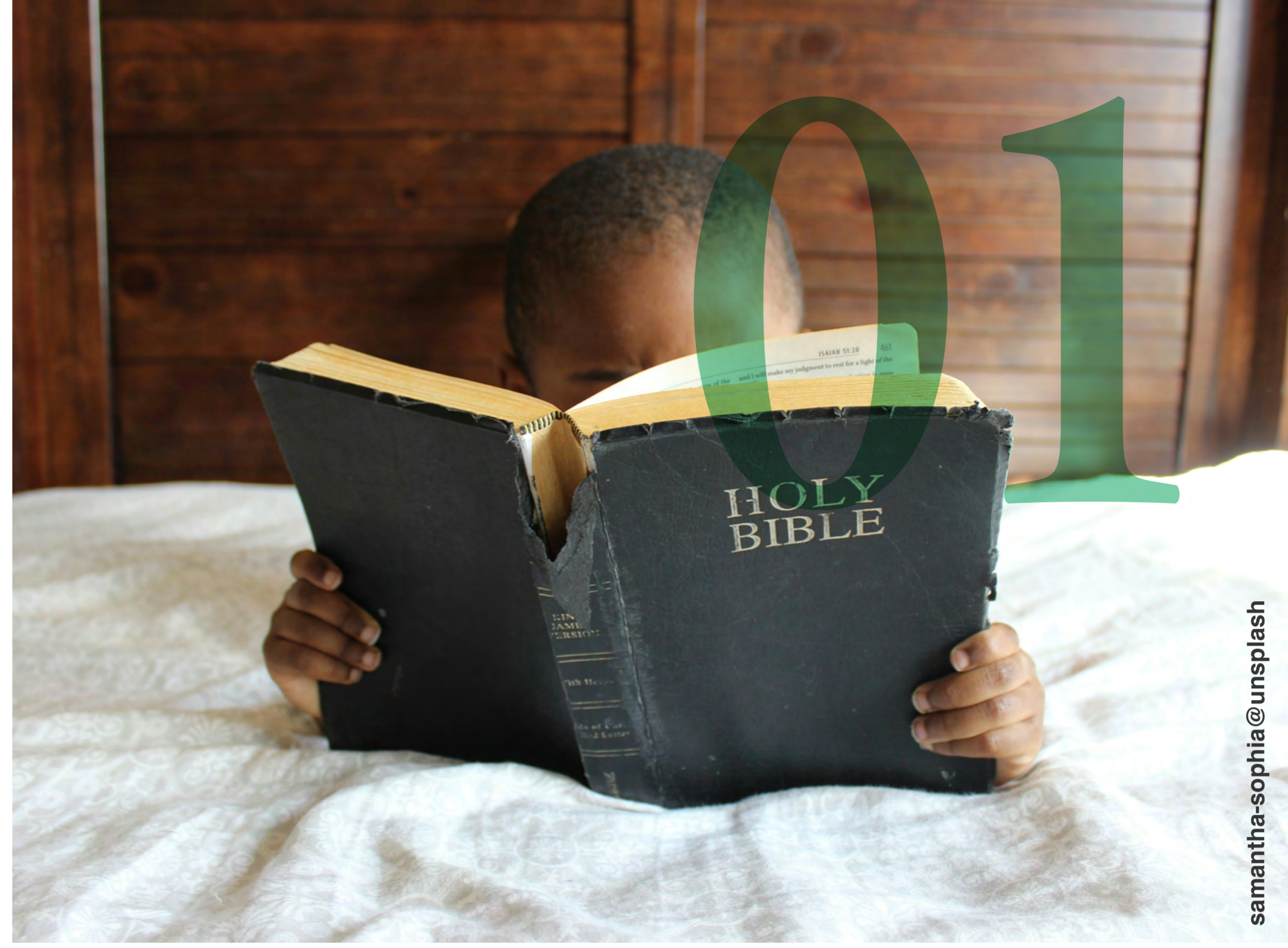
Peter Watson

Ruth 1-4



Ruth 1-4

A Simple Bible Translation



START HERE!

Read this simple translation to understand the passage, then read it in your own Bible.



PART ONE Chapter 1

1:1-5 A JEWISH FAMILY MOVES TO MOAB

In the days when the Judges were in charge of Israel, there was no rain in the country, and not enough food. So a Jewish man from Bethlehem in the land of Judah left his home to stay in the country of Moab [Moh-ab]. He took with him his wife and his two sons.

The man's name was Elimelech [e-lim-a'leck], while the name of his wife was Naomi [nay-oh-mee]. His sons' names were Mahlon [mach-lawn, ch as in loch] and Kilion [kilee-yawn]. They belonged to the old family of Ephratah [ef-ra-tah] that had lived for many years at Bethlehem. But because of the terrible drought they left their home town of Bethlehem and went to the foreign land of Moab on the other side of the Jordan River, and stayed there.

Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died. Naomi was left as a widow, with her two sons.

They married Moabite women. The name of the one was Orpah [or-pah], and the name of the other was Ruth [rooth]. The family of five lived there for about ten years.

Then both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left alone as a widow. She had lost both her sons as well as her husband. She was devastated.

1:6-9 NAOMI DECIDES TO GO BACK HOME

Naomi and her daughters-in-law got ready to leave the land of Moab. She took this decision when news came to the land of Moab that God had answered the prayers of his people by breaking the drought and providing them with food.

So Naomi left the place where she had been staying, and her two daughters-in-law went with her. They went to the road that goes back to the land of Judah.

Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law: No, girls, you must go back. Go back, each of you, to your own mother's home. May God be kind to you both, just as you were kind to my sons and to me.

May God look after you and help you to find another good husband and a good home. Then Naomi kissed them goodbye, and they all began to cry.

1:10-14 NAOMI TELLS HER GIRLS WHAT TO DO

Naomi's daughters-in-law said to her: No, Mom, we are going to go back with you to your people.

But Naomi insisted: No, my dear daughters, you have to go back to your own country. Why do you want to come with me? I'm not going to produce any more sons for you to marry!

Go back, my daughters. Please go! I'm too old and tired now to marry again. Even suppose that I could marry some man and have sons straight away,

Would you then sit around waiting until they grew up? Would you stay single for years until you could marry them? No, my dear girls, life has become much worse for me than it is for you. You can still make another start in life, but life has become bitter for me, because God has turned against me.

They all started to cry again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye. But Ruth clung to Naomi. She would not leave her.

PART TWO

1:15-18 RUTH WANTS TO GO WITH NAOMI

Naomi pleaded with Ruth: Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her people and to her gods. She's going back to her own culture and way of life. Please, go back with your sister-in-law!

But Ruth had other ideas. She said to Naomi: Don't try to get me to leave you, or try to force me to turn back from going with you, because where you go, I shall go. Wherever you live, I'm going to live with you. Your people will become my people, and your God will always be my God.

Where you die, there I shall stay until I die, so that I can be buried next to you. I promise you, in the name of the Lord, that nothing, not even death, will ever separate me from you.

Naomi realised that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her. She was not going to take “No” for an answer. So Naomi stopped trying to persuade Ruth to go back to Moab.

1:19-22 NAOMI'S SAD RETURN HOME

Naomi and Ruth travelled on until they came to Bethlehem. When they got to Bethlehem, there was lots of excitement in the whole town because of them, especially among the women. The women there could not believe that this really was Naomi. The old Naomi they had known was such a cheerful lady, but this Naomi who had come back was a very sad old woman.

So Naomi said to them: Don't call me Naomi anymore. Instead, call me Mara [mah-ra], because the Lord Almighty has made life very bitter for me.

When I left here, I had a lovely family, but the Lord has brought me back here with nothing. I've lost my whole family. I've lost my home and everything that I once had. So why do you still call me Naomi? No, the Lord Almighty has answered my prayers by hurting me and bringing a great disaster upon me.

That's how Naomi came back. With her was Ruth the Moabite woman, her daughter-in-law. Naomi came back from the foreign country of Moab. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

PART THREE Chapter 2

2:1-3 RUTH STARTS TO WORK

Naomi had a contact that was connected to her late husband Elimelech. This contact was an important man in Bethlehem, and was of the same clan or family as Elimelech. He was a relative or cousin, and his name was Boaz [boh-az].

Ruth, the foreigner from Moab, said to Naomi: May I go to work in the fields? I want to go and pick up the leftovers of the harvest wherever I can find a farmer who will allow me to do this. Naomi said to Ruth: Yes, my girl. You can do that.

So Ruth left and went and gleaned in the field. She followed behind the harvesters, picking up any bits of barley that they left lying in the field as they worked. It just so happened that the part of the field she was gleaning in belonged to Boaz who was of the same clan as Elimelech.

2:4-9 BOAZ WELCOMES AND HELPS RUTH

Then Boaz himself came from Bethlehem to the field. Boaz was a good man and a godly farmer. He greeted his workers, saying: The Lord be with you! They called back to him: May the Lord bless you!

Then Boaz asked his assistant, the foreman in charge of the harvesters: Whose girl is that?

The foreman who was in charge of the harvesters replied: She's a young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.

She asked permission to glean around the sheaves behind the harvesters. She has worked non-stop from this morning until now, except for a short break at the hut.

Boaz then spoke to Ruth: Listen to me, my girl: Don't go to glean in any other field, and also don't wander away from here. Stay as you are with the women who work for me. Keep your eyes on the field where my girls are harvesting, and stay with them.

Stick to the field where they are harvesting. I've also already told my men to leave you alone and not cause you any trouble. When you are thirsty you may go and drink from the water that my men fetch.

2:10-13 BOAZ BLESSES RUTH

Ruth bowed down to the ground in front of Boaz, and said: I cannot imagine why you are so kind to me, and why you take any notice of me at all. I'm just a foreigner.

But Boaz said to her: I have been told about all you did for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I know how you left your own father and mother and even your own home country. I understand that you came to live among people you had never known before.

May the Lord reward you for your goodness! May you receive a special reward from the Lord God of Israel, since you have come to live under his care and protection!

Ruth replied: I am very grateful for your kindness, Sir. You have comforted and encouraged me, even though I don't work for you.

2:14-16 BOAZ LOOKS AFTER RUTH

When it was lunch-time Boaz invited her to come and eat with his workers, so that she could have a proper cooked meal. When she joined them, Boaz offered her so much food that she had a full dinner, and even had leftovers to take home with her.

When she got up to go back to her gleaning, Boaz gave his men an order that even if she picked up the best bunches of grain that they cut, they must not say anything to put her off.

Boaz also told his men that they must deliberately pull some of the stalks of grain out from the heaps they cut and leave them lying on the ground for Ruth to pick up. Boaz wanted his men to help Ruth to glean.

2:17-20 RUTH TELLS NAOMI HER GOOD NEWS

Ruth gleaned in the field until evening, when she had to stop. Then, at the end of the day she did one more thing. She threshed the grain she had managed to collect. She ended up with over half a sack full of barley. Half a sack would give them food for weeks. All this was from just one day's work.

Ruth carried the sack of barley to the town. She showed her mother Naomi what she had gathered in that one day. Naomi stared at it, amazed. She also brought out the leftovers from lunchtime and gave Naomi what she had been unable to finish.

Her mother-in-law asked Ruth: Wherever did you glean today? Where did you do all this? May God bless the person who decided to be so kind to you! Then Ruth told her mother-in-law who she had worked for. She said: The name of the farmer I worked for today was someone called Boaz.

Naomi was thrilled. She said to her daughter-in-law: May he be blessed by the Lord. So the Lord has NOT stopped being kind to us. He is kind to those of us who are still alive, and he is also kind to those of our family who have died. Then Naomi shared some information with Ruth: That man is actually a relative of our family. He is what we Israelites call a redeemer. He is the person we may rely on to help us.

2:21-23 NAOMI TELLS RUTH TO STAY IN BOAZ' FIELDS

Then Ruth, who came from Moab, said to Naomi: Well, let me tell you something else: Boaz even said to me that I must stay with the harvesters who work for him until they finish the whole of his harvest.

Naomi then gave Ruth her daughter-in-law this advice: My dear daughter, the best thing you can do is to stay and work with the women of Boaz. On any other farm it is quite possible that the men will pick on you and cause you trouble.

So Ruth joined up with the women who worked for Boaz to glean until the barley harvest was finished. She stayed with them for the wheat harvest as well. All that time she lived with her mother-in-law and looked after her.

PART FOUR Chapter 3

3:1-5 NAOMI WANTS TO HELP RUTH

Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, came up with an idea for Ruth, her daughter-in-law. She said: My girl, I really ought to get you married, so that you can have a good home.

We are fortunate that Boaz is our relative, and you have the advantage of working with his young women. You've seen how he looks after them. Look, Boaz is separating the barley at the threshing floor tonight.

I want you to make yourself lovely. Have a good wash, and put on perfume, and dress up in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing-floor. But make sure that he does not see you until he has finished eating and drinking.

Then, when he goes to lie down, note the place where he lies so that you can go there in the dark. When you get to him, you must uncover his feet and lie down there at his feet. That will be a sign to him that you need his help. This is an old Israelite custom. He will then tell you what you must do.

Ruth said to Naomi: Yes, Mom, I'll do everything you have told me to do.

3:6-9 RUTH WANTS TO HELP NAOMI

Ruth went down to the threshing-floor and did everything her mother-in-law had told her to do.

When Boaz finished eating and drinking, he was in a good mood. He went to lie down at the far edge of the heap of grain. Ruth went quietly across to him, and lay down at his feet, and then pulled over her the part of his cloak that covered his feet.

Halfway through the night something disturbed the man and woke him up. He got a big surprise: A woman was lying at his feet. He asked: Who on earth are you?

She answered: I am Ruth, your servant. I have come to you for your help for the family. Please take me under your wing and give me your support. I need you to recover what belongs to Naomi's family. If you are willing to guide me through this, then put your cloak over me for protection, and I shall do whatever you tell me to do, because you are the the family's redeemer.

3:10-13 BOAZ DECIDES TO HELP RUTH

Boaz was amazed! He said: The Lord bless you, my girl! This generous kindness that you are now showing to the family is even greater than your kindness at the beginning

when you left Moab to come here. You have sacrificed looking for a nice young man as a husband for yourself. You could have hoped to marry for love or money. But you have chosen instead to marry for the honour and dignity of Naomi's family. You are simply wonderful!

Now, my girl, don't you worry. I'll do for you everything you have asked. It won't be difficult because all the leaders of my people know what you are: an honourable and unselfish young lady.

But there is one difficulty about the law. Yes, it is true that I am a relative and therefore a lawful redeemer of the family. But there is a redeemer who is a closer cousin to the family than I am. So he has to have the first option.

Stay here for the rest of the night. Then, in the morning, if he chooses to redeem you, well and good. It is his right and his responsibility. But, if he doesn't want to redeem you, then I promise you, as surely as the Lord lives, that I shall redeem you. Now, lie down until morning and get some sleep.

3:14-15 BOAZ BEGINS TO HELP RUTH

So Ruth lay at Boaz' feet until the morning. She got up very early, while it was still so dark that no-one could recognise anybody else. Boaz had warned her: No-one must find out that this woman had come to the threshing-floor.

Early in the morning Boaz said to Ruth: Bring that shawl you are wearing, and hold it out for me. When Ruth held it out for him, Boaz poured out about six scoops of barley into her shawl, and placed it on her shoulder. It was a gift to Naomi. Then Boaz went off to town.

3:16-18 NAOMI KNOWS WHAT BOAZ WILL DO

When Ruth came back to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked her: Well, my daughter, what happened? Where do you stand now? Do you have any idea who you are going to marry?

Then Ruth told Naomi all that the man Boaz had done for her. She also said: He gave me these six scoops of barley, and said that I must not go back to my mother-in-law empty handed.

Naomi said to Ruth: Now, my daughter, you must just wait until you find out how this matter turns out. The one thing I can tell you is that the man will not let this matter rest. You can be quite sure that he will sort out this business today.

PART FIVE Chapter 4

4:1-4 BOAZ INFORMS THE FAMILY RELATIVE

So Boaz went to the place at the town gate where the people of Bethlehem would meet to do their business. He sat down there. After a while the man who was the family's number one redeemer came along. He was the very man that Boaz had told Ruth about. Boaz called out to him: Ah, So-'n-so, please come over here and sit down with me. So the man came across and sat down.

Then Boaz invited ten men who were elders or leaders of the town to come and sit there. They also came and sat down.

Boaz then spoke up in front of everyone at the gates to the man who was first in line as the family's redeemer. He said: There's a piece of land that properly belongs to our brother who died, the late Elimelech. Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, is putting it up for sale.

So I have taken it upon myself to inform you personally about this. I am giving you the opportunity to buy it in the presence of these official witnesses sitting here, these elders of my people. If you want to redeem it and buy it yourself, then go ahead now and redeem it. But if you don't want to redeem it, then let me know, for no-one else is entitled to redeem it except you, and I am next in line. The man answered: Yes, alright, I'll redeem it myself.

4:5-6 BOAZ EXPLAINS ABOUT REDEMPTION

Then Boaz said to So-'n-so: The moment you buy the land, which belongs both to Naomi and to Ruth the Moabite, who is the widow of Naomi's dead son, you have a responsibility. You then have to protect and look after the dead man's good name as well as his property.

When he heard this, the man who was the closest relative to the family immediately changed his mind. He said: No! Sorry, then I cannot redeem it for myself because I might lose out where my own inheritance is concerned. So you can redeem it instead. I now give you my right to redeem it because I cannot redeem it myself.

4:7-8 THE RELATIVE GIVES HIS RIGHTS TO BOAZ

In the early days, in Israel, there was an old fashioned custom about redeeming or buying any property. It applied to an agreement to change the ownership of a property. Every business deal was settled when the man who sold the property took off his shoe

and gave it to the man who bought the property. This was the way that a business deal was properly or legally done in Israel in those early days.

So the man who had first right to get Naomi's property and belongings, said to Boaz: Alright then, you buy it for yourself. And he took off his sandal.

4:9-10 BOAZ BECOMES THE FAMILY-REDEEMER

Then Boaz announced to the elders, and to all the people standing there watching and listening: Today you are witnesses that I have bought everything that belonged to Elimelech. I have also bought whatever belonged to Kilion and to Machlon. I have bought it from Naomi.

On top of that, I have now got Ruth, the woman from Moab, the widow of Mahlon, as my wife. I have done this to preserve the good name of the dead man, together with his property. His name must not be lost from his family, nor from the list of the citizens of his home town. To this you people are witnesses today.

4:11-12 THE PEOPLE WISH BOAZ AND RUTH WELL

All the people at the town gates as well as the elders, who were witnesses, responded to Boaz, and said: May the Lord give his blessing to this woman who is coming into your home. May the Lord make her as special as Rachel and Leah [lee-a], Jacob's wives. Those two women were the mothers of the whole nation of Israel. Boaz, may you do well and have success and power in Ephratah as well as respect and a good reputation in Bethlehem.

Boaz, may your family, be like the family of Perez [perets], whose mother was Tamar [tah-mar] and whose father was Judah. May the Lord also give you children through this lovely young lady.

4:13-17 EVERYONE LOVES RUTH'S BABY

So Boaz married Ruth, and she became his wife. He made love to her and the Lord enabled her to have a baby, and she gave birth to a boy.

Then the women of Bethlehem congratulated Naomi. They said: The Lord be praised! You see, he has not denied you a redeemer now! May your little boy become someone special in the whole of Israel.

May he make life better for you, and look after you when you get old. You are so fortunate to have such a daughter-in-law. She loves you so much, and she has produced this little boy for you. Actually, she is better for you, and is a greater asset, than seven sons would have been.

Naomi was so thrilled with the baby that she adopted him as her own son and as Elimelech's son. She put the little baby boy on her lap, and she cared for him herself.

The women who were Naomi's neighbours and friends suggested a name for the baby. They said: A son has been born for Naomi. So they gave him the name, Obed [oh-bed OR aw-ved in Hebrew]. Oved [aw-ved] is Hebrew for a servant. That meant that he should look after Naomi when he grew up.

PART SIX

4.18-22 THE FAMILY OF PEREZ

This is the family record of Perez. (Perets means "Breakthrough".)

Perez was the ancestor of Nahshon [nach-shawn],

and Nahshon was the father of Salmon [sal-mawn],

and Salmon was the father of Boaz.

Boaz was the father of Obed [aw-ved],

who became the father of Jesse [Jessee OR Yi-shai in Hebrew],

who was the father of David [In Hebrew either dah-vid OR dah-veed].



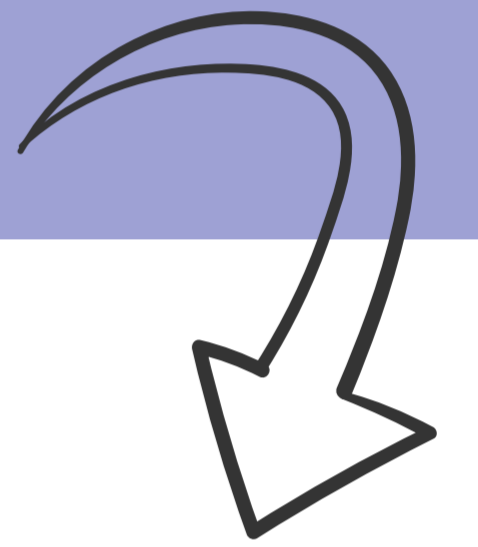
NOW YOU CAN READ RUTH IN YOUR OWN BIBLE.

Ruth 1-4

Passage background & introduction



Read this part to get to know the background of the chapter you read in Section 01. Interesting things like who Ruth was and what sort of person she was, and what Naomi's worries were about, and how wonderfully God blessed them.



CHAPTERS 1-4 INTRODUCTION

The book of Ruth is one of the most famous stories in the whole world.

It is also one of the loveliest. On top of this, it is a true story. It happened exactly as told in the Bible. It's a simple book. It's about two people talking to each other: first, it is Ruth and Naomi, her mother-in-law. Then it is Ruth and Boaz, the farmer at Bethlehem.

The book of Ruth in the Bible is unusual because it does not tell us anything about God and what he did. But it is clear that Ruth and Naomi and Boaz all loved God deeply. The book is like a puzzle: you have to think about what it teaches us about God. We must read it and study it and see what we can learn from it about God. It's a book that makes one think. That is actually what the whole Bible is:

**The Bible is to get one to think and to believe
and to live properly and well.**

If you read this book you will come to like Ruth. You will probably love her. If you do, then you must go on to love God, for he made her into such a lovely soul. Because she loved Naomi and God she did so much good. And then God did her so much more good, far more than she, or anyone else, could have imagined.

Ruth lived over a thousand years before Jesus Christ. This was sometime between when Joshua conquered the Promised Land and when David was born who became the second king of Israel. He was also the best ruler that Israel ever had. In the time after Moses and Joshua, and before the kings Saul and David, Israel was ruled by

judges. Three of the best known judges were Deborah, Gideon and Samson. Ruth lived sometime during this period of the Judges.

Moses was the leader of Israel who gave the Israelite people their special way of life. Moses was an exceptionally godly man who was very close to God. God gave to Moses the Ten Commandments and two types of Law:

- The main law was to tell the Israelites how to live a godly and a good life. This was the Law that God wants the whole world to keep.
- The second type of Law was especially for the Israelites. It told them how to live as a nation in a world that was evil and wicked, utterly bad and very sinful. These rules gave the Israelites their national character. It made them different from all the other nations. These second types of laws and rules were designed to help them to keep the main Law and commandments of God.

The problem with the Israelites was that they found the second types of laws easier to keep than the more important type. It was easier, for example, to sacrifice a sheep for the Lord and have a feast according to Moses' rules than to make sure they did not tell any lies. So they concentrated more and more on the minor laws. They became so keen on them that they even made more and more of them. But as they focused on the minor ones they began to forget the major ones. They sacrificed sheep strictly according to the rules, and enjoyed their feasts, but they told lots of lies. The problem is that lies and other sins lead to

trouble. The Israelites began to behave badly, and things got bad as the years went by.

What made things even worse was that the Israelites did not have the kind of fixed leadership that they had when Moses and Joshua were their leaders. Without good leadership to discipline and control them, the people began to do as they liked. When people do as they like they don't listen to God and they don't obey him. When that happens things get into a mess for the country. People become lawless. They disobeyed God's main laws and they even began to ignore his laws for the nation of Israel, his chosen people. God's people lost their respect for God and for others and for themselves. Their behaviour became more and more ugly.

For this God would punish them. He allowed other nations, their enemies, to attack them and beat them. Life under their enemies' rule was unbearable. They were forced to become slaves. When things got too bad they turned back to God and begged him to

Moses was an exceptionally godly man who was very close to God. God gave to Moses the Ten Commandments and two types of Law.

help them. God then kindly sent them leaders who were able to defeat their enemies and drive them out of their country. Those leaders were called judges. A judge was someone who would put matters right. But the problem then was that the same poor behaviour would begin again some years after the judge had died.

The book of Judges begins quite well. The first judge was called Othniel [oth-nee-el]. He was the son-in-law of the grand old man Caleb [kay-lib or kelev in Hebrew]. In Hebrew Caleb or Kelev means Dog. Kelev was a good old dog! He was a great man, a legend in Israel.

When the Israelites came out of Egypt in the great exodus, they had to make plans to conquer the land that God had promised them. The problem was that they all got cold feet. They gave up before they started.

However, there were two men who did not give up. Joshua and Caleb were willing to attack the giants in the Promised Land. They believed that God would support them, because he had told them to do that. But Joshua and Caleb were not able to convince the rest of the nation to do what Moses had told them to do. The result was that the nation was punished by God. They had to stay in the desert until everyone older than 20 had died there in the desert without ever getting to the Promised Land. Only Caleb and Joshua made it to the Promised Land, and Kelev was rewarded by becoming the owner of the town of Hebron. Hebron still exists today. Hebron is about 30 kilometres or 20 miles south of Jerusalem. Hebron is famous as the place where Abraham died.

Othniel, his nephew, helped Caleb to conquer the area around Hebron, and as a reward married Caleb's sensible and bold daughter. Othniel, the first judge, got the book of Judges off to a good start. He was a good leader and a worthy son-in-law of the grand old man Caleb, the oldest man and the most senior man, to conquer the Promised Land.

God sent them good and competent leaders, but the people kept falling away from their loyalty to the Lord.

But as the years passed, Israel began to let God down more and more. God sent them good and competent leaders, but the people kept falling away from their loyalty to the Lord. In the end things got very bad. The last few chapters of Judges are tragic and disgraceful. This was an especially bad time in Israel. What is interesting for us is that it was during this time of the judges that Ruth lived. So while the book of Judges was a poor and even very bad time in Israel's history, God was using this girl Ruth to get us a book in the Bible about one of the greatest and most beautiful happenings in the history of the Old Testament. Some of the things that happened in the time of the judges were horrible, ugly, nasty, appalling. There was no discipline, no

proper control, and so there was no decency and no peace. There was no godliness. By contrast, the life of Ruth during that time was beautiful, lovely, good, decent, pure and honourable. She was honest, she was faithful, and she is encouraging to us. She was such a godly woman!

Whenever things around us seem to be bad and worrying or frightening, we must realise that God is still doing some wonderful things in our world and in our times. Whatever is going wrong, there are always lovely people who are doing God's marvellous will. We must never give up when so much news is bad. We must keep going, because God is doing a lot of good somewhere.

What the book of Ruth is about is that:

**the good that God does
is greater than
the harm that people cause.**

What we must remember is that however bad a country or a community may become, there are always some really super and excellent people living there. Even if churches go wrong and Christians become hypocrites, there are always some lovely Christians in every church. This is what the book of Ruth encourages us to see and helps us to believe.

The last of the judges was a very godly man called Samuel. It is possible that he was a boy when Ruth was an old woman. Israel was in a mess when Samuel was born, but God used Samuel to make it possible for Israel to recover. When Samuel was an old man he anointed young David as Israel's next king. King David, a prophet of God, got the kingdom of Israel right. David's father's granny was...guess who...?

She was Ruth!

If in those days you flew south-east from Jerusalem, or from Bethlehem, across the Dead Sea, you would come to what was then the country of Moab [moh-ab]. Today it is part of the Arab country of Jordan. The roots of the nation of Moabites go right back to Abraham. Abraham had a brother who died, but he left a son who was Abraham's nephew. His name was Lot. He travelled with his Uncle Abraham from Iraq or Syria to Palestine. Lot became a rich man and settled in the valley that the Dead Sea is in. But the people he went to live with were utterly corrupt. God decided to wipe them out, but warned Lot and his family to get out of the valley. God then destroyed that valley, which seems to have been at the south end of the Dead Sea.

Lot survived and ended up living in a cave with his daughters. His daughter tricked Lot into getting completely drunk and then giving her a baby. She had sex with her own Dad and had a child by him. The boy's name was Moab. Moab grew up to have a big

family that went to live to the east of the Dead Sea. The family became so powerful that they took over the leadership of the people who lived there. Eventually the country was named after them: it became the country of Moab.

The Moabites became enemies of the Israelites, in fact, bitter enemies. About 600 years later Moses brought the Israelites from the Sinai Desert, to pass to the east of the Dead Sea and get to the Jordan River. But the Moabites refused to let them cross their country. The Israelites were not even allowed to use the highway that all other trading nations used. The Moabites would not sell them any food or water. They even threatened to get their army to fight the travelling Israelites. The Israelites, of course, had their families, their children and their cattle and animals with them.

But the Moabites sank even lower than just being unhelpful and rude. They tried to get a prophet to put a curse on the nation of Israel that God had miraculously brought out of slavery in Egypt. The Moabites knew what God had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians. They knew that the Israelites were descended from Abraham, Lot's uncle. But God made their attempts to use the false prophet to curse the Israelites fail. Instead of being cursed, the Israelites were blessed by God.

(By the way, the name of the prophet that the Moabites used to try to curse Israel was Balaam [bay-lim] and he is famous for having a donkey that talked to him. The poor donkey that he beat when he got angry rebuked him for not obeying God's orders.)

It would be a good thing if we had more donkeys like that today!

When Balaam failed to put a curse on the Israelites he then did something particularly nasty. He told the Moabites that there was a way they could bring serious trouble onto the Israelites even though they were protected by God. They must get their pretty women to go and have parties with the Israelites. They were to get them drunk and have sex with them. The Israelite men would fall for this. They would then break one of God's major laws, and God would then turn against them. This horrible plan worked, to some extent. God punished the Israelites who fell into this trap by putting them to death, as he had warned them previously. Then God went back to looking after the rest of his people again.

Because of this Moses gave the Israelites another minor law. No Moabites would be allowed to become Israelite citizens. Even Egyptians could join the Israelite nation if they became believers in God, but not Moabites. The Egyptians had treated the Israelites very badly. They had bullied them without mercy. But what the Moabites had done was worse: they had got the Israelites to sin against God. So Moses had told the Israelites to regard the Moabites as enemies permanently. The Israelites must never marry Moabites. Moabites must never be welcome in Israel.

When we study the Law of Moses we also see something else. An important part of the major laws was about love. We must love God. We must love him more than anything or anyone else. To show this kind of love to God our Father in heaven, we must love others. We must love our people. We must even love strangers and foreigners.

To show God that we truly love him we must love people. This includes people who cause us trouble and do not treat us well. We must cause them no trouble and we must treat them fairly and properly and decently. All this is most important if we want God's love and favours and blessings.

So what do we do? What do we do when the minor law says have nothing to do with those people because they will lead you to sin? And what do we do when the major law says we must love people, even those who don't like us? Which law do we obey?

The answer is that we must obey both laws. We must love people, and we must also not allow them to lead us into sin. We must have nothing to do with whatever is wrong, and we must always treat people properly, even if they do what's wrong. It also means even if they do wrong to us. This is what makes religion so difficult for all of us. Yet it is also why religion is so important for us.

But this is the rule that God has chosen to test whether we truly love him or not. Will we do as he says? Or will we make some excuse not to do what he has told us to do? The big mistake that many believers make is to take God's minor laws seriously but then fail to keep his major laws. We concentrate on the laws we think are right, especially those that suit us, yet we ignore or neglect laws that are most important because we find them too difficult. We even argue that the laws we don't like are not necessary, or are out of date nowadays. We say that everyone ignores them anyway, or claim that God will understand if we can't help doing what's wrong.

We must love people, and we must also not allow them to lead us into sin. We must have nothing to do with whatever is wrong.

But all these arguments are false. They are huge mistakes with serious consequences, and are even dangerous. They ruin people's lives. Arguing with God does not work. We just end up with our lives in a mess.

The book of Ruth is about how a lovely young woman who came from Moab yet won the hearts of the Jewish people. She put love first, and the result was that religious people who obeyed Moses came to love her despite the fact that she came from Moab. Because she kept God's laws she got God's support. She kept God's major laws and even

decided to learn his minor laws and obey them. For doing that God rewarded her by making her the great-grandmother of Israel's greatest king.

She even became the ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world, and the permanent King of the Kingdom of God and of heaven.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Every book in the Bible is showing us what the future is going to be. Every book in the Bible also teaches us something about God, even if the name of God is not mentioned, as in this book of Ruth. Every book also shows us something about the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel.

The book of Ruth shows us how God allowed Naomi to get hurt. That is a clue or a picture of how God the Father allowed his Son Jesus to get hurt. God also allows us to get hurt.

But it also shows us how wonderfully God caused things to turn out for Naomi in the end. In the end God raised Jesus out of all his sufferings and death, and took him up to heaven and put him on God's own throne. God has also promised to save us from all our troubles and sufferings, and lift us up to heaven. There he will give us a special place in his kingdom. Whenever we suffer, we actually have something wonderful to look forward to. It is something that we cannot see now, but God is planning and preparing it for us. That is what is called living by faith.

This book shows how wonderfully unselfish, loyal and faithful Ruth was. What God is telling us is that he loves that sort of thing. Here is someone, a young Moabite widow, who truly loved just one person, and God made a big thing of it. God has used Ruth to inspire us to love people. That's what God wants. The secret, though, is that our love must be genuine. It must be unselfish. It must be godly. It has to be something that really helps somebody.

When we do love someone in such an honourable or noble way we can then understand what Jesus has done for us. The way Ruth loved Naomi is the way Christ loves the Church, and all God's people. Jesus' love and self-sacrifice was even greater than Ruth's, by far.

A Christian is someone who appreciates Christ's love for us.

God's minor law, with God's support and help, made it possible for Boaz to redeem Elimelech and his family's good name and fortune. Jesus Christ's sacrifice and death on the cross has redeemed all God's people from sin, which the law of God condemns. He has also redeemed us from death, which is our punishment for having sinned.

As Ruth had a baby boy, called Obed, so Christ's resurrection from the dead has given us the hope of new life and everlasting happiness in heaven. This is thanks to God's Son becoming both the Servant of God and the Servant of man. Obed means "servant."

Jesus became our servant.

The amazing thing about the book of Ruth is that God used and blessed a young woman from Moab, who became the great-grandmother of Israel's greatest king. This tells us two things about God's wonderful plans:

First, he would one day use a young woman who was not yet married, a virgin, to be the mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Redeemer and the Messiah and the Saviour and Lord of the whole world.

Secondly, God showed that he wants to bless all the nations of the world, even those that were not Israeli or Jewish. He chose a woman from Moab, which is today the country of Jordan. The people who live there nowadays are Arabs. They are also Muslims. That Moabite girl, Ruth, was an ancestor not only of King David, but also of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And Jesus, of course, was a descendent of David. Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the whole world. He is the way for all nations to find God. This hope is not only for Christians, but is also available for Jews and Arabs, as well as for Muslims or any other religion. Jesus Christ is the way to God for all of us. What we have to do is to believe in him. We must believe in him and obey him.

Bethlehem was both the home of David when he was a boy, as well as the birth place of Jesus. Bethlehem is two Hebrew words, Beth-Lehem [bet lechem, ch as in loch]. Bethlehem means "House of-Bread." One can translate that as "a good source of food," in other words, a good farming area. Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem, called himself

"The Bread of Life."

We can translate that as

The True Food of God that gives us Eternal Life.

Ruth 1-4

A Bible study on our passage



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Now let's grasp the points of each paragraph and the issues being spoken about and together we can grow in our knowledge and love of God.



RUTH

Here is the story about Ruth's amazing unselfishness, and how God blessed her for it.

It's about Ruth's goodness to her mother-in-law, and about God's great goodness to Ruth and her mother-in-law.

PART ONE: Chapter 1

The first part is about how things went terribly wrong for an Israelite family whose home had been in Bethlehem.

1:1-5 A JEWISH FAMILY MOVES TO MOAB

In the days when ¹the Judges were in charge of Israel, there was ²no rain in the country, and not enough food. So a Jewish man from ³Bethlehem in the land of Judah left his home to stay in the country of ⁴Moab [Moh-ab]. He took with him his wife and his two sons.

The man's name was Elimelech [e-lim-a'leck], while the name of his wife was Naomi [nay-oh-mee]. His sons' names were Mahlon [mach-lawn, ch as in loch] and Kilion [kilee-yawn]. They belonged to the old family of ⁵Ephratah [ef-ra-tah] that had lived for many years at Bethlehem. But because of the terrible drought they left their home town of Bethlehem and went to the foreign land of Moab on the other side of the Jordan River, and stayed there.

Hebrew names: When unusual names are used for the first time, they are put in brackets and broken into sections, to help the reader to pronounce them.

Names in Hebrew, which look strange to us, often have meanings. For example, Elimelech, pronounced el-ee-melech in Hebrew, ch as in loch: El means God; Eli means My God, and Melech means King. So Elimelech means My God (is) King.

¹**the Judges:** To begin with, when the Israelites left Egypt and settled in Canaan [kay-nin] they had no kings. Canaan is a Hebrew word that means business or trade. A Canaanite means a businessman. Unfortunately doing business over the centuries had made them wicked, corrupt and rotten to the core. This is what the love of business and wealth and money does to people in the end.

So when the Israelites took over Canaan God appointed judges as leaders to rule the country. The function of the judges was to make sure that the people obeyed God and lived decently. They would then be able to live safely and happily.

²**no rain in the country, and not enough food:** This was their punishment from God because of the way most of the country was disobeying God and living in a heathen and disgraceful way.

³**Bethlehem:** Bethlehem was a farming community in the area where the tribe of Judah settled. Centuries later the tribe of Judah became known as the Jews. The name Bethlehem means a “good farming area.” Bethlehem, in Hebrew, is “House of Bread.” Beth [bet] means House, and Lehem means bread [lechem, ch as in loch]. Bethlehem is about ten kilometres to the south of Jerusalem. The town Bethlehem is still there in Israel today.

Over a hundred years after Ruth, David would become the second king of Israel. He would grow up in Bethlehem. It would be his home town. A thousand years after David, the Lord Jesus Christ would also be born in Bethlehem. Jesus was of the family of David.

⁴**Moab:** Moab [moh-ab] was a neighbouring country on the other side, the east side, of the Dead Sea. It was next to the lower or southern half of the Dead Sea. Today Moab is part of the country of Jordan. From Bethlehem one looked over the Dead Sea to the distant hills of Moab.

The Jews were descended from Abraham, and the Moabites were descended from Abraham’s nephew, Lot.

⁵**Ephratah:** Ephratah [ef-ra-tah] was possibly the ancient name of Bethlehem, or it may have been the area in which the town Bethlehem was situated. Bethlehem was

9 kilometres south of Jerusalem. The local people were proud to live in Bethlehem-Ephratah, which was an important part of the start of the Jewish nation. The prophet Micah prophesied that the future Messiah would be born there. (Micah chapter 5).

Micah's prophecy was made somewhere around 700 years before Jesus Christ, but Ruth lived long before that, well over a thousand years before Christ.

1:6-9 NAOMI DECIDES TO GO BACK HOME

Naomi and her daughters-in-law got ready to leave the land of Moab. She took this decision when news came to the land of Moab that God had answered the prayers of his people by breaking the drought and providing them with food.

So Naomi left the place where she had been staying, and her two daughters-in-law went with her. They went to the road that goes back to the land of Judah.

Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law: No, girls, you must go back. Go back, each of you, to ¹your own mother's home. May God be kind to you both, just as you were kind to my sons and to me.

May God look after you and help you to find another good husband and a good home. Then Naomi kissed them goodbye, and they all began to cry.

¹your own mother's home: Naomi was trying to do what was best for the two young women, who had no children. They had fallen in love with two Israelite men and married them. Machlon and Kilion were good husbands. So their widows now wanted to go to Israel where their darling husbands had come from. Naomi began to realise that this would be a mistake. They would not be welcome in Israel, especially in Bethlehem-Ephratah where the Jewish religion was strong. "Go back to your own mother's home" was a way of saying, go back to your own people and your own culture where you grew up. The two young women were very keen to go to Bethlehem with Naomi. They had packed up and started the journey with her.

1:10-14 NAOMI TELLS HER GIRLS WHAT TO DO

Naomi's daughters-in-law said to her: No, Mom, we are going to go back with you to your people.

But Naomi insisted: No, my dear daughters, you have to go back to your own country. Why do you want to come with me? I'm not going to produce any more sons for you to marry!

Go back, my daughters. Please go! ¹I'm too old and tired now to marry again. Even suppose that I could marry some man and have sons straight away,

Would you then sit around waiting until they grew up? Would you stay single for years until you could marry them? No, my dear girls, life has become much worse for me than it is for you. You can still make another start in life, but life has become bitter for me, because God has turned against me.

They all started to cry again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye. But Ruth clung to Naomi. She would not leave her.

¹I'm too old and tired now to marry again: Orpah and Ruth married into a very special Jewish family. But, sadly, that had now come to an end. Naomi knew that her daughters would not get the same chance to marry good Jewish men again. She is now persuading them that there is absolutely no chance that she can ever again give them a good husband. The happiness they have known in the past has now gone forever. Death has broken up their family.

PART TWO:

Ruth decided that she would look after Naomi for the rest of Naomi's life. Ruth was determined to do that even if that meant that she would have to be just a servant for the rest of her life.

1:15-18 RUTH WANTS TO GO WITH NAOMI

Naomi pleaded with Ruth: Look, ¹your sister-in-law is going back to her people and to her gods. She's going back to her own culture and way of life. Please, go back with your sister-in-law!

But Ruth had other ideas. She said to Naomi: Don't try to get me to leave you, or try to force me to turn back from going with you, because ²where you go, I shall go. Wherever you live, I'm going to live with you. Your people will become my people, and your God will always be my God.

Where you die, there I shall stay until I die, so that I can be buried next to you. I promise you, in the name of the Lord, that nothing, not even death, will ever separate me from you.

Naomi realised that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her. She was not going to take "No" for an answer. So Naomi stopped trying to persuade Ruth to go back to Moab.

¹your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods: When Naomi told her daughters-in-law to go back to their own country and their gods, she was not telling them to give up on the true God. She did not tell them to go and worship other gods. She had been living in Moab for ten years as an Israelite who believed in God. The two young women had married Israelites and the whole family believed in Israel's God.

But now Naomi was in trouble, and she was trying to help her sons' widows not to get themselves into more trouble with her. She felt helpless and desperate. She would not be able to help them anymore. Naomi knew that her people would not welcome two Moabite women. In Judah they would always have to live as servants. They would not be well-treated or respected. No Israelite man would want to marry a foreign woman, especially not from Moab. It would be better for the girls to go back home, to their own country, their own people and their own culture. They would have a better chance to get married there and have a home of their own, instead of just being servants in someone else's home.

Sadly, life would be better for them in their own country where people worshiped false gods. Even though they believed in God they would be better off in Moab than in Judah.

It would be possible for Orpah and Ruth to live in Moab as believers in God. Even today there are Christians who live in countries that have turned against Christianity. They worship God, but Sunday may not be a day of rest for everyone, and there may be no Christian churches that they can go to. It is not easy to worship and obey God in a country with a different religion, but it is possible. Even among the Moabites there were a few people who believed in the true God. There always are such people in every country, and certainly in the countries that were neighbours to Israel.

Many years later David sent his father and mother, who were believers in God, to live in Moab. King Saul was trying to kill David and he had to get his parents to safety.

Naomi knew that Orpah and Ruth would always love God. They both loved Naomi and Naomi's God. Naomi wanted God to bless the girls when they went back to their own people with their own culture and gods. Naomi had said to them:

May God be kind to you both, just as you were kind to my sons and to me.

May God look after you and help you to find another good husband and a good home.

There would be very few men in Moab who believed in God, so things would of course be difficult for the two girls. But Naomi was sure that there would be no men at all in Bethlehem-Ephratah who would want to marry a widow from Moab. In fact, nobody would want Moab women in their town. That was Naomi's problem. It is difficult to go to another country where nobody knows you. But it is especially difficult to go somewhere where nobody wants you! Going back to Moab would be difficult but not impossible. Going on to the land of the Israelites, the people of God, would be hopeless for these two Moabite girls.

That's what Naomi thought, as she desperately and unselfishly tried to help her two daughters-in-law. Naomi badly wanted them to have a family. The chances of that in Bethlehem were, in her experience, very poor.



Famous Bible Words

2where you go, I shall go:

Where you go, I shall go.

Wherever you live, I'm going to live with you.

Your people will become my people,

and your God will always be my God.

Where you die, there I shall stay until I die,

so that I can be buried next to you.

I shall always be with you,

I promise you in the name of God,

that I will still be with you even in death.

These words are very famous. Many people have loved them. Ruth is saying that she is going to change her country and her people in order to go and live with Naomi for the rest of her life. She will also change her culture, and, of course, would be perfectly happy to go on worshiping the God of the Israelites. She is willing to live as a humble servant looking after Naomi for the rest of her life. She loved Naomi, and she loved Naomi's God. She was prepared to learn to love Naomi's people, even if they were difficult or did not want her. She would rather do all that than leave Naomi in order to make a new home for herself.

Ruth's promise to Naomi is important. Ruth will not only be with Naomi for the whole of her life, but will stay with Naomi even when they die. They shall be together forever! It is her descendant, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who will make it possible for us to keep up our precious connections with those we love, after death. This is what is meant by the gift of eternal life by the grace of Jesus Christ.

1:19-22 NAOMI'S SAD RETURN HOME

Naomi and Ruth travelled on until they came to Bethlehem. When they got to Bethlehem, there was lots of excitement in the whole town because of them, especially among the women. The women there could not believe that this really was Naomi. The old Naomi they had known was such a cheerful lady, but this Naomi who had come back was a very sad old woman.

So Naomi said to them: Don't call me ¹Naomi anymore. Instead, call me ¹Mara [mah-ra], because the Lord Almighty has made life very bitter for me.

When I left here, I had a lovely family, but the Lord has brought me back here with nothing. I've lost my whole family. I've lost my home and everything that I once had. So why do you still call me Naomi? No, ²the Lord Almighty has answered my prayers by hurting me and bringing a great disaster upon me.

That's how Naomi came back. ³With her was Ruth the Moabite woman, her daughter-in-law. Naomi came back from the foreign country of Moab. They arrived in ⁴Bethlehem at the beginning of ⁵the barley harvest.

¹Naomi, Mara: Remember that the book of Ruth was written in the Hebrew language:

Naomi [nay-oh-mee] means 'My Loveliness', or 'I'm a Pleasant, Happy Person.'

Mara [mah-rah] means 'Bitterness', or 'Something Horrible has Happened.' "Ra" in Hebrew is something bad or horrible.

²the Lord Almighty has answered my prayers by hurting me: The Old Testament Bible was translated from Hebrew into Greek about 150 years before Jesus Christ. When translating the book of Ruth, the Greek translators left out of their Bible these unhappy or painful words of Naomi.

This shows that there are parts of the Bible that even believers do not like to hear.

But it is important that we listen to everything that God has told us, rather than just what people like to hear or want us to hear. The reason why the Bible is so important to us is because it is the truth. Sometimes the truth does not sound like what we want to hear.

Naomi realised that nothing happens to us that God does not know about, or allow to happen. God does sometimes let us get hurt, just as he allowed Job and Naomi and Ruth and Jesus to get hurt. Naomi thought that God had turned against her.

But the book of Ruth shows us that God always has a plan when this happens to his people, and that it is a very, very good plan. In this case it was an especially amazing and marvellous plan. That is what God is like, even when things go wrong. He is always amazing and marvellous, no matter what happens to us.

If we keep faith with him we shall sooner or later find out how wonderfully good he is.

God is a specialist at bringing great good out of our worst troubles.

³**With her was Ruth the Moabite woman:** To Naomi things would now be even more difficult because her daughter-in-law was a foreigner. This would be difficult for her, and, of course, even more difficult for poor Ruth, that lovely, loyal girl.

⁴**Bethlehem:** Bethlehem is a Hebrew word that actually means “The House of Bread” or The Farming Area that produces food for the country. (In Hebrew “Beth” [bet] is a house, and “Lechem” [lechem, ch as in loch] is bread.)

⁵**the barley harvest:** The farmers reaped their barley harvest in late April and early May, at the beginning of summer. Barley was ground into powder or flour, which was used to make bread.

So, guided by God, Naomi and Ruth got to Bethlehem at just the right time. It was harvest time when they got there. This means not only that there was plenty of food, but also that all the people were in good spirits. Harvest time was always a happy time.

PART THREE: Chapter 2

Ruth goes to work on a farm so that she can provide food for Naomi.

2:1-3 RUTH STARTS TO WORK

Naomi had a contact that was connected to her late husband Elimelech. This contact was an important man in Bethlehem, and was of ¹the same clan or family as Elimelech. He was a relative or cousin, and his name was Boaz [boh-az].

²Ruth, the foreigner from Moab, said to Naomi: May I go to work in the fields? I want to go and pick up the leftovers of the harvest wherever I can find a farmer who will allow me to do this. Naomi said to Ruth: Yes, my girl. You can do that.

So Ruth left and went and ³gleaned in the field. She followed behind the harvesters, picking up any bits of barley that they left lying in the field as they worked. It just so happened that the part of the field she was gleaning in belonged to Boaz who was of the same clan as Elimelech.

¹**the same clan:** The nation of Israel was divided into twelve tribes. Elimelech belonged to the tribe of Judah (who many years later, during the time of Esther, became known as the Jews.) Each tribe was divided into clans. A clan was a group of families who all came originally from the same ancestor. This meant that all the members of a clan felt that they belonged together in a special or close way, like cousins or relatives.

²**Ruth, the foreigner from Moab:** Ruth realised that it might be difficult for her to get any work. She was a foreigner from a country that Israelites hated. Farmers would allow poor people to pick up gleanings in their fields because that was what the Law of Moses said they must do. But, would they allow a foreigner from Moab to come onto their land?

³**Ruth gleaned in the field:** In Israel it was a custom, during harvest time, to let poor people come and glean. When the harvesters cut the crops and stacked them into bundles, or sheaves, little bits would always fall onto the ground. The same would happen when the sheaves were loaded onto carts. Those bits would not be picked up. They would deliberately be left lying there. That was to allow poor people to go behind the harvesters and pick them up. They could then take whatever they collected home with them. In this way the farmers helped the poor people by allowing them to help themselves to get some food at harvest time. That was one of the minor laws of Moses. **Leviticus 19.9-10.**

2:4-9 BOAZ WELCOMES AND HELPS RUTH

Then Boaz himself came from Bethlehem to the field. Boaz was a good man and a godly farmer. He greeted his workers, saying: The Lord be with you! They called back to him: May the Lord bless you!

Then Boaz asked his assistant, the foreman in charge of the harvesters: Whose girl is that?

The foreman who was in charge of the harvesters replied: She's a young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.

She asked permission to glean around the sheaves behind the harvesters. She has worked non-stop from this morning until now, except for a short break at the hut.

Boaz then spoke to Ruth: Listen to me, my girl: Don't go to glean in any other field, and also don't wander away from here. Stay as you are with the women who work for me. Keep your eyes on the field where my girls are harvesting, and stay with them.

Stick to the field where they are ¹harvesting. I've also already told my men to leave you alone and not cause you any trouble. When you are thirsty you may go and ²drink from the water that my men fetch.

¹**harvesting:** At harvest time the reapers were both men and women. The men would cut the crops and the women would follow them and tie them up into bundles. The poor people were allowed to follow behind the team of workers and pick up or glean anything that the reapers or the women had left lying on the ground.

²**drink from the water that my men fetch:** These gleaners were not normally allowed to drink this water. It was provided for the reapers who were paid to work for the farmer. This was because the water had to be carried in heavy clay pots from the wells to the fields. Therefore water had to be carefully rationed.

2:10-13 BOAZ BLESSES RUTH

Ruth bowed down to the ground in front of Boaz, and said: I cannot imagine why you are so kind to me, and why you take any notice of me at all. I'm just a foreigner.

But Boaz said to her: ¹I have been told about all you did for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I know how you left your own father and mother and even your own home country. I understand that you came to live among people you had never known before.

May the Lord reward you for your goodness! May you receive a special reward from the Lord God of Israel, since you have come to live under his care and protection!

Ruth replied: I am very grateful for your kindness, Sir. You have comforted and encouraged me, even though I don't work for you.

¹I have been told about all you did for your mother-in-law: It is amazing how news gets around. When people do something good, or useful, or do well or are kind, people talk about it. The result is that one gets a good reputation.

Boaz did not criticise Ruth because she was a Moabitess. He could easily have done that. Instead he concentrated on her good character. He ignored her background and encouraged her good attitude.

2:14-16 BOAZ LOOKS AFTER RUTH

When it was lunch-time Boaz invited her to come and eat with his workers, so that she could have a proper cooked meal. When she joined them, Boaz offered her so much food that she had a full dinner, and even had leftovers to take home with her.

When she got up to go back to her ¹gleaning, Boaz gave his men an order that even if she picked up the best bunches of grain that they cut, they must not say anything to put her off.

Boaz also told his men that they must deliberately pull some of the stalks of grain out from the heaps they cut and leave them lying on the ground for Ruth to pick up. Boaz wanted his men to help Ruth to glean.

¹gleaning: Most farmers listened to God's rule and allowed the poor to glean in their fields. But poor people would sometimes take advantage of this. They would cheat by trying to steal some of the grain out of the sheaves. So the harvesters had to keep an eye on them and make sure they stayed away from the sheaves.

We also have the same sort of problem. There are many people who feel for the poor and want to help them. However, there are also some poor people who take advantage of this, and would lie and steal. We need to learn how to cope with this problem, and how to handle it. We must help the poor, but we need to realise that sometimes they may try to get away with doing something that's wrong. We need to be careful not to let this happen.

But even if some poor people do cheat we must still not give up doing what we can for other poor people. That's what God wants. We help them, but we also have to be careful that they do nothing wrong.

2:17-20 RUTH TELLS NAOMI HER GOOD NEWS

Ruth gleaned in the field until evening, when she had to stop. Then, at the end of the day she did one more thing. She ¹threshed the grain she had managed to collect. She ended up with ²over half a sack full of barley. Half a sack would give them food for weeks. All this was from just one day's work.

Ruth carried the sack of barley to the town. She showed her mother Naomi what she had gathered in that one day. Naomi stared at it, amazed. She also brought out the leftovers from lunchtime and gave Naomi what she had been unable to finish.

Her mother-in-law asked Ruth: Wherever did you glean today? Where did you do all this? May God bless the person who decided to be so kind to you! Then Ruth told her mother-in-law who she had worked for. She said: The name of the farmer I worked for today was someone called Boaz.

Naomi was thrilled. She said to her daughter-in-law: May he be blessed by the Lord. So the Lord has NOT stopped being kind to us. He is kind to those of us who are still alive, and he is also kind to ³those of our family who have died. Then Naomi shared some information with Ruth: That man is actually a relative of our family. He is what we Israelites call ⁴a redeemer. He is the person we may rely on to help us.

¹**threshed:** The crops of barley or wheat were cut at the bottom of the stalk. These were then tied into bundles or sheaves, to be carried back to the threshing floor. There the stalks, with the ears of corn on them, were threshed or beaten on the floor so that the grain fell off the stalks.

Then the grain was thrown into the air for the wind to blow the chaff away from the grain.

The chaff was the thin little coverings or husks that covered the grain as it grew. Once the grain was ripe, the husks dried out to form light chaff that could easily blow away in the wind.

The wind at that time of the year would start to blow in the afternoon, and stop blowing just after it got dark. That was the time the reapers had to work at the threshing floor, using the wind to blow away the chaff.

After all this was done, the reapers were left with a large pile of grain. This grain would then be scooped into sacks or large bags. It would be sold to people to grind the grain into flour and make bread with it. That was their main form of food.

²**over half a sack full:** This large amount was thanks to Boaz' kindness, and to the help the harvesters gave Ruth. It was also the result of Ruth's own hard work.

All this success was arranged by God.

³**those of our family who have died:** A widow never forgets the family she has lost. Naomi was always thinking about, and worrying about, what her family deserved and what they had lost.

A very important truth and principle in the Bible is that God never lets us down. He may take us through difficulties and disappointments, but he will never forget us. Whatever happens, we can be sure that God is going to sort things out and get them right for us. God is going to bring something really good out of even our worst problems.

⁴**a redeemer:** God, through Moses, gave the Israelites lots of rules to keep. These included rules on how to help people in need. They were to be helped first of all by someone in their own family. The relative who was supposed to help was called a redeemer. His responsibility was to redeem or recover whatever someone had lost. Usually he would be an important man, as well as a rich man.

The law of Moses said:

- If someone related to the redeemer lost his home or his land, the redeemer could get it back for him.
- If he lost his freedom and was sold as a slave, the redeemer could buy his freedom back for him.
- If someone was murdered, the redeemer was allowed to go and catch the murderer and punish him.
- If a family became poor and needy and helpless, the redeemer would be the one to help them get back on their feet again.

Moses also said that if a man died without having a child, his widow could marry the redeemer and have a child with him. That child would then be regarded, by law, as the child of the dead man. In that way the dead man's good name and all his property or belongings could stay with his family, and benefit them. This would save them from losing everything and becoming poor when the husband and father died.

(You can read something about this law in Deuteronomy 25.)

2:21-23 NAOMI TELLS RUTH TO STAY IN BOAZ' FIELDS

Then ¹Ruth, who came from Moab, said to Naomi: Well, let me tell you something else: Boaz even said to me that I must stay with the harvesters who work for him until they finish the whole of his harvest.

Naomi then gave Ruth her daughter-in-law this advice: My dear daughter, the best thing you can do is to stay and work with the women of Boaz. On any other farm it is quite possible that the men will pick on you and cause you trouble.

So Ruth joined up with the women who worked for Boaz to glean until the barley harvest was finished. She stayed with them for the wheat harvest as well. All that time she lived with her mother-in-law and looked after her.

¹Ruth, who came from Moab: It is quite clear that Ruth realised that she was very lucky indeed to have found someone who would support her instead of turning her away.

But, of course, this “luck” was of God’s doing. Ruth and Naomi knew this.

PART FOUR: Chapter 3

Ruth finds a way to bring great happiness to Naomi.

3:1-5 NAOMI WANTS TO HELP RUTH

Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, came up with an idea for Ruth, her daughter-in-law. She said: My girl, I really ought to get you married, so that you can have a good home.

We are fortunate that Boaz is our relative, and you have the advantage of working with his young women. You've seen how he looks after them. Look, Boaz is separating the barley at ¹the threshing floor tonight.

I want you to ²make yourself lovely. Have a good wash, and put on perfume, and dress up in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing-floor. But make sure that he does not see you until he has finished eating and drinking.

Then, when he goes to lie down, note the place where he lies so that you can go there in the dark. When you get to him, you must uncover his feet and lie down there at his feet. That will be a sign to him that you need his help. This is an old Israelite custom. He will then tell you what you must do.

¹the threshing floor: At this time of year the wind would blow from the afternoon until just after dark. So the farm workers had to do their threshing during that time.

Boaz, the boss, chose to have his supper at the threshing-floor, and sleep there. Some of his workers did the same thing, but the boss would lie down alone on the far side of the pile of grain. Since everyone worked long hours during the harvest, and had to be up very early in the morning, they would all be asleep quite soon after dark.

²make yourself lovely: One of the great gifts that God has given to girls and women is to be beautiful and attractive. This is very important when it comes to love and marriage.

Although God has made women lovely, there is something that they can do to make themselves lovely. There are all sorts of tricks they can use such as perfume and pretty clothes.

Naomi has realised that Ruth is getting on well with the people on the farm, and that everyone likes her. She also knows that Boaz is very kind to Ruth. What Naomi wants now is to see if Ruth can find a good husband, so that she can have a home and a family. Boaz knows that Ruth is a good kind of person. Naomi wants him also to realise that she is beautiful and attractive. She is the sort of woman who deserves a good husband.

³Yes, Mom, I'll do everything you have told me to do: Although Ruth agreed to do what Naomi told her to do, Ruth also had other plans. Instead of going to Boaz to find a good husband for herself, she had decided that she would rather ask Boaz to help Naomi. Naomi had lost her family-home and all its property. Ruth wanted to ask Boaz to help Naomi to get back what had belonged to Elimelech. Because of the drought and because he had died ten years before, Elimelech and his family had lost everything they once owned in Bethlehem.

So Ruth did what Naomi told her to do, but with a different purpose.

3:6-9 RUTH WANTS TO HELP NAOMI

Ruth went down to the threshing-floor and did everything her mother-in-law had told her to do.

When Boaz finished eating and drinking, he was in a good mood. He went to lie down at the far edge of the heap of grain. Ruth went quietly across to him, and lay down at his feet, and then pulled over her the part of his cloak that covered his feet.

Halfway through the night something disturbed the man and woke him up. He got a big surprise: A woman was lying at his feet. He asked: Who on earth are you?

She answered: I am Ruth, your servant. I have come to you for your help for the family. Please take me under your wing and give me your support. I need you to recover what belongs to Naomi's family. If you are willing to guide me through this, then put your cloak over me for protection, and I shall do whatever you tell me to do, because you are the ¹the family's redeemer.

¹the family's redeemer: Ruth, a foreign Moabite woman, was asking Boaz, an Israelite gentleman, for help for Elimelech and Naomi's family. Ruth had married their son, so she was a part of their family. Naomi was too old to marry again and have another child herself for her family. So Ruth was now volunteering to do this for her.

To do this, Ruth would have to marry a relative who would be able to buy back all Naomi's property. He would also have to give the family a son who would one day become the owner of that property. That son would then, by law, be regarded as Elimelech's grandson, and his heir. To Ruth it did not matter who she married, as long as the man would get Naomi's family name and belongings back for Naomi.

What Ruth was now trying to do was an utterly unselfish and extremely noble deed. The custom in those days for anyone asking for this kind of help was to ask the redeemer to put her under his wing or care. To do this she would ask him to put his cloak over her as a sign of his protection and care. In Hebrew the word used here for a cloak is the same as the word for a hen's wing that covers and protects her little chickens.

For her to be covered with the redeemer's cloak, or protected under his wing, did not only mean that HE would look after HER. It also meant that SHE would obey HIM. He would help her, and she would do whatever he told her to do.

3:10-13 BOAZ DECIDES TO HELP RUTH

Boaz was amazed! He said: The Lord bless you, my girl! This generous kindness that you are now showing to the family is even greater than your kindness at the beginning when you left Moab to come here. You have sacrificed looking for a nice young man as a husband for yourself. You could have hoped to marry for love or money. But you have chosen instead to marry for the honour and dignity of Naomi's family. You are simply wonderful!

Now, my girl, don't you worry. I'll do for you everything you have asked. It won't be difficult because ¹all the leaders of my people know what you are: an honourable and unselfish young lady.

But there is one difficulty about the law. Yes, it is true that I am a relative and therefore a lawful redeemer of the family. But there is a redeemer who is a closer cousin to the family than I am. So he has to have the first option.

Stay here for the rest of the night. Then, in the morning, ²if he chooses to redeem you, well and good. It is his right and his responsibility. But, if he doesn't want to redeem you, then I promise you, as surely as the Lord lives, that I shall redeem you. Now, lie down until morning and get some sleep.

¹all the leaders of my people know what you are: News travels fast and far, and even to high places. That is especially true when people behave well and do well.

if he chooses to redeem you, well and good: Here we see clearly what sort of person Ruth was, and also what Boaz was really like. According to Moses' law, the other redeemer had first right to marry Ruth. When Boaz said, "Well and good," it meant that he and Ruth were willing for that man to have Ruth as his wife. All that mattered to Ruth was that the redeemer would buy back all Elimelech's property for Naomi. Boaz supported Ruth. Of course, what was very awkward for both of them was that they both would have preferred Boaz to marry Ruth and redeem Elimelech's good name.

But above all, their top priority was to do what God had told Moses to lay down as law. They put what was right first, and what they dearly wanted and longed for, second.

To Ruth, and to Boaz, the important thing was to regain for Naomi what Elimelech had lost because of the drought. They were both very unselfish. Unselfishness can be a great sacrifice. When Jesus came to rescue us from our loss of being able to live permanently, he had a most unselfish spirit. He was the most unselfish person who has ever lived. And he paid a very heavy price for his unselfishness. Being a Christian means learning how to be unselfish in order to bring respect to God for people.

Over a thousand years later Mary and Joseph would have the same sort of struggle. They loved each other and wanted to get married. But God decided that Mary would have a baby and that Joseph would NOT be the father. For Mary to become pregnant before she got married was a huge struggle for her. But she decided to agree and submit to what God wanted. This meant that Joseph no longer wanted to marry her. But when God spoke to Joseph he agreed to do what God wanted. He married Mary even though he would not be the father of her first child. They obeyed God and have been honoured ever since throughout history. Every Christmas they are heroes throughout the world.

What Ruth and Boaz, and Mary and Joseph, have shown us is that God's will comes first. Even love and marriage and all our dreams must all fit in with God's laws and God's will. What God wants comes first, not what we want. What God wants is always best for us.

3:14-15 BOAZ BEGINS TO HELP RUTH

So Ruth lay at Boaz' feet until the morning. She got up very early, while it was still so dark that no-one could recognise anybody else. Boaz had warned her: ¹No-one must find out that this woman had come to the threshing-floor.

Early in the morning Boaz said to Ruth: Bring that shawl you are wearing, and hold it out for me. When Ruth held it out for him, Boaz poured out about six scoops of barley into her shawl, and placed it on her shoulder. It was a gift to Naomi. Then Boaz went off to town.

¹No-one must find out: Boaz did not want anyone to find out that Ruth had come to the threshing-floor at night.

During the harvesting, the men had to work over-time. So it was easier for them to sleep at the threshing-floor where they worked. For that reason, no woman was allowed to be there at night.

But Boaz' main reason was that Ruth was highly respected. She had a good name and a good reputation. If someone started saying that she had spent the night where the men were sleeping, people, especially women, would lose their respect for her.

Naomi had taken a risk in telling Ruth to go secretly to the barn at night to see Boaz. Naomi's idea was that everyone was in a good mood at harvest time. Ruth must go to Boaz when he was happy and in a good mood, which would make him even kinder and more helpful. To find a husband is just one of those sorts of things that need to be done secretly. But Naomi knew both Boaz and Ruth well. She knew that she could trust both of them to behave decently, even secretly. However attractive and lovely Ruth might be, and however secretly they met, Naomi knew that Boaz would not take advantage of Ruth in the dark during the night. Naomi was quite right in trusting Boaz like that.

The problem was not that those two excellent and noble people might do something wrong. The problem would be how other people would react if they found out that these two had met secretly during the night. Most people would jump to a nasty conclusion. This is what Boaz wanted to avoid.

There was a strict and good rule that no women were allowed into the barn at night during the harvest time. Here we see clearly, in the Bible, the difference between breaking a rule and sinning. The rule was to prevent sinning, of course. But rules are only rules. The important thing is keeping all God's commands. Even though Ruth was so lovely, and Boaz was in love with her, he did not sin against God. He did, of course, break his own rule. So did Ruth. So did Naomi. But what they did was to do a lot of good, and not any harm. But they were wise to do what they did carefully and secretly, because so many people are so quick to criticise and come to ugly conclusions.

3:16-18 NAOMI KNOWS WHAT BOAZ WILL DO

When Ruth came back to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked her: Well, my daughter, what happened? Where do you stand now? Do you have any idea who you are going to marry?

Then Ruth told Naomi all that the man Boaz had done for her. She also said: He gave me these ¹six scoops of barley, and said that I must not go back to my mother-in-law empty handed.

Naomi said to Ruth: Now, my daughter, you must just wait until you find out how this matter turns out. The one thing I can tell you is that the man will not let this matter rest. You can be quite sure that he will sort out this business today.

¹six scoops of barley: All this happened a thousand years before Christ, so we do not know exactly how much barley Boaz gave Ruth. But the reason why he gave her this large gift was to let Naomi know that he was going to look after both of them.



PART FIVE: Chapter 4

Boaz finds a way to help Ruth get what she wants Naomi to have.

4:1-4 BOAZ INFORMS THE FAMILY RELATIVE

So Boaz went to¹the place at the town gate where the people of Bethlehem would meet to do their business. He sat down there. After a while the man who was the family's number one redeemer came along. He was the very man that Boaz had told Ruth about. Boaz called out to him: Ah, ²So-'n-so, please come over here and sit down with me. So the man came across and sat down.

Then Boaz invited ten men who were elders or leaders of the town to come and sit there. They also came and sat down.

Boaz then spoke up in front of everyone at the gates to the man who was first in line as the family's redeemer. He said: There's a piece of land that properly belongs to our brother who died, the late Elimelech. Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, is putting it up for sale.

So I have taken it upon myself to inform you personally about this.

³I am giving you the opportunity to buy it in the presence of these official witnesses sitting here, these elders of my people. If you want to redeem it and buy it yourself, then go ahead now and redeem it. But if you don't want to redeem it, then let me know, for no-one else is entitled to redeem it except you, and I am next in line. The man answered: Yes, alright, I'll redeem it myself.

¹the place at the town gate: In those days many towns were surrounded by a wall to protect them. To get into the town or get out of the town you went through the main gate. Even towns without a wall had a gate where the road entered the town. Just inside the gate was a large open space. That was like a town square. It was where people could meet and where they could do business together, like a conference hall. It was also the place where the town council would meet, like a town hall. It was a very busy place, with all kinds of business being done by all sorts of people. It also meant that there were lots of people milling around who could keep a close eye on who came in through the town gate. The main purpose of this sort of set-up or arrangement was that everything that was done at the gate was done publicly and openly. This encouraged honest business.

²**So-'n-so:** We are not told what the man's name was. Boaz would have used his name when he called him, but the writer does not want to tell us what that man's name was.

(See the verses of the next section for the reason.)

³**I am giving you the opportunity to buy it:** While Naomi was in Moab all those years, other people had looked after the farm and spent money on it. They would not have made a profit because of the drought. If Naomi decided to reclaim the land back, these people wanted their money back. So Naomi was "selling the farm" in order to be able to pay back all the debts that had built up over the years. By selling the farm, the redeemer could buy it and give it back to Naomi's family.

It was the Law of Moses that made sure that someone who lost everything could always have the chance to get it back again. No one in Israel could cheat anyone out of what belonged to him, just because things had gone horribly wrong for that person. The laws of Moses were designed to make sure that dishonest people could not take advantage of someone in need who had gone through bad times.

4:5-6 BOAZ EXPLAINS ABOUT REDEMPTION

Then Boaz said to ¹So-'n-so: The moment you buy the land, which belongs both to Naomi and to Ruth the Moabitess, who is the widow of Naomi's dead son, you have a responsibility. You then have to protect and look after the dead man's good name as well as his property.

When he heard this, the man who was the closest relative to the family immediately changed his mind. He said: No! Sorry, then I cannot redeem it for myself because ²I might lose out where my own inheritance is concerned. So you can redeem it instead. I now give you my right to redeem it because I cannot redeem it myself.

¹**So-'n-so:** We do not know who this other man was, who was Elimelech's closest relative. We also do not know why he would have lost his own inheritance if he had married Ruth. All we know is that this was the way God made things work out for Ruth.

The man who was first in line as the redeemer was an important man. Yet, strangely enough, we are not told what his name was. This is because he should have helped the family, but he did not want to. All he was interested in was what he could get, or keep, for himself. He was somewhat selfish. He was completely different from Ruth who was utterly unselfish. Therefore he was not highly respected. This is why his name is not mentioned in this story. If he had really cared for the family, he would have helped, as he should have by law. He would then have had his name written in the Bible.

But, of course, he did not have to help. He was free to choose not to. He could have helped but decided not to. For this he is not criticised, so his name is not mentioned. But since he was not unselfish nor is he honoured. The Bible simply shows us the difference between selfish So-n-so and very unselfish Ruth.

There is a big difference between selfish people and unselfish people. They are two completely different types of people, even if they belong to the same family or are relatives.

²I might lose out: The Jewish laws of Moses were complicated. They were all designed to get people to do what was right and fair. When someone got into trouble or became poor, there were laws that were meant to help.

Helping people can be difficult and even costly. Exactly how this man would lose out, we do not know. But if he bought the property that had belonged to Elimelech and his sons, he would have to marry Elimelech's son's widow, a Moabite woman. That would have been a problem for him: He would also have to have a son by her who would be half a Moabite. He would then have to look after Ruth's son as he grew up. When the boy became a man, he would then have to give him all the property he had bought for the family. For some reason or other that was all too much for him. He just opted out of it all.

The man could see that he would not be better off if he got Ruth as his wife. He realised that he would lose out in the long run if he tried to help her in this way. Obviously he did not have the same sort of love for the family that Ruth had.

4:7-8 THE RELATIVE GIVES HIS RIGHTS TO BOAZ

In the early days, in Israel, there was an old fashioned custom about redeeming or buying any property. It applied to an agreement to change the ownership of a property. Every business deal was settled when the man who sold the property took off ¹his shoe and gave it to the man who bought the property. This was the way that a business deal was properly or legally done in Israel ²in those early days.

So the man who had first right to get Naomi's property and belongings, said to Boaz: Alright then, you buy it for yourself. And he took off his sandal.

¹his shoe: In those days, in that hot country, they actually wore sandals. The owner of the property who was selling it took off his sandal so that the new owner who was buying it could step into his shoe. Then the seller kept one sandal while the buyer got the other. This was their proof that they had agreed or consented to do a deal together.

The idea was that as the two shoes matched each other, so the business deal suited both of them. The picture or symbol of the pair of shoes was that their owners “walked together” in agreement about their business with each other.

²**in those early days:** By the time the book of Ruth was written many years later on, that way of doing business had changed to a more modern way. The end of the chapter will show that the story of Ruth was written after David became king of Israel. As the life of David brought even more honour to Ruth, so the life of Ruth brought extra honour to David.

As our lives bring honour and glory to the Lord Christ Jesus, so King Jesus will honour us with a place in his Father’s glory in the Kingdom of God.

4:9-10 BOAZ BECOMES THE FAMILY-REDEEMER

Then Boaz announced to the elders, and to all the people standing there watching and listening: Today you are witnesses that I have bought everything that belonged to Elimelech. I have also bought whatever belonged to Kilion and to Machlon. I have bought it from Naomi.

On top of that, I have now got Ruth, the woman from Moab, the widow of Mahlon, as my wife. I have done this to preserve the good name of the dead man, together with his property. ¹His name must not be lost from his family, nor from the list of ²the citizens of his home town. To this you people are witnesses today.

¹**His name must not be lost:** This is what was really important. What we own and possess is important, but what we are and what we are like is even more important. Our name is our reputation. Losing a good name is worse than losing things that belong to us. One’s family is a source of pride, and one needs one’s family to be respected in order to be proud of them. People and their good name was something important in the Law of Moses. Our good name is not only important to us; it is also important to God.

²**the citizens:** A person is not only important as a member of a family, but also as a member of the community to which he belongs. This may be a school or a town or a farming area. That person belongs there, and is important. That is what a citizen is. Boaz was very keen that Elimelech’s family should not lose their citizenship in Bethlehem.

4:11-12 THE PEOPLE WISH BOAZ AND RUTH WELL

All the people at the town gates as well as the elders, who were witnesses, responded to Boaz, and said: May the Lord give his blessing to this woman who is coming into your home. May the Lord make her as special as ¹Rachel and Leah [lee-a], Jacob's wives. Those two women were the mothers of the whole nation of Israel. Boaz, may you do well and have success and power in Ephratah as well as respect and a good reputation in Bethlehem.

Boaz, may your family, be like the family of ²Perez [perets], whose mother was Tamar [tah-mar] and whose father was Judah. May the Lord also give you children through this lovely young lady.

¹**Rachel and Leah, Jacob's wives:** Abraham's son was Isaac, and Isaac's son was Jacob. Jacob married his two cousins Rachel and Leah. God changed Jacob's name to Israel. He was the father or ancestor of the nation of Israel. Rachel and Leah, between them, had twelve sons and a daughter. The descendants or children of the twelve sons became the twelve tribes of Israel, named after Jacob's twelve sons. One of Leah's sons was Judah.

²**Perez, whose mother was Tamar and whose father was Judah:** Judah was the father of the tribe of Judah. Many years later that tribe became known as the Jews.

Tamar did not grow up as an Israelite. She was born and bred as a Canaanite. But she married Judah's son, whose mother had also been a Canaanite. Then, like Ruth, she also lost her husband, who died without having any children. So Tamar needed a redeemer to give her a son. Judah's other son should then have married her. But Judah, her father-in-law tricked her so that she could not get a redeemer. So she tricked him, and he became her redeemer without knowing it. Judah became the father of Tamar's twins, one of whom was Perez [Perets].

When Tamar was giving birth to the twins, it looked as though Perez' twin would be born first, but, to everyone's surprise, Perez was born first, so they called him "Breakthrough" (which in Hebrew is "Perez [perets].")

The people of Bethlehem, who belonged to the clan of Perez, the Perezites [pe-r'zights], hoped that Ruth would have a son who would also be a great breakthrough for the people of Bethlehem. Just as Tamar had been a mother in Israel and Judah despite being a Canaanite, so the people hoped that Ruth would be a good mother in Judah and Israel even though she was a Moabite girl.

Little did they know that God would bless their good wishes for Ruth in a far greater way than they could imagine. Though Ruth was not a Jew, Ruth and Boaz' son would be the grandfather of David, the greatest king of Israel.

A thousand years later, Ruth's family line would produce the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of all God's people in the whole world.

So thanks to the way God blessed Ruth, the Messiah, or Christ, would come from the Jews. He would be the Messiah for the Jews, but Ruth proves that the Messiah would also be the saviour for the whole world.

(You can read about Judah and Tamar, and the birth of Perez, in Genesis chapter 38.)

4:13-17 EVERYONE LOVES RUTH'S BABY

So Boaz married Ruth, and she became his wife. He made love to her and the Lord enabled her to have a baby, and she gave birth to a boy.

Then ¹the women of Bethlehem congratulated Naomi. They said: The Lord be praised! You see, he has not denied you a redeemer now! May your little boy become someone special in the whole of Israel.

May he make life better for you, and look after you when you get old. You are so fortunate to have such a daughter-in-law. She loves you so much, and she has produced this little boy for you. Actually, she is better for you, and is a greater asset, than seven sons would have been.

Naomi was so thrilled with the baby that she adopted him as her own son and as Elimelech's son. She put the little baby boy on her lap, and she cared for him herself.

The women who were Naomi's neighbours and friends suggested a name for the baby. They said: A son has been born for Naomi. So they gave him the name, Obed [oh-bed OR aw-ved in Hebrew]. Oved [aw-ved] is Hebrew for a servant. That meant that he should look after Naomi when he grew up.

¹the women of Bethlehem: The girl Ruth, who was a foreigner, but who was so kind and loyal, so generous and unselfish, became a favourite among the Jews who normally did not like foreigners, especially Moabites. The women of Bethlehem especially loved Ruth very much.

This is the only time in the whole Old Testament when a baby was named by other women instead of its parents. This was very special. It was a sign of how much they

loved Naomi and Ruth, and how thrilled they were at how things had turned out for them. The women of Bethlehem had completely accepted Ruth as one of them. Naomi had not thought that this could possibly happen, but God had achieved the impossible and brought it about.

As parents look after their children when they are young, so children, when they grow up, should look after their parents when they get old. Where children do take care of their old parents this is a blessing from God. To women, caring for children and caring for old people, is important. Those who are young and small, and those who are old and weak, do need care.

PART SIX:

The family line runs from Ruth to King David.

Let's now look at a part of the family record of Perez. (**Perets** means "Breakthrough".)

Perez [perets] went to live in Egypt at the time that his uncle Joseph was governor of Egypt.

While the Israelites were in Egypt for 400 years, three important leaders of the tribe of Judah were **Hezron** [chets-rawn, ch as in loch] who was the father of **Ram** [rahm] the father of **Amminadab** [a'minna-dav].

At the end of 400 years, at the time of the exodus, **Nahshon** [nach-shawn] was the leader of the tribe of Judah. He was one of the twelve leaders of Israel under Moses. His father, Amminadab, was the father-in-law of Aaron, the brother of Moses.

Nahshon died before the Israelites crossed the Jordan River to go into the Promised Land when Joshua was the leader of Israel. But Nahshon's son **Salmon** [sal-mawn] crossed the Jordan. Salmon married **Rahab** [ray-hab OR rah-chav, ch as in loch] who lived in Jericho and saved Joshua's spies by hiding them on the roof of her house. Salmon and Rahab's son was **Boaz**.

4.18-22 THE FAMILY OF PEREZ

This is the family record of Perez. (Perets means “Breakthrough”.)

Perez was ¹the ancestor of ²Nahshon [nach-shawn],

and Nahshon was the father of ³Salmon [sal-mawn],

and Salmon was the father of Boaz.

Boaz was the father of Obed [aw-ved],

who became the father of Jesse [Jessee],

who was the father of ⁴David.

¹**the ancestor**: In Hebrew, father and ancestor (or forefather) is the same word. This means that we cannot tell the difference between the word ‘father’ and the word ‘ancestor’ just by reading our Bible. Father or grandfather or great-grandfather or even great-great-grandfather is all the same word in Hebrew. We need the help of experts, or scholars, special teachers, to help us know whether ‘father’ means ‘father’ or ‘grandfather’ or just ‘ancestor.’

²**Nahshon** [nach-shawn]: Nahshon was the famous leader of the tribe of Judah in the time of Moses and the exodus.

³**Salmon** [sal-mawn]: Salmon was the leader of the tribe of Judah in the time of Joshua, when the Israelites conquered the Promised Land. That was why his son Boaz was such an important person in Bethlehem.

⁴**David**: Ruth became the granny of King David’s Dad, Jesse. So Ruth was King David’s great-grandmother. David’s grandad was Ruth’s son Obed [aw-ved].



**Christians are my dear family,
and Jesus Christ is my Lord and God.**

Index

Jesus will come back,
the same way he was seen
going to heaven.



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VOLUME 1

- 1.1 Genesis 1-3
- 1.2 Mark 1
- 1.3 Ruth 1-4
- 1.4 Acts 1

VOLUME 2

- 2.1 Job 1-7
- 2.2 John 1
- 2.3 Micah 1-4
- 2.4 1 John 1-5

VOLUME 3

- 3.1 Exodus 11-15
- 3.2 Matthew 2
- 3.3 Joshua 1-4
- 3.4 Romans 8

VOLUME 4

- 4.1 Psalms 16-23
- 4.2 Luke 4
- 4.3 Isaiah 5-9
- 4.4 1 Thessalonians 4

VOLUME 5

- 5.1 Leviticus 6-8
- 5.2 John 6
- 5.3 1 Samuel 15-18
- 5.4 1 Corinthians 15

VOLUME 6

- 6.2 Proverbs 2-3 & 11-13
- 6.2 Luke 6
- 6.3 Jeremiah 28-31
- 6.4 Galatians 5

VOLUME 7

- 7.1 Numbers 13-16
- 7.2 Mark 8-9
- 7.3 1 Kings 17-19
- 7.4 Hebrews 4-5

VOLUME 8

- 8.1 Ecclesiastes 6-7
- 8.2 Matthew 5-7
- 8.3 Ezekiel 33-36
- 8.4 1 Peter 4-5

VOLUME 9*

- (9.1) Deuteronomy 4-7
- (9.2) John 17-18 (Crucifixion)
- (9.3) 2 Chronicles 5-10
- (9.4) James 1

VOLUME 10*

- (10.1) Song of Solomon 3-5
- (10.2) Matthew 28 (Resurrection)
- (10.3) Daniel 2-5
- (10.4) Revelation 7-8

VOLUME 11*

- (11.1) Genesis 15-22
- (11.2) Mark 12
- (11.3) Ezra 3-7
- (11.4) Ephesians 1

VOLUME 12*

- (12.1) Psalms 115-122
- (12.2) Luke 16
- (12.3) Isaiah 53-61
- (12.4) 2 Timothy 2-3

THE NEXT SEVEN VOLUMES 2 to 8 ARE IN PRODUCTION.

*(Further volumes 9 to 12 are to be planned, researched and written, God willing.)

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