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Ruth

Famine in Judah

1 Long ago, during the time the judges* ruled, there was a bad time when there was not enough food to eat. A man named Elimelech left Bethlehem, Judah. He, his wife and his two sons moved to the hill country of Moab.* ²The man's wife was named Naomi and his two sons were named Mahlon and Kilion. These people were from the Ephrathah family of Bethlehem, Judah. The family traveled to the hill country of Moab and stayed there.

³Later, Naomi's husband, Elimelech, died. So only Naomi and her two sons were left. ⁴Her sons married women from the country of Moab. One wife's name was Orpah, and the other wife's name was Ruth. They lived in Moab about ten years, ⁵and Mahlon and Kilion also died. So Naomi was left alone without her husband or her two sons.

Naomi Goes Home

⁶While Naomi was in the hill country of Moab, she heard that the Lord had helped his people. He had given food to his people in Judah. So Naomi decided to leave the hill country of Moab and go back home. Her daughters-in-law also decided to go with her. ⁷They left the place where they had been living and started walking back to the land of Judah.

⁸Then Naomi told her daughters-in-law, "Each of you should go back home to your mother. You have been very kind to me and my dead sons. So I pray the Lord will be just as kind to you. ⁹I pray that he helps each of you to find a husband and a nice home."

Naomi kissed her daughters-in-law, and they all started crying.

¹⁰Then the daughters said, "But we want to come with you and go to your family."

¹¹But Naomi said, "No, daughters, go back to your own homes. Why should you go with me? I cannot help you. I don't have any more sons in me to be your husbands. ¹²Go back home! I am too old to have a new husband. Even if I thought I could be married again, I could not help you. If I became pregnant tonight and had two sons, it would not help. ¹³You would have to wait until they grew to become men before you could marry them. I can't make you wait that long for husbands. That would make me very sad! And I am already sad enough—the Lord has done many things to me!"

¹⁴So the women cried very much again. Then Orpah kissed Naomi and left. But Ruth hugged her and stayed.

¹⁵Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her own people and her own gods. So you should do the same thing."

¹⁶But Ruth said, "Don't force me to leave you! Don't force me to go back to my own people. Let me go with you. Wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you sleep, I will sleep. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. ¹⁷Where you die, I will die. And that is where I will be buried. I ask the Lord to punish me if I do not keep this promise: Only death will separate us."*

judges Special leaders that God sent to help and protect the people of Israel. This was before there were kings in Israel.

Moab A country east of Israel.

I ask the Lord ... separate us Literally, "May the Lord do this to me, and even more, unless death separates us!"

The Homecoming

¹⁸Naomi saw that Ruth wanted very much to go with her. So Naomi stopped arguing with her. ¹⁹Naomi and Ruth traveled until they came to the town of Bethlehem. When the two women entered Bethlehem, all the people were very excited. They said, “Is this Naomi?”

²⁰But Naomi told the people, “Don’t call me Naomi,* call me Marah.* Use this name because [God] All-Powerful has made my life very sad. ²¹I had everything I wanted when I left. But now, the Lord brings me home with nothing. The Lord has made me sad, so why should you call me ‘Happy’?*[God] All-Powerful has given much trouble to me.”

²²So Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth (the woman from Moab) came back from the hill country of Moab. These two women came to Bethlehem, Judah at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Ruth Meets Boaz

2 There was a rich man living in Bethlehem. His name was Boaz. Boaz was one of Naomi’s close relatives* from Elimelech’s family.

²One day Ruth (the woman from Moab) said to Naomi, “I think I will go to the fields. Maybe I can find someone that would be kind to me and let me gather the grain he leaves in his field.”

³Naomi said, “Fine, daughter, go ahead.”

So Ruth went to the fields. She followed the workers that were cutting the grain, and she gathered the grain that was left.* It happened that part of the field belonged to Boaz, the man from Elimelech’s family.

Naomi This name means “Happy” or “Pleasant.”

Marah This name means “Bitter” or “Sad.”

Happy This is the name Naomi.

close relative(s) In ancient Israel, if a man died without children, one of his close relatives would take the dead man’s wife so she could have children. He would care for this family, but this family and their property would not belong to him. It would all be in the dead man’s name.

gathered the grain that was left There was a law that a farmer must leave some grain in his field during harvest. This grain was left so the poor people could find something to eat. See Lev. 19:9; 23:22.

⁴Later, Boaz came to the field from Bethlehem. Boaz greeted his workers. He said, “The Lord be with you!”

And the workers answered, “And may the Lord bless you!”

⁵Then Boaz spoke to his servant that was in charge of the workers. He asked, “Whose girl is that?”

⁶The servant answered, “She is that Moabite woman who came with Naomi from the hill country of Moab. ⁷She came early this morning and asked me if she could follow the workers and gather the grain that was left on the ground. And she has been working ever since. That is her house over there.”*

⁸Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Listen, child. Stay here in my field to gather grain for yourself. There is no need for you to go to any other person’s field. Continue following behind my women workers. ⁹Watch to see which fields they go to, and follow them. I have warned the young men not to bother you. When you are thirsty, go and drink from the same water jug my men drink from.”

¹⁰Then Ruth bowed very low to the ground. She said to Boaz, “I am surprised you even noticed me! I am a stranger, [but you have been very kind to me].”

¹¹Boaz answered her, “I know about all the help you have given to Naomi, your mother-in-law. I know you helped her even after your husband died. And I know that you left your father and mother and your own country and came here to this country. You did not know any people from this country, but you came here with Naomi. ¹²The Lord will reward you for all the good things you have done. You will be paid in full by the Lord, the God of Israel. You have come to him for safety,* [and he will protect you].”

¹³Then Ruth said, “You are very kind to me, sir. I am only a servant. I am not even equal to one of your servants. But you have said kind words to me and comforted me.”

That is her house over there Or, “She only rested a short time in that shelter.”

You have come to him for safety Literally, “You have come under his wings for safety.”

¹⁴At lunch time, Boaz told Ruth, “Come here! Eat some of our bread. Here, dip your bread in our vinegar.”

So Ruth sat down with the workers. Boaz gave her some roasted grain. Ruth ate until she was full, and there was some food left. ¹⁵Then Ruth got up and went back to work.

Then Boaz told his servants, “Let Ruth gather even around the piles of grain. Don’t stop her. ¹⁶And make her work easier by dropping some full heads of grain for her. Let her gather that grain. Don’t tell her to stop.”

Naomi Hears About Boaz

¹⁷Ruth worked in the fields until evening. Then she separated the grain from the chaff.* There was about 1/2 bushel* of barley. ¹⁸Ruth carried the grain into town to show her mother-in-law what she had gathered. She also gave her the food that was left from lunch.

¹⁹Her mother-in-law asked her, “Where did you gather all this grain? Where did you work? Bless the man who noticed you.”

Then Ruth told her who she had worked with. She said, “The man I worked with today is a man named Boaz.”

Naomi told her daughter-in-law, “Lord bless him! He has continued showing his kindness to the living as well as the dead.” ²⁰Then Naomi told her daughter-in-law, “Boaz is one of our relatives. Boaz is one of our protectors.”*

²¹Then Ruth said, “Boaz also told me to come back and continue working. Boaz said that I should work closely with his servants until the harvest is finished.”

²²Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law Ruth, “It is good for you to continue working with his women servants. If you work in another field, some man might hurt you.” ²³So Ruth continued working closely with the women servants of Boaz. She gathered grain

until the barley harvest was finished. She also worked there through the end of the wheat harvest. Ruth continued living with Naomi, her mother-in-law.

The Threshing Floor

3 Then Naomi, Ruth’s mother-in-law, said to her, “My daughter, maybe I should find ₁a husband and ₂a nice home for you. That would be good for you. ₂Maybe Boaz is the right man. ₁Boaz is our close relative.* You worked with his women servants. Tonight he will be working at the threshing floor.* ³Go wash and get dressed. Put on a nice dress, and go down to the threshing floor. But don’t let Boaz see you until he has finished eating supper. ⁴After he eats, he will lie down to rest. Watch him so that you will know where he lies down. Go there and lift the cover off his feet.* Then lie down there with Boaz. He will tell you what you should do ₁about marriage₂.

⁵Then Ruth answered, “I will do the thing you say.”

⁶So Ruth went down to the threshing floor.* Ruth did everything that her mother-in-law told her to do. ⁷After eating and drinking, Boaz was very satisfied. Boaz went to lie down near the pile of grain. Then Ruth went to him very quietly and lifted the cover from his feet. Ruth lay down by his feet.

⁸About midnight, Boaz rolled over ₁in his sleep and woke up₂. He was very surprised. There was a woman lying near his feet. ⁹Boaz said, “Who are you?”

She said, “I am Ruth, your servant girl. Spread your cover over me.* You are my protector.*

¹⁰Then Boaz said, “May the Lord bless you, young woman. You have been very kind to

chaff Parts of grain a farmer throws away. Farmers cracked the hulls from seeds and let the wind blow these hulls (chaff) away.

1/2 bushel Literally, “One Ephah.”

protector(s) Or, “redeemer,” a person who cared for and protected the family of a dead relative. Often this person bought back (redeemed) the poor relatives from slavery, making them free again.

close relative, protector This is a close relative that could marry Ruth, so she could have children. This man would care for this family, but this family and their property would not belong to him. They would belong to Ruth’s dead husband.

threshing floor The place where workers beat grain to separate the seeds of grain from the chaff.

lift the cover off his feet Literally, “uncover his legs.” This showed Ruth was asking Boaz to be her Protector.

Spread your cover over me Or, “Spread your wing over me.” This showed Ruth was asking for help and protection. See Ruth 2:12.

me. Your kindness to me is greater than the kindness you showed to Naomi in the beginning. You could have looked for a young man to marry, rich or poor. But you did not. ¹¹Now, young woman, don't be afraid. I will do the things you ask. All the people in our town know that you are a very good woman. ¹²And it is true, I am a close relative.* But there is a man that is a closer relative to you than I. ¹³Stay here tonight. In the morning we will see if he will help* you. If he decides to help you, then that is fine. If he refuses to help, then I promise, as the Lord lives, I will marry you and buy back Elimelech's land for you.* So lie here until morning."

¹⁴So Ruth lay near Boaz's feet until morning. She got up while it was still dark, before it was light enough for people to recognize each other.

Boaz said to her, "We will keep it a secret that you came here to me last night." ¹⁵Then Boaz said, "Bring me your coat. Now, hold it open."

So Ruth held her coat open, and Boaz measured about a bushel of barley* as a gift to Naomi, her mother-in-law. Boaz then wrapped it in Ruth's coat, and put it on her back. Then he went to the city.

¹⁶Ruth went to the home of her mother-in-law, Naomi. Naomi ¹went to the door and asked, "Who's there?"

¹Ruth went in the house, telling Naomi everything that Boaz did for her. ¹⁷She said, "Boaz gave me this barley as a gift for you. Boaz said that I must not go home without bringing a gift for you."

¹⁸Naomi said, "Daughter, be patient until we hear what happens. Boaz will not rest until he has finished doing what he should do.

Spread your cover over me Or, "Spread your wing over me."

This showed Ruth was asking for help and protection. See Ruth 2:12.

protector, close relative This is a close relative that could marry Ruth, so she could have children. This man would care for this family, but this family and their property would not belong to him. They would belong to Ruth's dead husband.

help Or, "redeem." This meant the close relative would care for and protect the dead man's family and property, but that property would not be his.

I will marry ... you Literally, "I will redeem you."

bushel of barley Literally, "six ^{measures} of barley."

We will know what will happen before the day is ended."

Boaz and the Other Relative

⁴Boaz went to the place where people gather near the city gates. Boaz sat there until the close relative* Boaz had mentioned passed by. Boaz called to him, "Come here, friend! Sit here!"

²Then Boaz gathered some witnesses. Boaz gathered ten of the elders* of the city. He told them, "Sit here!" So they sat down.

³Then Boaz spoke to the close relative.* He said, "Naomi came back from the hill country of Moab. She is selling the land* that belonged to our relative Elimelech. ⁴I decided to tell you about this in front of the people living here and in front of the elders* of my people. If you want to buy back the land, then buy it! If you don't want to redeem the land, then tell me. I know that I am the next person after you that can redeem the land. If you don't buy the land back, then I will."

⁵Then Boaz said, "If you buy the land from Naomi, you also get the dead man's wife, Ruth the Moabite woman. ⁶When Ruth has a child, the child will get the land. That way, the land will stay in the dead man's family."

⁶The close relative* answered, "I cannot buy back the land. That land should belong to me. But I cannot buy it. If I do, I might lose my own land. So you can buy the land." ⁷(Long ago in Israel, when people bought or redeemed property, one person took off his shoe and gave it to the other person. This was their proof of purchase.) ⁸So the close relative said, "Buy the land." And then the close relative took off his shoe and gave it to Boaz.

⁹Then Boaz said to the elders* and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I am buying from Naomi everything that belonged to Elimelech, Kilion, and Mahlon. ¹⁰I am also buying Ruth to be my wife. I am doing this so the dead man's property will stay with his family. This way, the dead man's name will not be separated from his family and his land. You are witnesses this day."

elders Older men who were city leaders; they helped make decisions for the people.

She is selling the land Or, "She has sold the land."

¹¹So all the people and elders* that were near the city gates were witnesses. They said,

May the Lord make this woman
who is coming into your home
like Rachel and Leah
who built the house of Israel.*
Become powerful in Ephrathah!*

Be famous in Bethlehem!
¹² Tamar gave birth to Judah's son Perez.*
And his family became great.
In the same way, may the Lord give you
many children through Ruth.
And may your family be great
like his.

¹³So Boaz married Ruth. The Lord allowed Ruth to become pregnant, and she had a son.

¹⁴The women [of the town] told Naomi,

Bless the Lord who gave you this child.*
He will become famous in Israel.

¹⁵ He will make you alive again,
and care for you in your old age.
Your daughter-in-law made it happen.
She bore this child for you.

She loves you.

And she is better for you
than seven sons.”

¹⁶Naomi took the boy, held him in her arms, and cared for him. ¹⁷The neighbors gave the boy his name. These women said, “Naomi has a son now!”* And they named him Obed. Obed was Jesse's father. And Jesse was the father of [King] David.

Ruth and Boaz's Family

¹⁸This is the family history of Perez:

Perez was the father of Hezron.

¹⁹ Hezron was the father of Ram.

Ram was the father of Amminadab.

²⁰ Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.

Nahshon was the father of Salmon.

²¹ Salmon was the father of Boaz.

Boaz was the father of Obed.

²² Obed was the father of Jesse.

Jesse was the father of David.

elders Older men who were city leaders; they helped make decisions for the people.

built the house of Israel The Hebrew word “built” is like the word meaning “gave birth to sons.”

Ephrathah Another name for Bethlehem.

Perez One of Boaz's ancestors.

child Literally, “Protector” or “Redeemer.” This might refer to Boaz, or the women might have used this name for the baby because he would be the one to care for Naomi and her family and to carry on the name of Elimelech.

Naomi ... now Literally, “A son was born for Naomi.”