

THE BOOK OF RUTH – AN INTRODUCTION

“... ‘Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.’” Ruth 1:16

AUTHOR: Unknown

- Jewish tradition credits *Samuel* with authorship during the time David was anointed King. If so, the book could be a Spirit-inspired justification of David’s rightful claim to the throne since Boaz and Ruth were his great-grandparents.
- Some suggest *Solomon* as the author, though his exclusion from the genealogy seems to go against this theory (4:18-21).
- The title of the book comes from one of the main characters in the story. Ruth’s name means “friend” or “companion.”

DATE: The events in the story take place “in the days when the judges ruled” (1335-1050BC; 1:1)

- The “**days of the judges**” were a terrifying time to live because “**everyone did what was right in his own eyes**” (Judg. 17:6; 21:25). This would have been especially true for widows and foreigners who had no advocates to defend them.
- The inclusion of David’s genealogy puts the writing sometime after his anointing as king (4:18-22; cf. 1 Sam 16; 1010BC).

AUDIENCE: Covenant people of Israel

- Orthodox Jews read Ruth annually during the Feast of Pentecost in remembrance of Ruth’s betrothal to Boaz, which took place during the season of the barley harvest (Ex. 23:16a; Ruth 3:2).
- The story of Ruth ought remind its readers of God’s covenant faithfulness to David and provoke adoration for Jesus, the greater David who brought about the ultimate redemption.

KEY TERMS / PHRASES: These terms are repeated in Ruth and are important in understanding the book.

- “**kindness**” [x3] [תִּשְׁבֵּר, *hesed*] loyalty flows from steadfast love as evidence of God’s covenant faithfulness (1:8, 2:20, 3:10)
- “**redeem**” [x23] to buy back someone or something from a form of enslavement or destitution
- “**land**” [x4] dwelling in the land is a sign of God’s faithfulness to the covenant He made with Abraham (Gen. 17:8)
- “**return**” [x8] Naomi departed Israel during famine but her return sets up her experience of God’s covenant blessing

THE KINSMAN REDEEMER

- To protect vulnerable widows, God made provision. The nearest male relative of a widow’s late husband should marry the widow and care for her. He would also redeem family property that may have changed hands.
- A kinsman-redeemer had obligation to redeem land (Lev. 25:25-28; cf. Jer. 32:6-9) and enslaved people (Lev. 25:47-55), in addition to providing an heir for the widow (cf. Gen. 38:8-10). The redeemer could be a brother, father, uncle, cousin, or any blood relative (Lev. 25:49). The closer the relation, the greater the obligation to redeem the person in need (Lev. 25:25).
- Boaz’s marriage to Ruth was tied to the redemption of Elimelech’s property (Ruth 1:3, 4:5, 10).
- Boaz’s redemption of Ruth is a shadow of God’s redemption of Israel from Egypt (Ex. 6:6; 20:2) and Babylon (Jer. 16:14–15) and ultimately from our sin through Jesus, the final kinsman redeemer (Gal. 3:13-4:7; Heb. 2:11-18).

AN OUTLINE OF RUTH: FROM RUIN TO REDEMPTION

Bitter Days for Naomi the Widow (1:1-5)

Faithful Devotion of Ruth the Moabite (1:6-22)

Generous Provision by Boaz the Farmer (2:1-23)

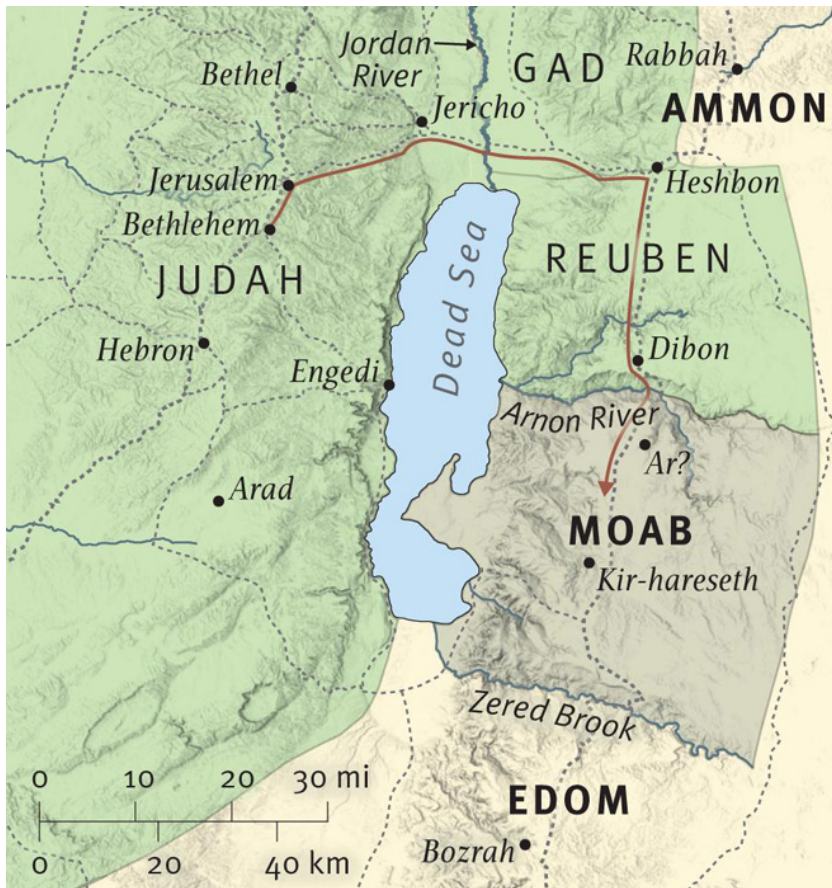
Hopeful Proposition by Ruth the Servant (3:1-18)

Public Redemption by Boaz the Redeemer (4:1-12)

Joyful Celebration by Naomi the Blessed (4:13-17)

Royal Genealogy of David the King (4:18-22)

THE SETTING OF RUTH



**These notes and map are taken from various sources including the Bible Knowledge Commentary and the ESV study Bible.*