

Ruth 1

Verse 1 - 5

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

Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons.

See timeline 105

Ch.	Event	Year
1	Elimelech, Naomi and their two sons move to Edom	1110
1	Elimelech dies	
1	Mahlon & Chilion marry Orpah & Ruth	
1	Both of their husbands die	
1	Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem	1100
2	Ruth gleanes barley in the field of Boaz	
3	Ruth proposes marriage to Boaz	
4	Boaz & Ruth marry and have a son	

The Book of Ruth covers about 10 years (verse 4).

The years 1110 to 1100 BC are an approximation based on Ruth 4:16 – 22.

Moab is about 60 miles from Bethlehem.

See Map 105



² The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there.

The Moabites were descendants of Lot and one of his daughters

See Genesis 19

The Moabites served the pagan god Chemosh.

As a whole, the Moabites were perpetual enemies of Israel. However, there were exceptions, as it seems to be here.

Before they moved to Moab they probably rented their land for whatever price they could get during a famine. The value of renting land was based on the number of crops that the land would produce over a certain number of years but in this case the value of the crops would be reduced significantly.

³ Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons.

⁴ They took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth.

One negative result of moving to Moab was that their two sons married non Jewish woman. However, Ruth the Moabite was a woman of faith and she became a great blessing to Naomi, and even more so when Naomi's husband and two sons died.

⁵ Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.

We are not told why Elimelech or his sons died but this left Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth widows in Moab with no means of support.

Verse 6 - 10

Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the Lord had visited His people in giving them food. ⁷ So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. ⁸ And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. ⁹ May the Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. ¹⁰ And they said to her, "No, but we will surely return with you to your people."

Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the Lord had visited His people in giving them food.

We don't know exactly how long the famine in Israel lasted but Elimelech and his family moved to Moab and stayed there about 10 years. But now the famine was over and Naomi planned on going back to Bethlehem.

This is a good reminder that mankind is totally dependent on God for our basic needs. Because America has been prosperous for so long many people today fail to recognize that our many blessing scan disappear very quickly if God is forsaken. It seems that these "ancient peoples" understood this much better than we do today in 2024.

⁷ So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

Ruth and Orpah extended the ancient courtesy of going part of the way as an escort for their mother-in-law. They would have gone with her to the border of Moab.

⁸ And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, return each of you to her mother’s house. May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

Naomi expressed her thanks to her daughters-in-law for treating her and the family with kindness and believed the Lord would repay them for their good works.

⁹ May the Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband.” Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

Naomi hoped that Ruth & Orpah would be welcomed back at their parent’s house and that they would find rest in doing so. In that place and time this was the only option for unmarried woman. They were still young enough that they might find a husband that would take care of them.

Then Naomi kissed her daughters-in-law goodbye and they all expressed their sense of loss. This was a sorrowful time in their lives. ☹

¹⁰ And they said to her, “No, but we will surely return with you to your people.”

At first, both of the ladies decide to continue on to Judah with Naomi.

Verse 11 - 14

But Naomi said, “Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? ¹² Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons, ¹³ would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me.”

But Naomi said, “Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?”

Naomi thought that Ruth & Orpah would be better off with their own people. In most cases that was probably true. They would have a better chance of finding a husband among the men of Moab than in Israel.

No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me.”

Naomi had experienced a lot of loss. Her husband, her two sons and now she was about to be separated from her two “daughters”.

It’s not surprising that she felt like the Lord was against her. Job was a man of great faith and he expressed the same feelings.

But it is also true that God is able to turn darkness into light. The Lord was not Naomi’s enemy and his plan to help her was already at work.

Having said that, we need to acknowledge that there is a time to rejoice and a time to mourn. Have you ever noticed that some Christians feel a need to say that God is good even in moments of pain and suffering? It is true that God is good but sometimes that truth needs to wait until the right moment.

Verse 15 - 18

Then she said, “Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law.” ¹⁶ But Ruth said, **“Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back 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. ¹⁷ Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if *anything but* death parts you and me.”** ¹⁸ When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

Then she said, “Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law.”

Naomi wanted Ruth to return as Orpah had but she would not go back. This act of faith changed the lives of Naomi and Ruth in ways no one could have imagined.

¹⁶ But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or turn back 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. ¹⁷ Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if *anything but* death parts you and me.

Ruth had become a believer (good job Naomi) and she wanted to be with a fellow believer no matter the outcome.

Verse 19 - 22

So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, the entire city was stirred because of them, and the women said, “Is this Naomi?” ²⁰ She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. ²¹ I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?” ²² So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

And when they had come to Bethlehem, the entire city was stirred because of them, and the women said, “Is this Naomi?”

It appears that Naomi was not only well known, but highly respected in Bethlehem.

The news of her return was big news because Naomi and her family had been gone for 15 plus years.

²⁰ She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. ²¹ I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty

Naomi (sweet) and Mara (bitter) reflected the changes that had taken place in her life.

The name Mara is likely a reference to the bitter waters of Mara.

See Exodus 15:23

²³ When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, because they were bitter; for that reason it was named Marah

And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

See chart 115

	March	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept
Barley	X	X	X				
Flax	X	X	X				
Wheat			X	X	X		
Figs			X	X	X		
Grapes				X	X		
Pomegranates				X	X		
Olives					X	X	
Dates						X	X
Figs 2nd crop						X	X

The barley harvest began in March or April depending on the 3 year cycle of the Jewish calendar.