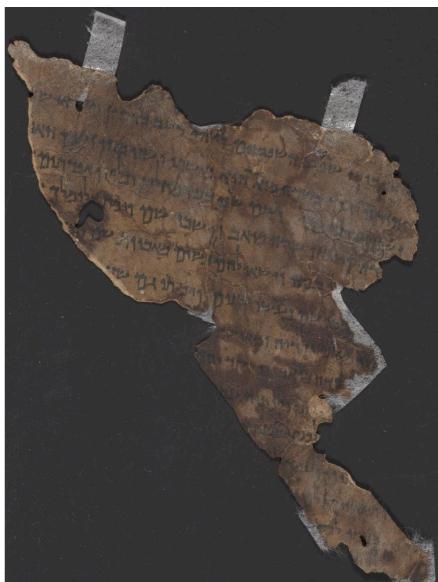


RUTH

From Moab to the Messiah

AUTHOR	The book does not name its author. Jewish tradition in the Talmud says Samuel wrote it. It ends with the name David, so it was written in David's time or later. Many scholars think it was written down after the exile, in the 500s or 400s BC.
EVENTS TOOK PLACE	In the days when the judges ruled, 1:1. About ten years in Moab, 1:4, then one harvest season in Bethlehem, from the barley harvest to the end of the wheat harvest, 2:23.
DATE	Counting back three generations from David, about 1100 BC. If Rahab was Boaz's own mother, Matthew 1:5, it was earlier, near the start of the judges. See The Missing Generations in the Big Question pages.
WRITTEN TO	Israel, to show how God's loyal love worked through ordinary loyal people, and how a Moabite widow became the great grandmother of King David.
KEY VERSE	Ruth 1:16. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.



ONE OF THE OLDEST COPIES OF RUTH

This piece of leather comes from 4QRuth a, a scroll of Ruth found in Cave 4 at Qumran, near the Dead Sea. It was copied about 50 BC and holds part of Ruth chapter 1, where the word Moab shows up again and again.

Four scrolls of Ruth were found at Qumran, two in Cave 2 and two in Cave 4. Their wording is very close to the Hebrew text behind this Bible. Most of the differences are small changes in spelling.

In the Hebrew Bible, Ruth is one of five short scrolls read on special days each year. Photo Shai Halevi, Israel Antiquities Authority, Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library.

Historical Setting

Two places. Bethlehem in Judah, a farm town about six miles south of Jerusalem, and Moab, across the Dead Sea to the east, where people worshiped a god named Chemosh. It is the same time as the book of Judges, when everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Ruth is a quiet story about a few people who did what was right in God's eyes.

What Was Going Wrong

FAMINE. There was no bread in Bethlehem, the house of bread 1:1.

LEAVING HOME. Elimelech took his family out of the Promised Land to live in Moab 1:1 to 2.

THREE FUNERALS. Naomi lost her husband and both sons, and she had no grandchildren 1:3 to 5.

BITTERNESS. Naomi said the Almighty had dealt bitterly with her, and she came home empty 1:20 to 21.

A NAME DYING OUT. With no son, the family's land and name would be lost forever 4:5 to 10.

The Idiot Proof Summary

Ruth is a short, beautiful story set in an ugly time. A family from Bethlehem runs from a famine to Moab, and only the women come back: Naomi, bitter and empty, and her Moabite daughter in law Ruth, who refuses to leave her. Ruth gleans leftover grain to keep them alive and lands in the field of Boaz, a relative who can redeem the family. Naomi makes a bold plan, Boaz does everything the right way, and the two marry. Their son Obed is King David's grandfather. God never speaks in Ruth and does no miracles, but His hand is behind every page.

Ruth at a Glance

CH 1	EMPTY A famine, three funerals, and a promise on the road home.
CH 2	GLEANING Ruth works in the field of Boaz.
CH 3	THE THRESHING FLOOR A midnight request.
CH 4:1 to 12	AT THE GATE Boaz buys back the land and marries Ruth.
CH 4:13 to 22	FULL A baby, and the family line to David.

Where Jesus Shows Up

RUTH 2:12 Boaz prays that Ruth will find shelter under God's wings. Jesus said He longed to gather Jerusalem like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, Matthew 23:37.

RUTH 4:9 TO 10 Boaz, a close relative, pays the price to buy back the land and the family. Jesus became our relative by becoming human and paid the price to redeem us, Galatians 4:4 to 5 and Ephesians 1:7.

RUTH 4:17 Obed, Jesse, David. Matthew 1:5 to 6 names Boaz, Ruth and Obed in the family line of Jesus, the Son of David.

GOD'S NAMES IN RUTH

Yahweh, eighteen times, mostly in blessings people speak to each other, like Yahweh be

with you, 2:4. Naomi calls Him Shaddai, the Almighty, 1:20 to 21. See Why We Say Yahweh in the Old Testament Introduction.

What to Watch for in Ruth

MESSIANIC FORESHADOW	4:9-10
THE HEART	2:13, 3:7
ARCHAEOLOGY	4:17
DEMONIC	1:15
NOTABLE	1:16-17, 2:12, 4:14-15
GOD SPEAKING	Words in red are God speaking. Only the words He actually said are red.
BLOODLINE OF CHRIST	Names underlined in red are in the family line of Jesus.

Cool Stuff Most People Miss

NO MIRACLES

God never speaks and does no miracle in Ruth. The writer only says Yahweh acted twice, 1:6 and 4:13, yet He is behind the whole story.

MR. SO AND SO

Boaz calls the other redeemer peloni almoni, the Hebrew for Mr. So and So, 4:1.

BOOKS NAMED FOR WOMEN

Ruth and Esther are the only two books in this Bible named for women. Ruth, a foreigner, married a man of Judah. Esther, a Jewish woman, married a foreign king.

READ AT PENTECOST

Jewish people read Ruth every year at Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, the wheat harvest feast the New Testament calls Pentecost.

How Did It Turn Out?

Naomi went from empty to full. A Moabite widow found a home, a husband and a God. Her great grandson was King David, and Matthew 1:5 puts her in the family line of Jesus. Next comes 1 Samuel, where the last judge anoints David.

DEMONIC NOTABLE BLOODLINE OF CHRIST

1

CHAPTER 1 IN 30 SECONDS

A famine hits Bethlehem, which means house of bread, so Elimelech moves his family to Moab. Then he dies, and so do both his sons. Naomi heads home with nothing. One daughter in law goes back. The other, Ruth, refuses to leave:

Where you go, I will go. Naomi gets back to Bethlehem and says, Don't call me Pleasant. Call me Bitter.

NAOMI BECOMES A WIDOW // 1 TIMOTHY 5:3-16

¹In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. And a certain man from Bethlehem in Judah, with his wife and two sons, went to reside in the land of Moab. ²The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah, and they entered the land of Moab and settled there.

³Then Naomi's husband Elimelech died, and she was left with her two sons, ⁴who took Moabite women as their wives, one named Orpah and the other named Ruth. And after they had lived in Moab about ten years, ⁵both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and without her husband.

RUTH'S LOYALTY TO NAOMI

⁶When Naomi heard in Moab that Yahweh had attended to His people by providing them with food, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to leave the land of Moab. ⁷Accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road leading back to the land of Judah.

■ **RUTH 1:1 [NOTE]** IN THE DAYS WHEN THE JUDGES RULED. Ruth happens in the same dark days as the book of Judges. Bethlehem means house of bread, and the house of bread had no bread.

■ **RUTH 1:1 [FIELD NOTES]** Moab was a real kingdom east of the Dead Sea, and its own king carved a stone about 840 BC. See The Mesha Stele Field Notes page.

■ **RUTH 1:2 [NOTE]** Elimelech means my God is king. Naomi means pleasant. Many think Mahlon and Chilion mean sickly and failing, which fits what happened to them. Ephrathites were people from Ephrathah, the old name for the Bethlehem area, Genesis 35:19 and Micah 5:2.

■ **RUTH 1:4 [NOTE]** The Moabites came from Lot, Abraham's nephew, Genesis 19:37. God's law kept Moabites out of the assembly of Yahweh, Deuteronomy 23:3. See the Big Question pages A Moabite in Jesus' Family?

⁸Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you to your mother's home. May Yahweh show you loving devotion, as you have shown to your dead and to me. ⁹May Yahweh enable each of you to find rest in the home of your new husband."

And she kissed them as they wept aloud ¹⁰and said, "Surely we will return with you to your people."

¹¹But Naomi replied, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb to become your husbands? ¹²Return home, my daughters. Go on, for I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me to have a husband tonight and to bear sons, ¹³would you wait for them to grow up? Would you refrain from having husbands? No, my daughters, it is much more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of Yahweh has gone out against me."

¹⁴Again they wept aloud, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

¹⁵"Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; follow her back home."

¹⁶But Ruth replied:

"Do not urge me to leave you
or to turn from following you.
For wherever you go, I will go,
and wherever you live, I will live;
your people will be my people,
and your God will be my God."

■ **RUTH 1:8 [NOTE]** LOVING DEVOTION is the Hebrew word hesed: loyal love that keeps showing up. It is the big word of this book, 1:8, 2:20 and 3:10.

■ **RUTH 1:15 [DEMONIC]** Orpah goes back to her people and her gods

■ **RUTH 1:16 [NOTABLE]** One of the greatest promises of loyalty ever spoken, and a Moabite widow said it. Ruth chose Naomi's people and Naomi's God for life. It is still read at weddings.

NOTABLE BLOODLINE OF CHRIST

DEBATED THE BIG QUESTION

A MOABITE IN JESUS' FAMILY?

The Problem

RUTH 1:4 · DEUTERONOMY 23:3 TO 6 · GENESIS 19:30 TO 38 · NEHEMIAH 13:1 TO 3 · MATTHEW 1:5

WHERE MOAB CAME FROM

The Moabites came from Lot, Abraham's nephew, through his older daughter, Genesis 19:30 to 37. They lived east of the Dead Sea.

THE LAW

No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of Yahweh, even to the tenth generation, Deuteronomy 23:3. The reason: they did not meet Israel with bread and water in the wilderness, and they hired Balaam to curse Israel, 23:4. Later, Moabite women led Israel into the worship of Baal of Peor, Numbers 25:1 to 3.

STILL IN FORCE LATER

After the exile, Nehemiah read this law aloud, and the people separated from foreigners, Nehemiah 13:1 to 3. Ezra had the men send away their foreign wives, Ezra 9 to 10.

AND YET

Ruth the Moabite married Boaz, an important man of Judah, and her great grandson became King David. Matthew 1:5 names her in the family line of Jesus. David even sent his parents to the king of Moab to keep them safe, 1 Samuel 22:3 to 4.

THE QUESTION

How could a Moabite be the great grandmother of Israel's greatest king and an ancestor of the Messiah, when the law kept Moabites out?

Every View

DEUTERONOMY 23:3 · RUTH 1:16 · ISAIAH 56:3 TO 7 · GALATIANS 3:28

VIEW 1: MOABITE MEN, NOT WOMEN

The Mishnah, a Jewish book of law from about AD 200, says the ban was on a Moabite man, not a Moabite woman. Later rabbis in the Talmud gave the reason: Moab did not bring Israel bread and water, and that was the men's job. Jewish teachers used this to explain Ruth.

VIEW 2: FAITH BRINGS YOU IN

Ruth left Chemosh and chose Yahweh: your God will be my God, 1:16. She came under God's wings, 2:12. Many Christians say the law kept out Moab as a nation of enemies, not a person who turned to God, just like Rahab of Jericho. Isaiah 56:3 to 7 says foreigners who hold on to God's covenant will be welcome in His house.

VIEW 3: WHAT THE ASSEMBLY MEANT

Some say the assembly of Yahweh meant the official gathering of Israel for worship and leadership, so the law did not ban marriage. Others point out that the ban lasted to the tenth generation, and David was only the third.

VIEW 4: A STORY WITH A MESSAGE

Many scholars think the book was written, or written down, to answer strict rules against foreign wives in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Others date it much earlier, but agree it welcomes outsiders.

WHAT ALL AGREE ON

God's grace is bigger than anyone expected. Jesus' family tree in Matthew names four women besides Mary. Rahab and Ruth were foreigners, Tamar was most likely a Canaanite, and Bathsheba had been the wife of Uriah the Hittite. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, Galatians 3:28.

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

May Yahweh punish me,
and ever so severely,
if anything but death
separates you and me."

¹⁸ When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped trying to persuade her.

THE RETURN TO BETHLEHEM

¹⁹ So Naomi and Ruth traveled until they came to Bethlehem. When they entered Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women of the town exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?"

■ RUTH 1:17 [NOTE] Ruth swears by Yahweh, the God of Israel, by name. A Moabite woman is now calling on Naomi's God.

■ RUTH 1:19 [FIELD NOTES] A clay seal found in Jerusalem names Bethlehem. See the Bethlehem Field Notes page.

DEBATED FIELD NOTES · ARCHAEOLOGY · CONFIDENCE: HIGH FOR THE STONE, DEBATED FOR DAVID

THE MESHA STELE

RUTH 1:1 · 1:15 · NUMBERS 21:29 · 2 KINGS 3:4 TO 27



The Mesha Stele in the Louvre, Paris. The dark, rough pieces are the original stone. The smooth parts were filled in from a paper copy pressed onto it before it broke. Public domain photo.

WHAT IT IS

A black stone almost four feet tall, carved for Mesha, king of Moab. In 34 lines he brags about how he won Moab's freedom from Israel. It is also called the Moabite Stone.

HOW OLD IT IS

About 840 BC, in the time of King Ahab's sons. That is two or three centuries after Ruth, but it is Moab speaking in its own words, in a language very close to Hebrew.

WHERE AND WHEN FOUND

At Dhiban in Jordan, the Bible's Dibon, in 1868. Before it could be bought, local people heated it and poured cold water on it, and it broke into pieces. A paper copy pressed onto it before it broke saved most of the words. The pieces are in the Louvre in Paris.

WHAT IT SAYS

Omri king of Israel humbled Moab many days, because Chemosh was angry with his land. Mesha says Chemosh gave Moab back. He says he took the holy things of Yahweh from Nebo, most likely

the temple vessels, and dragged them before Chemosh. It is the oldest sure writing of God's name, YHWH, ever found outside the Bible.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR RUTH

Orpah went back to her people and her gods, 1:15, and Moab's god was Chemosh, Numbers 21:29. Ruth chose the other God on the stone: Your God will be my God, 1:16. The stone shows Moab as a real kingdom with its own king, god and language, right across the Dead Sea from Bethlehem.

THE HOUSE OF DAVID?

In 1994 the French scholar André Lemaire read a broken part of line 31 as the House of David. Some scholars read it as another name, and others say it is too damaged to tell. The debate is not settled.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

Nothing on it names Ruth, Naomi or Boaz. It shows that Moab, Chemosh and the God of Israel were real names in Ruth's world.

BLOODLINE OF CHRIST

²⁰ “Do not call me Naomi,” she replied. “Call me Mara, because the Almighty has dealt quite bitterly with me. ²¹ I went away full, but Yahweh has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? After all, Yahweh has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me.”

²² So Naomi returned from the land of Moab with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabitess. And they arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

2

CHAPTER 2 IN 30 SECONDS

Ruth goes out to pick up leftover grain behind the harvesters, and she just happens to land in the field of Boaz, a rich relative of Naomi's. Boaz tells his young men to leave her alone and drop a little extra on purpose. Ruth comes home with about half a bushel of barley, and Naomi's matchmaking brain wakes up.

BOAZ MEETS RUTH

¹ Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a prominent man of noble character from the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

² And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, “Please let me go into the fields and glean heads of grain after someone in whose sight I may find favor.”

“Go ahead, my daughter,” Naomi replied.

³ So Ruth departed and went out into the field and gleaned after the harvesters. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.

■ **RUTH 1:20 [NOTE]** Mara means bitter. The Almighty is the Hebrew name Shaddai, the name God used with Abraham, Genesis 17:1. Naomi is honest with God about her pain, and the book does not scold her for it.

■ **RUTH 1:22 [FIELD NOTES]** The barley harvest came in spring, about April. A farm calendar from about the 900s BC gives it a month of its own. See The Gezer Calendar Field Notes page.

■ **RUTH 2:2 [NOTE]** GLEANING. God's law told farmers to leave the edges of the field and the grain they dropped for the poor, the foreigner and the widow, Leviticus 19:9 to 10 and Deuteronomy 24:19. Ruth was all three.

■ **RUTH 2:3 [NOTE]** She happened to come to the field of Boaz. The writer is smiling here. In this book nothing just happens.

■ **RUTH 2:3 [FIELD NOTES]** A real harvester's letter, written on a piece of pottery about 630 BC, begs an official to give back his cloak. See The Harvester's Complaint Field Notes page.

FIELD NOTES · ARCHAEOLOGY · CONFIDENCE: HIGH
FOR THE SEAL, THE PHOTO SHOWS A LATER FIND

BETHLEHEM

RUTH 1:19 · 4:11 · 1 SAMUEL 16:1 · MICAH 5:2 ·
MATTHEW 2:1



Part of the mosaic floor of Emperor Constantine's Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, AD 330s. The seal itself is not shown. No free photo of it exists. The wooden frames are modern. Photo Wknight94, CC BY SA 3.0.

WHAT IT IS

A tiny lump of clay, called a bulla, smaller than a dime, pressed with a seal. Experts read its three lines of old Hebrew writing as In the seventh, Bethlehem, for the king. One scholar thinks one letter is different and the town is not Bethlehem, but most accept the reading. It is not in the photo. No free photo of it exists.

HOW OLD IT IS

About the 700s or 600s BC, when kings of Judah ruled in Jerusalem. It is the oldest object found in Israel that names Bethlehem. A letter from about 1350 BC, found at Amarna in Egypt, names a town near Jerusalem that some think was Bethlehem, but most scholars doubt it.

WHERE AND WHEN FOUND

It was found in soil sifted from the City of David dig in Jerusalem, led by Eli Shukron. The Israel Antiquities Authority announced it in 2012.

WHAT IT SHOWS

Many think it sealed a shipment of taxes, like grain or wine, sent from Bethlehem to the king in the seventh year of his reign. Bethlehem was a real farm town of Judah, just as Ruth shows it.

THE PHOTO

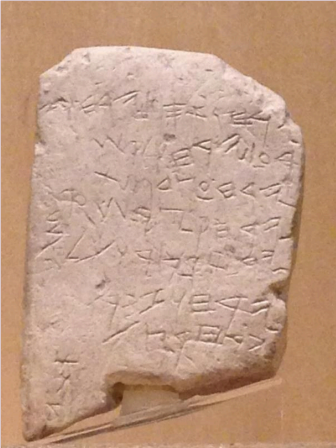
This mosaic floor is from the first Church of the Nativity, built in Bethlehem by Emperor Constantine in the AD

BLOODLINE OF CHRIST

DEBATED FIELD NOTES · ARCHAEOLOGY · CONFIDENCE: HIGH FOR THE TABLET, DEBATED FOR ITS PURPOSE

THE GEZER CALENDAR

RUTH 1:22 · 2:23 · EXODUS 9:31 TO 32 · LEVITICUS 23:10 TO 16



The Gezer Calendar, Istanbul Archaeology Museums. Photo oncenawhile, CC BY SA 3.0.

WHAT IT IS

A small limestone tablet, about four inches tall, with seven lines about the farm year scratched into it, and a name scratched at the side. It lists the year month by month. It is one of the oldest writings ever found in a language close to Hebrew.

HOW OLD IT IS

About the 900s BC, around the time of King Solomon. Some scholars say its language is an early form of Hebrew. Others call it Phoenician or a related Canaanite language.

WHERE AND WHEN FOUND

The Irish archaeologist R. A. S. Macalister found it in 1908 at Gezer, between Jerusalem and the coast. It is in Istanbul, because the Ottoman Empire ruled the land then.

WHAT IT SAYS

Two months of gathering, two months of planting, two months of late planting, a month of cutting flax, a month of barley harvest, a month of harvest and measuring, two months of pruning vines, a month of summer fruit.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR RUTH

Naomi and Ruth came home at the beginning of barley harvest, 1:22, and Ruth gleaned through the barley and wheat harvests, 2:23. That is the barley month and the harvest month on this tablet, about April to June.

THE BIG DEBATE

Who wrote it, and why? Many think it was a school exercise, a little song students copied, because the stone was scraped clean and used again. Others think it was a list for collecting taxes.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

It names no one from Ruth. It shows the farm year Ruth lived in, the same seasons the book follows.

330s. It is real and ancient, but it is more than a thousand years after Ruth.

BETHLEHEM IN THE BIBLE

Bethlehem means house of bread. Rachel was buried on the way there, Genesis 35:19. Ruth and Boaz lived there, David was born there, 1 Samuel 16:1, and Micah 5:2 said the Messiah would come from there, Matthew 2:1.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

The seal is centuries after Ruth and

names no one from the book. It shows that Bethlehem was a real town of Judah in Bible times.

⁴ Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and said to the harvesters, "Yahweh be with you."

"Yahweh bless you," they replied.

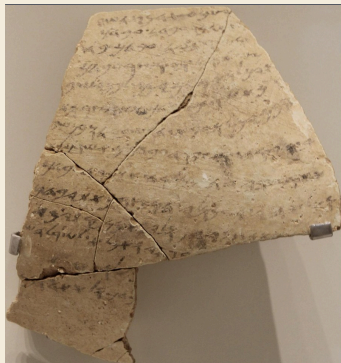
⁵ And Boaz asked the foreman of his harvesters, "Whose young woman is this?"

THE HEART | NOTABLE | BLOODLINE OF CHRIST

FIELD NOTES • ARCHAEOLOGY • CONFIDENCE: HIGH • CENTURIES AFTER RUTH

THE HARVESTER'S COMPLAINT

RUTH 2:3 TO 9 • DEUTERONOMY 24:12 TO 15 • LEVITICUS 19:9 TO 10



The Mesad Hashavyahu ostrakon, Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Photo Paamei Elyon, CC BY SA 4.0.

WHAT IT IS

A broken piece of pottery with 14 lines of ancient Hebrew written in ink. It is a letter from a farm worker to the official in charge of a small fort.

HOW OLD IT IS

About 630 to 609 BC, in the days of King Josiah. The Israeli scholar Joseph Naveh found it in 1960 at Mesad Hashavyahu, a fort near the coast south of where Tel Aviv is today.

WHAT IT SAYS

The worker says he was harvesting and finished his work, but a man named Hoshayahu son of Shobai took his cloak. His fellow workers in the heat can swear he did nothing wrong. He begs the official to give his cloak back.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR RUTH

It shows what a harvest field was like: hired workers, a foreman, long days in the heat, and poor people who could be pushed around. That is why Boaz ordered his young men not to touch Ruth or shame her, 2:9 and 2:15.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

We do not know if the worker got his cloak back. The letter is centuries after Ruth and has nothing to do with Boaz's field.

⁶ The foreman answered, "She is the Moabitess who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab. ⁷ She has said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the harvesters.' So she came out and has continued from morning until now, except that she rested a short time in the shelter."

⁸ Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Do not go and glean in another field, and do not go away from this place, but stay here close to my servant girls. ⁹ Let your eyes be on the field they are harvesting, and follow along after these girls. Indeed, I have ordered the young men not to touch you. And when you are thirsty, go and drink from the jars the young men have filled."

¹⁰ At this, she fell on her face, bowing low to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you

should take notice of me, even though I am a foreigner?"

¹¹ Boaz replied, "I have been made fully aware of all you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth, and how you came to a people you did not know before. ¹² May Yahweh repay your work, and may you receive a rich reward from Yahweh, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have taken refuge."

¹³ "My lord," she said, "may I continue to find favor in your eyes, for you have comforted and spoken to the heart of your maidservant, though I am not like one of your servant girls."

■ **RUTH 2:12 [NOTABLE]** Boaz prays that God will reward Ruth for hiding under His wings. Then Boaz becomes the answer to his own prayer, when Ruth asks him to spread the corner of his garment, the same Hebrew word as wings, over her, 3:9.

■ **RUTH 2:13 [HEART]** Ruth says Boaz spoke to her heart. In Hebrew that means he comforted her tenderly, the

BLOODLINE OF CHRIST

¹⁴ At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here; have some bread and dip it into the vinegar sauce." So she sat down beside the harvesters, and he offered her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left over.

¹⁵ When Ruth got up to glean, Boaz ordered his young men, "Even if she gathers among the sheaves, do not insult her. ¹⁶ Rather, pull out for her some stalks from the bundles and leave them for her to gather. Do not rebuke her."

¹⁷ So Ruth gathered grain in the field until evening. And when she beat out what she had gleaned, it was about half a bushel of barley. ¹⁸ She picked up the grain and went into the town, where her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. And she brought out what she had saved from her meal and gave it to Naomi.

¹⁹ Then her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today, and where did you work? Blessed be the man who noticed you."

So she told her mother-in-law where she had worked. "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz," she said.

²⁰ Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by Yahweh, who has not withdrawn His kindness from the living or the dead." Naomi continued, "The man is a close relative. He is one of our kinsman-redeemers."

²¹ Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "He also told me, 'Stay with my young men until they have finished gathering all my harvest.'"

²² And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law Ruth, "My daughter, it is good for you to work with his young women, so that nothing will happen to you in another field."

²³ So Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz to glean grain until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

THE BIG QUESTION

THE KINSMAN REDEEMER

What a Goel Was

RUTH 2:20 · 3:9 TO 13 · 4:1 TO 10 · LEVITICUS 25:25 TO 49 · DEUTERONOMY 25:5 TO 10

THE HEBREW WORD

Goel comes from gaal, to buy back or redeem. A goel was the closest male relative, the one who stepped in when a family was in trouble.

WHAT A REDEEMER DID

He bought back land a poor relative had to sell, Leviticus 25:25. He bought back a relative who had sold himself as a slave, Leviticus 25:47 to 49. In Ruth, redeeming the land also meant marrying the widow, so a son could carry on the dead man's name, 4:5 and 4:10. That is close to the brother in law law of Deuteronomy 25:5 to 10.

THREE THINGS HE NEEDED

Bible teachers often say a redeemer had to be a close relative, able to pay, and willing. The nearer relative was close and able, but not willing, 4:6. Boaz was all three.

WHAT BOAZ DID

He did it in public, at the gate, before ten elders, 4:2 and 4:9. He bought Naomi's land and married Ruth. When Obed was born, the women said, A son has been born to Naomi, 4:17. The family name lived on.

GOD THE REDEEMER

The Old Testament calls God Himself Israel's Redeemer, the same word: I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, Exodus 6:6, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, Isaiah 41:14. Job said, I know that my Redeemer lives, Job 19:25.

same words used for God's comfort to His people in Isaiah 40:2 and Hosea 2:14.

■ RUTH 2:20 [NOTE] KINSMAN REDEEMER is the Hebrew word goel, a close relative who buys back what a family lost, Leviticus 25:25. See the Big Question pages The Kinsman Redeemer.

THE HEART BLOODLINE OF CHRIST

Is Boaz a Picture of Jesus?

RUTH 4:9 TO 10 · GALATIANS 4:4 TO 5 · EPHESIANS 1:7 · HEBREWS 2:14 TO 17 · 1 PETER 1:18 TO 19

VIEW 1: A PICTURE OF CHRIST

Many Christians, from the early church to today, see Boaz as a picture of Jesus. Jesus became our relative by becoming human, Hebrews 2:14 to 17. He was able and willing to pay the price, not with silver but with His own blood, 1 Peter 1:18 to 19. He came to redeem those under the law, Galatians 4:4 to 5. Ruth, a foreigner, pictures people from every nation brought into God's family. This Bible marks 4:9 to 10 as a messianic foreshadow.

VIEW 2: A TRUE STORY FIRST

Many scholars say Ruth is first of all a true story about loyal love. The New Testament names Ruth and Boaz in Jesus' family tree, Matthew 1:5, but never calls Boaz a picture of Christ. They warn that turning every detail into a symbol can make the Bible say things it does not say.

VIEW 3: THE JEWISH READING

Jewish readers love Boaz as a model of hesed, loyal kindness that goes beyond what the law requires. They read the book as the story of how God prepared the family of King David, who leads to the Messiah.

WHAT EACH SIDE ANSWERS

The first side says the redeemer idea runs through the whole Bible and ends in Jesus, so it is fair to see Him here. The second side agrees Jesus is the great Redeemer, but says the story should be read for what it meant to its first readers before it is read as a picture.

WHAT ALL AGREE ON

God's kindness came through people's kindness. Ruth was loyal to Naomi, Boaz was kind to Ruth, and God used both to bring King David, and later Jesus, into the world.

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CHAPTER 3 IN 30 SECONDS

Naomi has a plan. Take a bath, put on perfume, go to the threshing floor at night, and lie down at Boaz's feet. At midnight Boaz wakes up and finds a woman there. Ruth asks him to spread the corner of his garment over her. Boaz says yes, but there is a closer relative who gets first dibs.

RUTH'S REDEMPTION ASSURED

¹One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek a resting place for you, that it may be well with you?" ²Now is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been working, a relative of ours? In fact, tonight he is winnowing barley on the threshing floor. ³Therefore wash yourself, put on perfume, and wear your best clothes. Go down to the threshing floor, but do not let the man know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴When he lies down, note the place where he lies. Then go in and uncover his feet, and lie down, and he will explain to you what you should do."

⁵"I will do everything you say," Ruth answered. ⁶So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law had instructed her to do.

⁷After Boaz had finished eating and drinking and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then Ruth went in secretly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

⁸At midnight, Boaz was startled, turned over, and there lying at his feet was a woman!

⁹"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am your servant Ruth," she replied. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, for you are a kinsman-redeemer."

■ **RUTH 3:2 [NOTE]** A threshing floor was a flat open place where grain was beaten loose and tossed in the evening wind, so the chaff blew away. At harvest time the men slept there to guard the grain.

■ **RUTH 3:4 [NOTE] UNCOVER HIS FEET.** Most readers, Jewish and Christian, take this as a bold but pure way for Ruth to ask Boaz to marry her. Some scholars think the words have a double meaning. See the Big Question pages The Threshing Floor.

■ **RUTH 3:7 [HEART]** After the harvest meal Boaz's heart was merry. The Hebrew says his heart was good: full, happy and at peace after a hard day's work.

■ **RUTH 3:9 [NOTE] SPREAD THE CORNER OF YOUR GARMENT.** The Hebrew says your wing, kanaf, the same

BLOODLINE OF CHRIST

¹⁰ Then Boaz said, "May Yahweh bless you, my daughter. You have shown more kindness now than before, because you have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. ¹¹ And now do not be afraid, my daughter. I will do for you whatever you request, since all my fellow townspeople know that you are a woman of noble character. ¹² Yes, it is true that I am a kinsman-redeemer, but there is a redeemer nearer than I. ¹³ Stay here tonight, and in the morning, if he wants to redeem you, good. Let him redeem you. But if he does not want to redeem you, as surely as Yahweh lives, I will. Now lie here until morning."

¹⁴ So she lay down at his feet until morning, but she got up before anyone else could recognize her.

Then Boaz said, "Do not let it be known that a woman came to the threshing floor."

¹⁵ And he told her, "Bring the shawl you are wearing and hold it out." When she did so, he poured in six measures of barley and placed it on her. Then he went into the city.

¹⁶ When Ruth returned to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked her, "How did it go, my daughter?"

Then Ruth told her all that Boaz had done for her. ¹⁷ And she said, "He gave me these six measures of barley, for he said, 'Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

¹⁸ "Wait, my daughter," said Naomi, "until you find out how things go, for he will not rest unless he has resolved the matter today."

DEBATED THE BIG QUESTION

THE THRESHING FLOOR

What Happened That Night?

RUTH 3:1 TO 18 · EZEKIEL 16:8 · PROVERBS 31:10

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

Naomi told Ruth to wash, put on perfume and her best clothes, go to the threshing floor, wait until Boaz lay down, then uncover his feet and lie down, 3:3 to 4. At midnight Boaz woke up startled and found her at his feet, 3:8. She asked him to spread the corner of his garment over her, for he was a redeemer, 3:9. He said yes, told her to stay until morning, and she left before anyone could recognize her, 3:13 to 14.

WHAT A THRESHING FLOOR WAS

A flat, open place where grain was beaten loose and tossed into the evening breeze. At harvest the men ate there, celebrated and slept beside the grain to guard it.

SPREAD YOUR WING OVER ME

Ruth used the same word Boaz had used in his prayer, the wings of God, 2:12. In Ezekiel 16:8 God spreads the corner of His garment over Jerusalem, a picture of His people, and makes a marriage covenant with her. Ruth was asking Boaz to marry her.

WHY AT NIGHT?

Women did not usually ask men to marry them, and a widow from Moab had no father or brother to ask for her. A private request let Boaz say yes or no without public shame. Boaz kept it quiet to protect her name, 3:14, and then did everything in public at the gate the next morning, 4:1.

A WOMAN OF NOBLE CHARACTER

Boaz blessed her and called her a woman of noble character, 3:10 to 11, the same words as Proverbs 31:10.

word as His wings in 2:12. It was a way to ask for marriage, Ezekiel 16:8. Boaz prayed for God to cover Ruth, and now he can be the answer.

■ **RUTH 3:11 [NOTE] A WOMAN OF NOBLE CHARACTER** is the same Hebrew phrase as Proverbs 31:10. In the oldest complete Hebrew Bible, Ruth comes right after Proverbs.

■ **RUTH 3:15 [NOTE] SIX MEASURES.** The Hebrew says only six of barley and does not name the measure. It was a big gift, as much as Ruth could carry home.

MESSIANIC FORESHADOW BLOODLINE OF CHRIST

Every View

RUTH 3:4 · 3:7 TO 14 · DEUTERONOMY 23:3 · PROVERBS 31:10

VIEW 1: A BOLD BUT PURE PROPOSAL

This is how most Jewish and Christian readers have taken it for centuries. Feet means feet: Ruth uncovered his feet so the cold night air would wake him, and she lay at his feet, 3:14. Old Jewish writings praise Boaz for his self control that night. Boaz blessed her for her kindness, called her a woman of noble character, and waited to marry her until the legal matter was settled. He would not have said those things if she had come to seduce him.

VIEW 2: DOUBLE MEANINGS

Some scholars point out that the Hebrew words for feet, lie down and uncover can sometimes be polite ways to talk about sex. They think the writer used words with a double meaning on purpose, so the reader holds his breath. A few think the two slept together that night. Most who see the double meanings still say the point of the scene is that both acted with honor.

WHAT EACH SIDE ANSWERS

The first side says the book praises both people again and again, and the text never says anything improper happened. The second side says the writer chose risky words on purpose to build suspense, and the story is about how they handled the risk.

WHAT ALL AGREE ON

Ruth took a huge risk. Boaz protected her reputation, sent her home with a gift, and settled everything the right way, in public, the next morning. Nobody in the story treats her as cheap. He calls her a woman of noble character.

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CHAPTER 4 IN 30 SECONDS

Boaz goes to the town gate and calls over the closer relative, Mr. So and So. He wants the field until he hears that Ruth comes with it, so he takes off his sandal and backs out. Boaz marries Ruth, and the women of the town name their baby Obed. And Obed? He is King David's grandfather.

BOAZ REDEEMS RUTH

¹Meanwhile, Boaz went to the gate and sat down there. Soon the kinsman-redeemer of whom he had spoken came along, and Boaz said, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down." So he went over and sat down.

²Then Boaz took ten of the elders of the city and said, "Sit here," and they did so.

³And he said to the kinsman-redeemer, "Naomi, who has returned from the land of Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. ⁴I thought I should inform you that you may buy it back in the presence of those seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you want to redeem it, do so. But if you will not redeem it, tell me so I may know, because there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you."

"I will redeem it," he replied.

⁵Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi and also from Ruth the Moabitess, you must also acquire the widow of the deceased in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance."

⁶The kinsman-redeemer replied, "I cannot redeem it myself, or I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption, because I cannot redeem it."

⁷Now in former times in Israel, concerning the redemption or exchange of property, to make any matter legally binding a man would remove his sandal and give it to the other party, and this was a confirmation in Israel. ⁸So the kinsman-redeemer removed his sandal and said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself."

⁹At this, Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I am buying from Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon. ¹⁰More-

■ **RUTH 4:1 [NOTE]** THE GATE was the town courthouse, where the elders settled business. Boaz calls the other man peloni almoni, a Hebrew way of saying Mr. So and So. The man who would not keep a dead man's name alive does not get his own name in the book.

■ **RUTH 4:7 [NOTE]** A custom so old the writer had to explain it. Compare Deuteronomy 25:9, where the widow pulls off the sandal.

ARCHAEOLOGY NOTABLE BLOODLINE OF CHRIST

over, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, to raise up the name of the deceased through his inheritance, so that his name will not disappear from among his brothers or from the gate of his home. You are witnesses today."

¹¹ "We are witnesses," said the elders and all the people at the gate. "May Yahweh make the woman entering your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you be prosperous in Ephrathah and famous in Bethlehem. ¹² And may your house become like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring Yahweh will give you by this young woman."

BOAZ MARRIES RUTH

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And when he had relations with her, Yahweh enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be Yahweh, who has not left you this day without a kinsman-redeemer. May his name become famous in Israel. ¹⁵ He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth."

¹⁶ And Naomi took the child, placed him on her lap, and became a nurse to him. ¹⁷ The neighbor women said, "A son has been born to Naomi," and they named him Obed. He became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

THE LINE OF DAVID // MATTHEW 1:1-17; LUKE 3:23-38

¹⁸ Now these are the generations of Perez:

Perez was the father of Hezron,

¹⁹ Hezron was the father of Ram,

■ **RUTH 4:9 [PROPHECY]** Boaz the kinsman redeemer buys back the land and takes Ruth as his wife → EPH 1:7; GAL 4:4-5 p.~

■ **RUTH 4:14 [NOTABLE]** Naomi came home empty, 1:21. Now she has a redeemer, and Ruth is better than seven sons.

■ **RUTH 4:17 [ARCHAEOLOGY]** On the Tel Dan Stele

■ **RUTH 4:17 [NOTABLE]** The last surprise: a Moabite widow's baby is King David's grandfather, in the line of the Messiah.

■ **RUTH 4:18 [ALLUDED TO]** The New Testament refers to this → MT 1:3-6 p.~

■ **RUTH 4:18 [ALLUDED TO]** The New Testament refers to this → LK 3:31-33 p.~

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,

and Jesse was the father of David.

DEBATED THE BIG QUESTION

THE MISSING GENERATIONS

Ten Names from Perez to David

RUTH 4:18 TO 22 · NUMBERS 1:7 · MATTHEW 1:3 TO 6 · JOSHUA 2

THE LIST

Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David, 4:18 to 22. The same line is in 1 Chronicles 2:5 to 15, Matthew 1:3 to 6 and Luke 3:31 to 33.

THE MATH

Nahshon led the tribe of Judah in the wilderness, Numbers 1:7, so his son Salmon was alive when Israel entered the land. David was born about 1040 BC. By the early date for the Exodus, that leaves more than 350 years for just four men: Salmon, Boaz, Obed and Jesse. By the late date, it leaves about 170 years.

RAHAB

Matthew 1:5 says Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, the woman of Jericho, Joshua 2. If Rahab was really Boaz's mother, then Ruth's story happened early in the days of the judges.

AN OLD JEWISH GUESS

The Talmud says Boaz was the same man as Ibzan of Bethlehem, a judge who had thirty sons and thirty daughters, Judges 12:8 to 10. The Bible does not say so.

WHY THE LIST IS HERE

The story could have ended at 4:17. The list ties Ruth back to Perez and Tamar in Genesis 38 and forward to King David, so the reader sees that a small family story was part of God's big plan.

Every View

MATTHEW 1:8 · GENESIS 5 · GENESIS 11:10 TO 26 · GENESIS 49:10

VIEW 1: SOME NAMES ARE SKIPPED

Bible family lists often skip generations, and father of can mean ancestor of.

Matthew 1:8 skips three kings of Judah, which helps him count fourteen generations, 1:17. Lists of ten names, like Genesis 5 and Genesis 11, may be built to be easy to remember. So the list gives the famous names, not every one.

VIEW 2: THE LIST IS COMPLETE

Others say every name is there, and these men had sons late in life. Boaz was clearly older than Ruth, 3:10. With the late date for the Exodus, four generations is easier to fit.

VIEW 3: RAHAB AS AN ANCESTOR

Some say Matthew means Rahab was an ancestor of Boaz, not his own mother, the way father can mean ancestor. Others say Matthew means she really was his mother, and that fits the skipped names view.

THE SAME LIST, FOUR TIMES

Ruth, 1 Chronicles 2, Matthew 1 and Luke 3 agree on these names, with small differences. Luke calls Salmon Sala, calls Ram Arni, and adds a name, Admin.

WHAT ALL AGREE ON

The point of the list is that David came from Perez, the son of Judah, the tribe that would hold the scepter, Genesis 49:10. God was keeping His promise across hundreds of years, one ordinary family at a time.

DEBATED THE BIG QUESTION**WHO WROTE RUTH?***The Traditional View*

RUTH 1:1 · 4:7 · 4:17 TO 22 · 1 SAMUEL 16:1

THE BOOK DOES NOT SAY

Ruth never names its writer. What we know comes from tradition and clues in the book.

THE TALMUD

An old Jewish teaching in the Talmud, Bava Batra 14b, says Samuel wrote the book that bears his name, Judges and Ruth.

CLUES IN THE BOOK

It starts in the days when the judges ruled, 1:1, looking back on those days. It explains a custom from former times, 4:7. It ends with David's name, 4:17 and 4:22, so it was written after David was born, and many think after he was famous. It never mentions Solomon, so many traditional scholars think it was written in David's time.

WHERE IT SITS

English Bibles put Ruth right after Judges, like the old Greek Bible. The Hebrew Bible puts it in the third section, the Writings, as one of five short scrolls read on special days each year. Ruth is read at Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks.

WHY IT WAS WRITTEN

To show that David's family came from God's hidden kindness, and that a foreign woman who trusted Yahweh was welcomed into His people.

Every View

RUTH 4:18 TO 22 · 1 CHRONICLES 2:5 TO 15 · EZRA 9 TO 10 · NEHEMIAH 13:23 TO 27

VIEW 1: EARLY, IN DAVID'S TIME

Samuel or someone close to David's court wrote it, to show that David's family was God's choice. Supporters point to the old style of its Hebrew and to the fact that Solomon is never named.

VIEW 2: LATE, AFTER THE EXILE

Many scholars date it to the 500s or 400s BC, pointing to a few later Hebrew words and the way it explains old customs. They think its welcome of a Moabite answered the strict rules about foreign wives in Ezra and Nehemiah's day.

VIEW 3: AN OLD STORY WRITTEN DOWN LATER

Some say the story was told for generations and written down later, and that the family list in 4:18 to 22, which matches 1 Chronicles 2, was added at the end.

WHAT ALL AGREE ON

Whoever wrote it was a master storyteller. God never speaks and does no miracles in the book, yet the reader ends knowing God was in every step, from a famine in Bethlehem to the birth of a king.