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Ruth

Introduction

This account tells us about what happened back in the time when the tribal leaders (misleadingly called 'Judges' in most older English translations) were still ruling Yisrael (Israel), i.e., before their first king. At that time, a long drought caused a famine in Yisrael, which in turned caused Elimelek to move his family to the neighbouring country of Moav (Moab). After a time, Elimelek died there in Moav, but eventually their two sons married, and this account focuses on Ruth who was one of those wives. When Ruth's husband also died, she displayed amazing love and dedication towards her mother-in-law, No'omi (Naomi, whose name means 'pleasant'). When God blessed Yisrael again with good crops, No'omi returned back to her roots in Yisrael and Ruth accompanied her. According to Jewish customs, Ruth needed to marry a relative of her husband, so that Elimelek's name could continue through the generations. Boaz turned out to be that man, and the son they bore became an ancestor of the future King David, and eventually through time, of Yeshua (Jesus) the messiah.

The previous *Accounts of the Heroes and Guides/Leaders* tells about how much the Jewish people suffered because they had turned away from God. So this account reveals how Ruth, a non-Jew, is blessed after she begins to follow Yisrael's god.

Note that the Hebrew name of the main character in this account is 'רוּת' which might be transliterated as 'Rūt' (and pronounced as 'root' with no 'th' at the end). However in weighing up the pros and cons, we have elected to use the traditional spelling of 'Ruth' (rather than 'Rut' which might would be more accurate in one sense, yet would most likely also be pronounced wrongly by most English speakers).

Main components of this account

Ruth accompanies No'omi when she returns home to Beyt-Lehem *1:1-22*
Ruth gets to know Boaz *2:1–3:18*
The marriage of Ruth and Boaz *4:1-22*

Lighter type marks additions. Underscores join parts of a single source word.
Struck words are untranslated. The ◘ sign marks a verse with no text.
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Readers' Version

Elimelek goes to Moav during a famine

1:1 Back in the time when the tribal leaders ruled Yisrael (Israel), there was a drought which caused a shortage of food, so a man from the town of Beyt-Lehem (Bethlehem) in the Yehudah (Judah) region went to live in the country of Moav (Moab) for a while, taking his wife and their two sons. **2** The man's name was Elimelek and he was married to No'omi (Naomi), and their sons' names were Mahlon and Kilyon. (They were part of the Efratah clan from Beyt-Lehem in Yehudah.) They travelled to the Moav countryside and lived there. **3** Then No'omi's husband Elimelek died, and she was left with her two sons. **4** Eventually they married women from there in Moav—Orpah and Ruth. But after No'omi and her sons had lived in Moav for about then years, **5** Mahlon and Kilyon both also died, and No'omi was left without her husband or her two sons.

Ruth accompanies No'omi back to Beyt-Lehem

6 One day No'omi (Naomi) was in the countryside there in Moav (Moab) when she heard someone telling about how Yahweh had helped his people in Yisrael (Israel) and that now they had plenty of food, so she got ready to return to Beyt-Lehem (Bethlehem) with her two daughters-in-law. **7** The three of them left the place where they'd been living in Moav and started walking along the road back to Yehudah (Judah). **8** Then No'omi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Both of you should go back to your parents' homes. I pray that Yahweh will treat you with the same faithfulness that you showed to your now-deceased husbands and to me. **9** May Yahweh enable both of you to find new husbands and find peace and happiness in your new homes with them."

Then she kissed them as they all wept aloud. **10** But they both said, "No, we'll go with you as you return to your relatives."

11 But No'omi responded, "No, go back to your homes my daughters. Why would you bother coming with me? It's not like I could still give birth to more sons to become your husbands. **12** Go on back, my daughters, because I'm too old to remarry. Even if I did hope for that and got married tonight and had some sons, **13** could you wait for them to grow up so you could be remarried? No, my daughters, what's hard for me, even more than your hardships, is that Yahweh is using his power against me."

14 Then they wailed and cried again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye and left, but Ruth stayed and clung to No'omi. **15** No'omi said, "Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her parents and to her religion. Go back with her."

16 But Ruth replied, "Please don't insist that I leave you and go back, because wherever you go, I'll go with you and wherever you live, I'll live there too. Your people are my people, and your god is my god. **17** Wherever you die, I'll die there too and be buried there. May Yahweh punish me severely if anything other than death separates the two of us."

18 When No'omi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she didn't say any more.

19 So the two of them travelled on until they reached Beyt-Lehem (Bethlehem). When they entered Beyt-Lehem, the whole town was curious about them, and the women began asking, "Is that No'omi?"

20 But No'omi told them not to call her 'No'omi' (which means 'pleasant') but to call her 'Mara' (meaning 'miserable') because she said, "The almighty God has made my life very miserable. **21** I went away content with a family, but Yahweh has brought me back with a void. So why call me 'No'omi'? You see, Yahweh has testified against me—the powerful God has brought misfortune on me."

Ruth collects grain in Boaz' field

22 And so No'omi (Naomi) had returned to Yisrael (Israel), along with her daughter-in-law, Ruth the Moavit, and they arrived there in Beyt-Lehem (Bethlehem) at the start of the barley harvest. **2:1** Now there was a relative there of No'omi's deceased husband. His name was Boaz and he was a very wealthy man from the same clan as Elimelek had been.

2 Ruth the Moavit said to No'omi, "Allow me to go to the countryside and pick up any heads of grain that the harvesters drop.[1] I'll follow any harvester who seems kind."

"Go ahead, my daughter," No'omi replied.

3 So Ruth left and went to the countryside where she picked up heads of grain after the harvesters, and it just so happened that that part of the countryside belonged to Boaz who was Elimelek's relative.

4 Just then, Boaz arrived from the town and greeted the harvesters, "May Yahweh be with you," to which they replied, "May Yahweh bless you also."

5 Then he asked the foreman of the harvesters, "Whose daughter is that young woman over there?"

6 "She's a young Moavit," the man replied. "The one who came with No'omi when she returned from Moav (Moab). **7** She asked me for permission to follow the harvesters and pick up any heads of grain that drop, and she's been doing it since early morning until just recently she's taking a break now in the shelter.

8 So Boaz approached Ruth, "Young woman," he said, "listen here. Don't leave this place or go to any other field to pick up grain, but just stay close by these young female workers of mine. **9** Watch where the men are harvesting and follow along behind them. I've told them not to bother you. And whenever you're thirsty, help yourself from the water jars that the men keep filled."

10 Then she knelt down on the ground and bowed her head low to the ground and said, "Why are you being so kind to me when I'm a foreigner? I wasn't expecting your attention."

11 "People have told me," Boaz replied, "about everything

1 RV 2:2 · Cross-ref. Lev 19:9-10; Deu 24:19.

you've done for your mother-in-law since your husband died—how you left your parents and your homeland behind and came here to live with people that you hadn't even met before. 12 May Yahweh reward your hard work. Since you've come here for protection under Yisrael's (Israel's) god Yahweh, may he reward you in full."

13 "My lord," she replied, "I trust that I'll continue to please you because you've comforted me by speaking so kindly to me, your servant, even though I'm not like your servant girls."

14 Then when it was time to eat, Boaz told Ruth, "Come and join us. Take some bread and dip it in the sauce and eat." So she sat beside the harvesters, and he also offered her some roasted grain. She ate until she was full and even had some left over. 15 Then she went back to picking up heads and Boaz ordered his men, "Let her gather grain even among the bundles and don't shame her. 16 Even pull some stalks out from the bundles and drop them for her to pick up, and don't tell her off."

17 So Ruth picked up grain in the countryside until evening and when she beat the heads and collected the grains, she had a large basket of barley. 18 So she picked up the basket and headed back into town and showed her mother-in-law how much she had collected. Ruth also gave No'omi (Naomi) the roasted grain left-over from her lunch. 19 "Where did you pick up grain today and where did you work?" asked No'omi. "May the man who took notice of you be blessed."

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

20 "May he be blessed by Yahweh," responded No'omi. "Yahweh *hasn't* forgotten his kindness towards us who are still living and to our husbands who've died." And then she added, "That man is a close relative of Elimelek. In fact, he's one of those responsible for taking care of our family."[2]

21 "He also told me," said Ruth the Moavit, "to stay with his workers until they finish the harvesting."

22 "It's good, my daughter," said No'omi to her daughter-in-law, "for you to stay near his servant girls because you don't know how people might treat you in another field."

23 So Ruth stayed near Boaz' servant girls and picked up heads of grain until the end of the barley harvest and then the wheat harvest, and she lived with her mother-in-law.

Ruth requests Boaz to assume his responsibilities

3:1 One day Ruth's mother-in-law No'omi (Naomi) said to her, "My daughter, I think I need to be finding a secure living situation for you? 2 Now, Boaz whose servant girls you've been working with, he's a relative of ours. In fact, he'll be on the threshing floor winnowing barley tonight. 3 So wash yourself and put on some perfume. Wear your cloak and go out to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you're there until he's finished eating and drinking. 4 Then when he lies down to sleep, pay attention to where he lies down. Once he's asleep, go and lift the blanket near his feet and lie down. Then he'll tell you what to do next."

5 "I'll do everything you say," Ruth answered, 6 then she went out to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law had instructed.

7 When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was feeling cheery, he went off to lie down at the end of the pile of grain. Then Ruth quietly followed him, and uncovered his feet and lay down there. 8 But Boaz was startled in the middle of the night, and when he turned over he was stunned to find a woman lying at his feet. 9 "Who are you?" he asked.

"I'm your servant Ruth," she replied, "Spread your cloak over me[3] because you have a responsibility as our close relative."

10 "My dear girl, may Yahweh bless you." Boaz replied, "You have shown more kindness now that before,[4] because you haven't chased after the young men, whether rich or poor. 11 So now dear girl, don't be afraid. I'll do what you've asked for, because the whole town knows that you're an honourable woman. 12 It is true that I have a responsibility towards your family,[5] but there's another man who's more closely related to you all than me. 13 Stay here for the rest of the night, and then in the morning, if he'll accept then he can marry you. But if he's not willing to take care of you, then as Yahweh lives, I'll do it myself. Now lie down here until morning."

14 So Ruth lay there near his feet until morning, but she got up before it was light enough to be recognised as Boaz had said, "It's best if no one knows that a woman visited the threshing floor." 15 Then Boaz said, "Bring your cloak here and hold it out." So she held it while he poured a generous amount of barley into it, and lifted it onto her shoulder. Then he or she[6] went into the town. 16 When Ruth got home, her mother-in-law asked her, "My daughter, how did everything go?"

So Ruth told her everything that Boaz had said and done for her 17 and she also said, "He gave me all this barley because he told me that he didn't want me to return to my mother-in-law empty-handed."

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2 **RV 2:20 · Cross-ref.** Lev 25:25.

3 **RV 3:9 · Note** This was the cultural way for Ruth to request Boaz to take her as his wife.

4 **RV 3:10 · Note** Probably referring to Ruth's faithfulness to her mother-in-law.

5 **RV 3:12 · Cross-ref.** Ruth 2:20.

6 **RV 3:15 · Note** TC: There's no separate Hebrew word for 'he' or 'she' here—it's part of the verb 'he/she_went' but it's unclear if this original verb was marked *masculine* or *feminine*, hence you'll find both alternatives in various Bible translations.

Readers' Version

18 "Okay my daughter," No'omi (Naomi) responded. "Wait
now until we see what happens, because that man won't rest
today until the matter gets settled."

Boaz takes over the land and gets Ruth as a wife

4:1 Meanwhile, Boaz went to the
place inside the town gate (where peo-
ple conducted their official business)
and sat down there. Just as he had hoped, the man responsible for No'omi's (Naomi's) family came along—the man whom Boaz had mentioned earlier—and Boaz called out to him by name and said, "Come over here and sit down." So the man came over and sat down. 2 Then Boaz called over ten of the older, well-respected men from the town and asked them to sit and witness their discussion, so they sat down with them. 3 Then Boaz asked the other relative, "The part of the countryside that belonged to our relative Elimelek is for sale. No'omi, who recently returned from Moav (Moab), is selling it. 4 I thought that I should tell you about it and in case you buy the land while the people sitting here are listening, including these leaders of our people. If you want to buy it back into the family, then do so. But if you do not want to buy it back, then let me know, because you are the closest relative to Elimelek, and I am next after you."

"I'll buy it," the man replied.

5 "When you buy the land from No'omi," Boaz continued, "you will also need to marry Ruth, our deceased relative's widow from Moav, so that she'll have a son who will inherit the property and continue Elimelek's family line."

6 "I can't buy it back myself, then," the closer relative answered. "If I did that, I would ruin my own son's inheritance. You can have the land and the woman instead of me, because I simply can't take it."

7 (At that time in Yisrael (Israel), people had a different way of buying land or exchanging goods between them. In order to make these matters legally binding, one man would take off one of his sandals and give it to the other party.[7] That was the way people in Yisrael confirmed what they had agreed to do.)

8 "You buy it yourself," the relative said and he took off one of his sandals and gave it to Boaz. 9 Then Boaz said to the respected men and to all the other people who were there, "Today you have all witnessed that I've bought from No'omi all the property that belonged to Elimelek, Kilyon, and Mahlon. 10 I am also taking Ruth, Mahlon's widow from Moav, to be my wife so that she can have a son. Everyone will consider that son to be Elimelek's descendant and he will inherit the property and carry on Elimelek's family name among his relatives and here in his hometown.[8] You've seen and heard that today and can tell anyone who asks about it."

11 All the respected men, and the others who were sitting at the town gate, agreed, and they said, "Yes, we are your. We pray that Yahweh will allow this woman who will be coming into your home, to be like Rahel (Rachel) and Le'ah, the two who gave birth to our ancestors and started our people, Yisrael.[9] May you become great in the clan of Efratah and famous here in Beyt-Lehem (Bethlehem)! 12 We pray that your family will be like the family of your ancestor Perets, son of Yehudah (Judah) and Tamar,[10] because of the many descendants that Yahweh will give to you and this young woman."

Boaz' descendants

13 So Boaz married Ruth, and when
he slept with her, Yahweh enabled her to become pregnant and she gave birth to a son. 14 The women in Beyt-Lehem (Bethlehem) said to No'omi (Naomi), "Praise Yahweh for giving you a male descendant to preserve your family today. We pray to Yahweh that people throughout Yisrael (Israel) will greatly respect him. 15 Your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who's been better to you than if you had seven sons, has given birth to him. Now he'll make you feel young again and he'll take care of you when you get old." 16 Then No'omi picked up the baby and held him closely and became like second mother to him.

17 The women who were living nearby said, "It is as if No'omi now has a son!" They named him Oved.

Eventually Oved went on to become the father of Yishay (Jesse), who became the father of King David.[11] 18 Here is a list of the descendants of Perets: Perets's son was Hetsron. 19 Hetsron's son was Ram and Ram's son was Aminadav. 20 Aminadav's son was Nahshon and Nahshon's son was Salmon. 21 Salmon's son was Boaz and Boaz's son was Oved.

7 **RV 4:7-8 · Cross-ref.** Deu 25:9.

8 **RV 4:10 · Cross-ref.** Deu 25:5-6.

9 **RV 4:11 · Cross-ref.** Gen 29:31.

10 **RV 4:12 · Cross-ref.** Gen 38:27-30.

11 **RV 4:17 · Cross-ref.** Mat 1:5-6.

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22 Oved’s son was Yishay and Yishay’s son was King David.

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