

Ruth

The Book of Ruth remains one of the most popular stories in the Old Testament. After all the turmoil in the Book of Judges, the Book of Ruth is an oasis of calm and human virtue. The book is among the five “festival scrolls” kept in each synagogue’s Torah Ark (special cabinet) which are unrolled and read on Jewish feast days. Family genealogies are very important in Sacred Scripture, especially when they follow the families of royal descent. Hence in the Old Testament the Book of Ruth is an example of endangered family lines (e.g., Abraham and Sarah) which are ultimately blest by God with a multitude of descendants.

The Book of Ruth begins with **Emilelech** and **Naomi** of Bethlehem who, to escape a severe famine, emigrate to Moab with their two sons, Mahlon and Kilion. However by leaving Bethlehem (the Promised Land), Emilelech exposes his family to the religious beliefs and culture of the Moabites who do not worship the God of Israel. Eventually Elimelech dies and, sure enough, his two sons marry Moabite women. Yet despite this break with Mosaic law that forbids marriage with foreigners, God chooses to bless one of Naomi’s new Moabite daughters-in-law. Her name is **Ruth**.

Ten years after moving to Moab, Elimelech’s sons die, leaving a household of three widows. When the famine ends, Naomi returns to Bethlehem; however she urges her daughter-in-law Ruth to stay in Moab. Ruth refuses and in fact confesses her newfound faith in Naomi’s God of Israel (1:16). So Naomi and Ruth travel together to Bethlehem to make a life for themselves. In Bethlehem lives Boaz, one of Naomi’s deceased husband’s wealthy relatives. As a faithful Jew, Boaz is careful to follow the Mosaic law which mandates leaving grain behind for the poor (Deuteronomy 24:19; Leviticus 19:9-10). One day Ruth goes to Boaz’s field to glean the leftover grain to feed herself and Naomi (2:1-2). Boaz notices Ruth and eventually the two are married.

Ruth and Boaz have a son, **Obed**, who later becomes the father of **Jesse**, who becomes the father of **David** (4:17). Since the Messiah of Israel was to be descended from David (Romans 1:3; Matthew 1), these events show how God blessed Elimelech’s family to be a part of Jesus’ line.

The Book of Ruth teaches that it’s always best to trust God. One need only look at Ruth to see the truth of it: a Gentile woman, a foreigner who received God’s mercy and later became the great-grandmother of King David and therefore a direct forebear of Christ. Because of Ruth’s faith and virtue, she became an ancestress of the Savior. Such a distinction is the reason Ruth is included in Matthew’s genealogy: “**Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth . . .**” (Matthew 1:5).

(OVER)

Abraham
(Gen. 11:26-31; Matt. 1:2)

Judah
(Gen. 29:30-35; Matt. 1:2)

Perez
(Ruth 4:18; Matt. 1:3)

Boaz
(Ruth 4:21; Matt. 1:5)

Lot
(Gen. 11:27)




Moab
(Gen. 19:33-37)

Ruth
(Ruth 4:13; Matt. 1:5)

Obed
(Ruth 4:17; Matt. 1:5)

Jesse
(Matt. 1:5)

David
(Ruth 4:17; Matt. 1:6)

 **Women**
 **Marital Relationships**
 **Descendant**