



The story of Ruth begins with her mother-in-law — Naomi. Ruth is actually a girl from the Moabites.

This takes place during the time of the judges. And as the Israelites at this time were in a cycle of obedience/disobedience, it's as a time of trial and the people being subjected to neighbouring countries. And at the same time, there was a famine striking the land. The famine meaning that the lack of water, meant there was a shortage of crops. However, we see that the rest of the tribe of Benjamin was still able to survive. However, Elimelech decided at this time to take his family to Moab.

What's the big deal of taking his family to Moab? Isn't this the same as taking his family to another city to find work and employment? It can be difficult for us to contextualise ourselves into the situation in this time, but let me help to explain.

The Moabites were actually one of the countries that had oppressed Israel in the past. Eglon, if you remember from William Cottrell's message, was the King of Moab. These were people that God had strictly forbidden the Israelites to meet with. Actually, Moab at the time refused to help Israel, or giving food, refused them passage. They were the enemies of the nation at this time. Why does God not like the Moabites? Some of the practices they were involved in were detestable, the circumstances of a sinful world. Child sacrifice, human sacrifice was common. Their god they worshipped was called Chamron, and similar to the other gods around that time, Molech.

Moabites are pretty interesting, because we talk about ancient cultures, we might easily dismiss this as a "made up people" in the Bible. But archaeologists discovered a Moabite stone — writings from the Moabites. Not from the time of the judges, but from the Biblical times of the Kings. It's interesting because that Moabite stone mentions Israel, yahweh (Yeshua), and the House of David. You can actually go see this stone at the Louvre in Paris. Pretty neat right?

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Right, so moving along, back to Ruth.



1. In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and 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. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. 3 But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 These took Moabite wives; the name of one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, 5 and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

## 2. Active Disobedience — Elimelech

1. This isn't a question of the grass being greener on the other side

2. This is choosing against God's commandments

## 3. What does that look like for us?

1. Do we ever consider what it means to disobey God?

2. We are very comfortable in receiving God's grace, but we also need to understand the responsibility that comes with obedience.

## 4. Giving of sons to Moabite wives

For us it's very difficult to understand why this is wrong, and we have to understand that the modern concept of love and marriage is very different to what things we were like in the ancient near east



1. 6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them food. 7 So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. 8 But 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 The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you 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, we will return with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? 12 Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, 13 would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me." 14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

### 3. There's Something About Naomi

1. As a mother-in-law
2. As a woman
3. As a follower of God

### 4. The response of the daughters

1. clinging to her
2. refusing to leave her at first
3. they have seen and known something about God of Israelites
4. The way they were treated and welcomed into the family was different

5. **1:6 Believer** - She believed God had mercy on Israel - ending the drought. **1:8 Kind** - She wished God's blessing on Ruth and Orpah **1:8 Appreciative** - She appreciated what her daughters-in-law had done. **1:9 Forgiving** - She kissed Ruth and Orpah goodbye - a sign they were at peace with each other. **1:11 Sacrificial** - She urged her daughters-in-law to go home when it would be harder for her. **1:13 Eager to help** - She kept trying to persuade Ruth and Orpah to go back to their families. **1:18 Sensitive** - When it was clear Ruth would not leave, she stopped urging.



1. A Choice — Naomi's Choice
  1. A decision towards repentance
  2. Going back home
  3. Accepting judgement
2. The difficulty involved in that
  1. shame
  2. failure
  3. emptiness
  4. danger
3. She's going back, because she knows that Israel has laws to care for orphan's and widows. It's the best place for her to go — even in the shame and the sorrow.

It's like that for us isn't it? Where there's a distance now between us and God, something that feels and seems insurmountable. And yet, God's love — the faint memory of us — still beckons. That there is something different about God — there's something different that reminds us that with Him things were right.

She's an insider.



She's an outsider.



**Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you:**

- 1. For where you go I will go,**
- 2. Where you lodge I will lodge.**
- 3. Your people shall be my people,**
- 4. your God my God.**
- 5. Where you die I will die,**
- 6. and there will I be buried**

1. A Choice — Ruth's Choice
  1. It is turning away from certain things
2. The declaration : Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you.
  1. For where you go I will go,
    1. promise to follow and serve Naomi
  2. Where you lodge I will lodge.
    1. whether it's nomadic, lodge/stay — not live. understanding that it might not be easy
  3. Your people shall be my people, and
    1. her identity will now be in Naomi's identity. Actually a bit deeper, to be an Israelite means that you must follow God. And here Ruth is saying the laws commandments, life will be that. She will be an Israelite
  4. your God my God.
    1. She is actively turning away from the gods she had worshipped as a child,. Instead she's choosing to worship and commit herself to Jehovah.
  5. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried.
    1. It's not a commitment to Naomi — but it's a deeper commitment. That as soon as Naomi dies she's not going to go back, she's going to follow til the very end.
3. These are amazing proclamations — because women are normally subject to the commands of the males at this time, and here with her freedom she chooses God. That there was something amazing, powerful, genuine, undeniable — seen in glimpses in the life of Naomi, and expressed outward here.
4. Do you understand the cost?
5. Faith
  1. She doesn't know exactly what's to come
  2. But she knows that it's better to be broken like Naomi, than just be like those in Moab



1. Returning Home
2. 19 So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town 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 away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?"
3. Naomi means Pleasant — Mara means bitter, chafed or heavy
  1. Many reasons why the city was stirred
  2. Naomi has returned, probably looking very different
  3. long journey from Moab back to Bethlehem
  4. returning without sons, without husband
  5. returning with a moabite woman
  6. Widow. Not looking very pleasant at all
4. Naomi's response
  1. It could be simply an honest evaluation of life as she experienced it.
  2. It could be an angry response
  3. It could be the response of deep sorrow.
  4. It appears to be a confession through scalding tears and burning memories.
5. She left with husband, children — she comes back empty handed



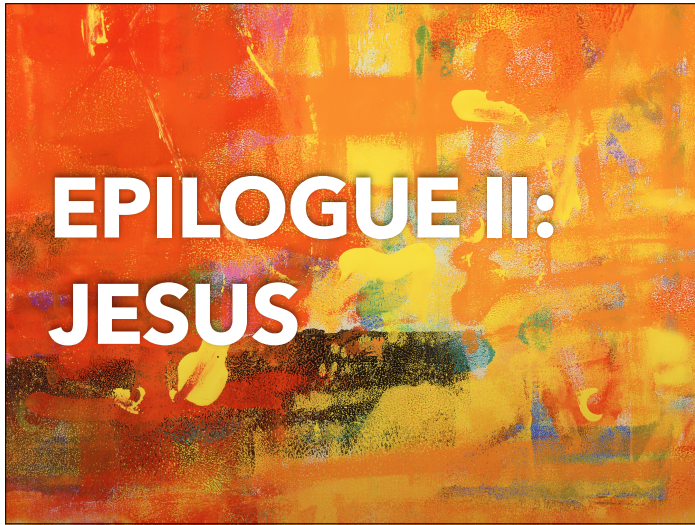
1. Actually, there is emphasis here, but not redundancy. The author is writing very carefully. He first reported that Naomi "returned." The word "returned" is "shoob" (bWv) which means "to turn back," "to retreat from an unfortunate direction." Elimelech took his family into Moab, into disobedience. The author said Naomi turned away from such evil ways and returned to Canaan, to obedience.
2. **22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.**
3. Contrast 1: **In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.**
4. Naomi's Return from a life of disobedience
5. Ruth's change from a life of idolatry to a life of obedience  
Physical famine — an oncoming time of difficulty
6. Spiritual famine — a turning away, a spiritual separation and distance from God
7. A RETURN
8. Physical renewal — barley harvest
9. Spiritual renewal — Repentance — the word return, changing times



# EPILOGUE: THE REST OF THE BOOK

1. In Jewish tradition, a widow can be given to another unmarried family member. It was designed as a way to care for those in need. As women and in particular, widows, were the most vulnerable in society.
2. It's called a kinsman-redeemer. Boaz, is the kinsman redeemer in this story. And he marries Ruth. And one of their children is Obed. Who was the Father of Jesse. Who was the father of David. Who became King. Who is in the lineage of Christ, himself.

Ruth, a Moabite — someone who was outsider, who's faith, and love draw her to a community — one that she knows only from the outside — but steps into, and in doing so is part of the greatest blessing this world has ever known.



1. See Jesus, come along, and he's our kinsman redeemer. He welcomes us in, to be part of his lineage, to be part of his family. To be part of his life. Paul writes it as "being grafted in" We become part of this very story, part of his very life.
2. **Jesus as Kinsman-Redeemer is the one who lifts us out of spiritual loneliness, spiritual separation, spiritual poverty — instead giving us spiritual meaning, spiritual fellowship, spiritual unity — and when the spiritual comes alive, the entire picture and perspective of life changes and transforms.**



1. 1. For where you go I will go,
2. 2. Where you lodge I will lodge.
3. 3. Your people shall be my people,
4. 4. your God my God.
5. 5. Where you die I will die,
6. 6. and there will I be buried