

Nov. 5. 2024

The Book of

RUTH

Rev. Deborah Dillard



MENU

INTRODUCTION: The Book of Ruth

SCENE 1: A Tragic Story in a Foreign Land

SCENE 2: A New Life, a New Hope

SCENE 3: A Decisive Encounter

SCENE 4: From Emptiness to Fullness

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Ruth

INTRODUCTION

- Life can throw us unexpected and painful surprises. Life can change in a single moment:
 - A tragic car accident
 - An ill-timed jump into a pool
 - A catastrophic tornado or hurricane
 - A broken relationship
- Even worse, one terrible event might bring about another. As the saying goes, “when it rains, it pours.”

INTRODUCTION

- When events overturn our lives, we might:
 - Get overwhelmed by grief and hurt.
 - Experience a loss of identity and lose sight of those things that make us who we are.
 - Enter a time of disorientation.

INTRODUCTION

- The story of Ruth and Naomi explores the problems of loss and identity.
- Stories, like the book of Ruth, are powerful tools which appeal to both our emotions and our intellect.
- The answers the book offers contain much wisdom for our lives today.



INTRODUCTION

- In the story, we encounter:
 - Loss
 - Suffering
 - Disappointment
 - Disorientation
 - Uncertainty
 - Bitterness



- But we also find good news:
 - Love
 - Commitment
 - Perseverance
 - Hope
 - God’s powerful and tender hand

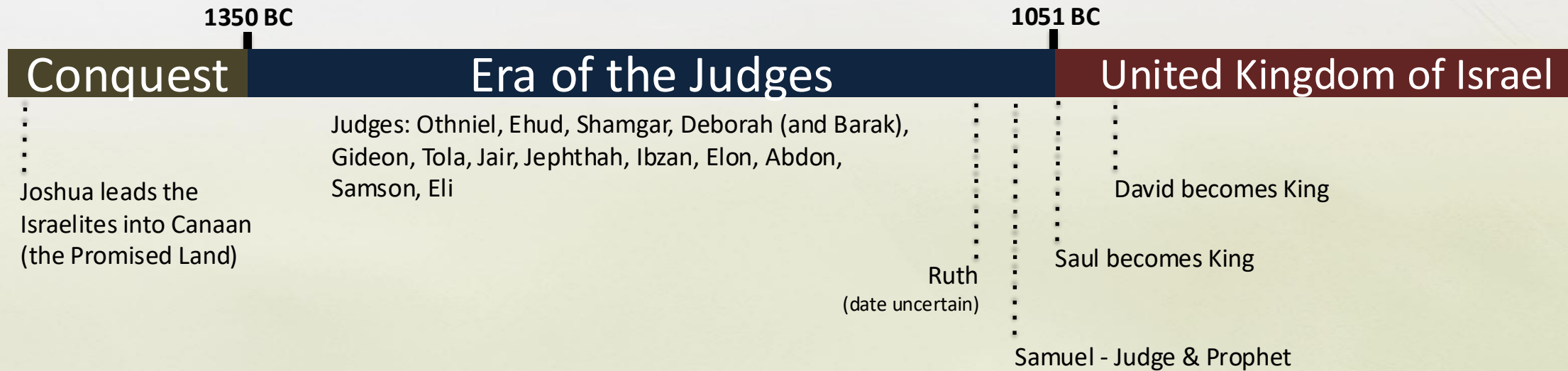


INTRODUCTION

- It's a story about love:
 - Love between Ruth and Boaz.
 - Love between God and his people.
 - God's unfailing love and ceaseless loyalty.
- It's a story about transformation:

“You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. LORD my God, I will praise you forever.”—*Psalm 30:11–12*

INTRODUCTION



- **Setting**

- The story begins and ends in Bethlehem with a hiatus in Moab, one of Israel's fiercest enemies.



Judean Desert near Bethlehem



MEDITERRANEAN
SEA

Sea of Galilee

Jerusalem
Bethlehem

Dead Sea

JUDAH

MOAB

EGYPT

- **Outline of the Book of Ruth**
 - Naomi's Emptiness: Famine, Migration, and Tragedy (1:1–5)
 - Naomi Back Home with a Moabite Daughter-in-Law (1:6–22)
 - Ruth Meets Boaz: Kindness and Generosity Meet Need (2:1–23)
 - Ruth and Boaz Married: Naomi's Fullness (4:1–22)

Name	Meaning	Description
Bethlehem	“house of bread”	Town south of Jerusalem in Judah. A famine causes the “house of bread” to be out of bread.
Elimelek	“my God is king”	Naomi’s husband. He and his family left Bethlehem for Moab because of the famine. He died in Moab.
Naomi	“pleasant”	Elimelek’s wife. Early in the story her life is quite unpleasant with the death of her husband and two sons. So she changes her name to <i>Mara</i> which means “bitterness.”
Mahlon and Kilion	“sickly” and “weakly”	The two sons of Elimelek and Naomi. Their names suggest that they will have a tragic end. They both die in Moab leaving their Moabite wives, Ruth and Orpah, widows.

INTRODUCTION

Name	Meaning	Description
Ruth	Related to the idea of “refreshment” or possibly “friendship”	Although a Moabitess, she became a “friend” of God’s people, and a “refreshment” to her mother-in-law, Naomi.
Boaz	“in strength”	A man of standing and influence in Bethlehem. He demonstrated great strength of character and convictions to carry others’ burdens.

SCENE 1

A Tragic Story in a Foreign Land

Ruth 1:1-22

SCENE 1

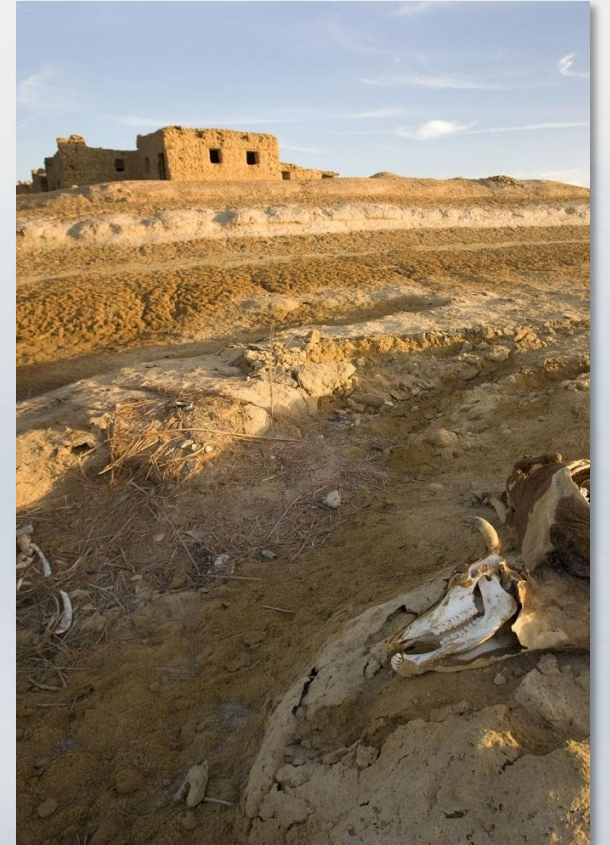
- “In the days when the judges ruled . . .” marks the setting for the story (Ruth 1:1).
- It was a time when “Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit” (Judg. 21:25).
- Israel’s social and spiritual life was known for its cycle of:
 - Disobedience
 - Repentance
 - God’s intervention
 - Gratitude
 - Back to disobedience

SCENE 1



SCENE 1

- The book begins in Bethlehem (“house of bread”) with a famine.
- The “house of bread” is running out of bread. (The Hebrew word for *bread* and *food* is the same.)



SCENE 1

- The famine may have been a punishment from God for the disobedience of the times.
- Elimelek and his family leave Bethlehem for the land of Moab because of the famine.



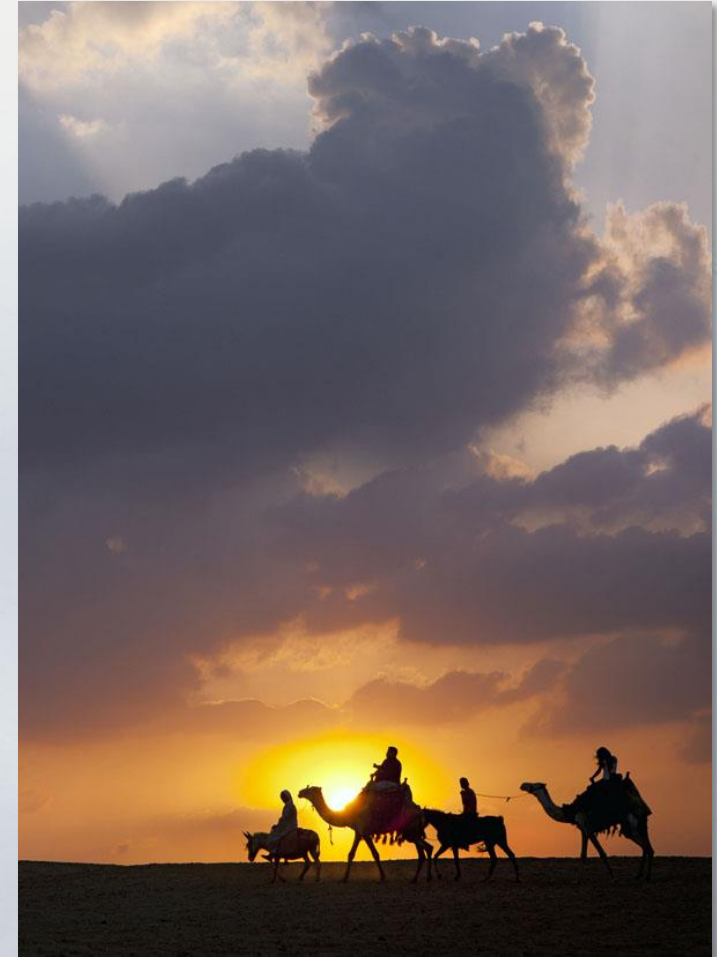
SCENE 1

- *Elimelek* means “my God is king.”
 - One of the main functions of a king was to provide security and food for his people.
 - A good king made sure his people did not suffer hunger.
- Elimelek’s sons’ names suggest that the story will take a tragic turn:
 - *Mahlon* means “sickly”
 - *Kilion* means “weakly”



SCENE 1

- Elimelek's wife's name seems to be the only good news:
 - *Naomi* means “pleasant”
- But in a story that promises surprises, we can anticipate a great surprise for Naomi as well.



SCENE 1

- In Moab, Elimelek died and, after ten years, so did Mahlon and Kilion.
 - “And Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband” (Ruth 1:5).
- In Old Testament times, women were valued only by their connection to a man.
 - Unmarried women derived their value from their fathers; married women from their husbands.
 - Their security and safety depended on the husband’s ability to provide for them.

SCENE 1

- When a married woman lost her husband:
 - Her value declined steeply.
 - Her safety and security depended on her sons.
- When Naomi lost her sons, she became destitute, on a social level below servants.
- Naomi was also a foreigner in Moab, one of the lowliest of the low.



SCENE 1

- The turn of fortunes for Naomi is total and paralyzing. Her life is overturned, similar to Job.

“For sighing has become my daily food; my groans pour out like water. What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil.”—Job 3:24–26



SCENE 1

- But as a woman, Naomi's situation is even worse than Job's:
 - “The LORD's hand has turned against me!” —Ruth 1:13
- Naomi's daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, are in a similar predicament—also widows.
- They do not or cannot have children. Ten years of marriage to Naomi's sons did not produce children.

SCENE 1

- Naomi had heard that “the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them” in Bethlehem (Ruth 1:6).
- By cultural tradition, Ruth and Orpah were attached to their mother-in-law to share her fate.
- Naomi releases them from their duty and encourages them to go back.

- Naomi says to her daughters-in-law:
 - “Go back, each of you, to your mother’s home. May the Lord show you kindness [*hesed*], as you have shown kindness [*hesed*] to your dead husbands and to me.” —Ruth 1:8

Hesed

- *Hesed* is often used to describe God's love, commitment, and loyalty toward Israel.
- Example: "In your unfailing love [*hesed*] you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling."—Exodus 15:13

Hesed

- It's often used in connection to a covenant, such as marriage, as it is in the book of Ruth.
- It means that people are willing to fulfill their covenant obligations and go beyond them for the sake of an important relationship.
- It suggests taking loyalty, commitment, compassion, and love a step beyond what is simply required.

SCENE 1

- After some argument, Orpah decides to go back, but Ruth decides to stay with Naomi.
- Ruth's decision is courageous; it comes from:
 - Love
 - Commitment
 - Loyalty



SCENE 1

- Ruth leaves:
 - Her home
 - Her identity
 - Her possibility of a favorable future
- She joins Naomi in what could only be a future filled with more suffering. Yet her actions are just what Naomi needs.



SCENE 1

Ruth says to Naomi:

“Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.”

—*Ruth 1:16–17*

SCENE 1

- Ruth's four-fold commitment:
 - **Personal:** “Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay”
 - **National:** “Your people will be my people”
 - **Spiritual:** “your God [will be] my God”
 - **Mortal (Lifelong):** “Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried”



SCENE 1

- When Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem Naomi declares:
 - “I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi [“pleasant”]? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me” (1:21).
- Naomi changes her name to *Mara*, which means “bitter” (1:20).

SCENE 1

- Though bitter, Naomi understood that life in Bethlehem would be still be better than in Moab.
- God commanded the Israelites to protect the weakest people:

“Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.” —*Deut. 24:17-18*

SCENE 1

“Learn to do right; seek justice.
Defend the oppressed. Take up the
cause of the fatherless; plead the
case of the widow.” —*Isaiah 1:17*



SCENE 1

- However, life for Ruth in Bethlehem would not be easy. She is:
 - Female
 - A foreigner
 - Barren
 - Widowed
- Yet Ruth's commitment was firm and exemplary. She took it upon herself to care for her sorrowful mother-in-law.

NEXT WEEK

Tuesday Bible Study

7:00 p.m.

“Guard Your Heart”

*Minister
Juanitress Cofield*



*Above all else,
guard your heart,
for everything
you do flows
from it.*

Proverbs 4:23 NIV

RUTH WILL RESUME:

TUESDAY

NOVEMBER 19, 2024

SCENE 2: A New Life, a New Hope

SCENE 3: A Decisive Encounter

SCENE 4: From Emptiness to Fullness