

RUTH



Ruth is an exquisite short story that instructs and delights. The three main characters—Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz—and the pastoral landscape in which they move come to life with the deftest of verbal strokes. Four chapters of elegant Hebrew prose transport Ruth and Naomi from sorrow to triumphant joy by means of dramatic dialogues, suspense, extended word play, and intricate compositional symmetries. The book's verbal sophistication suggests that its author was a literate member of the upper classes—a court scribe, perhaps. At the same time, the folktale patterns and motifs provide evidence of the story's origins in the oral tales enjoyed and embellished by ordinary Israelites as they raised their families and worked the fields.

The dilemmas faced by two women left destitute and isolated by the deaths of their husbands and sons are the focus of the plot. The turning point in their fortunes occurs when Ruth takes advantage of an Israelite legal tradition that allowed foreigners, widows, and the poor to gather grain during the harvest (Lev 19.9–10; 23.22; Deut 24.19–22). In the fields of rural Israel, which demanded the labor of men and women alike, the socially mandated boundaries separating the worlds of men and women lost their rigidity. In that context Ruth encounters Boaz, her future husband. The themes of life and fertility evoked so richly by the harvest scenes carry over to the final chapter of the book when Naomi embraces the newborn son of Ruth and Boaz.

The book ends with a genealogy and the delightful revelation that Ruth of Moab is the great-grandmother of King David himself. Early Christian tradition concerning the ancestry of Jesus names only four women (three of them non-Israelite): Mary, Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth (Mt 1.5). Rabbinic tradition celebrates Ruth the Moabite as the model proselyte (convert). Christian Bibles place the book of Ruth between Judges and Samuel, reflecting the historical context of the story. In Jewish tradition, however, Ruth is the liturgical reading for the harvest festival of Shabuot/Weeks, reflecting the book's agricultural setting. Consequently, it is grouped with the other festival scrolls (the Megillot), including Esther, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations.

Although the story is set “in the days when the judges ruled” (ca. 1200–1025 BCE), the date of Ruth's composition remains unresolved. On the one hand, a date during the monarchy is suggested by the book's obvious interest in celebrating the ancestry of King David, whose descendants continued to rule until the Babylonian capture of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. Equally pronounced, however, are the story's frequent reminders that its heroine is not an Israelite. Indeed, the storyteller suggests that Boaz's gracious treatment of Ruth the Moabite is unusual as well as exemplary. This insistence on an inclusive attitude toward foreigners suggests to many scholars a date of composition in the fifth century BCE when the issue of intermarriage between Israelites and non-Israelites had become extremely controversial (see Neh 13.1; Ezra 9.1). Whatever its date, however, Ruth is not a polemical book. The values it proclaims—loyalty, love of family, and generosity toward strangers—are universal and timeless.

RUTH 1.1–1.13

1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. ²The 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. ³But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, ⁵both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

⁶ Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had considered his

people and given them food. ⁷So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. ⁸But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me." ⁹The LORD grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. ¹⁰They said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." ¹¹But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands?" ¹²Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, ¹³would you then wait until they were grown?

1.1–22: Naomi and Ruth. **1:** *When the judges ruled*, that is, in premonarchic Israel. Although *famine* is often God's mode of punishment (Lev 26.19–20; Deut 28.23–24; 1 Kings 17.1; Jer 24.10; Ezek 6.12), here, reminiscent of Abraham (Gen 12.10), Isaac (Gen. 26.1), and Jacob (Gen 45.6–28), it explains why an Israelite family would abandon its homeland. *In the land* implies a widespread, not merely local, famine. *Bethlehem*, 8 km (5 mi) south of Jerusalem, was the home of David's family (1 Sam 16.1–5). One meaning of the name Bethlehem ("house of bread/food") is ironic in view of the famine of ch 1, but also foreshadows the grain harvest of ch 2, and the parallel human harvest, the birth of an heir, in ch 4. Food and fertility are key themes in Ruth. *Moab* occupied the land east of the Dead Sea. Territorial disputes led to enmity between Israel and Moab (Deut 23.3–6). Israelites claimed the Moabites were related to them through Lot (Gen 19.37), nephew of Abraham, but many references to Moabites in the Bible are hostile or derogatory (Num 22–25; Deut 23.3–5; Isa 15–16; Jer 48). **2:** *Ephrathites*, people of Ephrathah (see 4.11), either another name for Bethlehem or a nearby settlement; it was a place associated with David's family (1 Sam 17.12). Several of the characters' names have thematic significance. Naomi ("Pleasantness") pointedly changes her name in v. 21. Although Elimelech's name ("My God is King") does not seem symbolically charged, the names of his sons, Mahlon ("Sickly") and Chilion ("Frail") foreshadow their early deaths (v. 5). **4:** The etymology of both Orpah and Ruth remains obscure. **6:** Only here and in 4.13 does the LORD actively intervene in the story. *Food* (Heb "lehem") supplies the impetus for Naomi's return home and is also an example of word play on the name Bethlehem. *Return* (Heb "shub"), although not always evident in English translation, this thematically important word occurs ten times in ch 1. See 4.15. **8–9:** The first of a series of blessings (2.4; 2.12; 2.19–20; 3.10; 4.11–12; 4.14) that punctuate the story at key moments. *Deal kindly* (or do "hesed"), an expression (repeated in 2.20 and 3.10) that describes, above all, God's covenant relationship with Israel (Ex 20.5–6; 34.6–7; Deut 5.9–10); both Orpah and Ruth have exemplified this ideal on a human scale. The designation, *mother's house*, rather than the usual "father's house" (Gen 38.11; Lev 22.13; etc.), may have been used in circumstances associated with marriage (Gen 24.28; Song 3.4; 8.2). Only remarriage would ensure a childless young widow's *security*. **12:** In a society that valued women primarily as childbearers, postmenopausal Naomi is *too old* to remarry. She faces destitution. **13:** Naomi's experience of *the hand of the LORD* has been destructive (see Ex 9.15; 1 Sam 5.9), but she will find that the LORD's hand also rescues (Deut 6.21) and

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Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the LORD has turned against me." ¹⁴Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

¹⁵ So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

¹⁶ But Ruth said,

"Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following
you!

Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.

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

May the LORD do thus and so to me,
and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!"

¹⁸ When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

¹⁹ So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. 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,

"Call me no longer Naomi,^a
call me Mara,^b

for the Almighty^c has dealt bitterly
with me.

²¹ I went away full,
but the LORD has brought me back
empty;
why call me Naomi
when the LORD has dealt harshly
with^d me,
and the Almighty^c has brought
calamity upon me?"

²² So Naomi returned together with Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who came back with her from the country of Moab. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

² Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side, a prominent rich man, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. ² And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favor." She said to her, "Go, my daughter." ³ So she went. She came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers. As it happened, she came to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. ⁴ Just then Boaz came from Bethlehem. He said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you." They

^a That is *Pleasant* ^b That is *Bitter* ^c Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai* ^d Or *has testified against*

brings joy (Eccl 2.24). ¹⁷: Swearing by *the LORD*, Ruth makes good her new religious allegiance. She affirms her new kinship ties by her promise to stay with Naomi even in *death*, an allusion to burial according to Israelite custom in Naomi's family tomb. ¹⁹: The *women* of Bethlehem, commenting collectively on the new arrivals (cf. 1 Sam 18.6-7) call attention to Naomi's sad fate; in 4.17 they will celebrate her good fortune. ²⁰: *Almighty* (Heb "Shaddai") is an ancient name for God (Gen 17.1; 28.3; 35.11; 43.14; 48.3; 49.25; Ex 6.3; Num 24.4; Ps 68.14) that reappeared in the postexilic era (Job 27.2; Ezek 1.24; Joel 1.15; Job 27.2). ²²: Describing Ruth as *the Moabite . . . from the country of Moab*, the narrative emphasizes her outsider status in Bethlehem. Notice of the *barley harvest* (April-May), ironic in view of Ruth and Naomi's poverty, nevertheless hints at a reversal of the motif of emptiness in 1.21 and propels the story into the next chapter.

2.1-23: Ruth and Boaz. With the appearance of Boaz, its third essential character, Ruth and Naomi's story can proceed. ¹: *Boaz*, whose name includes the word "strength" (see also 1 Kings 7.21-22; 2 Chr 3.15-17) belonged to the extended family of Naomi's deceased husband. The Hebrew phrase translated *prominent rich man* ("ish hayil") can have a range of meanings, all connoting admirable and distinguished qualities. In 3.11, Boaz will praise Ruth using the feminine form of the phrase. ²: On her own initiative, Ruth takes advantage of Israelite law, which required farmers to leave a part of their harvest for gleaning by the poor, the alien, and widows (Lev 19.9-10; 23.22; Deut 24.19-22). Ruth is a poor foreign widow, triply entitled to *glean* after the reapers have finished their work. ⁸: Harvesting required

answered, "The LORD bless you." ⁵Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "To whom does this young woman belong?" ⁶The servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the Moabite who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. ⁷She said, 'Please, let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers.' So she came, and she has been on her feet from early this morning until now, without resting even for a moment."^a

⁸ Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. ⁹Keep your eyes on the field that is being reaped, and follow behind them. I have ordered the young men not to bother you. If you get thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn." ¹⁰Then she fell prostrate, with her face to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner?" ¹¹But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. ¹²May the LORD reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!" ¹³Then she said, "May I

continue to find favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, even though I am not one of your servants."

¹⁴ At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, and eat some of this bread, and dip your morsel in the sour wine." So she sat beside the reapers, and he heaped up for her some parched grain. She ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. ¹⁵When she got up to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, "Let her glean even among the standing sheaves, and do not reproach her. ¹⁶You must also pull out some handfuls for her from the bundles, and leave them for her to glean, and do not rebuke her."

¹⁷ So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. ¹⁸She picked it up and came into the town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gleaned. Then she took out and gave her what was left over after she herself had been satisfied. ¹⁹Her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz." ²⁰Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed be he by the

^a Compare Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

the labor of both men and *women*. **10:** In taking *notice* of Ruth the *foreigner*, Boaz formally signals that he does not consider Ruth an outsider (against Deut 23.3-6; Neh 13.23-27). The narrative cleverly highlights Boaz's unexpected graciousness with word play on the similar-sounding Hebrew words for *take notice* ("nakar"), *I* ("anoki"), and *foreigner* ("nokriyah"). **11:** Ruth's willingness to leave her *father, mother, and native land* resembles that of Abraham (Gen 12.1). In Jewish tradition, Ruth became the model proselyte (convert). **12:** The reference to God's protective *wings* (Deut 32.11; Ps 17.8; 36.7; 57.1; 61.4; 91.4) is echoed in 3.9 when Ruth asks Boaz to "spread" his cloak (lit. "wing") over her. **14:** In the hot fields, *sour wine* was a refreshing drink (Num 6.3; but see Ps 69.21). *Parched grain* was a staple food (1 Sam 17.17; 25.18). **14-16:** From verse to verse, Boaz's generosity increases, far outstripping his legal obligations to Ruth. **17:** An *ephah* (approximately 22 l, or 2/3 bu) would be an impressive day's work (1 Sam 17.17; Judg 6.19). **19:** Ruth dramatically withholds Boaz's name until the end of her report to Naomi. **20:** Whether the blessing refers to the *kindness* (Heb "hesed," see 1.8-9n.) of Boaz or the LORD is ambiguous. As one of Naomi's husband's *nearest kin* (Heb "go'el") Boaz belongs to a kinship group with shared covenantal obligations to protect the honor and property of the family (Lev 25.25; Jer 32.6-15). **21:** By referring here to Ruth as *the Moabite*, the narrator stresses yet again the uniqueness of

LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!" Naomi also said to her, "The man is a relative of ours, one of our nearest kin."^a 21 Then Ruth the Moabite said, "He even said to me, 'Stay close by my servants, until they have finished all my harvest.' " 22 Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, "It is better, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, otherwise you might be bothered in another field." 23 So she stayed close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests; and she lived with her mother-in-law.

3 Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. 2 Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. 3 Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do." 5 She said to her, "All that you tell me I will do."

6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her. 7 When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and he was in a contented mood, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of

grain. Then she came stealthily and uncovered his feet, and lay down. 8 At midnight the man was startled, and turned over, and there, lying at his feet, was a woman! 9 He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant; spread your cloak over your servant, for you are next-of-kin."^a 10 He said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter; this last instance of your loyalty is better than the first; you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. 11 And now, my daughter, do not be afraid, I will do for you all that you ask, for all the assembly of my people know that you are a worthy woman. 12 But now, though it is true that I am a near kinsman, there is another kinsman more closely related than I. 13 Remain this night, and in the morning, if he will act as next-of-kin^a for you, good; let him do it. If he is not willing to act as next-of-kin^a for you, then, as the LORD lives, I will act as next-of-kin^a for you. Lie down until the morning."

14 So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before one person could recognize another; for he said, "It must not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." 15 Then he said, "Bring the cloak you are wearing and hold it out." So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley, and put it on her back; then he

^a Or one with the right to redeem

Boaz's inclusive treatment of a foreign outsider. 23: The end of the *wheat harvest* (early June), closing the chapter that began during the barley harvest, signals a new phase in the progress of Naomi and Ruth.

3.1-18: Naomi instructs, Ruth acts, and Boaz makes a promise. 4: In Hebrew, *feet* (cf. v. 7) can be a euphemism for genitals, thus giving a sexual overtone to Naomi's instructions and Ruth's subsequent actions. 7: Boaz's *contented mood* could indicate inebriation (1 Sam 25.36; Esth 1.10) or a general sense of well-being (1 Kings 8.66; Prov 15.15). 8: Death strikes at *midnight* (Ex 12.29; Job 34.20; Ps 91.5), which may partly explain why Boaz is so *startled* (the Heb conveys the idea of trembling with fear; Ex 19.16; 1 Sam 14.15; Isa 66.2); perhaps Boaz at first mistakes Ruth for a "lilitu" or night-demon (Isa 34.14). 9-13: Ruth's request that Boaz *spread* his *cloak* over her could be interpreted as a request that he marry her (Ezek 16.8), though it might also be a general request for protection and assistance. Her reference to him as *next-of-kin* has caused many to appeal to Deut 25.5-10 for an explanation. But Deut 25.5-10 requires only that a surviving brother marry the widow of his deceased sibling. Since neither Boaz nor the anonymous kinsman (4.1) is Ruth's brother-in-law, the legal requirement would not apply here. More likely, the author is teasing the reader to increase suspense. 11: *Worthy woman* (Heb "eshet hayil"), see 2.1n.; Prov 31.10. 17: Boaz's care that Ruth not return to Naomi *empty-handed* explicitly reverses Naomi's emptiness in 1.21. These are Ruth's last spoken words in the story.

went into the city. ¹⁶She came to her mother-in-law, who said, "How did things go with you," my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her, ¹⁷saying, "He gave me these six measures of barley, for he said, 'Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'" ¹⁸She replied, "Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today."

4 No sooner had Boaz gone up to the gate and sat down there than the next-of-kin,^b of whom Boaz had spoken, came passing by. So Boaz said, "Come over, friend; sit down here." And he went over and sat down. ²Then Boaz took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, "Sit down here"; so they sat down. ³He then said to the next-of-kin,^b "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our kinsman Elimelech. ⁴So I thought I would tell you of it, and say: Buy it in the presence of those sitting here, and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not, tell me, so that I may know; for there is no one prior to you to redeem it, and I come after you." So he said, "I will redeem it." ⁵Then Boaz said, "The day you acquire the field from

the hand of Naomi, you are also acquiring Ruth^c the Moabite, the widow of the dead man, to maintain the dead man's name on his inheritance." ⁶At this, the next-of-kin^b said, "I cannot redeem it for myself without damaging my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

⁷ Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one took off a sandal and gave it to the other; this was the manner of attesting in Israel. ⁸So when the next-of-kin^b said to Boaz, "Acquire it for yourself," he took off his sandal. ⁹Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have acquired from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. ¹⁰I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, to be my wife, to maintain the dead man's name on his inheritance, in order that the name of the dead may not be cut off from his kindred and from the gate of his native place; today you are witnesses." ¹¹Then all the people who

a Or "Who are you, *b* Or one with the right to redeem *c* OL Vg: Heb from the hand of Naomi and from Ruth

4.1–12: Boaz acquires Ruth as wife and redeems the family property. **1–2:** In Israel legal matters were settled at the city *gate* (Josh 20.4; Deut 21.19–20; 22.15; 25.7; Isa 29.21; Am 5.15) by *elders* who were leading and influential men of the community (Deut 19.12; 22.15; 25.7; 1 Sam 16.4; Ex 3.16; Josh 24.1). **3–4:** Boaz makes a play on the word for *kinsman* (Heb "go'el") when he says he wants to *tell* (Heb "galah") the kinsman about the land sale. The existence of this property has not been mentioned previously. **3:** A woman could not sell her dead husband's land on her own. Boaz is acting on behalf of Naomi. **5:** No known Israelite law obliges the kinsman to marry Ruth. Instead of the NRSV translation, following an alternative textual tradition one could translate "The day you acquire the field . . . I am acquiring Ruth . . . to maintain the dead man's name." Though under no legal obligation to do so, Boaz states his intention to produce an heir through Ruth for the lineage of Elimelech and Mahlon. **6:** Such an act would have financial consequences for the kinsman if he were to purchase the field, for a child born to Boaz and Ruth would be the legal heir to the property. Thus through his clever strategy Boaz ends up with both Ruth and the property. **7:** The *sandal* ritual and the reference to Tamar and Judah (4.12; Gen 38) recall the law in Deut 25.5–10, but the circumstances and procedure described here do not follow that law's prescriptions. Ceremonies to resolve family inheritance questions presumably involved similar symbolic gestures. **9:** Gen 23.17–20. **10:** *Acquired*, Boaz specifically uses the word for "buy." Boaz may be speaking formally in the context of a legal commercial transaction because Ruth's status is bound up with the question of Elimelech's land. **11–12:** The tripartite form of this blessing closely resembles Canaanite royal marriage blessings found at Ugarit. Mention of prominent forebears and glorification of the family

were at the gate, along with the elders, said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you produce children in Ephrathah and bestow a name in Bethlehem; ¹²and, through the children that the LORD will give you by this young woman, may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah."

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together, the LORD made her conceive, and she bore a son. ¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin;" and may his name be renowned in Israel! ¹⁵ He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher

of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him." ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. ¹⁷ The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

¹⁸ Now these are the descendants of Perez: Perez became the father of Hezron, ¹⁹ Hezron of Ram, Ram of Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab of Nahshon, Nahshon of Salmon, ²¹ Salmon of Boaz, Boaz of Obed, ²² Obed of Jesse, and Jesse of David.

a Or one with the right to redeem

name (2 Sam 7.9; Isa 9.6-7; see Gen 12.2) are motifs related to the theme of royal dynasties. From this point the narrative alludes in various ways to king David's ancestry, and David's name is the climax of the genealogy at the end of the book (4.22). *Rachel and Leah*, the wives of *Israel*/Jacob, had Bethlehem connections. Rachel died and was buried near there (Gen 35.18-20); Leah was the mother of *Judah* (Gen 29.35), David's ancestor, in whose tribal territory Bethlehem was located. *Ephrathah*, see 1.2n. The foreign widow *Tamar*, like Ruth, took matters into her own hands to secure both her own future and the *name* of her Israelite husband's family (Gen 38).

4.13-17: Naomi embraces Ruth's newborn son. Naomi and Ruth the Moabite, whose familial and social barrenness the story emphasized at its beginning (1.19-21), are now encircled and celebrated in the name of the LORD by Bethlehem's community of women. **13:** Following sexual intercourse (lit. "he went in to her"; see Gen 16.2; 30.3) with her husband Boaz, Ruth *conceives* with the LORD's assistance; see 1.6n. This detail and the subsequent blessing may allude to the birth of Isaac (Gen 21.1-7). **15:** A *restorer of life* (Heb "nephesh") may be human (Lam 1.16; Prov 25.13) or divine (Ps 19.7; 23.3). *Restorer*, using the verbal root meaning to return or turn back, intentionally echoes the key recurring word in ch 1 (see 1.6n.). *Seven* (like ten, cf. 1 Sam 1.8) is a conventional number to suggest a happy abundance of sons and, by comparison, Ruth's superior worth. **16:** As the child's *nurse*, Naomi is a guardian, not a wetnurse; she clasps him to her breast in affection (1 Kings 3.20-21). **17:** Seldom would non-family members, especially a group of unrelated women, *name* a newborn son. Uniquely in the Hebrew Bible, Ruth's child is also announced as being *born to a female* (Naomi). *Obed*, "servant," is a short form of a name like Obadiah, "servant of the LORD." Ruth is the great-grandmother of David and, in the New Testament, ancestress of Jesus (Mt 1.4-6; cf. Lk 3.32).

4.18-21: The ancestors of King David. 1 Chr 2.5-15. *These are the descendants*, cf. Gen 5; 11.10-30; 25.12-19; ch 36. It is unclear whether this genealogy belonged originally to the text of Ruth or was appended later.