

# Ruth and Naomi

Ruth 1:1 - 1:22

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There was a time when Israel didn't have kings to rule over them. But they had leaders to help them. This is a story about some things that happened during that time.

There wasn't enough food in the land of Judah. So a man went to live in the country of Moab for a while. He was from Bethlehem in Judah. His wife and two sons went with him.



The man's name was Elimelech. His wife's name was Naomi. The names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went to Moab and lived there.

Naomi's husband Elimelech died. So she was left with her two sons. They got married to women from Moab. One was named Orpah. The other was named Ruth. Naomi's family lived in Moab for about ten years. Then Mahlon and Kilion also died. So Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

While Naomi was in Moab, she heard that the Lord had helped his people. He had begun to provide food for them again. So Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to go from Moab back to her home. She left the place where she had been living. Her two daughters-in-law went with her. They started out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

Naomi spoke to her two daughters-in-law. "Both of you go back, Each of you go to your own mother's home. You were kind to your husbands, who have died. You have also been kind to me. So may the Lord be just as kind to you. May he help each of you find a secure place in the home of another husband. May he give you peace and rest."

Then she kissed them good-bye. They broke down and sobbed loudly. They said to her, "We'll go back to your people with you."

But Naomi said, "Go home, my daughters. Why would you want to come with me? Am I going to have any more sons who could become your husbands?"

"Go home, my daughters. I'm too old to have another husband. Suppose I thought there was still some hope for me. Suppose I got married to a man tonight. And later I had sons by him. Would you wait until they grew up? Would you stay single until you could get married to them? No, my daughters. My life is more bitter than yours. The Lord's powerful hand has been against me!"

When they heard that, they broke down and sobbed again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye. But Ruth held on to her.

"Look," said Naomi.

"Your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

But Ruth replied, "Don't try to make me leave you and go back. Where you go I'll go. Where you stay I'll stay. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. Where you die I'll die. And there my body will be buried. I won't let anything except death separate you from me. If I do, may the Lord punish me greatly."

Naomi realized that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her. So she stopped trying to make her go back.

The two women continued on their way. At last they arrived in Bethlehem. The whole town was stirred up because of them. The women asked,

"Can this possibly be Naomi?"

"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara. The Mighty One has made my life very bitter. I was full when I went away. But the Lord has brought me back empty. So why are you calling me Naomi? The Lord has made me suffer. The Mighty One has brought trouble on me."

So Naomi returned from Moab. Ruth, her daughter-in-law from Moab, came with her. They arrived in Bethlehem just when people were beginning to harvest the barley.

