

# Ruth

## Original Historical Setting

**Author:** Unknown

**Written:** Between 1000-500 B.C..

**Audience:** Israelites living sometime after David came to power

**Occasion:** To preserve a beautiful story of love and redemption that occurs in the family line of King David.

### **Timeline:**

~1380 B.C. – Joshua dies

~1370 B.C. -- Othneil

Sometime here -- Ruth

~1100 B.C. -- Samson

~1050 B.C. – Saul anointed king

## World Events that occur simultaneously

~1380 B.C. – Nefertiti is queen of Egypt

~1200 B.C. – Iron tools/weapons used in Israel

## Genre/Literary style

Compact narrative written in excellent Hebrew

## Features and Structure

- This beautiful love story is framed with a historical prologue of Naomi's being emptied through grief (1:1-5) and a forward looking epilogue of Naomi's being filled back up again (4:13-22). Between are four distinct scenes that tell the story of redemption:
- Ch 1 – Naomi's journey home  
Ch 2 – Ruth's gleaning  
Ch 3 – Ruth's visit to Boaz  
Ch 4 – Boaz's redemption of Ruth

## Key text(s)

1:16 – Your God will be my God

4:4 – I will redeem it.

## What to look for

- Note four cultural expressions that may appear exceptionally odd to modern, western readers:
  - 1) "Gleaning" was a kind of early welfare provision that allowed poor to reap the edges of the grain fields
  - 2) "Covering" was a symbol of Ruth's claiming Boaz's protection by urging him to cover her with his cloak
  - 3) "Exchanging Sandals" was the symbol of ratification of a real estate transaction
  - 4) "Levirate Marriage" was the Deuteronomic law (Deut 25:5-6) that guaranteed the ongoing family lines and decentralized the control of farmland.

## Interesting facts

- In the Hebrew Scriptures the Book of Ruth was placed in the third section—the Writings or *Kethuvim* (the other two sections are the Law and the Prophets). Among the Writings were Five Scrolls of which Ruth was one. Each of these Five Scrolls became associated with one of the Israelite festivals and was read publicly during that festival. Ruth was identified with *Shavuoth*, "Weeks" or "Pentecost," which celebrated the end of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest..
- Oprah Winfrey was named for Orpah, the daughter-in-law who chose not to stay with Naomi and Ruth. The letters "r" and "p" were accidentally and continually switched in Oprah's name so it stuck.
- The mother of Boaz was Rahab, probably the prostitute who helped the spies in Jericho. That means that Rahab is the great, great grandmother of King David as well as an ancestor of Jesus.

## Memory Verse: Ruth 1:16