



**Introduction to the Book of Ruth
(Ruth 1:1-5)**

from *The Road to Character* by David Brooks

- “Occasionally, even today, you come across certain people who . . . are calm, settled, and rooted. They are not blown off course by storms. They don’t crumble in adversity. Their minds are consistent, and their hearts are dependable. . .
- They radiate a sort of moral joy. They answer softly when challenged harshly. They are silent when unfairly abused. They are dignified when others try to humiliate them, restrained when others try to provoke them. But they get things done. They perform acts of sacrificial service with the same modest everyday spirit they would display if they were just getting the groceries. They are not thinking about what impressive work they are doing. . . . They just recognize what needs doing and they do it.”

from *The Road to Character* by David Brooks

- “After you’ve known them for a while it occurs to you that you’ve never heard them boast, you’ve never seen them self-righteous or doggedly certain. They aren’t dropping little hints of their own distinctiveness and accomplishments . . .
- They are people who have built a strong inner character, who have achieved a certain depth.”

“Moral Exemplar”

- A person who serves as a role model

Background Information

Geography

- Geographical: two journeys between Bethlehem and Moab; approximately 50-100 miles one-way



Ruth

DAN
Sorek R.

BENJAMIN

Jordan R.

Jebus
(Jerusalem)

Bethlehem

Mt. Nebo

Heshbon

AMMON

Medeba

Gath

Libnah

Tekoa

Keilah

JUDAH

REUBEN

Jahaz

Lachish

Hebron

Dibon

Aroer

En-gedi

Salt Sea

Arnon R.

Anab

Debir

Maon

Gerar R.

Jattir

Arad

Beth-palet

MOAB

Ar

SIMEON

Beersheba

Hormah

Lisan

Kir-moab

Besor R.

Scale of Miles



© 2020 MANNA
All Rights Reserved
www.biblemaps.com



Numeira



Background Information: Geography and Timeline

- Geographical: journeys between Bethlehem and Moab; approximately 50-100 miles one-way
- Date: approximately 1200-1100 B.C.

Background Information: Social and Religious Situation

- A relatively small community at Bethlehem
- Strong sense of cultural identity as “Jewish”
- But the cultural identity excluded those not Israelite by birth
- Legal matters were decided by a group of recognized leaders
- Lack of religious figures and references in Bethlehem imply the adherence to religious principles was not central to daily life and thought in the community:
- “It seems likely that the author is implying that the people knew of God, but didn’t necessarily know God himself” (Mary J. Evans, *Judges and Ruth*)

“Exposition” of the overall narrative

Ruth 1:1-5

- 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.
- 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.
- But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons.
- These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years.
- Both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

In the time of the judges

- Book of Judges: 400 years of rule by “judges” (military/civic leaders) appointed by God to lead the Israelites after Moses and Joshua
- Approximately 1400-1000 B.C.
- A time of falling away from following God’s covenant with Abraham and Moses and growing decadence throughout the country

Characters

- Original family:
- Elimelech -- Naomi
- Mahlon (married a Moabite, Ruth)
- Chilion (married a Moabite, Orpah)

- Characters in the main story:
- Naomi
- Ruth
- Boaz
- The community (women; elders; community as a whole)

Spoiler Alert:

There are problems in Bethlehem

- The community fails to fulfill its covenant responsibilities to care for the stranger living in their midst:
- ³³ “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. ³⁴ You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 19:33-34)
- The community fails to treat the marginalized (e.g. women, widows, foreigners) and the poor with respect, compassion, and provisions (food, etc.)

Where is God in the text?

- Although there are general references to God and “blessings” in the Book of Ruth, there is little in the way of specific details of who God is and what are his directives/instructions
- Nevertheless, God’s presence, sovereignty, and providence are evident in how events work together for good in the text

A Major Theme

- **Everyday people and their actions matter to God:**
- “God is concerned about the lives of ordinary people, including women. It is not just leaders who are to be seen as significant” (Mary J. Evans, *Judges and Ruth*)

The Book of Ruth by The Bible Project

- Play video (length 7:12 minutes)
- <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/ruth/>

Let Us Pray

