

Language: English

Book: Ruth

Introduction to Ruth

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of Ruth

1. How Ruth came to Bethlehem with Naomi (1:1-22)
2. Boaz helps Ruth as she gleans (2:1-23)
3. Boaz and Ruth at the threshing floor (3:1-18)
4. How Ruth became the wife of Boaz (4:1-16)
5. Obed born to Ruth and Boaz; the genealogy of David (4:13-22)

What is the Book of Ruth about?

This book is about a non-Israelite woman named Ruth. It tells how she came to join the people of Yahweh. The book also explains how Ruth became an ancestor of King David.

How should the title of this book be translated?

This book traditionally has the title "Ruth" because she is the main person in it. Translators can use a title such as "The Book about Ruth."

When did the events in the Book of Ruth occur?

The story of Ruth is set during the time when there were "judges" in Israel. These were men and women whom God chose to help the Israelites defeat their enemies. These leaders usually continued to help the people by deciding disputes among them. They also helped them make important decisions. Many of these leaders served all the people of Israel, but some of them may have served only certain tribes.

Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

Why does Scripture include a book about a woman from the foreign land of Moab?

In a period when Israel was often unfaithful to Yahweh, a woman from Moab shows great faith in him. The Israelites' frequent lack of faith in Yahweh is contrasted with the faith of this woman from a foreign land. (See: faithful)

What important marriage custom is found in the Book of Ruth?

Israelites practiced what is called "levirate marriage." This was a custom for the closest male relative to provide for a childless widow by marrying her. Any children born to them were to be regarded as children of the dead man. They did this so that the dead man would still have descendants. If the closest relative did not marry the woman, another relative could.

What was a "kinsman-redeemer"?

A person's close relative or relatives were expected to act as "kinsmen-redeemers" (2:20 ULB) for him or her. They were responsible to provide for a relative in need. They were also responsible to practice "levirate marriage." In the Book of Ruth, Boaz is one such kinsman-redeemer.

What was "gleaning" in the Book of Ruth?

Poor people were allowed to follow after the men who harvested a field. These "gleaners" picked up sheaves of grain that the harvesters missed or dropped. In this way, poor people were able to find some food. Ruth became a gleaner in a field belonging to Boaz.

What is covenant faithfulness or covenant loyalty?

A covenant is a formal, binding agreement between two parties that one or both parties must fulfill. Covenant faithfulness or covenant loyalty is when a person does what they said they would do, according to a covenant they had with someone else. God promised that he would love and be faithful to the Israelites. The Israelites were to do the same toward him and toward each other.

The Book of Ruth shows that what kinsmen-redeemers do for their relatives are part of Israel's duties in God's covenant with them. The story of Boaz, Ruth and Naomi gives good examples to all of Israel of the good effects of covenant faithfulness. (See: covenantfaith)

What function did city gates have in the ancient Near East?

City gates in the time of Boaz were natural meeting places for the city elders. Elders were honored men who decided business matters and legal matters together. The city walls were large, perhaps two to three meters in width. Therefore the gateway opening provided a shady area for public meetings. For this reason, Boaz and the other elders sat in the gateway.

Some English Bible versions speak of Boaz sitting "at" the city gate. It may be best for translators to make clear that Boaz sat "in" the city gateway.

Part 3: Important Translation Issues

How does the Book of Ruth change from one topic to another topic?

The Book of Ruth often changes to new topics or new parts of the story. The ULB uses various words to indicate these changes, such as "so," "then," and "now." Translators should use the ways most natural in their own languages to signal these changes.

Ruth

Chapter 1

¹ It happened in the days when the judges ruled that there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem of Judah went to live as a foreigner in the country of Moab with his wife and his two sons. ² The name of the man was Elimelek, and the name of his wife was Naomi. The names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion, who were Ephrathites of Bethlehem of Judah. They arrived at the country of Moab and lived there. ³ Then Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left alone with her two sons. ⁴ These sons took wives from the women of Moab; the name of one was Orpah, and the name of the other was Ruth. They lived there for about ten years. ⁵ Then both Mahlon and Kilion died, and the woman was left without her two sons and without her husband. ⁶ Then she arose with her daughters-in-law and returned from the country of Moab because she had heard in the country of Moab that Yahweh had provided for his people's needs by giving them food. ⁷ So she left the place where she had been with her two daughters-in-law, and they walked down the road to return to the land of Judah. ⁸ Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return, each of you, to your mother's house. May Yahweh show kindness toward you, as you have shown kindness toward the dead and toward me. ⁹ May Yahweh grant you that you find rest, each of you in the house of another husband." Then she kissed them, and they raised their voices and cried. ¹⁰ They said to her, "No! We will return with you to your people." ¹¹ But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters! Why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb for you, so that they may become your husbands? ¹² Turn back, my daughters, go your own way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said, 'I hope I get a husband tonight,' and then give birth to sons, ¹³ would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you choose not to marry a husband? No, my daughters! It is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of Yahweh has gone out against me." ¹⁴ Then her daughters-in-law lifted up their voices and cried again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law farewell, but Ruth held on to her.

¹⁵ Naomi said, "Listen, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Return with your sister-in-law." ¹⁶ But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back from following you, for where you go, I will go; where you stay, I will stay; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.

¹⁷ Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May Yahweh punish me, and even more, if

anything but death ever separates us." ¹⁸ When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped arguing with her.

¹⁹ So the two traveled until they came to the town of Bethlehem. It happened that when they arrived in Bethlehem, the entire town was very excited about them. The women said, "Is this Naomi?" ²⁰ But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi. Call me Bitter, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. ²¹ I went out full, but Yahweh has brought me back again empty. So why do you call me Naomi, seeing that Yahweh has testified against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?" ²² So Naomi and Ruth the Moabite woman, her daughter-in-law, returned from the country of Moab. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Ruth 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

"It happened in the days when the judges ruled"

The events of this book occur during the period of Judges. The book is concurrent with the book of Judges. To understand the historical context of the book, the translator may wish to review the book of Judges.

Special concepts in this chapter

Women without a husband or children

In the ancient Near East, if a woman lacked a husband or sons, she was considered to be in a dire circumstance. She would not have been able to provide for herself. This is why Naomi told her daughters to remarry.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Contrast

The actions of Ruth the Moabite are intended to contrast with the actions of Naomi the Jew. Ruth shows great faith in Naomi's god, while Naomi does not trust in Yahweh. (See: faith and trust)

Ruth 1:1

It happened in the days when the judges ruled that

"It happened that" was a common way of beginning to tell about something that happened. Alternate translation: "In the days when the judges ruled" or "In the days when the judges ruled, this is what happened."

in the days when the judges ruled

"during the time when judges led and governed Israel"

in the land

This refers to the land of Israel. Alternate translation: "in the land of Israel"

a certain man

"a man." This is a common way of introducing a character into a story.

Ruth 1:2

Ephrathites of Bethlehem of Judah

They were people from the tribe of Ephraim who settled at Bethlehem in the region of Judea.

Ruth 1:3

she was left alone with her two sons

"Naomi had only her two sons with her"

Ruth 1:4

took wives

"married women." This is an idiom for marrying women. They did not take women who were already married.

from the women of Moab

Naomi's sons married women who were from the tribe of Moab. The Moabites worshiped other gods.

the name of one ... the name of the other

"the name of one woman ... the name of the other woman"

ten years

Ten years after Elimelek and Naomi came to the country of Moab, their sons Mahlon and Kilion died.

Ruth 1:5

General Information:

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Ruth 1:6

she arose with her daughters-in-law and returned

The word "arose" here means that Naomi began to act, and her daughters-in-law saw her, so they began to act also. Alternate translation: "she started to return, and her daughters-in-law also returned"

she had heard in the country of Moab

"while Naomi was living in Moab she heard." It is implied that the news came from Israel. Alternate translation: "she heard from Israel while in the country of Moab"

Yahweh

This is the name of God that he revealed to his people in the Old Testament. See the translationWord page about Yahweh concerning how to translate this.

had provided for his people's needs

God saw their need and provided good harvests for them.

daughters-in-law

the women who married Naomi's sons

Ruth 1:7

they walked down the road

"they walked along the road." To walk down a road is an expression for walking away.

Ruth 1:8

daughters-in-law

"sons' wives" or "sons' widows"

each of you

Naomi was talking to two people, so languages that have a dual form of "you" would use that throughout her talk.

your mother's house

"to the home of each of your mothers"

shown kindness

"demonstrated that you are loyal"

kindness

"kindness" includes the ideas of love, kindness, and faithfulness.

toward the dead

"to your husbands, who died." Naomi was referring to her two sons that died.

Ruth 1:9

grant you

"give you" or "allow you to have"

you find rest

"Rest" here includes security in marriage.

in the house of another husband

with their new husbands, not someone else's husband. This refers to both a physical house that belongs to the husband, and to the protection from shame by being married.

they raised their voices and cried

To raise the voice is an idiom for speaking loudly. The daughters cried out loud or wept bitterly.

Ruth 1:10

We will return

When Orpah and Ruth said "we," they were referring to themselves and not Naomi. So languages that have inclusive and exclusive "we" would use the exclusive form here.

with you

Here "you" is the singular form referring to Naomi.

Ruth 1:11

Why will you go with me?

This is a rhetorical question. Alternate translation: "It does not make sense for you to go with me." or "You should not go with me."

Do I still have sons in my womb for you, so that they may become your husbands?

Naomi uses this question to say she cannot have other sons for them to marry. Alternate translation: "Obviously it is not possible for me to have any more sons who could become your husbands."

Ruth 1:12

too old to have a husband

The reason a husband would be important can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "too old to marry again and bear more children"

give birth to sons

"bear children" or "deliver baby boys"

Ruth 1:13

would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you choose not to marry a husband?

These are rhetorical questions, which do not expect an answer. Alternate translation: "you would not wait until they were grown up so that you could marry them. You would choose to marry a husband now."

It is exceedingly bitter to me

Bitterness is a metaphor for grief, and what grieves her can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "It greatly grieves me that you have no husbands"

the hand of Yahweh has gone out against me

The word "hand" refers to Yahweh's power or influence. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has caused terrible things to happen to me"

Ruth 1:14

lifted up their voices and cried

This means that they cried out loud or wept bitterly.

Ruth held on to her

"Ruth clung to her." Alternate translation: "Ruth refused to leave her" or "Ruth would not leave her"

Ruth 1:15

Listen, your sister-in-law

"Pay attention, because what I am about to say is both true and important, your sister-in-law"

your sister-in-law

"the wife of your husband's brother" or "Orpah"

her gods

Before Orpah and Ruth married Naomi's sons, they worshiped the gods of Moab. During their marriage, they began to worship Naomi's God.

Ruth 1:16

where you stay

"where you live"

your people will be my people

Ruth is referring to Naomi's people, the Israelites. Alternate translation: "I will consider the people of your country as being my own people" or "I will consider your relatives as my own relatives"

Ruth 1:17

Where you die, I will die

This refers to Ruth's desire to spend the rest of her life living in the same place and town as Naomi.

May Yahweh punish me, and even more, if

This refers to Ruth asking God to punish her if she does not do what she said like the English idiom "God forbid, if."

Ruth 1:18

she stopped arguing with her

"Naomi stopped arguing with Ruth"

Ruth 1:19

It happened

"It came about." This is used here to mark a new part of the story with new people.

the entire town

The "town" refer to the people who live there. Alternate translation: "everyone in the town"

Is this Naomi?

Since it has been many years since Naomi lived in Bethlehem and no longer has her husband and two sons, it is likely the women were expressing doubt as to if this woman was actually Naomi. Treat this as a real question, not a rhetorical question.

Ruth 1:20

Do not call me Naomi

The name "Naomi" means "my delight." Since Naomi lost her husband and sons, she no longer feels her life matches her name.

Bitter

This is a translation of the meaning of the name. It is also often translated according to its sound as "Mara."

Ruth 1:21

I went out full, but Yahweh has brought me back again empty

When Naomi left Bethlehem, her husband and two sons were living, and she was happy. Naomi blames Yahweh for the death of her husband and sons, saying that he has caused her to return to Bethlehem without them, and now she is bitter and unhappy.

testified against me

Another possible meaning is "judged me guilty."

has afflicted me

"has brought calamity on me" or "has brought tragedy to me"

Ruth 1:22

So Naomi and Ruth

This begins a summary statement. English marks this by the word "so." Determine how your language marks concluding or summary statements and do the same.

at the beginning of the barley harvest

The phrase "the barley harvest" can be translated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "when the farmers were just beginning to harvest barley"

Chapter 2

¹ Now Naomi had a relative of her husband, a man of great wealth of the clan of Elimelek, and his name was Boaz. ² Ruth, the Moabite woman, said to Naomi, "Now let me go and glean what remains among the ears of grain in the fields. I will follow anyone in whose eyes I will find favor." So Naomi said to her, "Go, my daughter." ³ Ruth went and gleaned what remained in the fields after they had harvested it. She happened to come to the portion of the fields belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelek. ⁴ Behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May Yahweh be with you." They answered him, "May Yahweh bless you." ⁵ Then Boaz said to his servant who was supervising the reapers, "What man does this young woman belong to?" ⁶ The servant supervising the reapers answered and said, "It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the land of Moab." ⁷ She said to me, 'Please let me glean and gather among the bundles of cut grain after the reapers.' So she came here and has continued from the morning until now, except that she rested a little in the house." ^[1]

⁸ Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Are you not listening to me, my daughter? Do not go and glean in another field; do not leave my field. Instead, stay here and work with my young female workers." ⁹ Keep your eyes only on the field where the men are reaping and follow behind the other women. Have I not instructed the men not to touch you? Whenever you are thirsty, you may go to the waterpots and drink the water that the young men have drawn." ¹⁰ Then she fell on her face before Boaz and bowed to the ground. She said to him, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you should be concerned about me, a foreigner?"

¹¹ Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been reported to me, all that you have done since the death of your husband. You have left your father, mother, and the land of your birth to follow your mother-in-law and to come to a people you do not know." ¹² May Yahweh reward you for your deed. May you receive full payment from Yahweh, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have found refuge." ¹³ Then she said, "Let me find favor in your eyes, my master, for you have comforted me, and you have spoken kindly to me, though I am not one of your female servants."

¹⁴ At mealtime Boaz said to Ruth, "Come here, and eat some of the bread, and dip your morsel in the wine vinegar." She sat beside the reapers, and he offered her some roasted grain. She ate until she was satisfied and left the rest of it. ¹⁵ As she got up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the bundles of cut grain, and do not humiliate her." ¹⁶ Also pull out for her some ears of grain 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 the ears of grain that she had gleaned, and the grain was about an ephah of barley. ¹⁸ She lifted it up and went into the city. Then her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. Ruth also brought out the roasted grain left from her meal and gave it to her.

¹⁹ Her mother-in-law said to her, "Where have you gleaned today? Where did you go to work? May the man who was concerned about you be blessed." Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the man who owned the field where she had worked. She said, "The name of the man who owns the field where I worked today is Boaz." ²⁰ Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by Yahweh, who has not left off his loyalty to the living and to the dead." Naomi said to her, "That man is near of kin to us, one of our kinsman-redeemers." ²¹ Ruth the Moabite woman said, "Indeed, he said to me, 'You should keep close to my young men until they have finished all my harvest.'" ²² Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young female workers, so that they do not harm you in another field." ²³ So she stayed close to Boaz's female workers in order to glean to the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. She lived with her mother-in-law.

Footnotes

2:7 ^[1]Some modern translations read

Ruth 2 General Notes

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"Do not go and glean in another field"

Boaz said this because he could not guarantee their safety in another person's field. It is assumed that not everyone was as gracious and obedient to the law of Moses as Boaz.

Ruth 2:1

Now Naomi had a relative of her husband

This phrase introduces new information before the story continues. Your language may have a way to introduce new information.

a man of great wealth

"a prominent, wealthy man." This means that Boaz was prosperous and well known in his community, with a good reputation.

Ruth 2:2

Ruth, the Moabite woman

Here the story resumes. You need to see how your language restarts a story after a break.

the Moabite woman

This is another way of saying the woman was from the country or tribe of Moab.

Now

"Please." This word shows that Ruth was making a polite request.

glean what remains among the ears of grain

"gather kernels of grain left behind by the harvesters" or "pick up kernels of grain left behind by the harvesters"

the ears

"the heads" or "the stalks." The "ears" are the parts of a grain plant that contain the grain.

in whose eyes I will find favor

The phrase "found favor" is an idiom which means to be approved of by someone. Ruth speaks of gaining someone's favor as gaining permission or approval. Also, the eyes represent seeing, and seeing represents thoughts and judgement. Alternate translation: "who will grant me permission to glean"

daughter

Ruth was caring for Naomi as if she were her own mother. Make sure it is possible in your language to use this word for someone who is not an actual daughter.

Ruth 2:3

She happened to come

Ruth was not aware that the field she picked to glean in belonged to Naomi's relative Boaz.

Ruth 2:4

Behold, Boaz

The word "behold" alerts us to the important event of Boaz arriving at the field. Your language may

also have a specific way of introducing important events or characters.

came from Bethlehem

The fields were an unspecified distance outside of Bethlehem.

bless you

"give you good things" or "make you happy"

Ruth 2:5

What man does this young woman belong to?

Possible meanings are 1) Boaz was asking about Ruth's husband or 2) Boaz was asking about Ruth's parents or current guardians.

was supervising

"was in charge of" or "was managing"

Ruth 2:6

General Information:

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Ruth 2:7

glean and gather

You may need to make explicit that Ruth would be gathering grain. Alternate translation: "glean and gather grain"

the house

"the hut" or "the shelter." This was a temporary shelter or garden hut in the field that provided shade from the sun.

Ruth 2:8

Are you not listening to me, my daughter

This rhetorical question can be reworded as a command. Alternate translation: "Listen to me, my daughter" or "Note well what I am telling you, my daughter"

my daughter

This was a kind way of addressing a younger woman. Ruth was not the actual daughter of Boaz, so make sure the translation of this does not make it sound like she was.

Ruth 2:9

Keep your eyes only on the field

The eyes represent watching something or paying attention to something. Alternate translation: "Watch only the field" or "Pay attention only to the field"

Have I not instructed the men ... you?

Boaz used this question to emphasize what he had already done to help Ruth. Alternate translation: "I have given the men strict instructions ... you."

men ... the other women

"young male workers ... young female workers."
The word "men" is used three times to refer to the young men who are harvesting in the field. Some languages can say this using one word, and they have a different word that means young women workers.

not to touch you

Possible meanings are 1) the men were not to harm Ruth or 2) the men were not to stop her from gleaning in his field.

the water that the young men have drawn

To draw water means to pull up water from a well or to take it out of a storage vessel.

young men

You may need to make explicit that these were Boaz's servants, as do many versions. Alternate translation: "servants"

Ruth 2:10

she fell on her face before Boaz and bowed to the ground

This hendiadys describes an act of respect and reverence. She was showing honor to Boaz out of gratefulness for what he had done for her by kneeling or lying on the ground and putting her face on the ground. It was also a posture of humility. Alternate translation: "she bowed before Boaz with her face to the ground" (See: and [[rc://en/ta/man/jit/translate-symaction]])

bowed to the ground

Some modern translations read, "lay on the ground."

Why have I found such favor ... a foreigner?

Ruth is asking a real question.

foreigner

Ruth had pledged her loyalty to the God of Israel in private, but she was known publicly as "the Moabitess."

Ruth 2:11

It has been reported to me

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "People have reported to me" or "People have told me"

to come to a people

Boaz is referring to Ruth coming to dwell with Naomi in a village and community, a country, and religion she did not know.

Ruth 2:12

reward you

"repay you" or "pay you back"

for your deed

This is an act of faith, choosing to live with Naomi in Bethlehem and trusting Naomi's God.

May you receive full payment from Yahweh

This is a poetic expression that is very similar to the previous sentence. Alternate translation: "May Yahweh give back to you even more than you have given"

under whose wings you have found refuge

Boaz uses the picture of a mother bird gathering her chicks under her wings to protect them, in order to describe God's protection for those who trust in him. Alternate translation: "in whose safe care you have placed yourself"

Ruth 2:13

Let me find favor in your eyes

Here "find favor" is an idiom that means be approved of or that he is pleased with her. Here "eyes" are a metonym for sight, and sight is a metaphor representing his evaluation. Alternate translation: "Please accept me"

I am not one of your female servants

Possible meanings are 1) Ruth was not one of Boaz's female servants or 2) Ruth did not think her marriage to Naomi's son granted her any privilege in Bethlehem.

Ruth 2:14

At mealtime

This refers to the noontime meal.

dip your morsel in the wine vinegar

This was a simple meal eaten in the field. People would sit on the ground around a cloth that had a bowl of wine vinegar on it and plates of broken bread. They would dip their bread in the vinegar bowl to wet it and add flavor before they ate it.

wine vinegar

a sauce that bread was dipped in. The Israelites further fermented some of their wine to make vinegar.

Ruth 2:15

As she got up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men

In the context of the commands, it is likely that Ruth was far enough away not to hear Boaz's instructions. Alternate translation: "And when Ruth got up to glean, Boaz privately told his young men"

As she got up

"As she stood up"

even among the bundles

Here "even" denotes "above and beyond what one normally does." Boaz instructs his workers to let

Ruth glean around the bundles of grain. People who were gleaning were normally forbidden from working that close to the harvested grain.

Ruth 2:16

pull out for her some ears of grain from the bundles
"take some stalks of grain out of the bundles and leave them for her" or "leave behind stalks of grain for her to collect"

do not rebuke her
"do not cause her shame" or "do not dishonor her"

Ruth 2:17

beat out
She separated the edible part of the grain from the hull and stalk, which is thrown away.

ears of grain
This refers to the eatable part of the grain.

about an ephah of barley
An ephah is a unit of measurement equal to about 22 liters. Alternate translation: "about 22 liters of barley"

Ruth 2:18

She lifted it up and went into the city
It is implied that Ruth carried the grain home.

her mother-in-law saw
"Naomi saw"

Ruth 2:19

Where have you gleaned today? Where did you go to work?
Naomi said almost the same thing in two different ways to show that she was very interested in knowing what had happened to Ruth that day.

Ruth 2:20

he be blessed by Yahweh
Naomi is asking God to reward Boaz for his kindness to Ruth and herself.

who has not left off his loyalty
"who has continued to be loyal." Possible meanings are 1) Boaz remembered his obligations to Naomi as a family member or 2) Naomi is referring to Yahweh, who was acting through Boaz or 3) Yahweh

has continued to be faithful to the living and the dead.

to the living
"to the people who are still living." Naomi and Ruth were the "living."

the dead
Naomi's husband and sons were the "dead." This can be stated differently to remove the nominal adjective "the dead." Alternate translation: "the people who have already died"

near of kin to us, one of our kinsman-redeemers
The second phrase repeats and expands the first. This is a Hebrew style of emphasis.

kinsman-redeemers
A kinsman-redeemer was a close male relative who could rescue a childless widow from financial ruin by marrying her and having a child with her. He would also reacquire the land his relatives had lost due to poverty and redeem family members who had sold themselves into slavery.

Ruth 2:21

Indeed, he said to me
"He even said to me." This indicates that what follows is the most important part of Boaz's words to Ruth.

keep close to my young men
Boaz was referring to the physical protection his men can provide her.

Ruth 2:22

go out with
"work with"

they do not harm you in another field
You may need to make explicit that Naomi was afraid men would harm Ruth or to translate in passive form. Alternate translation: "the men in another field do not harm you" or "you are not harmed in some other field"

Ruth 2:23

she stayed close
Ruth worked in Boaz's fields with his workers during the day, so she would be safe.

She lived with her mother-in-law
Ruth went to Naomi's home to sleep at night.

Chapter 3

¹ Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek a place for you to rest, so that things may go well for you?" ² Now Boaz, the man whose young female workers you have been with, is he not our kinsman? Look, he will be winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. ³ Therefore, wash yourself, anoint yourself, put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor. But do not make yourself known to the man until he finishes eating and drinking. ⁴ But when he lies down, take notice of the place where he lies down so that later you can go to him, uncover his feet, and lie down there. Then he will explain to you what to do." ⁵ Ruth said to Naomi, "I will do everything you say."

⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor, and she followed the instructions her mother-in-law had given her. ⁷ When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the pile of grain. Then she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down. ⁸ It came about at midnight that the man was startled. He turned over, and right there a woman was lying at his feet! ⁹ He said, "Who are you?" She answered, "I am Ruth, your female servant. Spread your cloak over your female servant, for you are a near kinsman." ¹⁰ Boaz said, "My daughter, may you be blessed by Yahweh. You have made your latest kindness better than the first, because you have not gone after any of the young men, whether poor or rich. ¹¹ Now, my daughter, do not be afraid! I will do for you all that you say, because all the city of my people knows that you are a worthy woman. ¹² It is true that I am a kinsman, but there is a kinsman nearer than I. ¹³ Stay here tonight, and in the morning, if he will perform for you the duty of a kinsman, good, let him do the kinsman's duty. But if he will not do the duty of a kinsman for you, then I will do it, by the life of Yahweh. Lie down until the morning."

¹⁴ So she lay at his feet until the morning. But she rose up before anyone could recognize another person. For Boaz had said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." ¹⁵ Then Boaz said, "Bring your shawl and hold it out." When she did so, he measured six large measures of barley into it and put the load on her. Then he went into the city. ¹⁶ When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did you do, my daughter?" Then Ruth told her all that the man had done for her. ¹⁷ She said, "These six measures of barley are what he gave me, for he said, 'Do not go empty to your mother-in-law.'" ¹⁸ Then Naomi said, "Stay here, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out, for the man will not rest until he has finished this thing today."

Footnotes

3:3 ^[1] The copies of the ancient Hebrew text have,

Ruth 3 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Boaz's integrity

Boaz showed great integrity in this chapter by not having sexual relations with Ruth. He was also concerned with how people would see Ruth if they caught her in this position. Boaz's character is important for this story.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"So that things may go well for you"

Naomi attempted to make Ruth desirable to Boaz so that he would want to marry her. Even though she was a Gentile by birth, Boaz could marry her because she was, by marriage, Naomi's daughter.

Ruth 3:1

mother-in-law

Naomi is the mother of Ruth's dead husband.

My daughter

Ruth became Naomi's daughter by marrying her son and further by her actions in caring for Naomi after returning to Bethlehem.

should I not seek a place for you to rest ... for you?

Naomi uses this question to tell Ruth what she planned to do. Alternate translation: "I must look for a place for you to rest ... for you." or "I must find a husband to care for you ... for you."

a place for you to rest

Possible meanings are 1) literally in finding a house for her to live in or 2) figuratively in finding a husband to care for her. Naomi probably had both senses in mind.

Ruth 3:2

female workers you have been with

The translation can make explicit that she was working in the fields with these female workers. Alternate translation: "female workers you have been with in the fields"

is he not our kinsman?

Naomi probably used this question to remind Ruth of something she had already told her. Alternate translation: "he is our relative."

Look

This term indicates that the following statement is very important.

winnowing

To winnow means to separate grain from the unwanted chaff by tossing both the grain and chaff into the air, allowing the wind to blow the chaff away.

Ruth 3:3

anoint yourself

This is probably a reference to rubbing sweet-smelling oil on oneself, much as women put on perfume today.

go down to the threshing floor

This refers to leaving the city and heading to the threshing area.

Ruth 3:4

uncover his feet

This means to remove the cloak or blanket covering his feet so that they would be exposed to the cold.

lie down there

"lie down at his feet"

Then he will explain to you what to do

The specific custom of that time is unclear, but this is usually understood as a culturally acceptable way for a woman to tell a man that she was willing to marry him. Boaz would understand the custom and accept or reject her offer.

Then he will

"When he wakes up, he will"

Ruth 3:5

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Ruth 3:6

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Ruth 3:7

his heart was merry

Here Boaz is referred to by his heart. It does not imply Boaz was overly drunk. Alternate translation: "he was satisfied" or "he was in a good mood"

she came softly

"she sneaked in" or "she came in quietly so no one would hear her"

uncovered his feet

"removed his blanket from his feet"

lay down

"lay down at his feet"

Ruth 3:8

It came about

This phrase is used here to mark an important event in the story. If your language has a way for doing this, you could consider using it here.

at midnight

"in the middle of the night"

was startled

It is not clear what startled Boaz. Perhaps he suddenly felt the cold air on his feet.

He turned over

He looked to see what startled him.

a woman was lying at his feet

The woman was Ruth, but Boaz could not recognize her in the darkness.

Ruth 3:9

your female servant

Ruth spoke with humility to Boaz.

Spread your cloak over your female servant

This was a cultural idiom for marriage. Alternate translation: "Marry me"

near kinsman

a close relative with special responsibilities toward their extended family

Ruth 3:10

You have made your latest kindness better than the first
"You have shown me even more kindness now than you did before"

your latest kindness

This refers to Ruth asking Boaz to marry her. By marrying Naomi's relative, Ruth would provide for Naomi and demonstrate great kindness to Naomi.

because you have not gone after

"you have not pursued marriage with." Ruth could have ignored Naomi's need and looked for a husband for herself outside of Naomi's relatives.

Ruth 3:11

my daughter

Boaz used this expression as a sign of respect toward Ruth as a younger woman.

all the city of my people knows

Bethlehem is a town, or small city, that belonged to the tribe that Boaz belonged to. Here "city" represents the people who live in that city. Alternate translation: "all the people in the city know" or "everyone in town knows"

Ruth 3:12

kinsman nearer than I

It was the duty of the closest male relative to help the widow.

Ruth 3:13

if he will perform for you the duty of a kinsman

Boaz is referring to the expectation that the closest male relative of Ruth's dead husband would marry her and help carry on his family name.

by the life of Yahweh

"as surely as Yahweh lives." This was a common Hebrew vow.

Ruth 3:14

she lay at his feet

Ruth slept at Boaz' feet. They did not have sex.

before anyone could recognize another person

This time of day can be spoken of in terms of darkness. Alternate translation: "while it was still dark"

Ruth 3:15

shawl

a piece of cloth worn over the shoulders

six large measures of barley

The actual amount is not stated. It was enough to be considered generous, yet small enough for Ruth to carry alone. Some think it was about 30 kilograms.

put the load on her

The amount of grain was so great that Ruth needed help picking it up to carry it.

Then he went into the city

Most ancient copies have "he went," but some have "she went." There are English versions with both. The better choice is "he went."

Ruth 3:16

How did you do, my daughter?

What Ruth meant by this question can be made more clear. Alternate translation: "What happened, my daughter?" or "How did Boaz act toward you?"

all that the man had done

"all that Boaz had done"

Ruth 3:17

Do not go empty

"Do not go empty-handed" or "Do not go with nothing" or "Be sure to take something"

Ruth 3:18

finished this thing

This refers to the decision about who will buy Naomi's property and marry Ruth.

Chapter 4

¹ Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there. Soon, the near kinsman of whom Boaz had spoken came by. Boaz said to him, "My friend, come over and sit down here." The man came over and sat down. ² Then Boaz took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. ³ Boaz said to the near kinsman, "Naomi, who has returned from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that was our brother Elimelek's. ⁴ I thought to uncover your ears and say to you, 'Buy it in the presence of those who are sitting here, and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you wish to redeem it, redeem it. But if you do not wish to redeem it, then tell me, so that I may know, for there is no one to redeem it besides you, and I am after you." Then the other man said, "I will redeem it." ⁵ Then Boaz said, "On the day that you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also take Ruth the Moabite woman, the widow of a dead man, in order to raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance." ⁶ Then the near kinsman said, "I cannot redeem it for myself without destroying my own inheritance. You take my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

⁷ Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and exchange of goods. To confirm all things, a man took off his sandal and gave it to his neighbor; this was the manner of making legal agreements in Israel. ⁸ So the near kinsman said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself," and he took off his sandal. ⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and to all the people, "You are witnesses today that I have bought all that was Elimelek's and all that was Kilion's and Mahlon's from the hand of Naomi. ¹⁰ Also Ruth the Moabite woman, the wife of Mahlon, I have acquired to be my wife, in order that I might raise up the name of the dead man on his inheritance, so that his name will not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his place. Today you are witnesses!" ¹¹ All the people who were in the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May Yahweh make the woman who has come into your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built up the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem. ¹² May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring that Yahweh will give you with this young woman."

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. He went to her, and Yahweh enabled her to conceive, and she bore a son. ¹⁴ The women said to Naomi, "May Yahweh be blessed, who has not left you today without a near kinsman, this baby. May his name be famous in Israel. ¹⁵ May he be for you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him." ¹⁶ Naomi took the child, laid him in her bosom, and took care of him. 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, who became the father of David.

¹⁸ Now these were the descendants of Perez: Perez became the father of Hezron,

¹⁹ Hezron became the father of Ram, Ram became the father of Amminadab,

²⁰ Amminadab became the father of Nahshon, Nahshon became the father of Salmon,

²¹ Salmon became the father of Boaz, Boaz became the father of Obed,

²² Obed became the father of Jesse, and Jesse became the father of David.

Ruth 4 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

King David

Despite being a Moabitess, Ruth became an ancestor of David. David was Israel's greatest king. It is shocking a Gentile would become a part of such an important lineage. She had great faith in Yahweh. (See: and faith)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"You must also take Ruth the Moabitess"

Because Naomi had no son, her daughter-in-law Ruth needed to be provided for. Therefore, the relative who wanted to use her land had to also help Ruth to have a son who would come to provide for her.

"This was the custom in former times"

This is a comment made by the writer of the text. He functions as a narrator in this instance. It indicates that there was a considerable period of time between the events that occurred and the time they were written down.

Ruth 4:1

the gate

"the gate of the city" or "the gate of Bethlehem."
This was the main entrance to the walled town of Bethlehem. There was an open area by the gate that was used as a meeting place to discuss community matters.

the near kinsman

This was the closest living relative to Elimelek.

came over

stopped going to where he had planned to go and went toward Boaz

Ruth 4:2

elders of the city

"leaders of the city"

Ruth 4:3

Naomi ... is selling the parcel of land

It was the responsibility of the kinsman to buy back his relative's land and to care for his family. In this case, it meant the man must buy Naomi's land, marry Ruth, and care for Naomi.

Ruth 4:4

uncover your ears

"inform you"

in the presence of

This would make the transaction legal and binding.

redeem it

This meant to buy the land to keep it within their family.

I am after you

Boaz was the next kinsman in line to redeem the land.

Ruth 4:5

On the day that you buy ... you must also

Boaz uses this expression to inform his relative of the additional responsibility he will have if he buys the land.

from the hand of Naomi

Here the word "hand" represents Naomi, who owns the field. Alternate translation: "from Naomi"

you must also take Ruth

"you must also marry Ruth"

Ruth ... the widow of a dead man

"Ruth ... the widow of Elimelek's son"

to raise up the name of the dead

"that she may have a son to inherit the property and carry on the name of her dead husband"

Ruth 4:6

destroying my own inheritance

He would have to give some of his own wealth to the children that Ruth might bear.

You take my right of redemption for yourself

"You redeem it yourself" or "You yourself redeem it instead of me"

Ruth 4:7

Now this was the custom

The writer of the book explains of the custom of exchange during the time of Ruth.

in former times

"in earlier times." This implies that the customs had changed from when the story took place until the book was written.

his neighbor

This refers to the person with whom he was making the agreement. In this situation the near kinsman gave Boaz his shoe.

Ruth 4:8

General Information:

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Ruth 4:9

to the elders and to all the people

This refers to all the people who were present at the meeting place, not to everyone in the town.

all that was Elimelek's and all that was Mahlon's

This refers to all the land and possessions of Naomi's dead husband and sons.

from the hand of Naomi

The hand of Naomi represents Naomi. She was responsible for the money exchange. Alternate translation: "from Naomi"

Ruth 4:10

in order that I might raise up the name of the dead man on his inheritance

The first son that Ruth bore would be legally considered Mahlon's son and would inherit the land that Boaz bought from Naomi. Alternate translation: "so that I might give her a son who will inherit the dead man's property"

so that his name will not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his place

Being forgotten is spoken of as if one's name were being cut off from a list of people who had lived earlier. Alternate translation: "so that he will not be forgotten by his brothers' descendants and the people of this town"

the gate of his place

The gate of the town is where important legal decisions were made, such as decisions about who owns a piece of land.

Ruth 4:11

people who were in the gate

"people who were meeting together near the gate"

come into your house

This has literal and figurative meaning. As Ruth marries Boaz, she will move into his house. House can also refer to becoming part of Boaz's family by being his wife.

like Rachel and Leah

These were the two wives of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel.

built up the house of Israel

"bore many children who became the nation of Israel"

may you prosper in Ephrathah

Ephrathah is the name of the clan to which Boaz belonged in Bethlehem.

Ruth 4:12

May your house be like

God abundantly blessed Judah through his son Perez. The people were asking God to bless Boaz in a similar way through Ruth's children.

Tamar bore to Judah

Tamar was also a widow. Judah fathered a son with her, which continued the family name.

through the offspring that Yahweh will give you

Yahweh would give Boaz children through Ruth.

Ruth 4:13

Boaz took Ruth

"Boaz married Ruth" or "Boaz took Ruth as a wife"

He went to her

This is a polite way of saying that he had sexual relations. Alternate translation: "He had sexual relations with her" or "He lay with her"

Ruth 4:14

who has not left you today without a near kinsman

This phrase can be expressed positively. Alternate translation: "who has provided you today with a near kinsman"

May his name be famous

This refers to the reputation and character of Naomi's grandson.

Ruth 4:15

a restorer of life

This phrase probably refers to how Naomi will again experience joy and hope in her life as a result of having a new grandson. Alternate translation: "one who brings joy to you again" or "one who will make you feel young again"

a nourisher of your old age

"he will take care of you when you become old"

better to you than seven sons

"Seven" was the Hebrew number of completeness. Naomi's sons both died before they produced any offspring, but Ruth bore a grandson to Naomi by Boaz. Alternate translation: "better to you than any son"

Ruth 4:16

Naomi took the child

This refers to Naomi holding the child. Make sure it does not sound like she took him away from Ruth.

laid him in her bosom

"held him close against her chest." This is a statement of love and affection for the child.

bosom

chest, shoulders, and arms

Ruth 4:17

A son has been born to Naomi

"The child is like a son to Naomi." It was understood that the child was Naomi's grandson, not her physical son.

father of David

"father of King David." Though "king" is not stated, it was clear to the original audience that David was King David.

Ruth 4:18

the descendants of Perez

"the successive descendants." Because it was mentioned earlier that Perez was the son of Judah, the writer continues listing the family line that came from Perez.

Ruth 4:19

Hezron ... Ram

Ruth 4:20

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Ruth 4:21

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Ruth 4:22

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