

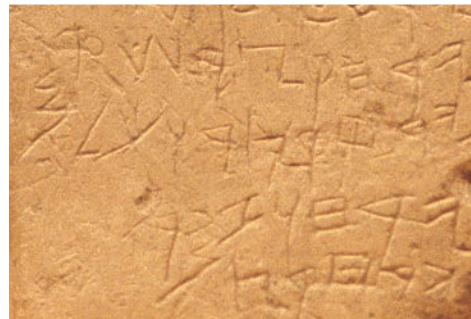


*A Visual Exploration of the  
People, Places, and Things of Scripture*

# HOLY LAND ILLUSTRATED BIBLE









## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| About the Bible                   | 4 |
| Bible Features                    | 4 |
| About the CSB                     | 6 |
| Available Editions                | 7 |
| The Biblical Illustrator Magazine | 8 |
| A Sample from Ruth                | 9 |





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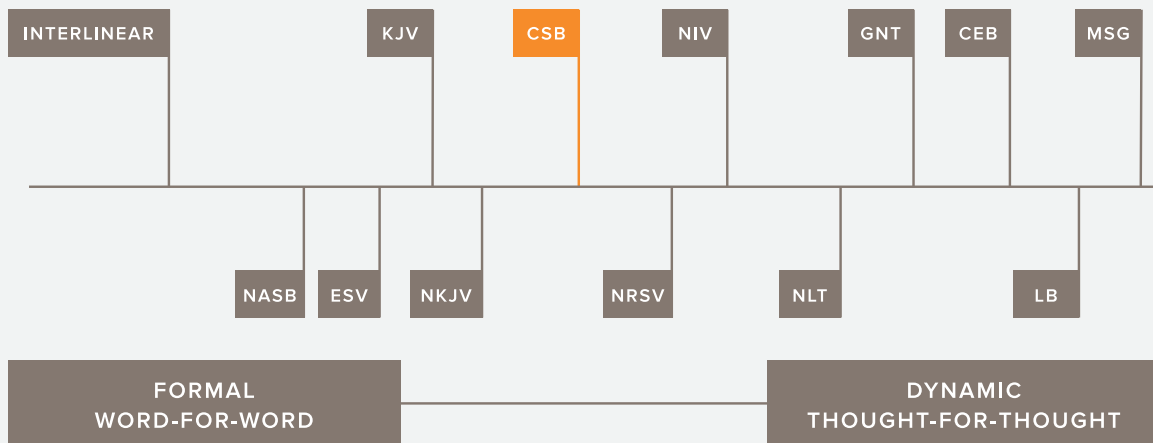
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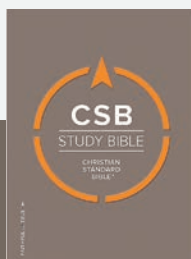
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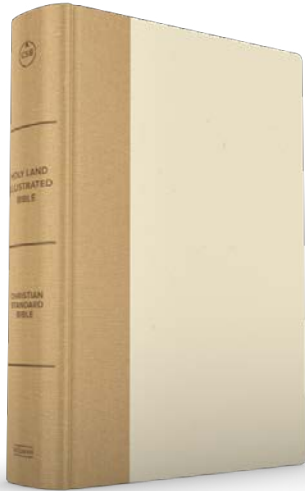
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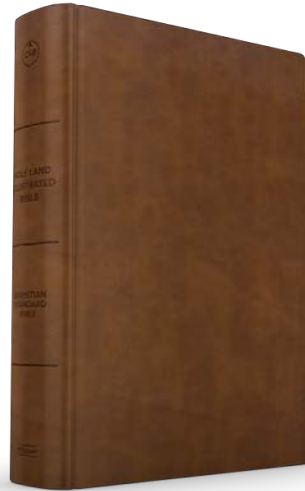
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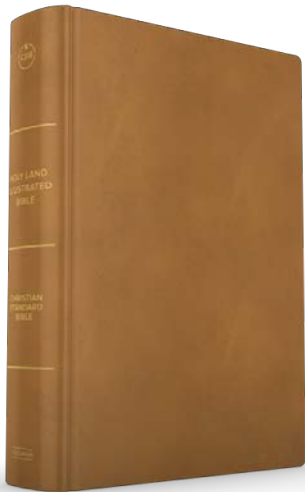
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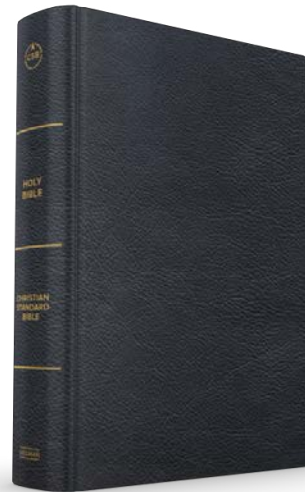
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# RUTH



Ruins of ancient Dibon, which became the capital of Moab. In 582 BC, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city. In the distance is the modern city of Dhiban.



## INTRODUCTION TO

# RUTH

### Circumstances of Writing

The Talmud attributes the authorship of Ruth to Samuel, but the book itself offers no hint of the identity of its author. We can only speculate about who might have written the book of Ruth, and its provenance and date must be deduced from the internal evidence—language and style, historical allusions, and themes. The family records at the end and the explanation of archaic customs requires a date during or later than the reign of King David (1011–971 BC), though it could have been written as late as after the exile, when the issue of the inclusion of Gentiles once again became pressing.

The book of Ruth is set “during the time of the judges” (1:1), a period of social and religious disorder when “everyone did whatever seemed right to him” (Jdg 17:6). Historically, this era bridged the time between the conquest of the land under Joshua and the rise of King David, whose family records form the conclusion of the book. It is not clear exactly when during the time of the judges the book belongs, but it opens with a famine

in the land, which may have been the result of Israel’s idolatry.

### Contribution to the Bible

Ruth’s covenantal faithfulness to her mother-in-law, Naomi, and her God provided a model showing that those who were not ethnic Israelites could be incorporated into the people of God through faith. If Moabites who joined themselves to the Lord could be accepted, there was hope for other Gentiles as well (Is 56:3–7). The book also effectively answered questions that may have been raised over the legitimacy of the Davidic line, given his Moabite roots.

### Structure

The book of Ruth is a delightful short story with a classical plot that moves from crisis to complication to resolution. The narrator draws the reader into the minds of the characters (successively Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz), inviting us to identify with their personal anxieties and joys and in the end to celebrate the movement from emptiness and frustration to fulfillment and joy.



## NAOMI'S FAMILY IN MOAB

**1** During the time<sup>a</sup> of the judges, there was a family in the land. A man left Bethlehem in Judah with his wife and two sons to stay in the territory of Moab for a while. <sup>2</sup> The man's name was Elimelech, and his wife's name was Naomi. <sup>8</sup> The names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They entered the fields of Moab and settled there. <sup>3</sup> Naomi's husband, Elimelech, died, and she was left with her two sons. <sup>4</sup> Her sons took Moabite women as their wives: one was named Orpah and the second was named Ruth. After they lived in Moab about ten years, <sup>5</sup> both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was left without her two children and without her husband.

## RUTH'S LOYALTY TO NAOMI

<sup>6</sup> She and her daughters-in-law set out to return from the territory of Moab, because she had heard in Moab that the LORD had paid attention to his people's need by providing them food. <sup>7</sup> She left the place where she had been living, accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, and traveled along the road leading back to the land of Judah.

<sup>8</sup> Naomi said to them, "Each of you go back to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you as you have shown to the dead and to me. <sup>9</sup> May the LORD grant each of you rest in the house of a new husband." She kissed them, and they wept loudly.

<sup>10</sup> They said to her, "We insist on returning with you to your people."

<sup>11</sup> But Naomi replied, "Return home, my daughters. Why do you want to go with me? Am I able to have any more sons who could become your husbands?"

<sup>12</sup> Return home, my daughters. Go on, for I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me to have a husband tonight and to bear sons, <sup>13</sup> would you be willing to wait for them to grow up? Would you restrain yourselves from remarriage?<sup>c</sup> No, my daughters, my life is much too bitter for you to share,<sup>d</sup> because the LORD's hand has turned against me." <sup>14</sup> Again they wept loudly, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. <sup>15</sup> Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Follow your sister-in-law."

<sup>16</sup> But Ruth replied:

Don't plead with me to abandon you  
or to return and not follow you.  
For wherever you go, I will go,  
and wherever you live, I will live;  
your people will be my people,  
and your God will be my God.

<sup>17</sup> Where you die, I will die,  
and there I will be buried.

May the LORD punish me,  
and do so severely,  
if anything but death separates you and me.

<sup>18</sup> When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped talking to her.

<sup>19</sup> The two of them traveled until they came to Bethlehem. When they entered Bethlehem, the whole town was excited about their arrival<sup>e</sup> and the local women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?"

<sup>20</sup> "Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara,"<sup>f</sup> she answered, "for the Almighty has made me very bitter. <sup>21</sup> I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has opposed<sup>g</sup> me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

<sup>22</sup> So Naomi came back from the territory of Moab with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabitess. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

## RUTH AND BOAZ MEET

**2** Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side. He was a prominent man of noble character from Elimelech's family. His name was Boaz.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth the Moabitess asked Naomi, "Will you let me go into the fields and gather fallen grain behind someone with whom I find favor?"

Naomi answered her, "Go ahead, my daughter."

<sup>3</sup> So Ruth left and entered the field to gather grain behind the harvesters. She happened to be in the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was from Elimelech's family.

<sup>4</sup> Later, when Boaz arrived from Bethlehem, he said to the harvesters, "The LORD be with you."

"The LORD bless you," they replied.

<sup>5</sup> Boaz asked his servant who was in charge of the harvesters, "Whose young woman is this?"

<sup>6</sup> The servant answered, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the territory of Moab. <sup>7</sup> She asked, 'Will you let me gather fallen grain among the bundles behind the harvesters?' She came and has been on her feet since early morning, except that she rested a little in the shelter."<sup>h</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Don't go and gather grain in another field, and don't leave this one, but stay here close to my female servants. <sup>9</sup> See which field they are harvesting, and follow them. Haven't I ordered the young men not to

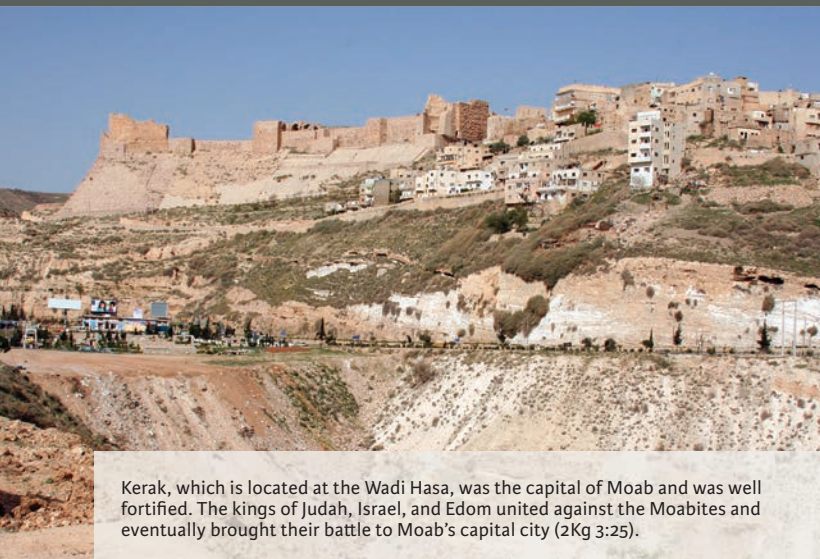
<sup>a</sup> 1:1 Lit *In the days of the judging*    <sup>b</sup> 1:2 = Pleasant; also in v. 20

<sup>c</sup> 1:13 Lit *marrying a man*    <sup>d</sup> 1:13 Lit *daughters, for more bitter to me than you*    <sup>e</sup> 1:19 Lit *excited because of them*    <sup>f</sup> 1:20 = Bitter; see v. 2

<sup>g</sup> 1:21 LXX, Syr, Vg read *has humiliated*    <sup>h</sup> 2:7 LXX reads *morning, and until evening she has not rested in the field a little*; Vg reads *morning until now and she did not return to the house*; Hb uncertain

<sup>i</sup> 2:8 Lit "Haven't you heard, my daughter?"





Kerak, which is located at the Wadi Hasa, was the capital of Moab and was well fortified. The kings of Judah, Israel, and Edom united against the Moabites and eventually brought their battle to Moab's capital city (2Kg 3:25).

the Dead Sea. They would have next climbed the rugged Jordan Valley to “the plains of Moab” where the Israelites camped and received final instructions before crossing the Jordan River into the promised land (Nm 36:13). As Elimelech and his family looked eastward across the rolling pastureland to the desert, they would have seen Mount Nebo, from which God showed Moses the promised land and then buried him in a nearby valley (Dt 34:1–6). Because of the width and the depth of the Arnon Gorge, they probably would have crossed the Arnon as it came out of the desert. When they settled in “the field of Moab,” they would have found rich soil with ideal climate and abundant rains in the fall and spring to grow grain and to raise sheep and cattle (Nm 32:1; 2Kg 3:4). They would also have found cisterns, which collected and held rainwater for use in the dry seasons.

Elimelech and his family entered Moab at a time of peaceful relations between the Moabites and the Israelites. But, in their mutual histories, Moab and Israel were often at war with each other, usually over who would possess the land north of the Arnon River.

During the time of the divided kingdom, Omri, who ruled northern

**M**oab was located on the high, fertile plateau immediately east of Judah. It was thus bordered on the west by the lower Jordan River and the Dead Sea. The Arabian Desert formed the eastern border and ended Moab's agricultural zone. At the times of its largest territorial possession, Moab's northern border stretched beyond Heshbon to the hills of Gilead; for most of the time, though, its northern border was the Arnon River (Jdg 11:18). The Zered River, the southern border, separated Moab from Edom.

Interpreters divided Moab into three districts: the area north of the Arnon River, the area south of the Arnon, and the Jordan Valley. From the Jordan River and the Dead Sea, the land moved upward to the east to the plateau that stood three thousand feet above sea level. Both the Zered and the Arnon Rivers flowed from east to west into the Dead Sea. The Arnon Gorge, which at points is seventeen hundred feet deep and two miles wide, discouraged armies from invading Moab proper. The “King's Highway” (Nm 20:17) ran north and south through Moab's heart. However, both the Edomites and the Amorites refused to allow Israel to travel that way (20:17; 21:22). The

“road to the Wilderness of Moab” (Dt 2:8), which the Israelites followed, ran north and south between the agricultural zone and the desert.

## JOURNEY TO MOAB

“The territory of Moab” (Ru 1:1), literally “the field of Moab,” probably refers to the area south of the Arnon River. In their journey, Elimelech and his family would have traveled north from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. Then they would have turned east down to Jericho to cross the Jordan River at its southern tip before it entered



Aerial view of the Wadi Hasa, through which the Zered River flows before emptying into the southern end of the Dead Sea. The Zered River served as the boundary between Moab and its southern neighbor, Edom.

Israel, conquered Moab and forced Moab to pay annual tribute of as much as “one hundred thousand lambs and the wool of one hundred thousand rams” (2Kg 3:4). Around 850 BC, however, Moab’s king Mesha broke Israel’s yoke and retook the land north of the Arnon River. To celebrate his victory, he erected the Moabite stone in Dibon, the city just north of the Arnon in which he was raised. In particular, King Mesha praised the Moabite god Chemosh for delivering the northern kingdom into his hands and for enabling him to fulfill his lifelong dream of Moab once again possessing the land north of the Arnon.

### RELIGION OF MOAB

The Bible refers to the Moabites as “the people of Chemosh” (Nm 21:29; Jr 48:46). The Moabite king was thought to be Chemosh’s son, and the people were thought to be the god’s other sons and daughters. The people believed their national god, Chemosh, ruled through the king and princes. His priests presided over temples dedicated to him; the people sought his forgiveness and favor through such extreme measures as child sacrifice (2Kg 3:27).



The Moabites also worshiped the Baal gods. Indeed, the Israelites joined themselves to these gods with the daughters of Moab at Baal-peor (Nm 25:1–3). These gods supposedly controlled productivity of the land. Through acts of so-called “sacred prostitution,”

worshippers sought to encourage the Baal gods to mate in the heavens in order to increase crop production as well as animal and human reproduction on the earth. The Moabites probably mingled worship of the Baals with that of Chemosh. ❖

The Arnon River valley bisected Moab. During the time of the tribal allotments, the Arnon, which flows westward into the Dead Sea (seen right, on the horizon), separated Moab from the territory of Reuben.





touch you? When you are thirsty, go and drink from the jars the young men have filled."

<sup>10</sup> She fell facedown, bowed to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor with you, so that you notice me, although I am a foreigner?"

<sup>11</sup> Boaz answered her, "Everything you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband's death has been fully reported to me: how you left your father and mother and your native land, and how you came to a people you didn't previously know. <sup>12</sup> May the LORD reward you for what you have done, and may you receive a full reward from the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."

<sup>13</sup> "My lord," she said, "I have found favor with you, for you have comforted and encouraged your servant, although I am not like one of your female servants."

<sup>14</sup> At mealtime Boaz told her, "Come over here and have some bread and dip it in the vinegar sauce." So she sat beside the harvesters, and he offered her roasted grain. She ate and was satisfied and had some left over.

<sup>15</sup> When she got up to gather grain, Boaz ordered his young men, "Let her even gather grain among the bundles, and don't humiliate her. <sup>16</sup> Pull out some stalks from the bundles for her and leave them for her to gather. Don't rebuke her." <sup>17</sup> So Ruth gathered grain in the field until evening. She beat out what she had gathered, and it was about twenty-six quarts<sup>a</sup> of barley. <sup>18</sup> She picked up the grain and went into the town, where her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She brought out what she had left over from her meal and gave it to her.

<sup>19</sup> Her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you gather barley today, and where did you work? May the LORD bless the man who noticed you."

Ruth told her mother-in-law whom she had worked with and said, "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz."

<sup>20</sup> Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May the LORD bless him because he has not abandoned his kindness to the living or the dead." Naomi continued, "The man is a close relative. He is one of our family redeemers."

<sup>21</sup> Ruth the Moabitess said, "He also told me, 'Stay with my young men until they have finished all of my harvest.'"

<sup>22</sup> So Naomi said to her daughter-in-law Ruth, "My daughter, it is good for you to work<sup>b</sup> with his female servants, so that nothing will happen to you in another field." <sup>23</sup> Ruth stayed close to Boaz's female servants and gathered grain until the barley and the wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with<sup>c</sup> her mother-in-law.

## RUTH'S APPEAL TO BOAZ

**3** Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, shouldn't I find rest for you, so that you will be taken care of? <sup>2</sup> Now isn't Boaz our relative? Haven't you been working with his female servants? This evening he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. <sup>3</sup> Wash, put on perfumed oil, and wear your best clothes. Go down to the threshing floor, but don't let the man know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. <sup>4</sup> When he lies down, notice the place where he's lying, go in and uncover his feet, and lie down. Then he will explain to you what you should do."

<sup>5</sup> So Ruth said to her, "I will do everything you say."<sup>d</sup> <sup>6</sup> She went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law had charged her to do. <sup>7</sup> After Boaz ate, drank, and was in good spirits, he went to lie down at the end of the pile of barley, and she came secretly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

<sup>8</sup> At midnight, Boaz was startled, turned over, and there lying at his feet was a woman! <sup>9</sup> So he asked, "Who are you?"

"I am Ruth, your servant," she replied. "Take me under your wing,<sup>e</sup> for you are a family redeemer."

<sup>10</sup> Then he said, "May the LORD bless you, my daughter. You have shown more kindness now than before,<sup>f</sup> because you have not pursued younger men, whether rich or poor. <sup>11</sup> Now don't be afraid, my daughter. I will do for you whatever you say,<sup>g</sup> since all the people in my town<sup>h</sup> know that you are a woman of noble character. <sup>12</sup> Yes, it is true that I am a family redeemer, but there is a redeemer closer than I am. <sup>13</sup> Stay here tonight, and in the morning, if he wants to redeem you, that's good. Let him redeem you. But if he doesn't want to redeem you, as the LORD lives, I will. Now lie down until morning."

<sup>14</sup> So she lay down at his feet until morning but got up while it was still dark.<sup>i</sup> Then Boaz said, "Don't let it be known that a<sup>j</sup> woman came to the threshing floor." <sup>15</sup> And he told Ruth, "Bring the shawl you're wearing and hold it out." When she held it out, he shoveled six measures of barley into her shawl, and she<sup>k</sup> went into the town.

<sup>16</sup> She went to her mother-in-law, Naomi, who asked her, "What happened, <sup>l</sup> my daughter?"

Then Ruth told her everything the man had done for her. <sup>17</sup> She said, "He gave me these six measures

<sup>a</sup> 2:17 Lit *about an ephah*    <sup>b</sup> 2:22 Lit *go out*    <sup>c</sup> 2:23 Some Hb mss, Vg read *she returned to*    <sup>d</sup> 3:5 Alt Hb tradition reads *say to me*

<sup>e</sup> 3:9 Or "*Spread the edge of your garment*;" lit "*Spread the wing of your garment*;" Ru 2:12    <sup>f</sup> 3:10 Lit *kindness at the last than at the first*

<sup>g</sup> 3:11 Some Hb mss, Orig, Syr, Tg, Vg read *say to me*    <sup>h</sup> 3:11 Lit *all the gate of my people*    <sup>i</sup> 3:14 Lit *up before a man could recognize his companion*    <sup>j</sup> 3:14 LXX; MT reads *the*    <sup>k</sup> 3:15 Some Hb mss, Aramaic, Syr, Vg; other Hb mss read *he*    <sup>l</sup> 3:16 Lit "*Who are you*

English Bibles often translate the Hebrew noun *go'el* as “kinsman” (“family redeemer” in Ru 2:20; 3:9,12; 4:1,14). The word is based on the verb *ga'al* and describes a person who has a familial responsibility. This kinsman’s obligation was to protect the family’s and clan’s interests.<sup>1</sup> Three specific areas of human responsibility are apparent from the use of *go'el* in the Old Testament, those related to property, descendants, and justice. The fourth use of *go'el* is with reference to God as the Redeemer.<sup>2</sup>

## PROPERTY

Redemption of property is an important part of Hebrew Law as depicted in stipulations related to the Jubilee Year and to animal sacrifice. The Hebrews were not to sell permanently their family or tribal land (Lv 25:23). The basic concept of the Jubilee Year was the “general return of lands and real property to the original owners or their heirs.”<sup>3</sup> Rather than simply focusing on the Jubilee Year, an examination of the kinsman’s role proves enlightening. If a brother (family member) sold property, the kinsman was to redeem it (v. 25). If the brother

was too poor to care for himself, the kinsman was to “support him” (vv. 35–36). When the brother sold himself into slavery to a foreigner, he was to be redeemed by his brother, his uncle, his cousin, a near kinsman, or, he could even redeem himself—by paying the redemption price (vv. 47–55).

## DESCENDANTS

The story of Ruth describes something akin to levirate marriage (see Dt 25:5–10), which emphasized the perpetuation of a bloodline. In this type of marriage, the brother of a deceased man was to marry the widow to perpetuate his brother’s name. Though levirate marriage<sup>4</sup> might not properly be part of the kinsman redeemer obligation,<sup>5</sup> it is clearly connected with the Ruth and Boaz narrative.

Boaz was a relative (2:1; Hb *moda`*) of Ruth through her marriage to one of Elimelech’s sons. Boaz did not become the *go'el*, the kinsman redeemer, until the end of the story, when he accepted responsibility not only for redeeming the land but also for redeeming Ruth. This marriage was in accord with

the concept of levirate marriage, where a kinsman would marry a widow of a relative to ensure the continuance of the relative’s name (bloodline) in Israel.

## JUSTICE

Limiting the role of the kinsman redeemer to the picture presented in the book of Ruth misses many details about his responsibilities. The most unusual kinsman obligation is related to justice. In Numbers 35:19, the *go'el* is “the avenger of blood” (*go'el ha-dam*). The book of Numbers clearly describes a situation in which a relative is killed and the kinsman’s resultant duty is to see that justice was carried out. ❖

<sup>1</sup> Jan de Waard and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Ruth* (London: United Bible Societies, 1973), 43.

<sup>2</sup> “[*ga'al*]” (redeem) in *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. William L. Holladay (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 52. <sup>3</sup> Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 175. <sup>4</sup> Solomon Schechter and Joseph Jacobs, “Levirate Marriage” in *JE*, [www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/9859-levirate-marriage](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/9859-levirate-marriage).

<sup>5</sup> R. Laird Harris, “[*ga'al*]” (redeem) in *TWOT*, 1:144–45.



Field of Boaz, near Bethlehem.



**S**ealing a deal” in the ancient Near East frequently involved a highly structured ritual that included carefully scripted spoken words, written documentation, the exchange of possessions, or even the shedding of blood. The end result of these commitments was that a change took place—of status, ownership, or obligation.

## **FORMAL COMMITMENTS: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE**

*Commitments between People Groups*—Old Testament scholars have given their primary attention to treaties coming out of the Hittite Empire of the fifteenth to thirteenth centuries BC. Hittite kings drew up these treaties and imposed them on people groups they defeated in battle. They are of interest to biblical scholars because they possess similarities to the covenant God established with Israel at Mount Sinai.

Hittite suzerainty treaties involved leading representatives of the two nations formally coming together to offer up religious sacrifices and set forth the specific details of the agreement. Included in the meeting were a description of

the historical relationship between the nations, a general statement of principles for future conduct, a declaration of the treaty’s terms, the invoking of deities to oversee the treaty, and the expression of curses associated with nonfulfillment of the treaty’s terms, as well as blessings resulting from fulfillment of the treaty.<sup>1</sup>

*Commitments between Individuals*—Many different kinds of transactions between individuals, each involving a ritual of some sort, took place in the ancient Near East. Archaeologists have found written contracts that record details about sales and purchases, rentals, labor contracts, business partnerships, loans, mortgages, bankruptcies, and power of attorney. Documented familial transactions included marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance. Documentary evidence suggests that the more important of these transactions included certain common elements: the swearing of oaths, the presence of authorized witnesses, and the creation of a record of the transaction in the form of a clay, papyrus, or leather document. As a rule, these documents

included the names or cylinder seal impressions of those who witnessed the event.

## **FORMAL COMMITMENTS: BIBLICAL EVIDENCE**

*Commitments between People Groups*—Like other cultures in the ancient Near East, the Israelites established binding agreements in the form of treaties or covenants with other people groups. At times, people drew up treaties with equal benefits for both parties, known in the world of Old Testament scholarship as parity treaties. At other times, the treaties consisted of one group imposing demands on another (suzerainty treaties). People established parity treaties especially for economic reasons (Israel and Tyre; 1Kg 5:6–12) or for mutual assistance in times of war (Israel and Judah against Moab; 2Kg 3:7). They drew up suzerainty treaties by conquering nations and forcing them on defeated people groups (Israel with Aram and Edom; 2 Sm 8:6,14; 10:19).

Israelites termed the establishment of a covenant “making” or “cutting” the covenant (Gn 21:27). This event, described most fully in



During the reign of Darius I (522–486 BC), cylinder seals regained their popularity. The designs typically depicted military personnel, deities, or animals—some mythological and others real. This seal depicts a Median archer and a soldier in a crested helmet.

Genesis 15:9–18, required the butchering of animals, separating the body parts into two piles, and the responsible parties standing between the divided carcasses while confirming the commitment. This portion of the event symbolically invoked the curse of a horrible death for anyone who broke the agreement.

Certain long-term treaties in the Old Testament were termed “a covenant of salt” (see Nm 18:19; 2Ch 13:5). While this term is never explained, the name is likely derived from a special ritual involving salt that was associated with the enactment of the treaty.

*Commitments between Individuals*—The Old Testament’s legal materials, narratives, wisdom sayings, and prophetic literature all supply useful details describing the rituals and practices that were part of Israel’s financial and familial transactions. One of the most detailed illustrations of an interpersonal legal transaction is in Ruth 4.

In larger financial transactions, ones involving the transfer of land or slaves to a nonfamily member, for example, four main elements seem to have been involved. First came the gathering of witnesses. Before an important business deal could be worked out, trusted individuals, normally a village’s older males, had to be assembled to witness the transaction. Boaz’s efforts in a complex deal involving land transfer and acceptance of responsibility for a childless widow clearly demonstrate this (Ru 4:2).

Second came negotiating an agreed-upon purchase price. Disagreements regarding price might exist, but because of the importance of honor within that culture, both the buyer and the seller were expected to avoid humiliating the other person.

Third came the exchange of payment, or at least a good-faith pledge for payment. Coined or printed money did not exist in



Pair of leather sandals from Nubia (in modern central Egypt); dated 1600–1550 BC. The family redeemer sealed his deal with Boaz by taking off his shoe and giving it to Boaz.

ancient Israel, so persons usually completed purchases through the transfer of agreed-upon amounts of bronze, silver, or gold weighed out on balance scales (Lv 19:36; Jr 32:9). Sometimes people used grain or animals instead of metal for payment (Gn 38:16–17a; Hs 3:2). If an individual could not make the full payment at the time of the transaction, he was required to provide some sort of collateral or good-faith pledge (Gn 38:17b–18; Ex 22:26) until he could pay the debt (Ezk 18:7). However, collateral could not consist of anything directly connected with a person’s existence, livelihood, or dignity (Dt 24:6; Jb 22:6; 24:3).

Fourth came the creation of evidence to verify that the transaction had taken place. The evidence varied according to the nature of the transaction and the era in which it occurred. Ruth 4:7 indicates that

in Boaz’s day, a man redeeming or transferring property would remove one of his sandals and give it to the person making the acquisition or accepting the transfer. This would serve as a “legal attestation of a transfer of goods or rights.”<sup>2</sup> In the days of the prophet Jeremiah (early sixth century BC), a similar transaction required the production of two identical documents, signed by two witnesses, detailing the sale. One was “tied with straps and sealed for ready verification in the event the ownership was challenged.”<sup>3</sup> Both documents were then preserved in a protected earthen storage jar. ❖

<sup>1</sup>J. A. Thompson, *The Ancient Near Eastern Treaties and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale Press, 1964), 16–17. <sup>2</sup>Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, vol. 6 in NAC (1999), 718. <sup>3</sup>F. B. Huey Jr., *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, vol. 16 in NAC (1993), 291.



of barley, because he said,<sup>a</sup> ‘Don’t go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”

<sup>18</sup> Naomi said, “My daughter, wait until you find out how things go, for he won’t rest unless he resolves this today.”

## RUTH AND BOAZ MARRY

**4** Boaz went to the gate of the town and sat down there. Soon the family redeemer Boaz had spoken about came by. Boaz said, “Come over here<sup>b</sup> and sit down.” So he went over and sat down.<sup>2</sup> Then Boaz took ten men of the town’s elders and said, “Sit here.” And they sat down.<sup>3</sup> He said to the redeemer, “Naomi, who has returned from the territory of Moab, is selling the portion of the field that belonged to our brother Elimelech.<sup>4</sup> I thought I should inform you: Buy it back in the presence of those seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you want to redeem it, do it. But if you do<sup>c</sup> not want to redeem it, tell me so that I will know, because there isn’t anyone other than you to redeem it, and I am next after you.”

“I want to redeem it,” he answered.

<sup>5</sup> Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the field from Naomi, you will acquire<sup>b</sup> Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the deceased man, to perpetuate the man’s name on his property.”<sup>e</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The redeemer replied, “I can’t redeem it myself, or I will ruin my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption, because I can’t redeem it.”

<sup>7</sup> At an earlier period in Israel, a man removed his sandal and gave it to the other party in order to make any matter legally binding concerning the right of redemption or the exchange of property. This was the method of legally binding a transaction in Israel.

<sup>8</sup> So the redeemer removed his sandal and said to Boaz, “Buy back the property yourself.”

<sup>9</sup> Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses today that I am buying from Naomi everything that belonged to Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon.<sup>10</sup> I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon’s widow, as my wife, to perpetuate the deceased man’s name on his property, so that his name

will not disappear among his relatives or from the gate of his hometown. You are witnesses today.”

<sup>11</sup> All the people who were at the city gate, including the elders, said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is entering your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built the house of Israel. May you be powerful in Ephrathah and your name well known in Bethlehem.”<sup>12</sup> May your house become like the house of Perez, the son Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring the LORD will give you by this young woman.”

<sup>13</sup> Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. He slept with her, and the LORD granted conception to her, and she gave birth to a son.<sup>14</sup> The women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you without a family redeemer today. May his name become well known in Israel.”<sup>15</sup> He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. Indeed, your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”<sup>16</sup> Naomi took the child, placed him on her lap, and became a mother to him.<sup>17</sup> The neighbor women said, “A son has been born to Naomi,” and they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

## DAVID’S GENEALOGY FROM JUDAH’S SON

<sup>18</sup> Now these are the family records of Perez:

Perez fathered Hezron,

<sup>19</sup> Hezron fathered Ram,<sup>f</sup>

Ram fathered Amminadab,

<sup>20</sup> Amminadab fathered Nahshon,

Nahshon fathered Salmon,

<sup>21</sup> Salmon fathered Boaz,

Boaz fathered Obed,

<sup>22</sup> Obed fathered Jesse,

and Jesse fathered David.

<sup>a</sup> 3:17 Alt Hb tradition, LXX, Syr, Tg read *said to me* <sup>b</sup> 4:1 Or *said, “Come here Mr. So-and-so* <sup>c</sup> 4:4 Some Hb mss, LXX, Syr, Vg; other Hb mss read *if he does* <sup>d</sup> 4:5 Lit *Naomi and from* <sup>e</sup> 4:5 Alt Hb tradition reads *Naomi, I will have already acquired from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead man, the privilege of raising up the name of the dead man on his property* <sup>f</sup> 4:19 LXX reads *Aram*; Mt 1:3–4



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