

READING RUTH AS A MYTHIC TALE: GUIDELINES FOR LIFE IN TIMES OF TRANSITION



1. THE SPIRITUAL CONTEXT - HUNGER, AWAKENING, LOSS

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a **famine in the land** (Ruth 1:1)

Behold the days are coming, says Adonai, that I will send **a famine in the land**, not a famine for bread, nor **a thirst** for water, but **to hear the words of God**. (Amos 8:11)

...and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. **2** The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name **Naomi**, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

3 Now **Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died**, and she was left with her two sons. **4** They married Moabite women, one named **Orpah** and the other **Ruth**. After they had lived there about ten years, **5** both **Mahlon and Kilion also died**, and **Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband**. (Ruth 1:1-5)

2. DEALING WITH TRAUMA

6 When she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. **7** With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. (Ruth 1:6-7)

20 "Don't call me Naomi, " she told them. "Call me Mara, because the God has made my life very bitter. **21** I went away full, but the Adonai has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Adonai has afflicted me; the God has brought misfortune upon me." (Ruth 1:20-21)

3. CHOICES WE FACE ON THE JOURNEY/COMMITMENTS WE MAKE

8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law... **12 Return home, my daughters**; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons- **13** would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone out against me!" **14** At this they wept again. Then **Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye**, but Ruth clung to her. **15** "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." **16** But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. **Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God**." (Ruth 1:8;12-16)

4. ALLIES – VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

1 Now **Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, from the clan of Elimelech, a man of standing, whose name was Boaz.** **2** And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." **3** So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech. (Ruth 2:1-3)

8 So **Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. 9 Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."** (Ruth 2:8-9)

10 At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?"

11 Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. **23** So Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law. (Ruth 2:10-11;23)

5. FOLLOWING YOUR DESTINY

1 One day Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for? **2** Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. **3** Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. **4 When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down.** He will tell you what to do." **5 "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered.** **6** So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do. (Ruth 3:1-6).

6. CALLING TO WORLD TRANSFORMATION

13 So **Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife.** Then he went to her, and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and **she gave birth to a son.** **14** The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! **15** He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth." **16** Then Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap and cared for him. **17** The women living there said, "Naomi has a son." And they named him Obed. **He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.** **18** This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron, **19** Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, **20** Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, **21** Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, **22** Obed the father of Jesse, and **Jesse the father of David.** (Ruth 4:16-22)

Compiled by Simcha Raphael, 2022

