

THE WEXNER FOUNDATION

THE BOOK OF RUTH

Chapter One: Ruth and the Long Embrace of Acceptance
Dr. Erica Brown | May 11, 2022



George Dawe, "Naomi and Her Daughters," oil on canvas (1804), Tate, London

Ruth: 1-21

1.

וַיְהִי בִּימֵי שָׁפֶט הַשְּׂפֹטִים וַיְהִי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ נִלְוָה אִישׁ מִבֵּית לְחָם יְהוּדָה לָגוּר בְּשֵׂדֵי מוֹאָב הוּא וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּשְׁנֵי בָנָיו:

In the days when the chieftains ruled, there was a famine in the land; and a man of Bethlehem in Judah, with his wife and two sons, went to reside in the country of Moab.

2.

וְשֵׁם הָאִישׁ אֱלִימֶלֶךְ וְשֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ נְעֹמִי וְשֵׁם שְׁנֵי בָנָיו | מַחֲלֹן וְכִלְיוֹן אֶפְרַתִּים מִבֵּית לְחָם יְהוּדָה וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׂדֵי־מוֹאָב וַיְהִי־וּ
שָׁם:

The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and his two sons were named Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. They came to the country of Moab and remained there.

3.

וַיָּמָת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ אִישׁ נַעֲמִי וַתִּשָּׂאָר הִיא וּשְׁנֵי בָנֶיהָ:

Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons.

4.

וַיִּשְׂאוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים מְאָבִיּוֹת שֵׁם הָאֶחָת עֹרְפָה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית רֹוּת וַיָּשְׁבוּ שָׁם כְּעֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים:

They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth, and they lived there about ten years.

5.

וַיָּמָתוּ גַם־שְׁנֵיהֶם מִחִלּוֹן וְכִלְיוֹן וַתִּשָּׂאֵר הָאִשָּׁה מִשְׁנֵי יְלָדֶיהָ וּמְאִישָׁהּ:

Then those two—Mahlon and Chilion—also died; so the woman was left without her two sons and without her husband.

6.

וַתָּקָם הִיא וְכַלְתֶּיהָ וַתָּשָׁב מִשְׁנֵי מוֹאָב כִּי שָׁמְעָה בַּשָּׂדֶה מוֹאָב כִּי־פָקַד יְהוָה אֶת־עַמּוֹ לָתֵת לָהֶם לֶחֶם:

She started out with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab; for in the country of Moab she had heard that the LORD had taken note of His people and given them food.

7.

וַתֵּצֵא מוֹרְהֶמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר הָיְתָה־שָׁמָּה וּשְׁתֵּי כַלְתֶּיהָ עִמָּהּ וַתֵּלַכְנָה בְּדֶרֶךְ לָשׁוּב אֶל־אֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה:

Accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, she left the place where she had been living; and they set out on the road back to the land of Judah.

8.

וַתֹּאמֶר נַעֲמִי לְשְׁתֵּי כַלְתֶּיהָ לָכֶנָה לָכֶנָה שִׁבְנָה אִשָּׁה לְבֵית אַמָּה (יַעֲשֶׂה) [יַעֲשֶׂה] יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם חֻסֵּד כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם עִם־הַמֵּתִים וְעִמָּדִי:

But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Turn back, each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me!

9.

ותן יהוה לכם ומצאן מנוחה אשה בית אישה ותשק להן ותשאנה קולן ותבכינה:

May the LORD grant that each of you find security in the house of a husband!" And she kissed them farewell. They broke into weeping

10.

ותאמרה לה כי אתה נשוב לעמך:

and said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people."

11.

ותאמר נעמי שבנה בנתי למה תלכנה עמי העודלי בנים במעי וקניו לכם לאנשים:

But Naomi replied, "Turn back, my daughters! Why should you go with me? Have I any more sons in my body who might be husbands for you?

12.

שבנה בנתי לכן כי זננתי מהיות לאיש כי אמרתי ישלי תקוה גם היתתי הלילה לאיש וגם ילדתי בנים:

Turn back, my daughters, for I am too old to be married. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I were married tonight and I also bore sons,

13.

הלהן | תשכרנה עד אשר יגדלו הלהן תעגנה לבלתי היות לאיש אל בנתי כי מרלי מאד מכם כי יצאה בי ידיהוה:

should you wait for them to grow up? Should you on their account debar yourselves from marriage? Oh no, my daughters! My lot is far more bitter than yours, for the hand of the LORD has struck out against me."

14.

ותשאנה קולן ותבכינה עוד ותשק ערפה לחמותה ורות נבקה בה:

They broke into weeping again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law farewell. But Ruth clung to her.

15.

וַתֹּאמֶר הַגֵּה נָשְׁבָה יְבִמְתְּךָ אֶל-עַמֶּיהָ וְאֶל-אֱלֹהֶיהָ שׁוּבִי אִתְּךָ יְבִמְתְּךָ:

So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and her gods. Go follow your sister-in-law."

16.

וַתֹּאמֶר רוּת אֶל-תִּפְגַּעֵי-בִי לְעִזְבֹתִי לְשׁוּב מֵאַחֲרַיִךְ כִּי אֶל-אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכִי אֵלָיו וּבְאֲשֶׁר תֵּלִינִי אֵלָיו עִמָּךְ עַמִּי וְאֱלֹהֵיךְ אֱלֹהֵי:

But Ruth replied, "Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.

17.

בְּאֲשֶׁר תָּמוּתִי אָמוּת וְשָׁם אֶקְבֹּר כֹּה יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה לִי וְכֹה יוֹסִיף לִי הַמָּוֶת יִפְרִיד בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ:

Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. bThus and more may the LORD do to me-b if anything but death parts me from you."

18.

וַתֵּרָא כִּי-מִתְאַמָּצָת הִיא לָלֶכֶת אִתָּהּ וּתְחַדֵּל לְדַבֵּר אֵלֶיהָ:

When [Naomi] saw how determined she was to go with her, she ceased to argue with her;

19.

וַתֵּלְכֶנָּה שְׁתֵּייהֶם עַד-בִּזְאוּנָה בֵּית לָחֶם וַיְהִי כְּבוֹאוֹנָהּ בֵּית לָחֶם וּתְהִי כָל-הָעִיר עָלֵיהֶן וַתֵּאמְרֶנָּה הֲזֹאת נַעֲמִי:

and the two went on until they reached Bethlehem.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole city buzzed with excitement over them. The women said, "Can this be Naomi?"

20.

וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהֶן אֶל-תִּקְרָאנִי לִי נַעֲמִי קְרָאוּ לִי מָרָא כִּי-הִמָּר שָׂנְאֵנִי לִי מְאֹד:

"Do not call me Naomi," she replied. "Call me Mara, d for Shaddaie has made my lot very bitter.

21.

אני מלאה הלקחתי וריקם השיבני יהנה למה תקראנה לי נעמי ויהנה ענה כי ושדי תרע לי:

I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. How can you call me Naomi, when the LORD has dealt harshly with me, when Shaddai has brought misfortune upon me!"

22.

ותשוב נעמי ורות המואבית כלתה עמה השבה משדי מואב והמה באו בית לחם בתחלת קציר שערים:

Thus Naomi returned from the country of Moab; she returned with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabite. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Dr. Tamara Mann Tweel, "The Exquisite Challenge of Care," Gleanings: Reflections on Ruth

"Naomi describes a body that can no longer attract physical love, a body that can no longer carry life, a body that no longer feels useful... There is nothing for her to live for, no love, no intimacy, no life. It feels as if even God has left her."

The Biblical Mandate to Hug: Genesis 2:24

על־כן יעזב־איש את־אביו ואת־אמו ודבק באשתו והיו לבשר אחד:

"Hence a man leaves his father and mother and clings to (lit. hugs) his wife, so that they become one flesh."

R. Obadiah Sforno: to "become of one mind on how to deal with life's challenges."

Dr. Yael Ziegler, Ruth: From Alienation to Monarchy

A hug symbolizes "... an all-encompassing connection, a relationship characterized by identification, in which one party embraces the totality of the Other, utterly and completely. There is something illogical in this type of relationship, in which one's own ego, one's I-awareness, is subsumed by concern for the Other."

Jennifer Clopton "How to Cope When COVID Steals Loving Touch, Hugs," WEBMD, June 15, 2020

Dr. Valentina Ogaryan: "Those who are older and don't live with a lot of family members say they even miss the more minor and nuanced encounters that used to bring a touch here and there, like a handshake, smile, or pat on the hand or back from a neighbor or someone at the grocery store."