

# *Great Grandparents to a King*

## The Story of Ruth and Boaz

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Part 1  
A Testimony of God's  
Grace and Mercy



# Introduction/Background Info:

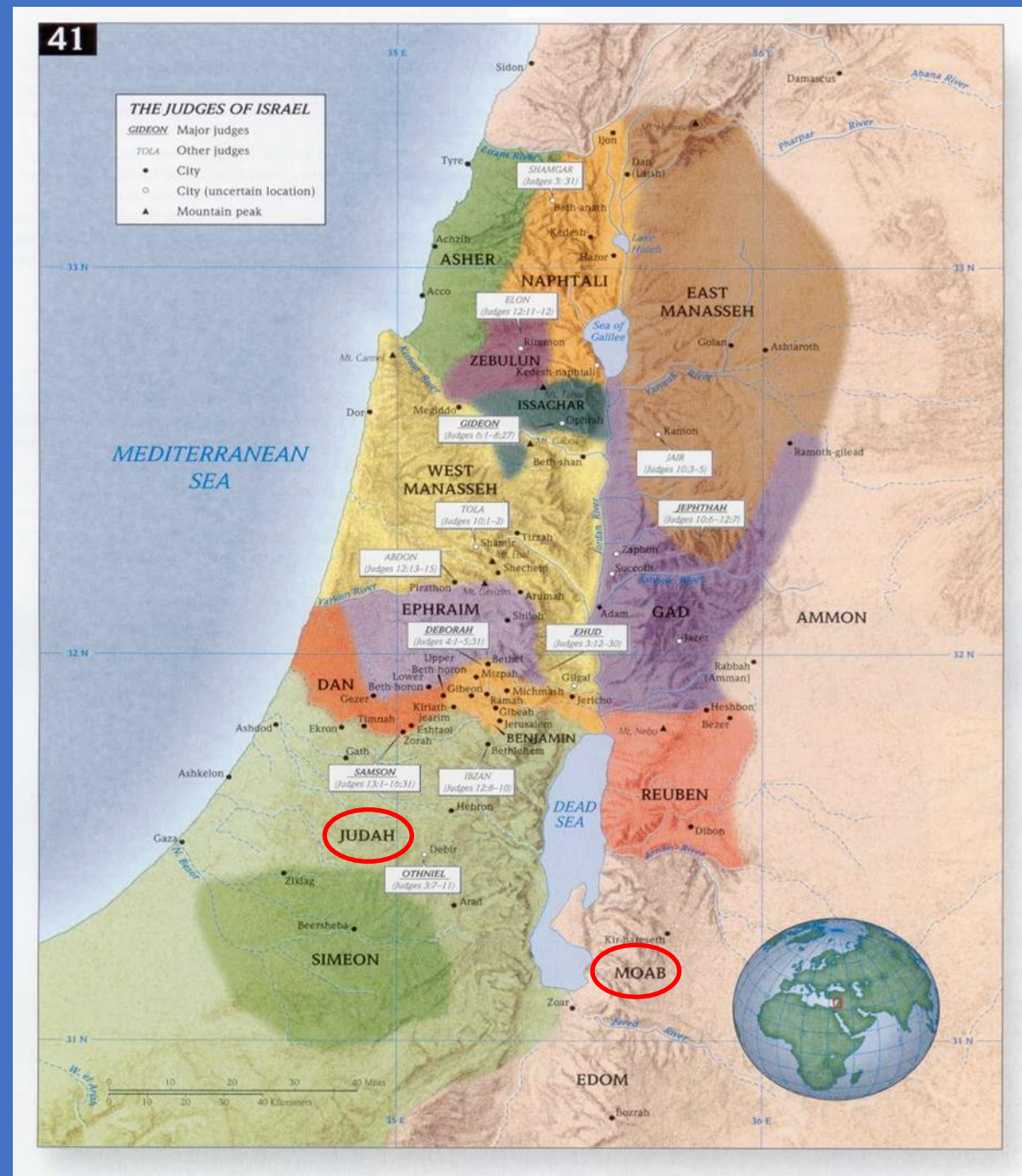
❖ Before there was a Ruth and Boaz

“Now it came about in the days where the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the name of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there” (Ruth 1:1-2)





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This probably coincides with the events surrounding Gideon one of the Judges of Israel

# What life was like during these times

- The “Days of the Judges” (after the conquest of Canaan and prior to the time of the Kings) was described this way:

“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25)

# What life was like during the Time of the Judges

Unfortunately – after the conquest of Promised Land by Joshua, Caleb and the tribes of Israel, as well as their promise to obey the Lord's commands and laws and to rid the land of false gods and idol worship, the Israelites failed to do this which, caused continual warfare between them and their enemies

- Othniel battled the Arameans (Judges 3)
- Ehud – battled the Moabites, Ammonites and Amalekites (Judges 3)
- Deborah and Barak – battled the Canaanites (Judges 4)
- Gideon – battled the Midianites, Amalekites and other Eastern (probably included a portion of modern-day Saudi Arabia) tribes (Judges 6-8)

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- Jephthah – battled the Philistines and Ammonites (Judges 10-12)
- Samson – battled the Philistines (Judges 13-16)
- These were dark days for the Israelites who continued in their disobedience and will battle the Philistines (the primary enemy at the time of Samson) through the times of Samuel the Prophet who will lead the them until God raises up King Saul and eventually King David.

- Our story begins with a couple by the name of **Elimelech** and Naomi, along with their two sons Mahlon and Chilion:

1. Elimelech was a member of the tribe of Judah, one of the 12 sons of Jacob/Israel
2. Elimelech was probably a man of wealth and probably the head of a family or clan

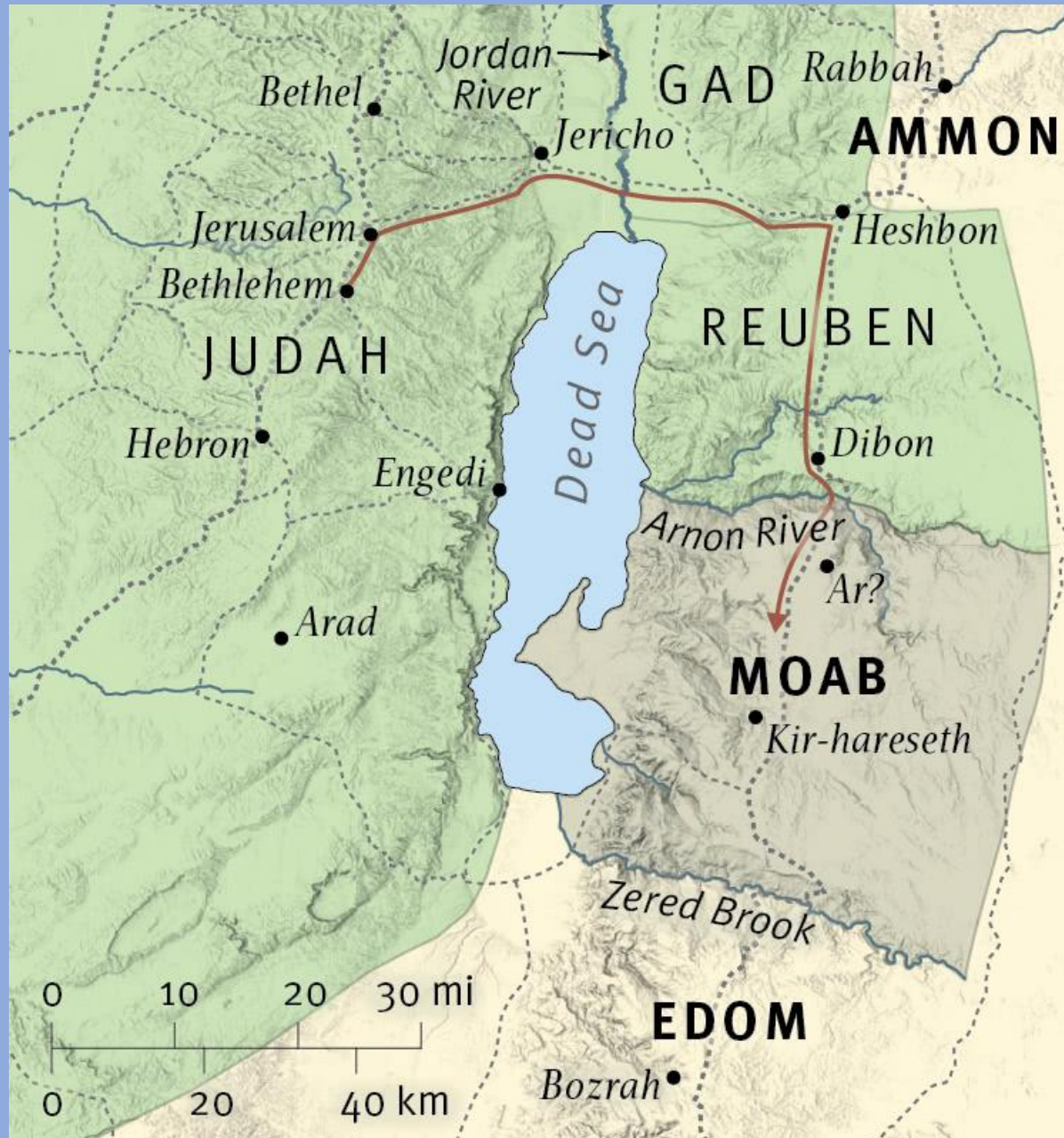
“Now it came about in the days where the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And **a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah** went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and two sons. The name of the man was **Elimelech** and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the name of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, **Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah**. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there” (Ruth 1:1-2)

- Our story begins with a couple by the name of Elimelech and Naomi, along with their two sons Mahlon and Chilion:
  1. Initially they lived in Bethlehem (about 5 miles south of Jerusalem)
  2. We are told that there was a famine in the land of Judah which drove them to the land of Moab

“Now it came about in the days where the judges governed, that there was a **famine in the land**. And a certain man of **Bethlehem** in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the name of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there” (Ruth 1:1-2)



The probable route  
Elimelech and  
Naomi took to  
escape the  
famine in the  
region of Judah



Moab during  
this time period  
would not have  
been favorably  
disposed to the  
people of Israel.

- Elimelech was from the tribe of Judah, lived in the land of Bethlehem and was a kinsman (same family line) of Boaz
- The decision to leave the “Land of Promise” and travel/sojourn to a “foreign land” (perhaps it could be said – outside of the blessings of God) probably would have been looked upon as stepping outside of the blessings of God and to remain there (in Moab) may have even brought judgment upon them.

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# What was the significance of the Land of Moab?

- The people who lived there (called Moabites) were descendants of Lot (Abraham's nephew)
- It was Lot's two daughters who committed a sinful act by sleeping with their father resulting in the birth of two sons named Moab (father of the Moabites) and Ben-Ammi (father of the Ammonites). Their descendants were in constant warfare with the Israelites
- Moab was no place to raise a family as wickedness was the rule rather than the exception. They worshipped the god chemosh (similar to Baal) and relied on a variety of gods to supply their food, water and basic needs of life. Their lifestyle was also one of extreme sexual perversion
- The Moabites were known for idolatry, and they often influenced the Israelites to follow their practices

# The Story Continues.....

- Elimelech (Naomi's husband) at some point dies while living in Moab and Naomi becomes a widow
  - Each of the two sons marry a Moabite woman
    - ❖ Chilion marries Orpah
    - ❖ Mahlon marries Ruth
  - They live in Moab for 10 years and both Mahlon and Chilion will die leaving the two Moabite woman as widows also
- “Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years. Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband” (Vs 3-5)



# Life Changes for Naomi

- Jewish tradition concludes that the death of Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion may have been God's judgment on them for leaving Bethlehem in the first place. This leaves Naomi with no male heir and two daughters in a place where the people worshipped false gods
- It was during these 10 years in Moab that Naomi probably taught her two daughters-in-law about Jehovah
- Losing a spouse is hard enough but to also lose your two sons and now find yourself responsible for two daughters in an unfavorable land put Naomi in a very challenging position. The physical and emotional trauma no doubt took its fair measure against Naomi but in time she will find grace, mercy and peace with her God.

# Life Changes for Naomi

***“Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the Lord had visited His people in giving them food. So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on their way to return to the land of Judah” (Ruth 1:6-7)***

- Notice her declaration of faith in which she recognizes that it was the Lord not the false gods of Moab that provided her people with food
- Naomi’s act of repentance is shown when she decides to return to the place of blessing – the land of Judah/Bethlehem

*“And Naomi said to her two daughters-in law, go, return each of you to her mothers house. May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. May the Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. And said to her, No, but we will surely return with you to your people” (Ruth 1:8-10)*

- Naomi might have thought that in the best interests of her daughters-in-law, it would be best for them to return to their families and not return with her to Bethlehem. We aren't given much other detail.
- It's easy to judge Naomi's decision (either as a sign of selfishness or of protection) but the decision no doubt weighed heavy on her
- Initially Orpah and Ruth wish to return to the land of Judah with Naomi (both had the same opportunity to follow God), but circumstances for Orpah change (we are not told why) and only Ruth stays with Naomi

# Naomi decides to return to her homeland of Judah

**“But Naomi said, return my daughters.** Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Return my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for **it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me**” (Ruth 1:11-13)

- This is a “practical” response from Naomi – the solutions (in her mind) were less favorable should Ruth and Orpah return with her to Judah
- It’s hard to judge whether this response is a disobedient act by Naomi or simply an emotional response based on the circumstances she knew they would face. However, Naomi was feeling the judgement of the Lord upon her and that weighed heavy on her heart



# Notice the contrast between Ruth and Orpah:

*“And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. Then she said, **behold your sister in law has gone back to her people and her gods**; return after your sister-in law” (Ruth 1:14-15)*

- Orpah kisses Naomi goodbye, returns to her people and her gods **showing no true sign of repentance or any indication of obedience**
- **Ruth clings to Naomi**, shows signs of repentance, embraces Jehovah, and sets out on a life of obedience that will result in God’s blessing
- It will take some time, but Naomi (who is no doubt struggling physically, emotionally and spiritually) will see the hand of God at work in her life as well as in the life of Ruth, and Naomi will play a big part in Ruth’s future.

# A Declaration of Faith by Ruth

“But Ruth said, do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me. When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her” (Ruth 1:16-18)

- Ruth will turn her back on the pagan practices of her family and will adopt the belief in the One True God (Jehovah) and follow Him wholeheartedly
- By virtue of her family background (being a Moabite) she was outside the commonwealth of Israel and her belief/trust shows commitment
- Her faith in God will provide her the honor of being in the direct human lineage of the Messiah – Jesus Christ

# This Story is a Testimony of God's Grace

The definition of God's grace is Him giving us something that we don't deserve

- For Naomi – it was a chance to return to the place of blessing and see God work not only in her life but in the life of Ruth
- For Ruth – it was a chance to be brought under the blessing of God by choosing to follow Him by faith
- For all of us – even though mankind lives in rebellion against God, He will send His Son Jesus Christ (a descendant of David who was a descendant of Ruth and Boaz) to die for our sins (John 3:16)

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life”*

# This Story is a Testimony of God's Mercy

The definition of God's mercy is Him not giving us something that we do deserve

- For Naomi – it was her act of obedience to return to the blessings of God that allowed her to receive God's mercy and instead of receiving God's judgment (for that disobedience) she was restored
- For Ruth – it was her recognition of God's sovereignty and her open and willing heart that allowed her to receive God's mercy and not receive what she deserved which would be eternal separation from God
- For all of us – although eternal separation from God awaits those who reject Him, “yet to all who do receive Him, to those who believe in his name (Jesus Christ), he gives the right to become children of God” (John 1:12)

*“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23)*



# Things we learn from the characters in this story

- **From Elimelech** – although it is easy to judge not knowing all the facts, I think we can conclude that his decision to leave Judah in the first place and go to a land of “unbelievers” was a gross error on his part. This single decision put him and his entire family at great risk and peril
- **From Naomi**
  1. Although she went willingly with her husband to the land of Moab and stayed there for 10 years, she took steps to return to the place where she knew she needed to be – no matter how difficult and challenging that was for her. God will bless her for her trust and faith in taking those steps toward returning to Him
  2. During the 10 years that Naomi spent in the land of Moab she must have been a godly influence to Ruth

# Things we learn from the characters in this story

- **From Ruth**

1. She was a Moabite (Ruth 1:4) and her family upbringing would have been influenced by pagan/idol worship. By virtue of her family background, she was outside the commonwealth of Israel
2. Ruth will turn her back on the pagan practices of her family and will adopt the belief in the One True God (Jehovah) and follow Him wholeheartedly
3. This investment that God makes in the life of Ruth probably came through the 10 years in which she witnessed the faith of her mother-in-law Naomi

## It was that investment that no doubt brought this response by Ruth:

“Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me” (Ruth 1:16-17)

1. The response by Ruth was no accident and it came as a result of God’s drawing power. Ruth merely responded in faith to the fact that God is God and there is no other! Ruth’s response was an act of obedience to the call that God had already placed in her heart.
2. Ruth (a Gentile) who had the deck stacked against her from birth – yet she saw the truth for what it was and responded in faith! What a great example of redemption
3. Ruth showed unwavering commitment to the plan God had for her

**“When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her” (Ruth 1:18)**

1. Sometimes, even when you don't know the full outcome or what the result will be you just have to trust that God knows your circumstances and His plan will make things work for the good

***“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28)***

2. Naomi will continue to struggle with feeling abandoned, lacking in purpose and doubting there was any favorable outcome for her and her daughter-in-law Ruth.



## Discussion Topics and Concluding Thoughts

1. Sometimes when we make a life decision and then circumstances (such as what happened to Elimelech and Naomi) go bad, what are some ways (be they good or bad) we might respond to those circumstances?
2. Are we guaranteed that only good things will happen to us because we are children of God?
3. When bad things happen or challenges enter our life journey even when we try to live and be right – what sort of responses, actions, thoughts and even feelings play a part in the outcome of the decisions we make?

***Naomi and Ruth will find themselves with some significant life challenges and it will be their hope in God that will see them through and it is that same hope in God that can also see you through the most difficult of circumstances***