

## Ruth

*This is part of an ongoing series of short articles designed to help us understand what scripture is and what is **in** each book of scripture. Previous articles can be found at [www.openarms-communityofchrist.org](http://www.openarms-communityofchrist.org).*

Up to this point, the biblical books have been about tribes or other large groups of people. Ruth is the story of one family—a family that would have not been acceptable to the Israelite people at one point in time.

Because of a famine, Naomi's family (husband and two sons) had gone to the country of Moab, a country that the Israelites tended to be at war with because of conflicting claims to the same territory. While they were living there, her husband died as did both of her sons. She decided to return to her home of Bethlehem, and her daughters-in-law began the trip with her. Near the border, she encouraged them to stay in Moab. One daughter-in-law, Orpah, died. However, Ruth went with her, with words that are often used in wedding ceremonies today "(Entreat me not to leave you...your people shall be my people and your God my God").

Noami was concerned for Ruth's well-being and encouraged her to glean in the fields of Boaz, a relative. When Boaz saw her, he was attracted to her and told her to stay only in his fields. Noami was pleased with this attraction, and told Ruth to return to Boaz at night, asking him to marry her. Although Boaz wanted to, there was a closer relative who had the first right of marrying Ruth—but he said he would settle that matter in the morning. When he met the relative, Boaz asked him about redeeming Noami's land—which also included marrying Ruth. The relative refused, and that left Boaz free to marry Ruth.

The book closes with a list of descendants—including David, one of Israel's greatest kings.

It is not certain when this book was written—either before or after the Jewish Exile. If before, it might have been written to establish King David's ancestry. If after, it may have been written to counter the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which considered intermarriage between Israelites and non-Israelites wrong.

Either way, the strong message of the book is that God's love and concern extends to the people of **every** nation.