

The story of Ruth

A long time ago, in a land where no king ruled, a small family lived in the town of Bethlehem. Life was hard for Naomi, her husband and their two boys, for food was short, very short. There had been a bad harvest and there was little to eat. Night after night, Naomi and her family went to bed hungry. Something had to be done.



Naomi and her family decided to leave Bethlehem and look for food



in another country. As they left the town they looked back at the home they were leaving. Would they ever go back? Would they ever see Bethlehem again? They looked at each other and started

walking. They might be leaving home, they might be poor, but they still had each other.

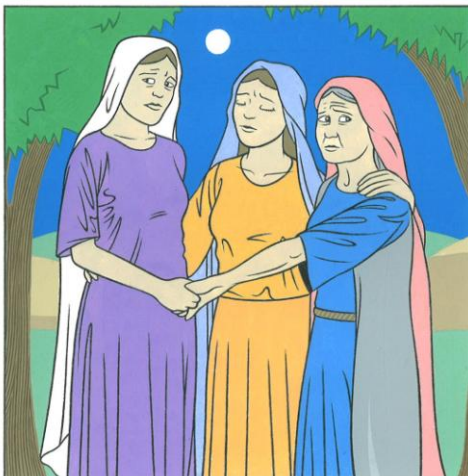
The family walked in the hot sun. They were tired and they were thirsty but they knew that they had to keep going. In time they came to a country called Moab. There was food in Moab and there was water. They decided to stay.

Hard times followed. Naomi's husband died but the family stayed on in Moab. Where else could they go? In time the boys grew into young men and they both married girls from Moab.



One was called Ruth, the other was called Orpah. There was laughter again in Naomi's house, for she loved Orpah and Ruth and they loved her.

Ten years later great sadness overcame the family; both young men



died and the three women were left alone. Naomi decided to return home. There was food in Bethlehem now, for she heard there had been a good harvest. Naomi packed her bag ready to go back home.

She looked at Ruth and Orpah. She could not ask them to come with her; all she could offer them was loneliness and hard work in a strange, new country. She was worried about how they might be treated, for some people in Bethlehem did not like strangers.

Naomi begged Ruth and Orpah to go back to their families. Orpah did not want to leave but Naomi begged and begged her to go until she left. Ruth refused.



'No!' said Ruth. 'Don't make me go:

Where you go, I will go.

Your people shall be my people.

Your God will be my God.

Where you die, I will die and there will I be buried.

I swear by God that nothing but death shall separate us two.'

Naomi stopped trying to send Ruth back and the two walked on together. Many miles later they came to Bethlehem and people gathered around them.



'It's Naomi!' they shouted, 'She's come back home!'

'Don't call me Naomi anymore,' said Naomi, 'for that name means 'pleasant'. Call me 'Mara' which means bitter, for life has been hard for me.' Naomi told her friends all that had happened, how her husband and both sons had died.



Naomi and Ruth settled down to their new lives. Naomi was old but Ruth was young and strong and she worked in the fields, walking behind the people cutting the grain and picking up the bits they dropped.

That way, she and Naomi had enough to eat.

One day Boaz, the owner field,
Noticed Ruth and admired her
for her hard work and her
kindness towards Naomi. He told
the other workers to drop some
extra grain, 'accidentally on purpose', so that Ruth and Naomi would
have more than enough to eat.



Boaz looked after Ruth and their
friendship grew. Eventually they
married and had a little boy
called Obed.

Naomi held Obed in her arms and
remembered her own boys. There
was still sadness there but also joy,
now that she had a grandchild to love.

