

Handout: Ruth Lesson 1

Ruth is read in Jewish Synagogues on the Feast of Shavuot, known in English as the Feast of Weeks and at the time of Christ as the Feast of Pentecost (Greek word meaning 50<sup>th</sup> day since 50 days were counted from the previous annual feast). Reading the scroll of Ruth at the Feast of Weeks/Pentecost is considered particularly appropriate by Jews for three reasons:

1. Much of the Book of Ruth takes place during the period that is somewhat equivalent to the interval of the seven weeks between the beginning of the barley harvest on the day after the holy Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:9-14) and the end of the wheat harvest fifty days later on the Feast of Weeks/Pentecost (Lev 23:15-21). It is in the instructions for the Feast of Weeks/Pentecost that the requirement for leaving the gleanings for the poor like Ruth is mentioned a second time in the Torah (see Lev 19:9-10; 23:22; Dt 24:19).
2. Since the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD the Feast of Weeks/Pentecost has been associated with the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai and is related to the theme of Ruth taking the Torah upon herself as the ideal convert at the time the giving of the Law was remembered.
3. Ruth's descendant, King David, was believed by Jewish tradition to have been born and also to have died at the time of the Feast of Weeks/Pentecost (*Jewish Study Bible*, page 1579).

Key words: The noun *hesed* = “covenant loyalty” and “faithfulness” in action as well as attitude (see Rt 1:8; 2:20; 3:10). The verb *baruk*, “to bless” and its related noun *berukah*, “blessing,” is the bestowing of God’s favor in a sanctifying act (see Rt 2:19; 3:10). *Hesed* is found alone near the beginning of the story (Rt 1:8) and *baruk* is found alone at the end (Rt 4:14). The two words occur twice together in the middle of the story (Rt 2:19-20 and 3:10). In the Book of Ruth, Naomi, Ruth and Boaz are models of *hesed*. Other key words include the Hebrew verb *ga’al*, “to redeem,” and the noun *go’el* “redeemer” (Lev 25) related to the obligation of the *Go’el Haddam* (Blood Redeemer) who voluntarily shows *hesed* to his kinsmen in need of assistance.

God is mentioned 23 times in 85 verses. Of those times, the Divine Name *YHWH* is written eighteen times, the title *Shaddai* (Almighty?) is used for God twice, and the word *Elohim* (god plural) is used for Yahweh God of Israel three times.

References to the God of Israel in the Book of Ruth	
Hebrew word	Scripture reference in the Book of Ruth
YHWH (the divine Name believed to be pronounced Yahweh)	Chapter 1: verses 6, 8, 9, 14, 17, 21 (twice) Chapter 2: verses 4 (twice), 12 (twice), 20 Chapter 3: verses 10, 13 Chapter 4: verses 11, 12, 13, 14
Elohim (god plural but referring to the One true God of Israel)	Chapter 1: verse 16 (twice) Chapter 2: verse 12
Shaddai (Almighty?)	Chapter 1: verses 20 and 21
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## SUMMARY OF THE BOOK OF RUTH

BIBLICAL PERIOD	#5 THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL			
FOCUS	RUTH ENTRUSTS HER LIFE TO NAOMI & NAOMI'S GOD		RUTH ENTRUSTS HER LIFE TO BOAZ & THE GOD OF ISRAEL	
COVENANT	THE SINAI COVENANT			
SCRIPTURE	1:1-----1:19-----3:1-----4:1-----4:22			
DIVISION OF TEXT	RUTH AND NAOMI		RUTH AND BOAZ	
TOPIC	Introduction: Naomi's family is destroyed in the deaths of her husband and sons	Ruth unites herself to Naomi and travels to Israel	Ruth asks Boaz to become her Go'el Haddam, "Blood Redeemer"	Conclusion: Naomi's family is restored in the birth of Obed, son of Ruth and Boaz
LOCATION	MOAB	ISRAEL: the fields of Bethlehem in Judah	ISRAEL: The threshing floor of Bethlehem and the gates of the town	ISRAEL: Boaz's home in Bethlehem
TIME	c. 1100 BC during the latter age of the Judges and prior to the kingship of Saul; c. 12 years from journey to Moab to birth of Naomi's grandson			

### TIME LINE BC: JUDGES-----UNITED KINGDOM ---DIVIDED KINGDOM

Northern Kingdom = Israel / Southern Kingdom = Judah

c. 1300	c.1200	1100	1050	1000	930	722	587/6
Conquest of Canaan	c. Period of the Judges		Saul	David / Soloman	Rehoboam= Civil War	Assyria destroys Israel	Babylon destroys Judah
		/	<b>Ruth and Boaz</b>	builds the Temple			



**ISRAEL'S LITURGICAL AND  
CIVIL CALENDAR YEAR**

Month	Liturgical year order	Civil year order	Modern equivalent	Feast days & Agricultural Season (+ = God ordained annual and ++ pilgrim feasts * = national feasts)
Aviv/Abib (Nisan)	1	7	March/April	+Passover 14 <sup>th</sup> , ++Unleavened Bread 15-21 <sup>st</sup> (sacred assembly on 15 <sup>th</sup> and 21 <sup>st</sup> ) , +Firstfruits on Sunday of Unleavened Bread holy week. Spring equinox 15 <sup>th</sup> . The "Latter rains"& flood season, beginning of barley and flax harvest
Ziv (Iyyar)	2	8	April/May	Dry season, apricots ripen
Sivan	3	9	May/June	++Weeks (Pentecost) 50 days from Firstfruits as ancients counted; wheat harvest, dry winds, early fig harvest, grapes ripen
Tammuz	4	10	June/July	Hot, dry season: grape harvest
Ab	5	11	July/Aug.	Hot, olive harvest
Elul	6	12	Aug./Sept.	Dates and summer figs
Ethanim (Tishri)	7	1	Sept./Oct.	+Trumpets = 1 <sup>st</sup> , +Day of Atonement =10 <sup>th</sup> ++Booths (Tabernacles) = 15- 21 <sup>st</sup> & 22 <sup>nd</sup> sacred assembly; Fall equinox 15 <sup>th</sup> ; "Former (early) rains," plowing & seed time
Bul (Heshvan)	8	2	Oct./Nov.	Rains, winter figs, wheat and barley sown
Chislev	9	3	Nov./Dec.	*Hanukkah (feast of dedication); winter begins
Tebeth	10	4	Dec./Jan.	Coldest month, rains and snow in mountains
Sebat	11	5	Jan./Feb.	Growing warmer, almond trees in bloom
Adar	12	6	Feb./March	*Purim; spring: "Latter rains" begin, citrus & fruit harvest

Seven annual feasts are God ordained feasts (Ex 12:1-28; 43-51; 13:1-10; Lev 23:5-44; Num 28:16-29:39) including three pilgrim feasts; \*Hanukkah and Purim are national feasts proclaimed by the people and are not God ordained (1 Mac 4:36-61; 2 Mac 10:1-8; Esther 9:20-32). The Feasts of Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles fell respectively near the spring and fall equinoxes.



# ***Ruth's Family Tree***

