

RUTH: Finding **My True Love**



Betty Johansen

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My Life in Moab



My name is Ruth. I was born in the country of Moab, just across the Dead Sea from Israel. Moab and Israel are enemies, so I never wanted to live there.

My friends and I were like other girls. We loved to talk about marrying a handsome man and raising children. I used to dream about the man I would marry. I wanted him to be strong and kind and good. "You will be my own true love," I used to whisper into the night, "and we will be happy forever."

The one thing my friends and I never talked about was marrying a foreigner.

When Elimelech and Naomi moved to my town from Bethlehem in the country of Israel, they brought their two handsome sons. We girls used to look at Mahlon and Chilion and giggle, but none of us wanted to marry them! The idea was unthinkable!

I cried when my father told me he had arranged for me to marry Mahlon. "Oh no!" I cried. "Someday, they will go back to Israel, and I will have to go with them if I marry Mahlon."

But my father just shook his head. "It is already decided," he said. And before I knew it, I was married to Mahlon, and my friend Orpah was married to Chilion.



Marriage to Mahlon

The wedding was very sad because my father-in-law, Elimelech, had died. Naomi cried a lot, and Chilion and Mahlon missed their father terribly.

I thought I would hate being married to Mahlon. I was wrong. Mahlon was kind to me, and I loved his family. I had never met anyone like his mother, Naomi. Naomi told me about the God of Israel. He is a very powerful God and had done wonderful miracles to save Israel from the cruel Pharaoh in Egypt. I loved hearing stories about Him.

The gods of Moab were cruel and hateful. They made all kinds of horrid demands, but the worst was that little children were sometimes given as offerings to win their favor. What if they wanted one of my children one day? Just thinking about their ugly stone faces made my skin crawl!



Five Fast Years

My life was busy. Naomi taught me how to be a good, happy wife. Together, we cooked, cleaned, decorated our home, made clothing, carried water, and helped in the fields. With so much to do, time flew by. One morning I woke up and realized it was my fifth wedding anniversary. Five years and I had no children! It was humiliating. I was a failure as a wife!

Naomi caught me sobbing on my bed that day. "What's wrong, child?" she cried. "You should be happy on this day of remembrance. Aren't you happy with my son?"

"Of course I am!" I replied. But I couldn't bear to tell her why I was so sad. I buried my head in my arms and refused to look at her.

"Okay, up with you," she insisted. "Let's go to the kitchen and make a delicious meal to celebrate our happy memories of your wedding day. While we work, you can tell me what's troubling you."

She convinced me, and I did tell her. But it was a mistake. It made Naomi sadder than I had ever seen her.