

From Moab to Bethlehem

A Map for the Book of Ruth

The whole book of Ruth takes place in a very small part of the world. Naomi's family left Bethlehem for Moab during a famine (Ruth 1:1-2). After about ten years there (Ruth 1:4), Naomi and Ruth walked back (Ruth 1:19).



About the Journey

The route is our best guess. The Bible does not say where in Moab the family lived or which road Naomi and Ruth took. A common way was to go north around the Salt Sea and cross the Jordan River near Jericho.

How far? Probably about 50 miles, depending on where they started. On foot over rough ground, that could take anywhere from several days to more than a week.

Down and back up. Moab sits on a plateau about 3,000 feet high, and Bethlehem is in the hills at about 2,500 feet. Between them lies the Salt Sea, the lowest land on earth, more than 1,300 feet below sea level. Two widows made that descent and climb with no one to protect them.

The Story in Four Places

Moab (chapter 1). A foreign country east of the Salt Sea. Naomi's husband and both of her sons die here.

The fields of Bethlehem (chapter 2). Ruth gathers leftover grain and meets Boaz.

The threshing floor (chapter 3). A flat, open-air area near town where harvested grain was separated from the stalks. Ruth asks Boaz to be her family's redeemer.

The city gate (chapter 4). Where the town's leaders met to settle legal matters. Boaz makes it official.

Chapters 2 through 4 all happen in and around Bethlehem. On a clear day, the hills of Moab can be seen from there.