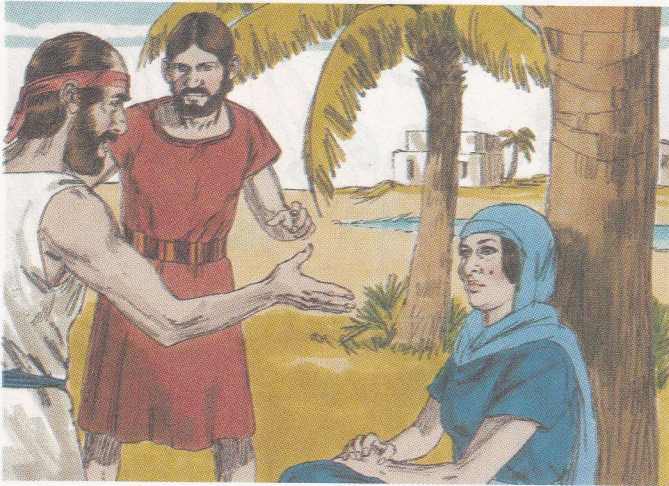


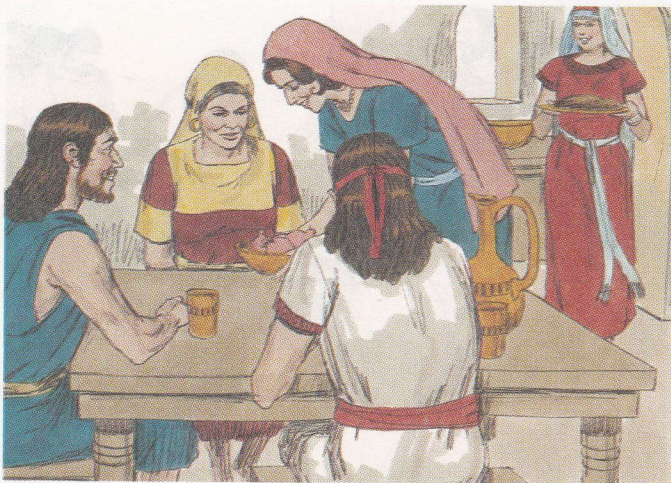
Ruth Is Loyal



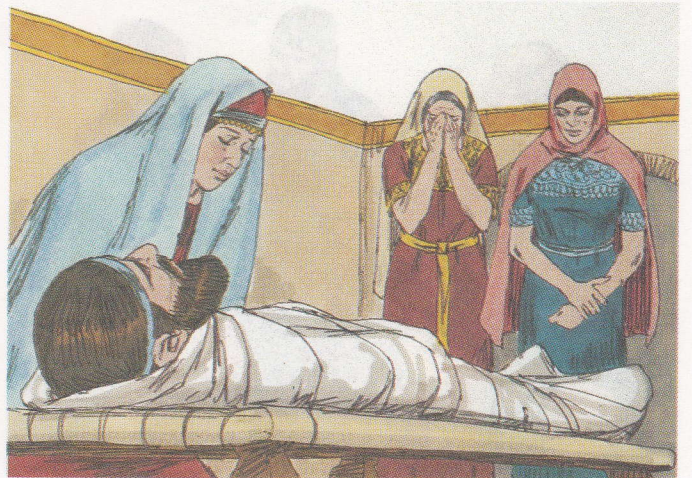
1 In the days when Israel was still ruled by judges — that is, before there was a king — there was a famine in the land.



2 An Israelite named Elimelech, who lived in Bethlehem of Judah, decided to take his wife and two sons and live for a while in the land of Moab, where there was food.



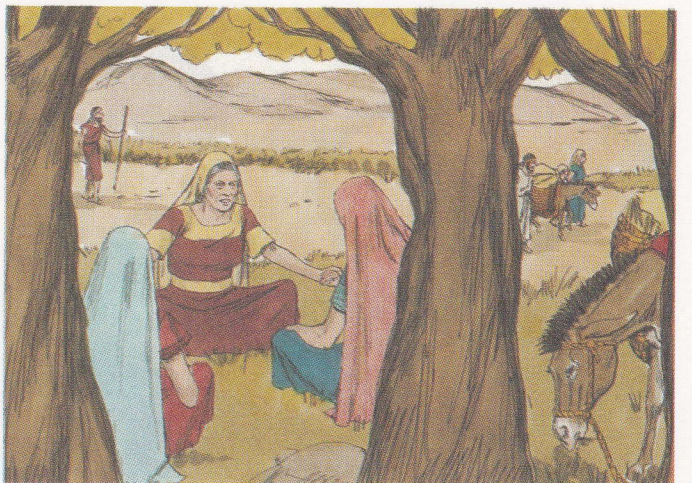
3 While living in Moab, Elimelech died. Naomi was left alone with her two sons. After a time, the sons married Moabite girls named Orpah and Ruth.



4 About ten years later the two sons also died. Now Naomi was left without husband or sons — just two foreign daughters-in-law.



5 Time — and the famine — passed. Naomi heard that the Lord had blessed the Israelites with good crops. She decided to take her daughters-in-law and return to her home in Bethlehem.



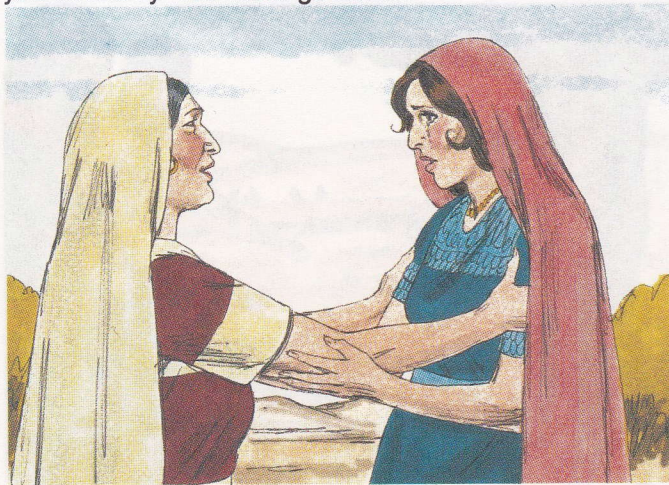
6 On the way, Naomi changed her mind. “Go back to your homes,” she said. “May the Lord be good to you as you have been to me. May you marry again and have your own homes.”



7 Naomi then kissed them goodbye, but they began to cry and said, "No! We will go with you!" But Naomi said, "I am too old to have other sons for you to marry. You must go home."



8 Again they started crying. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and went back to the home of her parents. Ruth, however, kept holding onto Naomi.



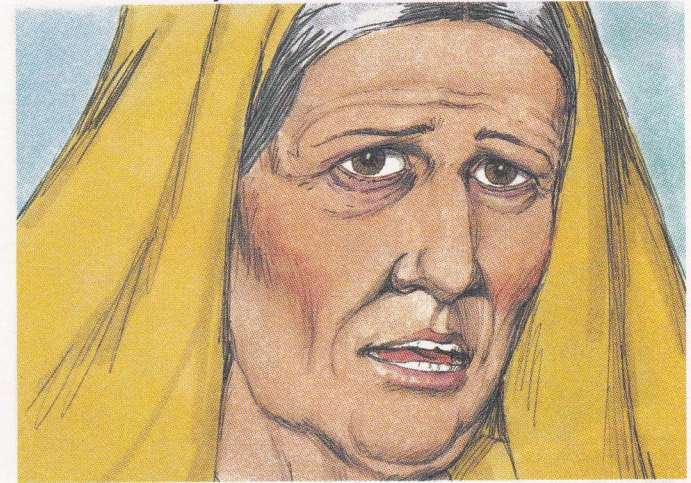
9 "Ruth, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods," said Naomi. "Go back with her."



10 Ruth said: "Don't ask me to leave you! Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Wherever you die, I will die."



11 Seeing that Ruth was determined to go with her, Naomi said nothing more. Finally they arrived at Bethlehem. Everyone was very excited to see them and exclaimed, "Is it really Naomi?"



12 Naomi said, "Don't call me 'Naomi' (pleasant) but call me 'Mara' (bitter), because God has made my life bitter. When I left here, I had plenty, but the Lord has brought me back without a thing."