

Colliding
with
Destiny

FINDING HOPE IN THE
LEGACY OF RUTH

SARAH JAKES



BETHANYHOUSE

a division of Baker Publishing Group
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Sarah Jakes, *Colliding with Destiny*
Bethany House, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2013, 2014. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

© 2013, 2014 by Sarah D. Jakes, LLC

The 2014 edition is expanded from the 2013 edition

Published by Bethany House Publishers
11400 Hampshire Avenue South
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438
www.bethanyhouse.com

Bethany House Publishers is a division of
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Jakes, Sarah.

Colliding with destiny : finding hope in the legacy of Ruth / Sarah Jakes.
pages cm

Summary: "Sarah Jakes uses the biblical book of Ruth to show women how the most painful times in life can be the most pivotal, propelling them into a destiny they'd never imagined"— Provided by publisher.

ISBN 978-0-7642-1211-6 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN 978-0-7642-1289-5 (international trade paper : alk. paper)

1. Bible. Ruth—Devotional literature. I. Title.

BS1315.54.J35 2014

222'.3506—dc23

2014017426

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Scripture quotations identified NASB are from the New American Standard Bible®, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations identified NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations identified NLT are from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Cover design by LOOK Design Studio

Author is represented by Dupree/Miller & Associates

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Sarah Jakes, *Colliding with Destiny*
Bethany House, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2013, 2014. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

*Because I needed to believe I wasn't alone,
I found a woman who went ahead of us all
and showed that grace survives
our most broken moments.*

Contents

- Introduction 9
1. Life Doesn't Always Go As Planned 15
 2. Unmasking the Lone Ranger 23
 3. Keep the Faith 31
 4. Don't Let Life Change Your Name 37
 5. Stick With What You Know 45
 6. Do What You Can 53
 7. You Never Know Who's Watching 61
 8. Your Enemy Becomes Your Footstool 69
 9. He Knew You Before He Blessed You 75
 10. Surpass Them All 81
 11. There Will Be an Overflow 89

Contents

12. Make Others Believe 95
13. Extra Protection 103
14. The Beginning of the End 109
15. It's Time to Try Again 117
16. Respect Those Who Came Before You 123
17. Be Vulnerable 129
18. Your Blessing Is in Your Obedience 135
19. Those Who Love You Will Protect You 141
20. Relationships Are Investments 149
21. Wait Patiently 155
22. God Will Put Like-Minded People in Your Life 161
23. Set Your Standards 167
24. Be Honest 173
25. It's Already Done 179
26. "I Know You, and I Still Chose You" 185
27. Witness the Redemption 191
28. From Redemption to Restoration 197
29. It's Not About You 203
30. Collide With Your Destiny 209

Introduction

Now that we're adults, my brother and I have created this new tradition. Whenever we stay at my parents' home, we take the opportunity to spend some quality time together. He loves being an uncle to my kids, and I love for them to get to know him. So after the kids have finished their homework, had supper, and taken their baths, we all settle in to relax together. Whether it's watching something on television, spending time talking about each other's day, dancing around to music, or play fighting, we always have fun.

Sometimes we even turn our hanging out into a team sport! Yes, the girls versus the boys, sibling teams versus sibling teams, or school versus school. Everything except for the play fights—that comes down to Malachi, my son, and Dexter, my brother. I just commentate or instigate, proving an important role in the morale of the fight.

One evening recently, we were trying to teach Malachi the art of boxing. Dexter and I would emulate the proper stance, bounce, and posture. But we also stressed the most important factors:

heart and attitude. Turning the family room into a makeshift boxing ring, we all burst into laughter as my six-foot-four little brother and five-foot-three son playfully squared off. Imitating Floyd Mayweather and Muhammad Ali, they both turned it all the way on!

After they engaged in this lighthearted contest, I again tried to show Malachi a boxer's stance. At ten years old, he had never seen an actual fight, so he had no clue what to do.

"Watch this," I said and gave my best Laila Ali impression. *Bounce, bounce. Bob, weave. Uppercut. Jab, jab. Bounce. Weave.* My son, timid in nature, looked up at me with wide eyes.

"But, Mom, I can't even reach his face!" he exclaimed.

I looked at him and smiled. But before I opened my mouth to reply, I heard, "I CAN REACH HIS FACE, MAMA!"

I looked down at my three-year-old, three-foot-high daughter, Makenzie. In perfect Laila Ali stance, down to the rhythm of her bounce, Makenzie was prepared to take on Dex. She had been watching us the whole time. Never recognizing their differences in size, she was ready to face the challenge.

Makenzie had no concept of how much smaller she was in comparison to her competition. All she knew was that she had the heart to fight the battle. It didn't occur to her to be intimidated by someone bigger.

What if we dared to believe with the heart of a child?

Somewhere along the path of life, we start to size up the competition. We start to look at how big the challenge before us is and get discouraged. Little by little, the punches of life begin to bruise our hope. We stop fighting as hard as we once did because we don't believe we can win anymore. We don't block very well because we're expecting the knockout that will end it all. We stop living, out of fear.

Fear is the most shameful ghost of them all. Painful memories of past fights convince us that some things are not worth the risk

of fighting at all. We allow our past to dictate our every move. We stand in place and wait for life to hit us again.

Certainly we're taught to always keep the faith. But when life's blows rock us to our core, it's hard to remember that our pain has a purpose. When the aches of what happened, what should have happened, and what could have happened haunt our every decision, keeping the faith can be a challenge.

If disappointments have kept you from being your true self, then this book is for you. My friend, please allow me to share with you the story of Ruth—*all of her story*, not just the happy ending. We often hear of Ruth having her Boaz, but we rarely discuss the collisions she faced on the road to her destiny. While it's imperative that we remember her legacy, we can only give it value if we see the price she paid for it.

Could it be that if you dare to live again, your story doesn't have to be associated with what broke you? That by doing whatever it takes to survive, you will sow seeds of redemption into your future?

Ruth's story begins with her being an outcast. Shunned in her homeland of Moab because she left the religion of the land and embraced her husband's beliefs, Ruth remained committed to her new husband and new God. And then again, when she returned to her mother-in-law's hometown, Bethlehem, she was shunned for being a foreigner from a pagan land. She carried the burdens of both who she was and who she used to be.

When Ruth worshiped with her husband's family in her hometown, there was a religious differentiation that caused her to be an outcast. She no longer bowed to their idols or prayed to their false gods. In Bethlehem, she was talked about because of her mystery. It was what people didn't know about her that intrigued them the most. She seemed like them, but on the inside she was not the same.

Ruth knew that sometimes it's our silent heartaches, the ones that bring tears to our eyes and make us want to drown the pain,

that often separate us from others. But she also knew the faithfulness of her Lord, the ways He transformed her pain into His perfection. The trials that Ruth endured on the way to her collision with destiny offer hope to each of us. Whether what has broken you can be seen by the world or is a silent burden you whisper in your pillowcase at night, God can still use your struggle to propel you to your destiny!

Ruth's story has inspired me to share this book with you to help aid you on your journey of colliding with divine destiny. It is my prayer that it will release clues from God that lead you back to Him like never before. It is my hope that your spirit will be refreshed, uplifted, and upheld as you move forward to the treasure that awaits you.

While studying the book of Ruth, I was reminded that God can restore life's most damaging collisions. In my time with Ruth, I learned that survival is so much more than a perky smile and dozens of friends. It's more than pretending to have it all together on the outside. Survival just means you do what you can with what you have left. And trust that God will do the rest.

Whether your heart has been broken because love had a devastating ending for you or your body has been ravaged by a painful disease, this book is for you. Or maybe you have a past you feel you can't escape. Maybe you're trying to reinvent yourself after life has dealt you its hardest blow. Maybe each day is an excruciating battle with depression. Maybe you're surrounded by other people while suffering the inner loneliness of not belonging. No matter what it is, you *will* have something in common with Ruth.

Imagine yourself being free. Bright-eyed, three-year-old Makenzie/Laila Ali free. Imagine looking at the size of life's battles without fear. What if you trust me and begin to believe that the barrier that blocked you from your destiny can be the platform God uses to propel you into your destiny? No longer will you be ruled by an imperfect past, difficult present, or grim future.

Think you'll have to be superwoman to do it? Spend thousands of dollars and dozens of years to get there? Learn eight languages to understand it? You're wrong!

I can show you one woman who faced many trials. Some because of the decisions she made and others because she was a victim of the choices of others. Still, she found a way to continue on her journey.

Survival can be a tricky road. It can be difficult to remember why we must press forward. Life can numb us so much we no longer want to remember who we are. If you're reading this book, it's because you want to remember. You want to try to survive again.

You want to believe that there is life after the memories . . . the pain . . . the rumors . . . and the lies. You want to get through today trusting that tomorrow will be better. You don't know how you'll keep going, only that you can't stop now. If these ring true, then you are on the same journey of survival that became the red carpet for Ruth's coming-out party.

Can you feel it? God is already beginning to restore you. With His help, please allow me to guide you through the story of Ruth so that you, too, can experience your collision with destiny.



Life Doesn't Always Go As Planned

Just because you make a change for the better doesn't mean you escape trouble. It only means your trouble has a promise.

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

Ruth 1:1-5



We make idols out of so many things in our lives. Whether we're just getting by or finally getting ahead, we discover that cars, clothes, careers, relationships, and money all have a way of clouding our vision, pulling our focus away from God. Eventually, we learn that we cannot serve two masters. We must choose and prioritize what's most important to us. We have to draw the line between enjoying things and worshiping things.

In fact, it's usually not until we encounter trouble that we reassess what we consider valuable and learn that things are just that—things. Whether it's divorce, loss of income, death of a loved one, or some other life-changing moment, we finally find ourselves at a crossroads. What do we do when life doesn't go as planned? Will we become bitter? Or will we seek God in the midst of our loss and become better?

Ruth, a Moabite woman, grew up practicing the religion of her land. Although she was raised to worship many gods, there was only One who could prepare her for her destiny. When Ruth married Mahlon, she didn't marry just him. She married his God. Finding fulfillment in her marriage and her new faith, Ruth appeared to be living her dream.

We aren't told how much they enjoyed each other, but it seems clear from her grief that Ruth experienced an abiding love with

her husband. She may have recognized her good fortune, or she might have taken it for granted. Regardless, she enjoyed ten years of living her dream—until her dream became her nightmare.

Ruth had to have felt like her world had shattered into thousands of irretrievable pieces. How could this have happened? This was not what she had expected! And it wasn't just her life that seemed to be crumbling to dust. Her father-in-law had already died, leaving behind his wife, Naomi, Ruth's beloved mother-in-law. Mahlon's brother also died. Now their family had no men to protect and provide for them. Ruth obviously had some hard choices before her.

What do you do when life doesn't go as planned? You've finally sown all the right seeds, yet all you reap in return is heartache. We hardly ever question God when things go as we want them to. But when we face trouble, we want answers. Where is God in the midst of our life's most painful disappointment?

Many times we feel so stunned by the blows we receive that we feel abandoned by God. How could He love us as His children yet allow these things to happen? Couldn't He have done something to prevent us from experiencing the bitter pain of our loss? Why would He allow this?

It's so easy to see Him when things are going our way. But are you willing to do the work it takes to discover Him in the midst of your disasters? He never promised there wouldn't be trials. He never promised we wouldn't have to wipe away some tears along the way.

What He has promised us is that we are not tested with any obstacle we can't overcome. And we will never have to face the harsh winds of life alone. God is there with us and has equipped us—long before He trusted us with the struggle. He knows better than we do what we can handle. He also knows what's required for us to mature into the masterpieces He designed.

My son is in the fifth grade, and I can already tell how his child-like tendencies are changing into full-blown adolescence. Before

my very eyes my little boy is becoming a teen. I can tell in the way his thoughts are evolving and his mannerisms are changing.

I am usually the youngest mom at his class parties. To his peers this somehow makes me the coolest mom. It makes me the most afraid. I know too well the results of peer pressure. I can only imagine how my parents felt when they learned he was coming into the world—when I was barely a teen myself. On one side, their ministry was rising; on the other side, life was not going as planned.

Their courage during that time taught me a lesson I utilize now that I'm watching my son mature. You don't broadcast every fear. You don't give space to negativity when your life isn't going as planned. You have to be careful who you allow to speak into your life when you're most vulnerable. In your most difficult days you must remember to focus on the things that make you feel closest to God. When I was first pregnant with my son, I watched my parents go to church every Sunday to worship at His feet. Only a few people in the room knew in those early days, when the wound was yet fresh. My parents didn't have to expose their wound to people in order to give it to God. The beauty of prayer is that your heart is able to connect so purely with God. Our brokenness is most beautiful when we're in His presence. While Ruth was facing a tragic time in her life, she'd made a commitment to God over a decade prior.

When we decide to make Him ruler of our lives, we do so knowing that each day may not be easy, but each will serve a purpose. Just as Ruth could not anticipate that the death of her husband would be the beginning of her new life, we also lose sight of the fact that our troubles are only temporary. Even after having and losing it all, we must remember that whatever—or whomever—we lost, we have not lost God.

Sometimes He removes all the distractions from our lives so that we can focus solely on Him. Do not give up when life doesn't go as planned. Instead, remember that all things work together

for our good when we live a Christ-led life (see Romans 8:28). The things that cause us the most pain are usually the roots that develop our true purpose. So weep, feel the pain, find a release for your anger, and sort through all the grief, but don't give up on God. He's there in the midst of it all.

Journal

As little girls, we dream about all the wonderful things we will do as adults. Often these include things like obtaining our education, falling in love, getting married, having children, and building a career. We imagine how perfect our lives will be when we grow up, our vision colored by our own innocence.

But soon enough we discover the many obstacles that life throws our way. Our education and career plans get put on hold. We fall in love but can't enjoy the level of trust we once hoped for in a husband. We struggle to conceive children or wrestle with the decision not to have them. We learn that parenting a baby doll is so much easier than the beautiful, high-maintenance real thing.

In short, we eventually learn we must recalibrate our expectations and turn our attention to who God made us to be, not the well-intentioned goals by which we used to define ourselves. We have to learn to rely on Him, which is bound to take us out of our comfort zone.

When you were younger, what was the plan you had for your life?

What has gotten in the way of this plan being realized?

How has the pain of losing your plan affected you?

How have your views on God changed as a result of the unexpected shift?

Prayer

God, I admit I'm lost, hurt, and confused. I've remained silent for too long, and now it's time to give my pain a voice. It's time for me to catch my breath and face what's ahead. I know I must accept that I'm broken before I can be healed. I need You, Lord. And like Ruth, I'm willing to follow You to my divine destiny. Amen.