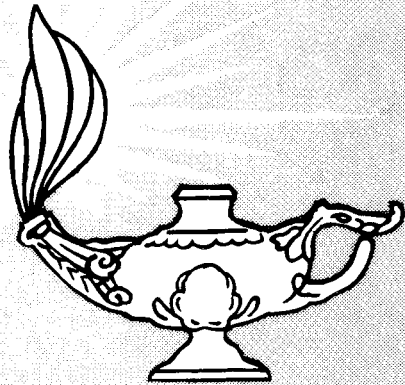
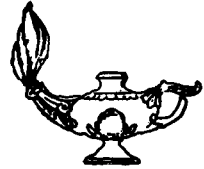


Christadelphian Expositor



THE BOOK OF RUTH

**THE
CHRISTADELPHIAN
EXPOSITOR**



**A VERSE-BY-VERSE EXPOSITION
OF THE SCRIPTURES**

by
H. P. Mansfield

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**THE
BOOK OF RUTH**

“And He said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth”.

Isaiah 49:6

Call to the Gentiles

-John 10:16- And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

Eph. 3:3-6

Foreword

Two books of the Bible are named after women and present interesting points of comparison and contrast: Ruth and Esther. The former is a record of faithful submission to duty in the humblest of circumstances; the latter is a story of faithful courage set on the background of political intrigue, in the court of the greatest monarch of his day. The former introduces us to a servant, the latter to a queen. The former tells of the experience of a Gentile among Jews; the latter of a Jewess among Gentiles. The former shows how a Gentile married a Jew; the latter how a Jewess married a Gentile. Both are historical narratives selected by the Spirit to typify the future purposes of Yahweh in Christ. Therefore, both have a doctrinal and a prophetic significance far beyond the importance of the records themselves.

The Story of Ruth universally appeals because in it virtue triumphs, and loving service is adequately rewarded.

But there is much more in the book than that. In type it sets forth principles of redemption that are the very foundation of the work of Yahweh in Christ. As we come to admire the strong, courteous, wealthy Boaz who was not above humbling himself as a servant in order to assist and uplift the poor Gentile maiden who gleaned in his field, we see foreshadowed the character and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the virtues of sweet Ruth, we have a glimpse of those appealing qualities that should be cultivated by Gentile believers who desire to form a part of the multitudinous Bride of Christ, and who appreciate the privilege of so doing. In the faithful and lovable Naomi, who patiently bore with distress and adversity to reap a great joy, and who, in common with Ruth, benefited from the redemptive work effected by Boaz, there is typified the Abrahamic covenant, and those of Israel who remained faithful to it, and so form the Jewish sheep among the fold of Christ (John 10:16).

The book is history as well as parable. The incidents were selected and recorded by the Spirit to illustrate the "revelation of the secret . . . which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it was after revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:3-6). Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz were so moved by the teaching of Yahweh as to manifest divine qualities in their lives in such a way as to illustrate His purpose as Redeemer in the seed who should come. The drama of their lives was such as to exhibit the drama of the divine plan of redemption. Ruth herself shows that Gentiles could believe in the true God, and could be

incorporated into the covenant people on a basis of equality. The book itself is an outstanding and moving example of the overshadowing care of Yahweh on behalf of His people.

The position of *The Book of Ruth* in the Bible is appropriate to the story it unfolds. Set between *Judges* and *Samuel*, it is like a bridge linking the records of those two books. The anarchy of the times of the Judges is thus joined in the events that finally led to the establishment of the Kingdom. The setting of *The Book of Ruth* when considered as a type foreshadowing the future suggests that at a time when Israel would fall into a state of spiritual anarchy, the Gospel would be proclaimed to Gentiles as preliminary to the establishing of the Kingdom of God on earth. *The Book of Ruth* thus forms a supplement to *The Book of Judges*, though the story it tells is in sharp contrast to the record of violence and evil recorded therein. *The Book of Judges records the national history of the times. It describes the disorders and dangers of a republic without an effective magistracy, and a theocracy where frequently Yahweh was dethroned from the hearts of His people, with the result that there "was no king in Israel; everyone did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25).* The book narrates periods of savage violence, national misery, and widespread apostasy, during which true worship deteriorated to a mere legal approach that destroyed its true spirit, and rested on self-justification.

Upon such a background, the story of Ruth is projected as a shining light in the midst of spiritual darkness. It reveals that though the national history was one of chaos and wickedness, there were those who still remained faithful to the pure principles of the Truth; that in spite of the prevailing violence and apostasy, there were faithful men like Boaz, selfless women like Ruth and Naomi, and establishments in the land where master and servants were joined together in the "one faith" as in the field of Boaz.

These facts are comforting; not only for those times, but for all times. Periods of anarchy and evil when the ways of truth and righteousness are abandoned, are not incidental to the period of the Judges only; they can erupt at any time. The basic failure of that epoch is revealed in the statement of the last verse of Judges, a verse that provides an introduction to *The Book of Ruth*: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). In fact, there should have been a King to Whom all should have been submissive: and that King should have been Yahweh (Judges 8:23). But, instead, anarchy reigned. There was no nominal renunciation of Yahweh, no public and blatant atheism, no boastful impiety; but something deadlier and more insidious: the retaining of God as a sign or a symbol, but paying no heed to Him as King; worshipping Him in outward forms, but with no inward power. Moses had warned Israel not to act as they did in the land: "Ye shall not do . . . every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes" (Deuteronomy 12:8). But his command was ignored. The challenge is whether we, in similar circum-

stances, can exhibit the example of faith and courage revealed by the main characters in *The Book of Ruth*.

The story of Ruth can be most cheering for those who are oppressed and depressed with prevailing evils. As they ponder its meaning, and grasp its significance, they can be uplifted with the realisation that they are not without a Redeemer who can help. With Job they can say: "I know that my Redeemer liveth . . ." (Job 19:14,25).

Reading *The Book of Ruth* forms part of the Jewish celebration of Pentecost which also commemorates the goodness of Yahweh. The incidents recorded in the book occurred about the time when faithful Israelites were about to celebrate that feast (cp. Ruth 2:23).

By so doing, Israelites have been reminded year after year that the great-grandmother of their most illustrious King (David) was a Moabitess (Ruth 4:22), which race was excluded from the congregation of Yahweh by the Law (Deuteronomy 23:3). When the jealous exclusiveness of Judaism is considered, this fact argues the truth, and the divine inspiration of *The Book of Ruth*. Only the authority of Yahweh could find such unstinting portrayal of a foreigner as the focus of admiration. If the book were a mere human production, Ruth undoubtedly would have been represented as a Jewess. By this book, therefore, Yahweh taught that Gentiles can find a place in His plan of salvation, equally with Jews; but that the way open to that end is beyond the ability of the Law (see Galatians 3:8-14); it is the revelation and appeal of grace.

It is part of the remarkable drama of the divine purpose, that from out of the humble service of a poverty-ridden Gentile maiden of a despised race, came the future Redeemer and King of mankind. From the Gentile maiden, united to the hope of Israel, came David and Christ. As the book provides a partial lineage of David, and thus of Christ, we learn that Gentile blood was in the one who became the redeemer of all mankind. And as though as to suitably reward the Gentile Ruth for her faithful ministrations to that end, through Christ, who descended from her, has been drawn an innumerable company of Gentiles, to lay hold upon the hope of Israel, and so to walk in the footsteps of faithful Ruth.

There is great value in the study of this book. It will not only reveal the humble condescension of Christ as Redeemer and so draw the reader closer to him, but it will also reveal in the qualities of Ruth those attributes that he can develop which will please Christ. Our exposition provides notes on the verses, rather than attempting to exhaust the subject in the form of an essay. By this means, it is designed to draw the reader to the Scriptures themselves, for therein are to be found the richest rewards of study. Let him prayerfully read with earnest attention this delightful book, and he will find himself blessed indeed in the treasures of wisdom it will unfold.

H. P. Mansfield — May, 1979



Introduction

THE STORY OF RUTH AN IMMORTAL RECORD OF LOVELINESS AND CHARM SETTING FORWARD THE PRINCIPLES OF REDEMPTION

THE SETTING OF THE BOOK

The Book of Ruth is historically important as providing the lineage of David through the whole period of the rule of the Judges from Salmon who fought under Joshua, to Jesse the Bethlehemite, the father of David (1 Sam. 16:1).

As such, it supplies a vital link in tracing the genealogy of the Lord (Matt. 1:1,5).

The care with which this narrative was preserved through so many centuries before Christ is an evidence of the Providence of Yahweh to Whom are known all things "from the beginning of the world", for it links the record of David with that of Christ.

The book is also important as illustrating that not all of Israel were brought under the degrading influence of the national environment in the days of the Judges. The circumstances of Boaz, Naomi and Ruth illustrate that even in times of great wickedness, or apostasy, individuals, or minority groups, do not have to succumb to their environment. If they manifest sufficient faith, courage and determination, they can lift themselves above it, and maintain a consistent walk before their God in the way that He will approve.

The Book, from its contents, as well as by its position in the canon of Scripture, forms a kind of appendix to *The Book of Judges*. It is included almost as an afterthought, as though to remind readers that circumstances may not be as completely hopeless as they may first appear; so that the story can act as an encouragement to them to seek the help of Yahweh in their distress. Let us face up to the problems of life as faithfully and courageously as did Naomi, Ruth or Boaz, and the success that they ultimately achieved in their circumstances, will be enjoyed by those who follow their example in this age.

There appears to be purpose and design, not only in what the books of the Bible record in regard to the revelation of Yahweh, but also in their very setting in Scripture. For example, the five books of Moses set forth the parable of the Pentateuch in the following manner:

- Genesis:** speaks of Ruin and Divine selection through Abraham.
- Exodus:** speaks of Separation as Israel is drawn out of Egypt.
- Leviticus:** speaks of Fellowship with Yahweh established on the basis of sacrifice.
- Numbers:** speaks of Divine grace in His Providence and Guidance illustrated by His overshadowing care of Israel in the wilderness.
- Deuteronomy:** speaks of the attainment of Hope as the new generation of Israelites prepare to enter the land.

Consider also the parable revealed by the historical books that follow as foreshadowing in type the past and future work of Christ.

- Joshua:** by his conquests made it possible for Israelites to obtain their inheritance; leaving it to their individual initiative to do so. Christ did likewise by his personal conquest of sin and death.
- Judges:** pictures the anarchy and error that followed the death of Joshua; foreshadowing the evils that have afflicted Ecclesias since the days of Christ through the centuries to the present.
- Ruth:** dramatises the faithfulness of minority groups and individuals who refuse to capitulate to anarchy or error; and in spite of circumstances, continue to render unto Yahweh that which is due to His holy name.
- Samuel:** the two books record the events that brought David to the throne and established the kingdom in power by conquest; foreshadowing Christ's coming conquests and restoration of the throne of David.
- Kings:** narrate the golden age of Israel's history, the glory under Solomon; whose peaceful reign foreshadows the coming Millennium.
- Chronicles:** outlines the setting up of the Temple service in its fulness; completing the national glory of the nation.

This five-fold division of the divine record (for Ruth is really an epilogue of Judges) foreshadows in sequence the future establishment of the Kingdom of God. The type anticipates the following developments:

- (1) — Christ's conquest of sin and death made it possible for any to obtain their inheritance (Joshua).
- (2) — Ecclesial life is largely a record of anarchy and error, during which minority groups only have succeeded (Judges and Ruth).
- (3) — Christ will return to re-establish the throne of David by conquest (Samuel).

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN EXPOSITOR

- (4) — **Christ will supervise the building of the House of Prayer for all nations (Kings).**
- (5) — **Christ will establish the Temple services and Theocratic rule of the Kingdom of God (Chronicles).**

Whether we accept the type or not, the overall order of events as narrated, foreshadows that order by which the perfection in Christ will be established in the earth.

In the midst of the great, dramatic events of the present, our personal redemption is of vital importance. In that regard *The Book of Ruth* can provide a direction and an incentive.

Outline & Analysis

AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

A man of Bethlehem named Elimelech, with his wife Naomi, and his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, leaves his own country in a time of famine, and goes to sojourn in the land of Moab. There he dies, and Naomi marries her two sons to two Moabitish women. Mahlon marries Ruth, and Chilion marries Orpah. In about ten years both these brethren die, and Naomi, accompanied by her two daughters in law, sets out to return to the land of Judah, she having heard that plenty is again restored to her country.

Arriving at the border of Moab, she suggests that her daughters return to their own country and kindred. Orpah takes her advice, and, after an affectionate parting, returns; but Ruth insists on accompanying her mother in law. They arrive in Bethlehem about the time of harvest; and Ruth goes out into the fields to glean for their support. The ground on which she finds herself belongs to Boaz, one of the relatives of Elimelech. Finding who she is, Boaz orders that she receive preferential treatment, and makes certain that she receives special care. On learning of this, Naomi perceives a divine overshadowing of the life of her daughter in law, and instructs her to seek Boaz in marriage as the Law provides. Boaz, recognising that as kinsman he has the right of marriage, is willing to accept Ruth, providing that a nearer kinsman, then living, should refuse. He makes application to the latter, who refuses to take Ruth, and surrenders his right to Boaz, according to the custom of the times, at the gate of Bethlehem before the elders of the city.

Boaz then takes Ruth to wife. She gives birth to Obed, who becomes the father of Jesse, the father of David. Thus from this Moabitess eventually comes the Redeemer of mankind. The book sets forth principles of redemption that are, and will be, fulfilled in Christ.

ANALYSIS

The four chapters of the Book of Ruth quite satisfactorily divide the book for us, for they record for steps in the drama of Ruth's life.

CHAPTER ONE: LOVE'S RESOLVE

— **Ruth's Noble Choice: She cleaves to Naomi in her sorrow.**

- a. Famine drives Elimelech into exile vv.1-2
- b. Death strikes three times vv.3-5
- c. Naomi decides to return..... vv.6-7
- d. Ruth and Orpah decide to return also vv.8-10
- e. Naomi warns of difficulties ahead vv.11-13
- f. Orpah turns back but Ruth refuses to leave Naomi vv.14-18
- g. Naomi and Ruth make their way to Bethlehemvv.19-22

CHAPTER TWO: LOVE'S RESPONSE:

— **Ruth's Faithful Service: She responds to Naomi's pressing need.**

- a. Ruth gleanes in the field of Boaz vv.1-3
- b. The relationship of Boaz with his workers vv.4-7
- c. Boaz extends kindness to Ruth vv.8-10
- d. Additional privileges given to Ruth vv.11-17
- e. Naomi's instructions to Ruth..... vv.18-23

CHAPTER THREE: LOVE'S REQUEST:

— **Ruth's Virtuous Appeal: She seeks the help of Boaz as Redeemer.**

- a. Naomi instructs Ruth to approach Boaz
as Redeemer..... vv.1-7
- b. Ruth's Humble Appeal vv.8-9
- c. The Gracious Response of Boaz vv.10-13
- d. Boaz' care for Ruth vv.14-15
- e. Naomi's advice to Ruth vv.16-18

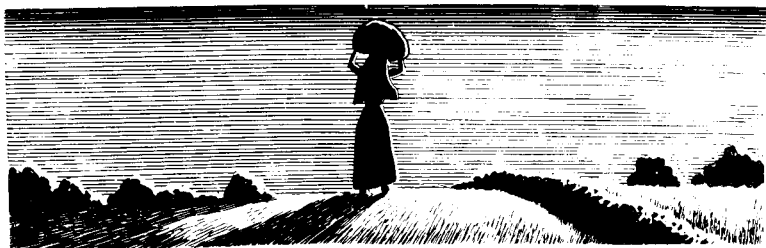
CHAPTER FOUR: LOVE'S REWARD

— **Ruth the beloved wife finds joy in her offspring**

- a. Boaz negotiates with Ruth's nearer kinsman for
her marriage vv.1-5
- b. The unnamed kinsman refuses Ruth..... vv.6-8
- c. Boaz assumes Responsibility of Redeemer vv.9-12
- d. Marriage: the final joy vv.13-17
- e. A king is born..... vv.18-22

The Book of Ruth

Verse by Verse Exposition





Elimelech leads his family away from Bethlehem (the house of bread) to Moab (the land of flesh). See Amos 9:11-12.

Chapter One

Love's Resolve



RUTH'S NOBLE CHOICE — SHE CLEAVES TO NAOMI IN HER SORROW

Famine drives Elimelech and his family from Bethlehem-Judah to seek a better life in Moab. But there he dies, and his two sons marry Moabitish women. Death again takes its toll of the family, and the two surviving sons of Elimelech likewise die, so that Naomi is bereft of both her husband and her sons. However, learning that the famine has broken in the land of Judah, she decides to return. Her two daughters in law return with her, until they reach the border of Moab. Here she urges them to return. Orpah does so, but Ruth cleaves to her mother in law with loving attachment and selfless dedication. So the two women continue on their way, and appropriately arrive in Bethlehem at the time of Passover. For them the circumstances lead to a time of great deliverance.

Famine Drives Elimelech Into Exile

— vv. 1-2

Famine in the land causes Elimelech to leave Bethlehem for the land of Moab, taking his wife and his two sons with him. The names of the latter imply that they were not robust in health, and perhaps Elimelech feared that they would succumb to the rigours of want that afflicted the land at that time. Lack of faith, therefore, is the motivating cause of his action.

VERSE 1

“**Now it came to pass**” — This phrase occurs six times in Scripture: Gen. 14:1; Ruth 1:1; Isa. 7:1; Jer. 1:3; Esther 1:1; 2 Sam. 21:1. It invariably introduces a time

of trouble which ends in blessing and deliverance. The book before us is no exception.

“**In the days when**” — This statement shows that the writer of *The Book of Ruth* was not contemporary with the events therein recorded. It was written after the birth of David (Ruth 4:22), and some have suggested that Samuel may have been the author. Be that as it may, the author lived after the events narrated, and felt the need to explain customs that were no longer practised in his day. See Ruth 4:6-8.

“**The Judges**” — “The days when the judges ruled” was a period of great evil and anarchy, and describe the national



background upon which the life of Ruth was enacted. Hidden behind the awful history of the times are the records of some who did not succumb to the evil environment of their day. They lived quiet lives of faith and service, unnoticed by the official historian, but known and seen by Yahweh in heaven. These humble men and women, living out their lives in obscurity, nevertheless manifested examples of great faith, and are recorded in "the book of life" (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5). Far better to have one's name inscribed therein, than in the honour rolls of a national history that knows no future.

"Ruled" — The Hebrew word *shaphan* signifies "to judge, discern, regulate, direct". The judges (*shopheim*) were not kings, dictators, or politicians, but rulers appointed by Yahweh to their high office, either over all Israel, or over some portion, or tribe. They were neither hereditary governors, nor democrats chosen by the people. They acted as vice-regents of Yahweh, as His deputies, ruling on His behalf. He was the real King in Israel (Judges 8:23), though the people often revolted against His rule. Therefore the record states: "There was no king in Israel" (Judges 18:1). We are not told at what precise time the events narrated in *The Book of Ruth* took place.

"That there was a famine in the land" — The Hebrew word for famine, *ra'ab* is derived from *raeb*, to hunger. There was great hunger throughout the land. It was the means whereby Yahweh punished His people because of sin (Lev. 26:18-20; Psalm 105:16). By that means also, Yahweh repaid Israel's faithless attitude in neglecting to pay their tithes in support of His service (see Proverbs 3:9-10; Amos 4:6-10; Malachi 3:8-11).

The worst famine, however, is a lack of the Word. The "famine in the days of the Judges" types the famine referred to by the prophet Amos: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord Yahweh, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Yahweh; and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of Yahweh, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst"

(Amos 8:11-13).

In consequence of the famine referred to by Amos, the Kingdom of God (or nation of Israel) was driven into exile. Its subjects sought everywhere but the right place for the word of Yahweh. They "ran to and fro to seek it," but were not able to find it because of their spiritual blindness. The dispersion of Israel was foreshadowed by Elimelech leaving Bethlehem to seek bread elsewhere.

"And a certain man of Bethlehem-Judah" — The description of Elimelech as "a certain man" indicates that he was well known in Bethlehem, and that he was a prominent citizen of the town. This is further suggested by the reception Naomi receives on her return, and the connection of the family with the wealthy and prominent Boaz.

Bethlehem-Judah was so named to discriminate from another Bethlehem in the land of Zebulun (Josh. 19:15; Jud. 12:8). "Bethlehem is about five miles south of Jerusalem, and 2,350 ft. above sea level. Its appearance is striking. It is situated on a narrow ridge, which projects eastward from the central mountain range, and breaks down in abrupt terraced slopes to the deep valleys on the north, east and south. The terraces, admirably kept, and covered with rows of olives, intermixed with the fig and vine, sweep in graceful curves round the ridge, regular as stairs. The valleys below are exceptionally fertile" (from *Syria and Palestine*). Bethlehem has been called, "the most attractive and significant of all the world's birth-places". Today it is situated in a fertile area of olives, pomegranates, almonds, figs and vines.

Bethlehem was the birthplace of three significant men: Benjamin, David and the Lord Jesus. Benjamin's name means, *the Son of the Right Hand*, and as such points forward to the Lord Jesus (Psa. 110:1). Rachel died in giving birth to Benjamin, and before her death called him Ben-oni, or *The Son of my sorrow*. But his father changed his name to Benjamin. In like manner, there was sorrow in Bethlehem at the birth of the Lord, and figuratively the weeping voice of Rachel was again heard (see Matt. 2:16-18). To Israel after the flesh, the Lord was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," but his Father called him to the heavens, and constituted him the *Son*

Opposite: Orpah's tearful farewell. She turns back — see Luke 9:62.

of His Right Hand.

Bethlehem-Judah signifies *The House of Bread and Praise*. It is also called "Ephrath" (Gen. 35:18-20), signifying *A Place of Fruit*, doubtless because of its well-known fertility. A lovely green ridge overshadows a small plain in which grain is sown, and this is pointed out as the place where Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz. Close to the traditional field, and about one mile east of Bethlehem, is the Shepherds' Field, where, it is suggested, the angels announced the birth of Messiah. Bethlehem was but a village, so small as not to be mentioned among the cities of Judah (Josh. 15); Micah describes it as "little among the thousands of Judah" (Mic. 5:2). Yet out of this insignificant place, Yahweh destined great things; for "out of thee shall he come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel." In like manner, "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty" (1 Cor. 1:27) in that He selects humble men and women for a glorious destiny yet to be revealed.

This was the place that Elimelech deserted. He left the *House of Bread and Praise* for the *Land of Sin and Death* (Moab) because to his fleshly vision, the latter looked so attractive.

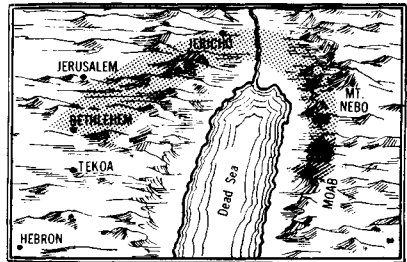
"Went to sojourn" — Lit. *To dwell as a foreigner or stranger*, from a root to *turn aside from the way*, i.e., of the inhabitants of the land. Apparently the original intention of Elimelech was to remain separate from the people of Moab; but gradually its influence involved him more and more. In similar manner, Israelites in dispersion, gradually assimilated the culture and teaching of the countries where they were driven, and finally adopted their manner of life.

Notice how the influence of their environment gradually dominated Elimelech and his family. The *sojourning* of v. 1, merges into the *continuing* of v. 2, and finally becomes the *dwelling there* of v. 4. Three steps of decline in which their original resolve to return was forgotten.

"In the country of Moab" — Moab was situated east and south-east of the Dead Sea, and occupied a stretch of land about 50 miles long by 30 miles wide. It consisted of high tablelands 2,300 to 3,300 feet above sea level, and could be clearly seen from Bethlehem. The soil is extremely fertile and produces large crops of wheat. It is known as the "green plateau," be-

cause of the rich, luxuriant growth of pasture and crops, especially in its well-watered canyons and hollows. Strictly the area was south of the River Arnon (Num. 21:13,26; Jud. 11:18).

Elimelech was influenced in his choice by the attractiveness of Moab, which however, was the country of one of Israel's most inveterate enemies.



"Moab" signifies *one derived from a father*, that is, one born of the flesh. He was the son of Lot's elder daughter, and was conceived in sin, through incest (Gen. 19:37). The Moabites were known for their hostility towards Israel. It was a king of Moab who hired the Babylonish prophet, Balaam, to curse Israel (Num. 22:7), and the daughters of Moab who caused the people to commit whoredom and bow down to pagan gods (Num. 25:1-3). Because of the unceasing hostility of the nation towards Israel, a Moabite was prohibited entrance into the congregation of Yahweh (Deut. 23:3). To the Hebrews, therefore, Moab was as the land of sin and death.

In leaving Bethlehem for Moab, therefore, Elimelech deserted the *House of Bread and Praise* for the *Land of the Flesh*, an action that can result only in sin and death. He enacted the course that the nation would adopt when it was taken into captivity.

In Christ's day, though the people claimed to be Israelites, they acted like Moabites. The Lord declared that they were not spiritually related to Yahweh, but were derived *from a father*, even the flesh. "Ye are of your father the devil", he told them (John 8:44).

"He and his wife, and his two sons" — The Kingdom of God (represented in the parable by Elimelech), did not go into captivity as a united people. Civil war had divided it into two parts: Judah and Israel. In *The Book of Ruth* those two parts

are represented by the two sons of Elimelech. His wife also went with him. In the parable, Naomi represents the Abrahamic covenant and its adherents who also went into dispersion (cp. Jer. 24:5).

VERSE 2

"And the name of the man was Elimelech" — Elimelech means *My King is God*. In the type he represents Israel as a Theocracy: the Kingdom of God.

"And the name of his wife Naomi" — Naomi signifies *Pleasantness, Favour, Sweetness*. In the type she represents the Abrahamic covenant, described by Paul in his allegory as "Jerusalem which is above . . . the mother of us all" (Gal. 4:26). As representative of the covenant-people, she is wedded to Elimelech. "Thy Maker is thine Husband" declared Isaiah to such (Isaiah 54:5).

"And the names of his two sons were" — In the typology of this interesting and instructive book, it is significant that Elimelech had two sons, for it represents the division that followed the reign of Solomon. Israel became divided into two sections answering to the two sickly sons of Elimelech. As this book was written some time after the birth of David (Ruth 4:22), it comprised a record that the faithful could consult with profit. In the days of the divided monarchy, it could teach such that though Israel was divided, and though it would go into captivity, the faithful remnant would return, as did Naomi.

"Mahlon" — Mahlon's name means *sickly or puny*. It comes from a root meaning *to rub, to wear away*, hence to be *weak or sick*. In the type he represents one of the two divisions into which, ultimately, the nation was divided. His name expresses the spiritual weakness of the nation.

"And Chilion" — Chilion signifies *pinning or wasting*, from a root denoting *to be spent, or consumed*. Chilion's name suggests *a consumption to an end*. In the type he represents the other division of Israel which likewise was taken into captivity, which deserted *The House of Bread for The Land of Sin and Death*.

"Ephrathites of Bethlehem-Judah" — Ephrath signifies *A place of fruit*. Israel was designed for fruitfulness. One of its symbols is that of the vine of Yahweh's planting (Isaiah 5:1-7), but because it failed to produce satisfactory fruit, it was

rooted out of the land (see Psalm 80).

"And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there" — In the parable of this book, Moab is treated as *The Land of Sin, Disaster and Death* (cp. Ch. 1:21-22; 2:6). Moab was a descendant of Lot, conceived in fornication, and therefore a product of the environment of Sodom (Genesis 19:37). The Lord virtually accused the Jews of his day of likewise being conceived in fornication (John 8:41-44), and so classed them with the Moabites. Therefore, in sojourning in Moab, the family, like Lot in Sodom, had transferred to an environment that was dangerous to their spiritual wellbeing. The original intention of Elimelech appears to have been merely to "sojourn" in the land, but once there, he continued to put off the time of his return, with the result that three of the family died in Moab to dwell there forever!

Death Strikes Three Times — vv. 3-5

Elimelech's family find no relief from their troubles in Moab. In fact, having left The House of Bread for The Land of the Flesh, their troubles intensify. First Elimelech dies, and Naomi finds herself a widow. Mahlon and Chilion marry Moabitish women, but die shortly after, and Naomi finds herself bereft of both husband and children. In the terms of the parable, the Kingdom of God (represented by Elimelech) is brought to political extinction (Ezekiel 21:27); and the two divisions into which it was divided likewise "die" politically. This was foreshadowed by the prophecy of Isaiah to the Covenant people (Naomi): "These two things shall come to thee in a moment, in one day, the loss of children and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection . . ." (Isa. 47:9). Jeremiah lived contemporaneously with the event, and described it in these terms: "Now is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces . . . She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her . . ." (Lam. 1:1-2).

Poor Naomi experiences this in her exile as tragedy strikes three times to destroy her family. But ultimately this leads to a great joy, as predicted by the prophet: "Fear not; for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shall not remember the re-

proach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine husband; Yahweh of hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: The God of the whole earth shall He be called" (Isaiah 54:4-5). Meanwhile, in her desolation, Naomi types the state of Israel's widowhood in dispersion.

VERSE 3

"And Elimelech, Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons" — Death strikes at the family. In the parable the Kingdom of God is brought to an end (Isaiah 47:9; Lamentations 1:1-2); and Naomi finds herself widowed in a strange land.

VERSE 4

"And they took them wives of the women of Moab" — This was a further backward step. Marriage with Canaanites was strictly forbidden (Deut. 7:1-3), and marriage with other races only tolerated if the woman concerned forsook her pagan worship, and embraced the hope of Israel. The indication is that these Moabish wives did not do this at the time of their marriage, for later, Ruth declares her intention of forsaking the gods of Moab (v. 16). Note the extreme action adopted by Nehemiah in relation to intermarriage with Moab (Neh. 13:1-3; 23-27), and the manner in which the Law legislated against Moabites (Deut. 23:3). Ruth became wife to the elder brother, Mahlon (Ruth 4:10).

This action on the part of Mahlon and Chilion foreshadowed the manner in which Israel in dispersion assimilated the culture and teaching of the peoples among whom they were forced to dwell.

"The name of one was Orpah" — Orpah means *The back of the neck* (Strong's Concordance), and therefore one who turns her back on another. The root *or-eph* is rendered *back* eight times, and *neck* seventeen times in Scripture. From it is derived the phrase "to turn the back of the neck", which is constantly used in relation to Israel in apostasy. Israel is described as having "turned the neck" (in 2 Chron. 29:6; Jer. 2:27; 19:15 etc.), to have "hardened the neck" (2 Kings 17:14), to have "made the neck stiff" in that they refused to heed instruction (Jer. 17:23). The analogy describes those who

stubbornly refuse to present the ear so as to listen to the speaker, but instead turn their heads away from him, and present to him their backs. That was the attitude of Israel after the flesh. The nation became "stiffnecked" (Deut. 31:27; Isa. 48:4). The people turned the neck to Yahweh's instruction, and showed Him the back! In turn, Yahweh also refused to hearken to them, and "showed them the neck" (Jer. 18:17) until they had learned to repent properly (see Psalm 18:25-26).

Some identify Orpah with Ophrah, signifying a timid female deer, who "dropped her young" (faith) at the "thunder" of Naomi's warnings (cp. Psalm 29:3-9). See Ruth 1:15. It is said that if Orpah is Moabish in derivation, and not Hebrew, it would signify *hind*.

To disobedient Israel, Yahweh declared: "When ye search for Me with all your heart, I will be found of you" (Jeremiah 29:13). But an indifferent, or half-hearted, approach to Yahweh will avail nought: His face will remain averted. The blessing pronounced upon Israel included the benediction "Yahweh make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee" (Num. 6:25).

In the type, Orpah represents those who having heard the call, refuse to respond, or having done so, turn from it to follow the sight of their eyes. Their ears are not directed to the word of Yahweh.

"And the name of the other Ruth" — Ruth signifies *Tender, Friendly, Comely*. It is similar to the Hebrew *re'uwith* denoting a female friend from the root *ra'ah* "to tend a flock." A cognate word is *reya'* found in Exodus 33:11, where Yahweh speaks to Moses as to a friend, and also in Song 5:16 where Christ is referred to prophetically as the friend of the Bride. It is frequently found in other places.

The feminine form of *reya'* is *rayah*. This word appears several times in *The Song of Solomon* in the mouth of the Bridegroom when addressing his Bride. In the AV it is translated "my love", but in the RV it appears as *friend* (Song 1:9, 15; 2:2,10 etc.).

All these words: *Ruth, reya* and *rayah* are derived from the same Hebrew root *ra'ah* signifying "to care for", "to pasture a flock", "to nourish", and hence, a shepherd. As a metaphor, the name signifies to *feed, feast, or delight* in a person or thing; hence to be a close friend or companion. All this is expressive of Ruth. In the type she represented the

Gentile Ecclesia, drawn by the hope of Israel to leave her Gentile associates, and embrace Naomi as her own. Her name signifies a female friend, nourisher, or shepherdess.

“And they dwelled there about ten years” — The word *yashab* signifies to settle down, to marry. They had intended only to “sojourn” in Moab, but they settled down there as Lot did in Sodom (Gen. 19:29). Most of them remained there never to leave, for they died and were buried there.

VERSE 5

“And Mahlon and Chilion died” — Their names describe their physical and spiritual condition. They were sickly, they wasted away and finally died whilst still young men.

“And the woman was left of her two sons and her husband” — Naomi was now completely bereaved: a lonely widow in a foreign, hostile land. Even the consolations of religion were denied her, for she had no access to the Tabernacle worship. And to a Hebrew that was equivalent to being cut off from the presence of Yahweh (see 2 Kings 13:23; 17:20; Jonah 1:3). The “eyes of Yahweh” are ever fixed upon the Land of Promise in a special sense (Deut. 11:12), so that “the upright” therein, are said to dwell in His presence (Psalm 140:13). Naomi’s sole consolation in her distress was her Gentile daughters in law, though they, too, were in the garb of mourning. In the anti-type, when Israel “died” with the destruction of the Jewish State in A.D. 70, the Abrahamic covenant (typed by Naomi) found its “comfort” from among the Gentiles, whom it drew to the hope of Israel, and to *The house of Bread*.

Naomi Decides To Return — vv. 6-7

Bereft of her family, the mourning Naomi acknowledges that the prospects of prosperity and plenty in Moab, the Land of the Flesh, have proved illusory. Lonely and destitute, she realises that whatever difficulties there might be in Bethlehem, the House of Bread, there are greater prospects of happiness and satisfaction there than Moab, the Land of the Flesh, offers. The prospects presented by Moab had seemed good from a distance, but tragedy has plagued the family in exile. Moreover, she hears that the famine has

broken, and she is consumed by a longing to return.

The type is clear. It points prophetically to the political death of the divided Kingdom in exile, but also, as Isaiah predicts, to the return of the exiles: “the remnant shall return unto the mighty God” (Isaiah 10:21). The remnant will return as a changed people. Yahweh declared through Jeremiah: “I will acknowledge them that are carried away . . . for their good. For I will set Mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land . . . and I will give them an heart to know Me, that I am Yahweh; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart” (Jeremiah 24:6-7). Israel as a nation is to be restored to the land, to embrace Yahweh’s truth in its fulness. From the graves of the centuries, “true Israelites” like Abraham, Moses, David and others, are to arise to receive the fulness of redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Heb. 9:15). There is to be a national salvation for Israel at the return of Christ, and an individual salvation for those Israelites who were true to their calling in past ages.

VERSE 6

“Then she arose with her daughters in law” — In their sorrow and distress the three widows discussed their problem. Naomi had come to her decision. Whatever conditions she might find in Israel, there were benefits to be derived in the *House of Bread and Praise* (Bethlehem-Judah) such as could not be obtained in Moab.

“That she might return from the country of Moab” — The literal Hebrew is “that she might turn back from the country of Moab.” The household of Elimelech had apostatised, or “turned away” from the *House of Bread*, and experienced tragedy. Naomi accepted the discipline, and so reacted to her sorrow, as to derive benefit from it. She recognised the mistake that her husband had made, and with which she had condoned, and decided to retrace her steps. Accordingly, she made her decision to “turn back” in faith. See the exhortation of Isaiah 55:7.

“For she had heard in the country of Moab how that Yahweh had visited His people” — She came to her decision by

meditating upon the goodness of God, and the divine blessings that would accrue from her action. This is an excellent procedure for arriving at a decision in any circumstances. She learned that "Yahweh had visited His people in giving them bread". That was how true Israelites described the breaking of a drought. Men would call it a change in the weather pattern brought about by "the laws of nature", but the Truth reveals such things in a different light. As Yahweh was responsible for the famine (2 Kings 8:1; Lev. 26:18-21,26), He, alone, was able to bring it to an end. The Word puts all things in correct perspective, and teaches its students to appreciate the daily benefits they receive as derived from the Giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). Men need to develop the faith to say: "Yahweh gave, and Yahweh hath taken away; blessed be the name of Yahweh" (Job 1:21), whilst, at the same time, seeking the meaning of life's problems. Perhaps they are the result of their own folly; perhaps they form part of the disciplinary pattern of life designed by God to mould characters for the kingdom; perhaps they are imposed upon some to provide them with the opportunity to manifest an example of faith in adversity for the edification and emulation of others. That was the case with Job and also with Paul, who three times besought the Lord that his "thorn in the flesh" might be removed, so that he might preach the truth more effectively. But he was told, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). As Paul maintained his labours in spite of his trials, others were moved to do likewise, for they could see that he was activated by an ideal, and an influence, greater than that of flesh. Let us, in faith and with courage, maintain our efforts with cheerful countenance (see Phil. 4:4) in spite of adversity, and we may encourage others, by our example, to do likewise.

In Moab, Naomi pondered her lot, and the events that had taken place, and recognised a divine providence: Yahweh had *visited* His people. The verb is a translation of the Hebrew *paqad* which signifies "to go to see, to visit in order to examine, to look after, to visit with the object of correcting or blessing". Yahweh had *visited* Bethlehem, and had imposed famine for the benefit of the people, to discipline them, to humble them, so as to

induce in them a proper attitude of mind (cp. Deut. 8:2); now He had visited them again to alleviate their difficulties, for they had learned the lesson of His rebuke.

Let us never imagine that adversity and tragedy are evidences of Yahweh's disinterest in our welfare. It may well be otherwise, as Naomi was coming to understand. In such times, when it seems that we "walk in darkness and hath no light" let us "trust in the name of Yahweh, and stay upon our God" (Isaiah 50:10). It was at a time of national tragedy, when Israel was taken into captivity, and on all sides there were evidences of disaster, that the voice of Yahweh was heard through Jeremiah: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to make your latter end an object of hope. Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, and I will turn away your captivity . . ." (Jer. 29:11-13). In context with this statement, Yahweh used the same term as we find in the verse before us: "I will *visit* you . . . and cause you to return to this place" (v. 10).

In both cases, natural means were used. In Bethlehem the rains came; in Babylon war came. Fleshly minded Jews could see both occurrences as fortuitous, the result of the vagaries of weather or of war; but spiritually minded Israelites, like Naomi in Moab, saw a divine visitation in these things. The phrase before us has been rendered by *Young's Literal Translation* as "Yahweh hath looked after His people." Yahweh promised His people good harvests if they obeyed His word (Lev. 26:3-5; Deut. 11:13-15), but many of them failed to recognise His goodness in the bestowal of the natural blessings of life: "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine and oil . . . therefore will I turn and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof" (Hosea 2:8-9). The result was famine!

David acknowledged the great condescension of Yahweh in visiting His people, as He has done so in the person of His son (Psalm 8:4). In citing this passage in Hebrew 2:6, the N.T. uses a Greek word which signifies that Yahweh "has looked upon in order to help or to bene-

fit, to look after, to have a care for" (see Psalm 80:14; Luke 1:68). In that sense, Yahweh has "visited His people in giving them bread", in that He has provided the Lord Jesus Christ, who is described as "the bread of life" sent from heaven to nourish people unto eternal life.

"In giving them bread" — As Yahweh broke the drought in the days of Naomi and Ruth, so the time is coming when the spiritual drought experienced by Israel will be broken (Amos 8:11-14; 9:13-15), and the "reproach of widowhood" will cease (Isa. 54:4). The Hebrew word for "famine" signifies *hunger*, and has application both literally and figuratively. Meanwhile, the Lord has represented himself as "the bread of life" which if a man eat he will live for ever (John 6:33). In like manner, the Gospel comprises "living water" which if a man drink, he will never thirst (John 4:14).

VERSE 7

"Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her" — Having discussed all the pros and cons with Ruth and Orpah, Naomi came to her decision, and made preparation to return. Her two daughters in law did likewise. The word *return* is a key word in this chapter.

"And they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah" — They commenced their journey together to the *land of praise*. Naomi must have done so with excitement and joy, all indecision being at an end; Ruth did so in wonderment; Orpah in doubt. Like Abram leaving Haran they commenced a pilgrimage journey to the Land of Promise.

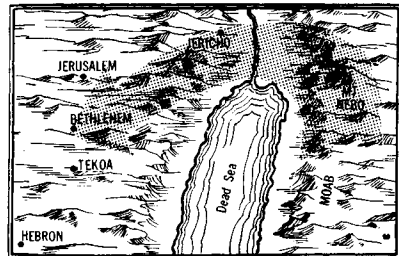
Ruth and Orpah Make Their Decisions — vv. 8-10

Naomi and her two daughters in law, comprising a feeble company of one old woman and two younger ones, all in the garb of mourning, commence the difficult and hazardous journey of at least fifty miles, back to Bethlehem. The Dead Sea cuts off the direct route between Moab and Bethlehem, so that they have to travel either north or south around this inland ocean. They reach a certain stage on their way, probably the border of Moab, at which point Naomi warns her companions of the difficulties that face them if they continue with her. She invites them to return, and so puts them to a test. All will be tested who seek to embrace the hope of Israel.

VERSE 8

"And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go return each to her mother's house" — The reference to the "mother's house" does not mean that their fathers were dead (see Ruth 2:11), but relates to the custom of the times. The natural place for the female members of a family was in their mother's part of the house, or the mother's tent supposing they were nomads (cp. Genesis 24:28,67; Song 3:4). In a typical sense, all who would follow Christ must leave the house of their "father and mother", and be joined unto his (Christ's) wife (see Ephesians 5:31-32; Psalm 45:10). Naomi, by this suggestion, puts Ruth and Orpah to a test.

"Yahweh deal kindly with you" — The word "kindly" is *chesed*, and signifies *lovingkindness, goodness, mercy*. Yahweh's kindness permeates this book even though the characters of it experience trouble and anguish (see Ruth 2:20; 3:10). *Chesed*, translated *goodness*, is one of the eleven attributes of the Yahweh name (Exod. 34:6-7). The term relates to the many blessings received from God including the Gospel of salvation. In regard to the latter, Paul exhorted the Roman brethren to "behold the goodness and severity of God" (Romans 11:22). Scripture reveals that the goodness of Yahweh far outweighs His severity, even though the fact of that goodness is hid often from human eyes. Meanwhile, those who would be accounted His sons must aim to build a manifestation of that goodness into their characters, so that they become as He is (see Matthew 5:44-48). With the merciful, Yahweh will show Himself as merciful (Psalm 18:25), and therefore it is important for His children to develop that characteristic in their lives (Hosea 6:6; Zech. 7:8-14; Matthew 6:12).



Character Sketch

RUTH — THE VIRTUOUS

Her Meekness

Gentle, self-effacing Ruth! How strongly the example of her unselfish service underlines the lessons of faith and love. It even coined a word in the English language, for to be ruthless is to lack the characteristics for which she is noted.

Her appeal to Naomi: "Intreat me not to leave thee!" expressed the gentleness of her nature, whilst her determination to provide for them both, revealed the strength of her character. Her decision to stay with her mother-in-law was governed by love for her. She could not bear to see the older woman walk with sad, lonely steps back to poverty and perhaps despair; but she is too tactful to suggest Naomi has need of her. No, she expressed it the other way, as though as to be rejected by Naomi would have put her at a disadvantage: "Intreat me not to leave thee."

Her Strength

Ruth was meek, not weak. She accepted the path of duty, and cheerfully walked where it led. For a time, it brought her into experiences of poverty and difficulty, but she was equal to them all. She had accepted the God of Israel as her God, not merely because He was Naomi's God, but because she was convinced that He should be worshipped.

There was strength of purpose in her actions. She did not bewail the fact of her poverty, nor rave about what her rich relation should have done, nor claimed the right to public charity. She quietly sought out a service she could perform, and patiently toiled in the field to relieve the pressing need of both Naomi and herself.

To use the figure of Boaz, when the storm of trouble broke over the little family in Moab, she trustingly crept under the shadow of Yahweh's wing, as a chicken crouches under the protecting wing of the mother-bird (Ch. 2:12). And out of weakness she was made strong.

Her Industry

Ruth did not presume on others. She manifested a noble spirit of independence. She resolved to obtain the necessities of life by working with her hands, in the one way that the law provided for such as were in her case.

What motive dominated Ruth to accept these conditions? What caused her to willingly follow the reapers in the heat of the burning, Palestinian sun, laboriously gleaning the few grains they left? Had not she willingly served Yahweh? Could He not move to alleviate her condition, and render unnecessary the back-breaking unaccustomed toil?

She knew He could, and perhaps He would; but she patiently, in faith, accepted the conditions, waiting for Him to change them. She manifested a willingness to submit to what was required: "Not my will but Thine be done." This was her religion. She had accepted Yahweh as her God, and was prepared to accept the conditions.

Her Affection

Ruth's abounding love was such that she accepted an apparently hopeless future, the degradation of poverty, the disadvantages of a foreign country, the knowledge that the people of her adoption hated the people of her nativity, to cleave unto Naomi, and to serve Yahweh. Here is love of such a quality that only the words of Paul (1 Cor. 13) are adequate to express it. It was love expressed in action, not only to Naomi, not only to Boaz, but to Yahweh as well.

She accepted the country, the hope, the religion of Israel. She turned her back completely and utterly upon Moab and all its ways, upon her father's house, upon the certainty of security in the land she knew so well, to embrace the strange customs, to learn the unaccustomed Law of the Israelites, to worship in such a form as to adversely reflect upon her native way of life.

Ruth was thus modest, industrious, meek, patient, and doubtless beautiful. She had the qualities to attract Boaz and engage his affection. Her tender solicitude for Naomi, her cheerful shouldering of the cares of the household, her voluntary acceptance of poverty, her patient endurance could not fail to arouse his esteem, as it did that of all Bethlehem. "All the city knows that thou art a virtuous woman" said Boaz (Ch. 3:11). She appeals to him, and her character drew him to her. The same attributes in us will attract and please the Lord Jesus.

All these matters worked together in the providence of Yahweh to bring about a matrimonial alliance intimately bound up in the birth of Christ, and the salvation of the world. It is significant, that by her marriage, Ruth became related to another wonderful woman of faith who likewise has been a great inspiration to true Israelites throughout the ages, for the

mother of Boaz was Rahab of Jericho (Matt. 1:5). In the typology of the narrative Ruth stands as representative of the Gentile ecclesia, united to the hope of Israel as Ruth was to Naomi, and redeemed by the Strong Man provided by Yahweh. Of her, the words of Proverbs apply: "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all" (Prov. 31:29).

"As ye have dealt with the dead and with me" — This is an indication of the characters of the two young women. They had given kindly, loving service to their sickly husbands, and did not desert Naomi in her extremity. Note the comment of Boaz to Ruth (Ruth 3:10).

VERSE 9

"Yahweh grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband" — In this prayer, Naomi seeks the blessing of Yahweh in providing husbands for the two young widows. Divine providence in marriage is an avenue of guidance that should not be overlooked. So often marriages flounder because this is not taken into consideration. Young people are governed by fleshly urges rather than by divine precepts and principles. They need to allow Yahweh to lead them in their search for a mate (see Prov. 18:22). Among the qualifications that should govern the choice of a partner for life are those characteristics in which He will find pleasure. In Naomi's statement, the word "rest" is *menuchah* in Hebrew, and is used in various ways. Fundamentally it denotes a place of rest where one may settle down in security. Thus David prayed that Yahweh might find permanent "rest" for Himself, and the Ark, in Zion (Psalm 132:8). The word signifies a permanent abode, a safe shelter, security. This was something that Naomi could not offer her daughters in law, and so she suggested, with delicacy and tact, the possibility of a second marriage for them. *Menuchah* is the word used by Hebrews to describe a husband's home. Therein the bride finds shelter as well as protection from servitude, neglect, or molestation. The RSV renders Naomi's words: "may find a home". A similar word is used in Ruth 3:1, recording a statement in which Naomi obviously refers to a husband for Ruth.

"Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voice, and wept" — It is obvious that the relations of the three women were most loving and devoted. They wept in unison, with "one voice".

VERSE 10

"And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people" — It is a compliment to Naomi's character that the two young women were prepared to leave the comforts of Moab, and the protection of their own people, to share the uncertainties and poverty that faced her. She evidently had developed in them a great love for her. In the type, these words of Orpah and Ruth have been echoed by many who have come to a knowledge of the Truth. When the full implications of what is required are realised, however, some turn back like Orpah; others go ahead in confidence of faith like Ruth. It is significant, perhaps, that in the parable of the ten virgins, five proved wise and five proved foolish (Matt. 25:2).

Naomi Warns Of Difficulties Ahead — vv. 11-13

In their love for Naomi, Ruth and Orpah express their willingness to leave the comforts of Moab, and to share the risks and difficulties of the journey ahead. But Naomi warns them of what this will entail, and reminding them that they are at liberty to return to the security of Moab, invites them to do so.

VERSE 11

"And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters" — By "turn" she means *return, turn back*. She tests them in love, inviting them to return.

"Why will ye go with me?" — Naomi asks them a searching question. Why go? What advantage will there be in so doing?

She can offer assurance of nothing but problems and difficulties. She calls upon them to examine their motives in continuing with her. Those desiring to embrace the Truth must answer similar questions. There has to be a reason for every serious decision in our lives. The decision was one which required Ruth to give up everything with which she was familiar: to forsake her country, kindred, friends, even her parents! (see Eph. 5:31-32). The bride of Christ must do likewise. She must "forget her own people, and her father's house" (Psalm 45:10). It is the decision that every Gentile must make in accepting the call of the Gospel.

"Are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?"

— The law of Moses made provision for what is called a *Levirate* marriage. The term is derived from the Latin *levir* "brother", and has nothing to do with the word Levite. A *levirate* marriage was an act of grace in which the nearest of kin married the widow of his childless, deceased brother in order to provide seed so that the line of descent may continue. The children of such a marriage were accounted as of the deceased brother (see Lev. 25:5-10; Matt 22:24; Luke 20:28). Naomi could have claimed this right on her own behalf, but she was beyond the age of bearing children, and thus was "without hope" (v. 12). She could have claimed it for her daughters in law, but possibly felt that she would have difficulty in finding any who would be prepared to act as husband to either of them because of the Moabitish origin of the two young women. This, indeed, proved to be the case (see Ruth 4:5-6). The law legislated against Moabites, so that, in contracting such a marriage, the husband would have to go beyond the Law, seeking its spirit rather than its letter (Deut. 23:3).

It is significant, that the Hebrew word here rendered "husbands" is different from that used elsewhere in the book. Elsewhere (e.g. v. 9) it is *ish*, signifying a high, or great man; but here it is *enoshim* which denotes weak, corruptible men. Evidently, Naomi felt that even if she could provide husbands, they would prove to be weaklings like her previous sons! Thus she warned her daughters in law that the flesh is weak, and advised them to put no confidence in it (see Phil. 3:3). What a contrast to the husband whom Yahweh provided, whose name, Boaz, signifies *Strength*. From natural sources, Naomi

could offer her daughters in law nothing of value. If they continued with her, they would have to do so in faith.

VERSE 12

"Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband"

— The desolate state of Naomi is expressed in this statement. She is too old for child-bearing; no one in Israel will raise up seed by Moabitish wives to keep the family alive, so her two daughters may as well return. The Vulgate renders: "For I am spent with age, and not fit for wedlock."

"If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons"

— Naomi gives expression to a hyperbole, an exaggeration so great as to clearly denote the impossible. The future of the family was hopeless left to natural means.

VERSE 13

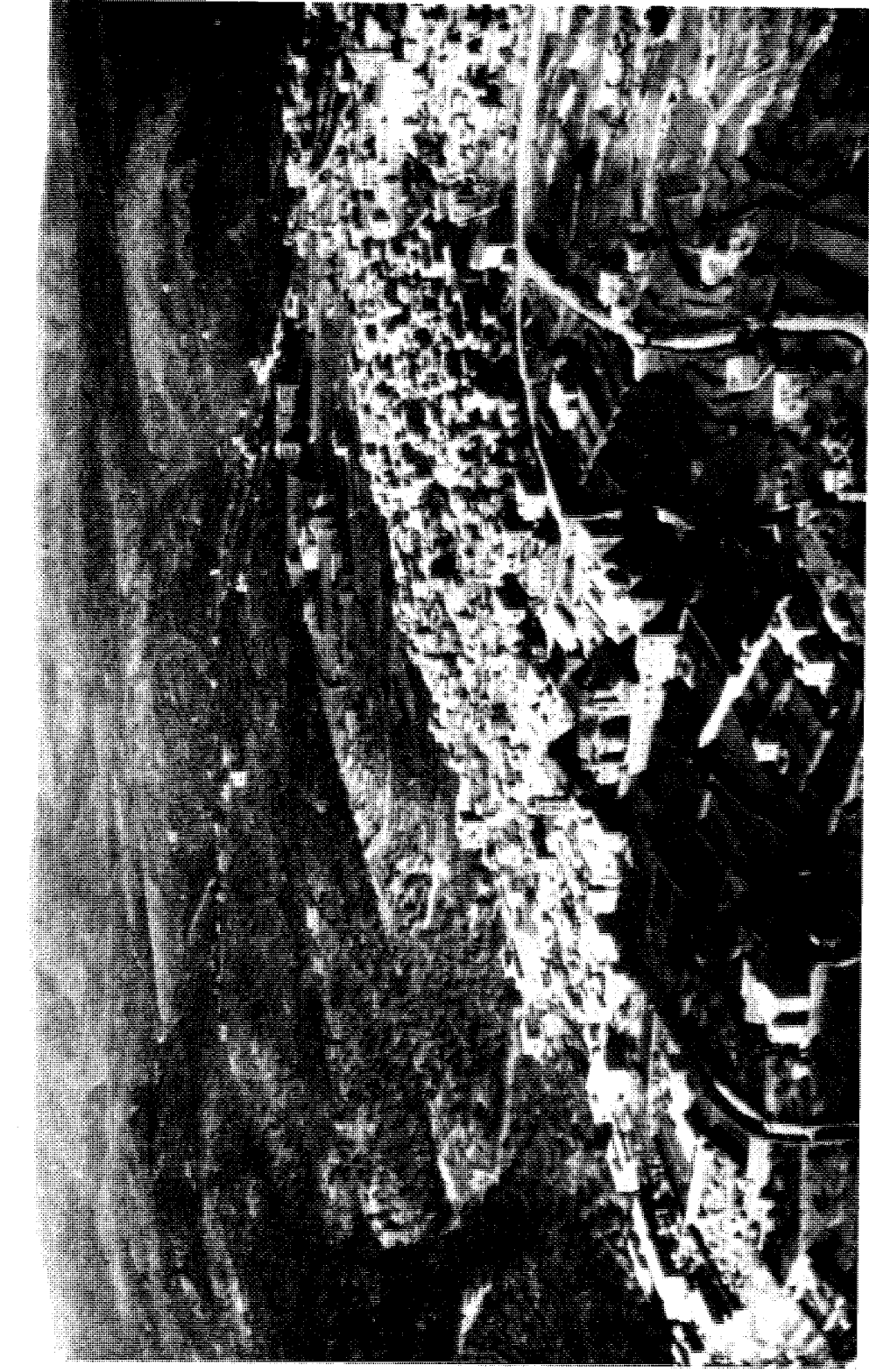
"Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands?"

— In order to preserve intact the families in Israel, a son, though not of marriageable age, was considered bound by divine will to marry the childless widow of his brother, when he has grown sufficiently to do so; and the widow was expected to wait for him until he grew up (see Gen. 38:11,14,26). The purpose was to keep alive the families of Israel, and their divinely allocated inheritances. It dramatised the work of redemption as the action of Boaz showed later in the account.

"Nay my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes"

— The Hebrew is: *I have much bitterness*. The expression is derived from the word *marar* which Naomi again used when she reached Bethlehem (v. 20). Naomi claimed that "it is more bitter for me than for you" as her words can be literally rendered. Jeremiah used similar words to describe the state of Israel in dispersion. He put into the mouth of desolated and widowed Zion words much like those of Naomi: "*Her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness*" (Lam. 1:4). Nevertheless, though Naomi keenly felt her sorrow, she felt more for the two young widows with her. She grieved mainly "for their sakes". Her anxiety was for the future welfare of her daughters in law.

"That the hand of Yahweh is gone out



against me” — The manner in which Naomi described her state is very expressive, and illustrates how Godly men and women perceive the ways of Providence interwoven in the everyday affairs of life. The breaking of the famine is described as Yahweh visiting His people (v. 6), the decision of Ruth to accompany her mother in law as she returned to the land of Promise is likened to a chicken sheltering under the wings of a mother bird (Ruth 2:12), and here Naomi recognizes her adversities as the result of the hand of Yahweh extended to administer punishment, as a father might deal with a disobedient child. The action was disciplinary in its object, intended for the benefit of the one receiving it. (See Judg. 2:15; Psa. 32:4). In these disciplinary measures, Yahweh acted as a Father; see Psalm 103:13-14; Heb. 12:5-11 with its conclusion: “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

Orpah Turns Back But Ruth Remains — vv. 14-18

Naomi's words further depress her two daughters in law and result in further lamentation. Orpah reluctantly feels that the trials that would face them in the foreign land are beyond her. For her, the border is the parting of the ways. Tearfully she kisses Naomi farewell, and commences the return journey. In doing so she types those who, having been brought nigh to the hope of the calling, are deterred by the trials and difficulties that are incidental to it, and so turn back into the world. By her action she demonstrated the meaning of her name.

On the other hand, Ruth, undeterred by the example of Orpah and the warning of Naomi, with unshaken, steady resolve, insists upon accompanying her mother in law to Bethlehem. She puts behind her the attractions of Moab, she cuts herself adrift from family or worldly hopes, she repudiates forever the false worship of Chemosh, the god of Moab, and wholeheartedly embraces the hope, the people, the God of Israel. Like Moses she chose to “suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25), like Paul, “this one thing

she does, forgetting those things which are behind, she reaches forth unto those things which are before” (Phil. 3:13); like Barnabas, “with purpose of heart she cleaves unto Yahweh” (Acts 11:23); like the true disciples of every age she willingly undertakes to experience “the fellowship of Christ's sufferings”, limiting the opportunities this world can provide, and cheerfully shouldering the difficulties this entails.

Ruth stands as a type of the true Gentile Ecclesia, completely identifying herself with the hope of Israel, represented by Naomi. The beautiful words of this section of the book have been an inspiration to many throughout the ages.

VERSE 14

“And they lifted up their voice, and wept again” — The three women are plunged into the deepest sorrow. Not only have they been brought close to tragedy by the decease of their menfolk, but now the remnants of the family are to divide forever. It is a moment of greatest sorrow and weeping. How often sorrow afflicts a divided house, when one makes a decision for Christ, and others reject it!

“And Orpah kissed her mother in law” — She kissed her farewell.

“But Ruth clave unto her” — She refused to leave her.

VERSE 15

“And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods” — Orpah fulfilled the meaning of her name. She turned the neck to her mother in law, to Yahweh, His special people, the promised land, and the hope of Israel. The statement of Naomi that Orpah had returned to “her gods” shows that she had not been properly converted to the way of Yahweh, and therefore, in following Naomi as far as she did, she had been motivated by mere fleshly feelings of affection. She shrunk at the sacrifices she would be compelled to make in order to worship Yahweh aright, because her faith was not strong. She preferred her gods, her fleshly attachments, her relations above those of Israel with the separation and dedication that the true worship demands. This is a danger to which any disciple is susceptible if not

Opposite: An old photo of Bethlehem. It involved an uphill walk to reach it. Cp. Matt. 5:1.

fully convicted. See John 6:66-67; 8:30-32. Obviously Mahlon and Chilion had been very lax in regard to the education of the two Moabitish women whom they had married. In preaching the truth it is necessary to reveal what is involved, for it is a Scriptural principle that it is only "through much tribulation" any will enter the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). The word "tribulation" is *thlipsis*, and signifies *pressure*. The pressures of life must be endured and countered in order to succeed in attaining the Kingdom. These can become so powerful as to destroy that dedication required, unless there is a compensating power of resistance within, that the Truth alone can create. Hence the need for proper instruction, and continued study after accepting Christ. The sustaining power of faith which comes from "hearing the word of God" (Rom. 10:17) is needful. This demands a thorough education in the basic principles of the Truth on the part of those who would embrace Christ, otherwise, like Orpah, they will turn back when the pressures become too strong.

"Return thou after thy sister in law"

— In view of the action of Orpah, Naomi proceeded to test Ruth's loyalty, inviting her to follow the example of her sister in law if she felt inclined so to do. It is necessary for a convert to "count the cost" of embracing Christ (Luke 14:28), and to make provision accordingly. For those who have much to endure, a greater conviction is required. Ruth would have to face many trials if she decided to follow her mother in law. Far better for her to refuse to do so than to prove an embarrassment to Naomi when the pressures were exerted, as Naomi knew they would be. However, nothing is said of Ruth returning "to her gods", so evidently she had been more responsive to the Truth than had been Orpah.

VERSE 16

"And Ruth said" — It is obvious that the record includes only an outline of the conversation between Naomi and Ruth. Doubtless the older woman explained to Ruth what her decision entailed. She could only follow Naomi into Israel, beyond the border of Moab, if she were prepared to forsake her country, people, religion and hope. The conversation evidently took place on the border of Moab and Israel, and therefore at the point

where Joshua passed over the river Jordan into the Land of Promise. This suggests baptism, so that the question and answer typed an examination for baptism! Acceptance of Christ on the part of converts demands a like examination (1 Timothy 6:12-13), and a complete understanding of the terms of separation demanded by the Truth (Acts 15:14; 2 Cor. 6:17-18). Notice that Paul to the Corinthians insists that the establishment of Father-son relationship between Yahweh and those who embrace the truth, is predicated upon the separation of the latter from the influence of the world.

"Intreat me not to leave thee" — Do not hold me back from my resolve: I have made up my mind, and am determined to go with you.

"Or return from following after thee" — I will follow the example you set.

"For whither thou goest, I will go" — I wholeheartedly accept the way that leads to the House of Bread and Praise.

"And where thou lodgest I will lodge" — I accept the privations and trials that may be your lot as a stranger and pilgrim in the land (Heb. 11:13).

"Thy people shall be my people" — I will accept adoption into the nation of Israel (cp. Boaz' comment — Ruth 2:11-12).

"And thy God my God" — I accept the worship of Yahweh, God of Israel.

VERSE 17

"Where thou diest, will I die" — I dedicate my life to this service.

"And there will I be buried" — I am prepared to share your circumstances, your people, your worship and your tomb.

"Yahweh do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" — This is my irrevocable decision, and nothing will dissuade me from it. The formula: *Yahweh do so to me and more also* was commonly used in connection with an irrevocable vow (cp. 1 Sam. 3:17; 14:44; 20:13 etc.). Rotherham renders the latter phrase: "If death itself part thee and me". The hope of the promise looks beyond death, which, accordingly loses its sting (1 Cor. 15:55-57). In Christ, death is only a temporary separation, not an irreparable parting, for there is the

hope of a glorious resurrection at the resurrection (1 Thess. 4:18)

VERSE 18

“When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her” — Naomi saw that Ruth had firmly made up her mind, and that nothing would dissuade her. The term “stedfastly minded” is from the Hebrew *amats* and signifies *to be alert, active, firm, and hence denotes alertness of mind, and firmness of resolve. The Septuagint translates: was determined to go.* Ruth had considered all the problems, and fully recognising what was entailed, had strengthened herself in her resolve. Her declaration in these verses expressed her confession of faith. As in the type, Naomi represents the Abrahamic covenant, Ruth’s endorsement was an acceptance of the terms of that covenant, an identification of herself with the “hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20).

Naomi And Ruth Make Their Way To Bethlehem — vv. 19-22

The conference between Naomi and her two daughters in law doubtless took place at the border between Moab and Israel. This means that they had moved north to the River Jordan, the place of baptism. After her declaration of faith, Ruth is conducted over the River by Naomi in a typical baptism, and the two lonely pilgrims commence a difficult and tedious journey from Jericho up the steep hill country to Bethlehem. The arrival of Naomi, showing signs of extreme distress, and accompanied by a young Moabitess as companion, causes excited comment among the towns people. Naomi leading the Gentile Ruth to Bethlehem-Judah, the House of Bread and of Praise, in type represents the Gentile Ecclesia being drawn to Yahweh through the Abrahamic Covenant of promise expressing the hope of Israel (Acts 28:20).

VERSE 19

“So they two went until they came to Bethlehem” — This would take them from the depression of Jericho (below sea level) to the heights of Judah; thus leading upwards to the *House of Bread*.

“And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them” — Bethlehem was but a small town (cp. notes v. 1), and the family of Elimelech was well known.

Therefore, news of Naomi’s return and circumstances were soon common knowledge, and excited great interest in the people. The word “moved” is *huwm* in Hebrew, and signifies *to make a noise, to agitate.* In 1 Samuel 4:5; 1 Kings 1:45 it is rendered *rang again.* The expression reveals that report of Naomi’s return quickly spread through the city, and became everywhere the topic of conversation. People were moved by knowledge of the great losses she had experienced, the decline of such a prosperous house as that of Elimelech, the marks of suffering and of age shown on her face, and the strange appearance of her foreign companion. This aroused such interest as to cause the city to hum with talk regarding it. Naomi’s action, and Ruth’s presence, comprised a valuable witness to the Truth.

“And they said” — In Hebrew this is in the feminine gender, and relates to the women of the city. They were keenly excited, and gathered around Naomi to question her concerning her circumstances. Most of their menfolk were absent in the fields for it was harvest time.

“Is this Naomi?” — In the Hebrew the definite article is added: “Is this *the* Naomi?” That is, Is this the Naomi we knew?

VERSE 20

“And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi” — Naomi means *My pleasantness, favour, sweetness.* See note v. 2.

“Call me Mara” — The word signifies *bitter.* From it there is derived the name Miriam. See note Exodus 15:23.

“For the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me” — In Hebrew “Almighty” is *Shaddai.* It is derived from a root *shaddad* “to be burly, powerful,” and by implication “to ravage”. The root is rendered “destroy” (Prov. 11:3), “destroyer” (Job 15:21), “spoiler” (Jer. 6:26; 12:12; 15:8; 51:48,53,56). *Shedim* is rendered “devils” in Deut. 32:17; Psalm 106:17, though “destroyers” would be a better word to use. Hence the *Shaddai* (being a plural word) denotes Destroyers (Job 21:20; Isaiah 13:6; Joel 1:15), or Powerful Ones.

Others derive *Shaddai* from *shad* which is invariably used in Scripture for a woman’s breast. It is translated in the A.V. by three words: breast (18 times), pap

and teat, and, metaphorically, represents nourishment. Hence the Shaddai are also Nourishers (Gen. 28:3; 43:14; 49:25; Job 22:25), sometimes disciplining in love (Job 5:17).

Applied to *El*, the word becomes a graphic metaphor of the Nourisher of Yahweh's people as well as the Destroyer of their enemies. Yahweh is both a Sun and a Shield (Psa. 84:11), the Giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). The *Shaddai* (Powerful Ones) rendered *the Almighty*, are Yahweh's representatives performing His bidding, and revealing His power unto man (Psalm 103:20-21). The title God Almighty, or *El Shaddai*, is expressive of Yahweh's strength (*El*), manifested through the Powerful Ones (*Shaddai* or angels) to sustain or destroy, assist or oppose mankind according as the latter respond to or resist the divine word and will.

The title is first used in Genesis 17:1 in a significant context. Abram, after long testing, had come to the realisation that the Son of Promise could not be conceived through natural strength (Rom. 4:19). But at that moment of long deferred hope and unfulfilled expectation, God Almighty (*El Shaddai*), the Nourisher and Destroyer, appeared with a message of hope (Genesis 17:4-8) and of warning (v. 14), and Sarah was strengthened to conceive seed (Heb. 11:11). Later, Isaac blessed Jacob in his search for a bride in the name of *El Shaddai* (Genesis 25:3). And in the passage before us, Naomi saw in the punishment she experienced, the disciplinary care of the *Shaddai*, as of a Parent-Power.

Of the 48 occurrences of the name in the Old Testament, 31 are found in *The Book of Job*. This is appropriate, for Job is a book of chastening, and yet of tender love, both of which are expressive of the significance of this divine title (Hebrews 12:5-12; James 5:10-11).

In Naomi's statement there is a play upon words; for the word "bitterly" is *marar* in Hebrew, and is illustrative of her changed state expressed by her words "Call me Mara . . ."

VERSE 21

"I went out full, and Yahweh hath brought me home again empty" — Wherever the words Lord or God are printed in small capitals in the AV, the name in the original is Yahweh. Examples of this are found in Ezekiel 37:27-

38:3. In Ezekiel 37:27 it will be seen that "God" is printed in the lower case in contrast to Ezekiel 38:3 where it is printed in small capitals: whilst in Ezekiel 38:3, "Lord" appears in the lower case in contrast to v. 1 where it is printed in the small capitals. In v. 1 "LORD" is Yahweh, and in v. 3 "GOD" is Yahweh, and so on throughout the Old Testament wherever the translators have used this means to define the use of the divine Name of Yahweh. The angels are Yahweh's ministers, performing His bidding on behalf of the saints (Heb. 1:14), and so manifesting His power in the various ways indicated by the titles used. For examples, as *El Shaddai*, they manifest the Power of Yahweh to sustain or punish. They do so in the name of Yahweh, because that is the Covenant-Name of Deity, and all that they do, in disciplining or in sustaining, is done with the Abrahamic covenant in view. The angels have been invested with that name, and minister on behalf of saints (Heb. 1:14) in the light of its requirements (see Exod. 23:21).

In her statement to the women of Bethlehem, Naomi described the disciplinary punishment she had received from God as beneficial in its effect, and as coming from One who had dealt with her as a Father (v. 13. Cp. Deut. 32:6; Isaiah 64:8). Her comment was not one of complaint as though she had been unfairly treated, but a statement of fact, similar to that of Job: "Yahweh gave, and Yahweh hath taken away; blessed be the name of Yahweh" (Job 1:21). Both Job and Naomi recognised God as the Author of both good and evil (Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6).

"Why then call ye me Naomi, seeing Yahweh hath testified against me" — The reduced state of Naomi was a divine witness against the wisdom of Elimelech in deserting the covenant land and Bethlehem, the House of Bread, for the land of Moab (the flesh); and in his sons marrying unconverted Moabitish women. The bitterness she experienced was an example to all to heed the folly of walking in the way of the flesh. The reduced condition of Israel, which is directly traceable to the state of apostasy into which the people have fallen, testifies today to the folly of turning from the ways of God.

"And the Almighty hath afflicted me?" — In this statement, Naomi described her reduced state as the disciplinary action of Yahweh in His Fatherly capacity as manifested through the angels.

VERSE 22

“So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab” — The older Jewess and the younger Gentile maiden came together to the land of the covenant. The older woman returned, or *turned back*, and the younger woman returned with her. They were both together. In the antitype, the true Israel of God (Galatians 6:16) comprising faithful Jews and Gentiles, the former from older Mosaic times, the latter from the more recent Gentile era, will “come together” to be redeemed through Boaz, the Strong One. The Hebrew word *shuwb* rendered “returned”, “turn back”, “go back” etc., is a key word of this chapter where it occurs no less than twelve times.

“And they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest” — They returned in early spring, the time of the new beginning, when all nature springs into new life. The barley harvest commences about the time of the Passover, and is the first grain crop to be cut. What an appropriate time for Naomi and Ruth to return! The Passover is the festival of deliverance and of a new beginning.

Naomi, most likely, would have timed her return to synchronise with the festival, as she obviously recognised its significance in the circumstances of her life. It is significant that Israel’s return and incorporation into the new covenant is associated with this festival. Jeremiah predicts that the words today spoken each year by Jews at the festival of Passover, will be superseded by words that will express the greater deliverance of the last days (see Jeremiah 16:14-15).



Overleaf: “Let me gather after the reapers”. Here we see barley-harvesting in April near Bethlehem. So might Ruth have stood among the gleaners to bind a handful of corn when she attracted the attention of Boaz, and he was told: “It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab” (Ruth 2:2,6).



Chapter Two

Love's Response



— RUTH'S FAITHFUL SERVICE

The first act in the drama of Redemption is completed. Naomi and Ruth are both home, but their condition is still one of want. There is a pressing need to relieve the poverty that rests so heavily upon them. Fortunately, the Law of Yahweh provides the means. It requires that when farmers reap their fields, they do not strip the grain completely, but leave some for any strangers, or poor of the land, to glean. These are permitted to follow the reapers and take for themselves that which the Law orders the reapers to leave. Thus Yahweh, by law, compels His people to acts of mercy and love. All that the farmer reaps has come from His bountiful hand, and it is only right and moral that he should, in turn, be bountiful to those less fortunate than he.

Ruth is providentially led to the field of Boaz, and gives herself to the hard, tiring labour of laboriously gathering the few grains left after the reapers have completed their work. Her industry is observed by Boaz, whose attention has already been drawn to her presence in his field, and who has learned of her faithful service to her mother in law, his relation. He bids her to continue gleaning in his field, and secretly arranges that she is suitably rewarded for her industry, by additional grain being left for her to glean.

Naomi joyfully recognises these circumstances as evidences of divine providence, guiding Ruth towards a betterment of the family conditions.

In the type, Boaz stands as representative of the Lord Jesus Christ, Ruth as the Gentile Ecclesia gleaning in the fields of Israel, and suitably rewarded with what she finds there through the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ, the antitypical Boaz. The record reveals that the virtues of industry, patience, selflessness, faith, and the acceptance of trials and problems without complaint and with gentle courage, do not go unnoticed or unrewarded.

Ruth Gleans In The Field of Boaz

— vv. 1-3

Ruth does not intend to sit down in idleness and lament her lot. The past is behind her and is put out of her mind. Recognising that activity is the best comfort to sorrow and distress, and learning of the law relating to the gleanings of fields in Israel, she seeks permission to undertake such labour so as to relieve the pressing poverty of her home. She does not want the charity of idleness, but the opportunity in faith and with courage to provide for the needs of herself and her mother in law. This takes her to the field of Boaz.

VERSE 1

“**And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband’s**” — The Hebrew is *yada*, “an acquaintance, or familiar friend”, not *goel* as in v. 20. This statement, therefore, introduces Boaz merely as “an acquaintance, or distant relative, of Naomi’s husband”. The word in the Hebrew is different from that rendered *near kinsman* in v. 20.

The word signifies one who is known by observation, or by seeing. The Lord invites all to “come unto” him, and observe his ways so as to imitate them (Matt. 11:28-30). In Isa. 42:1, Yahweh invites mankind to “Behold” His servant. Those who do so thoroughly can come to “know” him (John 17:3), and, by imitation of his ways, can become classified as among his friends (John 15:14-15) and relatives (Mark 3:33-34).

Notice the gradual development of Ruth’s relationship with Boaz as revealed in the narrative, and compare it with what is taught of the relationship of saints with Jesus Christ. First she is introduced to him as “an acquaintance” through observation; second, as a member of the family of Elimelech; next as *goel*, or *one who has the right to redeem*; finally, as her

husband. It commenced by her being attracted to him through observation, or seeing; it culminated in marriage. That is a common experience of life. Two persons are attracted to each other by their mutual observation of one another. Gradually, the acquaintance warms into affection, and culminates in marriage. That also can be the development of a person’s relationship to the Lord. It will commence through observation, or an understanding of the “things concerning the Kingdom of God (Elimelech) and the name of Jesus Christ” (Boaz). It can culminate in the glorious union with him at the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).

“**A mighty man of wealth**” — The word “mighty” is *gibbor* in Hebrew, and signifies *strong, valiant*, and hence a warrior (1 Samuel 16:18; 2 Samuel 23:8-9). It relates to man in respect of his physical strength. The term “man” is *ish*, and denotes a great man in contrast with ordinary men (contrast with *enoshim* in Ch. 1:11). In Psalm 49:2 the word is rendered “high” in contrast to *adam* which is rendered “low”. The expressions of the verse, therefore, denote the status of Boaz in Bethlehem. He was highly respected, being a man of strong character as well as of great possessions. However, he was not elevated in pride by his status and wealth, nor spoiled by flattery. In *The Book of Ruth* he types the Lord Jesus Christ who though “being in the form of God” in that he was the manifestation of Yahweh, “made himself of no reputation” and “humbled himself” taking upon himself “the form of a servant” that he might assist others (Philippians 2:6-10).

Christ can also be described as “a mighty man of wealth”. He successfully overcame the devil or sin’s flesh (Heb. 2:14); whilst concerning his “wealth”, Paul taught: “Ye know the grace of our

Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

"And his name was Boaz" — The name Boaz seems to signify *In him is strength*. It was the name given to one of the two pillars connected with the Temple of Solomon (1 Kings 7:21). Concerning the symbolism of these two pillars, Brother Thomas writes in *Eureka vol. 1, p. 392*:

"The ecclesia in the aggregate is the Pillar of the Stone to be placed in Zion, and a *hedraioma*, or House of Elohim, as Jacob termed the type he set up at Beth-el. But while the saints collectively are an Elohal Pillar and House of the truth, this house also contains *two classes of pillars, and many individuals in each class*. This is seen in type and antitype. Typically, the two classes are represented in the Two Brazen Pillars in the Porch of Solomon's temple, the one on the right hand being named Jachin, and that on the left, Boaz. These names were significative of the things represented by the pillars, which were of brass, eighteen cubits, or about thirty-two feet, in the shaft, which was twenty-one feet girth, and surmounted with a chapter nine feet high. Here were loftiness and strength. The chapters were ornamented with nets of checker-work, wreaths or *stephans*, of chain-work, pomegranates, and lily work, all of which was representative of things pertaining to the pillars. As a whole, they were styled *yahkin*, and *boaz*, or in plain English, *He shall establish by strong ones*."

Accepting this definition, Boaz signifies *the strong one*. His name presents a direct contrast to the name of Ruth's first husband Mahlon signifying *the sick one*.

VERSE 2

"And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi" — Conditions in the little household are critical. The pressing poverty must be relieved. How can it be done? The Law of Yahweh mercifully provides the means. Naomi explains it to Ruth, who asks permission to glean. Naomi is too old to endure the rigours of this work in the burning heat of the eastern sun. Ruth offers a sacrifice of love.

"Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn" — Ruth's request introduces us to an act of mercy demanded by the law. As Brother Roberts states in *The*

Law of Moses p. 87: "In reaping the fields or vineyards, no parsimonious spirit was to be shown. There was to be no going over them a second time to pick up or gather what had been overlooked. Field and vineyard were to be left ungleaned to give the poor a chance. Moderns would think this wasteful, improvident, and unbusinesslike; but there is a better business spirit than the modern one, though we cannot see it practised till the establishment of new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." The Law specified that the gleanings were to be left "for the poor and stranger" (Leviticus 19:9), for "the fatherless, and for the widow" (Deut. 24:19). Ruth was poor, a stranger (foreigner), and a widow, and therefore qualified for the gleanings.

This merciful provision for gleanings was much superior to the soul-destroying initiative-robbing dole that comprises the Gentile means of relieving poverty today. It provided the opportunity for everybody to labour for his own sustenance, so maintaining personal independence. It fulfilled the requirement of Scripture "that if any will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10).

"After him in whose sight I shall find grace" — Ruth could claim a right to glean, but it was possible for an Israelite to evade his responsibilities by making it unpleasant for such as she. Therefore, she recognised that it was only by "grace" that she, a Gentile maiden, could glean in the field of Israel. It is "by grace" that the offer of salvation is made to Gentiles (Eph. 2:5). Paul wrote that "as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21). Throughout his epistles he emphasised the importance of grace. The term occurs no less than 155 times in the N.T., and at least 100 times in the Epistles of Paul to Gentile believers. The word is expressive of God's condescending favour and goodness to those of His choice. The Hebrew word is *chen* and is derived from a root *chanan* which signifies *to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior* (Strong's Concordance). The word "grace", therefore, "denotes the stronger coming to the help of the weaker who stands in need of help by reason of his circumstances or natural weakness" (*Dictionary of N.T. Theology*). Therefore, the formula, "in whose sight I shall

find grace" is the expression of one who, recognising her weakness, decides to seek the favour, liking, benevolence, condescension, and understanding of a stronger party, who is in a position to help (see Ruth 2:2,10,13). Though one can never *earn* divine grace in the sense that he can ever adequately pay for it, it is normally extended only to those who have qualified as being deserving of it. Hence Noah (Gen. 6:8), Moses (Exod. 33:13) and others received grace because their actions called it forth; whilst David expressed his intention of "finding grace" by his actions of faith (2 Sam. 15:25). The Apostasy teaches that grace will be granted irrespective as to the actions of men, but that is not the Bible doctrine, which requires something of man if he would find grace. The theme of Christ's teaching was not the extension of grace in the sense of an undeserved gift given to all irrespective as to their attitude and actions, but the proclamation of the Gospel which offered grace to those who would "come unto him", and reveal in action the principles of his teaching. Hence the Pharisees were condemned, but grace was offered to those who were sufficiently "poor in spirit" to build into their lives the principles expressed by the Lord in his discourse on the mount, and his subsequent teaching. Indeed the theme of his teaching, and his acts as a whole, centred on God's condescension to the weak, poor, hopeless, lost (Matt. 11:5,28-30; Mark 10:26-31; Luke 15:1-32); the granting of an immeasurable remission of debt (Matt. 18:21-34); a gracious reward in the kingdom of God (Matt. 20:1-16); and pardon leading to a new life (Luke 13:6-8; 7:36-50; 19:19-27). This was the "grace" or divine favour and goodness that the Apostles preached unto the Gentiles.

The expression in the mouth of Ruth was appropriate to her circumstances. For she was in a state of want, and utterly dependent upon the condescending care and help of one stronger than she. It was of this to which she referred in her comment to Naomi, particularly in the Hebrew concept of the term she used. Let us recognise our fleshly weakness and our spiritual needs, and seek the divine grace to help, such as will be granted unto us on conditions. We will receive such measure of "grace" or favour as money cannot buy (Isaiah 55:1-2).

Though gleaning took place at the time

of reaping, between Passover and Pentecost, the order in which the instructions are given in Leviticus 23:17-21 follows the exact time sequence as was fulfilled in the antitype. For it was after the ingathering of the Jewish harvest by the Gospel reapers (see John 4:34-38) that the opportunity was given to Gentile "strangers" to participate therein (see Acts 13:46; 28:26-31), and so to glean in the Gospel field of the antitypical Boaz. Gentiles still can glean in those fields, and so follow "him in whose sight they shall find grace". "Grace", as we have noted above, represents favour. Christ, the antitypical Boaz is the vehicle of divine favour to men (John 1:14,16,17), so passing on to others that which he himself experienced (Luke 2:52). Grace now defines the sphere wherein stand those who embrace the Gospel (Rom. 5:2); and the status from whence they may fall (Gal. 5:4). The type is beautifully expressed in the words of Ruth to Naomi; for we, too, will find grace, if we follow after the footsteps of Christ, the antitypical Boaz. To do so effectively, we first need to recognise our spiritual poverty and need, and so seek the means to relieve both.

"**And she said, Go, my daughter**" — Naomi gratefully encouraged Ruth in her quest.

VERSE 3

"**And she went, and came and gleaned in the field after the reapers**" — The Mosaic Law permitted such as Ruth to glean in any field. So she entered the first such field as came to her notice as seeming to provide the best opportunity for gleaning.

"**And her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz**" — In this statement, all Israel is considered as the field of Yahweh (see Lev. 25:23). Yahweh's ownership of the land was a very important element of the Law, for its provisions gave to Israel only a *tenant at will* occupancy of the land of Canaan. Concerning this, Brother Thomas writes in *Elpis Israel* (p. 249) as follows:

"The national tenancy of Canaan under the law being leasehold, no purchases of freehold estates could be made in the land. If Israel had been a freeholder, the case would have been different. But the land belonged to the Lord; and they had no more right to grant it away in parcels

GLEANING AS A TYPE OF THE GOSPEL CALL

LEVITICUS 23 lists certain "feasts" that Israelites were called upon to observe. They are called "the feasts of Yahweh"; but as "Yahweh" expresses the future intent of Deity, they appear to set forth a prophetic sequence of events relating to the development of the divine purpose, such as are typed by these "feasts". We have written "feasts" in inverted commas because the original word does not designate a "feast" as we would understand the term, but *set times*: "the *set times* of Yahweh".

The implication of this word is that the antitypes will be fulfilled at the "set time" set down by Yahweh. Some of those "feasts" have already had their typical fulfilment.

PASSOVER — Pointing forward to the death of the Lord which took place at the very time the Passover Lamb was slain.

SHEAF OF THE FIRSTFRUITS — This was waved on the first day of the week following Passover. On that day, "Christ the firstfruits" (1 Cor. 15:23), rose from the dead.

PENTECOST — This festival celebrated the confirming of the covenant with Moses. On the Day of Pentecost, the Truth was first publicly proclaimed in the Name of Jesus Christ.

GLEANING IN THE FIELD — This was left to the poor and to the stranger. Actually this commenced immediately after Passover, but in the Leviticus account, it follows Pentecost. Following the proclamation of the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost, opportunity was given to the Gentiles to glean in the field of Israel, in that the Gospel was proclaimed to them after the Jews had turned from it.

DAY OF ATONEMENT — The Day of Judgment, yet to be antitypically manifested.

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES — Pointing forward to the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

Ruth, the Gentile maiden, gleaned in the field of Boaz following Passover, thus typing the proclamation of the Gospel to Gentiles following the death and resurrection of Christ "our Passover".

for ever, than the tenant under a twenty-one years' lease has to cut up his holding into lots, and sell them to purchasers for ever. Israel were the Lord's tenants; and the law said to them on the part of their Landlord, 'The land shall not be sold for ever; for the land is mine, and ye are *strangers and sojourners* with me'; so that 'in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land'. Hence, if poverty compelled a man to sell his farm, it was always redeemable by himself, or kin, according to certain conditions; but if neither could raise the money to redeem, the estate was not lost to the original owner; for though it remained in the hands of the purchaser, he was obliged to return it for nothing at the year of jubilee (Lev. 25:23-28)."

In the days of Ruth, a section of Yahweh's field was under the care of Boaz, and her "hap" was to light on this part of it. *Hap* is an old Anglo-Saxon expression signifying *happy*, or *good luck*. Flesh considers incidents such as that of Ruth turning aside into the field of Boaz, as matters of lucky chance, or good fortune. But actually Ruth was providentially guided to the field, and the Hebrew expression is better expressed "it happened". The Hebrew *miqreh* is from a root *qarah* signifying to *light upon*, to *bring about*. The means are not revealed in the narrative; but the invisible, but ever-present, guiding hand of Yahweh is obvious in all the incidents that took place (see vv. 12, 19, 20). So will the steps of faithful men and women be guided, and their actions blessed, if they place their trust in Yahweh. The wise man taught: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:6; See also Jer. 10:23). However, there is need to exercise God-given wisdom in this, for "wisdom is profitable to direct" (Ecc. 10:10). So Paul warns: "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16). Ruth manifested those characteristics, and placing her faith in Yahweh, she was providentially directed to the field of Boaz.

"Who was of the kindred of Elimelech" — At the time, the relationship of Boaz to Elimelech was unknown to Ruth (see Ruth 2:19-20). She probably was unaware as to who was the owner of the field she entered. The Hebrew word for kindred is also rendered as "family", as in v. 1.

The Relationship Of Boaz With His Workers — vv. 4-7

The approach of Boaz is heralded with pleasure by his workers, for excellent relationships exist between employer and employees. This stems from his personal interest in their welfare, and his co-operation in their labour. He supervises their conditions, whilst his keen eye looks over their work. Indeed, the wealthy farmer is not above labouring himself in the field despite his advanced age. On this occasion, he takes note of the gleaners who follow the harvesters. As he does so, he detects Ruth the Moabitess among the workers. His interest is aroused by her assiduous labours, and he enquires as to her identity.

VERSE 4

"And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem" — The inclusion of the exclamation, *Behold!* expresses the pleasure and excitement manifested by the workers at the approach of Boaz. Their attitude towards him is an indication of his excellent character. His very presence is the cause of delight to his workers, so that they draw the attention of each other to his approach. How pleasant, exciting, and rewarding it is when a work is accomplished in the gospel field, and one has felt the presence of the Lord (the anti-typical Boaz) in the labour performed! We draw the attention of others to it, and describe how his blessing has been experienced in the doing of it. "Behold, how He wrought with us!" (Num. 23:23). And as to the Lord's coming, how exciting it is to discern signs of his approach!

"And said unto the reapers, Yahweh be with you. And they answered him, Yahweh bless thee" — There is nothing servile or humiliating in this scene, nothing merely sentimental. It expresses the unity of good fellowship such as prevailed between Boaz and his servants, and it describes the source of his prosperity: the blessing of Yahweh. The Hebrew *Yahweh immachem*, as used by Boaz, can be paraphrased to signify: "May Yahweh be with you to preserve you from accidents, and strengthen you to accomplish your work". It is the blessing of Psalm 129:7-8. Though Boaz has come to his field to supervise his work, he does not do so in a critical, fault-finding spirit, but with true courtesy to all, and appreciation of what is being done by each one. The workmen reply *Barechecha Yahweh*, which can

be extended to signify: "May Yahweh bless thee with the increase of the field, and with the grace to use His bounty to the glory of the Giver." How different is this concord in comparison with the discord which exists in the commercial field today!

VERSE 5

"Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?" — The reapers, after greeting Boaz, return to their labour, the gleaners follow, searching for any grains that might remain. The keen eye of Boaz roves over the field. By his side is his foreman, ready to answer any questions advanced by him. And now, though he has previously heard of Ruth (v. 11), her future husband meets her for the first time. He observes the stranger among the reapers, and enquires as to who she is.

VERSE 6

"And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab" — The statement of the servant is better rendered as "a Moabitish damsel".

VERSE 7

"And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning unto now" — In his detailed report to Boaz, the foreman repeats the request that Ruth had made to him when she sought permission to glean in the field. As a foreigner, a widow and as one in want, she had a special claim to the gleaning (Lev. 19:9-10).

The word "sheaves" in Hebrew is the plural form of *omer*, the amount of manna that was provided for every man during the wilderness wanderings (Exod. 16:16). It is from a root word that signifies to *heap up*, and figuratively to *chastise*. There is a certain amount of energy and agony attached to harvesting, as there must have been in gathering the manna in the wilderness. And certainly, the gleaners "among the sheaves" would appreciate the agony of effort attached to hunting for the grains that remained. By the very use of this word, *omer*, is recalled the manna of the wilderness wanderings, and hence the Word of Life that it symbolised. It is there that we can glean

precious grains of spiritual food, though it may take the agony of effort to do so.

"That she tarried a little in the house" — The foreman gives a good account of Ruth. He remarks on her industry. The "house" probably refers to a tent that was set up in the field where the workers could rest during any breaks for that purpose, probably answering to "the lodge" of Isaiah 1:8. But Ruth had been too busy for much relaxation. The Septuagint renders the phrase as: "rested not even a little in the field". Darby translates: "Her resting has been little as yet". The RSV: "She has continued from early morning until now, without resting even for a moment". If we accept the AV it means that she has tarried but little in the tent set up for that purpose.

Boaz Extends Kindness To Ruth

— vv. 8-10

Learning of the identity of Ruth, and touched by her faithful industry, Boaz recalls what he has heard of her kindly service towards Naomi, his relative, and in his abundant generosity, he feels constrained to assist her further. He arranges for some of the corn to be left for her, additional to that which it is normal for gleaners to receive. In the parable presented in the Book of Ruth, Boaz types the Lord. The lesson it presents teaches that no work, if done in faith, no matter how humble it may be, will pass unnoticed by the antitypical Boaz, whose approach will be heralded with joy by those who look for him. Meanwhile, such workers have the assurance that their Lord will never leave them, nor forsake them (Hebrew 13:5).

VERSE 8

"Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter?" — The RSV renders: "Now listen, my daughter!" Evidently Boaz called Ruth to his side, that he might extend kindness to her. In addressing her as "daughter", Boaz hints at his seniority in age. (See also Ruth 3:10).

"Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence" — In the antitype, the field of Boaz is that of the Lord Jesus Christ. When once a Gentile has commenced to "glean" in that field, he must not turn back. It will be found adequate for every need unto life (see Luke 9:62).

"But abide here fast by my maidens"

— In this statement, *fast* is an obsolete expression for *steadfast*, hence “cleave close by my maidens”. Boaz not only invites Ruth to keep exclusively to his field, but urges her to guard against straying therefrom by keeping close to his workers. As the fields were not divided by fences, but by unploughed ridges, it would have been quite easy for a stranger to unintentionally stray from one field to another, whereas this would be avoided by following the advice of Boaz. The same care of keeping near to the maidens of Boaz is needed today. There is a tendency on the part of some to “remove the landmarks” (Job 24:2; Deut. 24:14; Prov. 22:28; 23:10; Hos. 5:10), and of others to “stray” from their appointed “field”, some delight to proclaim “some new thing” and so draw away disciples after them. The result is that others are led away from the sound expositions of truth.

VERSE 9

“Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them” — The maidens employed by Boaz were engaged probably in making bands and laying on them sufficient stalks to make a sheaf which the binders would tie and form into shocks. The close proximity of Ruth to these workers would give her opportunity to pick up any heads or ears that the maidens left; she was thus given a privileged position in the gleaning.

“Have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee?” — Boaz also arranges for her protection, overshadowing her life for good (see 1 Pet. 3:12-14).

“And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn” — Boaz also arranged for her refreshment. See John 4:14.

VERSE 10

“Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground” — Overcome with emotion at the kindness shown her, Ruth makes obeisance to Boaz recognising him as her superior.

“And she said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me?” — Ruth is astonished that she is given such preferential treatment, particularly as she

is a foreigner. Similar astonishment is often expressed by those who have experienced the kindness of the antitypical Boaz, in that the Truth has been revealed to them, and they have received preferential treatment above others. It is one of the great mysteries of life that the call of the Gospel should come to one, and not to another; but the fact is that it is God Who is “taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name” (Acts 15:14). The reason why one should find grace above another is not revealed at present.

“Seeing I am a stranger” — The word “stranger” signifies a *foreigner*. As such Ruth had a special claim on gleaning (Lev. 19:9-10), but it is not to that to which she is referring. Boaz, in his thoughtfulness, went beyond the requirements of the law in his kindness to Ruth, and it is to this that she makes reference. The antitypical Boaz has likewise gone beyond the law in his kindness to those whom he has called to himself, for “that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith” (Galatians 3:11). Let us treasure the great privileges and benefits that have been shown to us through Christ.

Additional Privileges Extended To Ruth — vv. 11-17

Acknowledging Ruth's self-sacrificing kindness to a fellow Israelite, Boaz extends kindness to her. The Lord does likewise. Not only will they be blessed who bless Israel, but he takes cognisance of those who do good in his name. He says: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

VERSE 11

“And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband; and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore” — The kindness and graciousness of Boaz is revealed in his words to Ruth. He commends her for her kindness towards Naomi, and her action in separating from home and country to be-

Opposite: “Where has thou gleaned today?” Gleaning is still allowed in parts of the Land.



come "an Israelite indeed". In the terms of the parable, she has been drawn by the covenant of promise (Naomi) to separate from her people and land, and to join in association with Israel. The call of the Gospel requires such action.

VERSE 12

"Yahweh recompense thy work" — Ruth's work, to which Boaz makes reference, included her care for Naomi, and her faithfulness in leaving Moab for Israel. This demanded such self-sacrifice as only Yahweh could adequately compensate. As Moses "had respect unto the recompence of the reward" in determining his course of action (Heb. 11:26), so Boaz now prays that Yahweh shall recompense the labours of Ruth on the behalf of others, as well as her acceptance of the way of life.

"And a full reward be given thee of Yahweh God of Israel" — Yahweh promises to fully reward those who place their trust in Him. See Prov. 11:18; Matt. 5:12. Boaz could well have in mind the promise made to Abraham: "I am thine exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1). A "full reward" denoted a payment in full for all that Ruth had done. Boaz recognised that she had not received such to that time, and indicates that what he was doing for her was not adequate compensation for her action in separating herself from her homeland, and throwing in her lot with Naomi. His prayer on her behalf can bear the further meaning, "and use me to bless her if that be Thy will". Those who endorse the Gospel in Christ, and sacrifice present advantage in order to carry out its requirements, receive a reward now, though payment in full awaits the presence of the antitypical Boaz, and the setting up of the Kingdom of God. "Godliness", wrote Paul, "has promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). In the Truth, a richer, more abundant life is enjoyed now, than that which the world offers, even though its "full rewards" await the future.

"Under whose wings thou art come to trust" — This is a beautiful analogy denoting the tender care of Yahweh for His people. The RV renders: "come to take refuge". The figure is that of chickens seeking the warmth, protection and security found under the outstretched wings of the mother bird, beneath the shadow

of which they take refuge. It is an expression repeatedly used by the Psalmist (Psa. 17:8-9; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7), and one which was taken up by the Lord Jesus as he lamented over Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37). Ruth saw in Yahweh her City of Refuge (cp. Heb. 6:18).

The analogy is particularly apt in view of the institution of the Passover. The word *Passover* is derived from the verb *pasach* rendered "pass over" in Exod. 12:13, but actually supplying the meaning of "to spare". It is translated in *The Septuagint* as *protect* in the sense of providing overshadowing care. The use of the word elsewhere in the O.T. where rendered other than "passover", suggests that its true meaning is *to hover over, stay over, protect, abide over*. The word is found in Isaiah 31:5: "As birds flying, so will Yahweh of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also He will deliver it; and *passing over* He will preserve it". In this place, the rendition *passing over* is from the Hebrew *pasach* from whence is derived Passover. But here it signifies, not "passing over" but *hovering over* as a bird does over its young, with its wings outstretched to protect. In making her way to Israel, Ruth, as it were, had crept under the outstretched, protective wings of Yahweh.

But, on what terms could Ruth "flee for refuge" to Yahweh, seeing that the Law of Moses prohibited the entrance of a Moabite into the congregation of Israel (Deuteronomy 23:3)? It is said that the statement of Deuteronomy is in the masculine gender, and therefore does not specifically refer to the women of Moab. Indeed, the Jewish Targum acknowledges this, stating in regard to Ruth: "What the Lord hath decreed, He hath not decreed concerning women, but men." There is little doubt, however, that the reference in Deuteronomy relates to both men and women, and prohibits both from entrance to the congregation of Israel. Indeed, it is an embarrassment for mere Judaisers to find that David, the most illustrious king of Israel from whom descends the Messiah, was related to both a Moabitish woman, and, in Rahab, a Canaanitish woman! What is the record teaching Israelites and us? That the provision of a Saviour and the means of salvation, go beyond the strict provisions of the Law. If Yahweh kept strictly to the principles of Law and Justice, there would no flesh be saved.

Salvation, however, is of grace, and mercy, and forgiveness, and on that basis, even Ruth the Moabitess could creep under the outstretched wings of Yahweh. Both she and Rahab did so, not as Gentiles, but as converts, as members of the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16).

VERSE 13

“Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me” — What beautiful and expressive words these are in the light of the antitype. Both grace and comfort can be found in Christ when he is sought in humility. In the words of this verse, Ruth thanked Boaz for the favour he showed towards her in granting her permission to continue to glean in his field.

“And for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid” — In the Hebrew, the word “friendly” signifies *to the heart*. The words of Boaz touched the heart of Ruth. She felt both humbled and grateful for the consideration and kindness extended to her, and this drew from her an answering response. There was no adequate repayment she could offer Boaz except to make known to him her loving gratitude for what he had done. A similar response will be made by those who recognise the great debt they owe the Lord for all that he has done on their behalf. In her gratitude, Ruth describes herself as the “handmaid” of Boaz. The word “handmaid” and “handmaidens” in this verse is *shipchath*, a different Hebrew word from that used elsewhere in *The Book of Ruth*. The word is in the plural number in both cases; so that it seems, in the statement before us, that Ruth is commenting upon the manner in which Boaz, apparently, had included her among the handmaidens of his household. He had spoken to her heart, as he would unto his handmaidens, though, in fact, she was a stranger, a gleaner, and not a member of such. The expression *shipchath* is from a root signifying *to spread out*, and denotes a household. To be treated as a member of such, particularly in a household of the status of that of Boaz, was a privilege indeed. Those who enter the household of Christ do so as servants, though they can attain unto the status of friends (John 15:14-15), and, ultimately, to that of his bride (Rev. 19:9). There is nothing harsh in the servitude experienced by the members of Christ’s household. Paul wrote (Rom. 6:22): “Now being made free from

sin (i.e. freed from servitude to the slave-owner Sin — cp. v. 16 — as Ruth had been freed from the dominance of Moab), and become servants (handmaidens) to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

This is what Ruth experienced in the treatment she received from the courteous, thoughtful Boaz. She remarks upon the manner in which the kindly Boaz, in addressing her, had done so as though she were a member of his household, and not a stranger gleaning in his field. Christ does likewise to Gentile converts when they embrace the covenant of promise.

“Though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens” — Ruth gently reminds Boaz that though he has addressed her as though she were one of his “handmaidens”, part of his household, she was not really such. She was a stranger, and therefore did not really qualify for such a description. The *Rotherham Bible* in a footnote quotes Ginsburg as rendering Ruth’s statement as: “Oh that I might be as one of thine handmaidens”. To be one of the maidens of Boaz, a member of his household, was, in her estimation, a most desirable condition; though it was a status that she felt she could not aspire unto. When the great privilege of becoming a member of the household of the antitypical Boaz is brought to the attention of “strangers”, the honour seems to be far above that which is possible. There is created a great longing to be a humble member of the household of Christ. Gentile converts to Christ need to ever bear in mind the great privilege that has been extended to them in grafting them into the Israelitish olive tree (cp. Romans 11:17-22). Paul writing to Gentile converts called upon them to “remember” that they were “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19). Boaz had addressed Ruth as of this status, and drew from her a grateful response in love.

VERSE 14

“And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread” — In recognition of Ruth’s kindness and service to Naomi his relative, and in appreciation of her faithful and loving disposition, Boaz extends an even greater privilege to her, and invites her to associate on terms of equality with his actual workers, so treating her as one of his

Character Sketch

NAOMI — THE FAITHFUL

Her Faith

Though perhaps overshadowed by the virtues of Ruth, the narrative nevertheless reveals Naomi as an outstanding woman of faith, courage and kindness. She never lost faith, even in the dire distress that overtook her in the land of Moab, but when in trouble sought the help of Yahweh, and out of weakness gained strength.

She was compelled to leave home by the decision of her husband, but in spite of the tragic reverses that she suffered, she maintained a constancy of purpose that won through to victory and joy in the end.

Her Lovingkindness

It speaks volumes for Naomi's character that though submerged by disaster, and left without hope, her two daughters in law continued with her. Death had desolated their homes, and laid in the dust the support upon which they all relied. But in the bitterness of their experience, we hear no word of complaint from Ruth and Orpah. They still cling to Naomi, that by their united efforts they might be mutually strengthened to surmount the mountain of trouble that stood in their way.

They preferred Naomi to their own family — to the security they could have found among their own kindred. Such love to a mother in law is so seldom seen, so scarce among the sons or daughters of men, as to reveal the true quality of her character. It had not only won their respect, their affection, but their warmest attachment. They turned to her rather than to their own; they had a confidence in her guiding hand that had greater appeal than the security of their kindred.

It was only when she proposed to leave Moab for the added difficulties that loomed for them in a foreign country, and by the suggestion of Naomi herself, that Orpah turned back. As so many who have been attracted to Christ have done since!

Her Piety

Naomi was a Godly woman. Her language was steeped in expressions that revealed her reverence for the Creator. She constantly recognised the ways of Providence in her life, and accepted her reverses as the hand of discipline administered for her good. In her distress, she does not echo the foolish cry of Job's wife: "Curse God and die!" but seeks the means of

redress. "The hand of Yahweh is gone out against me," she said (Ch. 1:13).

She was not only prepared to toil along the hard, difficult road from Moab to Bethlehem, but also the often more difficult road of spiritual reformation. She sought the Way of Yahweh, humbling herself in her distress, seeking the means of restitution in the provisions of His law, educating the half-pagan Ruth in the necessary principles that would lead to redemption, and guiding her to an end that meant joy for them both. In her old age, she experienced a joy she never expected, in the birth of the little boy, Obed, the Worshipper.

Her Prudence

She was a prudent, kind, tender, pious matron. Burdened with a terrible load of grief, limited by the restrictions of age, her faith remained strong, and with steady, resolute steps she sought her land and her God. As much as she must have desired their company, she refused the temptation to impose a burden on her daughters in law which she thought they could not undertake. She does not force them to go with her, but gives them the choice of returning to their kindred, and to an environment with which they were familiar.

Once in the land, her earnest desire is to "seek rest for Ruth." The future of her daughter in law becomes her sole and absorbing concern. But she realised that the attainment of her objective must be through trial and labour. There was no short cut to the end she had in view, no easy road. A lesser woman would have forced her presence on Boaz, reminded him of his great wealth, told him in straight terms that he had the means to help them all without feeling it himself. But Naomi did not want charity. She knew (as did Boaz) that such charity would not have been a true kindness, would not have accomplished the end in view, but would have destroyed it. She wanted something greater than material help, that which Boaz could only give her in the way revealed in the narrative. That way: the patience and faith it demanded, brought out the best in the characters of all concerned.

Sometimes people wonder why tribulation is the lot of those who live Godly lives. Why does not Yahweh intervene, make the road easy, pour out His blessings without limit? Because He knows what is best for each one of us. What a pity it would have been if Boaz, with clumsy generosity, had insisted upon relieving the poverty of Naomi, and made it unnecessary

for Ruth to glean in the fields. Ruth would never have been touched with the *need* of a redeemer, would never, with loving modesty and deep humility, have appealed to Boaz in that capacity.

Naomi allowed the invisible, guiding hand of Yahweh to direct her affairs in accordance with His purpose. She exercised faith and patience, though she did her part resolutely when the time came. She allowed Yahweh to reveal the way in which she should go, and in the end her faith was suitably rewarded.

In the typology of *The Book of Ruth*, Naomi represents the Abrahamic covenant, drawing Gentiles to embrace the Hope of Israel, and leading to the wonderful marriage between Ruth and Boaz, the Strong One, who typified Christ.

household. She is invited to join with them, and eat of the provisions he supplies. Is not this the invitation extended by the Gospel to "whosoever will" (see Rev. 22:17)?

"And dip thy morsel in the vinegar" — The Hebrew word for "vinegar" is *chomets* and denotes a sour wine. It was used by the harvesters as an acid sauce, or relish, with bread, much the same as we would use vinegar. As such it was both cooling and refreshing. The type is exceedingly beautiful. The offer of Boaz to Ruth is to come to his table as one of his household and partake of bread and wine. These are the tokens of sacrifice and dedication such as Melchizedek offered to Abram (Genesis 14:18), and Christ offers his followers. Ruth, in accepting the offer of Boaz, enjoyed sweet fellowship with him and his household.

"And she sat beside the reapers" — In the type, the reapers represent those who gather in the Gospel harvest. Christ (see John 4:35-38) sent the Apostles forth as reapers, and later prayed, not only for the success of their personal efforts, but "for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one" (John 17:20-21). This was enacted in the drama of Ruth as she made her way to the reapers, to take her place at the table where Boaz was able to minister more directly to her needs.

"And he reached her parched corn, and she did eat" — "Parched corn" is

roasted grain. Thomson in *The Land and The Book* describes the custom of harvesters eating such corn thus: "A quantity of the best ears, not too ripe, are plucked with the stalks attached. These are tied in small parcels, a blazing fire is kindled with dry grass and thorn bushes, and the corn heads are held in it until the chaff is mostly burned off. The grain is sufficiently roasted to be eaten, and is a favourite all over the country". Ruth thus enjoyed some of the delicacies of harvesting. She found that her self-sacrificing labours returned to her a bountiful reward. The Word promises likewise. Those who give to Yahweh the best of their endeavours are promised an abundance in return (Prov. 3:9-10). He challenges us to prove Him in that regard (Malachi 3:10). Christ taught: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38). If men reward in that manner, how much greater confidence can we place in Yahweh to do likewise! How little we do for Christ; how great are his rewards to us: both in this life, and in that which is to come (1 Tim. 4:8). As Ruth ate of the roasted corn given her by Boaz, she learned that acts of faith to Yahweh, and humble service extended in kindness to those of like precious faith, do not go unrewarded.

"And was sufficed and left" — In this statement, the Hebrew *yathar* rendered

“left” is translated *reserved* in v. 18. Literally the statement signifies that she had ample of the roasted corn for herself, and had some left over that she was able to take home to Naomi. So it is with the Truth: there is a superabundance for all. One benefits personally, and becomes the channel of benefit to others. In her poverty, Ruth thought of her beloved mother in law. Recognising that she, as a Gentile, was partaking of the food of Israel, she took some of the surplus to share with Naomi (see Romans 15:27).

VERSE 15

“And when she was risen up to glean” — Notice that Ruth did not presume upon the interest that Boaz showed towards her; she did not relax her labours because he had granted her special privileges. She gave herself to the work before her. So it is with service to Yahweh. He will bless His workers; but they must labour in order to provide the basis for blessing. It is a divine principle that “if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). The principle applies both in material blessings as in spiritual ones. It is a principle set at nought by the welfare states of today that induce laziness particularly in young people. There is a happiness, a benefit, and a joy in labour faithfully performed. Ruth recognised the need of labour in order to eat, so set about her task; even though she had been offered more than she had expected.

“Boaz commanded his young men saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not” — A gracious privilege was granted Ruth. Normally, the gleaners were not allowed to glean until the sheaves were bound and

set up in stocks. But observing the activity of Ruth, Boaz made it possible for her to gain greater benefits than were normal, and to glean where a greater harvest could be found.

Those who are prepared to labour will receive additional divine blessing as did Ruth. Their work can involve either the understanding of the Word (cp. James 1:4-5), or the extension of its truth (Matthew 10:41). Whilst nothing of permanent value will be accomplished without the blessing of God, the personal co-operation of those who are His workmen is needed for the best results (1 Cor. 3:7-9).

VERSE 16

“And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her” — The expression “of purpose” should be rendered *on purpose*. Boaz arranged for some of the grains to be left, in order that Ruth’s search might reap a richer reward. There are many such “handfuls of purpose” to be found in the service of the antitypical Boaz. Consider the rich, unexpected rewards that are found in searching out the glorious teachings of the Word, or in its proclamation. Let us thus labour in understanding, and many a rich “handful of purpose” will be found, deliberately left there by God to excite and encourage the diligent searcher of His word; let us expend ourselves in the extension of the Truth, and again, rich rewards will be our lot. But let us be lazy in our reading or in our labour, and we will not receive “wages” neither now nor in the age to come (John 4:36). In Christ there will be found blessings “above what we ask or think”.

Note the excitement of Paul, as in his gleanings in the Word, he comes upon hidden truths found therein, deliberately left there “on purpose” for earnest gleaners to search out (Romans 11:33-36).

“And leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not” — There are many “handfuls on purpose” left in the Word for us to glean if we give ourselves to its study. Let us encourage each other to that end, as Boaz commanded his workers to do in regard to Ruth. Note the promise of the Lord — Luke 11:9-13. See also Prov. 3:13-18; 4:7-8; 6:20-23.

VERSE 17

“So she gleaned in the field until even,



and beat out that she had gleaned” — Thomson in *The Land And The Book* remarks that “in the evening you might see some poor woman or maiden, that had been permitted to glean on her own account, sitting by the roadside, and beating out with a stick or a stone what she had gathered as Ruth did” (p. 647). Ruth had to labour for her living, but her hard work was made profitable by the overshadowing care of Boaz. There were “handfuls on purpose” left for her to pick up, unexpected rewards for her labour as there are in the service of Christ, but it required toil and trouble to gain the best results. The pursuit of Truth is like that. Ruth had to “beat out” the ears of corn she found, and we must “beat out” the Word to extract its inner meaning before our searching will receive its full reward.

“And it was about an ephah of barley” — An ephah is about five or six gallons. It is made up of ten omers, and an omer was the daily ration of manna for each man (Exodus 16:16,18,22,36). Hence Ruth gleaned enough corn to support both her and Naomi for about five days. days of grace (five being the number of grace, as ten is the number of sufficiency)! The barley harvest ripens first, but was considered of less reputation, of humbler grain, than wheat. Israeli farmers were commanded to take some of the first of the harvest gathered in, and offer it to the priest, reciting the words recorded in Deuteronomy 26:5-10. These recall the distressful conditions to which the people of Israel were reduced in Egypt, and the great help they received of Yahweh in calling them out of the land of sin and death, and establishing them in the land of affluence they then enjoyed. In context with this they were commanded to care for “the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow” in their midst, that “they may eat within thy gates and be filled” (Deut. 26:11-12). There is little doubt that Boaz would have fulfilled this requirement of the Law so that he would have been impressed with the need to care for Ruth.

Naomi's Instructions to Ruth — vv. 18-23

Returning home, Ruth surprises Naomi with the results of her labour. These show how kindly and generously she has been treated in the field where she has gleaned. Naomi learns that the field is that of Boaz, who is her near kinsman, and who, there-

fore, is in a position to redeem both her and Ruth from poverty as well as from the reproach of widowhood. As she ponders the implications of all that has occurred, Naomi recognises a divine providence in the matter, guiding Ruth to the field of their redeemer. She advises her on no account to be diverted to any other field, but to strictly adhere to the instructions of Boaz.

VERSE 18

“And she took it up, and went into the city; and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned” — The benefits Ruth received from contact with Boaz are immediately apparent. This is true also of contact with Christ. See Acts 4:13.

“And she brought forth and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed” — Ruth had reserved some of the prepared food given her at lunch time to take home to Naomi (v. 14).

VERSE 19

“And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? And where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee” — Naomi instantly perceived that Ruth had been given preferential treatment above that granted normal gleaners, and with quickened interest questioned her on her day's work.

“And she showed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz” — Ruth's explanation shows that previously she was ignorant of the identity of Boaz.

VERSE 20

“And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of Yahweh, Who hath not left off His kindness to the living and to the dead” — Naomi perceived a divine guidance in the events of the day, and recognised the hand of Yahweh in them. She knew of the law of the Redeemer, and could see that through the mercy of Yahweh, the living (Naomi and Ruth) would be cared for, whilst the name of the dead (Elimelech and his sons) would be carried on through marriage with Ruth. She recognised that He whose hand had been extended against her for correction (Ch. 1:21), was now extended to help. The Shaddai who had destroyed, were now about to nourish.

“And Naomi said unto her” — Evidently Ruth remained silent in wonderment, leaving it to Naomi to carry on with her explanation.

“The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsman” — The Hebrew *miggolim* signifies *of our redeemers*. It is derived from *goel*, “redeemer”. The margin renders: *one who hath a right to redeem*. Such had the right of redeeming the inheritance of a relative who has fallen on hard times, or of the person himself if he had been sold into slavery, and of acting in the capacity of family protector, so avenging the dead (Lev. 25:25-31, 46-55; Deut. 19:1-13). All these rights belonged to the next of kin, and therefore *goel* came to signify a near kinsman. The term used by Naomi implied that Boaz was one of several who could redeem.

The relationship of Boaz to Naomi and Ruth is gradually revealed in this chapter. First, he is described as a mere acquaintance (v. 1). Next, as related to Elimelech, and, therefore, by marriage to Naomi and Ruth (vv. 1,3). Thirdly, as near of kin (v. 20). Finally as *the Goel*, the Redeemer or *one who has a right to redeem*. As Naomi pondered the amazing circumstances that were developing, she was able to see the light of hope at last!

VERSE 21

“And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest” — The Hebrew *hannearim* is used in vv. 9,15, and denotes *young servants*. The word here, as in v. 9,15 is in the masculine gender, though in vv. 22,23 the same word is given in the feminine gender. There is a need for fellowship, of association, with those of like precious faith among the workers of the anti-typical Boaz. There is protection in so doing. The Lord (the antitypical Boaz) has his “servants” (the angels) who “do His commands, hearkening to the voice of His word” (Psa. 103:20). They are ministering spirits who labour on behalf of the heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). Like the young men of Boaz, they “encampeth round them that fear Him and delivereth them” (Psa. 34:7). The Bride should ever bear that in mind (Cp. Ecc. 5:6; 1 Cor. 11:10).

VERSE 22

“And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law” — Naomi plainly sees that

Boaz has taken unusual interest in Ruth, and realises that this has been done because he recognises his responsibility as redeemer to assist her and Naomi as the Law specified. But it is also obvious to Naomi that Boaz is motivated by more than mere law, even by love.

“It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field” — See note v. 8. It was absolutely imperative for Ruth to remain in the field of Boaz, if she desired to benefit from the provision of the Law regarding a redeemer, as well as from the awakening affection of Boaz. To stray into other fields would jeopardise her hopes in that regard, and could prove dangerous at a time when there was “no king in Israel” and “everyone was doing what was right in his own eyes”. The Hebrew can signify *to be met with violence*, and this could well be the fate of Ruth should she stray unattended in other places. But Boaz had provided against such an eventuality in his field, by instructing his young men to overlook Ruth (v. 15).

Having been granted permission to glean in the field of Israel’s hope, we, too, must follow the excellent advice of Boaz and Naomi, and guard against straying elsewhere. The gleaning in other fields may look attractive, like the seductive theories that are constantly being displayed before the eyes of the unwary, but Paul warns against those who “by good works and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:18). Such theories (which frequently represent gleaning in Gentile fields) can prove dangerous. The Bride in *The Song of Solomon* tells of the distress to which she was subjected when she was forced to labour in vineyards other than that of her Groom (Ch. 1:6). True happiness, sound contentment of mind, and full rewards of service will come only from gleaning in the field of Boaz, and by keeping close to his young maidens. In that regard, let us not attempt to “remove the ancient landmarks”. The principles of exposition, established over a century ago, remain true and sound to the present. How sad it will be at the return of the antitypical Boaz, if he finds us in another field.

VERSE 23

“So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of the barley harvest and of the wheat harvest” — The

time indicated occupied the period between Passover and Pentecost (fifty days — Lev. 23:16). Ruth arrived at Bethlehem with Naomi at the time of Passover which commemorates deliverance; and now her time of service had brought her to Pentecost, when the full results of labour were assessed. Pentecost, under Moses, commemorated the giving of the Law (see notes on *Leviticus*), whilst, under Christ, it was the day selected for the first public proclamation of the Gospel in the name of the risen Christ, and the complete redemption that is offered through him (Acts 2:1). The people gathered from all parts of the world heard these things proclaimed by Peter, and en-

quired: "Men and brethren what shall we do?" They were directed to seek the aid of the Redeemer in fulfilment of his promise (vv. 37-40). In Ruth's case, the time had come likewise for her to seek the help of her Redeemer.

"And dwelt with her mother in law" — Her environment, in the home of Naomi, was to her spiritual profit. The verb *dwelt* denotes *to settle down, abide as an inhabitant, to live*. Ruth settled down as an inhabitant in Israel. The Ecclesia has no patriotism for the nation in which it dwells, but identifies itself as the true Israel of God (Gal. 6:16). Its title *Ecclesia* proclaims that its members are *called out* of their original state.



A shepherd leading his flock in the shepherd's field outside Bethlehem.

Chapter Three

Love's Request



— RUTH'S VIRTUOUS APPEAL: SHE SEEKS THE HELP OF BOAZ

When Ruth reveals to Naomi her experiences in the field of Boaz, and Naomi recognises in these events the ways of Providence guiding her daughter in law to their near kinsman, she confidently anticipates that Boaz will soon move to help them in their need, as required under the Law. But there is inexplicable delay. The days drift into weeks and nothing is done. Ruth continues to labour in the field, Boaz continues to help her by seeing that she receives ample gleanings, but he remains silent and inactive as to the real work of redemption. Something is hindering him, and Naomi determines to ascertain what it is. She instructs Ruth to offer herself as wife to Boaz. There is nothing indelicate in the way this is done, for it is in accordance with the custom of the day. In fact, each party acts with the greatest circumspection and consideration for the other, each thinking of the other's welfare. But Ruth's action forces Boaz to declare his intention. He is prepared to act as Redeemer, but there is a closer kinsman who has a prior right to do so. He stands in the way of any such action on the part of Boaz. However, because Boaz now has developed a love for Ruth, he declares his intention of forcing his nearer kinsman to fulfil his responsibilities, or, in the absence of him doing so, to do so himself. The type is fulfilled in Christ, his Bride, and the Law. Whilst the Lord has the power to redeem, it is required of the members of his multitudinous

bride that they make the first move to that end, as did Ruth. They must recognise their need of a redeemer, and seek his aid in accordance with Yahweh's requirements and instructions. Among other things he must "redeem them from the curse of the Law" (Gal. 3:13).

Naomi Instructs Ruth To Approach Boaz as Redeemer — vv. 1-7

Concerned at Ruth's unsettled state, and the inactivity of Boaz their near kinsman, Naomi takes the initiative, and instructs her daughter in law to approach him, and offer herself in marriage.

VERSE 1

"Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" — Naomi recognises that she has a responsibility towards Ruth, seeing that she had left her own land and people to sojourn with her in Bethlehem. She decides to seek "rest" for her. The word is *menowach* and signifies a *place of rest, protection, honour, and security*. A husband's house is his wife's *menuchah* or place of security (feminine form of this word). When Naomi blessed her daughters in law with the words: "Yahweh grant you that ye may find *rest* (*menuchah*), each of you in the house of her husband" (Ruth 1:9), it was this that she meant. The term is used in relation to Israel's association with the land in the blessing of Jacob (Genesis 49:15). Moses used the expression when speaking with Israel in the wilderness: "Ye are not as yet come to the rest (*menuchah*) and to the inheritance, which Yahweh your God giveth you" (Deut. 12:9). That "rest" is the rest, or *menuchah*, of marriage. To attain unto such a "rest" the bride must make herself attractive to her groom, and so "labour to enter into her rest" (Heb. 4:11). The Lord Jesus Christ offers his followers "rest" (Matt. 11:29) and peace (John 14:27) in his "house" (Hebrews 3:6). In other words, he makes offer to "marry" them. Israel as a nation will find the land of promise a resting place of the future, "for as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isaiah 62:5).

Naomi recognised Ruth's need of such a rest (*menuchah*) if the name of Elime-

lech were not to cease in Israel: She had awaited a near kinsman to come forward to act as husband as specified in the Law, but no such offer had been made, probably because of the Moabitish origin of Ruth. At last she decided to take matters into her own hands, and initiate the necessary action.

What she did was based upon the law of inheritance as laid down in Scripture (Deut. 25:5), and which differs from the law of redemption. The law of inheritance required that in the case of a childless widow, one of the brethren of the deceased husband should raise up seed to his "brother". The word "brother" (*'ach* in Hebrew) signifies a near relative, a kinsman. The law stipulated that such a relative must be of the same tribe and community as the deceased; and that the firstborn of such a union would be considered as his son, and so inherit the property of his mother's former husband. Naomi had to seek "one of the kindred" of her late husband for the purpose she had in mind. Boaz was one such (v. 2). The word she used there to describe him is not *goel* but *mowda'ath*: "Is not Boaz of our *kindred*, with whose maidens thou wast?" she remarked. As such, he was qualified to act the part of husband unto Ruth in accordance with the instructions of the Law.

A further stipulation in regard to the proposed husband, was that he should "dwell" in the same tribal community as his deceased brother (Deut. 25:5), and this, too, had a bearing upon the typical significance of the enactment. This is revealed by considering the relationship of Yahweh to His people. He had called Israel out of Egypt, made the nation His unique possession (Exod. 19:5), and had caused a Sanctuary to be built that He might "dwell among them" (Exod. 25:8). And the purpose of this? That He might, through the word of Truth, beget a righteous seed. So what Naomi was about to call upon Boaz to do was to act the part of God to the house of Elimelech, in the way laid down by the provision of the

levirate law. Therefore, she used the appropriate expressions in describing Boaz as "her kinsman".

However, when Ruth subsequently approached Boaz, he described himself by another term, also rendered "kinsman" (v. 9), but which, in the Hebrew, is *goel*. The *Goel* was the redeemer of Israel. The word itself seems to signify *to loose*, hence to act as one who will untie a knot that has tied up the family fortunes. It does not, of itself, signify *next of kin* though that is the way it is rendered in Scripture. It is translated in that way, because it was the next of kin who was required to act as *goel*, so that by use, the title came to signify that. The *Goel* was the protector of any Israelite family.

Boaz, therefore, was both *Mowda'ath* ("of our kindred") and *Goel* (one with the right to redeem an inheritance). As "of the kindred" of Elimelech, he had the responsibility to see that his brother's name did not die out, and as "one with the right to redeem", he had the responsibility to relieve the family in times of want or distress, particularly in regard to its inheritance.

Naomi was about to bring both laws together: the law that required a brother to raise up seed to his deceased brother; and the law that required a man of wealth to redeem a family inheritance. For she retained in her possession the field of Abimelech.

Consider the type. The deceased Elimelech (*My God is King*) represented the Kingdom of God in a state of political death. The inheritance, however, is still in the possession of Naomi (the Abrahamic Covenant). There is a need to raise up a Godly seed, so that the name of Elimelech shall not cease, and to redeem the inheritance in his name. The antitypical Boaz, the Lord Jesus Christ, can do both in regard to the Kingdom of God. He will act as both husband and redeemer: the first, to restore the family; the second, to retain the inheritance. By this means the divine name and titles of Isaiah 54:5 will be fulfilled: "For thy Maker is thine husband: Yahweh of hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel." The Lord Jesus Christ, as the manifestation of Yahweh, and as the antitypical Boaz, will fulfil this divine, prophetic name of Deity.

The *Goel* had the right and duty to take up the case of a poor relation within the family connection. For example, a

man might fall into debt, and be forced to raise money on an inheritance. But the land was not his to sell. The whole land of Israel belonged to Yahweh (Lev. 25:23). A man's property, therefore, was God's. A landowner never really owned his land; he only had it on loan from God. But if he fell into debt and had to mortgage this right, it was the duty of the *Goel* to "redeem" it, to buy it back, and, subsequently, to reinstate his relative on what was not his, but God's land.

The year of Jubilee (see Lev. 25:8-17) was an inspired institution. Through the observance of it, land which had passed out of the hands of an Israelitish family which had no *Goel* to help it was given back to that family by *Yahweh* (see Lev. 25:23-55). Who thus manifested Himself as Redeemer.

The Law of the levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-10), which Naomi was now considering for Ruth, was a different law, as we have seen. Naomi made reference to this Law in her statement to Ruth and Orpah, recorded in Ruth 1:11.

Naomi brought these two laws together. The land belonging to Elimelech was still in her name; but it was Ruth alone who could provide children in the name of Elimelech. Without anticipating our comments, notice that Boaz in his negotiating with the nameless *goel* divided the transaction into two: (1) Redeem the land from Naomi (Ruth 4:3-4) — which he was prepared to do; (2) Marry Ruth (v. 5) — which he was not prepared to do, because of the legislation of the Law regarding people of Moab.

Actually, the law Naomi invoked predated the Mosaic code, and extended back to patriarchal times (see Gen. 38:8). The incident of Tamar, the daughter in law of Judah, established a precedent upon which she, with careful thoughtfulness, decided to act. On the basis of the patriarchal code, she sought to make Boaz act for Yahweh as husband for an alien woman who legally was outside the redeemed community, God's chosen people of Israel! Thus, by producing seed for Elimelech, Ruth's seed would inherit that which once was Elimelech's. Her action foreshadowed the appeal of the Gospel to Gentiles by which a Godly seed would be raised to inherit the Kingdom of God.

Her instructions to Ruth reveal that she knew more about the principles of redemption than did the unknown re-

deemer who appears in the next chapter of the story, and who was limited by the Law in that regard, knowing little of Grace. When Naomi remarks to Ruth: "Shall I not seek rest for thee", it seems that she had decided to go beyond the provisions of the Law to find it. The verb *baqash* denotes to *search* out, especially by worship and prayer (Strong). By careful study of God's word, and earnest prayer for wisdom, she was guided in her understanding of what was required. This caused her to see the need of bringing the two laws together, which we have already discussed; and as she pondered the precedent of Tamar's Levirate marriage, the fruits of which laid the foundation of her own tribe, she could see that in whatever the letter of the Law required and demanded, "grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). Naomi had no doubts about the genuineness of Ruth's confession of faith (Ruth 1:16-17), and recognised that despite her Moabitish origin, she was more Israelitish in spirit than the nameless *Goel* who rested so completely on a Law he could not himself fulfil. As we shall see, by careful manipulation, Naomi and Boaz so arranged matters, as to reveal the insufficiency of the Law to redeem, causing the "unnamed *Goel*" to withdraw his claim against the land (Ruth 4:5-6). In this transaction, Naomi typed the Covenant of Promise, as using the Law to accomplish her purpose.

VERSE 2

"And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast?" — Here the word "kindred" is *mowda'ath*, and denotes a relative. It is of different meaning to that rendered "next kinsmen" (Ruth 2:20) which is a rendition of the Hebrew *goel*. In speaking as she did, Naomi pondered the possibilities of a Levirate marriage between Boaz and Ruth, concerning which we briefly commented upon in our note upon Ruth 1:11. In doing so, Naomi acted both faithfully and courageously. Again we stress, because it is fundamental to the teaching of the book, to arrange a Levirate marriage for Ruth, the foreigner, Naomi had to go *beyond the law* to patriarchal times. She discovered her warrant for so acting in the record of Genesis 38, relating to the Canaanitish widow Tamar!

"Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshing-floor" — In the Land of Promise, a breeze rises from the sea

about 4 p.m. and lasts until after sunset. It is ideal for the purpose of winnowing, carrying away the chaff, and letting the grain fall to the ground. The threshing floor was an open, exposed spot, generally on a rising, with a large, hard surface, ideal to catch the breeze and to carry away the chaff. In the type, the reference to "night" takes us to the epoch of Christ's absence (John 9:4); whilst the removing of grain from the chaff suggests discrimination and judgment (Amos 9:9; Joel 3:13-14 mg.).

VERSE 3

"Wash thyself therefore" — The antitypical Bride has been invited to do likewise (Isaiah 1:18; Romans 6:1-3; Eph. 5:26). She is "clean through the word" (John 15:3).

"And anoint thee" — Ruth had to "make herself ready" for the purpose Naomi had in mind (see Esther 2:12). The antitypical Bride (2 Cor. 11:2) must do likewise (see Rev. 19:7). The "anointing" that she has received is through the spirit-word (see 1 John 2:27; 5:7), in the development of "the mind of the spirit" (Rom. 8:6). This is the source of true joy (cp. Heb. 1:9).

"And put thy raiment upon thee" — The manifestation of a Christlike character (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 13:14; Rev. 3:4-5; 16:15).

"And get thee down to the floor" — To the place of harvest.

"But make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking" — It would have been most injudicious and thoughtless for Ruth to have made her way to the threshing-floor whilst the busy work of winnowing was proceeding. It was necessary to await the proper moment, when the servants having finished their work and their repast, would have retired to their respective places, and Boaz, too, would have completed his labours for the day. The type looks forward to the time when the present activities of the antitypical Boaz, in extracting grain from the chaff, will be completed, and he will be able to enjoy to the full the result of his labours. When the servants left, Boaz remained as guard over the harvest. The angels assist Christ in the work of separating the grain from the chaff (Matt. 13:41), but the marriage will be between him and his multitudinous bride alone.

VERSE 4

“And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do” — There is nothing indelicate in Naomi’s suggestion, nor in Ruth’s action. It was in the nature of an appeal, based upon the teaching of the Law. To die childless, to have one’s house cease, was to lack the divine blessing (Psa. 127:3). It was the hope of every family to contribute to the birth of the “seed of the woman” who was to be manifested to redeem mankind (Gen. 3:15). Accordingly the Law required that in the case of one dying childless, his brother should raise up seed in his name. The problem in Ruth’s case was that she was not of Israel, so nobody had come forth to fulfil the requirements of the Law. But “what the law could not do” (Rom. 8:3), a precedent had been discovered in the patriarchal law. Acting upon the instructions of Naomi, Ruth thus made a direct appeal to Boaz. She did so in accordance with the custom of the times by which a woman could propose marriage to a man. Ruth was told to then await the reaction and instructions of Boaz.

The Hebrew word rendered “feet” in this place, is not that normally used elsewhere, but *marqelath* which is the opposite to *mera’ashath* which is properly a head-piece. Ruth is instructed to uncover the parts about his feet. The word can relate to a foot-piece, or anything associated therewith. She is to lay down at that spot, hence indicating an attitude of submissiveness to Boaz, as wives are instructed to “submit themselves unto their husbands, as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:22). The “footstool” is always treated as the place of humility. The instructions given are “to worship at his footstool” (Psa. 99:5; 132:7), and the promise made is that his enemies will be made his footstool (Psa. 110:1). Mankind must either voluntarily submit to the Lord, or be compelled to do so ultimately (see Isa. 60:12).



VERSE 5

“And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do” — Ruth is prepared to humble herself in co-operating with the purpose of Naomi.

VERSE 6

“And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her” — To “go down” suggests an act of humility. She humbled herself to obey the instructions of her mother in law. In the allegory of Galatians 4, Paul describes the “Jerusalem which is above” (the Abrahamic covenant) as “the mother of us all” (v. 26). Obedience to the requirements of the covenant is necessary if we would benefit from its provisions. We need to humble ourselves to that end.

VERSE 7

“And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry” — The Hebrew *yatab* rendered “merry” signifies to be good, well, pleased, joyous, well satisfied. It does not necessarily imply excess (Prov. 15:13). Boaz could see the evidence of a successful harvest before him; he was uplifted with the goodness that Yahweh had bestowed upon him; he was contented and relaxed.

“He went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn” — The “sleep of a labouring man is sweet” (Ecc. 5:12). Boaz was wealthy, but not above labouring with his men, even sleeping in the open air by the side of the heap of grain which witnessed to the blessing of Yahweh upon him. He did so as guard, as the Lord likewise protects his harvest.

“And she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down” — As Boaz lay sleeping, Ruth stepped cautiously forth to play her delicate part. She stole softly to the sheltered spot where he lay. She gently uncovered the margin of the cloak, which lay over the place where his feet were laid. She laid herself down noiselessly. Her action indicated that she offered herself in marriage to Boaz.

Ruth’s Humble Appeal — vv. 8-9

Boaz, little realising what the night will reveal, sleeps on. For a time he remains unconscious of the presence of Ruth. But after a while, he disturbs, and then realises he is not alone. He is amazed to find a woman in close proximity to him. Re-

cognising Ruth, he with delight hears from her lips, her humble and modest appeal.

VERSE 8

"And it came to pass at midnight" — Midnight is a significant time in Scripture, used by the Lord to describe the coming of the Bridegroom (Matthew 25:6).

"That the man was afraid, and turned himself" — Boaz disturbed in his sleep. He awakened, and feeling something soft and warm at his feet, he was startled, and, for a moment, afraid. The verb *turned* is from the Hebrew *laphath* and signifies to *bend over*. Boaz sat up and bent over to see what had disturbed him.

"And, behold, a woman lay at his feet" — The exclamation *behold!* expresses the startled surprise of Boaz at his discovery.

VERSE 9

"And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid" — In contrast to the term *shipchath*, as used in Ruth 2:13 here the word is *amah*, and denotes a servant. The difference between the two words is seen in 1 Sam. 25:41: "Behold, let thy handmaid (*shipchath*) be a servant (*amah*), unto thee". As "handmaid" Abigail acknowledged that she was a member of the household of Israel, owing allegiance to David as king, but as a "servant" she expressed her willingness to perform whatever menial tasks he desired of her. Both loyalty and humility were expressed in the terms she used. Ruth to Boaz likewise expresses herself in terms of humble submission. She does not presume to address him as a member of his household, even though he has spoken to her in such terms as that, but acknowledges her servitude to him. The disciples of the Lord are both his servants and his friends (John 15:14-15; Romans 1:1). They are called to be members of his household, but acknowledge their servitude to him (Heb. 3:6; Romans 6:18). Like Ruth, they recognise their subordinate position to their Lord, submitting to him as a true wife submits to her husband (Eph. 5:22), rejoicing in the self-sacrificing love of her husband "even as Christ also loved the Ecclesia, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). But often the word *amah* is used to denote a maidservant as a secondary wife, or concubine, of her lord. Examples

of this are recorded in Gen. 20:17; Judges 9:18. In those cases the maidservants were entitled to their status and maintenance as wives during their lifetime (see Exodus 21:7-9). In using that term, therefore, Ruth could have had in mind her submission as wife. Indeed, in inviting Boaz to "spread his skirt" over her, Ruth was claiming the right of a widow in the approved manner of the time. This right was to seek the help of her late husband's next of kin to raise up seed for his brother, and so maintain the family identity.

It is significant, that the word Ruth used for "skirt" is *kanaph*, the same as that rendered "wings" in Ruth 2:12, though here it is in the singular number. The term "wing" is suggestive of protection. For a man to act as requested by Ruth was for him to claim one as his wife (see Ezek. 16:8), promising that he will afford her his utmost protection. Ruth thus claimed the protection that the Law afforded her. The casting of an outward garment over the bride's head was the customary ceremony at old-time Eastern marriages, and was recognised as a token that from henceforth the husband would extend himself to provide every care and protection for his bride.

"For thou art a near kinsman" — Here the word is *goel* as in Ruth 2:20, a different word from that found in Ruth 2:1. The word denotes one who has a right to redeem. The *Goel* was a very important person in Israel, for he was the appointed protector of the family. He represented to the family what Yahweh was to His family.

The Gracious Response Of Boaz — vv. 10-13

The heart of Boaz is touched by the appeal of the young and lovely widow. He recognises her faith in using God-given instructions to relieve her distress, rather than following the dictates of the flesh, and seeking the companionship of young men of her age. Her character is well known to him, and has become the subject of favourable comment in Bethlehem. Moreover, Boaz has developed a tenderness for Ruth which makes him more than willing to act the part required of him. But there is an objection that appears insurmountable, and sadly Boaz gives expression to it, indicating that he has been pondering the problem of Ruth. There is a nearer kinsman whose responsibility and

privilege it is to act the part of Redeemer. Though Boaz is fully prepared to take Ruth to wife, his respect for the Law of Yahweh, requires that its provisions be scrupulously obeyed. He promises to investigate what can be done in the matter. In doing so, Boaz types the Lord Jesus Christ who fulfilled all the requirements of the Law before acting the part of a Redeemer. In this case, the Law stood in the way of Redemption until its inability to redeem was made clear to all, and its curse was removed from out of the way.

VERSE 10

“And he said, Blessed be thou of Yahweh, my daughter” — In this blessing (and compare with Ch. 2:20) Boaz indirectly makes reference to his comparative elderliness by addressing Ruth as “my daughter”.

“For thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich” — Ruth had shown great kindness to her late husband by nursing him during his sickness, and in accompanying his mother back to her land after his death. But great as all that kindness had been, her action in seeking out the elderly Boaz, to claim the right of near kinsman, and thus raise up seed to rebuild the house of her deceased husband, was even greater than her former actions. She was young, and doubtless attractive, and could have obtained a young and wealthy man as husband if she desired. Boaz was wealthy, but, obviously, not young. Yet she had turned to him, despite the attractions of younger men, because she respected the requirements of Yahweh’s law, and the wishes of her deceased husband. The world with its attractions must be denied and set aside if we would seek out the antitypical Boaz as our husband.

VERSE 11

“And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all thou requirest” — Boaz agrees to fulfil his duty as near kinsman to Ruth in order to rebuild the house of Elimelech — typical of the Kingdom of God.

“For all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman” — The word “city” is more properly rendered as *gate* (see margin). The elders of the city assembled at the gate, and their

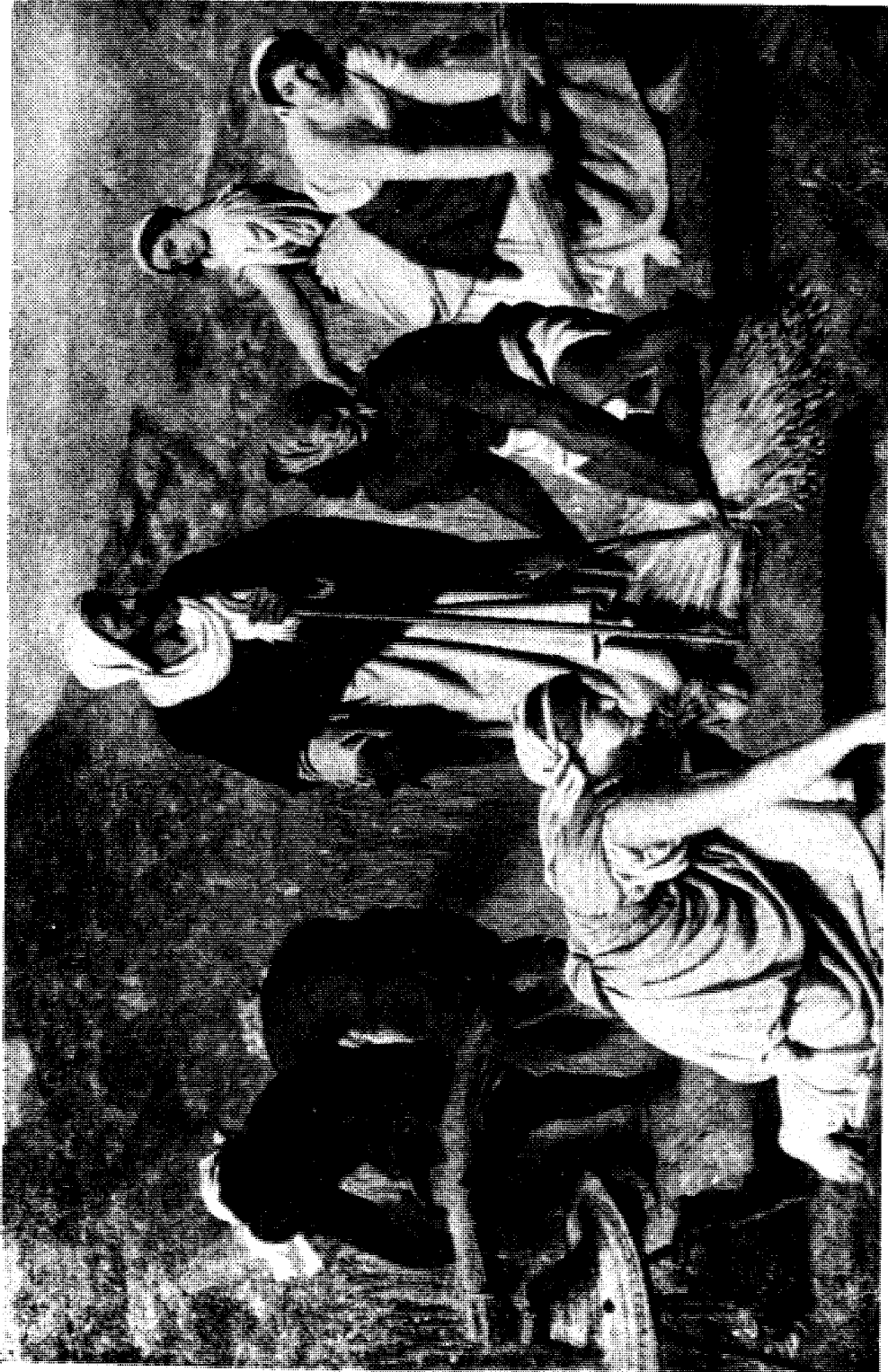
opinion of matters discussed was of greatest importance. They had observed the return of Naomi and Ruth, and recognising that the latter would have right to the inheritance of her father in law, acknowledged that her character was such as fitted her for such a privilege. The adjective “virtuous” is derived from the Hebrew *chayil* and has the sense of “force of character, strength of mind and body, capability”. All who had observed Ruth perceived that she was mentally and morally a woman of character and ability. She was resourceful, industrious, prudent, upright. Her character as a virtuous woman is depicted in Proverbs 31:10-31, and the secret of her success is expressed in the words of v. 30: “A woman that feareth Yahweh, she shall be praised”. Notice her value (v. 10), repute (v. 11), constancy (v. 12), industry (v. 13), prudence (v. 14), labour (v. 15), foresight (v. 16), strength (v. 17), carefulness (v. 18), skill (v. 19), charity (v. 20), oversight (v. 21), appearance (v. 22), status (v. 23), self-reliance (v. 24), clothing (v. 25), wisdom (v. 26), supervision (v. 27), influence (v. 28), praise (v. 29), Godliness (v. 30), and reward (v. 31).

That virtuous woman foreshadows the qualities of the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:1-2; Ephesians 5:25-32; Rev. 19:7). Ruth’s lovely character had been discussed by the elders of the city, and it constituted her greatest witness to the Truth she had espoused. How true that is of the antitypical Bride of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ exhorted: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Ruth had acted in that way, and this excited the admiration of her contemporaries.

VERSE 12

“And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I” — The nearer kinsman had the prior right, and not until he had been given opportunity to perform his duty and privilege could Boaz assume the full right. The delay in Boaz acting as he so much desired to do, was because of the existence of that other kinsman. Boaz had developed a great love for Ruth, but felt that his seniority stood in the way of Ruth returning that love. In any case, the right of the nearer kinsman had to be observed.

What a beautiful foreshadowing of the



Lord as Redeemer. The redemption he offers is under the terms of the Abrahamic covenant which predates that of the Mosaic covenant; but before he can extend his help as redeemer, the rights of the nearer kinsman (the Mosaic covenant based on law) had to be fulfilled, and any objections to Christ's redemption on a basis of grace had to be removed. The two "near kinsmen", namely Boaz and the nameless one, represented the two covenants of Scripture: the Abrahamic and the Mosaic. The mediator of the former is the Lord Jesus Christ; that of the latter was Moses (Gal. 3:17-19). The latter is a nearer kinsman in that it is based upon the flesh, for it was founded upon national considerations through the accident of birth. A person was born into that covenant, being circumcised on the eighth day of his life. Hence his relationship to it was closer than to that of the Covenant of Grace which depends upon the call of God. The covenant of Moses was based upon Law and Grace, and its terms had to be satisfied before those of the Covenant of Grace could apply. And this relates as much to Gentiles as to Jews, for Paul writing to the Gentile believers of Galatia declared that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law . . ." In Gal. 4:3, Paul points out that if any refuse the covenant of Grace, the Law still remains to claim its right.

VERSE 13

"Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part" — In his love and consideration for Ruth, Boaz will allow her to return only when it is light enough for her to do so in safety. In the meantime, she can remain under his protection, as saints do under the protection of the Lord during his absence, which he also styled "night" (John 9:4-5). Boaz does not touch Ruth as she lies at his feet, in case the nearer relative might agree to marry her. He risks being compromised by her presence, out of consideration and love for her. In the antitype, the Ecclesia awaits the time of redemption during the night of Gentilism, "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body" (Rom. 8:23). The impatience of love is manifested during that waiting both by

those "in heaven", and those on earth who "wait" for the coming of the morning of the new day (see Isa. 30:18; Hab. 1:2; Rev. 6:10).

"But if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee" — The term *part of a kinsman* is the translation of one word in Hebrew: *ga'al*, signifying *to redeem*. It is the verbal root of the word *goel* that occurs twice in v. 12. It should be noted that, in fact, Boaz did not say "I am thy near kinsman" but, "a redeemer (*goel*) am I"; and again: "There is a redeemer (*goel*) nearer than I". Again, in the verse before us, he did not say: "If he will perform unto thee the *part of a kinsman*, well", but "if he will redeem (*ga'al*) you, well". According to the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, the verb signifies *to resume a claim or right, which has lapsed or been forfeited, to reclaim, re-vindicate, redeem, or buy back*. It did not of itself signify "next of kin" which is only a derived meaning of the term. In practise, a man was seldom able to redeem a right which had lapsed, and thus the duty of doing so devolved upon his family (see Lev. 25:48), and, in particular, upon that member of his family who was most nearly related to him or her. The consequence was that the term *Goel*, properly rendered *Redeemer*, came to denote a man's kinsman, and especially his next-of-kin. That is the reason why the verb has been rendered in that way in the verse before us, and the rendering of the noun in v. 12. Boaz told Ruth that whilst he could act as Redeemer, because he was a member of the family, there was in existence a "nearer" Redeemer, one who was of closer relationship to Ruth, and it was his prior right and privilege to do so.

The antitype is very beautiful. When Yahweh proclaimed Himself as the Redeemer of Israel, He proclaimed His intention of revealing Himself as a close relation of Israel. This manifestation is seen in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom God was manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). Through such means, we, like Ruth of old, can become related to God; and He, through His son, becomes Redeemer to us: "The Father . . . hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the *Son of man*" (John 5:27). As such, the Lord is a Redeemer,

Opposite: Boaz confers with his servant: "Whose damsel is this?"

though his relationship to us is limited inasmuch as he was "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13).

"As Yahweh liveth" — This is a very significant addition. Boaz implicitly believed in the living reality of Yahweh, and acknowledged that whatever he said was recorded in heaven, and therefore, had to be accomplished. Israel, during the wilderness wanderings, failed to recognise the living reality of God, with the result, that the declaration was made to Moses (eliminating the word *as* in italics); "Truly I live, and all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh" (Num. 14:21). Faithful men and women clearly recognise that "God lives", and hence, whatever they may do, is done in His sight. See the repetition of the expression used by Boaz: Judges 8:19; 1 Sam. 14:39; 19:6; 20:3,21; 25:26,34; 26:10,16; 28:10; 29:6; 2 Sam. 12:5; 2 Kings 2:2,6; Jer. 4:2; 5:2. Solomon exhorted: "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for He hath no pleasure in fools; pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay" (see Eccles. 5:1-6). Christ told the "dead" ecclesia of Sardis which had a reputation of being a "living ecclesia" in the sight of men, that he had not found their "works perfect before God". The word signifies "completed": the ecclesia had promised but not performed, and therefore received the rebuke of Christ.

To Ruth, Boaz bound himself with an oath to take her as his wife, should the nearer kinsman refuse (see Ezek. 16:8). It is significant that the work of the antitypical Redeemer has been guaranteed by promises confirmed by an oath (Heb. 6:17).

"Lie down until the morning" — Ruth is exhorted to await in faith the morning of the new day when her desire for redemption would be fulfilled. For the antitype see Malachi 4:1-2; 2 Sam. 23:4.

Boaz' Care for Ruth — vv. 14-15

Boaz' love for Ruth has now quickened, and he shows her every consideration whilst contemplating the means that he shall use to claim her as his own.

VERSE 14

"And she lay at his feet until the morning" — That statement describes the con-

dition of the antitypical Bride of Christ whether dead or living. The former are described as being "asleep" in Christ (1 Thess. 4:15-16), whilst the latter though "troubled" as Ruth must have been, still submissively "rest in him" (2 Thess. 2:7) awaiting that day of release.

"And she rose up before one could know another" — The RV renders this statement as *before one could discern another*. Ruth arose in the early dawn, whilst it was still dark, before a person could clearly distinguish another. At the approach of the dawning of the millennial day, living and dead saints will be taken from their place of abode to a secret hiding place of Yahweh (2 Tim. 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:1), there to await their final redemption.

"And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor" — The relationship of Boaz to Ruth, and his intentions towards her, were unknown to others. This exactly describes the relationship between the Lord and the saints (the antitypical Ruth) during the present night of Gentile times. But in the narrative, to whom were these words uttered? Evidently to the attendants of Boaz with whom he must have discussed his proposition the following morning, though they were absent during the time that Ruth was at the threshing floor. The antitypical Boaz has his angelic assistants who overshadow the lives of saints (Matt. 18:10), and who "know those who are his" even though such knowledge is hidden from the world (2 Tim. 2:19). The RV, in accordance with the Hebrew, provides the definite article to the statement "*the woman*", the reference being specifically to Ruth to whom preferential treatment has already been extended by Boaz.

VERSE 15

"And he said, Bring the vail that thou hast upon thee, and hold it" — The Hebrew term *mitpachath* here rendered *vail* has been variously translated, and evidently refers to a large wrap or loose cloak worn over ordinary clothes. The Vulgate has "cloak"; the RV has "mantle". The Hebrew word is derived from a root implying a covering such as a tent. The Apocalypse refers to several different garments as used symbolically. Among them is the *Himation*, used of an outer cloak or mantle, and referred to

in Rev. 3:4-5,18; 16:15 as the covering put on in baptism.

“And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her” — Six is the number of flesh. As well as making arrangements for the redemption of Ruth, Boaz extends help to her in the mundane things of life; those things that our “heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of” and therefore supplies (Matt. 6:32).

“And she went into the city” — The verb is in the masculine gender, and, accordingly, the Revised Version renders “he went into the city”. Boaz lost no time in performing his part. His love for Ruth was such that he was now anxious for the marriage.

Naomi's Advice To Ruth — vv. 16-18

With great excitement Naomi learns of the intentions of Boaz, and recognises in the gift he has given Ruth his determination to carry out the part of a redeemer. She realises that her wealthy kinsman has developed a love for her daughter in law, and therefore will be most anxious to fulfil his role in her redemption.

VERSE 16

“And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter?” — The RV margin renders this: “How hast thou fared?” Naomi desires to know whether Boaz has betrothed Ruth to be married.

“And she told her all that the man had done to her” — The action of Boaz was a clear indication to Naomi of the genuineness of his intentions.

VERSE 17

“And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law” — In the parable of the labourers in which all received the same pay irrespective as to

the measure of their work, the Lord taught that his disciples will be amply compensated now, in the supply of their daily needs, for any labour they might perform for the truth (see Matt. 20:1-16; 6:11; Psalms 37:25). The penny each received comprised their daily needs which the “Father knoweth that all have need of” (Matt. 6:32), and which He sees that all will receive who work on His behalf (cp. Luke 10:7; 1 Tim. 5:18; 1 Cor. 9:9). The six measures of barley supplied the mundane needs of Naomi's household pending the final redemption of Ruth.

VERSE 18

“Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall”

— Very often faith demands of us in a crisis that we “stand still” and await “the salvation of Yahweh” (see Exod. 14:13; 2 Chron. 20:15-17; Isa. 41:10-14; Isa. 30:15; Psalm 37:3,5). It is as though Naomi told Ruth to be at peace for all will be well. The hand of the Almighty was dealing “sweetly”, not “bitterly”, with all parties concerned.

“For the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day” —

There was as much desire in Boaz to complete the work of redemption, as their was in Ruth to obtain it. So it is with the consummation of the divine purpose in the earth. For it “Yahweh waits” (Isa. 30:18); the angels enquire (1 Pet. 1:12); and those on earth, who are like Ruth, anticipate with longing “the appearing of the Lord (2 Tim. 4:8). Hence those in heaven and those on earth combine in their desire for the coming marriage, whilst for it “his wife makes herself ready” (Rev. 19:7). The word “rest” in this verse is *shaqat* and denotes *to be in repose*. It is the same word the Spirit uses to describe the attitude of heaven in relation to the divine purpose until it is accomplished (see Isa. 62:1,6-7; Luke 12:50).

NAOMI'S STRATEGEM FOR THE MARRIAGE OF RUTH

Naomi had two problems to solve. Firstly, there was the matter of the family inheritance; secondly, there was the obstacle of Ruth's Gentile origin. As to the first, Naomi decided to relieve her poverty by mortgaging the family inheritance (Ruth 4:3), though, under normal circumstances, this would have reverted back to the family at the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8).

But to what family? Elimelech and his sons were dead; Naomi was past bearing; and Ruth was husbandless. The family was on the point of extinction, and the situation was hopeless, unless it could be restored. This was possible only by a levirate marriage, and there lay the second problem. For Ruth was a Moabitess, and the Law legislated against such (Deut. 23:3).

The Importance Of The Inheritance

The land inheritance of an Israelite was not something that he purchased, but a grant of land given to his forefather by Yahweh, as divided by lot among the tribes and families of Israel when the nation entered the land (Num. 26:55; Joshua 13:6). There was nothing of chance or caprice in disposal of the land by lot. It revealed that the grant was of God. It was supervised by the priest acting in conjunction with the Urim and Thummim, and assisted by Joshua (Num. 27:21; 34:17). This method of distribution showed that no Israelite had exclusive right to any portion of the land except by the determination of Yahweh as the great Disposer. Hence an inheritance granted by lot in the Promised Land was typical of an eternal inheritance in the Kingdom of God. In the New Testament, the Greek word rendered *inheritance*, as relating to the future, is derived from a verb signifying *to receive by lot* (See Eph. 1:14,18; 5:5; Col. 1:12 etc).

Nobody was allowed to sell his inheritance. If a person fell on bad times, and was compelled by circumstances to raise money on his holding, it was the duty of a next of kin to purchase it, but, in any case, it reverted to the original owner at the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:23-28).

The division of the land, though by lot, was "according to the number of names", or families in Israel (Num. 26:53). This implies that a national register was kept of the original land-

inheritors. Their possession became a family heirloom to be passed down in order on the decease of the head of the house.

What determined the individual inheritance, or, to put it another way, the recording of a family name in the national register? The spiritual qualities of the one concerned: whether a man followed Yahweh or not (see Num. 32:11-12). Accordingly, of Caleb it is recorded: "Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that *he wholly followed Yahweh Elohim of Israel*" (Joshua 14:14). The inheritance he received was the mark of divine approval of his character. Hence Caleb received his inheritance "according to the commandment of Yahweh" (Joshua 15:13), though, in order to properly enter in upon it, Caleb had to drive out the original inhabitants. This demanded the manifestation of courage and faith, which, indeed, he exhibited (vv. 14-15). Having been granted his inheritance, apparently it was recorded in the national register.

This explains the reluctance of Naboth to sell his vineyard to Ahab. Ahab wanted it for all time, and not merely until the year of Jubilee. Therefore, whilst to grant the king's request may have been of material benefit to Naboth, it certainly would have been contrary to the will of Yahweh. Accordingly, because of his respect for the things of God, Naboth refused the king's request. He replied: "God forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee" (1 Kings 21:3). His family's name was inscribed on the National Register of land-inheritors, and to give the land up to Ahab would require that "his name be blotted out" therefrom (see Deut. 29:20).

Jezebel could not understand the attitude of Naboth. To her it was nothing more than stubborn stupidity, and she arranged for his assassination. The murderous death of Naboth, and the entering upon his inheritance by violence, was treated by Elijah as the greatest act of wickedness in an evil reign, so that he pronounced a special judgment against it, which afterwards took effect.

Again, of Coniah, or Jehoiachin, it is decreed: "Write this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" (Jer. 22:30). Actually, the king had seven sons (1 Chron. 3:17), but Yahweh decreed that his name be removed from the National Register, so that his sons could not lay claim, through their father, of an inheritance in

the land, or to the throne of David in Judah. The expression: "Write this man childless . . ." suggests the existence of such a register, though, of course, there was no literal writing done in regard to Coniah: it was merely a prophetic proclamation.

The existence of a National Register recording such transactions is also strongly inferred by the action of Jeremiah in redeeming the family inheritance when it was offered to him by Hanameel. This was done on the grounds that "the right of redemption was his to buy it" (Jer. 32:7). On completion of the transaction, Jeremiah states: "I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balance. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open" (vv. 10-11). The word "subscribed" signifies *to record*, or *to write in the book* (see margin). There were two parts to the transaction: the record that Jeremiah retained (equivalent to the modern title deeds relating to a property), and the national record of it. Jeremiah retained the former, and placing them in an "earthen vessel that they may continue many days" (v. 14), he buried them in a spot where he can recover them in the age to come, and so lay claim to his inheritance. The written record was placed in the National Register for "witnesses subscribed (wrote in) the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison" (v. 12).

And now Naomi is faced with the prospect of her family, left childless, on the point of losing its inheritance. Already, through poverty, it has mortgaged the land, and is need of a redeemer. But what use is a redeemer if the family ceases? Therefore there is a need for the family to be restored. How is that to be done, for as we have already noted, Naomi is beyond bearing children, and Ruth is a Moabitess, prohibited by the Law from entering the congregation of Yahweh?

A Levirate Marriage

But there is another law that provides for such an emergency. It is called *The Law of The Levirate Marriage*, from *levir* "a brother". This was a law designed to restore a family on the point of extinction. In the case of a childless widow, the law provided that a near relation of her dead husband, a brother of his own tribe, could take her to wife. In such a case, the firstborn which she bears "will succeed in the name" of the dead husband, "that his name be not put out of Israel" (Deut.

25:6). To “succeed” or to “rise up in the name of his brother which is dead” signifies to “build up the house” of the deceased by providing an heir to the family inheritance. For otherwise “his name will be *put out of Israel*”. This evidently means that on the extinction of a family, the family name was removed from the Register of Inheritance that apparently was preserved in Israel. Figuratively, this would be equivalent to blotting out a person’s name from the book of life (Rev. 3:14).

In the case of the brother of the deceased refusing to perform this duty, the widow was invited to complain of the fact before the elders of his city, stating, “My husband’s brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband’s brother” (Deut. 25:7). It is obvious, from this statement, that the term *shem* or “name” is used here in the sense of *offspring* or *household*, for the deceased already had a ‘name’ in the normal use of the term. Indeed, I. Rapaport, in a work entitled *The Hebrew Word Shem and Its Original Meaning* claims that *shem* is related to the Akkadian *sumu*, and that inherent in the meaning of the word is the idea of *offspring* or *household*. Hence “to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel”, is equivalent to providing seed as his offspring and heir, and so raising up the *household* of his brother. See also our comments on Ruth 4:13-15.

In considering the subject of a levirate marriage, such as Naomi contemplated, it should be borne in mind that, to a Hebrew, a childless marriage was a marriage from which Yahweh had withheld His blessing, for, as the Psalmist observed: “Children are an heritage of Yahweh, and the fruit of the womb is His reward”. (Psa. 127:3). The childless state of Elimelech’s house was due to divine displeasure at the faithless attitude of both father and sons. All of which is very significant in view of the mercy of the Father in providing a faithful relative (Christ), to raise up a Godly seed to inherit the Kingdom.

The suggestion that the Hebrew *shem* can denote *offspring* or *household* is strengthened by the penalty imposed upon one who refused to act so as to restore his brother’s family: “So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother’s house” (v. 9). In that statement, *house* is used synonymously with *name*: the former term being explanatory of the latter. Again: “And his *name* shall be called in Israel, The *house* of him that hath his shoe loosed” (v. 10). Obviously *name* and *house* in this statement have related meanings. “Name” (*shem*)

again is significant of *offspring*, and "house" denotes *household*. With perfect justice, the Law decreed that if a brother would not come and help rebuild the house of his deceased relative, the stigma of his action would rest upon his own house, or descendants.

In order to restore the family status of Elimelech in Israel, and before Yahweh, it was necessary that Ruth should marry, and that the marriage should be a levirate marriage. This would impose a sacrifice both on Ruth and the near relative of Elimelech, for it would mean that the marriage would not be according to flesh-likings necessarily, but as an act of obedience to Yahweh, motivated by faith. It is to the first that Boaz makes reference when he remarked to Ruth: "Blessed be thou of Yahweh, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich" (Ruth 3:10). He was commenting on the fact that Ruth did not seek to please the flesh in her search for a mate, but to obey the principles of the Law, and in order to restore the house of Elimelech which she had joined. It may have been materially more advantageous, and personally more desirable, for her to seek the companionship of a wealthy young man of her age than the elderly Boaz, but this lovely young woman was activated by a desire to carry out her vow to Naomi: "Thy God shall be my God" (Ruth 1:16).

The remaining problem was that of Ruth's Moabitish relationship. In view of the prohibition of the Law, this was a very real problem, as the nearer kinsman claimed when the facts were presented to him. But, as our notes show, as a precedent for this, Naomi was able to go beyond the Law to the practice of the patriarchs as exhibited in the matter of Tamar. And Boaz was prepared to see beyond the Law to its spirit. Indeed, who better than Boaz to do so, whose mother was Rahab, a Canaanitish woman of Jericho (Matt. 1:5)? When he told Ruth: "Now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest; for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a *virtuous woman*" (Ruth 3:11), he gave expression to the fact that, despite her Moabitish origin, Ruth was in character a true Israelite, so that in his opinion, the prohibition of Deuteronomy 23:3 no more applied to her, than did the similiar law to Rahab his mother.

Because of the difficulty of Ruth's Moabitish origin, when Naomi sought the help of a redeemer in regard to the land

inheritance of Elimelech, she attached a condition, an encumbrance thereto, in the person of Ruth the Moabitess to raise up seed to the house of Elimelech. Land was not normally redeemed with such conditions attached, but on this occasion, as was her right, Naomi insisted upon it. Her great objective in all that she arranged was to "seek rest" for Ruth (Ruth 3:1). In this she typed the Abrahamic covenant through whom the antitypical Ruth will find rest (see Heb. 3:19; 4:9-11).

The Antitype

And now consider the remarkable type and antitype. Israel went into dispersion, and the Kingdom of God (Elimelech), divided into its two parts, was brought to political extinction. But whilst in dispersion, the Abrahamic covenant (Naomi) has attracted Gentiles (Ruth) to its truth. Through Christ, the antitypical Boaz, a seed is being developed (Isaiah 53:10; Heb. 2:13) to lay claim to the inheritance of the deceased Elimelech. As redeemer, Christ also will purchase back the land on behalf of the children raised up by him. Yahweh promised: "And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of My mountains; and Mine elect shall inherit it, and My servants shall dwell there" (Isaiah 65:9).

It is wonderfully significant, that in his genealogy of the Lord, Matthew goes to the trouble of listing three Gentile women who have contributed to the line leading to the birth of Jesus: Tamar, Rahab and Ruth, and of those three, the sons born to two of them were through levirate marriages (Matt. 1:3-5). Surely the Spirit is teaching us to observe the wonderful type presented in *The Book of Ruth*, and in the action of Naomi in arranging for a levirate marriage in order to provide seed for Elimelech, so that his territory may not be without an Inheritor.

The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, is related to both Jew and Gentile, and accordingly is able to act as Redeemer to both races, inasmuch as he is "near of kin" to both.

Meanwhile, it is significant that the Jewish people have lost their identity with the ancient houses, or even with the tribes, of Israel. Having lost the national register, or their personal identification with a specific house, they can claim no right to an individual inheritance of the land; for it still remains the possession of Yahweh, and He still retains the right to dispose of it as He will (see Mark 10:40). It will be part of the work of Christ to restore the individual houses of Israel, so that the people may enter upon the inheritance to be granted them in that day (see

Zechariah 12:12-14).

As one ponders the amazing wisdom of Yahweh as revealed in the Word, he is constrained to echo the praise of Paul:

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of Yahweh? Or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen.” (Romans 11:33-36).



Chapter Four

Love's Reward



RUTH BECOMES THE BELOVED WIFE AND MOTHER, AND NAOMI REJOICES IN THE RESTORATION OF THE FAMILY

With characteristic energy Boaz initiates the work of redemption. Early next morning, he makes his way to the gate of Bethlehem where the business of the city is conducted. He is anxious to claim Ruth as his own, but before he can do so he has to give opportunity to the nearer kinsman to exercise his right. The kinsman agrees to redeem the land, but when he is advised that he must also marry Ruth he withdraws, and permits Boaz to act as Redeemer. The marriage takes place, and Ruth becomes the bride of Boaz, and ultimately the mother of a son, Obed, from whom descends David the illustrious king of Israel. Thus out of trouble and anxiety, Naomi receives a great joy. She rejoices with Boaz, Ruth, and her associates in Bethlehem at the birth of her grandson, for she sees in him the restoration of the family. The type is a beautiful one. Boaz as redeemer foreshadows the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, as Son of God and Son of Man, is a "near kinsman" to those whom he comes to save. His work overrides the Law of Moses, which imposes a curse on both Jew and Gentile, until forgiveness of sin is obtained in Christ (Gal. 3:13). In the Story of Ruth, the nameless kinsman who was prepared to take the land of Naomi, but was not prepared to marry Ruth to raise up seed lest he mar his own inheri-

tance stands for the Law which can only take, but never give, life.

Boaz Negotiates With The Nearer Kinsman — vv. 1-5

In the gate of Bethlehem Boaz calls for the nearer kinsman to indicate whether he is prepared to act as redeemer. Calling witnesses to his side, he outlines what is required.

VERSE 1

“Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there” — The presence of Boaz at the gate of Bethlehem indicated that he had business of importance to fulfil. The elders and judges of a city assembled at its gate as the most public place of business for purposes such as Boaz now contemplated (Deut. 16:18; Josh. 20:4). The work of Boaz as Redeemer was done publicly so that all could witness to it. What the Lord did as Redeemer was similarly placarded before all mankind (Gal. 3:1; cp. Luke 24:18).

“And behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by” — The exclamation, *Behold!* expresses the excitement that Boaz would feel as he saw the approach of his relative.

“Unto whom he said, Ho, such a one!” — It is obvious that Boaz knew the name of the man, and so called him. But the actual identity is hidden in the narrative. The Hebrew *shebah poh peloni almoni* shows this. *Peloni* comes from a root, *pala*, signifying to *separate or distinguish*, hence somebody definitely known as an individual. But *almoni* comes from a root *alam* meaning to *hide or conceal*, hence somebody hidden or secret. The use of the two words in the narrative indicate a definite person known to Boaz, but whose identity remains hidden. Throughout the record, this *Goel* remains nameless. The Septuagint renders the words as *Secret one!* It was necessary that this nearer redeemer should be nameless, for otherwise it would bring the Law into contempt before the time when its curse was removed.

“Turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down” — The nameless one recognised that Boaz had business of importance to transact, and awaited its disclosure with curiosity.

VERSE 2

“And he took ten men of the elders of the city” — According to Jewish custom, ten men constituted a quorum. In Bible numerics it is a representative number standing for the whole.

“And said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down” — The summons of Boaz announced that he had important business to discuss with the rulers of the city.

VERSE 3

“And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land which was our brother Elimelech's” — Naomi, having returned, had come into possession of Elimelech's property, but being reduced to want, and her sons being dead, was not able to work the property. She had decided to raise money on it, and it was open to the next of kin (the *goel*) to purchase it, and so retain it in the family (Lev. 25:25-28).

VERSE 4

“And I thought to advertise thee” — The Hebrew is very expressive. It is, *I will reveal in thine ear*, a phrase illustrated by the act of removing any obstruction to hearing, such as a head covering that might reach down over the ears, in order to plainly state the purpose in mind (cp. 1 Sam. 9:15; 2 Sam. 7:27). This was what Boaz proposed to do. His action in “advertising” his purpose typed the proclamation of the Gospel of Grace at the first advent of the Lord. The purpose of God in Christ was to redeem mankind from the curse of the Law, and permit both Jews and Gentiles to attain unto the inheritance promised by the Abrahamic covenant. This purpose will be made even more obvious at Christ's second coming. Paul, to the Galatians, wrote: “Before your eyes Jesus Christ hath been *evidently set forth, crucified*” (Gal. 3:1). His statement signifies that the Lord's work was done openly, publicly, plainly for all the world to heed. In another place, he claimed that it was preached to all mankind, both Jew and Gentile (Col. 1:6,23). In his defence before Agrippa,



Ruth
and
Boaz
in
the
field.

he declared: "The king knoweth of these things, before whom I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26). So Peter in reminding Cornelius of the widespread publicity given to the Truth in Christ Jesus, declared: "This word, I say, ye know, which was publicised throughout Judea . . ." (Acts 10:37). As Boaz advertised the possibility of redemption in the ears of the nameless *Goel*, so the Truth on the basis of Grace was proclaimed at the first advent in the ears of those who put their confidence in the Law.

"Saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people" — The challenge at the first advent of the Lord was whether the Law could redeem or not. The controversy was one of Law versus Grace. The Kingdom of God was dead; mankind was plagued with the disease of mortality: could the Law save? The Judaisers answered in the affirmative, but they put the Lord to death, and brought upon themselves a twofold curse. As Paul brilliantly reasons in *The Epistle To The Galatians*: "I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law" (Gal. 5:3). And where was there one man who could render perfect obedience to the law? Only Christ accomplished this, and him they crucified, and being so treated, even he was brought under the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13). Because of the failure of the flesh through weakness (Romans 8:3), the law could not save. It could only condemn; it revealed man to be sinful, and so made evident the need of a Redeemer. In that regard it acted as a schoolmaster leading to Christ (Gal. 3:24). The Law, which in itself was "good" — (Rom. 7:13), revealed human nature to be "exceeding sinful", and demonstrated man's proneness to sin. So Paul declared: "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death" (Rom. 7:10). The only way the Law could offer life was by its subjects manifesting perfect obedience, and that required the putting to death of the flesh. The very sacrifices of the Law proclaimed that the way to life was by death, as represented by Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection to eternal life (Heb. 13:20). Paul taught that "Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it

were by the works of the law" (Rom. 9:31-32). Hence, "they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3).

The inefficacy of the Law to redeem was made clear by the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. He challenged the Judaisers of his day to prove otherwise, but they were unable to do so.

And now, in the gate of Bethlehem, this was about to be foreshadowed before the elders of the city, as the inefficacy of the Law to help one whom all acknowledged as "a virtuous woman", would be clearly demonstrated, showing the absolute need of grace, if man was to be saved.

"If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it; but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me that I may know; for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee" — The word "redeem" is from the Hebrew *ga'al*, and signifies to *redeem by purchase*. The nameless kinsman had the right to do this under the terms outlined in Leviticus 25:23-28.

"And I am after thee" — Boaz was next in line to redeem, for the nameless *Goel* was a closer relative to Naomi and Elimelech than he. This statement by Boaz anticipates that of John Baptist when he spake of the coming redeemer, for he said: "This is he of whom I spoke, He that cometh *after me* is preferred before me . . ." (John 1:15). Again: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Luke records: "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it" (Luke 16:16).

Though the Abrahamic covenant was before the covenant of law, it was confirmed later (see Romans 15:8-9), so that it is treated as coming "after" the Law; fulfilling the type expressed by Boaz in his words at the gate.

"And he said, I will redeem it" — It must have been with sinking heart that Boaz heard these words of the nameless *Goel*, for it meant that Ruth would come under the control of the purchaser. But in doing so, that *Goel* "boasted in the law; failing to perceive his inability to perform all that was required (cp. Rom. 2:23-24). The nameless *Goel* was eager to claim that which was of material advantage to

him, but was not prepared to jeopardise his own standing in order to help another weaker than himself.

VERSE 5

“Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance” — This condition evidently was imposed by Naomi in whose charge was the inheritance. It reveals very clever reasoning and strategem on her part. Had Ruth turned back like Orpah, Naomi would have had to sell the land free of any encumbrance or condition whatsoever, for she was past bearing (Ruth 1:11), and the law of the levirate marriage could not apply to her. But she had with her the young widow Ruth, upon whom possession of the land would devolve at Naomi's death, and who, therefore, had a right to it. The law of the levirate marriage did apply to her case. Accordingly, Naomi imposed the condition that the land could not be purchased by a *Goel* without him, at the same time, discharging his duty by accepting Ruth in marriage, and raising up seed to his dead relation. The male fruit of such a marriage, however, would continue the line of Elimelech, and would inherit the land in his name, which would then pass out of the control of the nameless *Goel*. He would have paid out money for something that did not benefit him personally; indeed, would have put him to a disadvantage. As he, himself, declared, to do so would mar his own inheritance. He was not prepared to do that.

One further significant statement of this verse. The literal Hebrew of the statement of Boaz is: “What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy also Ruth the Moabitess” (See *Interlinear Bible*). This prefigures the work of Christ, causing the comment of Paul: “Ye are brought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23).

Technically, a foreigner was unable to obtain access to Israel's God, since the sacrificial system was not available to such. But “the purchase of Ruth” would bring her into the redeemed community of Israel, and permit her to have that fellowship with God through her membership in the nation that she longed for

as expressed in her words of Ruth 1:16.

To “buy” a Moabitess, however, was not normal by those under the Law, and this, we believe, was a compelling factor in causing the nameless *Goel* to withdraw from the transaction.

In this transaction, Ruth is also called *the wife of the dead*, which signified that she was no longer under the law of her husband, and therefore free to marry another. Even the law taught that principle, and Paul draws upon it to show that those who had become “dead to the law” were free to marry another, even Christ, so as to “bring forth fruit unto God” (Romans 7:1-4).

That principle, likewise, was expressed by Boaz to the nameless *Goel*, so that there is found, in this verse, a very graphic foreshadowing of the purpose of Christ in the redemption of Jew and Gentile.

The Nameless Goel Refuses To Redeem — vv. 6-8

At first the nameless kinsman is ready to act the part of the Goel, believing that Naomi's land is unencumbered, and seeing in the offer an opportunity to acquire a valuable property at small cost. But when he learns that he must also marry Ruth, he withdraws his consent, for he realises that he will lose by the transaction. In the type, this nameless kinsman represents the Mosaic covenant based upon the Law. The inability of such a covenant to redeem is constantly asserted by Scripture. It teaches that “through the weakness of the flesh” (Rom. 8:3), the Law “could not do” what was accomplished by the covenant of grace. The Law imposed a “yoke” which even faithful men found they were unable to completely bear (Acts 15:10), for being unable to keep it in its entirety, it inevitably brought them under its curse (Gal. 3:13; Col. 2:14). The covenant of Law revealed man to be a sinner, justly under condemnation (Rom. 5:12), and in need of the redemption effected by Christ (Gal. 3:10-14). The efficacy of his redemptive work stretched back to those “under the first covenant” (Heb. 9:15), as well as forward to those called to the Truth in Gentile times. The redemptive work of Boaz also stretched back as well as forward, for it helped the aged Naomi, as well as the attractive young widow — Ruth. It restored the land inheritance to the house of Elimelech (the Kingdom of God), whilst providing a seed that gave rise to a line of

kings (David etc.) to rule therein.

VERSE 6

“And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself lest I mar mine own inheritance” — The word “mar” signifies *ruin*. In what way would the kinsman ruin, or spoil, his own inheritance by performing the role of a *goel*? Certainly not by purchasing the land inheritance, for he was prepared to do that, but by marrying Ruth who was of Gentile origin. It is significant, that when Boaz outlined to him what was required, he stressed the foreign origin of Ruth, describing her as “Ruth the Moabitess”. Therefore, three factors could have governed the nameless Goel’s refusal: (1) To have paid out money to acquire a property that would revert to the family of Elimelech would be to impoverish his own inheritance; (2) To marry Ruth the Moabitess he would have to go beyond the exclusiveness demanded by the strict letter of the law as expressed in Deuteronomy 23:3; (3) Being already married he could evade the obligation laid upon a near kinsman.

If the first were the reason for his refusal, the nameless kinsman lacked the *means* to perform his duty. In type, this pointed to the inadequacy of the Mosaic covenant of law to truly redeem unto salvation, and illustrated the comment of the Psalmist: “None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: for the redemption of their soul is costly . . .” (Psa. 49:7-8). On the other hand, Boaz did have the means to redeem; and therefore foreshadowed Christ’s work: “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot . . .” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

If the second were the reason, the nameless kinsman was *limited* by the law, as indeed was the Mosaic covenant. He could have believed that he would be breaking the letter of the Mosaic Law if he married a foreigner, and, therefore, that he would be in danger of suffering the calamities experienced by Mahlon and Chilion. In that case, the attitude of the nameless kinsman was reflected in the attitude and words of Peter who, at first, feared to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, lest he be defiled by so doing (Acts 10:14-21, 34-36).

If the third were the reason, the anony-

mous kinsman lacked the *ability* to redeem the land with such a condition attached thereto, for normally it was an unmarried kinsman who was expected to take to wife the widow of his relation.

Why do we suggest that this nearer kinsman was already married? Because his refusal to accept Ruth was not treated as normally it would have been done, as specified in Deut. 25:5-10 (see v. 7). To take into his house another wife, whose children would be accounted as the descendants of another family, could well cause trouble in his dwelling. His married state presented him with a lawful reason to evade his obligations in that regard; and therefore the transfer of the right of redemption was confirmed by all concerned.

The nameless kinsman, therefore, apparently lacked the means to redeem the land if it were to revert to others than his own; feared that he would break the letter of the Law by marrying Ruth the foreigner; and was able to press the legality of his refusal on the grounds of his married state. Though he could redeem the land, he could not marry the widow. Naomi had imposed a condition upon the purchase of the land that was beyond the ability of this relation to perform.

“Redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it” — Literally, this signifies *redeem my redemption*: you perform the act of redemption which properly belongs to me, but which I am unable to perform. The anonymous relative does not cancel the idea that it would be only on the ground of doing what would be *for his own interest* that he was prepared to redeem. Therefore, he was completely self-centred. So also was the Covenant of Law. It revealed the way to life, for it was as a schoolmaster leading to Christ, but it was unable to grant life itself. Christ, like Boaz, accomplished this, by going beyond the letter of the Law to its spiritual significance. He was not self-centred, but the very reverse. He had a heart that “seeketh not its own”, but sacrificed self-interest to help others. Boaz recognised that though Ruth was a Moabitess by birth, she was an Israelite in belief and deed, and, accordingly, he had no compunction about marrying her. In Christ, “true worshippers” of any nation (John 4:23) can constitute part of the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16; Eph. 2:11-14). In arranging for their redemption, Christ was unconcerned as to whether he would

“mar his inheritance” by extending himself to redeem. Indeed, he “was made a curse” in order that he might redeem those (both Jews and Gentiles) who were under the “curse of the law” (Gal. 3:13). He was “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8), a form of death that stigmatised him as a criminal, and which marred him in the eyes of the law (see Deut. 21:23). Israelites were taught by *The Book of Ruth* that they would have to go beyond the letter of the law, to the spirit of its teaching, in order to discover true redemption.

VERSE 7

“**Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing**” — The reference to “the former time” implies that *The Book of Ruth* was written some considerable time after the events narrated. It describes a custom relating to property transactions that was originally of great significance, but which, after the birth of David (see v. 22), had become obsolete. The Hebrew word for “changing” is *tem-uwrah*, and signifies *bartering*, or paying compensation for the purchase of a thing.

“**A man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour, and this was a testimony in Israel**” — The action thus described is often aligned with the act of contempt described in Deuteronomy 25:7-10, when a brother refused to go through with a levirate marriage. In that case, the man’s widowed sister in law loosed his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and so publicly put him to shame. That procedure was not followed on this occasion because it did not apply. The excuse the man gave to evade his marriage to Ruth was considered quite adequate. The custom here described did not relate to the refusal of a man to raise up seed to his brother, but to the procedure adopted in regard to property transactions, by which a purchase was completed. Possibly the reason behind the action of the nameless kinsman taking of his shoe and handing it to Boaz, was to indicate that he gave up the right to the inheritance of the land. It is with shoes that one walks on a field, or paces out the measurements of it, and so claims possession of it (see Joshua 1:3; 14:9; Ezek. 43:7). The nameless *goel* abandoned his right to do that, and handed the token of his refusal to Boaz. Later, the custom became outdated, and a properly attested

deed of sale took its place (see Jer. 32:9-12).

In the type, the action of the nameless *Goel* comprised “a testimony in Israel”, teaching that the law could never provide for an everlasting occupancy of the land. That is only possible through the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 13:15) which was established by faith, and not by “the works of the law” (Romans 4:1-14). It will be realised, when the Kingdom is restored under the antitypical Boaz.

VERSE 8

“**Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe**” — This completed the transaction between Boaz and his relative who had the first right of redemption. When he pulled off his shoe and gave it to the elders as a sign that the redemptive rights were passed over to Boaz, the elders witnessed the transaction, and the matter was completed.

Boaz Accepts The Responsibility of Redeemer — vv. 9-12

Before witnesses in the gate of Bethlehem, Boaz vows to faithfully perform his part as Redeemer. His love for Ruth is such that he completely ignores the possible ignominy it may bring upon him. In like manner, the Lord humbled himself before all mankind, that he might redeem both Jew and Gentile (Isa. 49:6). Boaz is blessed by the elders of the city, and so also will be the Lord Jesus Christ ultimately (Phil. 3:9-10).

VERSE 9

“**And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech’s and all that was Chilion’s and Mahlon’s, of the hand of Naomi**” — In considering the significance of these names, we saw that they were representative of the Kingdom of God, in its two-fold division. The Lord’s death upon the cross, by which he paid the price of redemption (1 Pet. 1:18-19), not only provided the means for personal redemption unto life eternal, but also the national redemption of Israel as the Kingdom of God (Luke 1:67-75; 2:34; John 12:50-52; Rom. 15:8). Under him, the two sickly divisions will again be united as one (Ezek. 37:21-23), and the Kingdom of

God will be restored to a glory exceeding anything in the past (Isa. 2:2-4; Jer. 3:17; Dan. 2:44). The land will become the possession of the Prince "whose right it is" (Ezek. 21:27; 48:21; Zech. 2:11-12), and the "times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets" (Acts 3:19-21) will be witnessed by all the world.

Meanwhile, the elders in the gate, were called upon to be witnesses to the transaction that made Ruth the wife of Boaz, and one of the mothers in the line of David and Christ. Boaz obtained this "of the hand of Naomi". As, in the type, she represents the Abrahamic covenant, the elders were called upon to witness to principles that later were incorporated in the truth in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:8).

The fact that Yahweh permitted *The Book of Ruth* to be included in the canon of Scripture shows that He endorsed the act of redemption by Boaz. It then can be witnessed that Yahweh must feel at least as compassionate towards all the Ruths of Moab and of every other land as Boaz felt towards Ruth; and therefore He must be a God of redemption, with the desire and the power to draw all such "virtuous" ones into fellowship with Himself.

The "elders" in the gate of Bethlehem were appointed to act as witnesses of the redemptive work of Boaz. The record of history shows how completely Israel failed to act the part of witness to Yahweh's redemptive work. The nation was redeemed from Egypt, to become the channel of Yahweh's saving grace to all peoples. He chose the people, guided them, educated them, revealed His will unto them, in order that they might reflect His glory, and that they might be equipped to pass on to others the message of His plan — but they failed to fully respond. Jeremiah declared: "For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto Me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith Yahweh; that they might be unto Me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: *but they would not hear*" (Jer. 13:11). To the elders, Yahweh declared: "I, even I, am Yahweh, and beside Me there is no Saviour . . . therefore ye are My witnesses" (Isa. 43:11-12).

Israel after the flesh failed to witness, and, therefore, after the Lord had paid the redemption money (1 Pet. 1:18), he sent forth his witnesses, the "elders" of

the Ecclesia whom he commissioned for that purpose: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth", he declared (Acts 1:8). Today the mantle of witness to the Lord's redemptive love has fallen upon the members of Ecclesias (Eph. 3:8-10). How does one act as a witness? By speaking of it to others, and by allowing it to be clearly seen in one's own behaviour and attitude towards Yahweh and mankind. As the elders, in the gate of Bethlehem witnessed to the redemptive work of Boaz, so today, believers should do so in regard to that of Christ.

VERSE 10

"Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife" — A "purchased possession" is the title given to the Bride of Christ. See 1 Pet. 2:9 (mg); 1:18-19; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 2 Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9. The redemption of the elect is an act of grace illustrated by the redemptive work of Boaz. When the nearer kinsman failed Ruth, Boaz stepped in, impelled by love of Ruth and loyalty to the covenant that was laid upon him by the law of Israel. Legally, as is shown by the nearer kinsman's refusal, Boaz was not bound to redeem Ruth, but his love for her saw no other course of action. He was moved by compassion for a helpless and forlorn young woman, whose character matched her beauty, but who was both a foreigner and an outcast. Through her endorsement of the hope of Israel, her acceptance of the God of Israel, (see Ruth 1:16-17), and her espousal to her redeemer, Ruth was able to have full communion with Yahweh, even as believers find relationship with God through their espousal to His son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But the witness does not end there. As Boaz acted for Yahweh, and in accordance with the true spirit of His teaching, his action witnessed to the character of God. As Boaz was moved by compassion, his action illustrated that Yahweh is a God of compassion. And as that compassion discovered a way in which to bring a faithful Moabitess into covenant relationship with Him in spite of her foreign origin, so it witnessed to the boundless extent of divine love.

"To raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance; that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren" — Boaz called upon the elders to witness

Character Sketch**BOAZ — THE STRONG****His Occupation**

Boaz was a farmer. This is a man's oldest form of occupation. In Eden, before sin entered the world, Adam was given charge over the Garden "to dress it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15), for there is no pleasure or satisfaction in idleness. On the contrary, the greatest joy comes from the rewards of toil, particularly when such is done in harmonious co-operation with the Creator. And the farmer must work in co-operation with the Creator as in no other occupation. He knows, more than any other, how dependent we are upon the mercy and goodness of Him who sendeth His rain on just and unjust alike.

The angels are as farmers toiling in the field of Yahweh, bringing forth fruit to His glory (Heb. 1:14); and to their state, every true believer aspires (Luke 20:36; Heb. 2:5).

His Diligence

But a man's true character is not revealed by his occupation so much as by his application to it. Boaz was a successful farmer. He was wealthy. So wealthy, in fact, as to be described as "a mighty man of wealth." Yet he made that no excuse for wasting his life in ease and idleness. He employed an overseer in his field as the record shows (Ruth 2:5), but he did not commit his business entirely into his hands. He was called to account by Boaz who strictly supervised what went on in his field.

Thus he was not irresponsible towards his servants, nor did he give them latitude that they might abuse it. He was strict but fair, just but merciful.

"The hand of the diligent maketh rich," declares the writer of Proverbs. But it does more. It occupies a person's mind to the exclusion of less profitable things; and it therefore contributes to moral safety. The sin of Sodom was induced through "fulness of bread and abundance of idleness" (Jer. 16:49). Boaz was never guilty of that, but was open-handed in his liberality. He never let the pursuit of wealth dominate him; he never allowed diligence to degenerate into tight-fisted avarice and greed.

His Humility

Though mighty in wealth, though he had no need to labour

except for the actual pleasure it gave him, Boaz was not above joining in the common labour of the field. We see him with his labourers, toiling in the sun, sharing the discomforts of winnowing, sleeping on the threshing-floor, that he might not waste the time occupied by travelling from the field to the house each morning and night.

In this he beautifully types the Lord Jesus who though greater than all others, humbled himself as a servant (Phil. 2:4), and was not above doing the most menial tasks (John 13:5). In the readiness with which both Boaz and the Lord were prepared thus to humble themselves is found the secret of their success. It is a lesson everyone must learn who desires to rise in life, whether ecclesially or otherwise.

His Courtesy

Men are usually ready to defer to those above them, and yet show scant thought for those considered their inferiors. Boaz was courteous to all. His courtesy sprang out of his consideration for others. And this brought forth suitable responses from those about him. There was joy when Boaz visited his field, implied by the statement of the narrative, "Behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem" (Ch. 2:4), and which can be rendered: "See! Boaz cometh!" Listen to his words of blessing as he enters the field where his men labour; hearken to their response, their words of welcome. Here is master and servant working together in joyful harmony both interested in the welfare of the other. They find a joy and pleasure in mutual service, and a constant daily reward. He does not treat his men as inferiors, as clods, but as his companions, his fellow-labourers. He sits down and eats with them.

His treatment of Ruth was the acme of courtesy. He was not as some who looked with disfavour upon the privilege of gleaning, and surreptitiously stripped their fields of all. To Ruth: the humble, gentle, poverty-stricken Moabitess who so willingly identified herself with Naomi, Boaz showed a consideration that sprang from his kind and strong nature, long before love for Ruth gained possession of his heart as well.

His Piety

In this is found the true strength of his character. His name means *In him is Strength*, but that Strength was derived from Another, much Higher than flesh. The Lord is likewise styled, "the Son of Man whom Thou (Yahweh) madest strong for

Thyself" (Psa. 80:17). In Christ is strength (Phil. 4:13), as there was also in Boaz. And that strength came from his piety. His love of Yahweh is exhibited in his obedience to His law, his acceptance of its responsibilities, his praise of His name, his reflection of the Divine character. Divine love moulded his life. Because of it, great riches did not spoil him, diligence in business did not completely absorb him, strength of character did not harden into harshness.

With strong sure hands, Boaz ruled his own life, and guided and directed the lives of those in his care. Because of the excellence of his character, He was permitted by the grace of Yahweh, to become, like the Lord Jesus, the Goel (Redeemer) of his family. The events of his life forecast the future, and give help and encouragement to all who study his character and experience. In him we see Christ typified.

that the purpose of redemption was a revival of life out of death, a resurrection to newness of life. In the antitype there are two stages to that: through baptism to newness of life in Christ (Rom. 6:1-3), and through a physical resurrection to incorruptibility (1 Cor. 15:50-57).

What is meant by the statement "to raise up the *name* of the dead"? The Hebrew expression for "name" is *shem*, and concerning this, I Rapaport in *The Hebrew Word Shem And Its Original Meaning* states:

"We hold that, apart from the conventional values of *name* or *reputation*, the Hebrew *shem* always had yet an additional meaning when it was used in Biblical times. Our view in this matter is based on the equivalence between the Hebrew word *shem* and the Akkadian word *sumu* which, as we shall point out later in this study, had the meaning of *offspring*, *child*, and the like, among its other quite usual meanings. And once this new and additional connotation for *shem* is admitted, it is not only the passage of Ruth 4:14 which will appear in a new light; several other passages in the Hebrew Bible also will lend themselves to a fully satisfactory interpretation."

From this it appears, that whereas in most places *shem* signifies *name* or *reputation*, it also can denote *offspring*, or *child*. Apply that rendition to the words of Boaz, and it is obvious that a prime reason for him marrying Ruth was to

raise up a faithful "*offspring* of the dead upon his inheritance . . ." Is not that also the purpose of the Gospel? Do not those who accept its message constitute the "family of God" due to inherit the Kingdom of God which is now dead? How significant was the statement of Boaz to his peers in the gate of Bethlehem!

"And from the gate of his place" — The "gate" of his place, was the gate of Bethlehem, a place of great honour (see Prov. 31:23). Of the seed promised Abraham it is said: "Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies"; meaning, he shall be judge and ruler in the Age to come (Acts 17:31).

"Ye are witnesses this day" — The Apostles were sent forth to "witness" (see Acts 1:8) to the reality of the resurrection of Christ (see Acts 2:24,32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,34,37; 17:31), through which justification is available to others (Rom. 4:25), unto resurrection to life. (1 Thess. 4:14). Their "witness", therefore, was the proclamation of the redemptive work of Christ through which the offspring of the dead, may be raised up upon his inheritance.

VERSE 11

"And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses" — The audience listening to Boaz accepted the status of witnesses. That is the status of saints to this present day.

That means that they must witness, by word and action, to the Truth they have espoused. If a person imagines that he is in the Truth merely for salvation, he is in danger of losing what he has got. He must become a member of a witnessing community: testifying by word and action as to the power of truth within him.

“Yahweh make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel”

— This prayer expresses the hope that the new marital union would, in due course, be blessed with a family. That is what marriage is for; though that purpose is sometimes called in question today when many young couples delay, or refuse, to have children, leading to all kinds of frustrations and dissatisfactions. Reference to Rachel and Leah is made because they provided the twelve foundation stones for the national “house” of Israel. In like manner, the antitypical Ruth has provided the foundation stones for spiritual Israel. The latter is identified with the twelve tribes (see Eph. 2:11-13, 19-22; Rev. 7:1-10). This thought is expressed in the use of the word “house”. This is *ben* in Hebrew, and is derived from the root *banah*, “to build”, and hence *eben*, “a stone”. Actually, *ben* does duty for both *house* and *son*. The words are related because as a physical house is built of individual stones, so a family “house” is built of sons.

It is noteworthy that Rachel is placed before Leah in the comment of Boaz. That is the rightful place she occupied in the household of Jacob. Jacob’s love for her was undying. Many years after her death, he still recalled her with loving affection (Gen. 48:7). She bore him two sons: Joseph and Benjamin; both of them types of Jesus Christ. In the typology of his family relations, she represents spiritual Israel whilst Leah (who was dim of eye) represents national Israel. Rachel signifies a *ewe* from a root signifying “to journey”, and hence a good traveller. Leah signifies *weariness* (Gesenius) or *dullness* (Furst). She was short-sighted, which suggests spiritual limitations (see 2 Pet. 1:9).

“And do thou worthily in Ephratah”

— The expression “worthily” is a combination of *ish* and *chayil*, the word rendered *virtuous* in Ruth 3:11. As we have seen, the latter word expresses the idea of moral integrity and strength, so that it has the joint ideas of might and worth: ex-

pressions that apply to the Lord Jesus Christ. “Ephratah” signifies fruitfulness. Isaiah, prophetically, declared of Christ, “he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Yahweh shall prosper in his hand” (Isa. 53:10). The extent of his fruitfulness is described by John who saw that “seed” developed into “a great multitude, which no man could number, out of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues” (Rev. 7:9). Though the truth is considered of small account today, particularly by men of the flesh, the future shall reveal its real fruitfulness and strength.

“And be famous in Bethlehem” — The word “famous” in Hebrew is the word *shem*. Though, throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, this word is employed in the sense of *name* in the largest majority of instances, it also has the idea of *offspring* or *child* (see *The Hebrew Word Shem and Its Original Meaning*). The author supplies as a rendition of the phrase before us “and call, or proclaim, thou offspring in Bethlehem” with the comment: “Such a sentiment is what Boaz would have expected to hear from his well-wishers, and not some oddly worded hint about ‘being famous’ in connection with his forthcoming marriage with Ruth. A new household was about to be established, with the prospect of a family coming into being. Boaz and Ruth would greatly have looked forward to it, and the people around at the time gave very apt expression to that hope by making specific reference to it in the final phrase of Ruth 4:11.”

As to the A.V. rendition “be famous”, he very correctly states: “Any reference to *being famous* in Ruth 4:11 or elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures would have been quite outside the thinking of those who make up the gallery of the great in ancient Israel. Moses never sought fame. Nor did the Prophetess Deborah. Nor did King David, nor did Amos, nor Jonah. Fame has long been among the highest aspirations in European society, but it never ranked very highly with the worthies of Israel’s history. *Fama* is a Latin word; it has no equivalent in the Hebrew language.”

Bethlehem signifies *The House of Bread*. It is there that the offspring of Boaz and Ruth are to be found. We are instantly reminded of the discourse of the Lord in the synagogue at Capernaum in which he set forth the teaching that he is the bread from heaven, which, if a man

eat, he will live for ever (John 6:35). It is significant, in that regard, that the statement of the elders to Boaz was that he might "call offspring in Bethlehem", for it is on the basis of such a means that the family of the antitypical Boaz has been established: "God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name" (Acts 14:15). Hence the word *Ecclesia* signifies those called out by a herald. Such a family has been called in *The House of Bread*.

The margin of the AV renders the phrase *proclaim thy name* (offspring) in Bethlehem, or *the House of Bread*. The prayer has been fulfilled, in part at least, in that Israel's most illustrious sons, King David, and the Lord Jesus Christ, were both born in Bethlehem, and both provided bread in due season. What is very significant, however, is that it is the name of Boaz and not that of Mahlon, to which reference is made. This suggests that the name of Boaz took precedence over that of Ruth's former husband, so that, in his own right, he entered into the possessions that came to him through his marriage.

How true this is of the antitype, for the antitypical Boaz, the Strong One, the El Gibbor of Isaiah 9:6, will raise up seed in his own name. In addition, the once divided state of Israel will be united under him for "I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all" (Ezek. 37:22). All this was prefigured, in that the names of Mahlon and Chilion disappear in the narrative, and that of the house of Boaz remains as the sole heir of the inheritance of Elimelech, the Kingdom of God.

VERSE 12

"And let thy house be like the house of Pharez" — Pharez signifies a *breach*, or to *break forth*. He was given this name because he asserted himself in birth above his twin brother Zarah, whom he supplanted. Accordingly, he is accounted as the natural firstborn of Judah. Among his descendants were Nahshon, the prince of the tribe, Salmon who married Rahab, Boaz, David and Christ (1 Chron. 2:4-15; Matt. 1:3). The significance of the name expresses the ability of its owner to *break forth*, pushing aside those who would obstruct his course. That also explains the significance of the

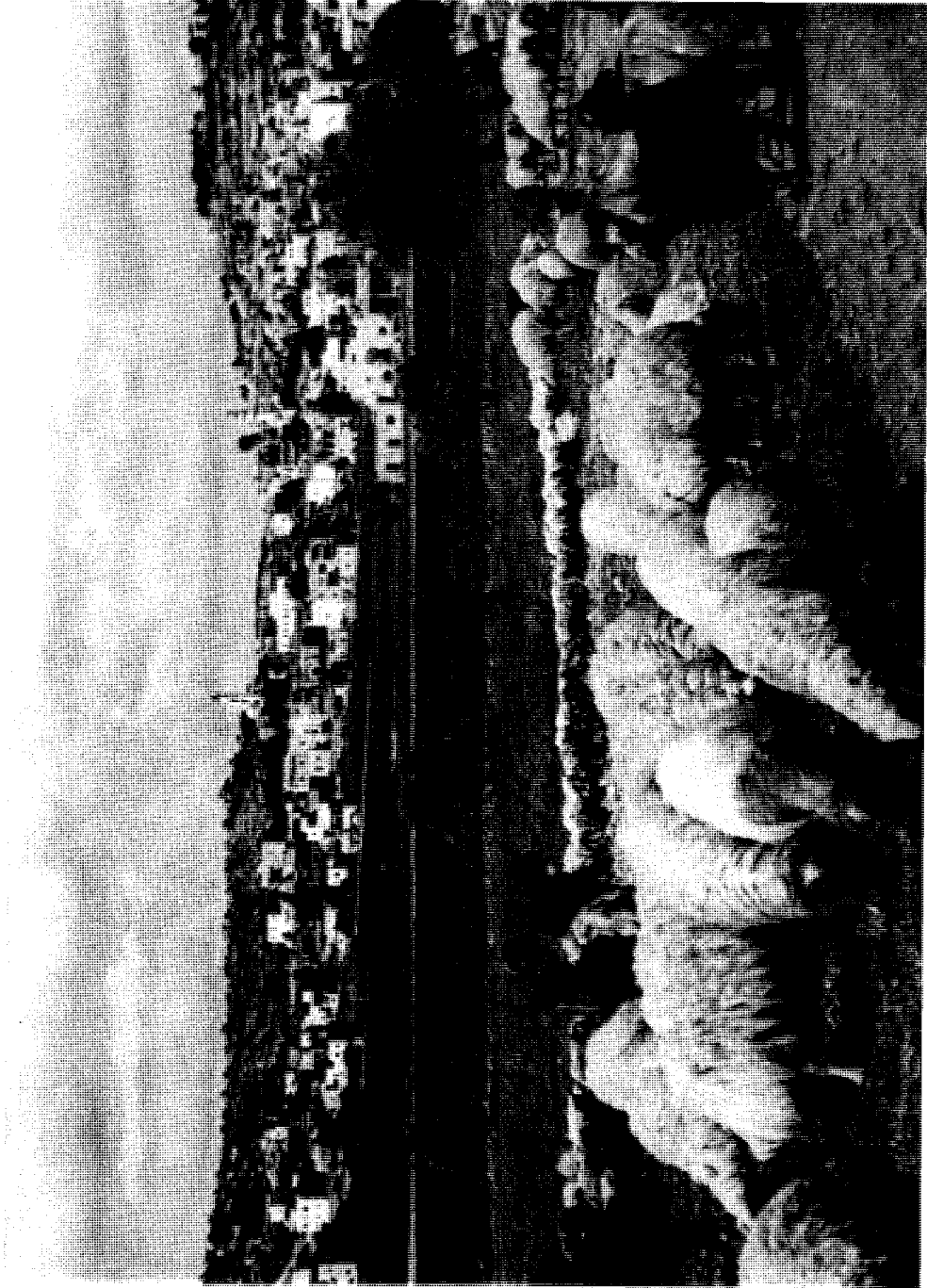
blessing now pronounced upon Boaz: it was that the house established by the elderly Boaz might sweep aside all obstructions, and assume power.

"Whom Tamar bare unto Judah" —

The reference to Tamar is significant. Her name signifies *the Palm*, and hence an *Upright One*. Although, evidently, she was a Canaanitish woman, she proved more righteous than Judah and his sons, Er, Onan and Shelah. Indeed, Judah declared of her, "She is more righteous than I" (Gen. 38:26). The reason for this comment is important. After the judicial death of her husband, Er, because of his wickedness, Judah promised that he would arrange a levirate marriage with his younger son Onan, but Onan, in disgraceful circumstances, refused to carry out his duty, and he, too, was slain by divine judgment. At that point, Judah promised that he would arrange a further levirate marriage with his younger son Shelah as soon as he was old enough for the purpose, but he failed to do so. Judah broke his promise, perhaps fearing that the fate that had overtaken his other two sons might also be the fate of Shelah. However, his failure to fulfil his promise led to far-reaching results.

Tamar must have had some knowledge of the covenant of promise made to Jacob, and the importance of saving the family from extinction through the first-born son, for denied Shelah, she was determined, though in an incestuous way, to raise up seed to her first husband through his father. She laid a trap for Judah, and through this means, gave birth to twins. When Judah learned that she had been playing the harlot, he commanded that she be punished according to the law; but when he learned that he was the cause of her guilt, Judah was compelled to vindicate Tamar, and to admit that she had been more righteous than he (Gen. 38:26).

Though we cannot condone the methods of Tamar, we must recognise that her motives were sound, and that her desire was to maintain the line of descent in accordance with the will of God. She was prepared to bear the shame that she brought upon herself by her action, in order that she might keep alive the line of Judah. She was a woman of faith because it was her belief in the promises of God (evidently taught her by either Jacob or Judah) that dictated an action that normally would have repelled her. Conse-



The field of Boaz outside Bethlehem.

Character Sketch

ELIMELECH: HIS ACTIONS BELIED HIS NAME

Elimelech was the husband of Naomi and father of Mahlon and Chilion. His name signifies *God (El) is King*, but in fact, he did not express the name in action, for in a time of famine, he deserted Bethlehem to make his way to the land of Moab. There was no need for a faithful man to do that, for Yahweh has promised to "keep alive" such in time of famine (Psa. 33:19). Through the Psalmist he declared: "In the days of famine they shall be satisfied" (Psa. 37:19).

It doubtless would be considered a wise move to leave an area of famine for one where food is plentiful, and that is what men normally do. Perhaps Elimelech was motivated by considerations for his family, but instead he should have manifested sufficient faith to trust God more completely. He should have considered the lesson of the wilderness wanderings, when Israel refused to enter the Land of Promise on the complaint that the difficulties associated with doing so would put the lives of their "little ones" in jeopardy. In fact, the faithless generation was condemned to perish in the wilderness, whereas the children entered the land under Joshua. He should have considered the circumstances of Lot who took his family to Sodom, and paid the penalty of his faithless action in a most tragic manner. Instead of considering these examples, Elimelech moved to Moab because of famine, and in doing so defied the will of Yahweh, Who had forbidden His people to have any association with the Moabites. He left Bethlehem for Moab to preserve his life and that of his family; instead he found graves for himself and for his children in Moab.

In the typology of the parable Elimelech represents the Kingdom of God which, divided into two parts (his sons), went into captivity, and to political death, because of the faithlessness of its adherents.

quently, she and her son found a place in the greatest of all genealogies: that reaching down to Christ (Matthew 1:3).

Shocked as we are by Tamar's method of aiding the perpetuation of Judah's line, a fruitful race followed, including some of the most illustrious of Israel's sons, reaching to the Messiah himself. It is of

the greatest significance, that in the line of descent listed by Matthew (who wrote specifically for Jews), specific reference is made to three Gentile women who contributed to that end: "Judas begat Phares and Zara of *Thamar* . . . And Salmon begat Boaz of *Rachab*; and Boaz begat Obed of *Ruth*" (Matthew 1:3-5).

The insertion of these Gentile women in the line of descent leading to Christ, suggests that Matthew was reminding the Judaisers of his day, that Yahweh is a God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, for both sections of the human race have contributed to the birth of the Messiah.

The birth of Pharez demonstrates that the practice of a levirate marriage existed before the giving of the Law. It evidently was designed to keep alive the line of descent reaching down to the seed of the woman who was to crush the serpent's head. Because of that, a precedent was established, endorsed by Judah's acceptance of the sons of Tamar as legitimate, showing that the marriage of Boaz to Ruth would have been endorsed by the patriarchs, whatever Judaisers might think of it.

It is also significant that the elders in the gate made reference to "the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah". Judah's firstborn son was Er, but he died because he "was wicked in the sight of Yahweh" (Gen. 38:7). In that case, though the law of the levirate marriage was still maintained, the fruit of the union apparently commenced a new house in the line of Judah: for the son produced was not accounted as belonging to Er, but as being the firstborn in the line of Judah. The same principle is followed in the case of Boaz and Ruth, for the husband of Ruth was Mahlon, but as he and his brother and father had died in disgrace because they deserted *The House of Bread*, the fruit of the union, as in the case of that of Judah and Tamar, was attributed to Boaz, and not to Mahlon. Boaz inherited the status and inheritance of the house of Elimelech, and the line of descent was attributed to him. Judah signifies *Praise*; and as Paul remarks in a play upon words, the true Judah is one "whose praise is not of men but of God" (Rom. 2:29). In that regard, there are those "who call themselves Jews but are not" (Rev. 3:9).

"Of the seed which Yahweh shall give thee of this young woman" — In Scripture, children are considered "a heritage of Yahweh and the fruit of the womb His reward" (Psa. 127:3). Faithful women of old, such as Sarah and Hannah, were strengthened to conceive seed (Heb. 11:11) pointing forward to the coming "seed of the woman" who would comprise God's "only begotten son".

The blessing of the elders on the proposed union of Boaz and Ruth recognises children as a divine heritage, and calls for the continuation of the line of Elimelech thereby. In the antitype, the union of Christ with his bride, the Ecclesia (Rev. 19:9) will be productive of seed in the age to come, for their ministrations will convert the world to Yahweh.

Marriage: The Final Joy — vv. 13-17

The story which begins under the cloud of tragedy, recording the calamities of famine, exile, death and despondency, ends in joy, in the manifestation of a new life, and in the happiness of redemption. Boaz takes Ruth to wife, and they are blessed with a son to the great joy of both, and the exceeding great pleasure of Naomi, who sees in this a restoration of the family status. She is congratulated by the women of Bethlehem, who had so warmly greeted her on her return from exile. They jointly give the name of Obed to the child born.

VERSE 13

"So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife" — Six times previously, Ruth has been described as *the Moabitess*, but with her induction into the covenant people by the redemptive work of Boaz, this is no longer the case. In Christ, there is "neither Jew nor Greek" for all are "one" in him. That was illustrated in the case of Ruth, and expounded in Psalm 87: "Yahweh shall count, when He writeth up the people, that this man was born there. *Selah*". In Christ, a person loses his national identity and becomes part of "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16).

"And when he went in unto her, Yahweh gave her conception, and she bare a son" — See notes above on v. 12. As the firstborn son of the union, this child belonged unto Yahweh (Exod. 13:2; 12-16; 22:29).

VERSE 14

"And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be Yahweh" — When the benefits that come from Yahweh are borne in mind, how completely one is able to enter into the joy expressed by the women of Bethlehem as they witnessed the drama of her life unfold. Daily the prayers of such should ascend to heaven that He hath "not left them this day without a Redeemer". Such are greatly privileged,

greatly blessed, and they need to express their heartfelt thanks in words of appreciation to Him Who has made it possible. The joy experienced by all those associated with Ruth caused them to see the hand of Yahweh revealed, and this took them to the throne of grace in prayer. That should be the attitude of all who are so moved. Let them learn to express their pleasure, their happiness in their association with their Lord through the expressions of fervent prayer.

“Which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman” — The word for “kinsman” is *Goel*, Redeemer. Yahweh had provided a kinsman for Naomi in Boaz, even though the nearer *Goel* had failed to provide redemption. He did likewise at the end of the Mosaic age (Heb. 9:26), at the time when the Law proved inadequate for the purpose of individual redemption. The Mosaic code was designed for a nation, and not for individuals as strangers and pilgrims in the earth. Therefore, in the work of redemption, it was not Law but Grace that triumphed as manifested through the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:14).

“That his name may be famous in Israel” — To whose name does this statement refer? To that of Boaz? Or Obed? Or Mahlon? Or Elimelech? The statement is confusing as it stands. Looking at it more closely, we learn that the term “famous” is different in the Hebrew from that of v. 11. Here it is the Hebrew *qara*, which denotes *called out* or *proclaimed*. The word for “name” is *shem*, and as we noted earlier, this, according to Dr. I. Rapaport, can denote *offspring*, as well as *name*. Concerning the passage before us, he makes the following comment:

“To the present writer, the message of those women was simple, unsophisticated and to the point. Two notable events stood out in their minds: firstly, Boaz had redeemed the family property, the future of which had been in some doubt; and secondly, a child of deep consolation was now in being as a result of Boaz having married Ruth for whom Naomi had shown so much personal concern.

“Now, both those events found worthy expression when those women came along and, firstly, praised God for providing Naomi with a redeemer and, secondly, went on to pray that his (the redeemer’s) offspring may be proclaimed in Israel.”

The declaration of these women consti-

tuted a prayer that the offspring of the redeemer should be proclaimed in Israel as being *his*, and not that of Mahlon, so that he might inherit all that appertained to Elimelech in the name of Boaz. That this prayer was granted is shown by the succeeding line of descent in which Obed is attributed to Boaz and not to Mahlon.

Now consider the antitype. The children, or offspring, of the antitypical Boaz (cp. Isa. 53:10) as being those “whom God hath given” him (Heb. 2:13), are proclaimed in Israel as being the true “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16): a wonderful fulfilment of the prophetic type.

VERSE 15

“And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life” — In the seed produced by the union of Boaz and Ruth there was found “restored life” for Naomi. She found in the child born, a joy she had never expected to have in her widowhood (Lam. 1:1-2). So it is in the antitype. The work of redemption that has been extended to the Gentile ecclesia has meant a renewal of life to the Abrahamic covenant. At the time when Israel went into exile, the covenant was no longer producing fruit in that nation, and Paul proclaimed that because of this, “the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it” (Acts 28:28). It has found restored life among the Gentiles ever since.

“And a nourisher of thine old age” — The word “nourisher” denotes to *keep in*, and therefore to *restrict*. The presence of the child would not only provide restoration of life, but would prevent Naomi becoming prematurely old; it would restrict the signs of age developing.

“For thy daughter in law, which loveth thee” — These words epitomised the character of Ruth. She personified the Scriptural attribute of love, and expressed it towards Naomi, as the antitypical Ruth loves the Abrahamic covenant, and Israel whose future is bound up in it (Rom. 16:25-26). Ruth was lovable in all her ways, an attribute that should characterise all in Christ. She was strong in character, determined in mind, yet gentle in action. Her beautiful qualities are expressed in the descriptive words of Paul in I Corinthians 13.

“Which is better to thee than seven sons hath born him” — This statement, made in regard to the Moabitess, is high praise indeed. It is quite a reversal of the normal

attitude of Israelites towards the people of Moab. Yet the whole world is going to praise the antitypical Ruth in the age to come, when the fruit born of the antitypical Boaz is apparent in the earth. Seven is the number of the covenant; it is expressive of the completeness of that which has been accomplished. Hannah gave expression to similar thoughts at the birth of Samuel, for she sang: "the barren hath born seven . . ." (1 Sam. 2:5). She found in the birth of her son Samuel, a complete vindication of her faith in Yahweh, and complete joy and contentment in regard to her desires.

VERSE 16

"And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom and became nurse unto it"

— It is said that the aged gain refreshment and renewal of energy from their association with the young. So Naomi found renewed zest in life by the presence of her little grandson. As the child was cared for and tended by Naomi, so those who have been begotten unto newness of life in Christ Jesus, are nourished up by the words of Truth relating to the Abrahamic Covenant. See the appropriate exhortation in 1 Pet. 2:2.

VERSE 17

"And the women her neighbours gave it a name" — As the neighbours of Naomi saw the child of Ruth rendering a service of joy to Naomi they realised that the babe would become of great service to Naomi.

"Saying, There is a son born to Naomi" — Naomi took the babe to herself as her own. As she had arranged the means by which it was born, she could claim it as a foster-child. She treated it as her son by proxy. Indeed, the levirate marriage provided her with that privilege.

"And they called his name Obed" — Obed signifies *servant* or *servant*, and hence a *worshipper*. For a true worshipper is one who serves Yahweh. In this case, however, the neighbours of Naomi called the child this name, for they could see that the babe was already serving Naomi so effectively as to be a restorer of life and a nourisher of old age to her. Hence, he was of great service to her, and so the name they gave him proclaimed his status in that regard. But that name was

endorsed also by Naomi and Ruth and by Yahweh (in His word), so that it has a higher note than designating merely a servant; even a worshipper. In Obed, who rejoiced the heart of his parents and grandparent, any believer, begotten unto God by His word, can find a type of himself. The name teaches him what he should be: one given to the service of Yahweh; one who is His servant. For in Christ, all become "servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:16-18). Isaiah makes reference to those "who please Yahweh, by taking hold of His covenant (as Obed took hold of Naomi); "even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name (offspring?), that shall not be cut off . . . also the sons of the stranger (Ruth), that join themselves to Yahweh, to serve Him (Obed), and to love the name of Yahweh, to be His servants. . . . even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer . . . for Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people" (Isa. 56:3-7).

A King Is Born — vv. 18-22

From the levirate marriage of Boaz to Ruth there commences a line of descent that reaches to David the King, and beyond that to the Saviour of the world. From Boaz the Redeemer there comes the King. So Christ first acted the part of Redeemer, to reach unto the glory of King. The delightful story of Ruth ends on a note of triumph and joy. It is a story rich in spiritual exhortation, and in parabolic significance.

VERSE 18

"Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron" — Pharez means *break out*; Hezron signifies *an enclosure*. He was the founder of a tribal family (Gen. 46:12; Num. 26:6,21; 1 Chron. 2:9; 4:1).

VERSE 19

"And Hezron begat Ram" — Ram signifies *to elevate*. Nothing particular is known of him (1 Chron. 2:25,27).

"And Ram begat Amminadab" — Amminadab signifies *People of liberality*. He was a prince of Judah. See Num. 1:7; 2:3; 7:12,17; 10:14.

Opposite: Ruth and Naomi: the final joy.



VERSE 20

“**And Amminadab begat Nahshon**” — Nahshon was a prince of Judah in the days of Moses (Num. 1:7; 2:3). His name means *oracle*.

“**And Nahshon begat Salmon**” — Salmon married Rahab (Matt. 1:5), and perhaps was one of the spies that searched Jericho (1 Chron. 2:11; Luke 3:32). His name signifies *clothing* or *investiture*.

VERSE 21

“**And Salmon begat Boaz**” — So we come to the epoch of our story.

“**And Boaz begat Obed**” — The line is continued through Boaz and not through Mahlon.

VERSE 22

“**And Obed begat Jesse**” — Jesse's house was considered of small account in Israel in the days of Saul. He had eight sons and two daughters by different wives (1 Sam. 17:12-14,25). Isaiah speaks of “the stock of Jesse”, in contrasting the humble descent of the Messiah with the glory of His coming rule (Isa. 11:1). His name signifies *Yah exists*.

“**And Jesse begat David**” — David signifies *Beloved*. He typed the Lord Jesus Christ as Yahweh's son, *the beloved* (Matt. 3:17).

There is a problem of chronology here for 1 Kings 6:1 states that from the com-

ing of Israel out of Egypt to the fourth year of Solomon was four hundred and eighty years, and this period of time must be divided up among the ages of five men from Salmon to David. This seems too long a period unless each of the men married very late in life. This, indeed, was the case with Boaz, and could have been the case with others. On the other hand, it could be that the names of unimportant persons have been omitted. If that is so, the existing names in the genealogy evidently assume an importance in themselves. Perhaps they are designed to express the story of the book, for it illustrates in type how the Ecclesia *broke out* of the curse of the law that *enclosed* them, and were *elevated* to the *liberty* in Christ (Gal. 5:1 — Amminidab — *People of liberality*) by hearkening to the *oracles* of God, and putting on the *raiment* provided by the *Strong One*. They thus become *servants* of *Yahweh who lives* joined in fellowship with *the Beloved*.

Be that as it may, the main object in the genealogy is to bridge the gap that otherwise would exist between Judah, David and Christ.

So this delightful story comes to an end. It is rich in both parabolic significance as well as exhortatory power. It is worthy of the closest study and meditation, for by that means the influence of its message will be felt by all.

YAHWEH AS REDEEMER

The story of Ruth is not merely a delightful narrative showing the triumph of virtue and love, but also a record of important doctrinal significance. Throughout Scripture, Yahweh is revealed as the Redeemer of His people (Job 19:25; Psa. 19:14; 78:35; Isa. 41:14; 59:20), and the full import of that title is revealed in *The Book of Ruth*.

The Hebrew word translated Redeemer in many places is *Goel* from *ga'al*, the meaning of which is illustrated in the Mosaic law of Redemption. Concerning this, Brother Thomas states in *Phanerosis*:

“According to this, all the firstborns of man and beast in Israel are Yahweh’s, and were all to be sacrificed to Him, except the firstborn of an ass, and the firstborn children, being males (Exod. 13:1-2, 13-15; 34:20); fields, houses, cities and servants (Lev. 25:25-34); all these, when sold were returnable to their original owners, because these, as Yahweh’s representatives, had the fee simple right in them, and could therefore not convey an unlimited right. The absolute fee simple right was in Yahweh; first, because He brought Israel’s firstborn out of Egypt, whilst He slew those of the Egyptians (Exod. 13:14); and secondly, because He claimed the Holy Land as absolutely His, the Israelites being only strangers and sojourners with Him (Lev. 25:23). The firstling of a cow, of a sheep and of a goat, were not redeemable from death; they were to be sacrificed to Yahweh, being typical of Messiah the prince in his cutting off (Num. 18:17).

“The redemption of redeemable things was to be effected by a blood relation of the nearest kin. Hence, *goel* stands for the nearest relative, a blood relation, the next of kin or a redeemer in this sense. It was his duty in redeeming to pay a stipulated price, so that the near kinsman became a purchaser, and the firstborns and so forth, a purchased people, and purchased things. Under the law, the price was blood and money. Now all this was a pattern of heavenly things. It was an illustration of the substance expressed in the text words, ‘Yahweh Goel of Israel’; that is, ‘He shall be the nearest kinsman of Israel.’ This necessitates that the Effluence of the Eternal should become an Israelite, or as Paul expresses it, ‘He,’ the Spirit ‘took upon himself the nature of Abraham; for in all things it behoved him to be made like his brethren.’ The Spirit

becoming thus a blood relation, and by resurrection Son of Power and firstborn, he is the one of right to redeem the Holy Land and Israel by a blood-price out of the hand of strangers, who desolate and oppress them. They are the Eternal's, and His near kinsman is Jesus the Holy One of Israel."

However, *Goel* of itself does not mean *near kinsman*; it is translated that way (see Ruth 3:9) because it was the duty of the near kinsman to act the part of a *Goel*, that is, to redeem, or buy back.

The Hebrew word *goel* has been translated *kinsman* (Num. 5:8), *avenger* (Num. 35:12), *revenger* (Num. 35:19-27), *kinsfolk* (1 Kings 16:11), *redeemer* (Job 19:25), *near kinsman* (Ruth 2:20; 3:9), *deliverer* (Psa. 119:154), *ransomed* (Isa. 51:10).

As the Mosaic code required the next of kin to act as *goel*, the term has been associated with that meaning. Accordingly, when Yahweh proclaimed Himself as Redeemer, he announced that He would become *next of kin* to those whom He would save. Therefore, the divine title of *Yahweh Redeemer of Israel* signifies *He who will be a near kinsman to Israel*. How did the great Increate become *near of kin* to those He would save? By manifesting Himself in flesh, as Brother Thomas has explained above. God was "manifested in flesh" in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who being of the same nature as those he came to save, can be styled their *next of kin*, or one who has a right to redeem.

There were various aspects to the work of redemption.

Redemption of a Land Inheritance

The land belonged to Yahweh, and individual Israelites never really owned it (Lev. 25:23), though they were given the exclusive right to it so long as they kept the law. If a man fell into debt, and had to realise on the land he inherited, it became the duty of the *Goel* to purchase it, so as to retain possession of it in the family (vv. 23-27). On the year of Jubilee, however, the land which had passed out of the hands of an inheritor, reverted back to him; and therefore was redeemed by Yahweh Himself (vv. 9-10). Meanwhile, the *Goel*, the Redeemer, acted on behalf of Yahweh.

The Land of Promise, which passed into the hands of strangers when Israel was taken into captivity, shall be redeemed by the *Goel*: Yahweh manifested in His Son — Psalm 74:2; Isaiah 52:9.

Redemption of Slaves

If an Israelite, through poverty or any other reason were sold into slavery to a stranger, it was the duty of the *Goel* to redeem him, and thus restore him to freedom (Lev. 25:47-53). If, however, he lacked a *Goel*, he automatically received his freedom in the year of Jubilee (vv. 54-55). In that way, the Law itself became a *Goel*. But it could not redeem man from death.

Through sin, man found himself in bondage to the law of sin and death (Rom. 7:23; 8:2), and utterly unable to redeem himself, or anybody else (Psalm 49:7-8). But Yahweh, the Redeemer of Israel, having manifested Himself in flesh in the person of the Lord, assumed the position of *Goel* or near kinsman, and so the price was paid (1 Pet. 1:18-19). In consequence, those "in Christ" have been "bought with a price" (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 2 Peter 2:1), and are accounted as no longer servants of sin (the flesh), but servants of righteousness in Christ (Rom. 6:16-18). They are now accounted as "the holy people, the redeemed of Yahweh" (Isa. 62:12).

In a national sense, Israel was sold into slavery when it was taken into captivity, but the nation is to be redeemed (Isa. 43:1; 44:22-23), and restored to their original possession.

Avenger of Blood

The next of kin was required to assume the status of the Protector of the family, to be ready to act as Avenger for any of his kin who suffered violence (see Numbers 35:15-28; Joshua 20:3-6). The term *Avenger of blood* is derived from the Hebrew *goel had-dam*. The *goel-had-dam* was the man who vindicated the rights of one who had been unjustly slain. This duty devolved upon the members of the family, or clan, of the murdered man (cp. 2 Sam. 14:7); though cities of refuge were appointed to limit the authority of the *goel* to so act, and to see that justice was done.

Yahweh, as the Redeemer, will avenge the blood of His servants, and has provided the *Goel* to do this (see Romans 12:19; Rev. 6:10; 18:6-8). Meanwhile, Christ, through death, destroyed (in himself) "him that had the power of death, that is the devil" or sin in the flesh (Heb. 2:14-15). He therefore exercised vengeance on that which has been accounted as a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44), and manifested the ability to "deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15). In Christ, redemption

is a matter of progression. There is redemption from sin now through forgiveness of transgression; and there is yet to be manifested the "redemption of the body" (Rom. 8:23), when "this corruptible shall put on incorruption".

In view of Yahweh's intention to act as Redeemer, Job declared: "I know that my redeemer (*Goel*) liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God (*Eloahh, the Mighty One*)" (Job 19:25-26). Job's use of the term *Goel* in this context reveals that he comprehended that Yahweh will manifest Himself in flesh, and so reveal Himself as a near kinsman competent to avenge, or vindicate, His own.

Preserver of the Family

The next of kin also had the duty of preserving the family by marrying the widow of a deceased brother if he had died childless (Deut. 25:5-10). Under such a law, the continuity of the family was maintained, even though its continuance may have been threatened by folly or disaster.

However the next of kin in such a relationship is never described as *goel* until we come to *The Book of Ruth*, and Naomi links the duty of such with the *Goel* about to act to redeem her land inheritance.

The continuity of the family of God has been maintained throughout the centuries by the influence of Christ who thus has manifested himself as the Preserver of the Family.

Boaz, acting as the *Goel*, made it possible for Ruth the alien to have fellowship with Israel, and relationship with Yahweh. The Lord Jesus Christ, as *Goel*, has done likewise (Eph. 2:11-13; 3:6). The distressed and afflicted in Israel were taught to look to the *Goel* for relief: the same provision is revealed in Christ.

The Title: Yahweh The Goel of Israel

When Yahweh added the title of Redeemer of Israel to His name, He proclaimed that He would be manifested as a near kinsman to His people competent to redeem them, in all ways mentioned above.

The title is most frequently used by Isaiah, which is appropriate, for the name Isaiah, in its meaning, is very similar to that of Jesus, and signifies *Yah shall save*. Equally significant is the fact that reference to the title is found most often in those

prophecies relating to the suffering servant, the Redeemer to be revealed (see Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16).

The Redeemer must have the Right, the Desire, and the Ability to redeem. Because the nameless *Goel* did not have the *desire* or *ability* to redeem the land when it involved marriage with Ruth, he waived his *right* in favour of Boaz.

However, Yahweh, by His manifestation through Christ, has the right, the desire, and the ability to redeem. He has *the right* as near kinsman — Isa. 44:24; 54:5; 63:4; *the desire* as one related — Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 54:8; *the ability* as one with power — Isa. 47:4; 48:17; 49:7. Moreover, He clearly revealed His intention to manifest Himself as Redeemer through His servant — Isa. 44:6; 49:6. And this was manifested through Christ — Luke 1:68; 2 Cor. 5:19; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18; Rev. 5:9; 14:3-4. The price was paid (Acts 20:26; 1 Cor. 6:19-20), and liberty secured in Christ (Rom. 8:1-4; Gal. 5:1).

Summary

The law of the *Goel* taught that Yahweh is both Redeemer of the nation (Exod. 15:3; Isa. 63:9), as well as of individuals who come unto Him (Job 19:25; Psa. 19:14). His law taught that the following could, or will be, redeemed: Israel as a nation (Exod. 6:6; Psa. 74:2; Jer. 31:11); the land (Lev. 25:25); houses (Lev. 25:29,33); cities (Lev. 25:32); slaves (Lev. 25:47-49); unclean animals, representing the Gentiles (Lev. 27:13,27); tithes (Lev. 27:31); souls (Psa. 69:18; 72:14); lives (Psa. 103:4; Lam. 3:58); Jerusalem (Isa. 52:9); the fatherless (Prov. 23:11).

His law revealed that unwarranted bloodshedding and violence will be avenged through the *Goel* who is styled the Avenger, or Revenger of blood (Num. 35:12, 19-27; Deut. 19:6,12; Josh. 20:3,5,9).

He also promises redemption from enemies (Psa. 106:10; 107:2; Micah 4:10); death (Hos. 13:14); destruction (Psa. 103:4); deceit and violence (Psa. 72:14); evil (Gen. 48:16).

In superimposing the title of *Redeemer of Israel* upon His prophetic name of Yahweh which proclaims what He shall accomplish, Yahweh announced that He would redeem and protect His people in the manner outlined above. Gentiles who desire to share this great privilege, must become incorporated into Israel, as did Ruth through her marriage with Boaz.

The *Goel* in Israel had the right, the power, and the will to

redeem; the Lord Jesus Christ possesses all three. He can provide for those who shelter under his wings, a comfort in times of distress, strength in times of weakness, protection in times of danger. The story of Ruth teaches how efficacious he is to do so.

“ . . . Their Redeemer is mighty; He shall plead their cause with thee” Proverbs 23:11.

