

Scene One:

Na'omi's Return to Beit-Lechem

1: 6-22

As Ian Duguid writes in his commentary on **Ruth**, in every life there are certain defining moments, key crossroads along the way. On the one hand, there are certain times when a person consciously chooses his or her destination. There are occasions where one has to choose between going down a path everyone else is following or taking another path, a road less traveled, as it were. A life changed forever.

On the other hand, though, there are also times in life when it seems that your destination has chosen you. These are the occasions when life gives us no choice at all, but throws us head-over-heels down a path that, however well or little traveled, we would never have chosen for ourselves. No one chooses to have her husband die, leaving her a widow with young children. No one chooses to have a crippling accident or a life-threatening disease with permanent consequences. These too can be defining moments in a life. But all of us - whether defined by the choices we have made or the choices life has made for us - are on a journey through life, a road that is heading toward some destination or other. Where are you going?

The first chapter of the book of **Ruth** is the story of choices made and choices seemingly thrust upon people, about roads traveled or left untraveled. It is about the long-term consequences of the decisions we make. Often the consequences are not those we expected or anticipated, but our lives nonetheless bear the mark of the decisions we have made and the defining moments we have faced. The book of **Ruth** shows us that our actions have consequences. However, our lives are not simply the consequence of the various decisions we have made and events that have occurred, as if the universe were a giant supercomputer into which we feed all of the variables and come out with a predictable answer. There is a mysterious X-factor that is evident in the book of **Ruth** - a variable that has the power to change everything. It is the grace of **ADONAI**, which directs the outcomes of those decisions and events according to **His** sovereignty and good purpose for **His** people. That grace is not always evident to the players in the game at the time. But it is always there, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged. Ultimately, for believers, the grace of **God** is always the defining element of our lives.¹⁷