

# Your People Will Be My People and Your God My God

## 1: 14-18

**DIG:** Orpah returned to her family, while Ruth remained with Na'omi; both did so out of loyalty. Which action was most surprising? Most expected? Why? What priorities and considerations persuaded Orpah to return to her mother's house? What does Ruth's choice tell you about her?

**REFLECT:** Consider what Ruth was risking to stay with Na'omi. How can you show this kind of selfless love toward someone? What would you be risking by doing this? What has been stressful for you this year? Did you cope like Na'omi, Orpah, or Ruth? How so? Who in your life is loyal like Ruth, who is loyal to you in your emptiness? Who is someone who has helped you feel close to God?

Na'omi's impassioned soliloquy (see Am - **ADONAI's Hand Has Turned Against Me**) had hit home in at least one heart. At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung (Hebrew: *dabaq*, which means *to stick like glue*) passionately to her mother-in-law (1:14). The very thing that caused Orpah to leave was what caused Ruth to stay. The fact that Na'omi had neither a husband nor sons, meant that she needed someone to take care of her. Orpah chose to become a wife again, and Ruth chose to remain a daughter. Orpah did the normal and expected thing, Ruth practiced chesed (see Af - **The Concept of Chesed**), took a risk and did the unexpected thing.

Orpah probably didn't realize exactly what she had chosen. It is likely that she didn't realize the far-reaching consequences. She returned to her mother's house. Where would she find **rivers of living water** to **flow from within her** (John 4:10-11 and 7:38)? Surely not in the spiritual cesspools of Mo'av. Would she find a husband who worshiped the **God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**? The children she hoped for, would be brought into the godless worship of Chemosh. She had been called out of pagan darkness into heavenly light but she chose, perhaps unwittingly, the darkness. These are also lessons for us today.

Why did Orpah go back? Was **the seed** of faith **scattered on rocky soil** so that when it **sprang up it had no root** and was **scorched by the sun** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Et - The Parable of the Soils**)? Were Na'omi's arguments so convincing? Or was she simply impulsive? We simply don't know. God didn't pass judgment and neither can we.<sup>32</sup> But the fields of Mo'av looked far greater than the land of Isra'el. With that simple choice she walked off the pages of the Bible, never to be heard of again.

Consequently, **Ruth** stood in the valley of decision between **her** beloved, familiar **Mo'av** and the uncertain, unfamiliar **Y'hudah**. There was nothing kosher about **her**. **She** knew **she** would be about as welcome in **Beit-Lechem** as a ham sandwich at a bar mitzvah. Conventional wisdom shouted for **Ruth** to follow **Orpah** back to **Mo'av**, the most likely way of worldly security and significance. But **Ruth** was not **Orpah** and there was nothing conventional about **her**. **She** would not let **Na'omi** go on alone into an empty future.<sup>33</sup> One can imagine **Ruth** loosening **her** embrace and looking **Na'omi** directly in the eyes, and with **her** very first words of the story, saying: **Don't press me to leave you or to turn back (shuwb) from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God (1:16)**. This was an amazingly mature and meaningful testimony of personal faith, especially in light of the fact that it came from the lips of a young woman raised in a pagan culture. **Her** trust was real. The writer to the **Hebrews** could just have easily have written, "By faith **Ruth** turned **her** back on the gods of **Mo'av** and believed in **the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**."

**Na'omi** said: **Look, your sister-in-law is returning (shuwb) to her people and her gods. Go back (shuwb) with her (1:15)**. There will always be a test of faith. The Adversary will always send you his best before **YHVH** can send you **His** best. Would **Ruth** decide to go on worshipping **the God of Isra'el** or would **she** go back to **her** old gods? **Ruth** was not going to let **Na'omi** walk out of **her** life. **She** had decided to go with **Na'omi** to **Isra'el** and **she** was not going to change **her** mind. **Ruth** did not argue with **Na'omi**. **She** clung to **her**. The same verb, **cleave** (the past tense of **clung**) is used for the first time in **Genesis 2:24**. It says: **For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh. Ruth clung to Na'omi, leaving everyone, her father and mother, and other family members and friends. She had decided to leave all behind. But now Na'omi gave her a second chance to reconsider. The choice was hers.**

Our steps take us either closer to **God** or away from **Him**. Affections and decisions that lead us away from **ADONAI** are affections and decisions that lead us down the wrong path. Sin always takes you farther than you want to go and costs you more than you want to pay. In fact, attachment's contrary to **God's** will, become idolatry. The cord, which bound and would continue to bind **Ruth** to **Na'omi**, was their mutual love of **YHVH**. That same choice is ours.<sup>34</sup>

**Ruth** made a decision on that dusty road. It was a life changing decision. Once again **she** had to decide whether to return to **Mo'av** and a culture that did not worship the One True **God** or to continue against **Na'omi's** expressed desires that **she** not accompany **her** to **Isra'el**. **Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried**. And to confirm the deadly seriousness of **her** intentions, **Ruth** swore an oath in **God's** name: **May ADONAI deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me (1:17)**. The word pattern

Ruth uses, is found in this full form only in the books of **Samuel** and **Kings** (**First Samuel 3:17, 14:44, 20:13, 25:22; Second Samuel 3:9 and 35,19:13; First Kings 2:23,19:2, 20:10; Second Kings 6:31**). She refused to listen to her mother-in-law's pleas or follow her sister-in-law's bad example. Why? Because she had come to have faith the God of Isra'el (2:12). Her commitment involved a change in direction, she was a sinner that turned from Chemosh to ADONAI.

If I asked you if you were a sinner, what would you say? **Romans 3:23** says: **For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**. That includes you and me, doesn't it? Most people feel that being good gets you into heaven and being bad keeps you out. That is not true; YHVH says we *all* have sinned. What would you say sin is? We can agree that we are both sinners; now lets define sin. Some have said, "I'm not perfect," or "I have made some mistakes." But what do you think the Bible means by sin? The Bible says that **everyone who sins breaks God's law; in fact, sin is lawlessness (First John 3:4)**. Have you ever disobeyed your parents? Have you ever misused the name of God? Have you ever told a lie? This is what sin is. It's breaking God's law. And any time you break a law there is a penalty. If you run a stop sign, the penalty is a fine. If you rob a bank, the penalty is jail. What is the penalty for breaking God's law?

**The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23a)**. The wages of work is money, but the wages of sin is death. In other words, what I earn - the penalty, the punishment of sin - is death. Death is separation. The Bible speaks of two kinds of death, or two kinds of separation. The first death is separation of the body and the soul. If I were to die right now my body would fall to the floor, but my soul, the real me, would go somewhere else. The Bible speaks of another death, that it calls the second death. This second death is separation of the soul from God. Now, the penalty of sin is death, spiritual death, and separation from the LORD. To put it simply - hell. Though all this is really bad news, there is good news.

But the gift of God is eternal life in Messiah Yeshua our Lord; God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us (**Romans 6:23b**). Do you have faith that Jesus is the Son of God? Do you trust that He died for your sins on the cross? Do you believe that He rose on the third day and is now seated at the right hand of YHVH in heaven (**Hebrews 1:3**)? Then through faith you can become God's child and have eternal life (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). You are not saved by how you behave, you are saved by what you believe. Ruth believed in the God of Isra'el and was saved.

Would you like to trust in Christ right now? If so, here is a prayer for you to repeat. Before you do, remember that saying a prayer does not save you, it is your faith in Messiah that saves you. Say these words: **God, I admit that I have sinned. I believe Jesus Christ died for my sins and rose to life. I choose to trust Him to save me right now. Please**

**come into my life and make me a new person inside. I accept you gift of salvation and will follow You as my Lord (Romans 10:9-11).** If you were to die right now, where would you go? That's right, heaven. Why should **God** let you into heaven? That's right, because **Jesus** died as a sacrifice (**John 1:29, Leviticus 1:4**) to pay the penalty for your **sins**. How wonderful to know for sure that you will spend **eternity in heaven (First John 5:11)!**

Then the narrator steps forward to draw the chapter's high point to a close. Lengthy, intense dialogue, gives way to quick, quiet reporting. **When Na'omi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said no more to her (1:18).** The storyteller wants the audience to feel **Na'omi's** preoccupation with **her** painful, uncertain future as the curtain falls on this dramatic scene.<sup>35</sup> **The two women, weary and worn, guided by the Ruach HaKodesh, arrived in Beit-Lechem just in time for the barley harvest and the start of the feast of Shavu'ot (see Ah - The Book of Ruth and Shavu'ot).**