

## **Love Ignores Barriers - Ruth and Race**

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### **Abstract**

The story of Ruth is an ancient one -- about a woman destined by the Creator, to remain with her mother-in-law -- an adieu, to the 'pilgrim's' journey to the heavens. The relationship of Ruth and her widowed mother-in-law is a remarkable study. Similarly Ruth had lovingly given up her biological family for the sake of knowing, as critics aver, a personal God who gives "every good gift and every perfect gift" (James 1.17) for His children. The "strange" tendency to help another when one is in need of help is possible only through divine guidance. The Creator loves these people. Ruth is one of the women in the genealogical lineage of Jesus Christ's ancestry.

### **Ruth Is Not a Jew**

Ruth is an ordinary girl of the country of Moab. The story of Ruth produced by Samuel G Engel visualises Ruth as a child given to the camaraderie of children to the place of child sacrifice. Ruth's parents, as the visual depiction and portrait shows, were poor. It was a heart wrenching scene. The child called back her father a few times and clung on to him. They were called to be observed -- Ruth the most beautiful of them all. Ruth was chosen to be a special sacrifice -- to be burnt on the altar of a pagan god for a ritual. Apart from the Moab ceremony of selection, the Israelite God Yahweh had a greater purpose for Ruth. The fact that the book of Ruth is included in the Holy Bible, and that too, considering the pagan origin of the girl Ruth, is indeed a resplendent observation. A child of Moab origin is destined to be numbered alongside the great characters of the book, the Holy Bible. It is indeed heart-warming for readers of different identities and culture.

## **Married to an Israelite, Chose to Live with the Family**

Ruth was pulled from the burning process. She was substituted for another child who offered herself to the altar of an idol god. This practice was detested by the foreigners -- Elimelech's family. After Ruth had grown up she had married Elimelech's son Mahlon and he had exposed his hatred for it. She had learnt ethics of what was good and what was bad. Apart from the Moab ceremony of selection, the Israelite God Yahweh had a greater purpose for Ruth. Ruth belonged to the Moabite clan but was married to an Israelite Mahlon. She had a loving family. Her husband and mother-in-law Naomi showered her with love. The story in the movie *Ruth* documents her husband dying after a fatal wound. The movie describes her husband's death but the Holy Bible documents the story of Ruth with no answer to the queries around her husband's death. Her sister-in-law Orpah shared a similar tragic family history; her husband had unfortunately died. Orpah and Ruth loved their husbands' family but at an important stage they could no more be a family. Their father-in-law too had passed away. Naomi was grief stricken as a mother and wife and also as a mother-in-law. As the wife of Elimelech she had served her family and God to the utmost. Orpah looked at her mother-in-law to bid farewell. She would move to her parents' house in search of an eternal family but Ruth did not travel a similar path. She loved her mother-in-law to the extent that she would not part away from her. She helped Naomi at the time of crisis of her own life.

## **Story of Motherly Love**

The story of Ruth and Naomi is a short story of motherly love, affection, family relationships, responsibility and duty. The lady - Naomi is a significant portrait of a true mother's love. As a mother-in-law her heart was elated when the young girl Ruth informed her that she would not be leaving her side. The girl Ruth loved her mother-in-law. The woman Naomi was also a woman of good character. She was a good woman of virtue and wisdom. The two women, both young and old travelled to their husbands' home-town Bethlehem in search of food and shelter. As per the visual presentation of the movie titled 'Ruth' - their ancient lands and houses were there to welcome them. As Naomi believed they were indeed people of a blessed nation who loved their God and nation and to her astonishment Ruth loved the God of her husband's family. The Holy Scripture says "And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or return from

following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1.16). Ruth had served her husband to the utmost and it is evident of absolute love and faithfulness. These lines recreate a story based on good deeds and dependence -- a wonderful story of love. Ruth's choice and good deed of remaining with her lonely mother-in-law is a paradigm story of sacrifice resembling Jesus Christ's sacrificial love on the painful cross.

Naomi and her daughter-in-law settled in the land of Israel. The story of political irony was the Moabites and Israelites were not friendly towards each other; they were conflicting nations at war with each other. The Eimelech family had no food, and so the survivors of the family Ruth and Naomi had to leave behind their homes in Moab to return to their homeland and acquire the legitimate assistance of the nation and people. Ruth, though from an enemy tribe of Israel was accepted into the field of Boaz to glean in the fields. The compassion rendered to her was an Israelite custom permitted to strangers and foreigners to glean after the harvesters for food. Ruth had gone to glean in the fields of a close relative of her mother-in-law -- his name was Boaz; he was a very wealthy man. He was a "kinsman" (Ruth 2.20). Pounds avers,

Provision was made in the Law of Moses for the poor person who was forced to sell part of his property or himself into slavery. His nearest of kin could step in and 'buy back' what his relative was forced to sell (Leviticus 25.48f). The kinsman redeemer was a rich benefactor, or person who frees the debtor by paying the ransom price. 'If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold' (Leviticus 25.25; cf. Ruth 4.4, 6). / The nearest of kin had the responsibility of redeeming his kinsman's lost opportunities. If a person was forced into slavery, his redeemer purchased his freedom. When debt threatened to overwhelm him, the kinsman stepped in to redeem his homestead and let the family live. If a family member died without an heir the kinsman gave his name by marrying the widow and rearing a son to hand down his name (Deuteronomy 25.5; Genesis 38.8; Ruth 3-4). When death came at the hands of another man the redeemer acted as the avenger of blood and pursued the killer (Numbers 35.12-34; Deuteronomy 19.1-3).

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### **Boaz and Ruth**

It means that he would be in a position to set up a heir for the widow. Ruth was in a position to acquire Boaz's help and assistance. Boaz gave Ruth the needed food for both of them. When the barley festival was nearby, Naomi gave instruction to her daughter-in-law to preserve her family. Naomi instructed Ruth to seek Boaz in the threshing floor after the men had gone away and lay at his feet without his sense of awareness. Ruth wore good clothes and did as Naomi had commanded her. Naomi had specifically warned her that it should not be known that a woman was present in the threshing floor.

Ruth did all that Naomi had commanded her. After Boaz had awakened, he was surprised to see Ruth there. He told her that the kindness she showed to him was very great. He said that she had not run after the younger men. Boaz gave her some food that she could carry and left to solve the issue as to who would claim Ruth. Ruth beheld a difference in the culture of Naomi's family. Their lifestyle, habits and faith challenged her. A young widow she was, but she could have left her in-law's house after her husband's demise, to seek a future, But chose to stay with mother-in-law Naomi.

### **Naomi and Ruth**

Naomi sought to do good things for her daughter-in-law. She was in awe of her country; of its vast treasure, beauty, heritage and commands and returned to it. As the "visual" (wikipedia) movie discusses, she was glad that her home was still there in the country in spite of the years and the effects of sunshine, rain and nature. In an imaginary depiction of her faith, it can be well noted that Naomi was aware of the protective power given to the orphan, the widow and the barren woman; the condition of loneliness is true in the lives of Naomi and Ruth, her daughter-in-law.

Naomi had sought out a good life for her daughter-in-law. She knew the wondrous escapades of youth. The 'visual' depiction of Ruth's story and life introduces a version of youthful chivalry. Boaz is visualised as a young man in Engel's TV production. Ruth was a wise woman. The 'visual' production of his life narrates her as a charming young girl, and her faith in the God who does not kill innocent children was noteworthy. Ruth was in search of a true, compassionate God. The visual description suggests Ruth was wandering in the temple of Moab. Ruth was in search of doing good in accordance to Moab's laws and conditions. The visual depiction presents her entering the humble abode of Elimelech and his sons. The grandeur of his home was quite intriguing with the job of making artefacts like crowns, and other products of the hammer and the weld. Her frequent visits reveal the fact that she wanted to find out about the God who does not allow the destruction of children.

Naomi knew the escapades of youth. The visual depiction of Ruth's story and life introduces a version of youthful chivalry. The language is of the King James 1611 Bible. A unique and special depiction of the Bible:

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 ? / And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshing floor./ Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. / And it shall be, when he lieth down that thou shalt mark the lace 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. / And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do. / And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her. / And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap pf corn: and she came softly and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

(Ruth 3. 1-7)

## Overcoming Racial Focus

There were vast differences between Moab and Israel, raising doubt whether a unification of culture, tradition, identity and most significantly religion and spirituality would be possible. The other daughter-in-law had returned to her Moab nativity.

Ruth reached a good position in society. She was married to Boaz after scrutiny from another 'kinsman'. As per Israelite tradition and as the Holy Bible mentions "a man pluckt off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour" (Ruth 4.7); of Ruth's genealogy there was her son Obed, and of his descendants were born Jesse, David and Jesus Christ, great leaders from the Jewish people group. In other words, through Ruth's love for her mother-in-law and her desire to help her, even though both came from diverse and warring tribes, Ruth becomes a "mother" of great leaders of Israelites.

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