

HOME BIBLE STUDY
Chapter One
Ruth 1:1-2

As you read through your assignment, you read how the Lord spoke to me about Ruth – meditative grocery stores. Were you shocked at how many items in a typical grocery store? Were you amazed that the volume nearly doubles during major holidays? You know, the Lord didn't say to me that Ruth was like my Kroger in Germantown, but He said "grocery stores" – plural.

I once heard a Baptist preacher (who loved the book of Ruth) say, "You can study the whole Bible through the book of Ruth." I do think over the next few weeks that you are going to be amazed at the wealth in these 4 short chapters.

In this session we will be covering verses 1 and 2. Would someone please read verse 1? Let's talk for a minute about the judges. The Judges spanned the period between Joshua's death – who led the children of Israel into the Promised Land – and when King Saul was anointed – or the Monarchy. It's a period of about 400 years. The Judges were also known as tribal leaders, or chieftans. The land and the people were divided into their tribes, and Judges were set over each tribe. The Jewish leaders have much to say about this period, specifically noting that there were no leaders and no followers. Some even contend by the way it is written that judges were judging judges, which I personally find intriguing because later on in Ruth we will see a courtroom scene in which a judge is judging another judge. Just for a moment, though, let your mind consider our society today and there being such judicial disorder that our courtrooms are all tied up with judges taking on other judges. We can only imagine in what state that would leave its citizens. In Jewish writings Elimelech was referred to as the Tribe of Judah's most illustrious son and is said to be the leader of that generation. The Tribe of Judah was of a certainty prominent because it is through this tribe that Messiah is prophesied to come. But, their leader, at a most alarming time, up and leaves. Elimelech's leaving Bethlehem might be something like George Bush leaving America to "sojourn" in Iraq until calm is restored here. This opening verse sets a very disturbing stage.

Judges were not effective leaders, because the book's recurring theme is sin, punishment, repentance and God's rescue. The Hebrew children numbered over a million people when they finally left Egypt after being there 480 years. How could they not have still felt that influence? After that, their families wandered 40 years while trying to get the "obedience to the One true God" right. Then, they finally arrived "home", which was actually a foreign country to them; they'd never seen it before. Fitting the Hebrew children into their "Chosen People" role was like putting a square peg in a round hole. They just couldn't get it. They'd sin, find themselves in the frying pan, cry out for help – get rescued, and repeat the cycle all over again – over and over, judge after judge. This is the times of the Judges – this is the backdrop for Ruth.

And, next we read that there's a famine. Someone read the Deuteronomy scripture found on page 19 in your books. _____ There's never supposed to be a famine, is there? _____ And, whether or not there is one depends on them.

Someone read Deuteronomy 6:8-9 from your Bibles. There were 4 required Scriptures Jewish males were to bind on their foreheads and hands during their morning

prayers, and the Deut. 11 Scripture is one of them. They received this commandment on Mt. Sinai, so they've had it all their lives. They should not be experiencing a famine. (Show phylactery.)

But, what about them going to Moab? Lot's family -- the Moabites and the Amonites -- are not the Chosen People. You will recall that Lot and Abraham parted ways because of disputes among their servants over grazing grounds for their cattle. And then Lot's daughters got him drunk, got pregnant with his two sons, and now these two sons have become two powerful nations. It is from Moab that this prominent Jewish family seeks relief from the famine. Someone read Deuteronomy 23:6 and see what God says about such a decision. _____ (*Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever.*) You can't get much clearer than that, can you? _____ He says, "Don't look to Moab for peace or prosperity at any time, even forever." And, what did this family go there for? Those very things!

Now, someone read verse 2 of Ruth. _____ In verse 1, it says they went to Moab to "sojourn", and in verse 2 it says they "continued", "lived" or "remained" there. The word "sojourn" speaks of something temporary, but to continue means that they have settled in to something more than just temporary.

And, next we are introduced to the first 4 characters in our story, and we are also going to have our first look into Ruth as an allegory. Jewish rabbis teach that the Bible is like an onion – layer after layer. (compare the body layers – fingerprints and dna) We are coming to our second layer in Ruth – the allegory. An allegory is used for teaching and is when people, things or happenings have a hidden, or symbolic meaning. Jewish rabbis teach that there are allegories in Scripture, but I can assure you I knew nothing about any of this when God gave it to me. To me, Ruth is allegorical because God revealed it to me that way, not because I learned it from Jewish writers. The first 4 characters are Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon and Chilion. Allegorically, who is Elimelech? _____ Who is Naomi? _____ Who is Mahlon? _____ And, who is Chilion? _____

Let's just review a couple of scriptures about their allegorical roles. The times of the Judges ended with the capture and captivity of the last Judge, Samson. Someone read from page 22 in the book the Judges 16:21 passage. _____ And, the last of the Kings was King Zedekiah, and, just like the Judges, this era of the monarchy came to an end with the capture and captivity of King Zedekiah. Someone please read II Kings 25:5-7 on page 22.

Now, on page 23, let's see who was responsible for the fall of the Judges and the Kings. Someone read the Joshua verses.

Isn't it amazing that in our story the two sons died in enemy territory, failing completely the ones dependent upon them, just as the Judges and the Kings ceased to be in enemy territory failing the one dependent upon them. What people group did Mahlon and Chilion represent? _____ In our story, what is the allegorical role for Naomi? _____ As we proceed in our study, you will see that both the Judges and the Kings left Israel and Mahlon and Chilion left Naomi (both interchangeable) totally exposed, vulnerable and defenseless.

But, as hopeless as all of this seems, with God all things are possible. God can take the worst of situations – and the worst of people – and bring about the greatest of

victories! He is God, and we're going to watch Him do it in this story, as we will most assuredly see Him do it with us.

GO OVER WORKBOOKS

“Did you Know?”

Kosher

Page 201

(I always like to ask a class member to read out loud in class the “Did you Know?” segment – in this case, Kosher. Before this class, I gathered a large basket full of different items from the grocery that had the kosher symbol. After the reading, I placed the basket on the table and asked the class members to take out items and locate the kosher symbols on them, and then pass them to the next person. Most have never given this a consideration. I also got packages of kosher bite-sized candies to pass out at the end of the class period, as we are only doing one “Did you Know?” this week. Try and think of different ways to make this segment informative and interesting, and don't forget to allow time for discussion.)

HOME BIBLE STUDY
Chapter Two
Ruth 1:3-7

Before starting this chapter, I want to explain the statement in the book on page 25. “There were a combined total of 40 Judges and Kings, with the periods lasting approximately 400 years each.” I failed to put the source for this in the book. This information came from the NIV Study Bible and the timeline chart in the front. The 40 combined Judges and Kings was derived from using the 27 kings on the timeline chart which excluded co-regents and short reigns, and the 12 Judges, plus Abimelech, son of Gideon, who ruled over Israel for 3 years. If I have the opportunity to revise this book, this information will be clarified and footnoted.

With that said, let’s talk a little about the number 40, since there are 40 Judges and Kings and 400 years of reign. Numbers in Judaism are extremely important. As a matter of fact, each letter of their alphabet has a numeric value attached to it. Aleph is 1, bet is 2, etc. Can someone tell me what the number 40 means? _____

Did you find it intriguing when you read about the placement of Ruth in our Bibles? What two periods does she fall between? _____

Alright, someone read verse 3 of Ruth, please? _____ I know you are pricked in your Spirit when you read that Elimelech, allegorically God, died in our story. A friend of mine who recently taught this material in her church said that when she got to that part, knowing that there would be concern, the Holy Spirit instantly prompted her to tell the group that Jesus and God are one and that on the cross the Supreme did die. Did you know that one of the greatest hindrances for the Jew with Christianity is that we say Jesus and God are one and Jesus died?

Turn in your books to page 28, and someone read the Isaiah 54 passage at the bottom. _____ Amazingly, it says Israel is a widow in this verse. What makes a person a widow? _____ Now, turn back to page 21 in the book, and read the Isaiah 54 passage. _____ Who does it say was Israel’s husband? _____ Although in our story, literally, Elimelech died, in the spiritual realm, because of her disobedience and because that’s what she wanted, God died to Israel.

But, what about Elimelech’s death? Do you think Naomi was overly grieved by it? Was she sorely troubled that she had to put his body in forbidden Moabite soil? She did seem to carry on, didn’t she? Possibly she was already so entrenched in Moabite society that Elimelech’s death really wasn’t nearly the tragedy it should have been. Oswald Chambers in his January 20th reading in My Utmost For His Highest says, “If you are depending upon anything but God, you will never know when He’s gone.” We can get so entrenched in building our own little world that there’s no room for God. The sad part is, when He’s gone, He’s not even missed. (Don’t think I’m speaking to you more than I’m speaking to myself.) I believe Naomi was so consumed with her strategizing and role playing and her own self-importance that Elimelech’s death was no more than a blip on the screen.

In that culture it was required that women have male covering. If not, they were reduced to poverty and were charity cases. So, all is not in vain because Naomi still has her two sons. They are now her male covering. Her position is still secure.

Okay, someone read the first half of verse 4, please. _____

There is a glaring sin that occurs in this verse. After Elimelech's death, the two sons marry Moabite girls. If Elimelech had been the controlling force behind this family and had *made* them go down to Moab, then after his death, why didn't Naomi regroup what she had left and go back to Bethlehem? Not only did she not leave, but she further intertwined her family in Moab. It was she who would have arranged their marriages. Elimelech would have been the one to do it, but he's gone.

Let's look briefly at the making of a marriage. Read along with me on page 29 right after the Scripture. _____

Let me tell you who Jewish scholars teach these sons married. Ruth was reportedly the daughter of Eglon, King of Moab. Records show that both Orpah and Ruth were Moabite princesses. Why should that shock us? Why wouldn't this family, the elite of one society, hobnob with the upper crust of another? It's the way society works. Oftentimes in that culture, marriages of convenience were arranged between the offspring of one king and that of another just to insure peace between their two kingdoms – not because the bride and groom were in love or perfectly suited for each other. It was a political move. Isn't it intriguing that these prominent marriages didn't take place until after Elimelech was out of the picture?

Alright, someone read the last half of verse 4 and read verse 5. _____ My, my, y'all; all is not well. What's happened to Naomi's male covering? _____ What about Orpah's and Ruth's male covering? _____ (may still have the covering of their father's.) But, it doesn't really allude to the girls, does it? Who is the primary focus here? Now, what do you think about the verse in Deuteronomy that said, "Thou shalt not seek Moab's peace or prosperity all thy days – forever?" _____ Does God mean what He says? _____ not only was Elimelech laid to rest beneath Moabite soil, but not long afterwards, tragically, both sons were as well. What do you suppose that did to Naomi's social life? She couldn't get her hands on the family wealth; she couldn't make binding agreements; she had no male to validate her status; she was now dispensable. She was no longer the rich widow with the necessary sons; she was in truth the enemy pauper. What happened to all those strategic moves she made?

Someone read verse 6. _____ News travels. What's happened in Bethlehem? _____ How long did this famine last? _____ Was it just a famine of food? _____ What is the real famine that's going on? _____ I once heard it said that if you have something going on the literal, that it may be symbolic of what is actually going on in the spiritual.

Someone read verse 7. _____ Some ten years have passed; she's played every ace in her hand; and she's lost. She has no further reason to stay in Moab. In truth, she's probably no longer wanted there. She has only one option: to go back to Bethlehem. We know from Scripture that the two Moabite daughters-in-law were still with her, but do you suppose their presence actually gave her any kind of leverage in Moab? They certainly weren't going to produce noble sons. We know the value of a woman in that culture. While there is nothing left for Naomi in Moab, on the contrary, she's heard that the famine is over back in Bethlehem. Degradingly, though, she probably heard it from a Moabite peddler. It would never have come from a Jewish visitor, because, remember, Jews were not supposed to seek peace or prosperity in Moab. She may probably have been the only Jew in that entire country.

But, also amazing is that while she may have been the only Jew in Moab, she is preparing to leave from there and taking with her two young widows who may find themselves the only Moabites in Bethlehem.

GO OVER WORKBOOKS

(Pass out the kosher candy.)

HOME BIBLE STUDY
Chapter Three
Ruth 1:8-17

(Put review on the board and explain the no male covering.)

Someone please read verse 8 of Ruth on page 33 or in your Bibles _____. James says a double minded man is unstable in all his ways. Let me show you double mindedness in this verse? Out of one side of Naomi's mouth she tells Orpah and Ruth to return to their mothers' houses, and then out of the other side she asks the Lord (which would be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) to deal kindly with them. Can you send someone back into paganism and then pray for Jehovah God's kindness to fall on them? Naomi is truly void spiritually. These girls have the opportunity to go from darkness to light, and Naomi is encouraging – actually urging them – to remain in darkness. And, she's asking her own God to bless them in this. If they go back to their mothers' houses, they will never have a chance to hear about the one true God; they will be Moabites worshipping Moabite gods, in which Naomi asks God to bless them.

Let me ask you, with the spiritual knowledge you have right now, would you rather have the plush life of royalty void of God or a possibly difficult life on this earth and the one and only true God? Are you beginning to see Naomi's own personal famine?

Let's keep going. Someone read verse 9 on page 34 _____. This all seems so amazingly compassionate, doesn't it? But, it's ignorance. Now, Naomi is asking God (her God) to provide other husbands for them. And, who are these husbands going to be? (Moabites) Historical writings tell us that God answered that prayer. Did you like what you discovered about David's and Goliath's great-grandmothers? Orpah must have gotten a lot of accolades for being the great-grandmother of 4 Philistine giants. However, in eternity, wonder what she thinks of that missed opportunity?

Alright, on page 35, please read verse 10 _____. I want to tell you what I see in this verse. I see two girls who, jointly, set their hands to the plough. When we were in Israel, we had a Messianic Jewish tour guide. One day he was explaining the meaning of Jesus' statement: "no man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God." He said that when ploughing time started, the farmer would have sharpened his plough with care, and he would have to be very careful ploughing because of the rocky terrain in Israel. If he hit a rock and damaged his plough, then it might be several days before he could get it sharpened and get back in the field. Getting the crops in on time was critical, because they were on God's timeline, and there were specific times they had to go to Jerusalem to make sacrifices and pay their tithes, part of which would come from these crops. Spiritually, it's a scary thing to set your hand to the plough and look back. In this verse, these girls set their hands to the plough. When they both said the word, "surely, we will..." they gave their word – they entered into a commitment.

Now, someone read verses 11-13 _____. Naomi knows the Law, but it is as if it only applies if it suits her. When God called the children of Israel into a covenant relationship with Himself, He set in place safeguards to provide for the people and the Land. What Naomi is talking about in these verses is leverite law. Briefly, it's when you have a married male head of household who dies without leaving a son to carry on his name with his property. You remember that God divided the land into 12 tribes, and the

property assigned to Dan was always to be inhabited by Danites, the property assigned to Reuben by Reubenites, etc. Obeying leverite law insured that the family name would never die out and that it would always be attached to the God-given family property.

Someone read the Scripture on the bottom of page 36 _____. I think you'll find it very interesting that some Jewish scholars teach that the reason Naomi was not willing to even try and get other husbands for Orpah and Ruth through herself was because she knew that her first two sons had died because they married forbidden Moabite girls, and she wasn't willing to take a chance of it happening all over again. Let me show you a very, very fascinating verse. Someone turn to Deut. 23:3 and read that. I think it's entirely possible that these marriages did cost their lives.

Another very interesting teaching is that Orpah and Ruth had not converted to Judaism before their marriages so these marriages would not have been legal in Israel. If that's the case, then leverite law would not apply to these boys because they would not have been married male heads of household. Leverite law would only have applied to Elemelech, and that's exactly what Naomi's saying in verses 11-13. She says that she's the one who's supposed to get the husbands for Orpah and Ruth through her own offspring. Nothing else lines up with Scripture.

I told you that leverite law is God's safeguard to insure that family names with their property did not die out. I believe that Elimelech's name is in jeopardy of being lost, and Naomi has told the girls that she refuses to play by Jewish law, so there's no hope for them. So, if there's no hope for them, then Elimelech's line ceases right here – because Naomi deems it so. In these verses, Naomi actually plays God. She says she has no more sons in her (how does she know that?), she's too old (not her call), and that these girls are too shallow to wait for her to produce other husbands for them. Leverite law is God's law, and Naomi says, "Not for me it's not."

Naomi has told the girls to go back to their mothers, to which they reply, "No, we're not going to do that; our future is in Bethlehem – surely we will go back with you." And, Naomi says, "There's no future for you in Bethlehem." "It's up to me, and I'm taking myself out of the equation. When we get back to Israel, we have to play by Israeli rules, and the rules say that there's a broken line in this family – with Elimelech – and the only way to mend this break is if I marry and have more sons, and, "I'm not going to do that. In addition, girls, don't forget the command that says, 'No Moabite to the tenth generation can enter into the sanctuary of the Lord,' there's no chance any Jew would touch you with a 10-foot pole, especially not from our tribe – the tribe of Judah – the Messianic line. I don't care what the Law says, Elimelech's line stops here, and that's that!"

This is basically how leverite law works, but I do want to tell you another benefit of leverite law, which is so like God, and it is that this law restores the lost male covering to the woman. God is exceedingly compassionate; He never overlooks anyone.

One last thing before we leave verse 13. In the latter part of that verse, Naomi says, "it grieveth me much "for your sakes" that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me." What about for "her own sake"? And, something else, if Naomi had been the obedient, submissive wife, then why would the hand of the Lord ever have gone out against **her**? If it was Elemelech that had taken his family into Moab, would the hand of the Lord have gone out against her??? Never once in this entire book does Naomi ever bring a charge against Elemelech.

Someone read verses 14 and 15 and let's see what happens next _____. After Naomi's strong urging, Orpah goes back, but it says Ruth cleaves to her. I have to tell you that verse 15 is one of the most condemning in all the book of Ruth against Naomi. Naomi, one of God's chosen people, says to "her daughter" for whom she espouses genuine love, "go back to your gods like your sister-in-law." (Just a side note. I believe that if these girls had converted to Judaism, Naomi would never/could never have said this. It further underscores for me that these marriages were not legal in Israel.)

The only hope either of these girls has for eternal life is in Israel. The gods of Moab are, of course, pagan, and even require child sacrifices. But, I think their eternal security is of no concern for Naomi, because if these girls do go back to Israel with her, then she has to play by the rules. It is as if she would rather they stay in Moab and be doomed for all eternity rather than for her to have to submit to those "ridiculous Jewish laws."

Someone read verses 16 and 17. _____ This is Ruth's response to Naomi's unrelenting urging of the girls. It is the only time in the whole book that I notice a sense of strong rebuke by Ruth to Naomi.

Let's look closely at these verses. How many times have we heard this sweet, little passage espousing the love of one for another? It's used many, many times in weddings. We say, "Entreat me not to leave you, or to return from following after 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, and we stop there – although she's not through speaking. This is a vow – a one-sided vow with Naomi responsible for absolutely nothing! Ruth has to keep this vow no matter what Naomi does or does not do. But, we never finish this "sweet, little" **vow**. I don't believe it would be used in quite so many weddings, if it were finished. What it actually says is: _____

What would you think if you went to a wedding, and the preacher got to the last part and pointed his finger at the bride and said, "And, may the Lord deal with you be it ever so severely if anything but death separates you from him." Yet, that's the vow Ruth makes. She says to Naomi, "Mother-in-law, I've set my hand to the plough, and I'm not looking back. You will never be rid of me; this is a forever vow, and God is to be my witness and is to be the administrator, and if I don't keep it, then I'm calling on Him to rain down severe judgment."

Jewish scholars teach that this vow is Ruth's conversion, but I don't believe it is just yet because she says, "your God will be my God, etc." I believe she's on the right road for sure, just not there yet.

(Put on the board the allegorical role for Orpah and Ruth.)

Remember, we have parallel stories running here. Allegorically, who are Orpah and Ruth? _____ Orpah is a picture of the world. She's someone without faith and with her eyes on the here and now. Ruth is a picture of true believers, the church, those who walk by faith and not by sight banking everything on the one true Eternal God. Allegorically, these three women represent all the people groups of the world. Naomi represents the Jewish people, who, incidentally, are saved exactly the same way you and I are; Orpah represents all gentiles who refuse to believe, and Ruth represents gentiles who come to faith in Jesus. Did you know that when the Hebrew children left Egypt there was a remnant of Egyptian gentiles that went with them? They

were little “Ruths”; they believed that there was something more for them in the Promised Land than they would ever find in Egypt.

GO OVER WORKBOOKS

“Mezuzah”

HOME BIBLE STUDY
Chapter 4
Ruth 1:18-22

Okay, someone start off by reading verse 18 on page 45. _____ I believe that when Ruth brought in the name of the God of Israel as overseer of her vow, it struck fear in Naomi, and that's why she quit trying to persuade her to stay in Moab

Now, turn to page 46, and someone read the Genesis 12:3 Scripture at the top of the page. _____ This verse says that if you bless Israel you will be blessed, and if you curse her you will be cursed. It does not say that we're to bless her if she deserves it. It simply states that if you bless her, you'll be blessed. Genesis 12:3 is not an outdated Scripture; it applied to Ruth in her day every bit as much as it applies to you and me today. It's a choice.

Someone read verse 19. _____ Naomi is back in Bethlehem after 10 years in Moab, and she has Ruth by her side. It's about a 40 mile trip from Moab to Bethlehem. Naomi knew exactly how long the trip would take; she's made it before. There is a critical piece of evidence in this verse that would be completely missed if it were only read in English. It says, *All the city was moved* and *they said*, "is this Naomi?" It seems to say that the whole city turned out for Naomi's homecoming, and the whole city speaks.

I talked in the book about how in Hebrew pronouns are either masculine or feminine. They are not neutral, and I would never have seen it if I could not read Hebrew. But, we'll get to the part about it only being women in a couple more verses.

Someone read verse 20 _____. Back in verse 19 they said, "Is this Naomi?" And, here she replies, "Don't call me Naomi. I've taken a new name and it's Mara because the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me." The word Mara in Hebrew means bitter. Naomi might have left Bethlehem in gay clothing flocked by three prominent males, but she returns in widow's garb with a lone Moabite younger widow beside her. My, the hens must have been clucking that day. How could there have been such a drastic change for that family in just 10 short years? What happened?

And, again, note that she does not blame Elimelech. She says the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with **her**. What a perfect opportunity to blame Elimelech. There are apparently no guys there – only women, and Elimelech is definitely not there to defend himself. Why doesn't she just make something up to save face? Could it be that everyone in that city knew the true Elimelech, and any false accusations would only further condemn her? But, the unchanged, still defiant Naomi continues in her godlessness. She takes the liberty of changing her name.

Let me tell you an illustration of how we women work. Our 7 year old granddaughter was at our house a couple of days ago with her mother, and her mother was going through her school things and noticed something Rachel had failed to do, and her mother was scolding her for it. After Rachel had had enough, she looked at both of us and said, "Well, I'm just not going to eat." She had been caught red handed, and rather than face the truth, she just played the "poor me" card.

Hebrew names are very, very important. Every Jewish person's name has a specific meaning and is reflective of that person. Naomi in Hebrew means "my pleasantness", with the "my" referring to God. She continues her domineering ways by

announcing that she's changing her God-given name. Her being exposed only makes her more rebellious, so she decides to change the course of the conversation.

I do want to say that Elimelech's name means "to me shall kingship come," and Naomi's name means "my pleasantness," and what God starts, He can definitely finish, and He will do it in this story too.

Now, someone read verse 21. _____ She went out full and the Lord brought her home empty. She says the Lord has testified against her and the Lord has afflicted her. Do you see any sign of humility in Naomi? _____ How about even a hint of repentance? _____ What do you see? _____

Alright, let's read the last verse of chapter one, verse 22, on page 48. _____ There is a very revealing phrase in this verse, and it is "in the beginning of barley harvest." Unless you understand Jewish culture, that little phrase would go right over your head. But, it is huge. The beginning of barley harvest signifies that it's Passover time.

Back in verse 19 where I said that the "they" in that verse was feminine gender – and that only women were present, not a single man, is possible because that at the three major pilgrimage feasts, of which Passover is the first, men were required to go to Jerusalem to perform certain duties, one of which was to pay their tithe.

Naomi knows what she's doing, folks. I don't think it's a stroke of luck that she and Ruth just happened to come back to Bethlehem while the men were gone. I think they came back at this time because Naomi's designed it that way. She knew when the men would leave for Passover, and if she played her cards right, she could arrive home and not have to subject herself to the men's stern words. The women would be painful enough.

Passover is the first of the three major, pilgrimage feasts. All three of these pilgrimage feasts have to do with the agricultural crops, and were all three commanded to be observed in Jerusalem (or wherever the Ark of the Covenant was, which at the time of Boaz was probably in Shiloh because the Temple had not yet been built.)

The pilgrimage feasts are the third layer of the onion God gave me in the understanding of Ruth. When these three feasts are overlaid on to the pages of Ruth, the insight nearly doubles, just as does the food supply in our grocery stores at our major holidays.

Someone turn to Deut. 16:16 and read that please. _____ How many times a year were they required to appear before God? _____ Who was required to go? _____ The three required times are: Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is Passover, Feast of Weeks and Feast of Tabernacles. Someone read Exodus 12:14. When they could stop observing these holidays? _____ I want to show you something I find extremely interesting. Someone turn to Exodus 34 and read verse 24. _____ What did God say He would do for them if they appeared before Him those three times each year? _____ Do all Jewish men observe this commandment today? _____ Has God cast out the nations before them? _____ Are their borders enlarging or are they shrinking? _____ Does anyone desire their land? _____

Brilliant Naomi knows her window of opportunity, and she seizes it.

We've covered Passover today, but near the end of our study we'll look at all three at one sitting and overlay them on to Ruth – wait till you see that!

HOME BIBLE STUDY
Chapter Five
Ruth 2:1-10

Let's do a little review before we start on chapter five. (Show allegorical roles.) So far we have: God, Israel, the Judges, Kings, and the Gentile world coming into play because the Jews have been fraternizing with pagan Gentiles. You remember the story of "Judge" Samson and "gentile" Delilah. Then, the counter roles thus far are: Elimelech allegorically God, Naomi – the Jews, Mahlon and Chilion, the Judges and Kings, and then Orpah and Ruth, who picture the Church and the non-believing Gentile world. And, today we will meet our Hero.

We ended our last class with Naomi and Ruth arriving back in Bethlehem at the "beginning of barley harvest", so we know it was the time of Passover because that's when God commanded Passover to be observed.

Finally, Naomi is back in the Promised Land (along with Moabite Ruth) – where the land is coming off a 10-year famine and things have to be pretty destitute. Reality has set in that if you don't work, you don't eat, and probably nobody is bringing over casseroles because they don't have it themselves.

Let's meet our next player. On page 55, someone please read verse 1. _____ I have to tell you, this verse haunts me and will not let me go. And, I'll tell you what bothers me about it. Up to this point, we are watching a step-by-step progression in our story. The writer is recording the events as they happen. (They went down to Moab; Elimelech died; the marriages; the sons' deaths; they move back.) Then, in chapter 2, verse 2, the progression continues: Ruth goes into the field; she gleanes, she encounters Boaz; etc. But, this verse is not a part of the natural progression. In this verse Boaz is introduced *before* he appears in the story, and he is the only player in this entire book whose character is described. It is as if the true Author took the pen from the scribe's hand and negates everything Naomi spoke in Chapter one. She said she could have no other sons; she went out full and came back empty; and she further withdrew from this family by changing her name. I believe God positioned this verse Himself so that the reader would see the flaws in Naomi's testimony before proceeding.

Allegorically, who is Boaz? _____ Naomi is at the lowest point she's ever been in her life (but not as low as she's going). She's led us to believe that there is absolutely no hope left for her; however, we quickly discover that Naomi has a relative of her husband's. Because some translations of this verse seem a little vague, I want you to know how it reads in Hebrew. It says, "Now to Naomi relative of husband of her..." Many versions say it is Naomi's relative, but actually it is her husband's relative, and it says he is a "mighty man of wealth." From this verse it seems the famine hasn't affected him. The word "kinsman" is used 13 times in the book of Ruth, but only this particular time (in KJV), where it speaks of the relationship between Elimelech and Boaz, is it a different meaning than all the others. The Hebrew word for this kinsman is m'yada, which means one who "knows" in many different ways, one of which is the exact same word as when a man "knows" a woman intimately. I personally believe that the relationship between Elimelech and Boaz was so personal, close and intimate, that the two could be as one. (Put Boaz and Jesus on chart.)

So, in the opening verse of chapter two, all of Naomi's declarations of her hopelessness and emptiness seem questionable by the introduction of this new mighty, wealthy player. If he's really all this verse says he is, then is there no hope for her?

_____ As a contemporary of Elimelech's, Boaz would have been around long before Elimelech married Naomi, long before their two sons, long before they left Bethlehem for Moab; he was there all along.

On page 57, someone read verse 2. _____ Because there are probably no handouts, and because the whole town has suffered the same set backs, Ruth asks to go into the fields and glean. (Same reader) - Go ahead and read in the middle of that same page the italicized Scripture and also the paragraph following. _____ Don't you love God's welfare program? God requires landowners to leave grain behind, and the poor, the widows, orphans and strangers have an open invitation into the fields to put food on their tables.

In the field, you would have the reapers first who would cut the grain, after them would come the binders who would tie the grain into sheaves, and last you would have the gleaners, the role of Ruth, who were allowed to follow behind and pick up leftovers.

Read verse 3 on page 58. _____ She didn't "just happen" there, did she? None of us "just happens" anywhere. God is not so small that there is anything that "just happens" in his children's lives.

Read verse 4, please. _____ Does this sound like the typical workplace? But, if he's really a picture of Jesus, should such a greeting really surprise us?

Someone read verse 5, please. _____ You tell me: "*Whose damsel is Ruth?*" _____ She doesn't belong to anyone anywhere, does she? She's "attached" herself to Naomi, but that's by her own doing and not because she really belongs there.

Read verses 6 and 7 please. _____ A damsel is a very young female from infancy to adolescence. Ruth may have been super young, but she was super mature. The foreman said she asked permission to glean and had worked from morning to the present with only a short break. Remember, folks, we are told Ruth was a princess. This was not work as usual for her. She had probably never done a day's work in her life, and this was back-breaking work – stooping over all day long. This was the choice Orpah opted out of. Wasn't she smart? _____ Y'all, don't think that doing God's will means it will be easy.

All that we are told this foreman said about Ruth, other than the fact that she wanted to glean and that she took a short rest, was that she was the Moabitess that came back with Naomi. Tell me, if Elimelech and Boaz did have a unique, close, intimate relationship, then should Boaz have a personal interest? _____ Let's keep going and see if we can figure out what there was about Ruth that got his attention.

Someone read verses 8 and 9. _____ Here we see Boaz going out into the field having a one-on-one conversation with little Ruth. There's no indication he introduced himself to her, and don't forget, he's a contemporary of Elimelech's, probably much, much older than our little "damsel". But, seemingly out of the blue he approaches her and gives her 7 specific directives – maybe more like commands. Follow along with me on page 61 and let's read those together. _____

(Just a side note -- How many times in Scripture do you remember seeing men draw water? I think Boaz is very unconventional.)

Back on course -- try and put yourself in Ruth's shoes. We have very young "princess" who's gone over to the enemy camp against elderly advice (Naomi telling her to stay back in Moab), she left out early morning from Naomi (the only comfort zone she has in Israel – such as it is) on foot looking for a place where she might blend in and hopefully get a little food. She has to be obviously different from anybody else in that field, and now it's mid-day, or later, she's probably a dusty mess, maybe with blisters on her hands, and suddenly, the landowner walks out into the field, where many others are too, but he only approaches her. Scary, isn't it?

Just for interest, let's go to the other side of the chart and see if we might hear those same 7 directives spoken from Jesus to the Church. _____

Now, look at Ruth's reaction in verse 10. Someone read that. _____ She's absolutely dumbfounded! What does all of this mean? Why does he care? She might say, "Why would you bother yourself with me seeing that I am an alien, a stranger, a foreigner -- I don't belong? Out of all those people in the field, Why me; Why me?" What was it about Ruth that really "moved" him?

Okay, let's look at our "Did you Know?"

GO OVER WORKBOOK

The Kippah
Page 211

HOME BIBLE STUDY

Chapter Six

Ruth 2:11-23

Alright, let's see if we can answer that last question I asked before we looked at the Kippah. The question was, "What was it that really moved Boaz about Ruth?" On page 65, someone read verse 11. _____ This answer is in response to her question in verse 10, where she asks, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" And, tell me, why did he say she found grace in his eyes? _____ He says, "My favor to you is because of the things you did **for Naomi** "after" the death of your husband." After the death of her husband she was a completely free person; she had fulfilled all obligations; she owed Naomi nothing!

By and large y'all, the Book of Ruth is viewed as a love-at-first-sight romantic novel between a rich, prominent man and a poor but beautiful young widow. But, that is not what a close look at Scripture reveals. Boaz's grace toward Ruth was (1) because of her total commitment to Naomi and (2) because of her total denial of self – those 2 things endeared her to him. If, indeed, there was a unique, committed relationship between Boaz and Elimelech as we talked about earlier, then Naomi is extremely important to him. Elimelech's line is in danger of being extinct – something God made elaborate provisions to keep from happening. Boaz, as a member of this clan, certainly does not want this to happen, and Naomi is critical if Elimelech's line is to continue. And, you remember that Elimelech's name means, "to me shall kingship come." His sons are dead and this has not happened – yet. Naomi is paramount in fulfilling God's design, but I believe Ruth's role at this juncture is huge as well because this nothing, nobody, gentile woman is the only link Boaz seems to have to Naomi. Only Ruth seems to have any contact or inroad to her. His only means of getting to Naomi is through Ruth who "just happened" into his fields.

Boaz continues talking. Someone read verse 12 and let's see what else he has to say. _____ Boaz tells her that he knows she's lost a lot—actually she's lost everything, and his words that he speaks are that the Lord God of Israel pay her back, and on top of that, give her a full reward. (Remember, words are extremely important.) Did Boaz's words perfectly come to pass? _____

Look at the last part of that verse, "Under whose wings thou art come to trust." In my Jewish Bible it reads, "under whose wings you have sought refuge", and the footnote says that Rabbinic interpreters understand this phrase as a reference to Ruth's conversion. If so, Ruth really does not belong here or in this family. We said last week because of Naomi telling her to go back to Moab and to her "gods" that she probably had not converted prior to that time. Her speech to Naomi may have been her point of conversion where she said, "your people will be my people and your God my God," but it also may have been the point at which she set her heart to know the God of Israel. Ruth is earnestly seeking a place to belong, and Boaz says she's now come under the wings of the God of Israel – the same place as for you and me.

Someone read verse 13 on page 69. _____ She asks to find favor, which she obviously has, and says he's comforted her and spoken friendly to her and then she says that she's not even equal to – she's lesser than – his handmaidens. A handmaid is a female slave. And, I'm sure she feels she is lesser – because she's a "Moabite gentile".

There is no reason for him to show her this favor – except for the two reasons given: her total commitment to Naomi and her total denial of self. Y'all, God can do something with that backdrop!

Someone read verse 14. Boaz provided food for all the workers, and Ruth's invited. They had bread dipped in wine vinegar, and then they had parched grain to munch on. Ruth had plenty and had leftovers. I've parched a little grain for you so we can join in with them. Let's nibble and continue reading. (Pass out grain and bread.)

Read verses 15 and 16. _____ Wow, he's good at giving directions, isn't he? (Seven to her and now four to the young men.) To these young, male workers in his fields, he "commands": (1) let her glean even among the sheaves – what they've picked up; (2) not to interfere with her; (3) drop handfuls on purpose; (4) not to scold her. Look at this, as a worker in his field, there is nothing she can do to get in trouble. And, these 4 commands only concern her – they are not issued for the other gleaners in his field. These men he's talking to could make her life a living nightmare, and maybe they have up to this point – after all, she is the "forbidden" Moabite. But, after Boaz's little talk with them, they have to continue doing their own work, and assist her with hers. I also want you to consider our relationship with Jesus.

Read verse 17. _____ She gleaned about $\frac{3}{5}$ th of a bushel; or about 11 two-liter drink bottles full, about 36 pounds. Quite a haul for a novice, wouldn't you say?

Read verse 18. _____ So, this is what she does with her leftovers – ever attentive to Naomi – total commitment to Naomi/total denial of self. What an amazing young woman is Ruth!

Read verse 19. _____ When Moabite, gentile Ruth came home with 36 pounds of grain – her first day as a gleaner – Naomi knew that Ruth had found favor. I can almost assure you that there was no other gleaner in his field who left with the same amount as Ruth. Naomi was flabbergasted! Naomi was just blessing that person, and then Ruth said, "His name is Boaz."

Read verse 20. _____ Naomi continues blessing him, but after hearing his name, she must have been a bit more sober than jubilant. How was it that Ruth landed in the field of Boaz – of all the fields around Bethlehem – why Boaz, her near kinsman? Naomi says he's a relative of "ours". He is a relative of Naomi's deceased husband, but not of Ruth's. If she had not converted "before her marriage" to Mahlon, that marriage would not have been legal in Israel. She has no legal connection to this family. Boaz would be nothing to Ruth. But, only Naomi and Ruth know what went on spiritually in Moab. No one else knew. No one else knew the marriage arrangements, whether they married before Elimelech's death, or that it was Naomi that arranged the marriages, or whether or not she had converted before her wedding – Naomi and Ruth alone knew those things.

Another thing in this verse that so intrigues me is the statement that Boaz is kind to the living and the dead. What "dead" person is Boaz being kind to? Let's go over to the spiritual side of our allegory. Was Jesus ever good to the living and the dead? _____ (Remember, this side of the board is far broader in scope than is our literal story.)

Someone read verses 21 and 22, please. _____ Boaz told Ruth to stay in his field with his workers until the harvest is finished. That would take 50 days, at which time we will see our second feast when the men were required to go back to Jerusalem to pay their tithes. So, for about a month and a half Ruth will be gleaning. To this Naomi agrees and tells her that as long as she stays in Boaz's field, it would go well with her.

With that thought in mind of staying in the right field so that it will go well with you, I want you to consider whether or not Naomi in going to Moab heeded her own advice.

But, then, we wouldn't have Ruth, so maybe all things do work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. You think?

Before we go to the "Did You Know", I want to make a couple of comments. We will cover the three required pilgrimage feasts later, but I do want you sort of to have these in mind. Passover is the first of the three required feasts, and Shavuot, or Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost is the second. Barley is planted 70 days before Passover so that the farmer will have his required sheaf of barley for his wave offering. Barley matures before wheat, so, immediately on the heels of the barley harvest comes the wheat harvest. Between Passover and Shavuot are 50 days, or 7 weeks, hence "Feast of Weeks", and when this second feast comes, the farmer will take two loaves of bread from the new grain crop and this will be his second wave offering.

GO OVER WORKBOOK

Tallit
Page 213

HOME BIBLE STUDY
Chapter Seven
Ruth 3:1-9

I hope you had a good week and are ready to jump into Ruth. Just a reminder, after this week we go from two chapters per week to just one, and I know you're ready for that.

(Review chart of characters.)

In our last class we ended the Biblical chapter 2 of Ruth with the words, "So Ruth kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law." (Show Feast chart on board.) We said that it took 50 days to harvest the grain crops, and since we know Ruth went into the fields at the beginning of barley harvest – Passover time – and we're now at the end of the harvest, we know she's been gleaning a little over a month and a half.

Turn in your books to page 80, and someone read our first verse please. _____ Ever the schemer, Naomi is about to reveal to Ruth a plan she's concocted that will get the needed kinsman-redeemer without her personally having to get involved.

I personally believe Naomi will employ whatever means necessary to get what she wants at the time. Look back with me to page 35 and follow as I read verses 11-13. You recall that before they left Moab, Naomi strongly urged the girls to stay back in Moab. Naomi did not want those girls to go to Bethlehem with her. She painted for them the bleakest picture she could paint, but it was also a correct picture. She's talking about leverite law, and she tells them that when they get back to Israel, the only way they will ever get husbands is if she births them.

Now, go back to page 80 and look at how the picture has changed from the one she painted just about Passover time. Here she says **she's** going to find a husband and a home for Ruth, but I want you to pay close attention to how **she** proposes to do that, and remember in that culture marriages were arranged (and still are in many cases). So, it sounds like **she's** about to arrange Ruth's marriage. Generally, marriage arranging would have the father of the groom going to the father of the bride, and the two working out the terms for the contract. And, yes, there really was a contract, and in Israel there still is a marriage contract called a Ketubah.

But, let me give you a little something to ponder. If Boaz is a contemporary of Elimelech, as taught by Jewish scholars, and if the two were about the same age, then there probably was no father of the groom. But, just suppose there was, do you think he would EVER have arranged this marriage – would Boaz's Jewish father EVER go to the father of Ruth (the Moabite king) and ask for his daughter's hand in marriage for his Jewish son??? Never! As we discussed earlier, there were laws prohibiting such unions.

Read verse 2, page 80. _____ In this verse Naomi says that Boaz is a kindred of "ours". She's said that many times, but we've questioned how Boaz could possibly be a kindred of Ruth's – Naomi's, yes, but not Ruth's. I want to take a little diversion before we go any further. Go back to page 55 and let's read again that opening verse of chapter two. Someone read that please. _____ (You remember that this is right after Naomi's pity-party performance where she changed her name and proclaimed that she was once full but now she's empty.) When this verse was spoken by "Whoever", Ruth was

already in the picture. She had given her famous vow attaching herself to Naomi for life. They're back in Bethlehem, and she's definitely a fixture, but, who does this verse say Boaz was kin to because of his relationship with Elimelech? _____ You remember that I told you this verse haunts me because to me it is as if the True Author takes the pen out of the scribe's hand and records the truth. Well, this True Author in this verse makes perfectly clear that Naomi, Elimelech and Boaz are the viable players. Ruth is not mentioned and neither are the two sons. The fact is only Boaz and Naomi are eligible by Biblical law to perform this duty – just as Naomi told the girls in chapter 1.

By Naomi saying Boaz is a “kinsman” of ours, she's making reference to Levirate law. Levirate law is where a brother, or the nearest relative of a dead, married man, steps up to the plate, marries his widow and produces a son so that the dead person's name and the land attached to that name does not disappear from the records. And, I must strongly remind you that this family is from the tribe of Judah. Elimelech's line is about to become extinct even though it is prophesied that Messiah will come through some family in the Tribe of Judah. What if Elimelech's line is the Messianic line? How critical it is to preserve every family line of Judah! And, Naomi knows all of this, yet she refuses to play by God's rules. If Elimelech's line is the Messianic line, and it ceases because of her, it's as if, “So be it.”

In verse 2 on page 80, she says she's going to get a husband for Ruth. And, remember, she's already arranged two other marriages. Did she play by the rules in arranging those marriages? _____

Let's look at the way she proposes this marriage. Naomi sets the stage by saying that she, personally, is going to seek this for Ruth, but we really don't see much involvement by her, do we? Maybe we're being too critical; maybe she's doing far more than any of us could imagine. Let's wait and see.

Someone read verse 3 on page 85. _____ Naomi tells Ruth to wash herself. This is a ceremonial bath known as a “mikveh.” (Pass out handouts.) A while back I was asked to do a talk on the mikveh, so I have for you what I prepared for that. Read it when you have time; it's interesting material. Men and women both are required at times to perform mikvehs, and, interestingly, two of the times the mikveh is performed by the woman is at her conversion and for her wedding. Some Jewish scholars say this is Ruth's conversion, and we know it is in preparation for her wedding.

Then, she's to anoint herself. This, too, is a requirement for both these occasions. Next, Naomi tells her to get dressed. The NIV says she is to put on her “best” clothes. The Jewish Bible says she's to put on “Sabbath” clothes. Then, she's to go to the threshing floor, not allowing herself to be seen until after Boaz has finished eating and drinking. All of this seems mysteriously romantic, doesn't it – hiding in the shadows, tiptoeing across the threshing floor, lying at her future husband's feet. But, let's check out Hosea 9:1b to see how romantic it really is. (In the NIV this reads, “... You love the wages of a prostitute at every threshing floor.) The threshing floor was a man's world. The only female visitors were prostitutes. Now, what do you think of Naomi's marriage arranging?

Read verse 4 on page 86. _____ So, after Ruth is ceremonially prepared, and Boaz is through eating and drinking and has settled in for the night, Ruth is to pay close attention to which sleeping form is his – she dare not lie down at the wrong man's feet. Then, she's to go and uncover his feet, lie down, and wait for him to tell her the next

move. The rabbis teach that this is, indeed, a marriage proposal, but of extreme interest is the fact that they say, because of the sentence structure, this marriage proposal also includes Naomi. It is all her doings, so isn't that intriguing?

Read verse 5, please. _____ Ruth has heard Naomi's proposition, and this is her response. Have you ever trusted anyone enough to say that? And, remember, this is her *Jewish* mother-in-law. Tell me, what two groups receive the brunt of most derogatory jokes? _____ Jews and mothers-in-law – and Naomi is both all rolled into one. (Tell about woman at Ole Miss ballgame.)

Read verses 6 and 7, please. _____ Naomi didn't miss a trick, did she? I'll say it again, "She is brilliant beyond description." The only thing that exceeds her brilliance is her disobedience. Naomi is foregoing her own personal chance of a lifetime, and she's giving it to Ruth. Naomi is perfectly aligned to rescue Elimelech's broken line, yet, she snubs it. You read in your books where a Messianic Rabbi friend, Gary Shansky, once put it this way, "The position of Israel today is that she's moved over." That's exactly what happened right here in Ruth. Let's skip over to the allegorical side for a minute. There were only 4 or 5 recorded incidences in all of Scripture where Jesus had dealings with gentiles. He came unto his own – He was there for the Jew first. But, the Jews wanted no part of Jesus, the true Kinsman-Redeemer. They were blind to their own personal need of redemption.

Someone read verses 8 and 9. _____ Here's the marriage proposal. Naomi said in verse 2 that Boaz was a "kindred of ours", but here in verse 9, Ruth refers to herself twice as his handmaid. Strongs says "handmaid" is interpreted as a female slave, a bondmaid. I believe those are Ruth's true words, and the next ones are Naomi's where she asks him to spread his skirt over her since he is a near kinsman. How can she be his slave if he's a near kinsman? _____ He knows what's going on. He knows who's behind all of this. Truly, Naomi has moved over and sent Ruth in her place.

When Ruth asked Boaz to spread his skirt over her, that literally meant "the corner of his garment" – the Hebrew word "kanaph", which also means wing. What did we say last week was on the corner of the man's garment? And, do you remember what that tassel represents? The 613 commandments God gave Moses on Mt. Sinai, one of which was leverite law.

Let's talk just a minute about what Ruth's request meant for Boaz. In redemption, the person who has gives to the one who has not. Since Ruth is standing in for Naomi, I believe this includes both of them. What did Naomi and Ruth not have? Ruth did not belong; she lost her gods; she lost her position as a king's daughter; she lost her future, her wealth, fame, security, and Naomi lost her male covering and any hopes of continuing Elimelech's line, plus her position and wealth. So, if Boaz is going to redeem, he has to make a trade – a trade of great cost for him and of great gain for them. Redemption is extremely costly and sometimes painful to the one but not to the other. Look over at the allegorical side for a better understanding. Let me tell you what redemption cost Jesus and what it profited you and me. Redemption is a very unfair trade. Jesus was punished, we were forgiven; He was wounded, and by His wounds, we are healed; He was made sin, we were made His righteousness; He died, we gained eternal life; He took on our poverty, and we took on His wealth; He was rejected by God, we were accepted by God. Redemption takes from the one who has, making that one naked, fully exposed, and gives to the one that is rightfully naked and exposed,

redeeming and fully validating that one. A redeeming kinsman is a very selfless, unfair trade. We know it was for Jesus. Will His counterpart, Boaz, also perform such a costly trade?

GO OVER WORKBOOKS

**The Role of a Scribe in Preserving the Scriptures
(Circulate Torah Scroll)
Page 217**

HOME BIBLE STUDY
Chapter Eight
Ruth 3:10-18

Alright, Ruth has proposed to Boaz, and now we will look at his response.

Someone read verse 10 on page 94, please. _____ Remember back that first day when he went out to his field and the first thing he did was bless everyone there? And, we talked about how frightened little Ruth must have been in that foreign country doing foreign work among foreign people when Boaz went out into the field and personally spoke to her. But, what about this time, “Do you think Ruth could have been even more frightened at this Boaz encounter than she was at the first one?” _____ But, true to his nature, he comforts her again with sweet blessings, and reminisces about that first day in his field and the kindness he saw in her then, specifically mentioning what she had done for Naomi “after the death of her husband.” We must keep in mind that Ruth is only bound by her own personal resolve to keep that commitment. Mahlon is gone; she is a free woman; she does not have to be doing what she’s doing.

Initially, Ruth endeared herself to Boaz by her selfless acts toward Naomi. But, now this act on the threshing floor far surpasses what she did earlier. There is no reason she has to be doing this other than that she chooses to. I want us to look at the break in Elimelech’s line. (Go to the chart on page 182 and discuss where the break in the line comes. _____)

In verse 10 where Boaz says, “You followed not young men, whether poor or rich,” Boaz is calling attention to her unselfishness. You will recall that the setting for the book of Ruth is during the time of the Judges, when it is said that everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes. Even though the laws forbade Jews from marrying Moabites, most Israelites were not law abiders. Ruth possibly could have flirted around and possibly landed herself someone handsome, young and maybe even financially well off.

Ruth’s visit to the threshing floor was the “more kindness in the latter end” that Boaz is referencing in this verse. Ruth is standing in the gap for Naomi, because Naomi has made it perfectly clear that she’ll have no part in any of this. And, because Naomi refuses to do what the Law requires, she is actually turning up her nose at the commandments of Almighty God. Now a small matter --

Someone read verse 11, please. _____ What does Ruth require – rather, what do Naomi and Ruth require? (Remember, there are two women asking of Boaz.) Ruth is outside the Law; she has no legal place here in Israel; as a matter of fact, she’s forbidden by the Law, so she asks Boaz to remedy that. And, since Naomi won’t play by the rules, Ruth further requires the necessary heir for Naomi/Elimelech’s line. So, two things are required: a male child to continue Elimelech’s name and Elimelech’s land holdings, and for Boaz to set right two women who are way out of line. What a predicament this is, but, no matter the predicament, he gives his word that he will do ALL that’s required.

Someone read verses 12. _____ Oh my goodness, there’s a problem. Did Naomi tell Ruth about this “little” glitch? You mean they’ve done all this elaborate scheming and match making, and there’s another groom in line ahead of Boaz? Why didn’t Naomi send Ruth to him first? But, Boaz doesn’t seem at all concerned about the legal

technicality, does he? (We will fully cover and uncover the nearer kinsman-redeemer's role in our next class. He only further illumines Boaz.)

Read verse 13, please. _____ He says, "Ruth, don't worry your pretty little head, just know that tomorrow you will have your request – either from him or from me."

Again, she has his word, and he says "as the Lord liveth" – his vow that it will be done.

I want to tell you what this scene mirrors in our allegorical role. (Put Garden of Gethsemane and Threshing Floor on the chart.) Do you realize that the battle of redemption for Jesus was actually won in the Garden of Gethsemane? Oswald Chambers says, "*The Garden of Gethsemane was where the real battle was fought and won. When once we get through the crisis of will, the price externally is of no regard.*" Jesus still had to endure the Cross, but when He yielded His will to God, the battle was won. In our verses, Boaz says of his future confrontation with the nearer kinsman-redeemer, ". . . if he will not . . . then I will." Likewise, Boaz's battle of will was fought and won on the threshing floor – there he surrendered his will. It was as good as done, and there was no turning back.

Just a few days before His crucifixion, Jesus knew, too, there was no turning back where Israel was concerned. The Scripture says, "He came to His own, but His own received Him not." Listen to what Jesus said in the last few days of His life, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you wouldn't let me." Isn't it astonishing that that's what Ruth asked Boaz to do that night – to gather her up under his wing – the same thing Jesus longed to do for Israel? Let's put this in our story: It was the same thing Boaz longed to do for Naomi. It was Israel and Naomi that rightfully belonged under these wings – but neither Israel nor Naomi wanted any part of it.

Please read verse 14. _____ She remains at his feet in the position of a bondservant, presuming nothing even though she has his commitment to give all she and Naomi require. Then Boaz says, ". . . *let it not be known that a woman came into the floor.*"

As you read in your books, Boaz's mother was the prostitute Rahab. I've often wondered if that's why Naomi would have nothing to do with Boaz. Was he just too common for her? Was Jesus just too common for Israel? _____ And, I've also wondered if that's why she put Ruth in this predicament – knowing he'd have compassion on someone in his Mother's arena. Did you know about Boaz and Rahab before this lesson? _____

Someone read verse 15. _____ He deliberately laid out 6 barley – this action can be a form of judgment, and we know that 6 is the number for man and falls short of the perfect number 7. He's making a calculated statement here.

Someone read verse 16, page 102. _____ Of course Naomi is curious; she's a party in all of this. Remember that every word, every action, every deed on that threshing floor was Naomi's through Ruth; certainly she wants to know what happened. Did Naomi ask who Ruth was, wondering if she had been labeled a prostitute? It was a gamble – a high stakes move on Naomi's part. And, was Naomi shocked to hear Ruth tell her that there was another kinsman-redeemer out there? Of course not! Naomi's probably been concocting this kinsman-redeemer thing for weeks. Naomi doesn't miss a thing – or so she thinks.

And, what if the Jewish scholars are right, and this is Ruth's conversion? Do you think that when Ruth started telling Naomi all that Boaz had done for her that Naomi might have experienced a slight tinge of jealousy? The marriage arrangement was a total success, but maybe it was a bit too much of a success for Naomi. Y'all, it should have been Naomi telling Ruth the details, and not the other way around.

Read verse 17, please. _____ (Again, "measures" is not in the original Hebrew.) So, the six barleys are a deliberate gift from Boaz to Naomi. It is she who was measured and found lacking. Always before in His fields, whatever Ruth took home from gleaning was for both her and her mother-in-law. But, this time, this designated "gift" belongs exclusively to Naomi. Naomi is brilliant, and the significance of this gift does not escape her. It may bother her a little, but the deed has been done, and there's no turning back. Just as after the Garden of Gethsemane there was no turning back, so, after the threshing floor, there is no turning back.

Now, read verse 18. _____ Naomi does seem to know Boaz well, doesn't she? Both Boaz in verse 13 (read that if time _____) and Naomi in this verse assure Ruth that the matter will be settled this very day. There really is no turning back. Will Naomi live to regret this decision? Will Naomi's and Ruth's companionship remain in tact? Will it all work out just as Naomi had envisioned? Stay tuned for the next week ---

GO OVER WORKBOOKS

**Bar/Bat Mitzvah
Page 221**

HOME BIBLE STUDY
Chapter Nine
Ruth 4:1-8

Last class was the Threshing Floor scene, and it ended with Naomi's assurance to Ruth that Boaz would not be at rest until the matter was settled "*this day*." I must remind you that the one calling the shots is brilliant in all her strategizing – brilliant beyond any of our capacities to grasp. She's gone beyond the outer limits in order to get what she wanted. She's gone where angels fear to tread. She's dabbled in God-sized business with no hint of reverential fear. The Threshing Floor is a holy place. According to Psalm 132, it is the place where the Lord will one day sit enthroned forever. To me, Naomi's actions through Ruth have been on the same caliber as Uzzah who – on a threshing floor – reached out his hand to steady the Ark of the Covenant, a forbidden act, and the Lord struck him dead. Truly, she has crossed a line, and there's no turning back now.

Let's get into our lesson and see what happens on "this day." Someone read verse 1 on page 108, please. _____ I want you to think just a minute about life in Bethlehem these past few weeks. There's been the scurrying around getting the crops in – the reaping and now the threshing. When a farmer is in peak harvest mode, all personal pleasures stop. I know this because when I married Ken, he was a farmer, the son of a farmer, the son of a farmer. When the clock is ticking, the work is from before daylight until after dark. All of you know this, but what I want you to consider is the likelihood of these two kinsmen "just happening" to be in the same city on the same day at the same time. And, apparently Boaz goes there with every expectation of seeing that other kinsman. Don't you think it's an uncanny coincidence? But, remember who's calling the shots, and has she missed anything so far?

Is there something going on that we who are not of that heritage don't understand? The answer is "certainly." Our culture is worlds apart from theirs, and unless we get out of our familiar surroundings and move over into theirs, we will never grasp the rich meaning.

(Show feast charts ((Passover and Shavuot/Pentecost.)) Do you recall my telling you that God showed me three layers in Ruth? There are probably many more, but these are the three He gave me. They are the literal story line, the allegorical role, and now the third one comes into play, and that is the story within the three pilgrimage feasts, two of which are specific to Ruth. There are seven Jewish feasts, but only three *pilgrimage* feasts. They are called pilgrimage feasts because a trip to the temple is required to pay specific tithes and to observe other requirements as dictated by each particular feast. The three pilgrimage feasts are: Passover, Shavuot (Weeks) and Sukkot (Tabernacles or Booths).

You recall we said that grain was planted 70 days before Passover so that the sheaf of grain "required" as a wave offering would be available. Then, between Passover and Shavuot, there are 50 days, or 7 full weeks (hence it being called "Feast of Weeks") known as the "Counting of the Omer". During these 50 days the farmer has to get all his grain crop in, and then on Shavuot he is to present two loaves of bread from the new grain to the Priest at the Temple to wave before the Lord.

I believe that the *uncanny coincidence* of the two kinsmen just happening to be in the same city at the same time was no coincidence at all. These men were there because it was required.

You remember that Boaz first told Ruth to stay in his field until they finished harvesting all the grain, and Naomi echoed to Ruth the same thing. And, then in Ruth 2:23, it says she did it. So, we know we've come through those 7 weeks and we are obviously at this next holiday. Farming as we know it has the farmer's and the season's dictates. He doesn't have a specific date he has to have all the crops in. He just knows what a typical Fall is like, and he works accordingly. Farming in Israel was on God's timetable, and everyone living there knew what that was. Naomi full well knew the agenda, and she planned it accordingly.

Boaz leaves the threshing floor and goes to the city and seats himself at the gate, then asks the other kinsman also to take a seat, indicating that a judicial matter was about to be addressed.

In our allegorical role, who is the nearer kinsman-redeemer? _____ Uncovering the nearer kinsman-redeemer's allegorical role was one of the hardest parts of the book for me. What kept nagging at me was the fact that there was *someone* "nearer" than Jesus, and I just couldn't get over that because, to me, Jesus is the ultimate. But, in the allegorical role, "nearer" meant in time, and it wasn't a person. Indeed, the Law did come on the scene before the literal Jesus. That Law, which we call the Old Covenant, came long before Jesus ushered in what we call the New Covenant. So, what we have in our courtroom are two kinsmen-redeemers, allegorically representing two covenants: the old and the new.

Your lesson explored the differences between the two covenants, but let's just look at a couple of Scriptures highlighting those differences. You remember that while Moses was up on Mt. Sinai receiving the Law, that Aaron was down in the camp being "coerced" into making a golden calf for the Hebrew children to worship. When Moses came down and saw the idol, he asked for an explanation from his brother Aaron as to why he had done such a thing. Someone read that first verse on page 110 to see Aaron's response. _____ When Moses saw the golden calf, he went into a rage and threw down the tablets (*written by the hand of God no less*), and now read how Aaron defends himself in that second Scripture on page 110. _____ Moses and the Levites then went into battle mode, and now read that last verse on 110 and let's see the outcome of that battle. _____ So, this is the introduction of the Law into the world. And, I have to tell you, living under the Law doesn't get any better either. The Law is demanding and unrelenting.

Now, allegorically, let's look at the other covenant represented in the courtroom that day. Someone read the Jeremiah scripture on page 111. _____ This is Old Testament Scripture – before Jesus – which says that one day God will make a New Covenant with the House of Israel. It will be different from the Old Covenant because it will be internal, written on their hearts and minds, unlike the Old Covenant which was written on tablets of stone. Now, read the verse on page 112. _____ The Old Covenant is shrewd, crude and unbending. It only brings death, as a matter of fact – 3,000 the first day, whereas the New Covenant brings life – astonishingly, also 3,000 – the first day. Consider how rigid the Law is: I recently heard it reported that 343 of the 613 Laws cannot be kept unless you live in the Land of Israel. Isn't that eyebrow-raising for all Jews living outside Israel?

Why did God give such a thing as the Law, and what, if anything, does it have to do with Gentiles? Let me say that God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. It does seem like He's changed His mind here by giving an Old Covenant and then a New Covenant, but that is not so. God laid out His plan of salvation way back in the beginning of the Book of Genesis. His plan of salvation today is the same as the one He gave to His servant Abraham. Paul explains in Galatians that Abraham believed what God promised him, even when it was far, far off, and that his belief in God's promise was his faith, and that faith made him righteous before God – the same as today. *“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”* So, why on earth did there ever have to be a Law? Paul says the Law came to show the Jewish people how truly sinful they were and how off target they had gotten. God gave the Law as a guide until Jesus came. Galatians 3:24 says, *“So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.”* I love the footnote for this verse in the NIV study Bible. It says, about the Law being put in charge, that it “refers to the personal slave-attendant who accompanied a freeborn son wherever he went and exercised a certain amount of discipline over him. His function was more like that of a baby-sitter, rather than a teacher.” So, the Law was sort of like a baby-sitter for the Hebrew children until the promised Redeemer came. But, most Jews rejected that Redeemer, continuing to embrace the Law rather than the sometimes scary, blind walk of faith. When God chose as His own the Hebrew children, it was to make them into a kingdom of priests for the world. The Law was for the Jews because they had a high calling on their lives.

Did Ruth exhibit faith when Naomi told her to go to the threshing floor? Did she exhibit faith when she uncovered Boaz's feet and asked him to spread his covering over her? Did she believe in what was promised before it was a reality? That is faith – the same faith that belonged to Abraham before he saw what was promised, the same faith that belongs to you and me before we see what we've been promised. Ruth had faith; Naomi had works – not what God intended. Obeying the Law sets the Jew apart from the rest of the world, but since Jesus has come, there is no longer any need of a baby-sitter.

Now, someone read verse 2, page 113. _____ The 10 elders are necessary to make up a quorum so court will be legal. This same number of elders is still required at Jewish functions today to hold any major religious event.

Someone read verse 3, page 114. _____ Here's the legal matter to be settled. Because of the deaths in Moab, Naomi is having to sell the family property.

Read verse 4, please. _____ So, Boaz says, “Because we are the kinsmen, and because you are nearer than I, then by requirement of leverite law, you redeem, but if you won't, then I will.” You recall that I told you that when the children of Israel came into the Promised Land, God divided the land into 12 sections and assigned a tribe to each of the sections. That was God's doings, and it was very important to Him. The name of the tribe member continuing in tandem with the God-given land was the intent of leverite law. Let's look just a second at God's intent of Leverite law. **(Look at Judah/Tamar chart.)** So, since Leverite law is a requirement of the Law, and since the nearer kinsman-redeemer actually personifies the Law, he confidently states that he will make the purchase and redeem.

Read verse 5, page 115, please. _____ There are two widows in our story: Naomi and Ruth, but to everyone present that day, Ruth would NEVER have been in this equation. **(Show Elimelech/Naomi chart.)** In this verse, for the first time, Boaz says

that it will be through Ruth's offspring that the name of the dead will be raised up. Almost every Jewish commentary I've checked says that Ruth had no legal right to be in this position. Amazingly, they explain her inclusion saying that she's there because of her kindness, but, where the Law is concerned, you cannot deviate no matter what the circumstances. The Law is unbending! Someone read in the middle of page 115 that Scripture, please. _____ This is a part of the Law. It's cut and dried; there is no, "Well, if someone is really nice, then the Law can be changed." Ruth is cursed! This verse literally curses her. But, in Deut. 27:26, it says, "*Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them.*" So, Ruth is cursed, and, therefore, whoever redeems her is cursed, and that's correct. BUT, Paul says in Gal. 3:13, "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.'*" The difference between the nearer kinsman-redeemer and Boaz is that Boaz was willing to pay whatever price was required to redeem Elimelech's estate, just like Jesus was willing to pay whatever price was to redeem the world from satan's hold.

So, now let's look at the response Boaz got from the nearer kinsman-redeemer. Someone read verse 6, page 116. _____ The nearer kinsman says, upon hearing Ruth's involvement, "I can't be a party to this; it ruins my position; you take my part – take me off the hook." Allegorically, there was One who perfectly kept the Law, and who could openly accept such a challenge – redeeming those of us outside the loop. God had this worked out from the very beginning of time. The Scripture actually says Jesus was slain from the foundation of the world.

Let's look at some of Paul's writings. Someone read the Scripture in the middle of 117. _____ God had redemption for all nations worked way back in Genesis (12). No, Ruth was not under the Law, just like you and I aren't, but we are all gross sinners in need of redemption. What can erase from us the "condemned" sign branded on us? Read with me starting three lines from the bottom of page 117. (me to read up to verse 7)

Someone read verses 7 and 8, please. _____ Everything about this court case from beginning to end is perfectly in order and perfectly legal. There is no room for error. Both Boaz and the nearer kinsman-redeemer are said to have been judges. Some commentaries even said Boaz was head of the Sanhedrin – the highest court in the Land of Israel, equivalent to our Supreme Court. Certainly he knew how to administer accurately a judicial matter. Much was at stake here – not just property and upholding the Law, but we are dealing with the Messianic line. There is no room for error.

Verses 7 and 8 tell us how the two parties "signed the contract". A sandal, or shoe, was exchanged. As the book pointed out, there is no clear consensus as to whose shoe it was. We could hash it out as to the logistics of who did what, but it really doesn't matter. The bottom line is that it is done, and it was done "that day" just as both Boaz and Naomi had said. There is no turning back. No one can undo what has just been done.

How this played out had to have been such a shock to all those watching from the sidelines – it even blind-sided the nearer kinsman-redeemer, of all people. It makes me wonder just how much rejoicing there was that day at the conclusion of the matter, or if it was a day of great agony knowing the exacting price mandated by the Law to redeem Ruth.

GO OVER WORKBOOKS

The Jewish Funeral
Page 225

HOME BIBLE STUDY
Chapter Ten
Ruth 4:9-12

This week we are going to be looking at what it means for Boaz to take Ruth as his wife. Someone read verse 9 on page 123, please. _____ Boaz, as the faithful judge who takes his role with utmost seriousness, cautions the elders and all others present that they are legally responsible for their testimony as to what happened in this legal matter. Notice that it wasn't only the elders who were responsible, but all those present. Yes, elders in our churches are entrusted with awesome responsibility, but so, too, is every single member of the body. No one is excluded from his or her responsibility to give just and honest testimony. We do not have the option of remaining silent. These elders and all those present just witnessed Boaz obeying one of the 613 commandments given by God to Moses, and they best better not add to it or take from it. He said, "This is what you must testify: I bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech, Chilion and Mahlon." I do believe this verse deals with the property because he's buying it from the hand of Naomi. We've talked about the seriousness of the Promised Land property staying within the specified family lines. How likely do you think it would have been for this property to pass from Jewish son Mahlon to *Moabite* wife Ruth? _____ There are two matters being adjudicated, the first of which is taking care of all the property *held* by Naomi. Naomi, herself, could not own property, but could only hold it in anticipation of a male heir, and since she's decreed that this male heir will not come through her, then Boaz buys the property. I ask you, if Naomi could not *own* this property, how likely is it that those Jews in charge would allow Moabite Ruth to own it? Women themselves were property – they were owned.

Not only did Boaz buy all the land holdings, but I also believe he availed himself to buy all the widows, if they were willing. Let's look at this allegorically.

On page 124, someone read the I John 2:2 verse. _____ Tell me, "How much of the world did Jesus avail Himself to redeem?" _____ But, how much of the world has willingly come up under that redemption? _____

Allegorically, I believe the 3 women in this verse represent the entire world: Naomi – all those under the Law; Orpah – all those who walk by sight; and Ruth – all those who walk by faith. Tragically, the last of the three categories is probably the smallest. *Narrow is the way that leads to eternal life, and few there be that find it* (Matthew 7:14).

Read verse 10, please. _____ This is the second half of what was adjudicated in this court proceeding. In this verse Boaz says he's *purchasing* Ruth *the Moabitess* to be his wife in order to perform leverite law. So, in the first half of the legal matter, he purchases all the land, and secondly, he purchases Ruth to bear the child so that the family name will not be cut off from its rightful property and "from the gate." You recall that we said both Elimelech and Boaz were respected judges; well, this verse says that the future child will, likewise, sit at the gate as a judge. Then, at the appointed time, this heir from this union will be given the Elimelech land, and this family line will be completely restored. How could Boaz purchase Ruth? Because she allowed him to. Both Boaz and

Ruth are completely selfless in all of this; it is not about themselves. Boaz doesn't have to be doing what he's doing, and Ruth doesn't have to be doing what she's doing.

Do you realize that there's nothing in all of this that Boaz did for himself? He's giving Naomi what's due her for the property; then he's taking a forbidden Moabite to wife, giving her position; and he's promising to give the necessary male heir – all at his own expense.

Someone read the last full paragraph toward the bottom of page 125 on the role of the kinsman-redeemer. _____ There is nothing about this role that is a plus for Boaz EXCEPT that in doing it, he sets right for Elimelech all that is wrong. This selfless, most difficult role will redeem those who have no hope and will satisfy the stringent requirements of the Law. That's the role the kinsman-redeemer.

There is a word in this verse that is the most exciting word in all the book of Ruth for me personally, and that is the word "purchased." The word has several definitions, but the one I think that is specifically applicable here is "*to provoke to jealousy*". That's the reason Boaz says he's purchasing Ruth – he's purchasing her to "provoke someone to jealousy." Had you ever heard that phrase in Scripture before? _____ If Ruth allegorically represents the Church, then that phrase would also have to apply to Jesus purchasing the Church – to provoke someone to jealousy. Who do you think Jesus would like to provoke to jealousy by His redemption of the Church? _____ Do you think the Church in its current state is provoking Jews to jealousy? _____ Why, or why not?

_____ Look on page 126, and someone read that Romans 11:11 Scripture. _____ It sounds like an accident, doesn't it when someone stumbles? But, the meaning of "stumble" here is to sin, to err, to fall, to offend. It is a deliberate act. Both Naomi's and Israel's offenses – their stumbling – were deliberate – they were no accident. In our story, was Naomi's being moved over so Ruth could take the primary role an accident on Naomi's part? _____ Yet, can God take deliberate sins and make them work together for good? _____ Every time! What good thing does Paul say happens because of Israel's deliberate sin? _____

But, let me ask you – can the same God that allowed the Jews to stumble, or move over, in the first place so that the Church could have the primary position – is that same God big enough to realign Israel back into position again? _____ Someone read Romans 11:12 at the bottom of page 126. _____ Paul talks as if what has happened to them – by their own choosing, as was the case with Naomi – is only temporary. Intriguing, isn't it?

Turn to page 182 please. On that page, all those on the left are either permanently or temporarily out of the picture, with the exception of Ruth. Do you see the new position of Ruth – actually she is moved up directly under Boaz, even with Naomi – a place she was never remotely qualified to be in. I ask you, do you see grace? _____

Someone read verse 11, page 129. _____ In this verse and the one following, there are three wedding blessings spoken. Just as this book is not a simple, little, casual, romantic novel, so these blessings are not light, kind marriage wishes. These three wedding blessings are actually three profound prophetic words. They deal with Ruth, Boaz and the promised child. The first one says of Ruth, "*The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel.*" This is huge! The prophecy says that the Lord is to make this one Moabite woman like the *two* wives of Jacob from whom the whole house of Israel came.

(I do want to sidetrack a moment here. Prophetic words are God's words given through the mouth or pen of any instrument God so chooses. Did the prophet or prophets at the gate that day want to speak these blessings – maybe not. But, if God has so set His hand on someone, then that person has no option. Did Jonah want to go to Ninevah and tell those reprobates to repent? _____ But, he did go – eventually.)

As wonderful as these wedding blessings may sound to us, I have to believe that they were very weighty and spoken with gravity. Naomi, one of their own, had just committed the unpardonable (well, not quite). Was it really a time of celebration? Do you see the possibility in this particular prophetic blessing that the speakers knew Naomi had ousted herself, and that it would take an act of God to somehow bring both Naomi and now Ruth into right standing in Israel?

Turn with me to page 183, and let's look at the House of Israel which Rachel and Leah built. Two women built one house by one man. You remember that Jacob's love was Rachel, but through a bit of scheming, two women actually ended up under his male covering. At that time, this was the greatest spiritual house ever built. It was monumental! Yet, it is prophesied that Ruth, single handedly will do what Rachel and Leah did jointly. Who prophesies such nonsense, or is it nonsense? Do you remember back on the threshing floor my telling you that Jewish scholars teach that two women were asking of Boaz that night? Do you think possibly the end result of the threshing floor scheming might produce two women under one male covering? (Look ahead allegorically, will these two joined together be one great house indeed?)

And, the witnesses continue, "*And do thou worthily in Ephratah and be famous in Bethlehem.*" This prophesy is addressed to Boaz. Boaz's vow to restore the break in Elimelech's line would, indeed, be a worthy deed in the Ephratah region – the land would be kept within the Judah line and the family name would not be brought to extinction. But, what about the phrase that He would "become famous in Bethlehem"? Who is prophesied to come through this Judah/Elimelech line? _____ And, where do the prophets say Messiah would be born? _____ If Messiah were to come through Boaz, would Boaz be famous in Bethlehem? _____ Do you see how prophetic words are God's words and not man's? Only God knows the end from the beginning. No one could have known these things but God alone. But, we do know, after the fact, that Boaz's fame did spread to Bethlehem because he and Ruth rescued the Messianic line, but it spread even beyond. You read in your lesson about the two columns on the front of the Temple in Jerusalem? These columns had names; one Jachin, and the other Boaz. Every time someone went in and out of the Temple, they passed the column of Boaz. My, what fame – in Bethlehem and way, way beyond!

Someone read verse 12, on page 130, please. _____ The third prophesy says that the son that Ruth will bear will be like Pharez, the son of Judah and Tamar. Why on earth would the son of Judah and Tamar be identified with the son of Boaz and Ruth? Let's look at some possibilities. Tamar was a gentile from a foreign country, just like Ruth. Judah's two sons had died in a foreign country, just like the two sons of Naomi. Judah refused to give Tamar to his third son; and Naomi refused to be a party to produce a third son. Tamar played the part of a prostitute to get the promised child. Ruth was put into the position of a prostitute to get the promised child. The son Pharez was a product of trickery. The son of Boaz and Ruth, too, is the product of trickery. Judah was actually Tamar's father-in-law, thus she was "his daughter". And, Boaz called Ruth "his

daughter” because I believe he longed to be her father-in-law – after his marriage to Naomi. However, both fathers-in-law ended up being the husbands rather than the parent. The Messianic line had actually stopped during the days of Judah, until gentile Tamar revived it. The same is true of the Messianic line through Elimelech and Naomi. It, too, had stopped until gentile Ruth revived it. Because Naomi refused to play by the rules, just as Judah refused to play by the rules, they both were guilty of being a party to the potential cessation of the Messianic line. Both were Jews, snubbing the commands of God *given to Jews*, while two gentile, foreign women revered the commands and obeyed when they didn’t have to.

Look with me on page 184. Do you see that Tamar’s position is just like Ruth’s? This gentile is moved over and elevated to the standing of wife, not daughter-in-law, and because of her great faith, she’s a part of the Messianic line – just as Ruth will be.

God is kind, loving and compassionate beyond words, but God is also true to His own Word. He decreed leverite law, the law of the kinsman-redeemer, and if the Jew wouldn’t honor it, then He would bless the one who would – and He would use that one to provoke to jealousy the one who puts herself outside the loop.

GO OVER WORKBOOKS

Major Branches of Judaism

Page 229

HOME BIBLE STUDY
Chapter Eleven
Ruth 4:13-14

Well, dear friends, we are fast coming to the end of our Ruth journey. I have to tell you, every time I get to just about this place, I begin to get a little apprehensive about it all falling in place, because that's what I did at this point when I was writing and studying – wondering if it really would all work out.

Although we have only 2 verses to cover today, chapter 11 is fairly long, so let's get started. Someone read verse 13 on page 135. _____ You must continually keep the inseparable roles of Boaz and Jesus in focus. Tell me – what did it cost Jesus to redeem? _____ Someone read the first three indented quotes starting on the bottom of page 137. _____ What do Jewish scholars say it cost Boaz to redeem? _____

Boaz promised Ruth that night on the threshing floor that he would marry her and give her the needed heir for Elimelech's estate. Did he make good his promise? _____ Ruth impregnated meant she was connected to (1) Elimelech (because she held the child that would perpetuate his broken line), (2) to Boaz – because it was his seed, and (3) obviously to the baby. So, she's connected in triplicate to Elimelech, Boaz and fetus Obed. At the moment of conception, Ruth received from Boaz the promise, even though she couldn't see it. Ruth received her promised male covering, whether or not Boaz remained in the picture – she was set. I still stand in astonishment that he could “promise” her such a thing.

What is the child's allegorical role? _____ Tell me something. Is the church connected in triplicate spiritually? _____ Name the three? _____

In this one day, Ruth has gone from being a widow from the enemy nation of Moab – a nobody, an outsider with all the wrong credentials – to being “cemented” – firmly sealed – in this most prestigious family of Israel. Look back on page 105, and someone read verse 18. _____ Do you now think it really was possible for Boaz to finish that day what he started that day? _____

Did the same thing happen to you and me – being firmly sealed – when we became believers? Someone read that first Scripture on page 141. _____ This perfectly describes Ruth before her marriage and conception, doesn't it? And, yet, Paul is not talking about Ruth – he's talking about you and me – about all Gentile believers before their redemption.

Now, read that second Scripture. _____ The Church had the same before and after life as did Ruth. Ruth without the baby, and we, the Church, without the Holy Spirit are nothing. That's our seal of approval. The promise was given, even though no one could prove it. Faith was not sight yet.

Furthermore, this Scripture says that we, the Church, are the habitation for God's Spirit. This time in our story – our little impregnated Ruth – allegorically parallels the Church at this time right now. This is the journey – Ruth's, here, and ours, now. Ruth had the growing and maturing infant inside her, confident (I hope) that she would receive what was promised: – a son – at birth. Just as the Church has the Holy Spirit growing and maturing inside us, likewise, confident, hopefully, that we, too, will one day receive what has been promised.

And, because we have this wonderful treasure in these earthly bodies and Israel doesn't, we can be a little cocky, can't we? _____ God forbid? Follow along with me as I read the Scripture on page 144. _____ Make no mistake, God's clock is ticking, and one day – probably sooner rather than later – that full number of saved Gentiles will come in. And, when Ruth's actual birthing process starts, nothing can stop it, and if someone tried, both the mother's and baby's life would be in serious danger. Even so, when God's "birthing process" starts, it won't be stopped.

During this waiting time (paralleling our time right now), Paul *warns* the Church not to boast or be ignorant of this mystery or be conceited. Paul is talking to believers – you and me. I do believe that there are Christians who have in the past and who continue to disregard this warning. And, they will have to answer to God one day for it, too.

Read verse 14 on page 147. _____ This is the day of the baby's birth, but look how the tables have turned, and how what was marked as the prize for one actually goes to another. Let's consider the birth of Judah's and Tamar's twins – which this child was prophesied at the City Gate to mirror. You will remember from your study that at that birth, the second born actually presented an arm first and was marked with a red ribbon as the firstborn, but a role reversal took place mid-birth, and the one so identified did not receive the prize.

As prophesied, there is obviously a role reversal in our story as well because in this verse it says that the kinsman redeemer is Naomi's. What happened to Ruth? Let's look at this allegorically for a second. What happens when the Church reaches full term? We're out of here, right? _____ Hallelujah! From this verse on, Ruth is no longer the main player. I believe in our literal story, the birth cost Ruth her life. We know that to give this child cost Boaz his life. And, what about for Jesus to give us the Holy Spirit? Someone read the Scripture on page 148. _____ The truth is that as Ruth faithfully incubated the baby those 40 weeks, giving her position, and now it's Naomi's turn to come front and center.

Someone read the Scripture on the top of page 150. _____ It's Israel's time for salvation. Hallelujah! This verse says that when the Church reaches full term, Israel will be front and center. It says, astonishingly, *all* Israel will be saved. Do I believe all means all? I have to tell you I do! I don't think that's too hard for God.

Let's look at what the Prophet Micah says about this on page 153. Someone read both of those passages. _____ I believe this teaches that after the Church travaileth and is raptured in "childbirth", that Israel will be restored to God – *all* Israel.

Let's look at one final verse on this. Someone read the Scripture on page 154. _____ It says all of creation groans as in childbirth right up to the present time. Y'all we're not there yet. And, we, who have the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit, groan waiting for our adoption as sons and the redemption of our bodies. Jesus set everything perfectly back on course (after the fall in the Garden of Eden) for everything to be made right again. We're not there yet – we're in the travail of birth right now – and the pains are coming closer and closer for our adoption – the time when our faith is sight. And, if we right now have the "firstfruits" of the Spirit, then that means there's much more work yet for the Spirit to do, and I believe that work is when we are out of here and all Israel is saved and has the Spirit.

GO OVER WORKBOOKS

Circumcision
Page 233

HOME BIBLE STUDY
Chapter Twelve
Ruth 4:15-22

Well, friends, we come to the end of our journey. We've seen Elimelech's choice in a wife, their two sons, the two Gentile marriages, three deaths, return to Bethlehem, Princess Ruth gleaning, a marriage arrangement, the wedding and conception, and today we see the final segment, Naomi's complete restoration. Do you marvel at the parallels in this story with the story of God and world events? How could these four chapters so perfectly mirror the whole of mankind's journey? The answer can only be found in the genius of Almighty God. Truly, you can study the whole Bible from the book of Ruth, and without a doubt, you can find Jesus, as Apostle Luke says, if you look for Him in the Old Testament.

Today we see that Ruth has delivered the baby, and now Naomi has her kinsman-redeemer. Allegorically, if the Church is out of the picture, and Israel is embracing her redeemer, then at what point are we in world order? _____ (This is the last 7 years, the Great Tribulation.)

Turn to page 159, and some start us off with verse 15. You will remember that I told you last week that the correct tense in this verse is past tense, and that it should be translated "thy daughter-in-law which loved thee, which was better to thee... ." I want to give you just one more interesting teaching for this verse. A non-believing Jewish man gave me The Jewish Study Bible (Oxford University Press 2004) after reading my book on Ruth. Listen to the footnote for this verse 15: "Though Ruth has *disappeared* from the story . . ." Jewish scholars also teach that Ruth has mysteriously disappeared. (Consider the Rapture.) Amazing!

This verse says that the infant will restore Naomi's life. When she "moved over," when she took herself out of being a player in God's commands, then at that point she was totally out of line. She was the outsider. But, now this baby (allegorically the Holy Spirit) rights all of Naomi's wrongs. She's been independent and disobedient nearly from the very beginning, but no longer.

Naomi's had 2 sons that were useless, but it says of this Moabite daughter-in-law that she was better to Naomi than if she'd had 7 sons. Y'all seven sons could not have done for Naomi what this one daughter-in-law did. The sons would have given her male covering, but they could never have given her a chance to right all wrongs. Ruth's deed gives Naomi a new beginning, a chance to get it right.

If, indeed, Ruth died at childbirth, then Naomi must sit sheva for 7 days mourning the death of Ruth, while simultaneously waiting the 7 days for the circumcision and naming of the baby when all is legal. So, Naomi has double 7's running in her life; a very bitter-sweet time, which I believe parallels the Tribulation for the Jews. Let's look at sitting sheva. Someone read starting the paragraph after the Scripture on page 160.

_____ It's a time to soberly remember. It's a gut wrenching time because you drag up all the wrongs, and in those 7 days you deal with them. Naomi had a lot to deal with, didn't she? She'd done a lot of underhanded, conniving, selfish things. Do you think that during the 7 years of Tribulation Israel, too, will have a lot to deal with because of her actions toward Messiah Jesus? _____

But, on the 8th day, after that indescribable time, she can rejoice because not only is the time of mourning over, but she's reached that longed-for 8th day, the celebration day, because the baby is circumcised and named, and she is officially reinstated. She IS the mother of the baby; Elimelech's line IS restored; and his name WILL SEE its meaning realized: "To me shall kingship come."

Someone read verse 16, page 163. _____ This is Naomi's act of faith. This is the first time in the entire book when Naomi exhibits faith. And, remember, folks, without faith it is impossible to please God. Even though her name means "My Pleasantness," she's not been pleasing almost her entire journey. Oh, if we could just see the big picture as God sees it. Someone read both Scriptures on page 166. _____ Was all of this a big mistake? Did it blindside God? Even in this tragedy of events, do all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose? _____ What is horrendous for Israel is perfecting for you and me. This is the mystery.

Someone read verse 17 on page 167. _____ (Just a little side note here. Fathers have the privilege of naming their sons, but you will note who names Obed. I had a Jewish friend tell me that as she was reading the book and got to the part about Boaz dying, she said, "Well, Diane has lost it here." And, then she said when she got to this verse where the women name the baby, she knew Boaz had died.) Jews do not deviate from Jewish procedures (unless you're Naomi).

Someone close out our study by reading verses 18-22 on page 172. _____ This is the Messianic line through which Jesus ultimately comes. Was it absolutely imperative that Boaz redeem so that there was no break in the Judah/Elimelech line (the Messianic line)? _____ Isn't it amazing that two people saved this line who didn't have to? Boaz was not the nearest kinsman-redeemer, and Ruth was certainly not a "kosher" participant.

Interestingly, there are three Gentile women represented in this genealogy: Tamar, Pharez's mother; Rahab the harlot, Boaz's mother; and Ruth, Obed's mother. All three found themselves in prostitute positions for God's purposes. And, I say that about Rahab because she probably was politically forced into that role, but it was in that role that she was able to receive those "male" spies. So, tell me, what does all of this (these three questionable Gentiles) say about God? I'll tell you what it says, it says "there's room at the cross for everyone." God is no respecter of persons, but He does look for those outstanding individuals who will completely deny self, dare to have faith in what they "know" but cannot see, and fling all on their trust in God. He longs for those individuals who will cry out in all sincerity, "Here am I Lord, send me!"

Before we go to the workbooks, did you get a chance to read today's "Jewish Primer" on the Dollar Bill?

GO OVER WORKBOOKS

Tribute to the Jews on our Dollar Bill

Page 235

The Mikveh

Several weeks ago, I was asked to speak to a ladies group at a Baptist church in Memphis, and was assigned the topic. It was definitely not a subject I would have chosen or would ever have come up with in a hundred years. After I got over the shock of what they wanted me to speak on and began researching it, I was overwhelmed at the richness of it, and then I began to get excited. At noon on the day I was to speak, I got a call that my Mother had just died, and that talk was never given. The wealth of that material was just too important to tuck away until someone else called and asked for a teaching on that subject – because that just wouldn't happen again in a lifetime.

So, God gave another opportunity recently, and I did get to share the material. Some of you may have read the book I wrote on Ruth, and you know that God has given me a heart for Jewish/Christian relations. This is not a casual thing that I have; it is very, very passionate, and Ken understands that I just can't help it. When we get know people really well, he tells them I'm his Jewish wife. Of course, I'm not, but he gets so much Jewish stuff with me around that he says he doesn't know for sure.

The topic I was asked to speak on is something very Jewish and something that has profound relevance for Christians. It is the “mikveh.” Some of you may know what a mikveh is, and others of you may think I'm speaking a foreign language, and you're right, it is a foreign language, but it's a language we need to get comfortable with because it's the language of the Bible. The entire Old Testament was written in Hebrew. Mikveh is the Hebrew word that we know as baptism. A mikveh is as old as creation itself. It did not have its beginnings with John the Baptist or with the early church or with the regulations given to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

One definition for a mikveh is that it is a “*ritual bath that allows one to have a good conscience before God.*” God is the Designer and the Originator of the mikveh. This water immersion act is a picture on the outside of what's already transpired on the inside, because before the mikveh is performed, the heart and mind have already embraced the deed. The mikveh is not a custom or a tradition; it is a biblical command. It shows a separation from an old way and a turning to a new way. *And, a mikveh always comes before service.*

In Judaism, both men and women have occasions for immersing themselves in the mikveh. In Biblical times, a Jewish man would immerse himself before entering the Temple to worship or to present his sacrifices. There is no Temple standing today, but the Jewish male still dips in the mikveh waters before his wedding day and before the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) which is the holiest of all Jewish holidays. More devout Jews will even wash themselves in a mikveh before all the Jewish holidays, and some will even do it before each Sabbath (because the Sabbath is considered a holiday). There are even some that go a step further and wash every day before they recite their ritual morning prayers.

For the Jewish woman, the times when she would go beneath the mikveh waters would be just prior to her wedding day and then as a married woman at the end of each month's cycle. The only unmarried woman expected to go to the mikveh is the bride just before her wedding day. So, if a Jewish woman never marries, then she's never obligated to observe this commandment.

I have a dear Jewish friend who was born and raised in Israel and off whom I bounce all these foreign-to-me Jewish things, and I was talking to her in preparation for this material, and asked her if she went to the mikveh before her wedding. (She was still living in Israel when she married). She said she did, and I asked her to tell me about it so I could tell you. She said that the mikveh she visited was a swimming pool filled with rainwater. A mikveh can be performed in any natural body of water, but in the absence of that, Jewish rules (not Bible rules) dictate that at least a specific amount of rainwater (120 gallons to be exact) must be collected. I asked if she bathed first, and she said she did, and I asked if she wore anything into the water, and she said she didn't. (She's used to my personal prying.) I asked who was present, and she said it was the Rabbi's wife who made sure that she did it right. Then after immersing herself, she recited specific ritual blessings, and the act was complete.

My husband, Ken, and I visited Israel 10 years ago, and we saw an ancient mikveh bath. It was built kind of like a large stone well down in the ground that had steps going down into the water and on the opposite side, another identical set of steps. Our Israeli tour guide told us there were two sets of steps because a "clean" person would never use the same steps that he used as an "unclean" person.

So, now you have a general understanding of a Jewish mikveh bath. But, in my studies, I've found that the Word of God is like an onion. It has many layers, and you have to peel away one layer at a time before you can get to the underlying one. That is exactly what we will see for a mikveh.

A mikveh actually symbolizes *life* and *death*. By performing a mikveh, you proclaim death to the old way and life to the new. For the bride-to-be, it's death to her old self as a single woman and life to her new self as a Mrs. For the woman at the end of her monthly cycle, it's death to what didn't take hold and life to there being another opportunity. Actually, the law of mikveh is perfectly illustrated through the woman's body. Each month the womb produces a lining that is a cradle for life. If the seed with the potential life inside it is not fertilized, then all of this dies and is carried away. Leviticus tells us that the life is in the blood, and it's a fact of nature that when blood is exposed to air, contamination sets in immediately – death. Therefore, each month the woman is contaminated and unclean during her cycle because God's Word says that anyone who touches anything dead, whether it's a human or an animal, it's considered unclean. And, during this time, my friend tells me that it is forbidden for a man to even touch his wife – not so much as her hand or an arm or her back – not anything. If he does, then he's as unclean as she is and is bound by the same set of laws. This sounds very complicated, doesn't it? By, y'all, we have a very exacting God, and there's reasoning behind all His requirements. This really is not a black mark against the woman. It's just God's standards, and He doesn't compromise. However, He never leaves us without hope. Praise God, the unclean can be made clean again. The Bible gives very specific guidelines as to how to be clean again. It says that the woman is to add an additional seven days at the end of her cycle, and then she is to go and wash in the mikveh, and she's pure and uncontaminated. Therefore, in observant Jewish homes, there are only about two weeks out of the month when a husband and wife can even touch each other. (Now, don't any of you rush out and convert to Judaism.)

So, now let's convert all this knowledge into what this means spiritually. What we see here is that just as being impure and contaminated separates the husband and wife,

the same principle applies to those who are *spiritually* impure and contaminated.

Before the actual immersion, the woman is to wash herself totally and completely so she's squeaky clean, and then after nightfall she visits the mikveh. So, from this we see that a mikveh is not for the purpose of cleansing, because the woman's already clean. Remember, the *mikveh is a picture on the outside of the transaction that's already taken place on the inside*. The mikveh is the outward "testimony" that the woman has observed God's requirements in counting her days, and by this immersion she is sealing it with the deed. Now, I ask you, "Could she cheat?" "Would anybody 'in the world' know if she were to cheat?" But, she's acting out a godly principle, isn't she, so isn't that dangerous? Can you imagine cheating where only you and God know the truth? Let's go a step further. Let's say that she does cheat and goes to the mikveh a couple of days early because she and her husband have an exotic cruise planned. Could she make an innocent person unclean right along with herself? Could she literally cause two people to sin and one not even know it? That's a scary thing, isn't it?

Let's strip away another layer. God has been separating the old from the new with a mikveh from the very beginning of time. I had no idea the magnitude of a mikveh until this study. A mikveh is the gathering together of any waters where a form of washing or passing through is considered an act of cleansing and sanctification. In the creation account, God gathered the waters and separated the land from the sea. Jewish scholars teach that God literally brought creation through a mikveh. Everything we see around us came through a mikveh because God created for six days, and then He rested, and nothing has been created since then. Adam was created from the dirt, and we are all in Adam. That dirt was separated from the waters. From the very beginning of time, God has been separating for service to Himself. We were created and placed on this earth to serve Him! God brought the Children of Israel through the Red Sea to serve Him. It was a mikveh. And, then after all that generation died out, God led the new generation of the Children of Israel through the mikveh waters of the Jordan River, separating that generation for service to him in the Promised Land. It was death to the old and life to the new. The maiden goes into the mikveh waters in order to serve as a wife and then as a mother. It's all about doing away with the old, embracing the new and service.

Now, let's take away another layer to see whether or not the mikveh applies to us, Gentiles, who are not bound by these Jewish laws.

Jesus Himself, as "God in the flesh," passed through the waters of the mikveh signifying his obedience to God's Law and His readiness for service. Remember in a mikveh you see the doing away with the old and the embracing of the new. It's a picture of going from death to life. What old things did Jesus do away with, and what new things did He embrace? This is astonishing! The Creator of the entire universe, who brought creation through the mikveh waters, immersed in those very waters He created. His immersion signified his laying down of the old and picking up of the new. Do you know what He laid down? What "old" things did Jesus lay down? He laid down a kingly throne; He laid down royal robes; He laid down a diadem; He laid down glory and majesty; and you know what he picked up in exchange for all of that? He exchanged it for His new life as the Suffering Servant destined for the cross. His mikveh signified the laying down of the old and the picking up of the new, and his readiness for service, knowing full well the scope of that service. So, what we see at His mikveh is that,

picturesquely, He went under the waters and laid down his rights to all of Heaven's glory, and was raised to bear the impurities and contamination of the entire world. But, in all other mikvehs, it is a picture of going from death to life, but for Jesus, it was a picture of going from life to death.

Let's contrast His baptism, or His mikveh, with the baptism of believers today. When we go under the baptismal waters (and remember, it is just a picture – the spiritual transaction has already taken place in the heart and mind), it is a picture of us laying down what Jesus picked up, and of us picking up what He laid down. We lay down these filthy, sinful, impure, unclean rags, and those rags in Scripture are actually menstrual rags. And, we rise clean, pure and righteous before a Holy God. We truly pass from death to life. Do you see how beautiful this is? Jesus went under the water and laid down His choicest possessions, that we might go under the water (picturesquely) and trade our worst for His best. Astounding! And, could we cheat in this testimony? Who would know? Only God. And, in our cheating, could we also take others down with us?

While I was researching all of this, one Sunday our choir did a song that didn't register with me at the time. But, later that day I kept humming one of the phrases over and over in my head, and finally the light came on, and I was astonished! The phrase in this old Negro spiritual went, "Deep river, I want to cross over Jordan; deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into Campground." And, I thought, "Oh my goodness, there's yet another crossing – a mikveh – waiting for us between this world and the next – signifying death to the old and life to the new and readiness for service." I pondered this for some time, but never came up with Scriptures to back it up. So, I called a dear friend of our family's who is a retired Baptist preacher, and I asked him if there were any Scriptures to back up that we cross from this world into the next through a body of water. He said not to his knowledge, but that for many old folks such a crossing is understood, just as it was in that Negro spiritual. He went on to say that when his mother died, that his brother was there by her side, and he told the family that she said, "Hold my hand; I'm crossing the river." Did the songwriters who wrote, "Shall We Gather At the River, where bright angel's feet have trod?" or "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I stand and cast a wistful eye to Canaan's fair and happy land where my possessions lie" – did they know intuitively that indeed there is a final cleansing awaiting us before we enter our Heavenly Home – our Promised Land?

Another thing a mikveh illustrates that we need to "embrace" is that obedience is not always pleasant or comfortable. Was it easy for the mikveh to be performed in November? (Israel's weather is much like ours in Memphis.) How about December, January or February? Did the ice have to be broken at times for a mikveh to be performed? Did the woman have to go even if she had a cold or the flu? Have all the times God has asked you to do something been easy or comfortable? Were you always obedient, or did you at times shrink back? Praise God for grace!

I want to make one final observation I believe to be huge by Heaven's standards. One of the qualities of the mikveh is that it signifies one's readiness for service. A mikveh is not a requirement for one's salvation. The salvation has already taken place; it's a certainty; it's a completed transaction. But, because of what I've seen in this study, I truly believe that there are work orders that cannot and will not be issued until this basic, foundation principle of baptism is obeyed. I believe that many truly and sincerely yearn to be used of the Lord, but because they haven't obeyed in this one area, God has to

withhold answering their prayers. The Word says “obedience is better than sacrifice.” God has been using the principle of the mikveh from the beginning of time, and even observed it Himself as God in the flesh. Who are we to debate God on this matter or any other?

PILGRIMAGE FEASTS
(Personal Teaching Notes)
(Ex. 23:17; 34:23-24; Deut. 16:16-17)

What I want you to see in this study on Israel's Pilgrimage Feasts is that God has patterns. His ways are not random or haphazard. There are no coincidences with our amazing God. Everything means something, and I believe everything about these feasts points to Him. So, as you study these feasts, look for His patterns, and certainly there are many others not covered here.

There are 7 major Jewish, Biblical feasts. You remember that 7 means complete, and I believe that these feasts are a complete story – again all about Him. These feasts were instituted long ago, so, of course, they are past, but I hope you will also see that they are equally present and future.

Biblical scholars, and particularly Messianic Jewish scholars, teach that Jesus personally fulfilled the first four at His first coming, and that he most assuredly will fulfill the last three at His second coming.

The seven feasts are: (1) PASSOVER*; (2) Unleavened bread; (3) Firstfruits; (4) SHAVUOT* (Pentecost); (5) Feast of Trumpets; (6) Yom Kippur and (7) SUKKOT* (Tabernacles).

The study of Ruth covers the three Pilgrimage Feasts*: Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot. However, Passover is really three of the seven feasts – it is grouped with Unleavened bread and Firstfruits.

These feasts are called Pilgrimage feasts because a journey to the Temple is required in order to pay tithes and perform certain biblical commands. ALL Jewish males were commanded to make these pilgrimages throughout their generations. I really don't think they minded, though, because this meant they would see family and friends at least three times a year. Also, these are called "feasts", so food and festivities would certainly have been an integral part. Women were certainly encouraged to participate, too, if they didn't have responsibilities at home preventing their going.

I want to show you something I found to be extremely interesting about what God said about the pilgrimage command. Exodus 34:24 states: *For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year.* Today, are Israel's borders being enlarged or shrinking? Does anyone desire her land?

Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot are connected to each other without a break, and because of the specific required offerings, the three are also tied to Israel's agricultural crops.

Passover (Feast of Unleavened Bread/Firstfruits) (Ex. 12:1-20,34,39; Ex. 34:26; Lev. 23:4-6,9-11,14; Num. 9:1-14; 28:16-25; Deut. 16:1-8) is the oldest Jewish feast. At the time this feast was instituted, the Hebrew children were instructed to take a lamb, sacrifice it and use its blood to save their own lives, which they did. They were also told to eat only unleavened bread that night and for the next 7 days. The first day of the week (Sunday) after Passover, they crossed the Red Sea and left behind the

conquered, forever-defeated enemy. They were permanently freed from Egyptian bondage.

Note the pattern: they sacrificed the lamb, applied the blood to protect their lives, ate only unleavened bread, and on the first day of the week (Firstfruits), they walked through the Red Sea and emerged free from bondage. (The emerging, victorious Hebrew children were the required Firstfruits wave offering.) The wave offering signifies much more yet to come, and my how their numbers did grow! Now, let's look for that same pattern in the three following time periods.

Boaz, an observant Jew, assuredly would have observed Passover by going to the Tabernacle, as required, eaten the Passover lamb, the unleavened bread, and then on the first day of the week, taken his specified sheaf of grain to the Tabernacle for the Priest to wave, grateful that they were no longer under the bondage of famine, and signifying the abundance yet to come.

Jesus was the perfect Passover lamb. He went to Jerusalem and ate the Passover lamb with its unleavened bread. He then became the required, blood-atoning sacrificial Passover Lamb, whose blood protected from eternal death and defeated the one holding the world in bondage. He was the unleavened bread – without sin – the bread of life. And, on the Sunday after Passover, He arose from the dead, the Firstfruits wave offering, signifying much more yet to come.

In Judaism today families gather in homes to eat the Passover meal – not in Jerusalem (as required) – because there is no Temple standing. They eat unleavened bread, but no longer eat lamb because of the destruction of the Temple. More Jews observe this feast than any of the others. At the end of the Passover seder, they exuberantly proclaim, “Next Year in Jerusalem!” expressing their desire to observe Passover as commanded. They cannot perform the necessary wave offering because of the destruction of the Temple.

Counting of the Omer (Lev. 23:15-16; Deut. 16:9; Lev. 23:10-14). Following the wave offering on the Sunday after Passover, there is a counting period for the next 50 days, or 7 weeks. The Counting of the Omer is not a holiday, it is a counting period between the first and second Pilgrimage Feasts (from Passover to Shavuot) during which all grain crops (barley and wheat) are gathered in.

For the Exodus children, it was the time when they were learning to walk by faith. God was preparing them to enter into a covenant relationship with Himself. It was their time to distance themselves from their former lives and follow the new leader God set over them. God provided a deliverer – Moses – a man symbolic of the perfect Deliverer who would come some day.

At the time of Boaz, we find Ruth learning to walk by faith. It was her time of preparation for entering into a covenant relationship and of distancing herself from her former idol-worshipping, Moabite life. God again provided a deliverer in Boaz, who also foreshadowed the One to come.

At the time of Jesus, the counting period began the day of the wave offering (Jesus at His resurrection). It was the time when Jesus made several appearances to His followers giving them final preparations for their new walk of faith, their soon coming covenant relationship and their new “Leader”.

In present-day Judaism, this is a time marked on the calendar. Because they desire to teach their children this command, they provide little money boxes for their children to give sacrificially during the counting period, and then at the end, they donate to a charity.

Shavuot (Pentecost; Feast of Weeks) (Ex. 23:16a; 34:22a; Lev. 23:15-21; Num. 28:26-31; Deut. 16:9-12; Acts 2:1-4) is Hebrew for “weeks” because it occurs 7 weeks, 50 days, (the Counting of the Omer above) after Passover. This is the second Pilgrimage feast. It is when all the grain crops have been gathered in. A sheaf of grain is the required wave offering at Passover (First Fruits), but on Shavuot two loaves of bread made from the newly harvested grain are the wave offering. Jewish writers compare this holiday to a wedding. Let’s see if we agree.

Shavuot during the Exodus is said to have been the time when God gave the Law to Moses. Try and visualize Moses excitedly descending the Mount waving the two Tablets written by the finger of God – the wave offering. The purpose of the Law was to bring Israel into a covenant relationship with Himself. The giving of the Law and their receiving it sealed them in a binding relationship. From that time forward they were known as God’s “Chosen People” – they belonged to Him.

Shavuot was the time when Boaz confronted the nearer kinsman-redeemer and took Ruth as his wife in a covenant relationship, sealing her through conception. It was also the time Boaz would have satisfied the command to wave the two loaves of bread before the Lord. Messianic Jews teach that these two loaves represented Naomi and Ruth (Jew and Gentile). Ruth was forever a part of the family of Almighty God.

Shavuot (Pentecost) during the time of Jesus found the believers all together in that upper room in Jerusalem, waiting as Jesus had instructed them. You recall how the Holy Spirit came on them as a rushing, mighty wind, sealing them in a covenant relationship by “impregnating” them with the Holy Spirit. The wave offering that day was the Law internalized on the two: the heart and mind (Jer. 31:33). What a joyous wave offering His new Church must have been to the Lord that day!

In present day Judaism, Jews celebrate with festive food and stay up all night reading Torah (the celebrated day it was given) and the Book of Ruth for which there is no certain explanation.

We next come to “the Journey”. For the Hebrew children we know that their journey lasted 40 years. They could not celebrate the third and final Pilgrimage Feast (Sukkot) until they reached the Promised Land. We also know that they would not reach the Promised Land until all those 20 and above had died because of the evil report about not being able to conquer the land for fear of the enemy (lack of faith in God). Did they know how long their journey would take? No, but they were most assuredly cognizant of the signs. They were waiting on that last person to die. When all had died out but one, how could they not know that the Promised Land was near?

At the time of Boaz, the journey took 40 weeks – the time between the promise of the male heir, and the promise received. Did Ruth know how long it would take? Not the day or the hour, but she certainly knew the signs for which to watch. And, as God alone knows the day and hour of a death (above), so also only God knows the day and hour for a birth. The journey for Ruth was the time it took to receive what was promised.

The time of Jesus is actually present day. Interestingly, there are some believing and unbelieving Jewish scholars who teach that Messiah will come after 40 Jubilees. (A Jubilee is 50 years.) Do we know the day or hour of His return? Only God knows that. But, we are told that the Church will reach “full term”, and that there will be “birth pains”, so we are to watch for the signs. Full term will usher in the Rapture, when by faith we receive what was promised.

Present-day Judaism will overlap **the time of Jesus** (above) – possibly those same 40 Jubilees – with each of us anticipating the same Messiah. Orthodox Jews are watching for His “first coming” just as earnestly as evangelical Christians are watching for His “second coming”.

Sukkot is the last Pilgrimage Feast (Lev. 23:33-35, 39-43; Num. 29:12-39; Deut. 16:13-17). This is also known as Feast of Tabernacles or Booths or Ingathering. It is the time when all crops have been gathered in – olives, grapes, pomegranates, etc. For the Children of Israel, it could not be properly celebrated until they reached the Promised Land, because the requirement was that for 7 days they would live out under the stars in little booths, or sukkot (or tents), remembering the journey and God’s faithfulness during their wilderness wanderings. The offering required at this feast is a wave offering of many different kinds of fragrant vegetation. It is the happiest celebration of all. The purpose for this feast is to remember the journey and God’s faithfulness.

For the Hebrew children, it meant they had finally reached the Promised Land. They received what was promised. They made it; their faith was sight and all were gathered in.

At the time of Boaz, Ruth would have delivered the baby – what was promised, and Naomi – by faith – would have taken the “promised” kinsman-redeemer into her bosom. Faith was sight, and all were gathered in – Ruth and Naomi.

The time of Jesus is yet future. It will be when we cross the heavenly Jordan into our eternal Promised Land – when we at least receive what was promised. It will be when our faith is sight and when all the children of God are gathered in: Jew and Gentile! I, along with many others, believe that in Heaven we will continue to observe all these feasts, and with this particular one, we will possibly live in temporary dwellings reminiscent of life on earth, remembering our own journey and the faithfulness of Almighty God every step of the way.

In present-day Judaism this is an exciting holiday – especially for the children – they get to camp out for a week. They decorate their sukka (singular of sukkot) with all kinds of fragrant produce, possibly family pictures and holiday lights. Since the purpose of this feast is to remember the journey, the father will tell the Exodus story over and over to his children because they must never forget. Many sleep and take all their meals in their “temporary home” for the week. Then, on the 8th day, they have a holy celebration at the synagogue where the last chapter of the Law (Torah) is read, followed immediately by the first chapter, and the cycle begins all over again.