



RUTH 1:7-13

On the Road Back



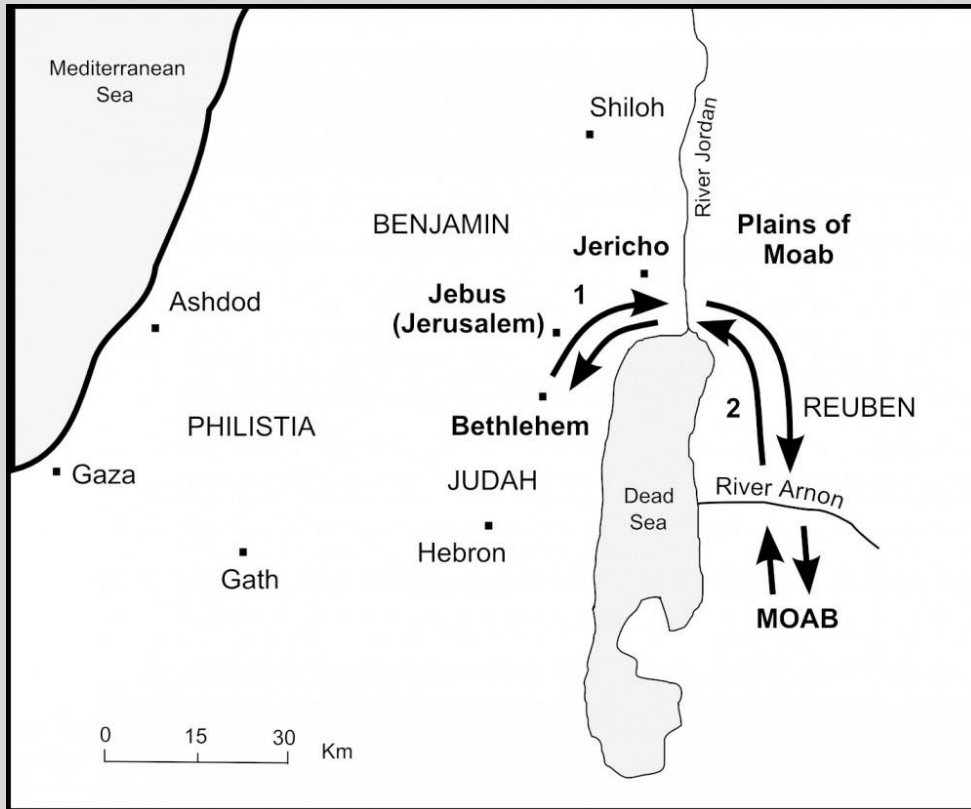
“May you find security with a husband”



A Speech Filled with Great Emotion and Love

- 7 So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah.
- 8 But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.'
- 9 The Lord grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband.' Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud.
- 10 They said to her, 'No, we will return with you to your people.'
- 11 But Naomi said, 'Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands?'
- 12 Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons,
- 13 would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me.'

7 So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah.



30-60 Miles
Depending on Route
7-10 days on foot
Most Likely a
Northern Route

Caravans and Geo-political Conflicts at the Time of Ruth



8But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me'
Naomi's First Request

Why Their Mother's House?

- The cultural and religious expectation would be Genesis 38:11 and Leviticus 22:13, so is the expression, "Mother's House" without precedent?
 - Genesis 24:28
 - Song 3:4
 - Song 8:2

Two possible reasons: A connection to Rebekah, a foreign woman (non-Canaanite) blessed by God. A man-to-man and a woman-to-woman hand off

Kindness to the dead: (Chesed Shel Emel)

- Chesed shel emel, a lovingkindness of absolute truth for which one does not expect a reward. If the poor are deserving of Chesed, then how much more the poorest of the poor?
- This kindness could take multiple forms:
 1. Walking with the dead: 7-day ritual as the soul hovers above the dead person. The mourning of the living helps the soul ease the pain of departure.
 2. Burying the dead person in the Holy Land in a pattern developed by Jacob in genesis 49:29-32
 3. Providing an inheritor. The living are the representatives of the dead. Widows of childless men are responsible for providing a descendant for the dead man. Ensuring an inheritor for the dead husband. Ruth fulfils this Chesed Shel Emel, Orpah does not.

Two Examples of Chesed Shel Emel:

1. Tobit 1:16-18
2. Achiezer



9The Lord grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband.' Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud.

Two-Part Prayer:

1. May God Grant (the righteous):

- a. Psalm 20:4
- b. Psalm 90:17
- c. 1 Samuel 1:17b

2. May (the righteous) "you" Find Security

The security Naomi is praying for is described by Isaiah 32:17-18 :

The effect of righteousness will be peace,
and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust for ever.

My people will abide in a peaceful habitation,
in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.

She kissed them,
And the daughters in law
wept loudly!

**(e) By this it appears that Naomi
by dwelling among idolaters,
had become cold to the true zeal of God,
having more respect for the comfort of the body
than the comfort of the soul.
(Ouch!!! Take a Xanax, Geneva Bible Commentary!)**

10 They said to her, 'No, we will return with you to your people.'

- Their desire to join Naomi in "Enemy" territory points to the women's righteousness. They saw it as their duty to care for the elderly Naomi, even if this would mean giving up on a future husband and family, gleaning for the rest of their days, and even begging.
- In Bethlehem they face
 - Dispossession
 - Loss of status
 - A different faith and culture
- In Moab they would have
 - A better support system (tribe, family, friends...)
 - A common language
 - A common Moabite faith
 - Better chances to find a husband "from within their people"
 - A chance for a family

... To your people!

11 "But Naomi said, 'Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands?'"
Naomi's Second Request

- Deuteronomy 25:5-10
- Levirate Law (Latin, "Levir" or Brother-in-Law)
- First son of the Levirate Marriage is legally the dead man's son, and inheritor of everything the dead man left in his estate.
- Even if Naomi were to have two other sons, Levirate law would not apply because their father would have no connection to Naomi's dead sons. There would be no implicit mandate to marry Orpah and Ruth. If they follow Naomi, she can not guarantee a Levirate marriage, and should a marriage become possible, at all, it will have to be up to any Kinsman redeemers alive.
- Following Naomi is like taking a terrifying step into the unknown

“No seed left in me”

12 “Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, 13 would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me.’”

Naomi's Third Request

- Three Requests (8, 11, 12): “This number corresponds to the number of times that potential converts should be strongly discouraged.
- Those who persist, however, should be educated and accepted as sincere converts” (JSB.)
- A decision made after three discouraging arguments (questions) will lead to an implicit acceptance into Judaism. There is a requirement of formation and education, which the text assumes Naomi did during the 5-7-day march to Bethlehem. These three objections or arguments are seen as the first test of conversion.
- The fact that we see two widows make two very different decisions is also indicative of the very nature of the conversion process. Some will be convinced by the objections and remain in their own faith and culture. Some will calculate the risks and choose to accept the faith and culture of the people of God. These three requests are part of a “discernment process” that takes place before a decision is made to accept Yahweh.

1-2-3

Three objections born out of love, but...

Do We Have Any Ivory Tower Commentators in the House?

"Naomi should have said to them what Moses said to his father-in-law, 'Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel' (Numbers 10:29, KJV)." [Note: Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary/History*, p. 181.]

"I may be wrong, but I get the impression that Naomi didn't want to take Oprah and Ruth to Bethlehem because they were living proof that she and her husband had permitted their two sons to marry women from outside the covenant nation. In other words, Naomi was trying to cover up her disobedience." [Note: *Ibid.* Italics omitted.]

Context, context, context!

“The hand of the Lord has turned against me...”

Why Does God Allow the Suffering of the Righteous?

1. Punishment for Covenant Disobedience

2. Testing the Faith of the Righteous Person

3. Neither: Suffering is the result of the freedom of choice,
and the logical
consequence of the sin of Self and others

Job 10:3

Job 19:21

Job 36:32

Jeremiah 18:6

Deuteronomy 32:41

Ezekiel 6:14

Zephaniah 1:4

Isaiah 23:11

