

# **THE HIDDEN MYSTERY OF SHAVUOT**

## **A SCRIPTURE STUDY OF RUTH, NAOMI AND THE POWER OF ONE NEW MAN**

Sandra Teplinsky, 2014 (revised, 2020)

*For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility... His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross. (Ephesians 2:14-16 NIV)*

A profound, global move of the Spirit is drawing Jewish and Gentile believers in Yeshua (Jesus) together in ways not seen since New Covenant times. This is partly because Jews in Israel and the nations are turning to Yeshua in unprecedented numbers. The prophetic phenomenon coincides with the re-establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. It gained momentum when Jerusalem returned to Jewish hands in 1967. By 1975 approximately 15 formal Messianic Jewish congregations existed around the world. Today an estimated 250 Messianic congregations exist in Israel alone.<sup>1</sup>

Like estranged family members reunited after too many years apart, Gentile and Jewish believers are not just becoming reacquainted but falling in love—despite the occasional stretch and strain. Each is restoring to the other essential knowledge of God’s ways and dimensions of His Kingdom. Together by grace, we are setting the stage for a global outpouring of the Holy Spirit the world has never known.

The concept of Jews and Gentiles together in Messiah as “one new man” is outlined in the book of Ephesians. In context, it flows from a broad description of God’s redemptive plans from before Creation. The one new man is not an isolated phenomenon. We exist and function within a larger Kingdom reality than Jews and Gentiles getting along well together—though that is an important start.

God’s ineffable plan is to bring “*all things*” in heaven and earth together under Messiah’s government of love, “that in the coming ages, He might show the incomparable riches of His grace...in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7 NIV). Deity’s dominion, which knows no end, showcases His unparalleled, rich grace forever, to His glory and good pleasure. In Kingdom context, non-Jewish believers are “no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s [Jewish] people.” They are “heirs together with Israel, members together of one body” (Ephesians 2:19; 3:6).

The Feast of Shavuot (May 28-29, 2020) relates to one new man like none other in God’s calendar. It is no coincidence that on that day, the book of Ruth is traditionally read as part of the holiday celebration. So this Shavuot (Pentecost), I invite you to journey with me deep into the story of Ruth. I daresay you’ll emerge a bit changed.

## ONE NEW HUMANITY IN THE BOOK OF RUTH

A background to Ruth, recall that throughout the Bible people from all nations are invited to worship Israel's God. We learn of Abraham's servant Eliezer; a "mixed multitude" leaving Egypt in the Hebrew exodus; Moses' Gentile wife Zipporah and father-in-law Jethro; Rahab of Jericho; and converts from King Xerxes's empire during Esther's day. In the New Covenant, God-fearing Gentiles worship in synagogues even before the Gospel is preached to them. Then, through Jesus, entrance to the Kingdom opens even wider to whoever would believe in Him, wherever and whenever.

Weeks after Jesus' death and Resurrection, the Levitical feast of Shavuot (Exodus 34:22, Deuteronomy 16:10, 2 Chronicles 8:13) exploded with prophetic reality when the Holy Spirit rained down on His followers in Jerusalem. As a result the New Covenant *ekklesia* (church) was born. This unparalleled event would be known as Pentecost. It unveiled the glorious mystery of one new man, Jews and Gentiles as one body in Messiah.

Leaders of the early Church, who were predominately Jewish, realized they could not claim spiritual superiority over their new, non-Jewish brothers and sisters. Nationality does not confer spiritual standing or privilege before God. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, when it comes to partaking of the blessings of salvation (see Galatians 3:28). These distinctions, of course, still exist in the earth realm. They bear upon our daily lives and, to some extent, our redemptive destinies.<sup>2</sup> But they are not relevant to our sanctification or status in God's Kingdom.

***To flesh out the meaning of true reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles in Christ, two biblical heroines of faith, Ruth and Naomi, serve as vivid prototypes. The unswerving devotion of Ruth to Naomi, together with Naomi's sacrificial deference to Ruth, gives us a revelatory glimpse of the prophetic dynamic of one new man. The serendipitous tale demonstrates how Jew and Gentile together, serving one another in a relationship of mutual Messiah-like love, proved instrumental to Yeshua's first coming. So too, it will take Jew and Gentile together, each preferring the other in divine reciprocity, to bring about His Second Coming.***

## ISRAEL'S DESOLATION

The book of Ruth is primarily a Spirit-breathed, literal account of historical events.<sup>3</sup> But it also constitutes a typology or prophetic allegory. The narrative takes place approximately 3,000 years ago. In the opening scene, an Israelite named Elimelech, his wife Naomi and their two sons leave home to escape a famine.

Now, as you probably know, names in Scripture are significant, reflecting the characteristics and callings of persons and places. The name Elimelech means "My God is King," while Naomi translates to "Pleasant." The couple has two sons, Mahlon, meaning "Weak," "Sickly" or "Afflicted;" and Kilion, meaning "Wasting Away." The family belongs to the clan of Ephrathites, which means "Fruitful Ones." They come from

Bethlehem, or “House of Bread,” which is located in Judah, meaning “Praise.” So at the outset, we know we have met a fruitful couple called to nourish others with good bread. But there is a famine in the land, and so their offspring are weak, sickly, afflicted and wasting away.

Famine in the Bible represents a form of judgment. Not surprisingly, the story of Ruth transpires during a sad period of rebellion against God. The first sentence in Ruth tells us the events described took place “in the days when the judges ruled.” The book of Judges, which immediately precedes Ruth, concludes with this sorry remark: “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (Judges 21:25 NIV). The famine is deserved and it is devastating.

Times being so hard, Elimelech and his family seek refuge in the land of Moab—Israel’s longstanding enemy. Moab, meaning “From Father,” was the son resulting from an incestuous union between Lot and one of his daughters (Genesis 19:33-37). Despite their dubious ancestry, Moab’s descendants grew into a prosperous nation. But they were cruel to Israel and consequently, God cursed them:

*No...Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation. For they did not come to meet you [Israel] with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam...to pronounce a curse on you.”* (Deuteronomy 23:3-4 NIV)

Moab was not the type of sanctuary you would think a starving Jewish family from the Province of Praise would pick. Sadly, the Moabites had apparently forgotten that their existence as a people, and the land they possessed, were due to the generosity of the Jewish patriarch Abraham. Recall that it was Abraham who ceded the lushest-looking ground in Canaan to Lot. Years later, Abraham twice rescued Lot and his family, both directly and indirectly (Genesis 14:14-16, 18:16-19:21). But as the years passed, so did any sense of kinship or gratitude on the part of Lot’s descendants with Abraham’s covenant children. (Might the same be said, perhaps, of some Christians concerning their spiritual legacy from Israel?)

In any case, Moab finds itself hosting a displaced Jewish family of destiny. It is there the head of the household, Elimelech (“My God is King”) dies. It is as if God’s kingship is no more, or no longer covers this family. Sons Mahlon and Kilion marry Moabite women, but being the weak, sickly, afflicted and wasting away souls that they are, these two young men also die, and without children. The family’s attempt to escape judgment has failed, and as a result, Naomi is “Pleasant” no longer. Soon she will change her name to Mara, meaning “Bitter.”

Time passes until word comes to Moab that Israel’s famine has ended. With this turn of events, Naomi decides to go home. She bids her two daughters-in-law a difficult farewell. Blessing them both, she urges them to stay where they are, make new lives, find new husbands, and start new families. At this, the young women are genuinely distressed. They weep together in protest and grief. But then Orpah, whose name means “Back of

the Neck,” says goodbye and departs. Turning the back of her neck to her mother-in-law, she goes “back to her people and her gods” (Ruth 1:15). Hers seems the more reasonable choice.

## CROSSROADS FOR THE CHURCH

In contrast, Ruth, whose name means “Friend” or “Clinging One,” will not be dissuaded. Instead she clings all the more to Naomi. Ruth pronounces words that have come to represent a commitment so supreme as to find place in many marriage vows today:

*Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.* (Ruth 1:16-17 NIV)

***The two Moabite women found themselves a crossroads. To continue on with God in the totality of what He had for them, they would have to cling to Naomi. The alternative was not to go forward with Him at all, but back to familiar ways and gods of the world. Similarly, in these last days, the Body of Christ is at a crossroads. To go forward in God in the years ahead, we must, like Ruth, go forward with Israel—or we shall not genuinely go forward at all. Such is the calling of the last days’ ekklesia for which Messiah is coming (see Revelation 19:7).***

At this juncture the book’s allegorical symbolism sharpens into focus. Ruth portrays Gentile Christians from the nations who have so joined themselves to Israel and her God that they cannot, under any circumstance, return to Moab or their Moabite gods. Ruth’s choice to stick with embittered Naomi, come what may, turns on two firmly resolved matters. First, she is thoroughly devoted to YHVH. Second, because of her faithfulness to Him, she sincerely and unconditionally loves her mother-in-law. In other words, she identifies fully with the family into which she has married. In so doing, Ruth depicts Gentile believers who fully identify with the family of their Jewish Bridegroom-King. Orpah, on the other hand, can be seen as those who turn and fall from faith in times of shaking, trial and severe hardship.

The opposite choices made by Naomi’s daughters-in-law portentously parallel those we make as believers today. As with Orpah and Ruth, our decisions will affect our destinies. Those radically in love with their Bridegroom-King will love His Jewish people. Knowing the inner chambers of God’s heart, their own hearts will resonate to His yearning for His firstborn son. Most wholly in love with the Most Holy, the Bride will prove so resolute in courage as to advance headlong, like Ruth, into a future fraught with uncertainty. Dependent entirely on God, she’ll gladly be escorted by a covenant counterpart who, like Naomi, may seem at times a bit more bitter than pleasant. For just as Naomi becomes Mara when the living presence of God as King is removed from her, so can Israel’s pleasantness turn bitter without Him.

Israel today has not collectively surrendered to God. As in the book of Judges and time of Ruth, the nation has no king, and in a sense, everyone does as he sees fit. Millennia of murderous persecutions, a century of terror, mounting global anti-Semitism and endless threats of annihilation have taken their toll. For these and other reasons, Israel remains spiritually semi-famished. But the story is not over. The suffering of the Jewish nation will be used by God for something ultimately far grander than she, like Naomi, could imagine.

Meanwhile, catch the full extent of young Ruth's valiant humility. From a rather sordid background and cursed family lineage, she refuses to let her past impede her future. Ruth may or may not know that God's curse on Moab—lasting ten generations—is likely just now ending. What she does know is that God is worth it all. Those of us with personal or family histories of dysfunction can take heart. The past prevails no more when He is our Healer, Lover and Lord.

Here I would like to share a side note with fellow Jewish believers in Yeshua. Years ago, when first preparing a teaching on the book of Ruth, I realized I did not fit neatly into any category represented by the story's cast of characters. I asked the Lord, "Are Messianic Jews Ruth, or are we Naomi?" The answer came clearly: "Yes. You are Rumi." The Spirit was saying we're to make room to humbly embrace and embody the exemplary characteristics of both Ruth and Naomi. He wants us joyfully appropriating and lovingly modeling His grace for roomy hearts and lives toward both.

## **GLEANNING BLESSINGS**

Back to the biblical tale, Ruth and Naomi set out for Bethlehem, where their arrival causes a veritable stir. Elimelech's widow has changed so much that she is barely recognizable to her countrymen. Plus, she has brought with her an unenviable Moabitess. Naomi bemoans, "The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me" (Ruth 1:21 NIV).

Naomi's groan echoes in Israel today each time another Jewish life is ravaged by another terror attack, or another genocidal threat is aimed at the beleaguered State. The groan reflects an unconscious but perplexed awareness that somehow, God is still involved. Yet it can seem that for them personally, He is nowhere to be found.

Israel's groan will not dissuade Christians who, in the spirit of Ruth, refuse to let go of the Jews because it is alongside them, God's greatest blessings will be found. The closer we come to the Lord's return, the more the destinies of His two covenant peoples will converge. In the process, today's Naomi will discover that her salvation and her Savior are revealed in her Ruth.

The last days "Ruth remnant" will be a radical firebrand provoking Israel to envy for her Messiah. According to Romans 11:11, "Salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious." For almost 2,000 years, this mandate has gone mostly unfulfilled. But as the Jewish people encounter a company of militant lovers in whose midst Yeshua

dwells, more and more will see Him at last—and reclaim the Desired of all Nations (see Haggai 2:7). This reality is already manifest in today’s Messianic Jewish movement. Together, these Ruths and “Rumis” comprise today’s one new man.

When Naomi returns home, it happens to be harvest time---and what better place to find food than in Bethlehem (“House of Bread”)! Recall that in biblical times (and to an extent, today) even the neediest in Israel could acquire food at harvest according to the law of gleaning. Gleaning was God’s merciful form of social welfare. It provided for portions of crops to be left on the ground for the poor to freely gather and enjoy (Leviticus 23:22). Prophetically, Ruth’s emergence in Israel at harvest time depicts the Church’s embrace of Israel during the last days’ harvest of souls. It also suggests a manna-like nourishment for God’s people at that season.

So back in Bethlehem, Ruth goes gleaning. The younger and physically sturdier of the two, she undertakes the taxing job to nourish and sustain Naomi and herself. Remarkably, from this point on, Naomi never again refers to her as a daughter-in-law, but as “my daughter.” Ruth is blessing Naomi as typically only a daughter (or son) would, in covenant love and faithfulness. The profound significance of Ruth’s sacrifice is more fully grasped when we consider that the Hebrew root-based definition of the word *bless* means to “kneel, particularly to enrich another.”<sup>4</sup> Ruth’s kneeling in the sweltering, sunbaked fields of the Middle East to enrich Naomi is a poignant picture of blessing.

God promises to bless those who bless Israel (Genesis 12:3). Ruth, therefore, is about to glean a great deal more than grain. She quickly catches the eye of a chivalrous chap named Boaz. Boaz owns the field in which she happens to be searching for leftovers. Tenderly he tells her, “My daughter, listen to me. Don’t go and glean in another field and don’t go away from here.... I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled” (Ruth 2:8-9).

Ruth is honored and baffled. We can imagine her mopping a sweaty brow, fingering sticky strands of hair from her face. “Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?” she asks (verse 10).

Boaz’s reply reflects his own magnanimity of spirit. “I have been told,” he says, “all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge” (verses 11-12).

#### **KINSMAN-REDEEMER COMES IN STRENGTH**

As it happens, Boaz is related to Naomi from Elimelech’s side of the family. The name Boaz can mean “In Him is Strength” or “Come in Strength.” So when Ruth comes

home and reports the day's good turn of events, Naomi is elated. She exclaims, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers" (Ruth 2:20 NIV).

The role of kinsman-redeemer was prescribed in the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). Certain relatives of a deceased Israelite were designated to protect the interests and inheritance of the surviving family. The kinsman-redeemer served, among other things, to father an heir for a brother who had died, thereby securing family property that would otherwise be lost due to death. But redemption by a kinsman—or his refusal to do so and handoff of those duties to another—had to follow certain protocol.

Naomi knows the rules. Learning of Boaz's benevolence toward Ruth, she dares to dream again. Suddenly we hear the bitter/pleasant one praising the Lord. "Could this man, coming in strength, be the hope of our redemption?" she perhaps thinks aloud. A strange flicker of faith—ignited by her Gentile daughter—sparks her soul. That flicker is about to explode into the surprise of a lifetime for Ruth, shaping history. Similarly, as Christians today bless the Jewish people, the question will arise in Jewish hearts, '*Could this ancient relative of ours (Yeshua) actually be the Coming One in whom there is strength? Could it be He is indeed the hope of our redemption*'?<sup>5</sup>

Like Boaz of Bethlehem, Yeshua redeems all that was lost due to sin and death. And like Boaz, He is captivated by clinging friendship to His Old Covenant people. His heart is won over by believers from the nations demonstrating genuine love to Israel. While He reveals Himself as Redeemer to all who trust in Him, to those intimately aligned with His kinfolk—His Jewish brethren according to the flesh—He goes deeper. He shows Himself, close-up and personal, as Kinsman. The Church's relationship with Israel is at its core about knowing Messiah and following Him intimately.

Thus Boaz blesses Ruth. "May full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge" (Ruth 2:12). Ruth has sought refuge not so much with Naomi as with Naomi's God. The Hebrew word translated "wings" in this tender transaction can also refer to the corner of a garment or *tallit* (prayer shawl). Unconditional love in action for Israel is associated with coming under her Kinsman-Redeemer's *tallit*-like cover (see Ruth 3:9).

Here we must briefly consider a side point. Unconditional love does not withhold truth needed by the beloved in order to save the beloved's life. An essential aspect of Christian love for Israel must involve communicating the good news of salvation in Messiah. This means it will be necessary, at the right time and by gentle leading of the Spirit, to at some point use words. Because communicating the good news of Yeshua can mean risking certain favor with the Jews, it can also represent the highest form of sacrificial love Christians can express toward them.

## **DIVINE RECIPROCITY**

Back in the drama of Ruth, until now the Moabitess has been the one kneeling to enrich (bless) Naomi. As a result she has curried unexpected favor from a man possessing

the potential to alter the course of her life. This in turn quickens Naomi's spirit to the near and present reality of God as in days gone by. And so now it is Naomi who will kneel to enrich Ruth—beyond imagination.

According to God's law, only Naomi, as surviving spouse of the deceased, inherits the right of redemption (Deuteronomy 25:5; Ruth 4:5, 9). Not only does Naomi have legal right and access to Boaz, but she is much closer in age to him than is Ruth (Ruth 3:10; 2:8). Surely he would make a terrific husband for the older, impecunious widow. Naomi has every common-sense reason to present herself to Boaz for marriage. Only if she voluntarily sacrifices her rights, and all the restorative blessings associated with them, can Ruth or anyone else claim them.

Amazingly and without hesitation, this is precisely what Naomi sets out to do. The matter is quickly resolved as far as she is concerned. She tenderly approaches Ruth and says, "My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for?" (Ruth 3:1).

Though embittered by life's hard blows, and perhaps all the more because of them, Naomi is extravagantly grateful for Ruth's loyalty and love. The young woman's steadfast devotion has transformed her, and she is able to reciprocate when the right time comes. With Ruth's best interest at heart, this consummate Jewish mother risks losing whatever she could possibly gain for her daughter's sake. For if Boaz redeems and marries Ruth, under typical circumstances, Naomi is likely to fade from the scene. (How likely is it a new bride will cling to a distressed, former mother-in-law once she's remarried into a prominent, upscale family? <sup>6</sup> Wouldn't a new husband, new mother-in-law and future children crowd her out?)

Nevertheless, Naomi takes the chance. She has learned once more to love.

In a certain sense, Israel has done for the Church what Naomi does here for Ruth. On a national level, she has for millennia deliberately—though unknowingly—foregone the blessings of redemption. As a result, salvation has come to the Gentiles. The Jewish people's corporate rejection of Kinsman-Redeemer Yeshua has meant the reconciliation of the world through Him (Romans 11:11, 15). ***To the extent the Church benefits from unsaved Israel's national spurning of salvation in Messiah, the two covenant peoples of God resemble Ruth and Naomi at the deepest level of sacrifice at this juncture in the book.***

Bear in mind that if Israel's national rejection of her Kinsman Redeemer has benefited the nations, her repentance will propel the world toward untold blessing:

*Moreover, if their stumbling is bringing riches to the world—that is, if Israel's being placed temporarily in a condition less favored than that of the Gentiles is bringing riches to the latter—how much greater riches will Israel in its fullness bring them!.... For if their casting Yeshua aside means reconciliation for*

*the world, what will their accepting Him mean? It will be life from the dead!*  
(Romans 11:12, 15 CJB<sup>7</sup>)

Israel's acceptance of Yeshua and national redemption will mean nothing less than life from the dead. Recall that Yeshua specifically conditioned His return on the Jews' repentant embrace of Him (Matthew 23:39). As today's Ruth blesses today's Naomi, Naomi will bless Ruth in return. The synergy of blessing will escalate in years to come. More and more Jews will come to Messiah and slowly, the Messianic Jewish component of one new humanity will blossom. This divine, mutual reciprocity between Jew and Gentile, this exquisite interdependence, will release the love of God's family not known since the early Church.

### THRESHING FLOOR TEST

But back in the book of Ruth, matters are still at stake. If the Moabitess is to be redeemed, Naomi must carefully prepare her according to set ways and means. So she instructs Ruth scrupulously according to protocol. Her advice is not just kindly and motherly; any deviation from God's Word could backfire, dashing their hopes to bits.

At first, Naomi's advice sounds reasonable: "Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes" (Ruth 3:3). But then it gets a little quirky and even kinky: "Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down...go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do" (verses 3-4). That could sound, I daresay, downright scandalous.

We can assume that Ruth, who has demonstrated nothing less than stellar character, is a chaste woman of moral purity. Could she not have balked at Naomi's "teaching?" Might she have been tempted to conclude that these Jewish ways were getting a bit too bizarre for her? ("I've gone along with this 'Israel thing' up till now, but that's just not how we Gentiles do it...")

But no—not missing a beat, Ruth replies, "I will do whatever you say" (verse 5).

***Naomi has surrendered her rights to Ruth; Ruth surrenders hers to Naomi. Divine reciprocity between Jew and Gentile is about mutual submission and humble service. There can be no arrogance or conceit on the part of Christians toward Israel (Romans 11:20-21, 25). Just as certain, there is no place for Jewish pride toward Gentiles. Any sense of self-importance will find itself exposed on a modern-day threshing floor. In these last days, threshing floor situations will result from birth-pain shakings heralding Yeshua's return. Just as Ruth's embrace of her Jewish mother was tested on a threshing floor, there the Church's embrace of Israel will be tested, refined and for His remnant, generously rewarded (Matthew 3:12).***

Down at the biblical threshing floor, Ruth follows through on all she was told to do. We are allowed to eavesdrop on her encounter with Boaz—one that commences almost comically. According to the narrative,

*In the middle of the night something startled the man, and he turned and discovered a woman lying at his feet. "Who are you?" he asked.*

*"I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer."*

*"The Lord bless you, my daughter," he replied.... "I will do for you all you ask." (Ruth 3:8-11)*

Like Ruth, faithful believers will emerge from their threshing floor test lavished with favor. It is there the Kinsman-Redeemer will spread over them the corner of His garment, His *tallit*. Their relationship with Him will be taken to new levels befitting His Bride.

### **JEW + GENTILE = FULL REDEMPTION**

Boaz readily fulfills all requirements of the Law to complete Ruth's redemption, just as Jesus, for the joy set before Him, fulfilled all legal requirements to redeem you and me. Then Boaz announces confidently to the community of Israel, "I have bought...all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife" (Ruth 4:9-10).

Boaz has rightfully inherited all that belonged to Elimelech ("My God is King"), even as Yeshua has rightfully inherited all things from God, Who is King (Ephesians 1:22). Boaz has rightfully taken all that belonged to "Weakness, Sickliness, Affliction" (Mahlon) and "Wasting Away" (Kilion). As Israel and the Church come together in the spirit of Ruth and Naomi, they will be delivered from forms of weakness, sickliness, affliction and wasting away that have beset them both.

When Boaz claims Ruth as his, the whole community joyfully welcomes her in. No longer is Ruth a lowly foreigner; she is a full member of the household of Israel, the recipient of eternal esteem: "May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem" (Ruth 4:11). Today, like our forebears, we Messianic Jews rejoice over, fully welcome, honor and bless our redeemed Gentile brethren in Yeshua, especially His "Ruth remnant!"

Blessings spoken over Ruth come to pass. In the closing scene of the book, she gives birth to a son named Obed ("Servant"). Obed becomes grandfather to King David and a direct ancestor of Jesus the Messiah. Obed's mother finds herself in the lineage of the Savior of humanity, her story preserved forever. She shines into infinity as the prototype Gentile believer who, because of her alignment with Israel, partakes of God's full covenant blessings. She especially foreshadows redeemed Arabic peoples positioned to uniquely bless the Jewish state.

Baby Obed, meanwhile, is nurtured by Naomi as her very own son. Obed serves to revive her to the extent she is pleasant again, shedding her name and identity as Mara

(“Bitter”) (Ruth 4:16-17). By the fruit of Ruth’s redemption, Naomi is brought back, so to speak, to life from the dead. According to the Hebrew text, she apparently nurses the boy at her own breast. She prophetically depicts Israel’s response to Christian love in hard times. Let’s get ready!

#### ENDNOTES

1. <https://www.caspari.com/2019/10/07/how-many-messianic-jews-in-israel/>
2. National Israel’s redemptive destiny means, for example, that she still retains the land covenant promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
3. The Scriptures are to be interpreted first and foremost in a straightforward manner, based on the plain meaning of the biblical text in its grammatical-historical context, wherever it is reasonable to do so.
4. James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Main Concordance* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977), see *bless* in Main Concordance and *barakh* in Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary; Francis Brown, S.R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), see *barakh*.
5. Romans 11:26b, citing Isaiah 59:20 and 60:16; Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, <http://www.ccel.org/h/henry/mhc2/Ru.ii.html>.
6. Some scholars say Ruth’s new mother-in-law could possibly have been Rahab the harlot-turned-heroine of faith (see Matthew 1:5). Others dispute the time frame.
7. David H. Stern, *Complete Jewish Bible: An English Version of the Tanakh (Old Testament) and B’rit Hadashah (New Testament)* (Clarksville, Md.: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1998).