

**"Your people shall be my people
and your God, my God."**

Ruth 1:16

Blessings to all Lovers of Zion,

Shavuot: Festival of the Harvest

Shavuot (Hebrew for Weeks) or Pentecost in English is the third of the three Pilgrim Feasts outlined in Leviticus 23. This year it begins on the evening of May 25, 2004 and ends on May 27, 2004. The scriptural admonition concerning the three feasts is repeated in Exodus 23:14 as follows: *"Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year."* God is to be honored and worshipped in a special way during these festivals. At Shavuot, God's people were instructed to bring the choice firstfruits (*bikurim*) to the house of the Lord their God. It was harvest time and God had blessed their labors in the field.

Shavuot occurs 7 weeks plus 1 day or 50 days after Passover (hence the name Pentecost in English). The new grain offering that the Lord required at Shavuot included two loaves of leavened bread which the priest waved before Him (Leviticus 23:17). We think these two leavened loaves represent all the people of the world (both Jews and Gentiles). We all come to God as we are, in our sin, and Yeshua, the Eternal High Priest, cleanses us and presents us to His Father, forgiven, one people **in Him**.

God's instructions for the observance of the Festival of the Harvest (*Hag Ha Katzir*) continues in Leviticus 23:22: *"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the Lord your God."*

Ruth: Poor and a Stranger

The Book of Ruth which is normally read on Shavuot (May 27th this year). There are a number of reasons for this. First of all, Ruth is a book with a harvest theme. A poor Moabitess (stranger) and her Jewish mother-in-law return to Bethlehem from Moab at harvest time. Ruth is directed by the hand of the Almighty to the man who will help her fulfill her divine destiny. They meet in a harvest field. Ruth is also read at Shavuot because this feast is identified with the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Shavuot marks the anniversary of the acceptance of God's Laws by the Israelites. Similarly, the heathen Moabite Ruth embraced the religion of the Jewish people. She also became the great-grandmother of King David. Since it is traditionally believed that King David was born and died on Shavuot, the book of Ruth is read in his honor.

Riches from Ruth

We are living at "harvest time." Our Messiah exhorted us in John 4:35 to lift up our eyes and look on the fields for they are "*white already to harvest.*" Ruth is a book for **now**. God has a message for all of us as we labor together in *ha katzir* (the harvest) of souls, especially Jewish souls. Ruth is a book about Jews and gentiles together, loving and comforting one another and being part of God's plan for mankind. It is a prophetic book filled with great riches right beneath the surface. The Lord is leading us to help you begin the process of mining these hidden treasures this month.

Ruth: What's in a Name?

Let's begin with the name "Ruth." It comes from two possible roots, both of which include the central idea of "friendship." If your name happens to be Ruth, you have a very good name! Your destiny is to be a friend—first to God, then to His people Israel and the rest of the world. Those of us who are not named Ruth can have the same spirit as Ruth—a spirit of friendship, especially in relationship to the same people that Ruth befriended—the Jewish people. Ruth displayed uncommon loyalty and friendship to her Jewish mother-in-law, Naomi. She made a decision to cling to Naomi and to Naomi's God. Many of you have made that same decision. The Lord will bless you for it.

Bethlehem to Moab to Bethlehem

The Book of Ruth takes place at the time when the *shoftim* or judges ruled Israel (12th century BC). It was a time very much like our day, a time when "every *man did what was right in his own eyes*" (Judges 21:25). There was a famine in the land of Israel (not surprising, considering the spiritual condition) and a man named Elimelech ("God is King") went with his wife Naomi ("Pleasantness") and their two sons to live in the land of Moab. God is still King, even if He is not acknowledged as such. He still arranges circumstances and directs people so that His will is accomplished. We saw Him move behind the scenes in **Esther** and now we see Him again in **Ruth**. He was in Moab even though the Moabites worshipped the god, Chemosh, to whom human sacrifices were made (present-day abortion?). King David expressed it this way: "*If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there*" (Psalm 139:8).

Elimelech and Naomi's sons married Moabite women. One was named Orpah ("the one that gives the back of her neck"), the other Ruth ("friendship"). While in Moab, Naomi's husband and two sons died. Meanwhile, Naomi had heard that the Lord had "visited" His people (Israel) in giving them bread. The Hebrew word for visited is *pakad* and is a word used in the Tenach to indicate divine activity, in this case blessing. God was blessing *Beth-lechem* (House of Bread) with bread again. Naomi, who we can see as representing the Jewish people, decides to return to Bethlehem. (This has not yet happened in Israel today. There are no Jews in Beth-lehem. The famine is still there—a famine of the Word of God. It is even dangerous for Arab-Christians to live there any more. The "House of Bread" is a Palestinian stronghold.)

Naomi's husband and sons had died, but **she** survived. The Jewish people are survivors because God has an eternal plan for them. They may go through purges, pogroms, persecutions, holocausts, and libels of all sorts, but they will make it to a glorious future because God has ordained it: "*The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant (nayim, same root as Naomi) places; yea, I have a goodly heritage*" (Psalm 16:6).

Ruth and Orpah began the journey to Beth-lechem with their mother-in-law; but Naomi, concerned for their futures, urged them to return to their mother's house so that they could find husbands again and begin life anew. She blessed them for the kindness (*chesed*) they had

shown her. Both wept and insisted on going with Naomi, but twice more she insisted that they go back to their own people. They wept again, but this time Orpah left to return to her people and her gods.

But Ruth clung to Naomi. The Hebrew word for cling is *dabak* which literally means to "stick like glue." Ruth was determined to "stick with Naomi through thick or thin." Without a husband or sons, Naomi would have a very difficult time surviving. Ruth would not abandon her in her time of need. Her heart compelled her to go with Naomi and take care of her. Friendship. Loyalty. Sacrificial Love. Faith. Ruth said to Naomi:

"Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, And there I will be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me." (Ruth 1:16-17)

Ruth: The Gentile Church or Believers in the Messiah Yeshua

If Naomi represents the Jewish people, Ruth represents all true believers in the Messiah Yeshua who have been grafted into the olive tree of Israel (Romans 11:17). A believer with a Ruth-like spirit clings to the Jewish people because he or she has become one with them through the Jewish Messiah Jesus (Ephesians 2:11-13). "Spiritual Ruths" (male or female) love Naomi (the Jewish people), are deeply committed to her, and are willing to make sacrifices on her behalf. They have left their pagan gods and have embraced the God of the Jews, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But the relationship doesn't stop here. True followers of Yeshua not only say, *"Your God shall be my God,"* but **"Your people shall be my people."** There is a difference. If all Christians made the last confession, there would be no such thing as Christian anti-Semitism! (a historical phenomena which continues until our day).

Jewish people are being murdered in Israel daily. Suicide bombers have killed over 900 Jewish people in the last three years. Believers like Ruth should be willing to die there too. (Echoes of Esther: *"If I perish, I perish."*) Are we committed for life? Can we say, "till death do us part?" This is the Ruth-spirit. Jewish people are deeply moved when they experience it. The unconditional love, loyalty, supernatural bonding and deep friendship of a "Ruth" is at once disconcerting and priceless to a Jewish person.

We have been personally stirred concerning the bombings of buses in Israel and have been praying for "Naomi" in this regard for over a year now. The Lord has put it upon our heart to mobilize prayer on behalf of the secular bus drivers, their buses, and their families. We would like to find a congregation or a serious group of intercessors to adopt an Israeli bus route as their own and pray regularly for it.

We believe that through prayer and claiming the promises of God, i.e. Psalm 91, we can prevent suicide bombers from blowing up busloads of Israelis! If your congregation or prayer group would be willing to make the sacrifice to save Jewish lives by adopting a bus route, please call Sheryl at our office and let us know A.S.A.P. We want to be able to share this information with bus drivers at a special meal in their honor when we go to Israel in September. Please understand: This is a serious commitment, a life or death matter. Pray earnestly for guidance before making a commitment.

The Rest of the (Ruth) Story

Lack of space necessitates a "bullet-format" of quick revelations on the rest of Ruth. As you continue studying on your own, we know that the Lord will show you even more.

- When Ruth and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem, Naomi told the excited welcomers not to call her Naomi but instead "Mara" (bitter) for El Shaddai had dealt bitterly with her. Many Jewish people feel this way because of the Holocaust and Jewish suffering down through the ages (see Isaiah 49:14). They need a "Ruth" to comfort and stand with them (see Isaiah 40:11).
- Ruth was anxious to go into the Jewish harvest field and get to work. She expected to find favor there (Ruth 2:2). Notice her faith. She "happened" (2:3) to end up in the field belonging to Boaz, of the family of Elimelech ("God is King"). This, of course, was no accident, but the leading of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit). From the moment Boaz set eyes on Ruth, he loved her. She captured his heart, won his favor and was abundantly provided for. When Ruth, in her humility, asked Boaz why **she**, a foreigner, had found such favor in the eyes of such a rich, important man, Boaz answered that he had heard all about her: her kindness to Naomi, her departure from her own land, people and gods, and the way she had embraced the God of Israel. Yeshua is our Boaz. We have captured His heart. Our love for God's people Israel and our departure from our pagan ways please Him.
- At mealtime, Boaz said to Ruth: *"Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the (wine) vinegar."* The rabbinic Midrash on Ruth refers to this as the "Messianic meal," associating the bread with the "bread of the kingdom" and the wine vinegar with the Messianic sufferings spoken of in Isaiah 53!
- Naomi (Ruth 3:1-4) instructed Ruth concerning Boaz because she was preparing her for a wedding. Our ministry has taken on part of Naomi's role as well. One of the goals of Jewish Jewels is to help prepare a bride for the King of Kings by adorning her with Jewish Jewels from God's Word.
- When Ruth (3:7-9) lay down at Boaz' feet in the threshing floor she said to him: *"Take your maid-servant under your wings, for you are a near kinsman."* Boaz was a kinsman redeemer (*goel*, in Hebrew), able to purchase Ruth as his wife once he redeemed the property of Elimelech. Ruth asked Boaz to cover her with his "wing," "skirt," "robe," "garment" (depends on the version you read). This actually refers to his talit, a four-cornered garment. The Hebrew word *kanfot* signifies both corners and wings. Boaz covered Ruth just as Yeshua, our kinsman redeemer, has covered us. He is our Bridegroom, just as Boaz became Ruth's bridegroom. A Jewish man took a gentile bride, and the first thing He did was bless her.
- Boaz told Ruth that He would do all that she requested because all the people of his town knew that she was a virtuous woman (Ruth 3:11). How do the Jewish people see you? your church? Is Yeshua compelled to bless you because of the godly way in which you live?
- Boaz loaded Ruth down with barley saying, *"Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law."* Yeshua has loaded us with benefits. Will we share them with Naomi? (Please consider putting aside a little each month for us to bring to Israel ("love basket") on our September/October Mercy Mission.)
- Boaz purchased Ruth as His wife (Ruth 4:10). We have also been bought at a price... I Peter 1:18—the precious blood of Messiah, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.
- The fruit of the marriage of Boaz and Ruth brought life from the dead to Naomi. She experienced new life, new birth and hope for the future through their son Obed ("servant"). The

fruit of a believer's marriage to Yeshua should also restore life to Israel. This fruit of servanthood, love, joy, peace, comfort through the Ruach HaKodesh, flowing from a heart like Ruth, can be the catalyst of Israel's salvation. We, like Ruth, can give back to Naomi "the gift of a Son" (John 3:16).

A Final Blessing

We want to leave you with the same blessing that Boaz pronounced over Ruth when he saw her in the midst of the Jewish harvest field:

"The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge." (Ruth 2:12)

Three Special "Ruth" Offers

Don Finto has written an excellent book, **Your People Shall Be My People**. In it he has thoughtfully, carefully, and spiritually outlined the case for the Church ministering to Israel in these last days. It will equip you to explain/defend your position on Israel as the media continues to attack her. We recommend it for every believer. We have been given fifty copies to give to **pastors**. If you are buying a copy for yourself and want one of the free copies for your pastor, please mark the box on the enclosed return card.

The music of Marty Goetz, a modern day psalmist, is always welcome in our home. We think his album, **I Call You Friend**, is some of the most anointed music he has ever recorded. We love it!

If you have never seen the **Jewish Jewels** program on "**RUTH**," please consider purchasing a copy. You will enjoy it, and then be able to pass it on to a friend or perhaps to your congregation's lending library.

Your servants in the Jewish harvest,

Neil & Jamie