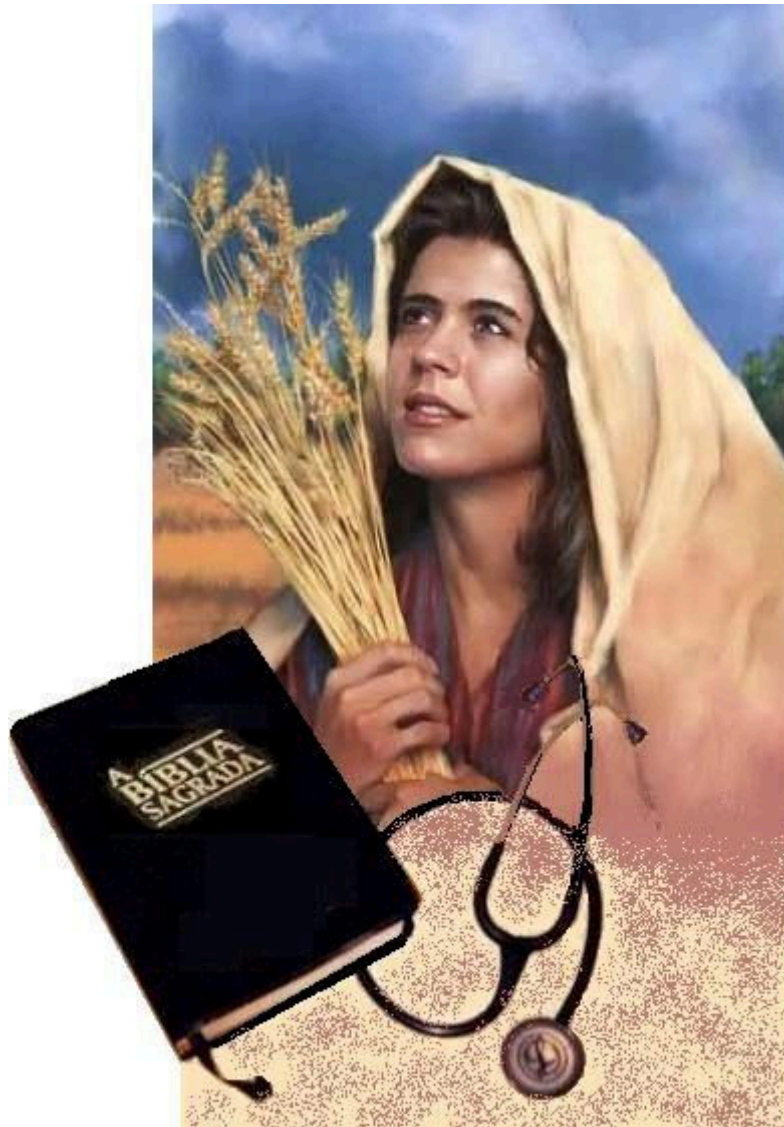


*RUTH, THE BEGINNING
OF A NEW LIFE*



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Ministério Seara Ágape*

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Estudo Bíblico Evangélico*

*Pastor Tânia Cristina Giachetti
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I dedicate this book to all those who were injured, hurt, disrespected, deceived, betrayed, devastated and abused by desiring to love and be loved and establish the kingdom of God on earth, but have within themselves the strength of this greater love to lift up their heads, move on and glorify the name of Him who rescued them from the darkness into His marvelous light.

I thank Jesus Christ who, with His blood, redeemed me from strong enemies and called me to be His companion, giving me back what was taken from me and giving me what I have never had. To Him who gave me a dream, be the glory, the power and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

INTRODUCTION



The book of Ruth is a profound book that leads us to reassess our way of life and urges us to leave what is old and move on to conquer the places of honor and victory that God has already set aside for us. It shows us that leaving the roots implies a real revolution in internal structures and in a struggle to dethrone all Rulers of our lives (High hierarchy of demons, I mean). All of us are born committed with something that somehow gives legality to the enemy to act on what is ours. The biggest examples are the hereditary curses, the curses of sentence and the knowledge that we acquired in contact with the world. Only when we consciously surrender to Jesus is that we are actually redeemed, having the right to write a new story of life.

Like Ruth, I lived moments of great changes and inner transformations and, logically, great wars, by being called by God to take on a spiritual position and a specific mission, leaving medicine after eighteen years and eight months of exercise of it. It was the third attempt (1991, 1999 and 2003), because the feeling of God's call already has many years, but only at that moment I felt prepared for the surrender and for the action and with the strength to go to the end. It was not a simple handover of a job, however, a profound handover and an important transformation within myself, implying other changes and liberations in all areas in order to assume the identity designed by God and the leadership of the land He had separated for me. I came across the inner conflicts, lies and the human opposition that takes time to leave aside the prejudice and selfishness, and is afraid to dare new things and support those who decide to change their lives and turn things 'upside down.'

The redemptive action of God overthrowing the barriers and filling me with His love brought victory and transformation.

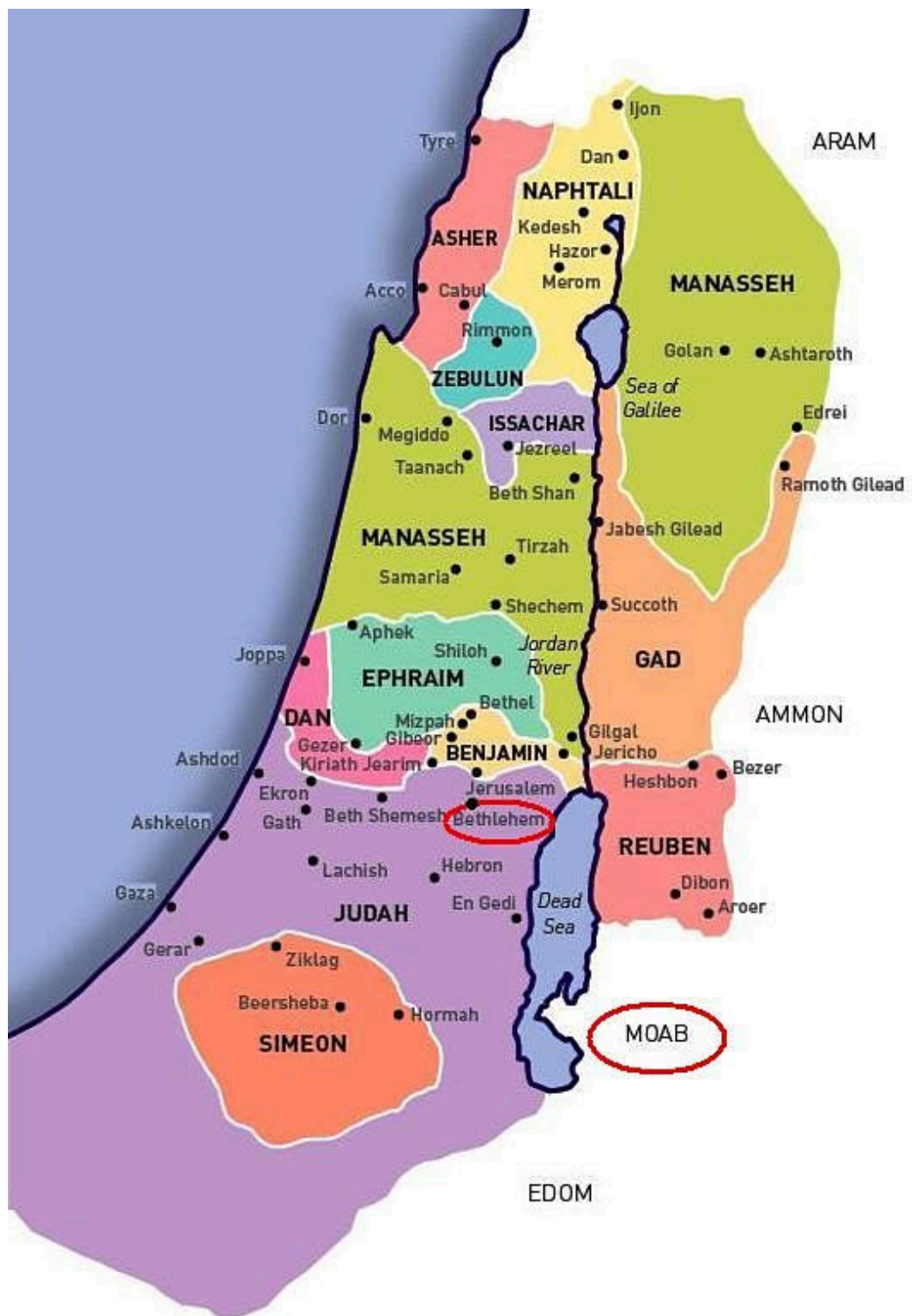
Perhaps your call to be Ruth is lighter, so do not be surprised if the Holy Spirit embraces you and calls you 'my Ruth.' Answer *yes* to Him. He knows what He's doing. He is turning you into a great owner of a huge land.

Good reading. I love you in Jesus.

Tânia Cristina

THE STORY OF RUTH





THE LAND OF THE TWELVE TRIBES

THE STORY OF RUTH



“Are we ready to begin? So here we go. How are you, Ruth? Are you okay?”

“Huh?”

“Yes, I’m talking to you, reader!”

“But my name is not Ruth.”

“I know. You can be man or woman and have any other name, but please, read the book to the end and then you will understand why I called you Ruth. You will wish to be Ruth.”

“What, then, is to be Ruth?”

“It’s a long story. *Ruth* is a Hebrew name and means *friend, companion, faithful and beautiful*. Having the anointing of Ruth is the desire of Jesus to His Church, for it is to have a firm covenant with the *Redeemer* of our souls.”

The book of Ruth, in Jewish tradition, was written by the prophet Samuel, but can also be considered of an unknown author. It is a symbol of covenant, marriage, change of life; it also talks about the foreigner and logically about us, the Gentiles. The story is more or less lived in the period of the judges (1375–1050 BC, much probably, 1170–1169 BC – Gideon as judge: 1162–1122 BC) and is read on the feast of harvest at Pentecost, for the Jews, called *SHAVUOT*.

The book of Ruth is small compared with other books of the bible, but it is one of the books with the greatest secrets and revelations from God to us.

Bethlehem of Judah is a city in the hill country of Judah called *Ephrathah*. It is different from Bethlehem, another city in the tribe of Zebulun. From Bethlehem of Judah Naomi and Elimelech, her husband, went out to live in Moab because there was famine in the land. The interesting is that *Bethlehem* means “*house of bread*” and symbolizes the dependence on God.

The time of the judges was a very troubled time for the Jewish people. Joshua was already dead and the later generations did not know the Lord or the works that He had done for Israel (*Judg. 2: 10; 16-19*). At that time when the material and spiritual hunger reigned Naomi and Elimelech moved to Moab with their sons, Chilion and Mahlon.

It seems contradictory that someone named Elimelech, whose meaning is ‘*My God is King*’, and Naomi, which means ‘*my delight, delightful, blessed, fortunate, pleasing, beautiful*’, have children who call Chilion [*weakening; pining away; consumption – as in a wasting disease; anxiety*] and Mahlon [*skinny, sick, illness*]. Probably, they were the picture of famine and shortage that occurred in Israel and that caused a sick constitution, physical and emotional, with anxiety and low physical endurance. We can extrapolate this deformity to the spiritual as well, where the knowledge of the word seemed scarce and held by a few priests only, but the people had no access to it and lived in idolatry. When the physical and material supply are lacking, particularly in the area of nourishment, learning and intelligence is affected. But when the supply of faith, peace, love and comprehension are lacking by the scarcity and ignorance of God’s

word, the spiritual and emotional consequences can be tragic, deforming the character, killing the dreams, hindering the healthy relationships, destroying the family and creating all kind of deformation of personality that opens gaps for spiritual devastation and destruction. Only the true love can bring healing, deliverance and redemption.

Moab was the name of the land of Lot's descendant (*Gen. 19: 37*), from his incestuous relationship with the eldest daughter. Moab means *desire, family of a father*. He was the brother of *Ammon or Ben-Ami*, a descendant of Lot's incest with his youngest daughter, and means *son of my people (Ben-Ammi) and craftsman (Ammon)*. Therefore, they were relatives of Israel. Marriage between Jews and Moabites was not forbidden by the Lord; only the Moabites and Ammonites were forbidden to enter the tabernacle (*Deut. 23: 3-4*), not exactly by the sin of incest of their ancestors, but because they hired Balaam to curse the Israelites (*Num. 22: 1-6*). Here I want to make a parenthesis to bring a revelation from God. Please notice that the Lord did not forbid them to enter His sanctuary, that is, in His presence, by the sin of their flesh, but because they cursed the people whom He had blessed. This means that every time we curse the anointed and the chosen of God we are prevented from entering His presence for this sin of ours. So, we feel distant and sad because we cannot enjoy His blessing upon us. This fellowship can only be restored when we recognize our sin and ask the Lord for forgiveness; from there, our responsibility is to break the curses with our own lips.

Chilion married Orpah, Moabite, whose name means *youthful vigor*, among others (*mane, gazelle, neck*); apparently someone who would compensate his weakened spirit. Mahlon (*sick, skinny, illness*) married Ruth (*friend, companion, faithful and beautiful*). The god of the Moabites was *Chemosh*, worshiped with children sacrifice. Ruth, in the ten years she lived with Mahlon, had no children, which leads us to think she was sterile (*Rut. 1: 4; Rut. 4: 10*), although we cannot put aside the possibility of sterility being Mahlon's, for he was the 'sick.' Certainly, her idolatrous origin and the constant contact with a sick, sterile and pessimistic person must have affected her as well or, at best, should have made her to meditate on her own life and her circumstances, leading her later, to make the decision of knowing the true God, the God of Naomi, and get rid of such contamination and have a new chance to be happy.

Until now, we can say that when there is shortage of the true spiritual supply and relationships are unsatisfying, sick and sinful, the results are: death, sterility, devastation, deprivation and loss of dreams. The growth is hindered by the prisons and chains of the devil. That's what happened especially with Naomi, Ruth and Orpah after the death of their husbands, but hearing about God's mercy to His people, Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem of Judah. Spiritually speaking after had been through so much tribulation and tests, a real desert, Naomi remembered a living and true God who could give her back all she had lost.

Here, then, comes an interesting subject called faithfulness, loyalty and covenant. Orpah was faithful, but her loyalty was only human; therefore, she returned to Moab, to what she knew. Who is faithful only to the flesh, but has no covenant in the spirit, in other words, who only loves with human love, has a bridge with the past and remains with the soul committed to what the person was taken from.

Ruth, unlike Orpah, did with Naomi and her God a spiritual covenant, and her statement on *Ruth 1: 16-17* was a true conversion, because she left the old life, her family and took the risk of living a new story and have a new family: "But Ruth said, 'Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die – there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to

me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!” Therefore, she made the decision and didn’t turn back. She stood firm and destroyed the bridge with the past. That is what happens to those who have true spiritual covenant with Jesus.

Arriving in Bethlehem, however, Naomi brought a trace of bitterness in her heart (*Ruth 1: 20-22*): “She said to them, ‘Call me no longer Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty; why call me Naomi when the Lord has dealt harshly with me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?’ So Naomi returned together with Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who came back with her from the country of Moab. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.” She brought this bitterness due to the circumstances extremely contrary, full of theft, loss, desolation and spiritual oppression that involved her in a strange land, preventing her from maintaining her original character as *happy, blessed and fortunate*. The interesting point is that God did not deal with Naomi first; perhaps, the wound was very deep and painful and she didn’t let Him touch her at the moment. But the Lord left her to heal naturally in contact with her land and customs of origin, customs healthier than those of Moab, till heal her completely through Ruth. On the contrary, God’s attention turned to Ruth because of His sovereign purpose in her life: to make her an ancestor of David.

You noticed that I have given special emphasis to the meaning of the names, because, for the Jews, the name of someone is what will determine his personality traits and character.

In *Rut. 2: 2* (“And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, ‘Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favor’. She said to her, ‘Go, my daughter’”), we can perceive another trait in Ruth’s character that was the initiative and the willingness to work, besides her desire to be part of that new community. Ruth knew that if she did not work, there would be no food for her or for her mother-in-law. She didn’t care what kind of work it was, whether it seemed humiliating to others or not.

Gleaning was the act of gathering the grain forgotten by the reapers and it was something permitted by the Law of Moses as social security system. “When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings. When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this” (*Deut. 24: 19-22*). But what was left to the poor, generally, was very little: “And it shall be as when reapers gather standing grain and their arms harvest the ears, and as when one gleans the ears of grain in the Valley of Rephaim. Gleanings will be left in it, as when an olive tree is beaten – two or three berries in the top of the highest bough, four or five on the branches of a fruit tree, says the Lord God of Israel” (*Isa. 17: 5-6*).

Gleaning was a mocking way of expressing *dependence on divine provision*. Ruth was literally living by faith. She gleaned the ears of grain and gathered them among the sheaves. She was a simple gleaner, but God’s providence had already placed her in the field of Boaz, Naomi’s kinsman-redeemer. *Boaz* means ‘*strength, firmness*’, and he is the figure of Jesus. God had a plan to Ruth and a prize for her loyalty. He did not want her as a gleaner but as ‘the owner of the field.’ The field of Boaz is about one mile to the east of Bethlehem, adjoining to the *Shepherds’ Field*, where the birth of Jesus was

announced to those who cared for the sheep. I want to open a parenthesis here to talk a little bit on the functions of a family's kinsman-redeemer:

The Redeemer is also called 'kinsman-redeemer' and 'avenger'. He was a not so distant relative, influential, whom the family could usually call upon when their lineage or their goods were at risk of being lost. He should:

- Buy back the family land that was sold in times of crisis: "If anyone of your kin falls into difficulty and sells a piece of property, then the next of kin shall come and redeem what the relative has sold" (*Lev. 25: 25*).

- Rescue enslaved relatives: "If resident aliens among you prosper, and if any of your kin fall into difficulty with one of them and sell themselves to an alien, or to a branch of the alien's family, after they have sold themselves they shall have the right of redemption; one of their brothers may redeem them, or their uncle or their uncle's son may redeem them, or anyone of their family who is of their own flesh may redeem them; or if they prosper they may redeem themselves" (*Lev. 25: 47-49*).

- Ensure an heir for the deceased brother: "When brothers reside together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her, taking her in marriage, and performing the duty of a husband's brother to her, and the firstborn whom she bears shall succeed to the name of the deceased brother, so that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. But if the man has no desire to marry his brother's widow, then his brother's widow shall go up to the elders at the gate and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.' Then the elders of his town shall summon him and speak to him. If he persists, saying, 'I have no desire to marry her', then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, pull his sandal off his foot, spit in his face, and declare, 'This is what is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' Throughout Israel his family shall be known as 'the house of him whose sandal was pulled off'" (*Deut. 25: 5-10*).

- Avenge the death of a relative: "The avenger of blood is the one who shall put the murderer to death; when they meet, the avenger of blood shall execute the sentence. Likewise, if someone pushes another from hatred, or hurls something at another, lying in wait, and death ensues, or in enmity strikes another with the hand, and death ensues, then the one who struck the blow shall be put to death; that person is a murderer; the avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death, when they meet" (*Num. 35: 19-21*).

- Take care of relatives in difficult circumstances: *Jer. 32: 6-25* (Jeremiah bought the field at Anathoth from his cousin Hanamel).

The idea of ransom (Redeemer) is also used in reference to God and the redemption of Israel made by Him:

- *Ex. 6: 6-8*: "Say therefore to the Israelites, 'I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.'"

- *Job 19: 25*: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth."

- *Ps. 19: 14*: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."

- *Ps. 69: 18*: "Draw near to me, redeem me, set me free because of my enemies."

• *Isa. 43: 1*: “But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.”

In these passages, God is the closest kin of Israel, appearing to bring the nation back to His family, since the people had no conditions to do this for themselves. The word ‘redeemer’ is also used as a prediction of the coming of the Messiah (*Isa. 59: 20*: “And he will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord”). Christ is our close kin (our kinsman-redeemer) who came to buy us back to God’s family. In the NT, this concept is revealed in the several synonyms of ‘to redeem’, which convey the idea of paying a ransom, making an acquisition or recover what was lost.

Boaz was gentle with Ruth, giving her protection, ordering the servants not to touch her, guiding her to follow what his maidservants did and giving her portion of water and food as if she worked for him. He also gave orders to his servants to let her pick up some more handfuls from the bundles so that it was left over for her and for her mother-in-law. Boaz was receptive and kind to her, because she had sought for help at the right place (*Rut. 2: 12*: “May the Lord reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!”) and because he saw loyalty and a real change of attitude in her (*Rut. 2: 11*: “But Boaz answered her, ‘All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before’”). We can notice until now that Boaz was respectful and let Ruth was gradually taking her place, overcoming her shyness and gaining self-confidence and perseverance, because she was a foreigner, she had never done that work before and she was taking the risk of rejection, segregation and even abuse. After her conversion, Ruth was going through a period of healing by the Holy Spirit, strengthening her to occupy the place that God had already determined to her and preparing her to make a commitment with the redeemer.

I also see that all the time she gleaned ears, Ruth was worked and freed from the spirit of poverty and misery, idolatry and the distortions of her self-image that could prevent her from assuming her position of honor in that society.

The bible makes no reference to the time elapsed between events; it only says that they arrived to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest (*Rut. 1: 22*). Usually the barley harvest anticipates the wheat’s and starts around the 14th day of the month *Ziv* or *Iyar*, which corresponds to April-May. Passover begins on the 14th of the previous month, the first month of the Jewish religious calendar, the month of *Aviv* or *Nisan*, which corresponds to March-April. By the 6th day of the month May-June (month of *Sivan*) is the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (seven weeks after the start of harvest), commemorating the end of the wheat harvest: “You shall count seven weeks; begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain. Then you shall keep the festival of weeks to the Lord your God, contributing a freewill offering in proportion to the blessing that you have received from the Lord your God. Rejoice before the Lord your God – you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, the Levites resident in your towns, as well as the strangers, the orphans, and the widows who are among you—at the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and diligently observe these statutes” (*Deut. 16: 9-12*). In *Rut. 2: 23* it is written that Ruth worked in the fields of Boaz until the wheat and barley harvest had finished: “So she stayed close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and

wheat harvests; and she lived with her mother-in-law.” But it does not talk how much time elapsed after the end of story, until the birth of Obed.

The bible does not tell also the emotional details that happened in Ruth’s life in this time of adaptation to this new community, but we can imagine by our own growth with God that it was not easy to forget and change the habits of origin, to deal with her spiritual and family heritages and leave back the bad memories of the old life. Surely, what eased the process were the love and care of Naomi and Boaz, and her own desire to have a new life and a new chance. Naomi also waited for signs of maturity and confidence in Ruth to suggest the idea of marriage to Boaz, and therefore a deeper ransom for both women: “Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, ‘My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do’. She said to her, ‘all that you tell me I will do’” (*Rut. 3: 1-5*).

In *Rut. 3: 7-8; 13-14* the bible says that Ruth lay down at Boaz’s feet, which meant a marriage ceremonial request, and she asked him to spread the cloak over her (*Rut. 3: 9b*) or ‘the corner of his garment’ (NIV). In Hebrew, the word *cloak* (*kanaph*) (כַּנָּף) – Strong #3671 – has several meanings: *mantle, cloak (as in 1 Sam. 24: 5 – when David cuts the corner of Saul’s cloak), shirt, skirt, corner, border, garment, extremity (of a bird or army), edge, wing, winged, covering*. In this case of Ruth, it refers to a custom associated with *marriage proposals (in the case of a woman)*; it was a woman’s way of asking for marriage. For a man, spreading his cloak over a woman showed *acquisition* of that woman, since *kanaph* has the sense of *covering, dominion, possession and protection*, suggesting that more than a request of marriage this was *a request of protection*. In *Rut. 3: 9* it’s written: “He said, ‘Who are you?’ And she answered, ‘I am Ruth, your servant; spread your cloak over your servant, for you are next-of-kin’ [NRSV]”; in NIV is: “‘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 Hebrew transliteration is: “vayyo'mer miy-'attvatto'mer 'ânokhiy Ruth 'amâthekha uphârastâ **khenâphekha** 'al-'amâthkhakiy **gho'êl** 'attâh”. **Goel** (*go'el* or *gho'el*) is a Hebrew term that comes from the verb *ga'al* (to redeem), therefore, *go'el* means *redeemer*, which in the Hebrew bible and the rabbinical tradition denotes a person who, as the nearest relative of another, is in charge with the duty of restoring his rights and to avenge him of the damage caused to him. When Ruth says, “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer,” it was the same as saying “spread your wing” or “take me under your wing of protection”, showing us also the strength that a commitment to marriage has to a Jew. The woman receives protection from the man and he gains her as a precious asset, not in the pejorative sense of possession of only a material good, as it can be misunderstood nowadays. One becomes a complement to the other. Boaz states that he is willing to redeem Ruth through marriage, but informs Ruth that there is another male relative who has the first right of ransom. He also used the same word before, when he said that Ruth trusted God by taking refuge under his wings (*Rut. 2: 12*) or *cloak*. Spiritually speaking, *cloak* or *mantle* means *anointing, protection, covering of the blood of the covenant on our lives*. That’s the moment of decision when we will occupy spiritually the highest places, when we need more protection, more anointing and a greater empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Maybe this marriage is referring to the baptism in the Holy Spirit or a greater outpouring of Him.

Boaz did not disappoint Ruth; instead, he took her cloak and filled it with supplies and sent her them back to town. This is what Jesus does for us, when by faith we assume a commitment to Him and ask Him for help; He not only confirms His promise but also increases our anointing because we won one more challenge to come to Him and to our blessing.

Ruth took some risks; for example, to jeopardize her reputation and the reputation of Boaz. Both of them were undoubtedly faultless. At that time, there could be vandalism and theft in the harvest; therefore, Boaz lay down at the foot of a heap of grain to take care of his property. That grain could serve as food for many people if he sold it. It is like Jesus does. He is the owner of our blessings and our food. It is He who guards our treasure from thieves; it is He who protects our promises; just we have to do is to go to Him and ask what we need.

Our prejudice, fears, shyness, pride and such other things must be left back and we must take the risk of knowing Him better and of asking Him, really, what we want. Here I want to alert also to the fact that there is demonic action hindering, distorting and impeding our understanding of God as He truly is, often creating in the most hidden of our being the excessive fear of Him, which makes us to be suspicious of His good intentions concerning us and to think that He does not love us, does not hear or will not give us what we are asking. The root of religiosity, deeply rooted in many people, distorts His image, transforming Him into an overbearing God, oppressive, a God who demands, who charges; punitive, serious, suffering and heavy or into a negligent and absent God that does not really matter with our human misery and even laughs at it, which leads many people to opt for atheism or an impersonal spiritualism where He ceases to be a person, to have identity, and becomes only a positive energy. The image we have of our carnal father (distorted by the devil) can also bring us a distorted image of God. Returning home and telling Naomi, Ruth received the confirmation of the determination and the persevering character of Boaz (*Rut. 3: 18*: “She replied, ‘Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today’”). When we make our petitions to Jesus and trust our cause to Him, He does not rest until His work in us is complete so that we can receive what belongs to us. He also works in the circumstances around us so that as soon as possible all can be cleared, for He saw faith and determination in us.

I see something more than a marriage request or protection in the fact that Ruth lies down at the feet of Boaz; I see submission and surrender to his will (one more trait in Ruth’s character), for she and Naomi knew that there was a nearer kinsman-redeemer and he could take the place of Boaz in the negotiations (*Rut. 4: 1-10*), but they decided to trust him and in God. This redeemer figuratively is sin, which tries to hold us back in its plots; our family heritages that try to bring us back to our origins; in short, anything that tries to keep us chained to Satan and the Law instead of grace.

In fact, the marriage should be with Naomi, not with Ruth, for Naomi was the widow of Elimelech and the land was hers (*Rut. 4: 3*: “He then said to the next-of-kin, ‘Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our kinsman Elimelech’”), but Naomi had no conditions to have children to raise offspring; so, it behooved to Ruth to take the place of family matriarch. God blessed her and she conceived a son who would continue the lineage of the redeemers in the family, besides it has been a means of restoring joy to Naomi and remove the bitterness from her heart, because she found herself restored and justified. The baby’s name was *Obed*, which has several meanings: *servant of God*, *worshiper* and *He restored*. In other words, when we give our lives to Jesus and seek a real change of life, what was barren becomes fertile, what is bitter becomes sweet, what was desolation and

failure becomes accomplishment and what was scarce and insufficient becomes abundance. Ruth, from a mere gleaner became 'the owner of the field' because she married its owner. By marrying Jesus emotionally and spiritually, His whole harvest, His whole kingdom, becomes our inheritance.

Most likely, the dream of Ruth was to be happy, to have a new family and be a mother, to be restored, honored and loved, to be accepted in society even as foreigner; in short, to be part of the group. The dream of our heart can be: to have children, biological or spiritual ones; to have professional or ministerial fulfillment; to feel a helpful human being to God and to society; to be accepted and loved; to have back what we lost or to have what we have never had. When this is achieved with the help of Jesus, it happens what happened to Ruth: we beget an *Obed*, that is, we and our dream become *servants of God*, His instruments here on earth; so, we can be true *worshippers* because *He restored us*.

Ruth came to Bethlehem, which means '*House of Bread*' (in Hebrew, Beth Lechem or Bet Lehem, Strong #1035). This Bethlehem in Judah was also known as Bethlehem-Ephrathah (*Mic. 5: 2; Ruth 4: 11*). Ephrathah was the former name of the city: *Gen. 35: 16; 19; Gen. 48: 7; Ps. 132: 6*). Ephrathah (Ephrath, Ephrathah or Ephratah, Strong #672) means '*fruitful*', and comes from the Hebrew root, parah, which means '*fruitfulness*'. Ruth made the right choice, came to the God and to Naomi's hometown, fed on the true spiritual bread, and saw the fruit of her obedience, which was Obed and his descendants. Jesus was born in Bethlehem-Ephrathah. He is the bread of life and whoever eats of Him has eternal life; whoever remains in Him is able to multiply this 'bread', which is His word of life (*Jn. 6: 1-14*: The multiplication of the loaves and fishes).

There is no place for bitterness (Mara – Rut. 1: 20) and frustration when the blessing of God comes full and complete upon our lives. The reverse is also true. We cannot have a great blessing from God with bitterness and frustration in our hearts. Therefore, the focus of the story was on Ruth because through her growth and her testimony Naomi was healed and restored. It is interesting to perceive that within us, we can have a *Ruth* and a *Naomi*; *Naomi*, an old creature (our flesh) that was deprived of love, food, understanding, God's light, of a lighter life, and that was desolate, deprived, widowed, frustrated and ended up to get bitter. And we also have a new creature within us, a *Ruth*, our spirit, which decides to be born again, to do God's will and get strength to recover what was lost or stolen. It is with our spirit that Jesus makes a covenant, and through it our flesh, our *Naomi*, begins to be changed and healed from the wounds of the past.

May the peace and the love of the Lord be the banner over your life.



And His banner over me is love

