

Ruth 1:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

Analysis

And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

Both daughters-in-law initially protest Naomi's urging to return to Moab (v. 8). The emphatic "Surely" translates the Hebrew particle *ki* (岂), which functions here as an assertive declaration: "No! We will certainly return with you." The verb "return" (*nashuv*, בָּשַׁׁבּוּ) is ironic—they will "return" with Naomi though they've never been to Judah. For Orpah and Ruth, going to Israel means leaving their homeland for a foreign land; for Naomi, it's returning home.

The phrase "unto thy people" (*el-ammekh*, אֶל-עַמֶּךָ) emphasizes the ethnic and covenantal dimension of this choice. "People" (*am*, אַם) in Hebrew denotes more than ethnicity—it signifies covenant community, shared identity, and collective destiny. By choosing to go to Naomi's people, the daughters-in-law are choosing to abandon Moabite identity and embrace Israelite covenant identity. This is precisely what Ruth later declares explicitly (v. 16-17), but here both women express initial willingness.

Their response reveals genuine affection for Naomi—not mere duty or formality but authentic love cultivated during their marriages. Despite Naomi's losses and bitterness (v. 13, 20), these young women prefer her companionship in poverty and uncertainty to the security and familiarity of Moab. Their declaration demonstrates that even in Israel's darkest period (the judges era), when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25), individual Israelites could still

reflect God's covenant character, attracting outsiders through godly example. True faith creates communities worth joining even at great personal cost.

Historical Context

The ancient Near Eastern custom was for widows to return to their birth families rather than remain with in-laws. That both daughters-in-law initially refuse this culturally expected option testifies to the depth of relationship formed during their marriages. In patriarchal societies, relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law could be fraught with tension and competition. The biblical record includes negative portrayals (Micah's mother in Judges 17-18) alongside positive ones (Ruth and Naomi). That Orpah and Ruth both initially choose Naomi over their own families is extraordinary.

The choice to join "thy people" wasn't merely social but religious and covenantal. Joining Israel meant embracing Yahweh worship, Mosaic law, kosher dietary regulations, Sabbath observance, and circumcision for any future sons. It meant abandoning Chemosh (Moab's god) and all familiar religious practices. For Moabite women, this represented total life transformation—not simply moving to a new location but adopting entirely new identity, worldview, and worship.

Historically, Israel's calling was to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6), displaying God's character to attract the nations. The judges period represented massive failure of this calling. Yet Naomi's character still attracted these Moabite women to want association with her people. This foreshadows the gospel age when the church would truly fulfill the mission of drawing all nations to worship the true God (Matthew 28:19; Revelation 7:9).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What about your life and faith community makes following Christ attractive to unbelievers, or does your Christianity repel rather than attract?
2. Are you willing to identify with God's people even when doing so involves loss, uncertainty, and leaving comfort behind?
3. How do your relationships with believers reflect genuine covenant love rather than mere formal religious association?

Interlinear Text

לְעַמְךָ:
with thee unto thy people

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 8:23 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.

Psalms 119:63 (Parallel theme): I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

Psalms 16:3 (Parallel theme): But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.