

# Ruth 1:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me.

## Analysis

**Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me.** Naomi completes her argument with two rhetorical questions expecting negative answers. "Would ye tarry for them till they were grown?" (hallahen tesabernah ad asher yigdalū, הֲלָהֶן תִּשְׁבְּרֶנָּה עַד אֲשֶׁר יִגְדְּלוּ) uses the verb sabar (שָׁבַר), meaning "wait" or "hope"—asking whether they would realistically wait 15-20 years for hypothetical sons to reach marriageable age. The second question intensifies: "would ye stay for them from having husbands?" (hallahen te'agennah levilti heyot le'ish, הֲלָהֶן תִּעֲגְנָה לְבִלְתִּי הָיֹוֹת לְאִישׁ), asking whether they would forfeit marriage and motherhood during their prime childbearing years. Both questions obviously expect "No" as answer.

"Nay, my daughters" (al benotay, אַל בָּנוֹתַי) literally means "No, my daughters" or "Don't, my daughters"—emphatic prohibition against such foolishness. Then comes Naomi's bitter theology: "it grieveth me much for your sakes" (mar-li me'od mikhem, מַר־לִי מְאֹד מֵכֶם) uses the same root (marar, מָרַר, "bitter") she later applies to herself in verse 20 ("call me Mara"). The phrase "much more bitter to me than to you" suggests her grief exceeds theirs because she understands the full hopelessness.

Most significantly, she declares "the hand of the LORD is gone out against me"

(yatse'ah vi yad-YHWH, יֵצֵאָה בִּי יַד־יְהוָה). This is covenant language—God's "hand" represents His powerful intervention, usually for deliverance (Exodus 3:20; Deuteronomy 4:34) but sometimes for judgment (1 Samuel 5:6; 12:15). Naomi interprets her losses as divine opposition, not recognizing that God's hand "going out" would ultimately bring redemption. Her theology of suffering lacks the perspective that Romans 8:28 and Joseph's life (Genesis 50:20) later illustrate—God works all things, even apparent judgment, toward redemptive purposes. Naomi's bitter providential interpretation blinds her to God's hidden grace already at work.

## Historical Context

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Naomi's reference to "the hand of the LORD" going out against her reflects covenant theology. In Deuteronomy 28, God promises blessings for obedience (vv. 1-14) and curses for disobedience (vv. 15-68). Among the curses: loss of children (v. 32, 41), widowhood (v. 54), and famine (v. 23-24). Naomi's experience—famine in Israel, migration to enemy territory, death of husband and sons—could reasonably be interpreted through this covenant curse framework. Her theology wasn't entirely wrong; God does discipline His people (Hebrews 12:5-11).

However, Naomi's interpretation was incomplete. She couldn't yet see how God was working redemption through these very losses. The famine brought her family to Moab where Ruth became part of the family. The deaths created the situation allowing Ruth to glean in Boaz's field unmarried. The return to Bethlehem positioned Ruth to meet Boaz. Every element Naomi identified as God's hand against her was actually God's hand orchestrating redemption. This demonstrates the limits of human perspective in real-time versus God's comprehensive providence visible in retrospect.

Ancient Near Eastern cultures universally interpreted prosperity as divine favor and suffering as divine disfavor. Job's friends exemplified this theology, insisting suffering proves sin (Job 4:7-9; 8:3-6; 11:13-15). While God does discipline sin, not all suffering indicates judgment—sometimes it prepares for greater blessing, forms character, displays God's glory, or accomplishes purposes beyond human understanding. Naomi's bitter interpretation, though understandable, missed the

redemptive narrative God was writing. Believers throughout history face similar challenges: trusting God's goodness when circumstances suggest His opposition.

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

## Study Questions

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1. How do your interpretations of suffering shape your ability to recognize God's ongoing gracious purposes?
2. What bitter providential interpretations might be blinding you to God's redemptive work in your circumstances?
3. How can you hold together honest lament over losses while maintaining trust in God's ultimate goodness and wise purposes?

## Interlinear Text

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הֵלֵהוּ for them H3860	תִּשָּׁב רְנָה Would ye tarry H7663	עַד H5704	אֲשֶׁר H834	יִגְדּוּ לוֹ till they were grown H1431	הֵלֵהוּ for them H3860		
תִּעַגְּנָה would ye stay H5702	לְבִלְתִּי H1115	הִיא H1961	לֹא יֵשׁ from having husbands H376	אֵל H408	בָּנֹתַי nay my daughters H1323		
כִּי H3588	מֵר for it grieveth H4843	לִי H0	מְאֹד me much H3966	מִכָּאֵם H4480	כִּי H3588	יֵצָא הָ is gone out H3318	בִּי H0
יְדִ for your sakes that the hand H3027	יְהוָה: of the LORD H3068						

## Additional Cross-References

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**Job 19:21** (Parallel theme): Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.

**Psalms 32:4** (Parallel theme): For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

**Judges 2:15** (References Lord): Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

**Psalms 38:2** (Parallel theme): For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.

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