

Ruth 1:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

Analysis

Ruth's response to Naomi's urging begins with a plea: "**Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee**" (al-tiphge'i-bi le'ozvekh lashuv me'acharayikh, פַּגְעָה) (אל-תְּפַגְּעֵה בָּי לֹא-זָבֵחַ לְשׁוּב מֵאַחֲרָיֶךָ). The verb *paga*, "intreat" or "urge") means to press, entreat, or encounter with force. Ruth pleads with Naomi to stop pressuring her to return to Moab. The infinitives "to leave" (*azav*, עַזֵּב) and "to return" (*shuv*, שׁוּב) express actions Ruth refuses—she will neither abandon Naomi nor turn back from following her.

Ruth's commitment then unfolds in a beautiful series of parallel declarations. "**For whither thou goest, I will go**" (ki el-asher telkhi elekh, קַיְמֵן אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֶךְ אֵלֶיךָ)—she commits to shared journey and destination. "**And where thou lodgest, I will lodge**" (uve'asher talini alin, וְבַאֲשֶׁר תָּלִין אַלְיָן) (uve'asher talini alin, וְבַאֲשֶׁר תָּלִין אַלְיָן)—she commits to permanent residence, not temporary accompaniment. The verb *lin* (לִין) means to spend the night or dwell, indicating settled habitation rather than brief visit.

The theological heart follows: "**thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God**" (amekh ami velohayikh Elohai, אַמְּךָ אַמְּךָ וְאֶלְהֵיכָא אֶלְהֵי). Ruth doesn't merely pledge loyalty to Naomi personally but embraces complete identification with Israel and Yahweh. The order is significant—committing to God's people precedes but implies committing to God Himself. She renounces Chemosh (Moab's deity) to worship Yahweh, abandons Moabite identity to become Israelite, and leaves her

homeland to join covenant community. This is the Old Testament's clearest statement of genuine conversion—not merely behavioral change but identity transformation, covenant commitment, and wholehearted devotion to the true God. Ruth's declaration anticipates the New Testament truth that genuine faith in Christ produces identification with His people (the church) and total life reorientation. Her commitment to Naomi models hesed (חֵדֶשׁ, covenant loyalty), the same faithful love that characterizes God's relationship with His people. This Moabite woman demonstrates covenant faithfulness that surpasses many Israelites during the judges period, proving that God's election transcends ethnicity and is received through faith.

Historical Context

Ruth's declaration came at a critical junction—Naomi was returning to Judah after a decade in Moab that had cost her husband and both sons. Orpah, Ruth's sister-in-law, had just tearfully accepted Naomi's urging and returned to Moab (Ruth 1:14-15). Ruth could have done likewise—returning to her birth family, native culture, familiar religion, and prospects of remarriage to a Moabite man. Instead, she chose to abandon everything familiar for an uncertain future in a foreign land with an embittered widow who had nothing material to offer.

Ruth's commitment was particularly remarkable given Israel's status during the judges period. She wasn't joining a prosperous, victorious nation but a struggling, often-defeated people characterized by apostasy and oppression. The Book of Judges describes this era: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Ruth chose to identify with a nation in spiritual and political disarray, demonstrating that her commitment was to Yahweh Himself rather than to Israel's current circumstances or advantages.

The phrase "thy God my God" represented radical religious conversion. Ancient Near Eastern peoples viewed deities as territorial—each nation had patron gods, and geographic relocation often meant adopting local deities. Ruth's confession that Yahweh would be her God repudiated Moabite polytheism and embraced Hebrew monotheism. She recognized that Yahweh wasn't merely Israel's ethnic deity but the universal Creator who could be worshiped anywhere by anyone who

trusted Him. This understanding anticipates the gospel's proclamation that salvation extends to all nations through faith in Christ. Ruth's incorporation into Israel and ultimately into Messiah's genealogy (Matthew 1:5) demonstrates God's gracious inclusion of Gentiles who come to Him in faith—a pattern fulfilled in the church where Jews and Gentiles become one body in Christ (Ephesians 2:11-22).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What might wholehearted commitment to Christ require you to leave behind—relationships, cultural identity, career prospects, or comfort—and are you willing to make Ruth's choice?
2. How does Ruth's confession ("thy people my people, thy God my God") challenge contemporary tendencies to claim Christ while avoiding commitment to His church?
3. In what ways does Ruth's choice to join a struggling, defeated nation (rather than a prosperous one) expose false motives in our own religious decisions?
4. What does Ruth's example teach about the nature of genuine conversion—is it merely intellectual assent, emotional experience, or comprehensive life reorientation?
5. How does Ruth's inclusion in Messiah's genealogy demonstrate God's grace in welcoming outsiders who come to Him in faith, and how should this shape the church's mission and attitude toward those from different backgrounds?

Interlinear Text

וְתִּאְמֹר	רֹות	אֶל	בְּ	לֹצַחַת	לְשָׁבַע
said	And Ruth	H408	Intreat	H0	me not to leave thee or to return
H559	H7327		H6293		H5800
					H7725
מַאֲתָכֶם יְהִי	אֲלֵךְ	אֲשֶׁר	אֶל	בְּ	אֲלֵךְ
from following after	H3588	H413	H834	H1980	H1980
					H834
					I will lodge
					H3885
אֲלֵךְ	עַמִּי	עַמִּי	אֲלֹהִים	אֲלֹהִים	
I will lodge	shall be my people	shall be my people	and thy God	and thy God	
H3885	H5971	H5971	H430	H430	

Additional Cross-References

2 Samuel 15:21 (Parallel theme): And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.

Psalms 45:10 (Parallel theme): Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;

Matthew 8:19 (Parallel theme): And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

John 13:37 (Parallel theme): Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 (References God): For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

Isaiah 14:1 (Parallel theme): For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.

Acts 21:13 (Parallel theme): Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

Hosea 13:4 (References God): Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me.

Daniel 2:47 (References God): The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.

Joshua 24:18 (References God): And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God.

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