

Ruth 1:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

Analysis

Ruth's declaration reaches its climax with an oath: "**Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.**" The Hebrew construction moves from future commitment ("I will die... I will be buried") to solemn oath invoking divine witness and judgment. This isn't merely emotional sentiment but legally binding covenant language.

The phrase "where thou diest, will I die" commits Ruth beyond Naomi's lifetime. She's not offering temporary companionship until better circumstances arise, but permanent identification unto death. The parallel "there will I be buried" emphasizes perpetual connection—even in death she will remain among God's people rather than return to Moabite burial grounds. Ancient burial practices emphasized resting with one's ancestors, making Ruth's commitment to foreign burial a definitive rejection of Moabite identity.

The oath formula "the LORD do so to me, and more also" (koh ya'a seh YHWH li vekhoh yosif, פֶּה יְעַשֵּׂה וְהִנֵּה לִי וְכֹה יְסִיף was standard legal language invoking divine curse for oath-breaking (see 1 Samuel 3:17; 2 Samuel 3:35). Significantly, Ruth invokes "Yahweh"—the covenant name of Israel's God—demonstrating her theological conversion is complete. She's not hedging by calling God "Elohim" (a generic term) but specifically embracing Yahweh as her God. The condition "if ought but death part thee and me" (ki hammavet ya'freed beini uveinekh, פִּי הַמַּמְוֵת יָפִירֶד בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶיךָ

means only death will separate them—nothing else, no hardship, poverty, or social pressure will make Ruth abandon Naomi or Israel.

Historical Context

Ruth's oath demonstrates familiarity with Israelite legal and religious forms despite her Moabite origins, suggesting she had learned Israel's God and customs during her marriage to Mahlon. The oath formula invoking Yahweh to witness and enforce commitments appears throughout Old Testament narrative, always carrying serious binding force. Breaking such an oath invited divine judgment—not merely social disapproval but supernatural consequence.

Burial customs in the ancient Near East emphasized being laid to rest with ancestors in family tombs. The patriarchs' concern for proper burial (Abraham purchasing Machpelah cave, Joseph's bones carried from Egypt) reflected theological beliefs about death and covenant promises connected to the land. Ruth's commitment to burial in Israel meant permanent severance from Moabite clan identity and complete identification with Israel's hope, including Yahweh's covenant promises about the land.

This oath's inclusion in Scripture serves multiple purposes: it demonstrates Ruth's genuine conversion (not mere circumstantial following of Naomi), establishes her legal right to be incorporated into Israel despite Deuteronomy 23:3-6's prohibition of Moabites, and foreshadows her place in David's genealogy (Ruth 4:17-22) and ultimately Christ's lineage (Matthew 1:5). Ruth becomes the paradigm of Gentile inclusion through faith—ethnicity doesn't determine salvation; covenant commitment to Yahweh does.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does Ruth's willingness to be buried in Israel teach about the permanence and totality of genuine conversion to Christ?
2. How does Ruth's oath invoking Yahweh's name demonstrate that true faith requires not just private belief but public covenant commitment?
3. In what areas of your Christian life are you holding back from irrevocable commitment, keeping exit strategies in case discipleship becomes too costly?

Interlinear Text

רָאשָׁךְ	אַמְתָּה	אַמְתָּה	וְשָׁם	אַקְבָּתְךָ
H834	Where thou diest	Where thou diest	H8033	and there will I be buried
	H4191	H4191		H6912
כִּי	וְסִירְבָּה	וְסִירְבָּה	כִּי	וְסִירְבָּה
H3541	do	the LORD	H0	H3541
H6213		H3068		H3254
בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי
בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי
בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי
also if ought but death	part	H996	H996	
H4194	H6504			

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 3:17 (References Lord): And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.

1 Kings 2:23 (References Lord): Then king Solomon sware by the LORD, saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life.

2 Kings 6:31 (Parallel theme): Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day.

2 Samuel 19:13 (Parallel theme): And say ye to Amasa, Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab.

1 Kings 20:10 (Parallel theme): And Ben-hadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me.

1 Samuel 25:22 (Parallel theme): So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.

2 Samuel 3:35 (Parallel theme): And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down.

Acts 11:23 (References Lord): Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

1 Kings 19:2 (Parallel theme): Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.

2 Samuel 3:9 (References Lord): So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him;