

Ruth 1:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.

Analysis

Naomi's urging continues as she points to Orpah's decision: "**Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.**" This verse captures a decisive moment where the two Moabite women make opposite choices regarding covenant faith. The Hebrew uses the perfect tense shavah (שָׁבָה, "she has returned") to indicate Orpah's completed action—she has definitively turned back to Moab.

Significantly, Naomi identifies Orpah's return as both ethnic and religious: "unto her people, and unto her gods." The plural "gods" (eloheha, אֱלֹהֶיהָ) indicates the polytheistic worship Orpah was resuming. The chief Moabite deity was Chemosh, to whom child sacrifices were offered (2 Kings 3:27). By returning to "her gods," Orpah was abandoning whatever knowledge of Yahweh she had gained through marriage into an Israelite family. This demonstrates that mere proximity to God's people doesn't guarantee genuine conversion—Orpah had lived among believers for perhaps a decade but ultimately chose familiar paganism over costly covenant commitment.

Naomi's command "return thou after thy sister in law" shows her continued attempt to release Ruth from obligation. The phrase "after thy sister in law" (acherei yevimtek, אַחֲרַי יְבִמְתֵּךְ) emphasizes following Orpah's example. Naomi presents the easier path—return to family, security, and familiar religion. This makes Ruth's subsequent refusal even more remarkable. She chooses the harder

path not from lack of alternatives but from genuine faith conviction. The contrast between Orpah and Ruth illustrates Jesus' teaching about the narrow and wide gates (Matthew 7:13-14)—many choose the easy path back to the world, but few choose the costly way of discipleship.

Historical Context

Orpah's decision to return to Moab would have been the culturally expected choice. Ancient Near Eastern customs assumed that widows, especially young childless ones, would return to their birth families and seek remarriage. Moab offered Orpah economic security, social acceptance, and the comfort of familiar language, customs, and religion. Her decision was entirely reasonable by human calculation—Naomi was returning to a devastated land with no prospects to offer her daughters-in-law.

The worship of Chemosh, Moab's national deity, involved practices abhorrent to Yahweh worship. The Moabite Stone (Mesha Stele), discovered in 1868, describes King Mesha's devotion to Chemosh and mentions Israel's God in an extra-biblical source. Numbers 25 records how Moabite women enticed Israelite men into Baal-Peor worship, resulting in divine judgment that killed 24,000. Deuteronomy 23:3-6 prohibited Moabites from entering God's assembly due to their hostility toward Israel and their hiring Balaam to curse God's people. This historical enmity makes Ruth's choice to embrace Israel and Yahweh even more extraordinary—she was turning from her people's gods to worship the God of a nation Moab had opposed.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What "familiar gods"—whether literal idols or functional ones like comfort, security, or cultural acceptance—are you tempted to return to when covenant faithfulness becomes costly?
2. How does Orpah's choice after years of exposure to Israel's God warn against assuming that proximity to believers or religious activity equals genuine conversion?
3. In what ways might you be following the crowd "back to the familiar" rather than pressing forward on the difficult path of whole-hearted discipleship?

Interlinear Text

יִתְּ	יְהוָה	לְךָ ׀	וּמָצָא אֵן	מְנוּחַ הַ	אִשָּׁה הַ
grant	The LORD	H0	you that ye may find	rest	each
H5414	H3068		H4672	H4496	H802
בְּ יֵת	אִשָּׁה הַ	וַתִּשָּׁק קַ	לָהּ ׀	וַתִּשָּׂא אֹנָה	
of you in the house	of her husband	Then she kissed	H0	them and they lifted up	
H1004	H376	H5401		H5375	
וַתִּבְכֶּינָהּ: קוֹלָ					
their voice	and wept				
H6963	H1058				

Additional Cross-References

Ruth 3:1 (Parallel theme): Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

Acts 20:37 (Parallel theme): And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,

Genesis 29:11 (Parallel theme): And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.

Genesis 45:15 (Parallel theme): Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

Genesis 27:27 (References Lord): And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed:

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