

RUTH & HANNAH

Ruth Chapters 1-4; 1 Samuel Chapters 1-3

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened when two women trusted in God. • How God helps people of faith even when things go wrong. • How Ruth and Boaz fulfilled the plan of God in their son Obed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How Hannah and Elkanah fulfilled the plan of God through their son Samuel. • How two women and their sons prepared the way for Jesus, Israel's Messiah. |
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THIS BOOK gives the true stories of two women of God in the history of Israel. It occurred between the time of the judges and the prophets of Israel over 3000 years ago. The son of Hannah prepared the way for the prophets and kings of Israel. The son of Ruth prepared the way for Israel's Messiah and Saviour, Jesus the Christ. They did not know these things at the time they lived. Each woman stepped out in faith to ask God to meet their personal need of a son. Both received God's blessing through their faith and worship of Him. Their first-born sons were part of the final salvation plan of God to bless Israel and the world through Jesus. Through their Messiah, we are all blessed when we truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

MANNA PUBLICATIONS publish small Bible teaching commentaries written by Fred Morris to use on your own or to study in a group. For many years Fred and his wife Lorna travelled round the world teaching and preaching. His books are easy to read, understand and translate into other languages. They give basic New and Old Testament teaching of God's truth with practical applications of our salvation through Christ alone plus additional notes for Bible students, teachers and pastors.

THESE BOOKS will help you to come closer to Almighty God. He is worshipped by millions of Jews and Christians worldwide. These books will also help you to receive salvation and eternal life through God's Son, Jesus the Christ who is Israel's Messiah. They will help you to talk about your faith in God and to pray to Him. They will help to guide you from going the wrong way in life. They will help you to live a life that is pleasing to God through the love and power of His Holy Spirit. This was promised to all who believe Jesus is the Son of God, who suffered death for our sins before returning back to Heaven.

WE PRAY that you may have a new peace and purpose in life as you trust in God, read the Bible and use these commentaries. Think about what Jesus taught and suffered 2000 years ago for our eternal salvation and what He is calling you to say and do today to prepare the way for His return. Amen.

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"The secret of God's Kingdom has been given to you" (Mark 4:11)



RUTH AND HANNAH

Two Women of Faith in God

**A Bible Teaching Commentary
for personal or group study
by Fred Morris**



**Ruth Chapters 1 to 4
and
1 Samuel Chapters
1 to 3**



To the Reader or Leader

These commentaries help to explain the Bible in a way that is easy to read and understand. They are also easy to translate. You can use Fred's books to study the Bible on your own or with others in a group. Each person should have his or her own book and a Bible if possible.



Bible reading: Where you see this, it means you or your group leader should always read the Bible passage first before reading this book.



Talk about this: Where you see this, there are questions to prayerfully answer yourself or to discuss in a group study. They also help the reader to remember the Bible verses.



Think about this: Where you see this, the questions require more time for personal meditation.



Ruled teaching boxes: Where you see these, the information gives extra teaching about life at the time the Bible passage was written and helps to apply the teaching for today.

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Pray about this: Praise God that He continues to speak to people today. Ask Him to speak to you when you read the Bible. Pray for others to hear the voice of God. Pray that they will see and understand that Jesus suffered and died to save them and serve Him. Ask God today to guide you in faith for miracles to happen in your country in line with His will.

CONCLUSION TO THE STORY OF HANNAH

This is the true story of Hannah. Like Ruth, she lived during the sad times of the judges of Israel. Hanna knew she could put her trust in God despite His anger towards Israel at that time. Hannah was distressed and mocked for not giving birth to a son. She came to God in prayer and found true peace in the midst of personal grief and national disobedience. God heard and then answered her prayer for a son, whom she offered back to serve God. This offering and dedication of her son was used by God to bless Israel and the world. God used Samuel to prepare the way for the prophets, priests and kings of Israel. Many of the prophets who followed Samuel spoke of God's plan in Jesus the Christ. Jesus (Yeshua) was Israel's promised Messiah and is Saviour today of all who believe that He is the Son of God.

REVIEW: THE STORIES OF RUTH AND HANNAH

Both Ruth and Hannah were blessed with sons who were important in God's plans for the future of Israel. Their first-born sons were also part of the salvation plan of God to bless the world through Israel, as He promised Abraham over 700 years before (Genesis 12:2-3). They prepared the way for the prophets and kings of Israel and finally Israel's greatest Prophet and King, our Saviour, Jesus the Christ.

Like Ruth and Hannah and their sons, we can all be used in different ways to prepare for God's plan to establish His Kingdom on Earth. Like them, we must have faith in God today, despite times of personal suffering and national disobedience, to help prepare the way for the return of Israel's Messiah.

Naomi and Boaz are also examples of faith in God used for the eternal good of God's people.

Ruth Chapters 1 to 4

THE STORY OF RUTH AND HER MOTHER-IN-LAW NAOMI

INTRODUCTION

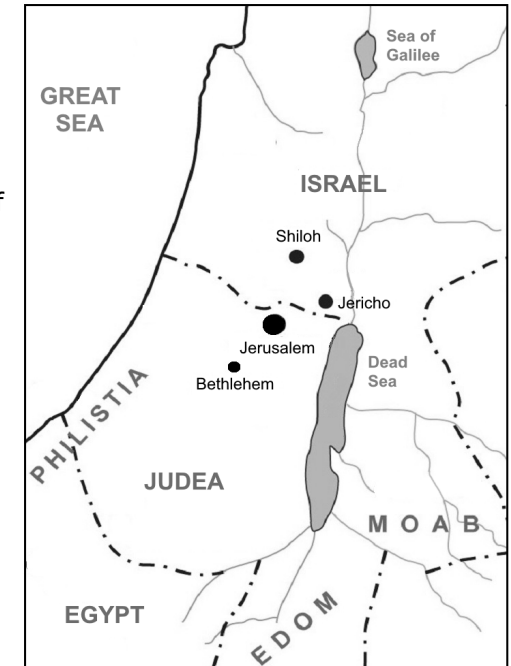
The Old Testament book of Ruth is often read by Jews at the Feast of Pentecost. The story of Ruth, a non-Jew, covers approximately 12 years. It happened around 3,300 years ago when the nation of Israel was ruled by judges. The judges were leaders of Israel before the time of the prophets of God and the kings of Israel. It was not a happy time for the people of God in Israel, because their leaders often disobeyed Him and led their people into sin.

This book tells us how Ruth chose to leave her home in the country of Moab and live in Bethlehem south of Jerusalem. She chose to give up her false gods and trust in the one true and living God, the LORD God Almighty.

This is the amazing story of how Ruth became the great-grandmother of King David in the family line of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-6). Jesus was the promised Christ or Messiah of Israel who became the Saviour of the world.

The book of Ruth begins with the story of Naomi and her husband Elimelech. They lived in Israel at the time of the judges. They chose to move from Bethlehem to the country of Moab and took their two sons with them.

The book of Ruth also gives the story of Boaz, a family relative in Bethlehem. Boaz was the son of Rahab from Jericho. (Read how Rahab, also a non-Jew, was



Moab and Israel

The people of Moab descended from Lot, the nephew of Abraham. They did not keep faith in the LORD God Almighty of Israel. Ruth was born in Moab and worshipped their false gods until she put her faith in the One True God. The people of Israel descended from Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. Israel and Moab were often at war against each other. At the time of Ruth, there was peace. People moved freely between Moab and Israel.

spared death in the Manna commentary on Joshua, Chapter 2). Boaz married Ruth soon after Naomi returned with her to Bethlehem, where their first son was born.

This story of Elimelech, Naomi, Ruth and Boaz shows us their parts in the great salvation plan of God. He is the LORD God Almighty. He is the God of the Jews and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This book tells us of the plan of God to offer salvation from sin to men and women of all nations through His Son Jesus. Jesus the Christ or Messiah was sent as Saviour to Israel over 1000 years after the time of Ruth who was an ancestor of Mary the mother of Jesus. Jesus was also born in Bethlehem.

This story of Ruth confirms that God's purposes for Israel include foreign believers like Rahab and Ruth.



Bible reading: Ruth Chapter 1

ELIMELECH, NAOMI AND FAMILY LEAVE ISRAEL

The book of Ruth begins sadly. Many of the people of Israel at the time had turned away from God. Judges ruled Israel. There were no kings and no prophets of God yet to guide them. Each person went their own way. 'The people did anything they thought was right' (Judges 21:25). They had their own ideas of what to do and failed to put their trust in God.

God allowed a great famine in Israel. There was not enough food in the town of Bethlehem. The name of Bethlehem means 'house of bread' but God allowed a shortage of bread at that time. The land no longer had plenty of the milk and honey promised by God to the people of Israel (Exodus 3:8).

There was a man in Bethlehem whose name was Elimelech. He was from the family line of Ephrath. Ephrath is the ancient name for Bethlehem. Elimelech believed in the LORD God Almighty of Israel.



God shows mercy when we make mistakes

It was a difficult decision for Elimelech to move his wife and family to Moab. Sometimes, we fail to put our trust in God. Despite our mistakes and lack of trust, the purposes of God are not defeated. The Old Testament describes how God saved some of His people from their risky decisions:

- Abraham went to Egypt away from the Promised Land at a time of famine. He risked losing his wife who became the mother of Isaac. Isaac became the father of Jacob whom God named Israel (Genesis 12:10-20).
- The mother of baby Moses left him in a basket on the River Nile. She risked losing the child who became the saviour of the people of Israel in Egypt (Exodus 2:1-10).
- David secretly cut off a piece of cloth from the robe of King Saul. He risked losing his life but became the ancestor of Joseph who was married to Mary, the mother of God's Son, Jesus (1 Samuel 24:1-7).

This was a sad message. Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the message he had received (3:15). In the morning Samuel got up and started his work. Eli called out, "Samuel, my son ... what did the LORD God Almighty say to you? Do not hold from me anything He told you" (3:17).

So Samuel told Eli everything. Then Eli said, "He is the LORD God Almighty. Let Him do what He thinks is best" (3:18). 'It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God' (Hebrews 10:31).

This is a strong warning to all fathers. Do all you can to raise your sons and daughters in the training and instruction of the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 6:4). Do not ignore their sinful ways. Love them, but stand against the things they do.

GOD CONTINUES TO SPEAK TO SAMUEL

From this time Samuel was always ready to listen for God's voice. He obeyed even when it was difficult. God chose Samuel and trained him to do what was right for God's people. He was the last judge and the first prophet of Israel.

'As Samuel grew up, the LORD God Almighty was with him. He made everything Samuel said come true' (3:19). When Samuel spoke, all Israel listened. 'So all the people of Israel recognised that Samuel really was a prophet of the LORD God Almighty' (3:20).

'The LORD God Almighty continued to appear at Shiloh. There He made Himself known to Samuel through the messages He gave him. And Samuel gave these messages to all the people of Israel' (3:21).

Through the prayer request of Hannah and her promise to God, her son became prophet of Israel. He was the first of a long line of Old Testament prophets to bless and to guide Israel.

Many of these Old Testament prophets spoke of the coming Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God and Saviour of the world for all who believe.

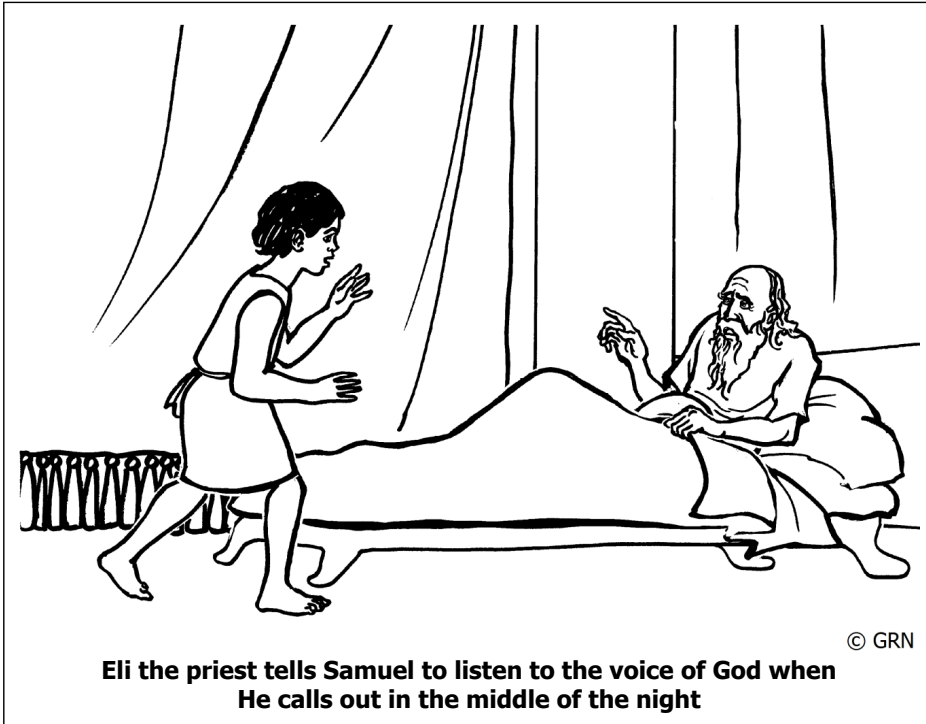


Talk about this:

1. Why do you think God gave His message to Samuel and not to Eli?
2. What did the warning in 3:14 mean for the sons of Eli?
3. How did Hannah and her son prepare the way for the Son of God?
4. What part did Elkanah have in the salvation plan of God for Israel and the world?



Think about this: Samuel served Eli and through him he learned to listen to the voice of God. Samuel replaced Eli and his sons as priest of Israel. He was also the last judge and the first prophet of God. What other purposes of God were also fulfilled in Hannah's prayer for a miracle son?



Eli the priest tells Samuel to listen to the voice of God when He calls out in the middle of the night

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God called out to Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am" (3:4). He thought it was Eli calling. God often speaks to us in a familiar voice we easily understand. So he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am. You called out to me."

Eli said, "I did not call you. Go back and lie down" (3:6).

This happened twice more. Then Eli knew that God had called to Samuel. Samuel did not yet know the voice of the LORD God Almighty (3:7).

"Go and lie down. If someone calls out to you again," Eli told Samuel. "Say, 'Speak, LORD. I am listening'" (3:9). So Samuel went back and lay down.

God called out as before, "Samuel! Samuel!"

This time Samuel answered as Eli had told him. God spoke to him with a message for Eli. Samuel listened and obeyed. God said, "I am about to do something terrible in Israel. It will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle! I will do everything to Eli and his family that I said I would. I will finish what I started" (3:12).

These things are written about in Chapter 4. God's message to Eli was the same as before, only more urgent. Eli failed to stop his sons from sinning (3:13). So God refused to accept their offerings and sacrifices for sin (3:14).

Elimelech and his wife Naomi, moved their family to the country of Moab to look for food (Ruth 1:1-2). They did what they thought was right. However, it was a difficult choice to make. They decided to move away from Israel, the Promised Land of God.

While in Moab, Elimelech died. Naomi was left a widow with two sons in a foreign land (1:3).

The people of Moab worshipped false gods. The two sons of Naomi married girls from Moab. Mahlon married Ruth, Kilion married Orpah (1:4). They were not blessed with children. Both girls worshipped the gods of Moab.

The family of Naomi lived in Moab for over ten years. Then the two sons of Naomi also died. Naomi was left with no sons, no grandchildren and no husband (1:4-5).

NAOMI PREPARES TO RETURN TO ISRAEL

Naomi heard that God had forgiven and blessed Israel with food. The sorrowful Naomi planned to return to Bethlehem (1:6). So Naomi and her two daughters-in-law travelled on the road towards Israel (1:8).

Naomi stopped along the road. "Both of you go back" she said. "Each of you must go to the home of your own mother. You were kind to your husbands who have died. You have also been kind to me. So may the LORD God Almighty be just as kind to you" (1:8).

Then she asked for the blessing of God on both the girls from Moab. "May He help each of you find a secure place in the home of another husband. May He give you peace and rest" (1:9). Naomi showed her faith in God. She asked boldly for His blessing on herself and the two girls. God answered in ways she did not expect.

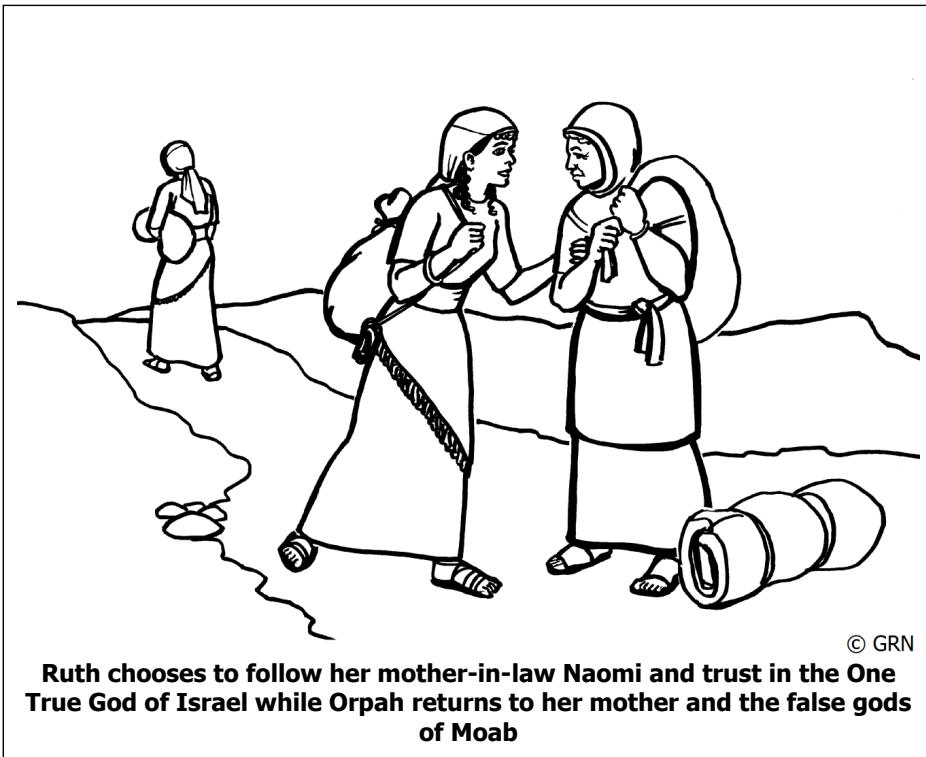
Naomi kissed both girls and they wept loudly. They said to her, "We will go back with you to your people" (1:10).

Naomi said, "Go home, my daughters. Why would you want to come with me? Am I going to have any more sons who could become your husbands? ... No, my daughters. My life is more bitter than yours. The power of the LORD God Almighty is against me" (1:11,13). Naomi had faith in Almighty God but little hope.

The two women wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye. But Ruth held on to Naomi (1:14).

"Look," said Naomi, "Your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her" (1:15). Both girls had a choice of following the false gods of Moab or following the LORD God Almighty of Israel.

Ruth replied with these now famous words. "Do not try to make me leave you and go back. Where you go, I will go. Where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. Where you die, I will die. And there my body will be buried. I will not let anything except death separate you from me. If I do, may God punish me greatly" (1:16-17). This decision changed the world!



Naomi realised that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her. Ruth had chosen to leave behind her false gods and put her trust in the LORD God Almighty of Israel. Orpah left Naomi but Ruth stayed with her mother-in-law. Naomi saw that Ruth would not go home. Naomi stopped trying to make her go back (1:18).

RUTH TRAVELS WITH NAOMI TO LIVE IN BETHLEHEM

Ruth's belief and trust in God was strong. Her faithfulness to Naomi was also strong. Sometimes the faith of new believers is stronger than the faith of older believers. This new faith of Ruth encouraged Naomi in her own faith.

God wants to increase our faith in Him. He also wants us to help increase the faith of others. Faith is a gift of God which all may receive. We grow in faith by using our faith.

Naomi and Ruth travelled on to Bethlehem (1:19). Ruth gladly trusted in God for her new life in Israel.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, many people recognized Naomi. The whole town was excited when Naomi arrived with Ruth. The women in the town asked each other, "Can this possibly be Naomi?" They saw that Ruth was a foreigner in Israel. However, they gladly welcomed her. The Jews were quick to bless both Naomi and Ruth.

Prophet, Priest, King and Saviour of Israel. Therefore, through Samuel, God blessed Israel and through Jesus, God blessed the world.

The family line of Eli became beggars (2:36) and were removed from the priesthood (1 Kings 2:27).



Talk about this:

1. Describe how the prayer of Hannah shows her joy and love for God (2:1-2).
2. Describe how Hannah knew that God met her personal needs (2:3-5).
3. Describe how Hannah shows her knowledge of the books of Moses (2:6-9).
4. Describe the full meaning of the prophecy about the anointed king of God in the final verse of Hannah's prayer (2:10).
5. Was there really no salvation possible for the sons of Eli? Why? What was the chief cause? How did their father fail them?
6. Describe what the man of God said to Eli about sin (2:27-34).
7. What did he say about the future priests and God's anointed kings (2:35)?
8. What would happen to the family line of Eli? (2:36).



Think about this: Describe how the gift of a son from God to Hannah later blessed Israel and all nations. Can you pray a 'song of praise' to God with increased understanding of His provision and purpose? What shows the love, provision, knowledge and purpose of God in your life?



Pray about this: Ask again for faith to praise God in good times and in bad times. Praise God for how He has worked in your life and has blessed you. Give thanks for learning about what is right and what is wrong. Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal more of the love and truth of God. Ask to understand fully His amazing plans for the salvation of mankind through Jesus. Acknowledge that Jesus is Lord.



Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapter 3

SAMUEL SERVES GOD AND GOD CALLS TO HIM

Samuel grew up under the care of Eli. He guarded the Ark in the Tabernacle. In those days there were very few messages or visions from the LORD God Almighty (3:1).

The old priest taught Samuel how to serve before God in the Tabernacle. Samuel opened the doors to the worshippers. He received their offerings and looked after them. He lit the lamps and kept the oil full. He guarded the Holy of Holies and the Ark with its Ten Commandments.

Samuel knew the wicked ways of the two sons of Eli. He saw, too, that Eli had lost authority in Israel. Men and women did as they pleased. There was no true judge or priest who could call the people back to God.

One night, the lamp of God was still alight in the Tabernacle (3:3). This witness of God's holy presence still shone in Israel. Samuel was lying on his mat. Only a curtain hung between him and the Ark of God. Then he heard a voice.

We are saved from the punishment and eternal death that we deserve through repentance and the sacrifice of Jesus.

If believers continue to disobey God and live in sin, they hurt those closest to themselves. They hurt the whole fellowship of believers. They also hurt themselves. Most of all, they hurt God. Unless they repent, they will not be saved. It is a good and blessed thing when believers acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord.

GOD WARNS ELI AND HIS FAMILY

The boy Samuel grew up. 'He became more and more pleasing to God and to the people' (2:26).

Now a man of God came to warn Eli. He made it clear what God expected from His special people of Israel (2:27-28). He said that God had a question to ask Eli. "Why do you honour your sons more than Me? Why do you fatten yourselves on the best parts of every offering that is made by My people Israel?" (2:29).

These sons wanted the offerings to God for themselves and ignored the meaning of them. They took them for themselves. The man of God repeated what God had told him. God announced, "I will honour those who honour Me. But I will turn away from those who look down on Me" (2:30).

The sons of Eli opposed God and did not repent. Eli honoured his sons more than he honoured God. He let God down. He let himself down. He let his own sons down. He let Israel down.

Judgment may take time to come, but it will come in the end. If you cheat on your wife or steal from your boss, be sure of one thing. 'God will judge everything people do ... good or evil' (Ecclesiastes 12:14; 1 Corinthians 3:13). The apostle Paul further warns, 'We will have to explain to God the things we have done' (Romans 14:12).

God then announced to Eli:

- "I will cut your life short. I will also cut short the lives of those in your family line of priests" (2:31).
- "You will see trouble [but] good things will still happen to Israel" (2:32).
- "Something is going to happen to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. When it does, it will show you that what I am saying is true. They will both die on the same day" (2:34).

THE PLAN OF GOD FOR SAMUEL

Then the man of God said, "I will raise up for myself a faithful priest. He will do what My heart and mind want him to do. I will make his family line of priests very secure. They will always serve as priests to My anointed king" (2:35).

God began the new line of priests and prophets through Samuel. Samuel later appointed and served the new kings of Israel beginning with Saul and then David.

The prophets, priests and kings of Israel served God for hundreds of years. They replaced the judges of Israel. Then our Lord Jesus Christ came as Judge,



How God prepared the way for Ruth and the Messiah

Ruth was a foreigner in Israel. We read in the Old Testament that God told the people of Israel to welcome foreigners. 'Suppose a foreigner lives with you in your land. Then do not treat them badly. Treat them as if they were one of your own people. Love them as you love yourself. Remember that all of you were foreigners in Egypt' (Leviticus 19:33-34).

We also read in the New Testament that God wants all believers to welcome foreigners who trust in God (Romans 10:12-13). The apostle Peter said, "I now realise how true it is that God treats everyone the same. He accepts people from every nation. He accepts all who have respect for Him and do what is right" (Acts 10:34-35).

The plan of God for Ruth was fulfilled this way:

- Naomi witnessed her faith in the One True and Almighty God of Israel whilst living with Ruth in Moab.
- Naomi prayed to God for His kindness, security and peace for Ruth (1:8-9).
- Ruth understood the choice she had to make. She chose to leave behind the gods of Moab.
- Ruth chose a new life and new faith in God with Naomi in Israel.
- It was the right time for Naomi to move back to Israel with Ruth. It was a time of peace and God's mercy with plenty of food for their personal needs which were many.
- Ruth moved with Naomi to the town of Bethlehem. It was the right place prepared by God for her and her future family, especially her firstborn son.

It was also the right time and place for Ruth to meet Boaz in God's plan for the future of Israel. They had a son. Through the family line of Boaz, the Son of God, Israel's Messiah, was later born in Bethlehem to Mary.

Naomi struggled with her thoughts and feelings. "Do not call me Naomi", she told the women. The name of Naomi means joyful and pleasant. She said, "Call me Mara [which means bitter]. The Mighty One has made my life very bitter. I was full when I went away. The LORD God Almighty has brought me back empty. So why are you calling me Naomi? God has made me suffer. The Mighty One has brought trouble on me" (1:20-21).

Naomi felt very sad. We can see from the Bible, however, that God worked in the life of Naomi during her sadness. We can learn from this that we should not let our feelings weaken our faith. Nor should we weaken the faith of others. We must believe that God is at work in our lives at all times.

Naomi's faith in God was tested. She needed to believe that God had not rejected her. She needed to believe that the people of God had not rejected her. She needed to believe that they would be kind to her and to Ruth.

Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem with what they carried on their backs. What happened is told in the Bible with very few words (1:22). We know that God was not against them. God was with them. Israel blessed Naomi and her foreign daughter-in-law. The people of Israel welcomed both Naomi and Ruth and helped them to stay and live in Bethlehem.

They arrived when people were beginning to harvest the barley grain. It was also the start of the Feast of the Passover.



Talk about this:

1. What decision did Elimelech and Naomi make (1:1)? Why was it risky?
2. Describe what happened in Moab (1:3-5).
3. What blessings from God did Naomi ask for Ruth and Orpah (1:8-9)?
4. How do we know that Ruth converted to the faith of Naomi (1:16-17)?
5. How did Naomi help the faith of Ruth? How did Ruth help the faith of Naomi?
6. Was it true that God was against Naomi (1:13,21)?
7. Why was a foreign girl from Moab welcome in Israel? How should we welcome foreigners today?



Think about this: What risky decisions or mistakes have you made in the past? Thank God for His faithfulness and blessing in times of danger and need. Think of ways to grow in your faith and become a blessing to God and to others.



Bible reading: Ruth Chapter 2

RUTH MEETS BOAZ IN BETHLEHEM

Boaz lived in Bethlehem. He owned much land there. He was respected in the town. He was a relative of Elimelech, the husband of Naomi who died in Moab (2:1).

Ruth spoke to Naomi. She said, "Let me go out to the fields. I will pick up the grain that has been left" (2:2). Ruth was now ready to trust in God to provide what they needed.

So Ruth went to pick up grain that other people left behind. Poor people were allowed to use what was left in the fields after the barley harvest. This was a law in Israel (Leviticus 19:9-10).

Ruth chose to collect grain in the field owned by Boaz (Ruth 2:3). She did not know Boaz at that time. Boaz arrived and greeted his workmen. "May the LORD God Almighty be with you" (2:4). Boaz was a good master. He cared for each of his workers. He loved them and asked God to bless them. He shared the love of God with them.

"May the LORD God Almighty be with you" they all replied. It was the Jewish custom to ask God to bless each other.

Boaz noticed Ruth in his field. He spoke to the man in charge of his workers. "Who is that young woman?" (2:5).

SAMUEL GROWS TO LOVE AND SERVE THE GOD OF ISRAEL

Elkanah and Hannah returned home but left the young Samuel with the priest Eli to serve God (1 Samuel 2:11). Samuel grew up and loved God. He served in the House of God at Shiloh. He helped Eli, the chief priest.

However, Eli's sons did not honour the LORD God Almighty (2:12). They took sacrificial meat from the people of Israel for themselves (2:13-16). 'This sin of the sons of Eli was very great in the sight of God. That is because they were not treating His offering with respect' (2:17). Therefore, God did not accept their service.

The Bible does not hide sin or try to cover it up. We need to know about the sons of Eli who sinned. We need to know what happened to them. Their actions showed what was in their hearts. They broke the Law of Moses but Eli did not stop them. However, Samuel served God faithfully as a child. He wore the apron of a priest (2:18).

'Each year, his mother made him a new robe. She took it to him when she went up to Shiloh with her husband ... to offer the yearly sacrifice' (2:19).

Eli asked God to give Hannah and Elkanah more children (2:20). There is no further mention of Peninnah, the other wife of Elkanah. However, God blessed Hannah with three more sons and two daughters (2:21).

THE WICKED SONS OF ELI

Eli heard what his sons Hophni and Phinehas were doing. He also knew they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the House of God (2:22).

Eventually, Eli said to his sons, "Why are you doing these things? All the people are telling me about the evil things you are doing. No, my sons. The report I hear is not good. And it is spreading among the people of God" (2:23-24).

Eli did not take their priestly robes from them. He did not discipline them and they did not obey him. Eli had left it too late to stop his two sons from doing wrong and causing Israel to sin. Yet when Eli spoke to his sons, he spoke to them clearly. "If a person sins against someone else, God can help that sinner. If anyone sins against the LORD God Almighty, who can help them?" (2:25). They did not listen to Eli and they would not repent. They were therefore closing their ears to the voice of God. God decided to punish their sins with an early death.

Under the Law of Moses, no man deliberately turned against God and lived. All sin offerings were for repentance and for unintended sin. No man openly rebelled against God and went unpunished. Those who disobeyed God were 'cut off' from among the people (Numbers 15:30-31). This is the punishment they deserved under the old covenant of God before He sent His promised Messiah.

Separation from God and His people and death are the punishments that we all deserve when we deliberately sin against God. Separation and death are the punishments that Jesus suffered in our place to save us from the results of sin.

- She *declared* there was no place for pride. God knows all things and is judge of all we say and do (2:3).
- She *believed* that mighty people are brought down by God. Those who stumble are lifted up by God with renewed strength (2:4).
- She *rejoiced* that those who are hungry are fed and those who are childless are finally blessed. She saw how ungrateful people who have plenty of food and children end up unhappy (2:5).
- She *claimed* that God gives life and He takes it away. He sends the wicked to Hell and believers to Heaven. He makes some poor and others rich. He humbles people and He lifts up whoever He chooses (2:6-8).
- She *trusted* in the Creator of the world, the LORD God Almighty (2:8).
- She *announced* that strong and wicked people will not finally win. God guards those who are godly (2:9).
- She further *declared* that the enemies of God would be destroyed since He is the great judge of all nations (2:10).
- She *prophesied* about a coming king even at a time when there were no kings in Israel. He would be the 'anointed one' of God (2:10).

When Hannah's son Samuel later became Israel's priest and prophet, he anointed Saul as the first king of Israel (10:1). He also anointed King David to replace Saul (16:13). King David became an ancestor of Mary the mother of Jesus, the King of Kings.



The song of Hannah and the song of Mary

The opening words of the song of Hannah are similar to the opening words of the song of Mary, mother of Jesus (Luke 1:46-55). Mary sang:

"My soul gives glory to the LORD. My spirit delights in God my Saviour. He has taken note of me even though I am not considered important. From now on all people will call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me. His name is holy. He shows his mercy to those who have respect for him, from parent to child down through the years. He has done mighty things with his powerful arm. He has scattered those who are proud in their deepest thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones. But he has lifted up people who are not considered important. He has filled with good things those who are hungry. But he has sent away empty those who are rich. He has helped the people of Israel, who serve Him. He has always remembered to be kind to Abraham and his children down through the years. He has done it just as he promised to our people of long ago."



The Jewish Blessing

Jews were taught to love God and to do good to others. They gave thanks for all that God provides. They learned from an early age to pray to God. They prayed often. They praised their loving Creator. They prayed for the growth of the Kingdom of God. They gave thanks to God for His people. They were quick to bless God, to bless others and to bless their possessions many times a day. This is why Naomi blessed Ruth. This is why the women of Bethlehem blessed Naomi and Ruth. This is why Boaz blessed them, and his farm workers.

The prayers of the Jews included many blessings. They believed that God is interested in their lives. They gave thanks to God for all things at all times and in all places. They learned to praise God in good times and in bad times. The Bible teaches us to bless others as God blesses us (Genesis 12:2). Jesus also taught us to forgive others and we will be forgiven (Matthew 6:14). He also said, "Give to others and good things will be given to you" (Luke 6:37-38).

It is a Jewish custom today to give thanks and bless everything and each other many times a day. Loving each other should be part of our joyful daily worship of God for His love, salvation and provision.

The man told him what he knew about Ruth. "She is from Moab. She came back from there with Naomi" (2:6). He added, "She has kept working from morning till now. She took only one short rest in the shade" (2:7).

God was merciful to Ruth. Boaz remembered that he was related to Naomi through her marriage to Elimelech. Boaz said to her, "Dear woman, listen to me. Do not go and pick up grain in another field... Stay here with the women

who work for me. Keep your eye on the field where the men are cutting grain. Walk behind the women who are gathering it. Pick up the grain that is left. I have told the men not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled" (2:8-9).

When Ruth heard that, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why are you being so kind to me? ...I am from another country" (2:10).

Boaz replied, "I know all about you. I have heard about everything you did for your mother-in-law since your husband died. I know that you left your father and mother. I know that you left your country. You came to live with people you did not know before. May the LORD God Almighty reward you for what you have done. May the God of Israel, bless you richly. You have come to Him to find safety under His care" (2:10-12).

In this way, Boaz shared the love of God with Ruth.

"Sir, I hope you will continue to be kind to me," Ruth said. "You have comforted me. You have spoken kindly to me. I am not even as important as one of your servants" (2:13).

When it was time to eat, Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread." She ate all she wanted. She even had some left over (2:14).

Boaz gave orders to his men. He told them to help Ruth to collect more grain than normal (2:15-18).



Laws of Israel to protect widows

A family protector or redeemer was someone who had the right to buy back a property sold or taken from a family. Two laws in Israel protected the rights of a widow among her relatives:

- The right to redeem or take back the land that God gave them.
- The right to marry and have children to continue the family line and the family name.

Property given up or sold was redeemed or bought back by a family member (Leviticus 25:25). It was also the custom of a close relative to look after the widow of his brother or nephew. If the brother or nephew died without leaving any children, the relative would arrange for their widows to marry a family member and have children in order to carry on the family name.

BOAZ WAS A FAMILY PROTECTOR

Ruth took home to Naomi much grain and some food. God was good to them by encouraging Boaz to be kind. Boaz had helped the two women whom God wanted to bless.

Ruth emptied out her grain and Naomi was surprised. She asked Ruth, "Where did you pick up grain today? Where did you work? May the man who noticed you be blessed." Naomi was quick to thank God. She also asked God to bless the man who was kind to Ruth (2:19).

Ruth told Naomi, "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz." As soon as Ruth mentioned the name of Boaz, Naomi knew where Ruth had been.

When Ruth told her this, Naomi was again quick to give thanks. She said, "May the LORD God Almighty bless him" (2:20).

Naomi saw how God provided much food. She also saw how God opened the way for the future needs of herself and Ruth. It was a very special moment for her.

She said, "The LORD God Almighty is still kind to those who are living and to those who are dead" (2:20). Naomi was amazed how God had answered her prayers through Ruth and Boaz. Boaz was a relative of her dead husband. She believed that Boaz would provide for her and Ruth and protect them.

Naomi spoke boldly in faith to tell Ruth what to do next. Naomi told Ruth "That man is a close relative of ours. He is one of our family protectors" (2:20). This meant that Boaz had a duty to help Naomi and her daughter-in-law. On that day, God led Ruth to the man who was a relative of Naomi. She found a relative who was a family protector and redeemer.



Talk about this:

1. What was special about the town of Shiloh? Who went with Hannah to worship there (1:3-5)?
2. What things made Hannah sad? What step of faith did she take on her own (1:10)? What made her bold?
3. What promise did Hannah make to God (1:11)? Who else shared this promise with her?
4. How did Eli bless Hannah? How did Hannah bless Eli (1:17-18)?
5. Three years later, how and why did Hannah, Elkanah and Eli worship God (1:24-28)?



Think about this: How was Peninnah part of God's plan for Elkanah, Hannah, Eli and the boy Samuel? How can persecution bring glory to God? What struggle has there been in your life to bring glory to God?



Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapter 2

HANNAH'S SONG OF PRAISE

Hannah's song of praise to God is also called a prayer. Many of the Psalms are prayers of praise. Three years before, Hannah had prayed without speaking words aloud. Now she wanted everyone to hear what God had done for her. Hannah's song of praise to God is now known to the whole world.

Hannah suffered shame through being childless. And all around her, men and women failed God. This included Eli the High Priest and his sons. Yet Hannah kept her faith. God lifted her up. She praised and worshipped God in bad times and in good times. She took God seriously.

Our own praise to God will lift Him up for everyone to know about Him. Remember to praise the name of God at all times and before all people.

God is judge of sinners, and the nations are in His hand. He allows good and evil to serve His purposes. It was not only a time of much disobedience by God's people but also much persecution by the Philistines, which God allowed. Those who do not obey His commands will come under His judgment. God will judge everyone fairly by what they have done (Romans 2:6).

The first ten verses of Chapter 2 tell us the words Hannah prayed to God at Shiloh. God opened her eyes to understand what had happened in her life. The Jews still use these verses for teaching and blessing the people of God today.

Hannah sang words of thanks and greater understanding, including words of prophecy. Her song also looked forward to Israel's 'Anointed One', Jesus the Christ, Israel's Messiah:

- Hannah *praised* and thanked God for His power over her enemies. She rejoiced in her salvation (2:1).
- She *worshipped* God for His great holiness. He was the rock in her life. There is no-one else like Him (2:2).



The Bible teaching on sacrifice and faith in God

Hannah understood true sacrifice to God. She was ready to give away her son to serve God. She was also ready to give up her life as a mother in order to serve God.

The apostle Paul thought of personal sacrifice and service when he wrote these words. 'Christ loved the Church. He gave Himself up for her' (Ephesians 5:25). The sacrifice of Jesus was the greatest sacrifice of all. Jesus gave up His life to serve others. He did this to obey the will of His Father. It was the plan of God to offer to sacrifice His only Son to save the world from sin. Jesus loved and obeyed His Father God. He trusted in the salvation plan for Himself and for others. So should we.

HANNAH GIVES HER SON BACK TO GOD

When Samuel was about three years old, Hannah and Elkanah took the boy to the House of God at Shiloh (1:24). They took with them the sacrifices and offerings commanded in the Law of Moses. They took a young bull and some flour and some wine.

'After the bull was sacrificed, Elkanah and Hannah brought the boy to Eli' (1:25). They told him that they wanted Samuel to grow up serving God at Shiloh. He was a very special sacrifice and offering to God.

Hannah said to Eli, "I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD God Almighty" (1:26). Hannah gave Samuel to Eli and reminded him of her prayer for a son. She praised God for His goodness.

She told Eli, "I prayed for this child. The LORD God Almighty has given me what I asked Him for. So now I give him to God. As long as he lives he will be given to the LORD" (1:27-28).

This was the time to fulfil her promise to dedicate her baby to God. It began a great work of good for Israel and the world. It was the result of her faith, her love for God and her prayers. God allowed the shame of not having children. He gave her the faith to believe. He encouraged her love. He heard and answered her prayers. She was 'heard by God'. Samuel came into this world through the love and mercy of God for Hannah. This is called the grace of God. Through the giving up of her son Samuel, God changed the world.

Many hundreds of years later, God gave up His Son Jesus for the sins of the world. His name means Saviour or Salvation.

Eli, Elkanah and Hannah worshiped God together. They rejoiced that God would do great things in Israel. They gave glory to God.

Then Elkanah and Hannah left the House of God. The heart of Hannah sang with praises to God. The next chapter gives us the words of her song.

We should always try to remember when and where God answered our prayers. Then tell others what He did for us to the glory of God.

Ruth said, "He told me more. He even said [to] stay with my workers until they have finished bringing in all my grain" (2:21).

In this way, Boaz became a protector, provider and redeemer for Naomi and Ruth. Naomi told Ruth to continue to work in the field of Boaz. She said, "That will be good for you my daughter" (2:22).

So Ruth stayed close to the women who worked for Boaz until the end of the harvest (2:23). The other men and women in the field owned by Boaz kept her safe. They respected her.



Talk about this:

1. How did Ruth show her faith in God in her new life in Israel (2:2)?
2. How did Boaz show the love of God for Ruth and Naomi (2:8-17)?
3. How did Naomi show her thanks for the provision of God through Boaz (2:19-20)? Why did she say that God loves the living and the dead?
4. Why did Naomi believe that Boaz was a family protector (2:20)?



Think about this: Do troubles make our faith in God weaker or stronger (James 1:2-4)? Have you seen clearly the simple ways that God is at work in your life? Are you quick to praise God? Are you quick to ask Him to bless others (2:19-20)?



Bible reading: Ruth Chapter 3

RUTH SECRETLY VISITS BOAZ

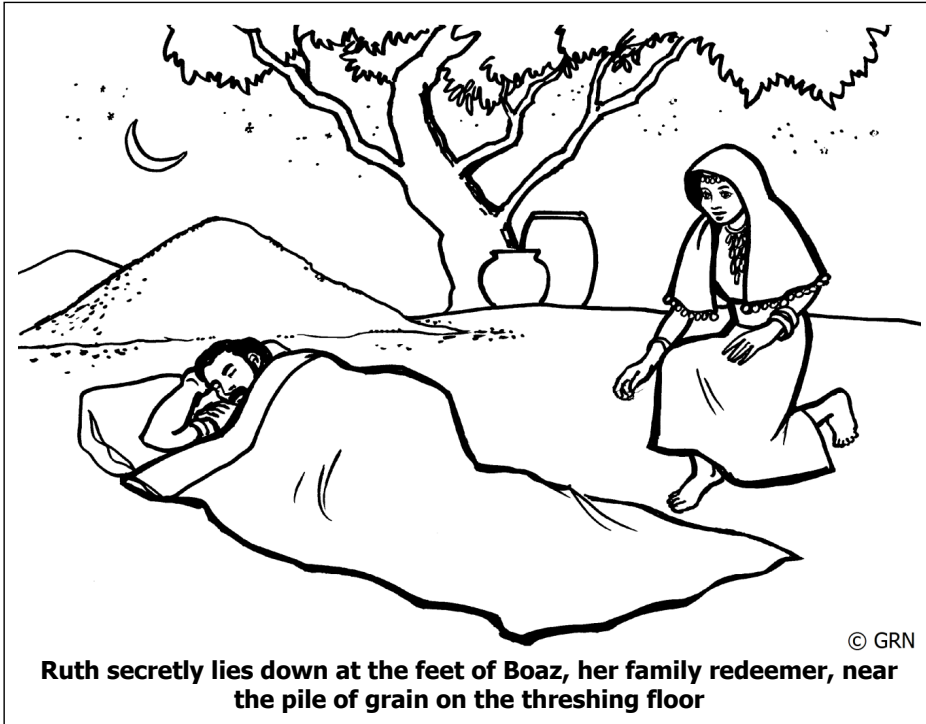
Naomi spoke to Ruth and said, "My daughter, I must find a home for you. It should be a place where you will be provided for" (3:1).

The faith of Naomi was now very strong because of the provision of God through Boaz. She had great hope for the future. She looked beyond the need for food. She looked to God to provide a Jewish husband and children for Ruth. Naomi also trusted in God to meet her own needs.

Naomi spoke to Ruth again. "You have been working ... for Boaz. He is a relative of ours (3:2). Tonight, Boaz will be separating the straw from his barley on the threshing floor. So wash yourself. Put on some perfume and your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor. But do not let Boaz know you are there. Wait until he has finished eating and drinking. Notice where he lies down. Then go over and uncover his feet. Lie down there [at his feet]. He will tell you what to do" (3:3-4). Ruth must wait there and trust Boaz to supply her future needs.

Naomi remembered the law of Moses. She knew that if a man died and left no children, a near relative should marry the widow to keep the family line and name (Deuteronomy 25:5-6).

Boaz was a relative of Naomi's former husband. He was therefore a family protector and redeemer for Naomi and Ruth.



Ruth secretly lies down at the feet of Boaz, her family redeemer, near the pile of grain on the threshing floor

Ruth showed she was ready to trust in God. She replied to Naomi, "I will do whatever you say" (3:5). Naomi's own faith in God was strong. Ruth was happy to obey her. She did everything her mother-in-law told her to do (3:6-8).

Ruth changed her clothes. Her days of mourning were now over. She was ready to accept Naomi's family redeemer. That night, she washed, put on perfume and went to the harvest field. Boaz slept near the pile of grain. Ruth quietly lay down at his feet. She spread the edge of his cloak over her. In this way, without speaking a word, Ruth invited Boaz to protect her.

Our own heavenly Redeemer and Saviour is Jesus. If we humble ourselves at the feet of Jesus, we can accept Him as our Saviour. His name means Saviour or Salvation. He will redeem us; He will save us.

BOAZ AGREES TO HELP RUTH

Boaz woke up in the middle of the night. "Who are you?" he asked. "I am Ruth" she said. "You are my family protector. Take good care of me by making me your wife" (3:9).

Boaz praised Ruth for asking him for help instead of going after the younger men of Israel (3:10). He also praised her for her good reputation in the town (3:11).

- Hannah believed that God had heard her prayer.
- Hannah believed that God would answer her prayer.
- Hannah believed that her prayer was in the will of God.

God put faith in the heart of Hannah. Through the love and mercy of God, His answer would become part of His salvation plan for Israel and the world.

Faith is a gift of God. This is part of the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-9).

ELKANAH AGREES TO GIVE HANNAH'S SON TO GOD

Married women of Israel were allowed to make a promise to God as part of their worship. However, the Old Testament scriptures say that the wife and the husband must agree (Numbers 30:10-11).

Elkanah loved God. He and his family rose early the next day. They did not return home until he gathered them again to worship (1 Samuel 1:19). Then they went back to their home in Ramah.

Elkanah agreed with the promise that Hannah made to God. Elkanah slept with his wife. God blessed them. 'After some time, Hannah became pregnant. She had a baby boy... She named him Samuel' (1:20). The name of Samuel was a witness to everyone that God had heard her prayer. Samuel means 'heard by God'.

Hannah kept her promise and gave her precious gift back to God. She trusted in His plan for her son.

The next year Elkanah prepared to take his family to Shiloh. He was ready to offer their animal sacrifice to God (1:21). Hannah did not go with them. She said to her husband, "When the boy does not need me to breast-feed him anymore, I will take him to the House of God. I will give him back to the LORD God Almighty... He will stay there for the rest of his life" (1:22).

- Hannah continued to believe that this was the will of God.
- Hannah never forgot the promise she made to God.
- Hannah remained strong in her faith that God gave her.

Hannah gave her baby Samuel to God from the day he was born. She dedicated her baby to God. However, he had to grow before she could leave him with Eli at Shiloh.

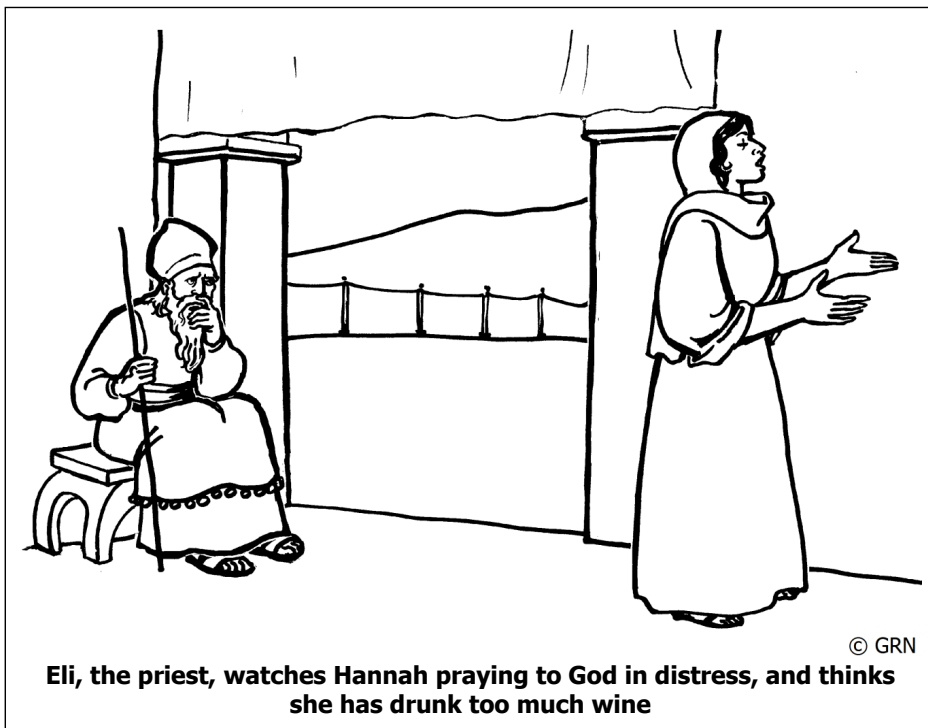
Elkanah told her, "Do what you think is best. Stay here at home until Samuel does not need you ... anymore (1:23). He wanted God's blessing from Eli to come true. Elkanah wanted to give Samuel back to God as Hannah had promised. He believed it was the will of God.

'So Hannah stayed at home. She fed her son until he did not need her milk anymore' (1:23).

- With faith that God would do a miracle and give her a baby boy.
- With faith that God would take her son back as His own.

Jewish teachers today still use the prayer of Hannah for teaching and blessing the people of God. Hannah continued praying silently to God. She also promised that her son would never cut his hair. This was a sign of a holy man in those days.

Eli, the chief priest, saw her lips moving but he heard no words. She was praying in her heart. Eli was unkind to her. He thought she was drunk. He told her to stop drinking wine (1:12-14).



Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer. I was telling the LORD God Almighty all my troubles... I am praying here because I am very sad. My pain is so great" (1:15-16).

Eli then gave her his blessing. "Go in peace. May the God of Israel give you what you ask for" (1:17).

Hannah replied, "May you be pleased with me" (1:18). His prayers and his blessing encouraged her. She gave thanks and blessings to God and to Eli. They blessed each other in the custom of the Jews.

Hannah left Eli and had something to eat. Her face was no longer sad. Her faith was strong.

Boaz wanted to marry Ruth. "Do not be afraid. I will do for you everything you ask" (3:11).

There was a problem, however. "It is true that I am a relative of yours. But there is a family protector more closely related to you than I am... If he wants to help you, good. Let him help you. But if he does not want to, then I will do it" (3:12-13).

Boaz showed his faith in God. "You can be sure that the LORD God Almighty lives. You can be just as sure that I will help you" (3:13). Her request was part of the plan of God and Boaz accepted it was the will of God.

Boaz would first ask the other relative if he wished to buy back the property of Elimelech. He would also ask the man to marry Ruth to renew the Ephrath family name and line of Elimelech. In this way, their family would continue in future years. These guidelines were given to Moses by God in the Old Testament Torah teachings of Leviticus and Deuteronomy.


While it was still dark, Boaz sent Ruth home without anyone seeing her (3:14). But first he filled her shawl with barley grain. Then he went into the town of Bethlehem (3:15).

Ruth told Naomi what Boaz said to her. Naomi told Ruth to sit down and wait. She said, "The man will not rest until he settles the whole matter today" (3:18).

The Law of God gave a widow rights to the property of her dead husband. Naomi had a right to a share of the land and property that used to belong to Elimelech.

Talk about this:

1. What did Naomi say in faith to Ruth (3:1-4)?
2. What did Ruth say in faith to Boaz (3:9)?
3. Why was it possible for Ruth to have a new family through Boaz (3:2,9)?
4. What was the problem that might prevent Boaz from marrying Ruth (3:12)?
5. How did Boaz overcome the problem fairly? How did he show his faith in God (3:13)?
6. What encouragement did Naomi give to Ruth while waiting for God's answer to her prayer (3:18)?

 **Think about this:** How did the faith of Ruth grow through the love of Naomi and Boaz? How has your love and faith changed the lives of strangers and friends and relatives around you?



Bible reading: Ruth Chapter 4

BOAZ AGREES TO MARRY RUTH

Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there to talk with his relative. The other protector or redeemer of the Elimelech's family arrived. The two men sat down together at the gate (4:1).

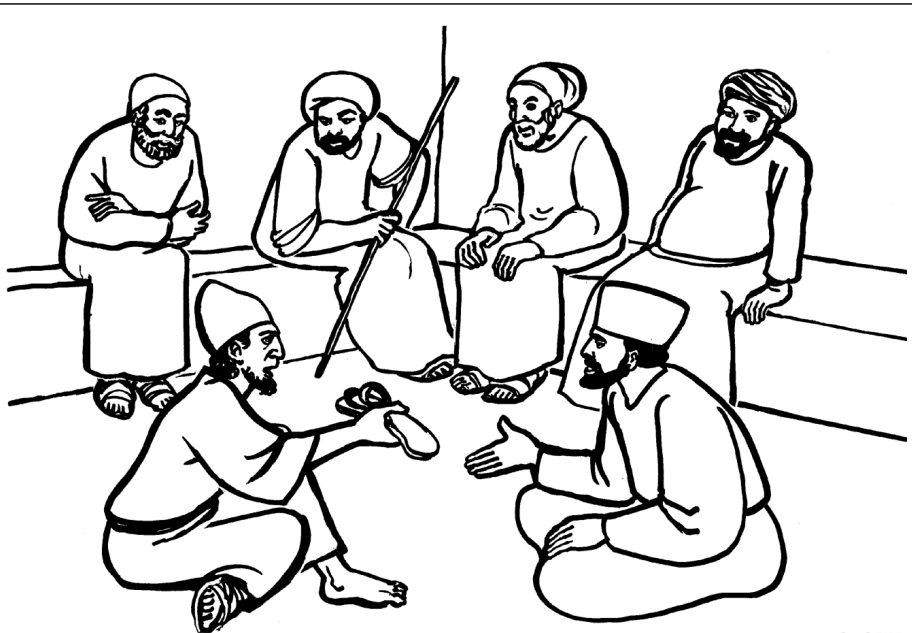
Boaz called ten of the elders of Bethlehem to meet with him. They were trusted men who took care of the town. There, Boaz put his request before the elders and before the nearest family redeemer of Naomi and Ruth.

Boaz reminded them that closest relative of a widow could buy back or redeem the land previously owned by their dead husband.

Boaz said to his relative, "Naomi has come back from Moab. She is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. I suggest that you buy the land... Buy it while ... the elders of my people are looking on as witnesses. If you are willing to buy it back, do it. But if you are not willing, tell me. ...No one has the right to buy it back except you. And I am next in line [to buy it]" (4:3-4).

The relative said, "I will buy it."

Then Boaz said, "When you buy the property from Naomi and Ruth ... you must marry Ruth... You must take her as your wife" (4:5). This would redeem the



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Boaz agrees to buy back the property of Elimelech and Naomi and marry Ruth



One Place to Worship God

Before Israel entered the Promised Land, Moses showed them how to worship the One True and Living God Almighty. In the desert, Moses put up a special tent outside the camp. It was called the Meeting Tent. God Himself told Moses how to do it. God met Moses there and filled the tent with His glory (Exodus 40:34-35).

The Meeting Tent became the centre of worship for the people of Israel. They carried it with them through the desert. Moses told them that God would provide a place for them to worship Him when they arrived in the Promised Land of Canaan (Deuteronomy 12:13-14). The priests set up the Meeting Tent at Shiloh (Joshua 18:1). It became the first Jewish tabernacle. Three times a year the Jews went to Shiloh for the great feasts of Israel (Deut. 16:16). They came to Shiloh to worship God. It was 400 years before the Temple of God was built in Jerusalem. Shiloh was the only holy place that Jews worshipped God at the time of Hannah.

Every year at Shiloh, Peninnah made the grief of Hannah get worse. Peninnah spoke cruel words to her. Hannah was upset. Peninnah had children but Hannah did not. Hannah, however, was special to God. She loved God. She knew how to worship Him and to pray to Him.

HANNAH PRAYS FOR A SON AT SHILOH

One year in Shiloh, Hannah went alone to the Meeting Tent. 'Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the House of God' (1:9). Hannah was not allowed to go inside because she was a woman.

Hannah was very sad. She wept and wept. She stood and prayed to the LORD God Almighty (1:10). Her struggle made her bold in her faith.

Then she asked God for a son. Hannah made a promise to God. If He gave her a son, she would give the boy back to God. He could then serve God all the days of his life.

She said, "LORD God Almighty, you rule over all. Please see how I am suffering! Show concern for me! Do not forget about me! Please give me a son! If you do, I will give him back to You" (1:11).

True prayer is not just the words we speak out loud. It is the spirit within us talking to God in fellowship with Him. Jesus once said to His followers, "Ask and it will be given to you. Search and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). Learn from Hannah how to ask, and to receive, for God is always listening to you.

She prayed with much faith (1 Samuel 1:11):

- With faith that God was in control of all things.
- With faith that God knew all about the reasons for her troubles.
- With faith that God would show His love and care for her.
- With faith that God would not forget or ignore her.

1 Samuel Chapters 1 to 3

THE STORY OF HANNAH AND HER SON SAMUEL

INTRODUCTION

Jews at the Feast of Trumpets often read the Old Testament words from 1 Samuel 1:1 to 2:11. These words about Samuel are part of the history of Israel after the book of Ruth. It begins with the story of Hannah, a childless woman, who prayed to God for a son. God answered her prayer, so she gave her baby back to serve God. The name of the baby was Samuel.

This true story happened 1100 years before the birth of Jesus. It was during the time of the last judges of Israel and before the time of the kings of Israel. Only a few people at that time obeyed the LORD God Almighty. So God allowed them to come under the control of the powerful Philistines who worshipped heathen gods.

The Ten Commandments of God were kept in the House of God at Shiloh. This was 30 km north of Jerusalem. There was no Temple of God in Jerusalem in those days. There was no public reading of the teachings from God written down by Moses in the Torah or holy laws of Israel.



Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapter 1

ELKANAH AND FAMILY WORSHIP GOD AT SHILOH

Elkanah lived in Ramah (1:1). Ramah was 8 km north of Jerusalem and 22 km from Shiloh. He had two wives. It was a custom at that time for some men of Israel to have two wives. The people copied this custom from the neighbouring tribes. This was not the plan of God at the beginning. The plan of God is for one man to marry one woman for life (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; Hebrews 13:4). This plan of God has not changed.

The wives of Elkanah were called Peninnah and Hannah (1 Samuel 1:2). Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. Peninnah caused Hannah much shame and grief (1:6). Hannah's problem, however, became part of a plan of God for Israel and the world.

Year after year Elkanah and his family went to Shiloh to give sacrifices to God (1:3). Eli was chief priest at Shiloh. His two sons Hophni and Phinehas served as priests there.

Peninnah teased Hannah year after year. Each time Hannah went with her husband to the House of God at Shiloh, Peninnah teased her. She did this until Hannah cried and did not want to eat (1:7).

Elkanah loved Hannah very much. He said to her, "Hannah, why are you crying? Why do you not eat? Why are you so unhappy? Do I not mean more to you than ten sons?" (1:8). But he could not comfort her.

land that belonged to Elimelech. It would enable Naomi to start a new life. Then she could also start a new family for Elimelech through the children of Ruth, if a relative were free to marry her. This custom is based on the laws given by God to Moses (Deuteronomy 25:5-6).

The closest relative did not want to do this. He asked Boaz to buy the land back (Ruth 4:6).

The man took off his sandal to give to Boaz. This was the custom at that time. It showed that a business plan was agreed (4:7). The relative held his sandal high in the air for all to see. In this way, the people at the city gate witnessed what was said.

Boaz said, "Today you are witnesses... I have bought all the property that belonged to Elimelech and [his sons] Kilion and Mahlon. I have also taken Ruth, who is from Moab, to become my wife. She is the widow of Mahlon. I have decided to marry her so that the name of the dead man will stay with his property. Now his name will not disappear from his family line [Ephrath] or from his hometown [Bethlehem]. Today you are witnesses" (4:9-10).

"We are witnesses," the elders answered. The other people at the gate of Bethlehem added their blessing to Boaz and Ruth (4:10). "May you be famous in Bethlehem", they said (4:11). These words came true. They blessed Boaz and Ruth with a prayer asking God to give them many children.

RUTH AND BOAZ HAVE A SON

Boaz bought the land owned previously by Elimelech and Mahlon. He became the family redeemer of Naomi and Ruth. He redeemed the land by paying the price. He paid the price for them to begin a new life.

Boaz married Ruth and a son was born to them (4:13).

The local women said to Naomi, "Give praise to the LORD God Almighty... May this child become famous all over Israel! He will make your life new again. He will look after you when you are old. He is the son of your very own daughter-in-law. She loves you. She is better to you than seven sons" (4:14-15).

'Better to you than seven sons' was a saying at that time which meant 'perfect'. A similar saying is also used in the story of Hannah (1 Samuel 1:8; 2:5).

Naomi took the child in her arms and took care of him (4:16). The women of Bethlehem said, "Naomi has a son." They named him Obed (4:17). Obed means serving or servant.

The family line of Elimelech was saved through which Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah, was born 1300 years later. Obed became the grandfather of God's anointed king, David (4:17). King David became an ancestor of Joseph, and his wife Mary. Mary was the mother of Jesus, the Son of God (Matthew 1:16).

Jesus was the Christ or Messiah of Israel. He became the Saviour of the world. He became our Redeemer to pay the price for us to begin a new life. Joseph was told by an angel, "Mary will have a Son. You must give Him the name Jesus." This

name means salvation or saviour in Hebrew. "This is because He will save the people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus is Saviour of Jews and non-Jews. "He accepts people from every nation" (Acts 10:34-35).



Talk about this:

1. How did the custom in Israel protect families from losing their property?
2. How did the custom in Israel provide for the family name and line to continue after a death in the family?
3. What does the word 'redeemer' mean in this Old Testament story?
4. What does 'redeemer' mean when the word is used in the New Testament scriptures?
5. How did the story of Ruth prepare the way for the new covenant of God with Israel and the world?
6. How does the story of Ruth encourage us to tell foreigners about the salvation plan of God?



Think about this: Think how the story of Ruth links the Old and New Testaments. Can you see the blessings and purpose of God at work in the lives of Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon, Ruth, Boaz and baby Obed? Can you see God at work in your life and in those around you? Are you ready to care for and share the Good News of Jesus with your family and friends and any foreigners you meet?

CONCLUSION TO THE STORY OF RUTH

This true story began with Elimelech and Naomi from Bethlehem. They and their sons left Israel, the Promised Land of God, to live in Moab. This was because of the sins in Israel which brought God's judgement on His people through allowing a great famine. It then became the story of Ruth, a foreign woman who married a son of Elimelech and Naomi. Ruth rejected the gods of Moab. She chose to put her trust in the One True and Living God of Israel. She loved God and her mother-in-law Naomi. When her father and husband died, she chose a life of faith in God to live in poverty in a strange land. The love and care of God for Ruth and Naomi was then revealed after they returned to Bethlehem.

It is also the story of the love of Boaz for them both. He became their family protector and redeemer in the town of Bethlehem. God continued the family line through Ruth. It is the story of the faithful love of God to save believers when things go wrong in their lives. It is the same God today who remains faithful to believers.

It is also the amazing story of how God prepared the way for Israel's Messiah through the firstborn son of Ruth and Boaz. Boaz paid the price to become a redeemer for Ruth and Naomi. God provided Ruth with a husband and a son who prepared the way for Jesus, the Saviour of Israel and the world. The first son of Ruth was born in Bethlehem. The first Son of Mary, the mother of Jesus, was born in Bethlehem 1300 years later. He was Jesus the Son of God and the promised

Christ or Messiah of Israel. He paid the price to redeem the world from sin through suffering and dying for us on a cross. The loving sacrifice of Jesus is the way God redeems and saves the world from sin for all who believe in His Son.

It is also the story of Naomi, who returned to Bethlehem with no home and no descendants. Yet her daughter-in-law saw Naomi's faith in God and accepted Him as her own. We are all guilty, like Naomi, of making bad decisions in our youth that hinders God's provision for us. But Ruth was accepted by God because Naomi repented and risked poverty and shame in returning to where she belonged. Naomi's repentance brought her closer to God and in line with His will for Israel through Ruth. We, too, can be used by God in preparing the way for others to be in God's will, with a big impact for His Kingdom, if we repent and seek God anew.