

NAOMI'S Prayers and thoughts:

O! LORD, it is so frightening to see the cost of all we need or do increasing. The dust because we have had no rain is awful; it is in or on everything. I feel like I even taste it in our food. The drought has severely damaged the crops. The stalls in the market place have less food for sale—it's like our Bethlehem, the "*house of food*," is struggling just to mean what its name suggests. This famine is affecting everything. The book of the Law says when we stray from You there will be famines—it terrifies my heart to think that might be exactly why these shortages are happening.

Elimelech has been so down lately. Though today was good. I loved seeing a bit of hope sparkle in his eyes when he shared his idea with me. I do not think though, that I can hurt his feelings by telling him my doubts. I wonder if he really believes You are nudging us to move. I also question if his worries are due to his concern that the famine is making the boy's health even poorer or if he is just trying to avoid living through this difficult time.

I am struggling, LORD. I do not understand how he can believe that taking us away from everything we know is the answer to living through this difficult time. I wonder why he is not thinking we should just wait out this time of high prices and very few resources.

I know Mahlon and Kilion are going to follow in Elimelech's footsteps. If their steps do not follow his they will each need to find an occupation that will provide for their own families when they have them. I really do not like the idea of them doing that in a foreign country, away from our roots in Israel, and without the nearness of our families while doing life. What if they choose to marry foreign women? What happens then?

O! LORD God Almighty, quiet my heart; help my words encourage my husband instead of causing him to doubt himself. When I think of the meaning of Elimelech's name, *God is King*, I am doubly reminded that You are our powerful God and that when I trust my husband's decisions I am really trusting You.

You are so great and mighty LORD God. Thank You for answering my prayers. I had no idea when I prayed for help trusting my husband's decisions You would give me energy, joy and the fun of packing with two young boys that are ready for an adventure. When the packing was complete our carts and donkeys overflowed with many crammed in or tied on bundles. We shared or gave away many of our possessions to our families and neighbors. I was sure doing that would make me feel very sad, but actually, I'm feeling very free—that's another gift from You is it not?

So many of the hills and valleys got greener the further away we got from the dry grit that has accompanied the famine in Judah. I had no idea Moab was so far from Bethlehem. Elimelech's done some traveling but I have not, his reassurances were a great help through this whole process. Thank You for my loving, caring, motivated husband. It

seems to me that our boys' laughter has returned a sense of enjoyment to life that has calmed Elimelech's troubled heart.

I know even with what we left behind my heart is full—it is good to feel as though we are all functioning together, all moving toward the destiny You have in place for us. I am feeling once again that my lovely thoughts are a reflection of the meaning of my name—Naomi, *pleasant and righteous*. My fullness of heart is fullness of joy because my family is well, excited, and looking forward to this trip, and because I am now as confident as Elimelech that You are encouraging us to move. Thank You for forgiving my doubts—Your goodness and Your mercy are the greatest blessings of all.

God Almighty, I thought I trusted You with everything when we left Bethlehem. I thought trusting You was hard then—Now it feels impossible—Elimelech is dead.

This is definitely much WORSE! Trusting is much more difficult now with him gone. Convincing myself not to believe You brought us here so he could die has been a battle with every part of my being. I want to be very angry with You; I am very mad—but when I honestly look at the fact we chose to move thinking it was at Your direction—it makes no sense to be upset about being left here in this foreign country alone with the boys—even if it is the last thing I expected. I do not want nor do I like what has happened at all. O! God, I need Your help. I do not want my bitterness to show. Please help me keep it tucked away so the boys do not learn through my example that becoming bitter is how one handles grief.

You have given them these years with their father, if we had been in Bethlehem and he had been constantly fearful for their existence and our need for provision he might have died even sooner. So... I am going to choose to thank You instead, for the time the boys had with Elimelech and ask You to help me be the parent they need now, as they become full grown men. I am so fearful we will become destitute. Thank You that they are nearly grown young men somewhat able to provide what we need to survive this totally different type of famine in our lives.

Moabite women!!! O! God Most High, both of my boys have had their hearts captured by Moabite women! O! Most Holy God—this is exactly what I feared! And now without Elimelech's authority as the Father, how do I strongly encourage them to rethink their involvement with Ruth and Orpah? If the boys marry these young women I fear they will be enticed to love the gods of Moab instead of You. What am I to do? What ever will I do?

I guess I should be glad they are not from any of those forbidden nations found in Canaan—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Perizites, Canaanites, Hivites, or Jebusites. But Jehovah Yahweh, if my boys have children You have told us they will not be allowed to enter the assembly of the LORD for ten generations. My heart cries at the thought of not worshipping You with my grandchildren. O! LORD, keeping going is almost more

than I can do. I am so worn out from wrestling with this problem it is almost hard to breathe—I am so tired.

Two weddings! Both boys, both of them want to get married!!!

It is too much! These weddings are within just months of burying Elimelech. The fog has barely begun to clear from my mind because of the confusion brought about by his death. I am frustrated too. I have not been able to talk those boys of mine out of anything. O! LORD I have been so hoping to go back to Bethlehem, to go home. With these weddings I know my sons will not want to leave Moab. And on top of everything else right now I feel like even trying to pray gives me a headache. I hope we can manage the day-to-day stuff of putting food on the table for all five of us.

I have to admit, for foreigners, both girls are pleasant and kind. Kilion's wife Orpah is quite lively—she seems to like fresh ideas and exciting things. I hope she has as much passion for their marriage.

Mahlon's wife Ruth is an exceptional beauty, inside and out. She is constantly agreeable, and always seems to find a way to look on the bright side of things. She listens very attentively, asks well thought out questions and seems quite interested in who You are when I share information about our Sabbath traditions and why we believe You are God Most High. She has been very willing to learn the customs of our forefathers. I am surprised for it appears to me when Ruth left home she expected to give up the gods of Moab and embrace the god of her husband. She has already begun questioning how living by faith pleases You.

Both girls are kind, work well together—so far, and seem to really love my sons. I should not worry, whine or complain should I?

Like always... I want to praise You for helping me remember I need to be a gracious, loving, grateful woman of God. You and I both know I do not like myself when I focus on what I do not like. That means as I pray right now I need to say thank You for good, good boys, for lovely daughters-in-law, and for the blessing of being loved and honored by them. Thank You Holy Father for these great gifts of life.

LORD God Almighty! What are we to do? First one son, now the other is dead. What are we to do? How are we to live now that they have both died? How could You let this happen? I wonder if You really understand this world You've made; do You know how dependant women are on men to care for them? Even in a loveless marriage a woman counts her blessings if her husband is a good provider.

You have not only left me alone, but I need to lead and take responsibility for these two young childless women, do I not? Who will take care of us? How can we possibly survive?

Why? Why? Why?

I do not understand! We have tried so hard, even in a foreign land, to honor You with our lives—and is this the thanks we get? Is it?

I want to go home, I want to leave this place where this spiral of loss in my life just keeps winding downward. The wives—I feel so bad for them. They have no children (no one to remind them of the love they shared with their men), no husbands, no hope of life with someone to love, (You at least gave me years to love Elimelech).

I'm so, so, so angry! How can You do this to them? Why would you treat them this way when it seems to me they have come to love You as their God? In a sense they are more destitute than I am. I want to demand an answer to my “why” again. Why? Why Lord have You allowed this awful state of affairs? I can taste the bitterness growing in my soul again. This bile, the resentment, the wrath I feel because everything is so unfair is squeezing the very life out of the grasp I have had on You. I worked so hard for the boy's sake not to be bitter when Elimelech died. Why has Your hand gone out against me? How do I handle the bitterness this time? It is threatening to consume me—and with ALL that I do not like—I hate the rise of this ugly, ugly feeling inside of my body. Lord God Almighty I do not want to hate You nor blame You for everything. I just do not understand, I just do not know why You could allow such horrible things to happen when we have tried so hard to be Your obedient servants.

I wonder; are you directing us? Do You still care, at least a little? I heard that You, the LORD God Almighty have come to the aid of Your people by providing food in Judah. Will Orpah and Ruth come with me, should I even ask them to do that? Maybe? There is no future here in Moab for me. I think there may be even less for them. Is it possible You are saying it is time for me to go home? Might Your love be more constant than I want to consider?

They are so precious to me—thank You for my foreign daughters—thank You for the love they have demonstrated to their dead, my beloved sons. I cannot force them to come with me. I do not want my bitterness to rub off on them. Their lives may be much better here, here in Moab with their families—I have to encourage them to make that choice do I not? O! Yahweh, how can I stand more separation, more loss, and even more emptiness? How can You ask that of me?

Today, LORD Jehovah, we started out toward Judah together and You know the struggle of my heart as I walked. Doing as I believe You wished I gathered up my courage to tell my daughters to go home instead of coming with me. The words I said choked my throat—"Go back each of you, my dear daughters, return home. Even if we followed our tradition of another son of mine marrying you—I first need another husband, and then would you be waiting years for that baby to grow into a man? I am unable to care for you, provide for you—I am empty, void of life—even my womb is empty, unable to ever be full again. I pleaded with them, trying to be obedient to Your encouragement to give them a choice.

I told them, "I do not understand why this is the LORD's will for me. I sense the LORD's hand in all of these calamities. My heart grieves for you because you have also had to bear all this sad hurt and bitter pain too."

And they cried, and cried, and wept some more. Orpah was finally able to collect herself. She kissed me good-bye and walked away—O! How my heart broke for my vivacious daughter-in-law. She did not look back as she headed for her mother's home. My prayer is what I told her, "May Yahweh grant you rest in the home of another husband."

LORD, God Almighty, I pray she does not return to Chemosh—the god of Moab—but her leaving did give me the impression that is exactly what she will do.

But LORD, sweet, gentle, always kind, always loving Ruth just clung to me. I urged her again, "Your sister-in-law is going back to her people and the gods of this land—go back with her."

Ruth grabbed hold of me as I have clung to You. She would not let go and said these amazing words. "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me."

In the midst of all this pain, separation, and death You have given me a daughter. I am not as empty as I thought. You've given me a daughter that loves You and understands who You are. Her love for You has encircled me too. She does not want the gods of Moab, she wants life with me where You are, and she does not even want her body to be returned to Moab when she dies. She loves You, LORD Jehovah and me! She loves us completely!

Thank You for this incredible gift, this incredible love, and this new hope for a future. You are giving me someone with whom to share my life—the daughter of my heart; my sweet, young, widowed daughter-in-law. Thank You for the spirit of this precious young woman; We are headed home; I am no longer desolate. She is Your gift to me, is she not?!?! Thank YOU! Thank You for EVERYTHING!

Dear Holy Jehovah,

Home, and thoughts of life in Bethlehem kept me going. I am so tired LORD, ...really tired from walking all those miles. Ruth was a lovely traveling companion. She chats easily and yet seems to have a sixth sense about when to be quiet too. Thank You for her amazing loyalty, love and support, she was so helpful in selecting sheltered places to sleep, and finding safe places to rest along the way.

The road looked much greener than I remember, especially as we got near Bethlehem. Actually, I think it should appear more fertile since the famine is over. April is such a beautiful time of year and seeing the harvesters, sickles in hand; all gossiping together brought a special pleasure to my heart. The harvest season too reminded me that I could see for myself that You have restored sustenance to Bethlehem, the *house of food*.

Seeing women at the well, my old friends, was an incredible delight. But I could see the women Ruth and I first met whispering to the ones that arrived after us that. "the older woman's name was Naomi."

I found myself telling them, "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."

I am sorry I so quickly showed my disrespect for You. How can I trust that You are a loving God and be so angry You allowed my husband and children to die at the same time? I do not understand why this has happened? But I know because of how easily the words came out of my mouth that I am still fighting my bitterness toward You. You are sovereign. It is just that I am so disappointed. Today I realized I have been wishing, along with all the women of Israel, to be used to fulfill Your covenant. My deep desire, the yearning of my heart, has been that my family, my sons, would be part of Your promise—a Messiah is coming. That dream died along with my sons. Why is it that the death of a dream brings so much emptiness and bitterness with it?

Also there are no grand children to carry on our family line. There has been no *goel*, kinsman-redeemer, growing up with one of my widowed daughter-in-laws. On top of that I am still trying to work through the feelings of my heart breaking into pieces smaller than a broken pottery jar. Please forgive me for being bitter...and thank You now, for the work You are going to do in my heart to help me release it once and for all. I hid my bitterness about Elimelech in the beginning, for the boy's sakes—I desire now to get rid of it, not hide it, for my sake. Thank You for helping me do that.

Just a few days here and she's caring for me again LORD. Ruth asked permission this morning to go into the fields to pick up the leftover grain. I am sure my words of caution were unnecessary but her beauty could easily attract unwanted advances from any

number of young men. As a poor foreigner it might be easy for someone to take advantage of her and so I worried out loud to her—and I'm now praying for her as she works. Thank You for keeping her safe dear Jehovah.

I'm also hoping our stop at the well when we first got here in Bethlehem will act a means of protection. Most of the women in the village know who she is, will have talked with their husbands and people will remember her kindness to me. I pray You will use that as an entrance to someone's field where she will be safe. Thank You for caring so completely for our needs.

I could hardly wait for her return from the fields yesterday. She had hardly gotten in the door before I blurted out, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!"

I had hoped for answered prayers, but for all the devastation in our lives, I was dumbfounded by Your extraordinary provision. She proceeded to unveil the ephah of barley she'd threshed and show me the leftovers of her mid-day meal. An ephah LORD, how You have blessed Ruth's efforts with this unusually large amount of grain. You are so good to us—Thank You!

Then my Ruth, this precious gift You've given me, started telling me about her day.

She began by saying, "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz."

Boaz? He's our close relative—our *goel*! LORD, I do not think if we had searched the world over I could have found a safer or better place for Ruth to work. O! Thank You, thank You, thank YOU!!!

She continued her story, "He even said to me, 'Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.'"

I feel like we are standing under one of the sieves used for getting the chaff out of the grain—the blessings are pouring on our heads. You are an AWESOME God—O! Holy One, O! Most High!

After we ate she we talked more and I can almost see things as they happened because she described them so well.

She started by saying, I saw this man (Boaz) as he rode up to the fields and called out to everyone, "The LORD be with you!" Ruth was impressed by how everyone greeted him back so cheerfully. She said it appeared to her that everyone likes working for him because he treats his people like they are human, not just his property. She said the girls she worked with actually seemed proud of his high standing in the community.

She then mentioned that he leaned down to talk with the foreman, the man, who had given her permission to glean. She reported she couldn't hear all the words but thought from the pieces she could make out that Boaz was asking who she was. The foreman told him I was with you, Naomi. She questioned me, "how did he know that?"

I was able to tell her how I had prayed that our respite at the well would mean that the news of our arrival would be carried into all the homes of Bethlehem. She opened her eyes wide and then grinned. I am really glad the gossip was favorable.

Next she leaned forward to tell more. Boaz came to her after that and said, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."

She continued, since I did not realize Jehovah was answering your prayers or how the gossip had traveled I could hardly believe he was talking to me so I said, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me — a foreigner?"

The man, Boaz, said almost the same thing you did about hearing about her from the townspeople. Ruth stated next. He said, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband — how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before.

Then before I could speak again he also said something that seemed like he was praying a blessing over me, "May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

"Weren't his words beautiful Naomi?" she asked me. I had to agree.

She said she responded to his kindness by saying something like: "May I continue to find favor in your eyes."

Ruth is good about filling this old woman in on all that happens. She told me Boaz next invited her to sit near him and have bread and wine vinegar for dipping during their mid-day meal. Then, she leaned closer to tell me again, he offered me some roasted grain—and told me to bring my leftovers home to you.

We rejoiced, we even danced a little as we celebrated knowing You have work for her again tomorrow within the safety and care of Boaz and his harvesters. And we both decided we wanted to shout Hallelujah so the world would know about how You have been answering our prayers and providing for us.

Thank You again for this dear precious girl. Thank You again for taking care of us and getting me through the time of wishing my life was over. Thank You for the new

beginning You are giving to us both. Holy, Praised and Glorified be Your name!
AMEN!!!

LORD Jehovah,

Thank You for Your gracious loving care. This home You've provided for both Ruth and me is quite small and I would truly love to give her a little more privacy. I believe such a precious young woman needs more than a corner to call her own. I wonder if we sold some of the property that belonged to Elimelech if we would be able to spend a little more for a larger place?

Ruth's been able to continue gleaning through the barley harvest and now into the wheat harvest. She's such an industrious young woman. We are going to have many of our needs met because of all of her hard work.

But...I'm worried about her, what will happen to my precious girl after I'm gone? I know she has taken refuge under Your wings and You certainly have proven to us that You are safe to trust, but where will she go, what will she do?

Thank You for guiding each step we take, thank You for keeping my precious girl and me under Your wing. Praise Your Holy Name!

LORD God ALMIGHTY!!!

You've done it again—You've guided my thoughts! You given me an idea that may bless my sweet, loyal, loving daughter-in-law for all she's done and who she is. This idea, Your idea, would take care of my precious child when I'm gone, it would give me funds for a bit larger home, and keep Elimelech's property in the Ephrathite clan too.

What a good idea! Boaz is our kinsman, one of our *goels*, a kinsman-redeemer. If he were to buy Elimelech's property he also has the responsibility of taking Ruth as his wife and preserving the name of Mahlon's line. It is a great risk—for if there were to be a son, the boy's inheritance might endanger Boaz' own estate.

I wonder if there is really anything to worry about though as in all those years Mahlon and Ruth were married there were no conceptions, no births, no children. But might Boaz consider buying the property and acquiring Ruth as his wife even with the risks involved? I wonder, it seems to me he has become quite attached to my dear one. He has already taken great care a number of times to protect her. From the comments she has shared about their time together during their rests in the shelter it is evident that he sees her value in ways a younger man never would.

I need to talk to her today. Thank You for making it possible for us to do that, a time when it is quiet, when no neighbors are around, and we aren't too tired to think through all the parts of this plan carefully.

Thank You for helping us think wisely about the offer I am proposing she make and our choices. I am taking a great risk too, aren't I? I may lose many of the treasured moments I value with my precious girl. Thank You for knowing what is best for both of us and being such a mighty powerful God!!! Holy is Your name!

The evening was lovely, no one even passed by our little home as I talked over my idea and plans with Ruth. I told her of my worries for her future when I am gone. Then I described for her again the plan You have for keeping property within the tribe of Israel when a family loses its heirs. A relative, typically a brother or uncle is encouraged to buy the property so it stays within the clan. There is often the condition though that the kinsman takes the dead man's wife and they attempt to conceive a child to be heir in place of the dead man.

Ruth's eyes with those beautiful lashes opened really wide when I finished describing the details of the kinsman-redeemer, a *goel*, and my plan that she should go to the threshing floor tonight. I was impressed once again with her willingness to take my advice. She had no trouble making herself appealing. I explained that once Boaz was asleep, she should uncover his feet and lie down. I told her when she uncovered his feet she was actually asking him to protect and cover her as God promises to do for us when we rest under His wings. I hoped to help her learn that meant she was asking him to become her redeemer. I also told her he would let her know what the next step would be.

Holy One of Israel, I pray Boaz is as attracted to my girl as I think he is. I also ask that he would want very much to have her as his wife. Thank You for helping me be patient while I wait for these long night hours to pass. I need Your help too, to not feel sorry for myself if I am left alone again. I know she will not desert me, but I already grieve at the thought of her leaving our home.

Yahweh, it was still dark out when I heard Ruth at the door. I remember whispering, "How did it go my daughter?"

I hope she gets to repeat the story because even though she was trying to hold back a yawn or two while she told the story I could tell Boaz had impressed her again. I love how he continually protects her. He didn't want her leaving the threshing floor until everyone was asleep. He has done everything within his power to keep her reputation untarnished. As she finished her retelling of events she also said, "He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, 'Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'" Boaz continues to impress me also. Thank You for a man who honors You in everything he

does. He lives out his love for You before those of us watching: it shows in everything he does.

I did have to tear myself away from my thoughts to hear the end of the story. I could see from the wrinkle in her brow that she was a little concerned about one thing he said. She leaned even closer to my ear to whisper in my ear: “Mother Naomi, Boaz told me there is another kinsman-redeemer that is a closer family member than he is.”

This time I think it was my eyes that opened wide. I'd forgotten there was closer family. But then I think it was You that reminded me that Ruth and I have been blessed by our trust in Your faithfulness—we must continue that now as this day unfolds. I told her, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.”

Then we headed back to our mats for another hour of rest. Harvest is complete and we had a quiet but long day of waiting. The Israelites had to wait there at the Red Sea for You to act, we need to do the same thing don't we?

God Most High—Holy One of Israel,

The waiting was worth it! Boaz stopped by our little home after he finished his transactions for the day. We were able to ask him to join us for our midday meal. We set out the food and with her eyes sparkling like the stars, Ruth asked Boaz to tell us about his day.

He started out by saying I went to the town gate this morning to talk to the other kinsman-redeemer. I encouraged him to sit near me as I told him you, Naomi, were selling the land that belonged to Elimelech. I hoped by bringing it to his attention he would think well of me. I wanted him to know if he bought it, fine. But...if he didn't want it, I wanted everyone in town to know I planned to buy it.

The story had us holding our breath at that point for he told us the *goel* that was a closer family member said, “I will redeem it.”

Boaz just grinned as he watched Ruth close her eyes as her body swayed a bit, in fear I think. Then Boaz said, “I told the kinsman-redeemer, ‘On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.’”

He placed his work callused hand on top of Ruth's. “I hoped that statement was the one that would make him rethink his plans,” he told her. As I watched the two of them interact I was reminded of what Boaz' name means, “*in him is strength*.” It is so true, he has strength of mind, strength of character, strength of body and strength of spirit—for he loves You LORD. Thank You for his presence in our lives.

The kinsman-redeemer said, “Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.”

I remember when Boaz said that I thought of Orpah. These two, our kinsman and my other daughter-in-law are similar. I understand they know who You are, LORD God Almighty, but their actions and choices speak very loudly of the level of their commitment to You being less than wholehearted.

Ruth's whole body shuddered as she took a deep breath. And the silly grin Boaz had on his face earlier only got bigger. He appeared pleased with himself and thrilled to be able to tell us, “I said: ‘Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from the town records. Today you are witnesses!’”

I clapped, I found my self so excited at the outcome I just clapped and grinned with them. Boaz then added that those at the gate gave he and Ruth this blessing. “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.”

You, O God Most High—Maker of Heaven and Earth, are so good. Thank You for loving and caring for my Ruth much better than I ever could. I'm so excited, we have a wedding to plan and Boaz is anxious—he said last night he didn't want to wait long.

On her way to her mat my precious girl whispered to me, “Mother Naomi, I hope my happiness at becoming Boaz' wife does not hurt you because Mahlon is gone. I loved him and never expected to love another man. Boaz is truly a man of standing as his harvest girls have told me over and over this summer.”

It was with great joy I found I could honestly say back to her, “You are my daughter and your happiness is mine. Sleep well dear girl—I love you!”

Blessings, blessings, blessing! Thank You for Your love O! Holy One—it is as great and mighty as You are.

Holy, holy God Almighty,

My God, and like Abraham I call You today—my Provider! Do You know, of course You do—that Boaz and Ruth came to me a few days after his bargain at the city gates to tell me they want me to live with them. They want this old woman to live right in their home with them. O! LORD, what blessings You are pouring into my life.

With a soft smile on his face Boaz chided us for whispering shortly after their announcement. “Dear Bride,” he said, “There are to be no secrets in our home, speak up—what is it you are telling Naomi?”

She flushed such a pretty color of red that I wondered if that was why he challenged her in front of me. With her dear chin raised in the air she looked him right in the eye and said, “I was going to tell my dear mother-in-law that you are wonderful! That it was your idea and when you presented it to me you made the comment, ‘You’ve lived with, walked miles for and have taken care of Naomi, why would you think I want you to stop doing that now? Of course I expect and plan that she should live with us.’”

“Well, I am glad I asked, a man likes to hear compliments from his wife every once in awhile” he teased right back.

She squeezed my hand before saying back to him, “You had better get used to the idea of compliments from your wife. You are going to hear often, all the good things I think about you. And it is going to be more than every once in a while.”

O! LORD, God Almighty,

Life is good again. Thank You for the joy of rejoicing in Your goodness to me and to those I love. May Your holy name be praised forever! AMEN!

Eternal God, O! Holy One,

These months have been filled with laughter and fun. Ruth looks as if she is floating on a cloud most of the time. Boaz and I have grinned at each other a number of times when she’s spilled something on her rounded swollen belly. She has even indignantly claimed we think it is delightful that she has recently been unable to tie her own sandals. And then, we all laugh! We are excited about this baby. Her pregnancy has been a daily cause for celebration in this home.

And last night as I was settling into sleep, praising You for the joy of living I nearly sat straight up. I was reviewing all the things that have happened since I left Bethlehem and I could see Your hand in each and every step and every single decision.

Why if Elimelech had not insisted You were encouraging us to move, we may have survived the famine, but what of the privilege of loving our sons, and there would have been no Moabite women. Mahlon would not have chosen our dear Ruth, I would not have come to love her as my daughter, and there were no children, so I suspect Mahlon was unable to plant fertile seed. Your plan is good is it not? And, today I can finally say I cherish the restoration You have brought into my life. It is very pleasant once again. I

“like” the newness of my life, my choices, and being a daughter of the King of the Universe. Life has been hard but I KNOW You are very, very good.

I want to thank You now before Ruth's labor begins for her safety during the delivery of Boaz' child. They have picked out names already; I like the name they have chosen for a boy. Obed, Boaz and Ruth have picked a name that means “*servant*.” I hope the baby serves You as well as his father into his old age. He comes from a family that seems to believe everyone is worth redeeming. I look forward to holding him or even her in my arms. Blessings my LORD God! Blessings!!!

O! My Precious Holy One—the baby, Your *servant*, our Obed is finally here. Thank You, thank You, and thank YOU again for his safe arrival and for watching over them both so carefully as Ruth delivered him. She looked so proud when she unwrapped the swaddling clothes that would have kept Boaz from seeing him. We all marveled at such tiny, but long and slender, fingers and toes. He is a good size boy and his body shape already takes after his father. Thank You for our Obed.

The town's women were here already—and complimenting me—like I had anything to do with his arrival. It is quite amazing, but they brought up how Ruth's presence in my life is better than if I had had seven sons. They are so very accurate. Do You know what she has done Lord? She has shared him with me. She allows me to hold and care for him—we talk about what we think he needs and she takes turns with me in ministering to this small and very young man.

I worried so often that there would be no one around; much less anyone willing, to take care of me as I became old—and You in your compassionate thoughtful manner God You have taken care of that worry too. You have provided a baby that will grow into a man that is not only expected to do that but will be taught the value of fulfilling *the doing of it*, with love, by his precious parents. You are so generous, You give so openhandedly, and I love that my people—and me—belong to You—the God of Israel!

The women—then said, “Naomi has a son.” I feel like that is true and even though I am not in the line of mothers from which Your Messiah will come—You, God of Forever, have restored my faith, hope and love for all those who look forward to the Messiah's arrival and to worshipping Him. He will be a gift treasured like our Obed will He not?

Even with ALL the pain, all the negativity, and all the unanswered questions; Naomi saw a great deal of restoration in her lifetime—BUT she did not have the whole picture.

- 1) Naomi and Elimelech may not have realized that they made the decision to move to Moab at God's prompting.
- 2) Naomi had no idea that God was so pleased with her family's faith, and her faithfulness in following Him that He would use it to encourage, mentor, and draw Ruth into becoming a believer in the One True God.
- 3) Naomi did not realize that by urging her daughters-in-law to go home she would begin to see that Ruth had truly become a believer in the God of Israel.
- 4) And for Naomi, even though her husband and sons died—their arrival in heaven before her made it possible for Ruth to meet, marry and have Boaz' child.
- 5) Orpah leaving Naomi on the road actually made it easier for God to bless Naomi and Ruth with Boaz' love and support.
- 6) Not only did Naomi's son Mahlon pick Ruth for his wife—but in essence he picked David's grandmother, and as evidence of even further blessings—the lovely young woman Mahlon chose as wife, became one of the ancestors of the Christ—the Messiah. Every woman in Israel longed for that privilege. God chose Naomi, her life, her ideas, her faithfulness, her tenacity in holding on to Him in the midst of all her grief to bring Ruth to Himself as she mentored a young woman God placed in her life.
- 7) Naomi's grandson though not biological is that Ancestor.

Ways to follow more closely:

1. Mentor—Who is following you?
2. Bible under your pillow
3. Write out prayers
4. Write out Bible stories as if you were person praying to God through the whole experience, tragedy or crisis.

The book is primarily a story of Naomi's transformation from despair to happiness through the selfless, God-blessed acts of Ruth and Boaz. She moves from emptiness to fullness (1:21; 3:17; see notes on 1:1, 3, 5-6, 12, 21-22; 3:17; 4:15), from destitution (1:1-5) to security and hope (4:13-17).

8) **4:18-22** See 1Ch 2:5-15; Mt 1:3-6; Lk 3:31-33. Like the genealogies of Ge 5:3-32; 11:10-26, this genealogy has ten names (see note on Ge 5:5). It brings to mind the reign of David, during which, in contrast to the turbulent period of the judges recalled in 1:1, Israel finally entered into rest in the promised land (see 1Ki 5:4). It signifies that, just as Naomi was brought from emptiness to fullness through the selfless love of Ruth and **Boaz**, so the Lord brought Israel from unrest to rest through their descendant David, who selflessly gave himself to fight Israel's battles on the Lord's behalf. The ultimate end of this genealogy is Jesus Christ, the great "son of David" (Mt 1:1), who fulfills prophecy and will bring the Lord's people into final rest.