

The Torah of Kindness (Chesed)

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Text: Ruth 1:19-21

(19)And the two of them [Naomi and Ruth] went until they came to Bethlehem, and it happened as they came to Bethlehem that the whole town was astir over them, and the women said, "Is that Naomi?" (20)And she said: 'do not call me Naomi. Call me Mara, ... (21)I went out full, and empty did the Lord bring me back...

- What do you think that the women meant when they asked, "Is this Naomi?"
- How is Ruth feeling in this episode? She walked in with Naomi, yet nothing is said to her, nor is she mentioned. How is the town treating her? Why?
- Note Naomi's response to the women. Why do you think that she does not address the unspoken questions about Ruth?

In contrast to the chorus of the town's women, we hear the voice of Boaz, the relative of Ruth's in-laws of whose existence she is unaware and into his field she wanders searching for a place to gather left-over grain: (Boaz, without introducing himself, offers her protection in his field. Later, he tells his workers to discreetly drop extra stalks for her.)

Text: Ruth 2:11-12

(11) It was told to me all that you did for your mother-in-law after your husband's death, and that you left your mother and father and the land of your birth to come to a people that you did not know in time past.

- What is the reason for Boaz's treatment of Ruth? What might we have expected it to be?
- Who does he compare her to in his description of her as having left her parents and the land of her birth? In what ways is she like that biblical character, and how does she differ?
- Why do you think that Boaz does not reach out with an offer of help to Naomi and Ruth, but tells his workers to make sure that Ruth is able to collect enough grain?

Commentary: Midrash Ruth Rabbah 2:14

Rabbi Zeira says: "This book [of Ruth] does not have anything in it concerned with impurity or purity nor what is forbidden and what is permitted. So why is it written? To teach us the greatness of the reward for acts of lovingkindness (Chesed)."

- Why do you think that on the day that we celebrate the receiving of Torah, we choose to read about acts of Chesed, not observance of Mitzvot from the Torah?

The Chanting of the Ten Commandments:

From Cantor Hinda Labovitz (See her You Tube Channel for more)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PLmzHvENFU>

Akdamut - Introduced by Cantor Hinda Labovitz - 45 Cantors around the

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBRBzRHsnV4>