

hard for Hashem? Read the story and watch G-d go into action! Watch him redeem the lost property and put the deed of ownership back into the name of the deceased. All right, you say, G-d can redeem the land perhaps. But can G-d redeem the dead? Can a corpse have a child? As we read the whole story, we find that not only can a child be given to the corpse, but also that in this child is the promise of a Moshiach who himself will be raised from the dead with the ultimate promise that every corpse sleeping in the grave will be raised from the dead, even the corpse in this story, Mahlon, the deceased husband of Ruth! Now the story is saying, after all that, you, reader, should believe that G-d is the G-d of the living, who can redeem the world and the land and who can make alive even the dead. Ruth had neither a Jewish mother nor a Jewish father! But she has entered Ideal Israel (Yeshuron Yisroel, meaning 'upright one or 'law-upholding one', a poetic name for the true Israel—see Isaiah 44:2; Deut. 32:15; 33:26; 33:5) by faith alone (Gal.2:15-21), by an individual choice to turn away from the former heathenish direction she was going and by making a personal decision to turn back and join the people of G-d and to take their G-d as her G-d in true teshuva (1:16-17). (Moab symbolizes for Naomi a heathenish neglect of G-d's people and G-d's House, because Bethlehem means 'House of Bread,' and Naomi has felt the covenant curses of famine, death, and childlessness as a result of her moving in a heathenish direction that neglects G-d's House—Dt 28:18, 21, 24). But

Ruth has become a 'supernatural Jew' through the new birth identity in Hashem, entering 'Upright' Israel by what alone made her upright, that is, emunah (Hab. 2:4; Gn 15:6; Psalm 106:31; Gal. 2:16), and Ruth has entered Upright Israel ahead of those who say they are Jews but are still spiritually uncircumcised, still blindly heathen at heart, as Naomi seems to be in Moab until she is provoked to jealousy by seeing G-d bless in Bethlehem one of the Gentiles, her daughter-in-law Ruth (contrast Ruth 1:15 and Ruth 2:20). Ruth's regenerated, circumcised heart made her part of the true circumcision, and we who are regenerated in the Brit Chadasha kehillah have also entered Yeshurun Israel with Ruth the Moabitess and with Rahab in order to provoke the Jewish people to jealousy, to turn them back to the true G-d, the G-d revealed in the Holy Bible. The point that the story is leading to is how great G-d's blessing is on this non-Jewish woman—more than she could ever see in her lifetime. Ruth became a direct ancestor of King David and, through him, Ruth became a direct ancestor of the promised Moshiach! The irony of G-d's hand on a Gentile's life in the midst of Jewish people is a theme of the story. Hashem's providential care for her, the way her footsteps are literally ordered by the L-rd (Ps 37:23), the gracious way her faith is answered by His provision—these are all highlighted by the fact that she is an outsider, alone, a widow, a non-Jew, a foreigner, a member of the excluded, (cursed by the Law—Dt 23:3) Moabite people, a pagan who had known only death and a false religion and

was now poor and helpless in a strange land. G-d's special providential care toward those on their way to salvation is a theme of Ruth. Everywhere this Gentile widow turns, she is blessed, because she has been given a heart to bless G-d's people (Gn 12:2). Just as she does not forget her mother-in-law, G-d does not abandon His chesed (covenant-keeping loving kindness) with Ruth and with both the living and the dead (Ruth 2:20). G-d makes everything work together for good for Ruth, even a famine, even a death in the family, even three deaths in the family (Ro 8:28). G-d uses the famine in Israel to get Ruth's future mother-in-law Naomi to move from Bethlehem to where Ruth could meet her in Moab, making Naomi an unwitting "Jonah to the Ninevites," a light to the nations. G-d uses the death of Ruth's husband to free Ruth to begin a spiritual pilgrimage that is nothing short of salvation. G-d, who withdraws the rain, now brings the early rain and the later rain to end the famine and bless the land with the harvest, which is a reward for covenant-obedience (Dt 28:4). But, here is where the wonder really begins. G-d leads the two widows back to Bethlehem for a harvest greater than they could ever imagine, a world harvest led by the Moshiach (Mt 28:19-20), the world Harvester 'to whom the nations belong (Gen.49:10).' (Notice carefully the Goel redeemer son of Judah at the threshing floor in Ruth 3:2). The World Harvester, the Moshiach will be born there in Bethlehem a thousand years later (see Mic 5:1-2). G-d gives Ruth a strange and marvelous love. G-d gives