

"Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy: at thy right hand there are pleasures forever more." Psa. 16. 11.

### The Lesson Council.

**Question 26.** What reason can be given why the story of Ruth is inserted in the canon of Scripture?

The canonicity of the Book of Ruth has seldom been questioned by competent critics. It may be considered a supplement to the Book of Judges, to which in the Hebrew canon it was joined. As David was a famous king it is natural to expect that some one would write out his genealogy, and the book was evidently written to give the ancestry of David, and one evidence of its truthfulness is that it traces this genealogy to a source not remarkably flattering. The language of the book is quite similar to Judges and to Samuel, and its genealogical account is quoted in Matt. 1. 5 and Luke 3. 32.—*Henry Spellmeyer, D.D.*

Not only because it gives an account of the extraction of David, the future king of Israel and the ancestor of Messiah, but because, though brief, the narrative contains examples of patience, industry, faith, and kindness, and of God's mysterious ways in so overruling the sin of Elimelech's son in marrying a Moabitess (Deut. 23. 3) and the troubles that came thick upon the family that in the end this Moabitess was converted and received a rich reward of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings she came to trust.—*J. E. Hanauer, Jerusalem.*

### 27. What noble traits of character are found in Ruth?

Ruth, an example of virtue and piety, shines the more brightly because she lived in an idolatrous age. She came from a modest and humble home, but one of the sixty-six books of the Bible is called by her name, and she is one of the few characters in Bible biographies whose virtues are not marred by some moral stain. In her there is an honest, rugged simplicity. She is a natural, sincere woman, without the need of art, because her heart was so large and true. Orpah gave the sign of affection; Ruth showed it by her deeds. Orpah "kissed;" Ruth "clave." Ruth 1. 14. And this example of filial devotion, expressed in language of incomparable pathos, is worthy of universal emulation. Being poor, she was not proud, and ashamed of honest toil, but "gleaned and gathered after the reapers" (Ruth 2. 7), winning their respect, and receiving such courtesy as was due to her sex (Ruth 2. 9) and such rewards as were due to her industry. She was full of womanly grace, (Ruth 2. 10) profoundly grateful for favors received, sitting at meal-time among the reapers (Ruth 2. 14). With characteristic humility, and with womanly modesty, when "she did eat and was sufficed, she left." Ruth 2. 14. She is an example of religious decision and vital piety. Most of all she desired God. "Thy God shall be my God," and her history suggests that he wants gleaners as well as reapers in his harvest-field.—*Henry Spellmeyer, D.D.*

Deep affection, decision of character, modesty, faith.—*J. E. Hanauer, Jerusalem.*

### Cambridge Notes.

Ruth 1. 16-22.

This exquisite little idyll preserves a picture of quiet country life in Judah during the earlier part (comp. Matt. 1. 5) of the period of the judges, showing a marked contrast to the turbulence and lawlessness of the other tribes, as depicted in the appendix to the last book. It seems probable that the actual composition

of *Ruth* must be placed very late, but it is evidently based on the traditions and chronicles of the family of David, whose ancestry it was designed to relate. It is noteworthy that the very lawlessness of the time may have contributed to bring into the royal Messianic line a faithful and noble woman from the accursed tribe of Moab, in stricter ages rigidly excluded from the congregation of Jehovah. Ver. 16. Orpah and Ruth had accompanied their mother-in-law to the boundary of Moab, and there Naomi expected the courtesy to end. Orpah yields to her unselfish pressure, and goes back to her country and her god Chemosh. Ruth deliberately sacrifices all, and faces poverty in a strange land. Compare Elijah's similar protestation, 2 Kings 2. 2, etc. The religious application of her noble speech is thoroughly in accordance with the spirit of the original. Ver. 17. *Buried.* This must be emphasized by remembering the strong desire of Orientals to be buried in the ancestral tomb. Comp. the patriarchs and such passages as 1 Kings 13. 22, etc. *Do so, etc.* The formula so common in the books of Samuel and Kings. The "so" includes all the unexpressed consequences felt to attach to perjury. Ver. 19. *Beth-lehem.* "House of bread," the abode of the family. Ver. 1. The journey was fully fifty miles, and across two rivers, Arnon and Jordan, no light task for two solitary women. *The women said.* Quick to notice the change wrought in Naomi by age and sorrow. The men, busy with the harvest, had no time to spare for gossip about strangers. Ver. 20. *Naomi,* a name akin to *Naaman*, meaning "pleasant," or perhaps "my delight." If the latter, it may have been a pet name, and we can the better understand the sad thoughts it would recall. *Mara.* Comp. Exod. 15. 23. For similar plays on names compare Gen. 27. 36; Jer. 20. 3; 1 Sam. 25. 25. *The Almighty.* Hebrew, *Shaddai*, the name used by Bunyan in the *Holy War*. It is a title used in the Pentateuch and largely in the Book of Job. This clause looks like a reminiscence of Job 27. 2. Ver. 21. *Contrast* Gen. 32. 10; 1 Sam. 2. 5. *Full.* Rich in the possession of husband and sons. Note the emphatic *I*; her going away was an act of self-will, and she had been punished for sojourning in a heathen land. *Testified.* Comp. 1 Kings 17. 18, 20; and for the metaphor Exod. 20. 16; 2 Sam. 1. 6; Isa. 3. 9, etc. Naomi speaks of Jehovah as of a hostile witness in court who brings up her misdeeds for judgment. Ver. 22. *Which returned.* Evidently the description by which Ruth was best known. Comp. 2. 6. The language of Moab was almost identical with Hebrew, as Mesha's stone shows, but Ruth's history would be too vividly remembered for her foreign origin to be ignored. *Barley harvest.* Exod. 9. 31, 32. That is, the end of April. The only point in the sequel needing special elucidation is the duty of the *Goel*, "redeemer," or next of kin (to be remembered in explaining Job 19. 25). He was bound to redeem the property of the dead man, to avenge his death, if violence had occurred (see Josh. 20. 3), and to marry his widow, the children being reckoned legally not his, but those of his deceased kinsman. We see here that the "Levirate law"—one older than Moses and not confined to Israel—extended to other kinsmen besides brothers. In this case the proper *Goel* declines to marry Ruth, and Boaz takes over the obligation; Obed, however, is described in Israel as his son, doubtless because Mahlon was practically a foreigner.

### Berens Methods.

#### Hints for the Teachers' Meeting and the Class.

The story of Lot, his residence near Sodom, his escape, and the fatal irresolution of his wife. See Gen. 13.