

## NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

### LESSON TWENTY-SIX: RUTH 1:22b

**"And they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest."**

God's timing is always perfect. Naomi left Bethlehem because of a famine. There was no food for her family. God brought her back to Bethlehem in the spring, at the beginning of the barley harvest. A time to celebrate the bounty of the Lord.

Spring was the perfect time for Naomi and Ruth to begin their new life together. Spring is a time of rebirth. In Israel, spring was the time to begin harvesting the first crop that had been planted in the fall: barley. The two main grain crops in Israel were barley and wheat. Barley was harvested in April, followed by the harvesting of wheat in May. The reaping of both crops was celebrated by divine command as part of God's special feast days.

The Hebrew word translated "feasts" literally means "appointed times." God prescribed seven special holidays to be celebrated when Israel settled the Promised Land. Four of the feast days were celebrated in the spring (April/May) and three in the fall (September/October). The Jewish people did not understand that they were actually celebrating major events in the career of Jesus the Messiah.

Passover, the first feast, was celebrated on the 14th day of Nisan (Lev. 23:5). The purpose of this feast was to teach the Hebrew people about sacrifice and substitutionary death. On that day Jesus was crucified. He was "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

The next day, the 15th of Nisan, was the beginning of the seven day feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6-8). Leaven is simply yeast. It is referenced extensively in Scripture as a symbol or type for sin. In the life of Jesus, the Feast of Unleavened Bread celebrates the fact that Jesus' body would not see corruption. The day following the crucifixion, Jesus' body lay entombed in the borrowed grave of Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57-60).

On the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the 16th day of Nisan, they were instructed to celebrate the Feast of First Fruits (Lev. 23:9-14). The Feast of First Fruits celebrates the harvesting of the first grain crop of the year. The sheaf of the first stalk that is cut is brought to the priest to be presented to the Lord. In the life of Jesus, the Feast of First Fruits commemorates the resurrection (I Cor. 15:20). He is the first fruits because other resurrections will follow His (John 11:24).

The people are instructed to count seven weeks from the Feast of First Fruits, which is 49 days. The next day (50th day) is the fourth feast, the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (Lev 23:15-22). The first fruits from the wheat harvest are taken to the temple on the Day of Pentecost. Interestingly, the book of Ruth is read in the synagogues during the celebration of the Feast of Pentecost because the events took place during the time of the barley and wheat harvests. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was given and the Church was born. As part of the celebration two loaves of bread are baked with leaven and also brought to the temple. The two loaves represent the Jews and the Gentiles united now into one body. The bread is baked with leaven because the church is made up of sinners - forgiven, yes, but sinners, nevertheless.

In the beautiful story of Ruth we find so many wonderful illustrations of what God has done for us. We may be sinners but we are sinners beloved of God. Sinners for which He sent the Kinsman-Redeemer to save. Sinners for which the Lamb of God was a sacrifice and a substitute, taking our punishment on

Himself. Sinners which have been baptized in the Body of Christ, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.  
We are loved!

*"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." I John 4:10, 13*