

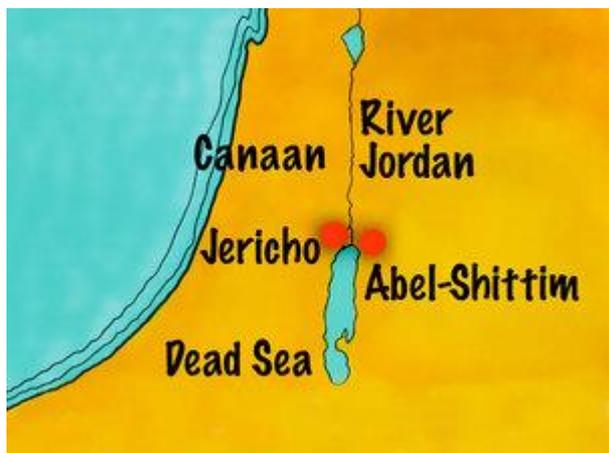
RAHAB THE HARLOT

Dearest Ruth, it's really good to have a long chat with you at last. Ever since Boaz first told me about you I've felt a great empathy with you. We're both Gentiles, although we've been fully accepted by the Israelites, you from Moab, me from Jericho. You've become well-known for your kindness to your mother-in-law Naomi. My survival after the destruction of Jericho also became well known, but for different reasons. What we both had in common was a faith in the God of Israel. You gained yours from your love for Naomi – when I last spoke to her she told me of your beautiful promise to her, - *“for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:”* That was just so lovely! My faith was founded on the stories that were coming from across the desert lands of all that the God of Israel was doing for the Israelites. I was only ten years old when we heard about Moses crossing the Red Sea with the children of Israel, - and the humiliation of Egypt, with all their soldiers drowning! During the last forty years we kept hearing of the Israelites progress, - they'd won so many battles, - it made everyone very nervous, because we knew they'd eventually be coming here, - we were *their* promised land! But the more I heard, strangely, the more I believed in their God.

TWO GENTILES

I remember how scared everyone was, but my growing faith kept me strong. We often heard of their victories, especially the utter destruction of Sihon and Og. While others grew more afraid, I found myself trusting more in their God than *all* of ours. I couldn't believe how it was changing me. Ruth, I swear to you that their God, *their* God, led me to where I am now, where we are now together. I really feel he has been preparing both of us, for our presence as Gentiles among Jews is so important and so humbling. I somehow feel we're part of their unfolding history.

ONE GOD



Anyway, I expect you remember that in those days I was a harlot, - it was quite usual for those who used their inns along the edge of the city to be in that kind of trade. The children of Israel were now within marching distance of us. And then two Israelite spies came into the city. I bet they thought they wouldn't be noticed amongst the riff raff of a harlot's house - and they came to mine! How is it that of all the brothels they came to me, - the only one who wouldn't be afraid of them, the only one who believed in their God? Looking back, it seems so clear that God directed them to me. So, I invited them in, even though I knew them for what they were. But then so did others! Ruth, God was

guiding everything, including me and I didn't know! Word of their visit had got around because in less than no time the king of Jericho had sent his officials to arrest them at my house. They came straight to the inn! I couldn't think what to do!

But in that instant it came to me to pray! I prayed to the one God with a faith and a trust I couldn't explain. Time seemed to stand still. I was able to hide the spies up on the roof beneath the stalks of flax while the officials unwittingly waited. When they came in, they questioned me because the men had been seen, - I

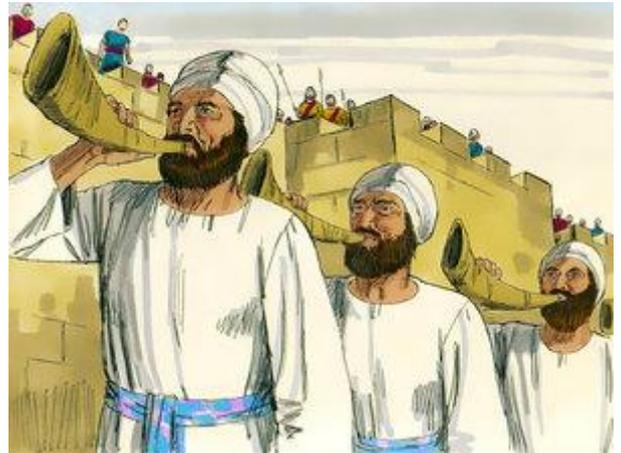
couldn't deny it! –Ruth, if they'd found then I would have been killed there and then! It was as though all the power of the King of Jericho was suddenly ferreting about in my home.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

It was like an invasion, but I was now convinced of the greater power of that one God. Yes, I really trusted in the God of Israel to guide me. I felt quite safe in telling the officials that the spies had already gone just as the gates shut and that they should waste no time in getting after them. If they were quick they would surely catch them. They left in such a hurry! Oh Ruth, I felt the power of God with me, and when I went up to speak with these spies after the officials had left, it was as though God was present and embracing us all. I found myself giving advice that I would never have thought of before, - but it was just what was needed, and they were able to report back to Joshua in complete safety.

But even more important was the promise they made to look after me and my family. The red cord that was used to let them down and out of the city was to be the marker safeguarding our whole family when they took Jericho. And I knew with absolute confidence that we would be protected. I felt as though my life had suddenly changed, - the touch of God had both blessed and purified me. I was no longer bound by my past. I remember smiling with the thought that the spies had gone and so had my past life!

Just imagine a few days later the terrible fear that came over the city when the Israelites arrived and then marched around the city walls behind their ark! I watched from the window. It was an incredible sight! A group of soldiers marched before their Ark of the Covenant, followed by seven priests with trumpets blowing loud, and the rest of the army behind them. They just marched around the city the once. But then they did this for five more days. That was all they did. It was eerie, - everyone was very frightened. There had never been a siege or battle like this before! And on the seventh day Oh my! We all watched as they went around the city twice, then again, and again. They encompassed the city a total of seven times! And then everyone shouted! Ruth! The walls of Jericho just collapsed, fell flat, - all except those holding our household! The city was taken but we were unharmed!



I often look back in amazement at what happened. Our house was untouched as all around us the walls of Jericho, - the most impregnable of all the cities in Canaan, just collapsed, all at once. The noise was terrific, - the shouts and cries horrible! The Israelites came and rescued us as they had promised. We were barely a hundred yards from the flattened walls of the city when our own house and walls also collapsed, - the whole city was gone, just flattened! But we were safe!

Darling Ruth, - can you imagine how I feel now? I was a harlot, - yet God still chose me out of all the citizens of Jericho. In a way I can understand it because I already had a faith in Him. But even then He never turned away from me. I wonder why not? I was a sinner, yet I felt His love. He spoke to me and I just had to listen. Can you see how special that made me feel? I now know that anyone, - whatever their background, whatever their race, whatever they have done, when they listen to God, He is always there for them simply because He IS God

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

We were allowed to mix freely with everyone. That was so special. I later met and married Salmon, - how could I have known that of all people he was of the chosen tribe of Judah. I then had Boaz, and now he and you are as one. I feel we have been chosen to show the omnipresent love of God for ALL his children. We are so blessed, dear child. Against all odds, we two have now been brought together, and I'm so pleased!

We've surely seen the incredible power of God. It does not matter who we are or what we've done. I feel no shame for my past because it *is* past, but I rather rejoice in the present knowledge that God loves me, loves us, as He sees us, as we truly are. God preserves the good, and His marvellous kindness is always ours to hold. Ruth, one thing I have learned it is this: obedience to God leads to rejoicing in God, an understanding that our trust in Him will always be rewarded, for when we give our gratitude, both in anticipation and fulfilment, we have an inner peace that cannot be shaken, the knowledge we are safe in His arms.

Joshua 6:

25 And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Ruth 4:

21 And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed,
22 And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.