

MB Conversion

I love the story of Naomi and Ruth. Two women superheroes in the Bible! Ruth even gets her own book although it is really only a couple pages snuck between Judges and Samuel so you might miss it if you're not looking for it. Obviously Ruth didn't write the book so who did? We're not sure but the issue of intermarriage between the Hebrews and their captors became more controversial in the 5th century BCE so it might have been added then to calm the waters.

So for those of you fuzzy on the story I'm going to give you the cliff notes version then we're going to dig into the metaphysical interpretation. That is when you'll have to put your boots on and fasten your seat belt because we are going off the beaten path of Fillmore's metaphysics. Because once again, I disagree with his interpretation. You might wonder why. Well, his interpretation just doesn't make sense with the story. I kind of like my interpretation and really, it works for everyone without regard to gender so let's proceed.

Elimelech is married to Naomi and they have two sons. They own a little property out on the edge of Bethlehem and they are Hebrews. Seems like a lean season comes and Elimelech decides to pack the little family up and go to Moab. After they've been there a while, Elimelech dies. The boys are coming of age though and they meet some nice local girls and get married. There really aren't any Hebrews to pick from. A little while later, both boys die. These guys are really not hardy stock. Now back in the day, women couldn't own things on their own and without some male in the family, they were sort of destitute. So Naomi wants to head back to where she came from because she at least has some kin back there. She tells the girls to go back to their families there in Moab where they will be safe. Chilion's wife, Orpah, heads home but Mahlon's wife is Ruth. It seems Ruth has been paying attention to the Hebrew traditions and has experienced a conversion. "Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God." So the women set out for Bethlehem. This is NOT a short trek and it is two women alone. I am in awe of their bravery and the certainty of their calling. They get to Bethlehem and it seems the famine is gone and not everyone left because the harvest is going on. Now Naomi is really kind of pissed about the whole move and men dying thing and she says everyone can call her Mara now, because that means bitter. She feels God has turned against her. But she starts in right away working on a husband for Ruth.

Ruth is out in the fields and strikes up a conversation with an older gentleman, Boaz. She brings grain home at night and tells Naomi, who says, "Great! This is a kinsman and we can get our inheritance back!" Naomi coaches Ruth on getting Boaz and Boaz seems pretty happy with the arrangement but there is one little snag. There is another relative in line before him to "redeem" the land of Elimelech and his sons. They have a meeting and the other guy is kind of excited at first but then Boaz says, "Hey, Naomi and Ruth go with the property" at which the other guy passes and Boaz is the winner! Ruth and Boaz have baby Obed, Naomi is not left out in the cold and everyone is happy.

Happy ending (well except for Elimelech and the boys), good story. Obed is the father of Jesse, who is the father of David and Jesus is from the house of David. So what could the metaphysics of this story be? I want to clue you in to another resource for interpretation: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. It has all the Greek and Hebrew roots for names. It was published in 1890 so Fillmore had access to it and he used it for that portion of information that also appears in the Metaphysical Bible Dictionary.

Let's start with Elimelech and Naomi. Elimelech means God is King and Naomi means sweet, delight and beauty. Now Fillmore's interpretation goes along with Elimelech's name but interprets Naomi as, yes, sense consciousness and the source of all their woe. Let me set his interpretation aside and tell you how I interpret the issue of the move to Moab. Tammy Wynette seems to have summed it up: "Stand by your man, even when he does things you don't understand. And if you love him, you'll forgive him because after all, he's just a man." Remember in Bible Interpretation we are all the characters and it is our consciousness unfolding. I think Elimelech represents our intellect, even when we feel we are committed to aligning with the Divine. Have you ever noticed that sometimes it is difficult to tell the difference between Divine Guidance and Intellect just trying to figure things out? Honestly, the thing is, either God is your Source all the time or not. Bethlehem means house of bread or metaphysically the place of abiding substance. So the first sign of lack and Elimelech is looking for another source. Maybe this is intellect not as deeply grounded in faith as we might have hoped. The Daily Word cautions us to know the limits of intellect.

Now here is what puzzles me about Fillmore's interpretation. In the time when women were chattel or possessions, who do you think made the decision to pack up and leave? Naomi as sense consciousness ruled or male intellect?

The other thing that puzzles me a bit is who do you think maintained the Hebrew traditions and faith while they were in a foreign land? Have you noticed church attendance is better on Mother's Day than on Father's Day? Now they had no temple to go to in Moab, so how do you think Ruth got her schooling on One Power? Why was she so loyal to Naomi? My interpretation is that Naomi is the soul, grounded in faith but not always the ruling consciousness. She keeps the faith even if she questions the decisions of the intellect.

Now the boys Chilion and Mahlon. Their names mean "Pining, wasting away" and "sickly" respectively. Who thinks things are going to end well for them? I named my kids Sarah, which means princess and Faith and Victor. Not taking chances. Now Fillmore blames this weakness in the boys on Naomi but Naomi's not the one who died now is she? Perhaps they are thoughts that are the offspring of Doubting Daddy. Seems more likely to me. With the intellect out of the way, Naomi returns to the place of divine substance. This is really important. Naomi returns to the foundation of her faith. What about the whole, "Call me Mara" drama? Have you ever felt betrayed by intellect? You know that dance inside you when you feel called to do something and then intellect chides you about how impractical or impossible that is and you settle for the "logical" thing? Or you even convince yourself that logical thing is Divine Guidance trying to save you? Maybe Naomi wanted to wait things out in Bethlehem but that was not Elimelech's guidance so Naomi goes along. Yes, Naomi blames God when it appears all is lost for her, stranded in a foreign land. Is there anyone here who has not at least said quietly, "God, why would you do this/let this happen?" As if God is manipulating something and it has nothing to do with our own consciousness. The important thing to me is that Naomi keeps working her faith. She looks at what is, as discouraging as it might appear and affirms God is making a way. She may not know what that way is but she moves forward, step by step. If it were up to logic, would Naomi and Ruth have tried to get back to Bethlehem? What an adventure! I don't think Naomi had any idea that Ruth might stick with her and Naomi was trying to get the girls to do what was best for them. It was Ruth's guidance that her highest and best was to stay the course in this new faith that Naomi had introduced her to, which also would not seem to be common logic.

So what does Boaz represent? In Hebrew it means strength and power. Metaphysically Fillmore says he represents a cheerful willingness and the richness and power of thought and strength of character.

Ruth means companion, delight, pleasing. Fillmore says she represents “the love of the natural soul for God and for things of the Spirit.” In uniting the power of thought and strength of character with the love for things of the Spirit, we open the way for the birth of the Christ consciousness. Or at least we begin that process. I definitely think Ruth traded up, getting Boaz after Mahlon.

What about Ruth’s conversion? It is interesting to dig a little into Moab. The dialect was not that different than Hebrew. The Moabites belonged to the same ethnic stock as the Israelites. Their ancestral founder was Moab, a son of Lot, who was a nephew of the Israelite patriarch Abraham. The god-protector of their nation was Chemosh. Yet the Israelites were often in conflict with the Moabites. The online dictionary defines conversion as changing one’s beliefs or religion. Maybe you have had a conversion over the years. There is a joke about a non-Catholic who grilled meat every Friday. It annoyed the Catholic neighbors back in the time of eating fish on Friday so they set about converting their neighbor. They took him to classes and he went through all the rituals. Come Friday *after his conversion* the neighbors were surprised to smell meat grilling. As they neared his yard they heard him speaking to his meal: “You were born beef, you were raised beef but now you are fish!” Ironically, although the etymology of Chemosh is unclear but it is likely it meant “Destroyer” or “Fish God”. Clearly Ruth’s conversion was not at a superficial level. “Your people will be my people and your God will be my God” Fillmore says her declaration represents human love raised to divine love by its willingness to leave the love of the unreal to follow after the real, to go wherever true love leads and to be steadfast in that love of God. And that love and devotion is rewarded for both Ruth and Naomi in both Boaz and Obed.

Obed represents service. To serve God and to serve one another is our calling. It’s interesting to read what the book of Ruth says about the relationship between Naomi and Obed. *“Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin; and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him.” Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed.”* A couple interesting things here. “A daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than 7 sons”. Seven is the number of completion. Sons represented the material world’s view on the path to inheritance and yet God provided a way to

substance and security through love that was more sure and certain than the material world's path. How perfect is that?

And Naomi's role in navigating the process is acknowledged as they say "A son has been born to Naomi". Her faith, coupled with the love and faith of Ruth, joined with the willingness of Boaz manifest a new expression of consciousness. Notice the women name him. For me this symbolized the increased role of intuitive knowing as we build the foundation for the Christ consciousness.

Which brings me to Why is Ruth's conversion important? Why do you think it warrants a book of its own back in the Old Testament? Well, one reason I think I talked about in the beginning: The Israelites spent a lot of time in captivity and being oppressed by others, even after getting out of Egypt. No matter how many rituals and rules they created to try to keep their culture separate from captors, you always had a lot of back-sliders. They had little gods on altars to hedge their bets with the One God vs the gods of their captors. They married their captors and that sort of messed with the whole "purity" theme the Hebrews maintained. I think Ruth was intended to say to the Hebrews, well, convert the captors if you marry them and you can still get good outcomes. And always return to the faith of your beginnings. From a metaphysical level, Ruth stands for the idea we talk about sometimes that there are many paths to One God. Most of us have had some twists and turns along our spiritual journey and it is always possible to still get to the place of Oneness with the Source of all good.

Although this may have been written as early as 500 years before Jesus, the other thing Ruth represents is a lineage to Jesus that is not purely Hebrew. Jesus was the teacher for everyone! His followers were not just Hebrew and not just Gentile and not just Moabite or Samaritan. I feel like Ruth's conversion laid the foundation for understanding the universal reach of the Christ consciousness. There is no single path; no pure line of inheritance that leads to the Divine other than the pure connection with the Oneness.

I feel that Ruth and Naomi send many messages: Never give up; Trust the knowing in your heart; Maintain your faith in Spirit and Let faith lead you to your highest good. Maybe don't abandon intellect but understand it has limits.

So we're wrapping up our Bible series for now. Next week Reverend Sandra will be here. Then on the 29th we'll do some visioning and find our fire.