



**Internet Lodge 9659**  
**United Grand Lodge of England**  
**Province of East Lancashire**  
<http://internet.lodge.org.uk>

## **Short Papers Competition 2007**

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**Paper 51/2007**

**Title** **The Left Hand Pillar and the Book of Ruth**  
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Masonry is a mystery story veiled in allegory and illustrated with symbols, part played out, part implied and hinted at. I would like to bring one of those lesser parts to your attention. It is the symbol of strength within our first Degree characterized by the great grand father of King David and represented by a pillar placed on the left hand side of the entrance porch to our Temple, King Solomon's Temple. Masonic ritual, as all good mystery and fairy tales do, conveys far more than at first meets the eye. It's a fascinating mystery hunt that benefits from our attention and enquiry. I hope here to inspire you all to a little digging into the rituals we all play out. Our character Boaz is portrayed in the Book of Ruth, a short rather moving story, in the Old Testament. Like our ritual, the tale is veiled in allegory and contains hidden imports. By understanding these we gain the full relevance to our story bringing light to those imports of the first Degree in Masonry.

Naomi's family, Bethlehem Jews are in Moab due to famine. Moabites Ruth and Orpah, both marry into the family and, subsequently, along with Naomi all are widowed. Ruth remains totally loyal to her adopted family and their religion returning with Naomi to Judea whilst Orpah stays in Moab.

Naomi tries to persuade Ruth to return home and not be burdened by her, but Ruth goes off to glean corn in the fields to support Naomi to survive together. Her loyalty, fidelity, hard work and long hours along with her chastity in not engaging with the reapers is noted, particularly her charity in supporting Naomi. Also noted is her determination and perseverance portrayed by the chisel in our tools. Boaz, the land owner, enquired of her and was told she was of good character and worth, keeping faith with her adopted religion. He rewarded her with his protection allowing her to glean with his hand maids, drink water drawn by his men and invited her to eat at his table easing her burden. Once home Naomi directed her to return and lay at Boaz' feet as a hand maid.

Boaz frees her of obligation and gives her six measures of barley saying she must not return to Naomi empty handed and he sets off to the town gates to invite Naomi's nearest kinsman to buy her land and redeem them both. This is not redeemed. Boaz steps in to buy Naomi's land and marry Ruth redeeming both. We gain insight into Boaz, his honor and the expansiveness of charity from kin to community and to Ruth, a foreigner from Moab.

Boaz' :- Pious, Just, Learned Judge and Great Redeemer.

Redemption :- to protect, love and be mercy-full. Each name has an import. Reflect on our first degree. I hope this inspired you to look beyond the veil in the journey we make and finally you'll find why you removed a shoe to enter.

### **CHARACTERS**

**Boaz** ('strength is (in) him' or 'he comes in strength')

Talmud, Boaz was a just, pious, a great redeemer and learned judge.

The custom of using God's name in greeting one's fellowman (Ruth ii. 4) received the approval of even the heavenly court.

Boaz was especially friendly toward the poor stranger.

Boaz blessed Ruth "May God, who rewards the pious, also reward you".

Boaz was a ruler Judge in Israel not a ruler Prince.

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**Ruth** (meaning friend)

Daughter in law to Naomi The Moabitess and the Jew became one. Pious Naomi and Ruth's ingenuity and assertiveness and Ruth's total loyalty.

**Naomi** (Pleasant One; agreeable)

Asks for her name to be changed to Mara (the bitter one) due to the death of her husband and sons.

**GLOSSARY**

**Redemption** (the verb redeem means to 'buy back'; but fundamentally its meaning is 'to protect') and hessed (loving kindness). Redemption was both a rich social and religious concept in Israel's daily life. The Israelites understanding of redemption is woven into their understanding of Yahweh. GOD stands by the oppressed and needy. He extends his love and mercy offering a new freedom and hope. God has a deep concern for the welfare of his people, materially, emotionally and spiritually. The redemption theme extends beyond this biblical book through the genealogy.

Socially the Israelites were aware of their responsibility to one another to protect the weak and unprotected. Redemption secures the life of the people as a community, not just as individuals.

Boaz' brother / kinsman Goel represents the limitation of the law and GOD redeems all

Gentiles joining both society religion and family, inclusive society.

**Hessed** loving kindness with no expectation and within but above and beyond the law.

Redemption enshrined in life as kinsman and redeemer and extending out Boaz' power was great, as it extended to Ruth and the proper burial of Naomi's sons?

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