

*Naomi Entreating Ruth and Orpah to Return to the Land of Moab*, by William Blake

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The English poet William Blake is almost as well known for his engravings and watercolors as he is for his poetry. In 1795 he produced this watercolor depicting the scene in the book of Ruth when Naomi has just informed her Moabite daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, that she is returning to her native land of Judah. She encourages each of them to return to their “mother’s home.” In response, Ruth and Orpah “wept aloud and said to her, ‘We will go back with you to your people.’” Blake has captured the pathos of the moment. Ruth clings to Naomi while Orpah turns in tears toward her Moabite home. Ruth explains her decision “Where you go, I will go . . .” Ruth’s words are often used in wedding ceremonies to express vows between spouses. In their biblical context, they express a loyalty that goes beyond family ties or national allegiance. “Your people will be my people, and your God my God.”