“Is there Bread in the House of Bread?”

(By Artur Stele)

The postmodern times in which we are leaving today are best compared with the time of Judges in the Old Testament. The main characteristic of the time of Judges is well presented in the Book of Judges itself:

“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” Judges 21:25

The story of the Book of Ruth took place exactly at that time: “Now it came about in the days when judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons.” Ruth 1:1

Then the following text speaks explicitly of the name of this man who went to sojourn:

“And the name of the man was Elimelech...”Ruth 1:2

It is interesting to note that the story took place at the time when there was no king in Israel and yet the book of Ruth makes a special effort to explicitly mention the name of the man: Elimelech!

The meaning of the name actually is: “My God is King!”...

Elimelech and his family were living in Bethlehem.

The name Bethlehem actually means “the House of Bread.”

What a tragedy - “In the House of Bread” there is NO BREAD!? 

And as a result the people were forced to leave the house of Bread in a search of a place that had Bread.
In this search of Bread Elimelech and his family vent to Moab. The book of Deuteronomy actually states that it was exactly the place that has not received the people of Israel with Bread:

“No ... Moabite shall enter the assembly of the Lord... because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt...” Deut 23:3-4

Here in the Hebrew for food actually the word Bread is used! ~x,l),

“Because they did not meet you with Bread!!!”

Ruth 1:6 also speaks of Bread. It was when it became known that again the bread was back in the house of bread (Bethlehem) that the remnant of the Elimelech’s family deseeded to return back to the house of bread!

“Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the Lord had visited His people in giving them food.” In Hebrew – BREAD!!!

And they returned back to Bethlehem “at the beginning of barley harvest.” Ruth 1:28

The physical famine and hunger also marked a time of spiritual famine in Bethlehem as well as throughout of the most part of the time of Judges.

1 Sam 3:1 is one of the best descriptions of the spiritual hunger of the time that actually best describes also our time today: “Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli. And Word from the Lord was rare in those days, visions were infrequent.”

Could it be that also today in the House of Bread, there is NO Bread?! Could it be that today from our pulpits in our Churches people are not getting the spiritual Bread? Is it possible that our people today are forced to leave the House of Bread in a search for Bread? Is it possible that we are forcing our people out to go to the land of Moab where there is no real Bread? Is it possible that today many church members are not attending the Worship on Sabbath but rather searching in the TV and Internet for a spiritual food?

Have you heard a cry from church members: “Pastor, we are hungry for the Word of God...?”

Research shows convincingly today why people of all ages are leaving the church...

(Nurture and Retention Committee...)
Naomi and Ruth returned to the House of Bread when they have heard that the Lord visited His people in giving them Bread!!!...

The same story happened throughout history, whenever it became known that there is Bread in the House of Bread people would pack the church: see times of Jesus (Mark 2:1-2), Reformation etc...

Compare Ruth 1:7-15 (A strange plea of Naomi, sending back her daughters –in-law) with 1Sam 3:5,6,8 (Eli is sending back Samuel not recognizing that God is calling)

Naomi is actually sending away her future, her provider, her “bread.”

Not only has God satisfied Naomi’s hunger. But He has given her much more – a family tree, and what a tree it was!!!

Ruth 3:17 – the last recorded words of Ruth: “And she said, “These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said: “Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.””

Naomi vents out full from Bethlehem but came back empty (Ruth 1:21). Now Ruth in Bethlehem vent out empty, but is coming back fully loaded, full....(Ruth 3:17)

Ruth 3:18 – the last recorded words of Naomi: “Then she said, “Wait my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out: for the man will not rest until he has settled it today.”

Wait – in Hebrew, SIT DOWN...

Man – refers back to the GOEL statement...Will redeem you...

Will not rest – will not be quiet, will not relax, will not be inactive...

In the beginning of the book of Ruth two ladies have to make a decision:

One makes a decision against and gets lost in the history. Her name is not mentioned any more in the book of Ruth. The other makes a right decision and her name not only keeps being mentioned in the book of Ruth, but her name comes up in the genealogy not only of David the king but actually of the one who is the real Goel – Jesus Christ!

At the end of the book of Ruth there are two men who have to make a decision:

Both have the right to be the redeemers, Goel. The one, who was actually the close relative, decides not to get involved, and he is the only person in the book of Ruth whose name is not mentioned at all. At best he is mentioned as “so and so...” The other one, Boaz, decides to get involved, to help, and thus becomes not only the key figure of the whole book, but what is even more importantly becomes the grandfather of the king and also a figure that symbolizes the great King and the true Goel!!!

What role are you planning to play in these times when there is no or little Bread in the House of Bread?

The story of the book of Ruth takes place when there was no king in Israel...
The book starts with a sad statement that there was no Bread in the house of Bread, but it finishes with plenty of Bread in the House of Bread...

It finishes with a family tree that will lead to the One Who later will say: “I am the Bread of Life!” John 6:48

It finishes with pointing our attention to the One Who is the King of Kings. Who always was and is the King of Kings... This why a special mention of the name Elimelech (My God is the King) even when there was no king in Israel...

He, our true Goel, will not rest... till the matter of providing Bread for His children will be settled...

He will not rest till Bread is provided to secular Europe as well...!

However, the question to me as a pastor is: what role will I play in meeting the needs of the people around me?