



Nugget

The Significance of Boaz

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Boaz - a biblical character found in the First-Degree.

Summary

A description of Boaz, a biblical figure found in the Book of Ruth, together with his symbolic association within Freemasonry.

Keywords

First-Degree, Boaz, Ruth, Charity, David

The Significance of Boaz

We know that in Freemasonry the name Boaz signifies 'In Strength'. In the original Hebrew it means '*in it is strength*', but does Boaz have another significance, and who was he?

We encounter Boaz in the Hebrew Scriptures in the Book of Ruth. The story begins with a man of Bethlehem named Elimelech going with his wife, Naomi, and his two sons into the land of Moab because there was a famine in Judah. They had to leave behind all they owned. Elimelech in due course died in Moab and both his sons married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. Sadly, the two sons then died, and Naomi was left with two widowed daughters-in-law. At this point Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem as the famine there was ended. Orpah wished to remain in the land of Moab, but Ruth determined to stay with her Mother-in-law, saying '*Whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God*'.

Thus, they returned, and in Bethlehem scripture tells us there was a kinsman of Naomi's, '*a mighty man of wealth*' and his name was Boaz. He owned farm-land and as was the custom of the day, at harvest time the poor were allowed to pick-up the corn that had fallen from the hands of the harvesters. Ruth went to the fields of Boaz to glean some corn. However, Boaz had heard of the support Ruth had given to her widowed Mother-in-law and he made special provision for her to be protected from molestation in the fields from the young men, and for extra handfuls of grain to be left lying so that Ruth would be able to gather up a good measure. Indeed she was able to gather an 'ephah' of Barley. That measure equalled ten 'omers' and an omer was supposed to represent a man's daily grain needs. Thus, Boaz made special provision for Ruth and Naomi out of charity.

In due course, we are told that Boaz married Ruth and he reacquired all the land that Elimelech had been forced to sell when he left Bethlehem to escape the famine. In so doing he was making further kind provision for Ruth and Naomi and was ensuring that the line of Elimelech's family would not die out. In due course Ruth bore him a son, and that son's name was Obed, and he in turn had his son named Jesse, who was the Father of King David and the Grandfather of our King Solomon.

In our ceremony of Initiation the newly made Mason is placed in the North-East corner of the Lodge there to be instructed in the importance of charity. Boaz is particularly significant at this point, as he is represented in the scriptures by the virtue of charitable giving coupled with care and concern for a widow and the homeless. He also upholds the ancient laws of Israel by allowing gleaners into his fields and does not take all the produce of the land for himself. He gives special protection to Ruth to ensure she is safe in the fields, and in due course he fulfils the legal obligation which then lay on all unmarried Israelite men to keep alive the family line of a deceased male relative by marrying his widow. Boaz was thus an honourable and kindly and charitable man, and his name in our ceremonies is a reminder to us also to pursue and practice those virtues.

##END##

Recommended use of Nuggets

Nuggets offer a short, simple and readily absorbed means of progressing Masonic knowledge and an easy way to introduce learning to Lodges and Chapters. It is hoped that they will become a regular feature of Lodge and Chapter meetings as well as a source for private-study.

Nuggets can be included as an item in the summons and read at most Lodge/Chapter meetings. They can be:

- Read by either a new or an experienced Mason with the minimum of preparation and practice; *though ideally, they need to be read a few times beforehand.*
- Themed with the meeting or activity.
- Used to initiate a discussion within a Lodge/Chapter, LOI/COI, or group.
- Read at home and shared as a topic for a future discussion.
- Used as a focus for an unplanned, informal discussion.

For further nuggets and other learning materials visit 'Solomon' at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

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