

## NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

### LESSON EIGHT: RUTH 1:4b

By Sandy Harber

*" and they dwelled there about ten years."*

Naomi's family made a home in Moab for about 10 years. She buried her husband in this place. She raised her two sickly boys until they were of the age to marry. Both boys married Moabite women (as far as we know there were no other Jewish families where Naomi settled.)

Naomi, whose name means "pleasant," was probably well liked. Certainly, two families were willing to entrust their daughters to her sons. It seems likely that this Hebrew family became progressively more involved in the culture of Moab (just as Lot grew more involved in the life of Sodom). What was probably intended to be a temporary refuge from the famine became a permanent home, where several Moabite families became united to them through marriage. Nevertheless, their faith in God separated them from their neighbors.

By Jewish Law, the people from Moab were permanently banned from worshipping with the Jews in Israel (Dt. 23:3). The reason was Moab's treatment of the Hebrews when they wandered in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses. That is, the Moabites did not offer them food or water. Instead, they plotted with the prophet Balaam to entrap the Israelis into idolatry. Their plan was to force God to curse His Own people (Dt. 23:4-5).

(Note: Since "Moabite" in Dt. 23:3 is in the masculine form, Bible scholars have concluded the prohibition to assemble with the Jews for worship did not include proselyte Moabite women, like Ruth, who had married Israeli men.)

God's Law further commands the Jewish people to "not seek their (Moabites) peace nor their prosperity all the days forever.: (Dt. 23:6). In other words, God did not want the Jews to make alliances with or pray for Moab. His anger over Moab's treatment of Israel illustrates that His promise to Abraham that all those who curse him/his descendants God will curse (Gen. 12:3) was and is still in effect.

For 10 years Naomi dwelt in a country God regarded as the enemy. Spiritually, this family was isolated. They had no one to gather with for worship. Were they able to make sacrifices in accordance with the Law of Moses? Were they able to observe their religious feast days in some fashion? Were they afraid to practice their religion openly in the midst of their Moabite neighbors? Or were they bold and forthright about their faith?

When Naomi lost her husband, God was available to comfort her. But she needed a human connection, too. Every crisis and every major change in our lives may be an occasion for negative emotions to arise. Depending on the situation, we may experience fear, anger, confusion, sorrow, etc. Having someone - or several someones - to turn to for comfort, advice, encouragement, etc. can be the difference between descending into depression or successfully coping.

Finding that connection can be a challenge. It can also be a blessing. I was amazed at the number of people who reached out to me when my husband died. I felt love, support, and encouragement. We can be on the other end of that connection, too. We can be the ones providing love, support, and encouragement to another soul in need.