

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON THREE: RUTH 1:1-2

By Sandy Harber

"Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there."

The book of Ruth opens with the story of a family in trouble. Elimelech of the tribe of Judah lived in Bethlehem with his wife Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Their problem was that, ironically, Bethlehem, which means "House of Bread," was experiencing a famine.

The only famine mentioned in the book of Judges occurred in the judgeship of Gideon. Whether it was that specific famine we don't know. Nor do we know the extent of the famine. Did it encompass the entire country of Israel? Or just the southern region where the tribe of Judah settled?

Whatever the extent of the famine Elimelech chose to move his family to Moab. There is no indication that he consulted the Lord before making this decision. This omission is probably the first thing everyone notices when they begin to study the book of Ruth. Yet, how many of us are guilty of the same thing? We are so quick to try and fix our problems ourselves. Sometimes we even ask God to bless the choice we have already made without consulting Him.

In times of grief or fear it is not wise to make life-changing decisions. We are not at our mental peak when we are loaded down with sorrow. It is better to not only consult God, but to proceed with caution and be sure we have interpreted His answer correctly. Pray, read the Bible, wait for that still small voice inside that is the Holy Spirit of God guiding and directing your way.

What did Elimelech's relative and neighbors do during the famine? Was the Elimelech family part of a caravan that traveled together to Moab? Or, did they journey into a strange country alone?

When going through difficult times Christian friends are invaluable. We are truly blessed if we have a godly friend to offer advice - or just to act as a sounding board and listen. At times we all feel alone. "No one understands what I'm going through," we say. And, while it's true each person's loss and grief is personal, it is also true we are not unique in experiencing that loss. We have a connection to others who are grieving. And, we can - and should - help one another.

The whole purpose of the Naomi-Ruth Connection is to bring together people who have lost a loved one. Each of us has wisdom and experience to contribute. And, each of us is in need of some kind of support. We can be there for each other. We will pray for one another. We will form our own caravan and travel through this time of trial together. And, I pray, we will allow God to lead us in His path to the destination He has determined for us.

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

II Corinthians 1:3-4