

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON FOUR: RUTH 1:2

By Sandy Harber

"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."

Why Moab? The Bible doesn't tell us why Elimelech chose to take his family 50 miles to the country of Moab. Perhaps it was the closest place that he knew of that was not affected by the famine. We don't have enough information to determine whether or not this was a wise choice (well, wise as you can get without consulting God!).

The Moabites were related to the Hebrew people through a pair of cousins: Jacob (Israel), grandson of Abraham, and Moab, grandson of Haran (Abraham's brother - Genesis 11:27). Abraham took Haran's son, Lot, with him when God called him out of Ur of the Chaldees (Genesis 12:1-5).

God blessed Abraham and Lot to the point that they could no longer dwell together in the same area because of the size of their herds and flocks of animals. Genesis 13 records the separation, in which Lot was given first choice of the location for his animals. He chose the well-watered plain of Jordan, not taking into consideration the character of the people who dwelt in the plain.

Lot's descent is progressive. He "pitched his tent toward Sodom" (Genesis 13:12). Soon, he "dwelt in Sodom" (Genesis 14:12). Finally, "Lot sat in the gate of Sodom" (Genesis 19:1), indicating he was a man of influence in the city.

When Christians move away from God it is often a gradual process. Rather than a dramatic turning away or outright rebellion, they tend to miss a Sunday service once in a while, forget to read their Bible for a few days, neglect prayer for a week. Instead, their time is centered around their job, their worldly friends, and worldly pursuits. The defection is subtle.

Lot was so engaged with his life in Sodom he was reluctant to leave, even after he was warned of coming judgment. When it was time to flee, the angels "laid hold upon his hand... and brought him forth, and set him without the city" (Genesis 19:16).

Lot's moral lapse was passed on to his children. His sons and married daughters refused to leave Sodom (Genesis 19:14) and, thus, perished with the city. His two unmarried daughters escaped with him to the mountains, where they hatched a plan to get him drunk and sleep with him in order to continue the family line (Genesis 19:30-38). The eldest daughter named her son Moab. He became the father of the Moabites.

What we do or say influences other people for good or ill. Someone is always watching. For us, that means that the way we conduct ourselves in our grief, the way we handle our emotions, even the words we speak may have an impact on the life of someone. Death can present us with a unique opportunity to introduce a family member or close friend to the concept of eternal life. Death reminds us all how fleeting life is, how uncertain. That unsaved brother or cousin or uncle you have been praying for may be more willing to listen to what you have to share.

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:14-16