

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON TWENTY-TWO: RUTH 1:20

"And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me."

Naomi objects to being called "Naomi," which means "pleasant." Names were thought to describe the character of a person. Therefore, Naomi declared that she was no longer "pleasant" but "bitter." As such, she preferred the name "Mara." We discussed feelings of bitterness and blaming God for the circumstances we are in with verse 13.

Interestingly, when Naomi names the Source of her troubles to the Gentile Moabite woman (v. 13) she refers to God as "Lord" or "master." But when speaking with her own people (v. 20) she refers to God as "the Almighty" (Hebrew "Shaddai").

God first revealed Himself as the Almighty God (El-Shaddai) when He appeared to Abraham to confirm the covenant (i.e. Abrahamic Covenant) in Genesis 17:1. This title for God is used 48 times in the Old Testament. It always refers to Jesus, the only Person of the Godhead Who people can see and live.

"Shaddai" is related to the Hebrew verb meaning "mighty." It is also akin to the Akkadian word meaning "mountain" or "breast." El-Shaddai is powerful, majestic, awe-inspiring and enduring like a mountain. Like a mountain, He provides shelter from the elements. El-Shaddai is all-sufficient, the self-existent One. He nourishes, satisfies, and abundantly supplies what we need, as the breast supplies the basic needs of an infant.

Of the 48 times God is referred to as the "Almighty" in the Old Testament, 31 occur in the book of Job. The purpose of Job is to help us understand suffering and why bad things happen to good people. The two occurrences in the book of Ruth (1:20, 21) also carry the theme of suffering and loss. This title of God, then is closely related to the suffering of mankind.

Naomi saw the Almighty as the Source of her pain and grief. It's true that in His sovereignty God allowed Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion to perish in Moab. We may never know the reason why. The same is true of our own losses. God doesn't owe us an explanation.

But Scripture also tells us that Jesus, as God Almighty, shelter us in time of trouble and provides for all our needs. He is all-sufficient. No problem is too big for Him to handle. In my grief over the loss of my husband, I found comfort in the Almighty by meditating on Psalm 91:1,2.

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God, in him will I trust." Psalm 91:1-2