

*Appendix 7: The Book of Ruth as it Relates to the Gospel of Mark*

**1:1-5**

**Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled,** the writer of this book assumes that the reader has read the book of Judges. The peace procured in Judges 3:30 is probably that in which the book of Ruth transpires. **that there was a famine in the land.** Leviticus 26:18-22 prepares the reader for a feeling of doom to set over the main characters of our story. Perhaps the town in focus is under the wrath of God? **And a certain man of Bethlehem,** When comparing Judges 12 and Judges 19, you see there are two towns by this name, and one of them is not in **Judah,** When you see that Judges-1 Samuel is a drama between the house of Judah and the house of Benjamin, and you see that Ruth fits into the book of Judges, we see why the author (probably Samuel) is so interested in pointing out the lineage of “Elimelech.” Incidentally, the drama of Judges 19 may be the occasion of this famine.<sup>1</sup> Oddly enough, Genesis 19 (discussed under 1:3) and Judges 19 have almost identical stories.

**went to dwell in the country of Moab,** So Judges 19 and here we have people leaving the town of Bethlehem. Another similarity between the two stories is that in Judges 19 we have men surrounding the house out of lust whereas in the book of Ruth we have people journeying to a country that existed because of a similar story in Genesis 19! **he and his wife and his two sons. 2 The name of the man was Elimelech,** means the “Lord is My King.” **the name of his wife was Naomi,** means “pleasant.” **and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem,** Genesis 35 and Genesis 48 give both names for this town **Bethlehem Ephratah** (as does Micah 5:2). Any time you see that prefix **Beth** in the Hebrew, it means “house.” **Bethlehem** is “house of bread.” The house of bread, then, had no bread (verse 1).

Genesis 35:16-20 is the first time we find this town in the Scripture and the event is the birth of Jacob’s 12<sup>th</sup> (of 12) sons and the death of his favorite wife Rachel. **Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there.**

**3 Then Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died;** Amos 7 tells us this was a curse on top of the curse of famine: dying in foreign land. **and she was left, and her two sons. 4 Now they took wives of the women of Moab:** Genesis 19 tells us the origin of the **Moabites.** They are the result of an incestual relationship between Lot (Abraham’s nephew) and one of his daughters. This, by the way, indicates that they are descendants of Abraham’s father, and so these are cousins. Genesis 36 provides for us the first time that **Moab** is a location. Basically it is what we now call the nation of “Jordan.” This is also the place where Moses died. Judges 3:30, moreover, ends the story about the **Moabite** king Eglon who was killed by the left-handed judge.

**the name of the one was Orpah,** means “neck.” **and the name of the other Ruth.** Means “refresher.” As **Moabites** in Deuteronomy 23:1-3, they are not allowed to be a part of the “congregation of the Lord.” That is to say, that they were probably never allowed to worship around the tabernacle in Shiloh.

**And they dwelt there about ten years. 5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died;** famine, dying in a foreign land, and now two sons dying childless [after ten years of marriage (verse 4)]: thrice cursed. **so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.**

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<sup>1</sup>We know for sure it was after Judges 3:30.

## 1:6-10

**Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab** It could be, when considering Numbers 22-24 (24:17 specifically), that they had some knowledge of the God of Israel, and perhaps did some talking. We could probably follow this long story through the wise men of Matthew 2. This is dealt with a little more in my commentary on Matthew (chapter 2) and my commentary on Revelation (2:14). This is, then, the second time that we know of where God “reaches the heathen.” We don’t have a God Who is uninterested in reaching the world. It has always been His will to reach them...even if it is through a “bitter” woman (1:20).

**that the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread.** Which is really good since the name of the town Naomi is from is the “house of bread.” **7 Therefore she went out from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. 8 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, return each to her mother’s house. The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband.”**

**So she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. 10 And they said to her, “Surely we will return with you to your people.”**

**<sup>11</sup> But Naomi said, “Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? *Are* there still sons in my womb, <sup>m</sup>that they may be your husbands? <sup>12</sup> Turn back, my daughters, go—for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, *if* I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, <sup>13</sup> would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that <sup>n</sup>the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!”**

**<sup>14</sup> Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth <sup>o</sup>clung to her.**

**<sup>15</sup> And she said, “Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to <sup>p</sup>her people and to her gods; <sup>q</sup>return after your sister-in-law.”**

**<sup>16</sup> But Ruth said:**

**<sup>r</sup>“Entreat <sup>5</sup>me not to leave you,  
Or to turn back from following after you;  
For wherever you go, I will go;  
And wherever you lodge, I will lodge;  
<sup>s</sup>Your people *shall be* my people,  
And your God, my God.**

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<sup>m</sup> Gen. 38:11; Deut. 25:5

<sup>n</sup> Judg. 2:15; Job 19:21; Ps. 32:4; 38:2

<sup>o</sup> [Prov. 17:17]

<sup>p</sup> Judg. 11:24

<sup>q</sup> Josh. 1:15

<sup>r</sup> 2 Kin. 2:2, 4, 6

<sup>5</sup> Urge me not

<sup>s</sup> Ruth 2:11, 12

<sup>17</sup> **Where you die, I will die,  
And there will I be buried.  
‘The LORD do so to me, and more also,  
If anything but death parts you and me.’**

<sup>18</sup> **“When she saw that she <sup>6</sup>was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her.**

### **1:19**

**Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that <sup>v</sup>all the city was excited** Joshua 15 is not mentioned and would lead one to believe it is significantly smaller than the one in Zebulun (Joshua 19). Around 200-300 years later, maybe the population was larger? It’s hard to know because we don’t know how many had left because of the famine. After the exile, we have as many as 123-148 households in Ezra-Nehemiah. Again, this is 700-800 years later, but it does tell us we probably never exceeded “hundreds” as the population of this town. Furthermore, Micah 5:2 speaks of this town’s comparable insignificance.<sup>2</sup>

What also made this return obvious to **all the city** was that folks were working at the edge of town (1:22).

**because of them; and the women said, <sup>w</sup>“Is this Naomi?”**

### **1:20-21**

**But she said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.** So her name means “bitter.” Hannah is another woman who was in “**bitterness** of soul” (1 Samuel 1:9). It’s helpful to a Christian soul to know **bitterness** is not mutually exclusive from being filled with the Spirit.

**21 I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty.** This seems reminiscent of Job’s response in Job 1 (see my commentary on Job).

By the way, Naomi did not go **out full**. It was a famine! Neither did not come home **empty**. She returned with Ruth. Perspective makes us forget how bad it really was and how good it really is. This is much like the Children of Israel (Numbers 11:5) when things went a little sour in their current situation.

**Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me, and <sup>9</sup>the Almighty has afflicted me?”**

### **1:22**

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<sup>t</sup> 1 Sam. 3:17; 2 Sam. 19:13; 2 Kin. 6:31

<sup>u</sup> Acts 21:14

<sup>6</sup> Lit. *made herself strong to go*

<sup>v</sup> Matt. 21:10

<sup>2</sup>My good friend Greg Majewski did this research and capsulated this opinion. It was my privilege to be his pastor for several years. He does a good job of talking about his town of Pulaski, WI—a town of 2000-3000—where everybody knew everything happening (especially those who are new to town, or have returned).

<sup>w</sup> Is. 23:7; Lam. 2:15

<sup>9</sup> Heb. *Shaddai*

**So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.** 4:3 seems to show us that Naomi had fields (belonging to her late husband?). Was anybody leasing this from her? Was anything growing on it? This would have been around April.