

A BAD TIME IN ISRAEL

(Background for the Story of Ruth)

Introduction

[Israel was in Egypt 400 years – they were slaves in Egypt. Then, about 1400 B.C., Creator God freed Israel with great power. And God promised: I will give Israel the land of Canaan.]

Deuteronomy 9:5

9:5 Why did God give Canaan to Israel? Because the small countries in Canaan were very bad – so God pushed those bad countries out of Canaan.

Joshua 11:15, 23 & 23:1

11:15 Joshua, the leader of Israel, did everything that Creator God told him to do – Joshua obeyed God. 23 Joshua fought the bad countries and took Canaan. Then, there was no more war. 23:1 And God gave Israel rest from all their enemies.

Judges 2:7-21 & [3:6]

2:7 The people of Israel obeyed God while Joshua was living. 8 Then Joshua died – he was 110 years old. 2:21 But Joshua did not finish pushing out all the bad countries.

2:10 After Joshua died, a young generation grew up – but they did not know Creator God – and they did not know what God had done for Israel. 11-12a God had saved Israel from slavery in Egypt, but the young generation forgot about God. [3:6] The young generation married men and women from the bad countries – 2:2b and the young generation worshiped the gods of the bad countries around them. So God was very angry with Israel – God was angry because Israel forgot God. 14 So God sent enemies to attack Israel – the enemies attacked and took Israel's food and belongings. And God gave Israel to their enemies – so the enemies ruled over Israel. 15 Every time Israel fought their enemies, God fought against Israel. And Israel was in great trouble.

16 Then God chose special leaders for Israel. 18 When God chose a leader for Israel, God helped the leader. And God saved Israel from their enemies. God saved Israel because he loved Israel – he heard their groaning – he saved Israel because they were suffering greatly. 19 But when the leader died, Israel became very bad again – Israel became worse than before. Again, Israel worshiped the gods of the bad countries.

[Then God sent enemies to attack Israel again. This cycle continued from about 1300 B.C. to 1100 B.C. During this time special leaders led Israel.]

Judges 21:25

21:25 In those days Israel had no king. So each person did what he thought was good.

RUTH & ORPAH MAKE BIG CHOICES

Ruth 1:1-19

1:1 Special leaders were leading Israel – and in those days there was a famine in Israel. A man named Elimelech lived in the town of Bethlehem. There was no food in Bethlehem, so Elimelech went to live in the country of Moab. He went with his wife and two sons.

2 His wife's name was Naomi. His sons' names were Mahlon and Kilion. 3 But Elimelech died in Moab – so Naomi had only her two sons. 4 Naomi's sons married two women from Moab – they married Orpah and Ruth. Then Naomi's family lived in Moab for about ten years.

5 Then Naomi's two sons also died. So Naomi had no husband and no sons.

6 Then Naomi heard: Creator God has given food to his people – God has helped Israel. So Naomi and her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, prepared to go back to Naomi's home in Bethlehem. 7 And they started walking on the road back to Bethlehem.

8-9 Then Naomi said to Orpah and Ruth, “Go back to your mothers' homes. Go back and find new husbands – I pray that God will give you new husbands. You have been very kind to me – and you have been very kind to my dead sons. So I pray that God will be very kind to you also.

Then Naomi kissed Orpah and Ruth. And Orpah and Ruth cried loudly – 10 and they said, “We will go back with you to your people.” 11-13 But Naomi said, “No, my daughters. Go back to your homes. Why do you want to come with me? I cannot have more sons – I cannot give you new husbands. I am too old to get married again. You cannot wait for me to have new sons. There is no hope for me.”

Naomi said, “[You have hope.] But it is very bitter for me – it is more bitter for me than for you. Because Creator God is against me.”

14 Orpah and Ruth cried again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-by. But Ruth held on to Naomi. 15 “Look,” said Naomi, “your sister-in-law is going back to her people. She is going back to her gods. You go back with Orpah.”

16 But Ruth answered, “Do not make me leave you. Where you go I will go. Where you live I will live. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. 17 Where you die I will die. Where you are buried I will be buried. I promise God: Only death will separate you and me.”

18 Naomi thought: Ruth will not change her mind – Ruth has decided to go with me. So Naomi stopped pressuring Ruth. 19 Then Naomi and Ruth continued walking – and finally they came to Bethlehem.

CONTENT QUESTIONS**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS****A BAD TIME IN ISRAEL** (Go over this section quickly)

- Where was Israel for 400 years? (introduction)
- What was Israel's situation in Egypt? (introduction)
- What did God do for Israel in about 1400 B.C.? (introduction)
- What did God promise to give Israel? (introduction)
- Why did God give Canaan to Israel? (Deuteronomy 9:5)
- What did Joshua do? (Joshua 11:15, 23)
- How long did Israel obey God? (Judges 2:7)
- Did Joshua finish pushing out all the bad countries? (2:21)
- After Joshua died what did the young generation do? (2:10 to 12b)
- How did God feel? (verse 12b)
- So what did God do? (verses 14-15)
- Then, how did God help Israel? (verses 16 and 18)
- Why did God help Israel? (verse 18)
- What happened when the special leader died? (verse 19)
- How long did this cycle continue?
- Did Israel have a king in those days? (Judges 21:25)
- So what did everyone do? (verse 25)

Was this a good time to live in Israel?

[*Ruth* is the story of one family living during this time.]

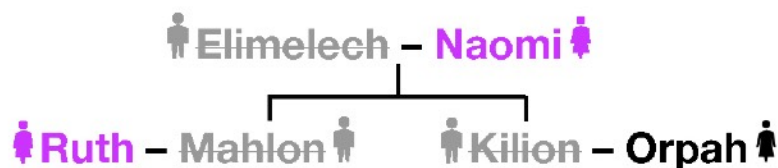
RUTH & ORPAH MAKE BIG CHOICES (Focus on this section)

- What bad thing happened in Israel during this time? (Ruth 1:1)
- Where did Elimelech live? (verse 1) Where did he go with his family? Why?
- What was his wife's name? (verse 2)

- What happened to Elimelech in Moab? (verse 3)

If you were Naomi, how would you feel?

- What did Naomi's sons do? (verse 4) Who did they marry – what were their names?



- After 10 years what terrible thing happened to Naomi? (verse 5)

Now, how would you feel, if you were Naomi?

How do you think Naomi felt about Creator God?

How would you feel about God in this situation?

How do you think Orpah and Ruth felt about losing their husbands?

- What good news did Naomi hear? (verse 6)

Was God still taking care of his people?

- So what did Naomi, Orpah and Ruth decide to do? (verse 6)

Why do you think Orpah and Ruth decided to go to Israel with Naomi?

- But what did Naomi say to Orpah and Ruth? (verses 8-9)

- What did Naomi call Orpah and Ruth? (verses 11-13)

How do you think Naomi felt about her daughters-in-law?

- But what did Orpah and Ruth say to Naomi? (verse 10)

How do you think Orpah and Ruth felt about their mother-in-law?

- Could Naomi help her daughters-in-law in the future? (verses 11-13)

- What did Naomi say about her situation? (verse 13) What did she say about God?

How sad do you think Naomi was? Did she have hope?

Did Naomi stop believing in Creator God because she was so sad?
Or did Naomi still believe in God?

Do you think it is okay to talk about our feelings?
Or do you think that we should hide our feelings?

Do you think we should tell Creator God how we feel?

- What does God think about our true feelings?

Be kind to me, O God. ...Write down my sadness. Put my tears in your bottle.

Psalms 56:8

He [Jesus] carried our sorrows.

Isaiah 53:4

I saw a new heaven and a new earth. God will live with people. He will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Revelation 21:1, 3-4

Do you think God listened to Naomi's sorrow?

- What did Orpah decide to do? (verse 14)
- What did Naomi tell Ruth to do? (verse 15)

Naomi knew that Orpah's gods could not help her –
Orpah's gods had no power.
Naomi loved Orpah –
but Naomi sent Orpah back to gods who could not help her.

Was this good?
Why do you think Naomi did this?

- But what did Ruth choose? (verses 16-17) What 5 things did Ruth choose?

What do you think of Ruth's choices?

Why do you think Ruth chose these things?

Naomi was very sad and weak at the end.
But, how do you think Naomi had treated Ruth for 10 years?

What do you think Ruth thought about Creator God?
Ruth was sad too – but how big was Ruth's faith in God?

- Where did Naomi and Ruth go? (verse 19)

What do you think of Ruth?

***Charm will deceive you,
and beauty is not satisfying – it is quickly gone.
But a woman who respects Creator God is great!
She will get her reward.***

Proverbs 31:30-31