

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.¹ 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 12th (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 two years of marriage (verse 4): thrice cursed. **so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.**

¹We 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).

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.”