

Ruth 1:1-5

Making choices, but also experiencing difficulties not from your own choosing

The dark setting of the narrative—1:1a “*in the days of the judging of the judges*” (cf. Judges 21:25)

The particular tense circumstances—1:1b

- 1) Generally—that there was a famine in the land. (perhaps Judges 6:3-4)
- 2) Specifically—*And a certain man from Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the fields of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.* (cf. Genesis 19:37)
 - a) He intends to live briefly as a resident alien in a neighboring country. (cf. 1:4; Genesis 12:10-20; 26:1-6; 45:9-46:7)
 - b) The famine apparently did not extend to the country of Moab east of the Dead Sea.
- 3) Questions:
 - a) Was this a demonstration of a lack of faith?
 - b) Was this a demonstration of wisdom to provide for his struggling family?

A description of the specific family's situation—1:2

- 1) The husband—1:2 ² *Now the name of the man was Elimelech,*
- 2) The wife—the name of his wife was Naomi (“my pleasant one”),
- 3) The children—and the names of his two sons Mahlon and Kilion,
- 4) Their location and tribe—*Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah.*
 - a) Ephrathah was apparently a clan within a tribe as well as a smaller village in close proximity to Bethlehem (cf. 1st Samuel 17:12)
- 5) The move—*And they went into the fields of Moab and settled there.*

The situation worsens to encompass three widows in one vulnerable family—1:3-5

- 1) The husband's/father's death—1:3 ³ *Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons [ben].*
 - a) Note the change of identification of the couple from 1:2 to 1:3
- 2) Both sons marry Moabite (Gentile) women—1:4 ⁴ *And they took for themselves Moabite wives: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other was Ruth.*
 - a) Cf. Exodus 34:11-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-5; see example in 1st Kings 11:1-8
- 3) The length of their sojourn—1:4b *And they sojourned there about ten years.* (cf. 1:1)
 - a) This is consistent with Judges 6:2-5
- 4) Both sons die—1:5 ⁵ *Then both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was bereft of her two offspring* (only time yeled refers to married men) *and her husband.*
 - a) She lost all the men (male providers) in her life (cf. 1:21), similar to homelessness
 - b) Apparently no children were born to either of these younger couples (cf. 4:13-17; Deuteronomy 28:15-19)

Questions:

- Will God prove to be a provider for these widows? (cf. Deuteronomy 10:18; Psalm 68:5; 146:9)
- Will the people of Israel be obedient to God's Law in meeting the needs of these widows? (cf. Deuteronomy 24:17-22; 26:12-13; 27:19)

Will we practice pure religion before God by meeting the needs of widows? (James 1:27)