

RUTH WAS AN ISRAELITE

By

Arnold Kennedy

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PO Box 146

Cardwell QLD 4849

Australia

Email: hr_cim@bigpond.com

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RUTH AND BIBLE HISTORY.

The territory of the Moabites was originally East and Northeast of the Dead Sea, extending from the River Arnon on the South to the River Jabbok on the North, and from the Dead Sea and Jordan River on the West across the plains and foothills into the mountains to the East. Also included were the "plains of Moab" which were across the Jordan River on the West Bank "towards Jericho". Deut. 32:49, 34:1 and Josh.3:16 all say part of Moab was "against Jericho", and this is confirmed by:

Num. 26:63 "These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan, near Jericho".

Now what is important here is that Jericho is on the West bank of Jordan, and thus this part of "the plains of Moab" are also West of Jordan, according to the verses given above. The story of Ruth does not involve anything about the extermination of Moabites (by race) in certain areas East of Jordan, such as is found during Israel's advance towards their Jordan crossing.

The story of Ruth is placed at about 1322BC. Before this in about 1406BC we read:

Judges 3:28 And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over. And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valour; and there escaped not a man. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years".

In the previous chapter we find that these Israelites came from Mt. Ephraim to the "fords of Jordan". They allowed no Moabites who lived on the West Bank to escape across the river, to go to the East - "*there escaped not a man*". Those Moabites on the East Bank of Jordan were not involved in the Ruth saga.

Elimelech, a man of Judah, with his wife Naomi and his two sons were driven by famine out of Judea; and Ruth 1:1 says that he "*went to sojourn in the country of Moab.*" Note the accuracy of that expression: NOT among the people of Moab, or the land of Moab, but in the country of Moab, which refers to "the plains of Moab". These were occupied by Israelites exclusively. Elimelech's sons married women of that country, one of them being Ruth. Ruth could not have been of any race or nation but Israel, for no other races lived in "the plains of Moab". It is important to understand here that "the country of Moab" is different to "the land of Moab", since "country" and "land" are different words in Hebrew, with differing meanings. The "land of Moab" on the East side of Jordan does not feature in the Book of Ruth (KJV).

The Israelite peoples within the land of Moab were known as "Moabites" because "the plains of Moab" was the name of the place where they lived. This is similar to those who lived in Galilee being called "Galileans" and those within Judea being called "Judeans". Calling Ruth a 'Moabite' thus is not a problem. Today, Anglo-Saxon English who live in New Zealand may be called "New Zealanders", but this does not alter their place of birth if that was in England. A New Zealander may be an "Auckland" or a "Wellingtonian", but both are New Zealanders. The description here is determined by place of residence, not nationality.

So we might ask that if an Israelite Judean man took an Israelite wife from Galilee, would she not still be a Israelite after the marriage? She could also be called a "Galilean" just as Ruth was called a "Moabitess". This wife would be described as being "of Galilee", just as Ruth was as being "of Moab". So if Ruth is called a Moabitess seven times, so what –it would not change her race! Should "of Moab" have a different meaning to "from Moab"? "Galilee" is used as a territorial term just as "Moab" is in the Book of Ruth.

Then there is the phrase "*wives of the women of Moab*" that is really just, "*wives from Moab*". Even Strong's Concordance will show us the words, "*the women of*" are not there. "Moab" is adjectival, but to be definitive we must first determine if the usage is about a place or a race. Until this is done we will just be presumptive. Strong's Concordance indicates that Mow'ab (4124) means either a land or a nation, (a place or a people) and he shows the word is translated both ways about the same number of times. Then he indicates there are two Hebrew words, but does not show us which is which. So which one are we looking at? Strong omits altogether the "country" of Moab as used right through the Book of Ruth, altogether. We do not find the "LAND" of Moab mentioned once in the Book of Ruth, so could the word "Moabitess", as used in that book, have any reference to the "LAND", (or the people) on the East of Jordan? So if any make the claim that Ruth "came from the "LAND" of Moab", they are wrong. Ruth did not come from East of Jordan. No, she came from the "COUNTRY" of Moab, which is West of Jordan and which was inhabited solely by Israelites for about 600 years.

Now we come to Ruth 1:6-7, "*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 how that the LORD had visited HIS PEOPLE in giving them bread*". So, did God visit "His people" in the Land of Moab as Israelites or not? Are not "His people" Israelites? Here even Mr. Strong admits the particular word used for "people" as used here means, "*members of one's people*"...and also "kinsmen". The word "kinsmen" shouts loudly, does it not? So were they not all of one "kin" in both places?

Some suggest that the record indicates that Ruth was different from Boaz's handmaidens, and that this difference might be racial. But from history, and from the Bible record, we find Israelites sometimes worshipping the gods of the lands that they had taken from other races. The indications are that Ruth, as an Israelite, came back to worship the God of Israel from having previously worshipped other gods when in the plains of Moab.

In the case of Ruth and her identity, we must consider whether or not God would violate His, "*I am the Lord – I change not*". The rules concerning the gene pool from which wives for Israelite men could draw was so well established (by God) before this time. The story about Ruth is Israelite kinsmen both marrying within God's laws. Boaz says, "*And he said, Who art thou? Ruth answers, "I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman*". And Boaz's replies, "*And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I*". If we start with the right viewpoint from simple statements that Ruth was of the same kin as Boaz, we will not create our own problems about whether or not Ruth was an Israelite.

GOD'S CONDEMNATION OF THE MOABITES.

From the beginning God very strongly condemned the Moabites and Ammonites as races. See what God commanded.

Deuteronomy 23:3 "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of Yahweh; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord FOREVER."

In the tenth generation there could be as little as one part in 1056 of Moabite blood when marrying back into Israelite stock. There is argument whether "ten generations" is a Hebraism meaning "forever", and whether or not this has the same meaning as "for all generations", but regardless of this, in the case of Ruth, in her time, if she had not been of Israelite stock, she could not possibly have been allowed to enter into the Congregation of the Lord. So then, could Ruth possibly have been a Moabitess by race?

Zephaniah 2:9 *"Therefore, as I live saith the Lord of hosts, the surely Moab shall be as Sodom and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah.*

The whole 48th chapter of Jeremiah is a terrible condemnation of the people of Moab. In prophesying the triumphant return of Jesus Christ, Isaiah tells us"

Isaiah 25:10 *"For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under Him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill."*

If Ruth had been a Moabitess by race, all who descended from her would share the same fate. In examining just these few points, it can be seen that Ruth could not possibly have been from the race of Moab.