

14.08a Ruth Is Faithful (Ruth 1)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- (optional) “Ruth” Flash-a-Cards published by Abeka
- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *famine*: an extended time with no rain, no crops, and, thus, little or no food
- *Moab*: a country [see map below] where the descendants of Lot’s son, Moab, lived

Scripture: (ESV)

Ruth 1:1 In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. 2 The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. 3 But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, 5 and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them food. 7 So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. 8 But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, return each of you to her mother’s house. May 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 of you in the house of her husband!” Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. 10 And they said to her, “No, we will return with you to your people.” 11 But Naomi said, “Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? 12 Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, 13 would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me.” 14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

15 And she said, “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.” 16 But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.” 18 And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

19 So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, “Is this Naomi?” 20 She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 21 I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?”

22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Introduction/Review:

[Teacher, this review assumes that the first seven stories in Judges (#14.01–14.07) have already been taught. If that is not the case, teach the next paragraph but not the second one of this introduction.]

After Joshua died and those died who, with him, had seen all the wondrous works of God, the people soon forgot their promise to serve the Lord. Rather, they served the gods of the nations around them. God, as He had warned, brought enemies against Israel to oppress them. After a time of trouble, the people would return to God and pray that the enemy be taken away. God would send someone, called a judge, to lead His people against the enemy and return the land to peace. This cycle took place thirteen times—rebellion against the Lord, trouble from an enemy, return to the Lord, a judge to lead to victory over the enemy, peace; rebellion against the Lord, trouble from an enemy, return to the Lord, a judge, *etc.* You get the idea.

We have just had two stories from the book of Judges that show how disobedient the Israelites had become—just how far from God they had gone. The first lesson had to do with idols. What was that story about? [Micah made an idol from silver. The Danites came through and captured Micah’s idols and his priest.] The second story had to do with civil war. What tribe was almost wiped out? [Benjamin.] How many men from Benjamin were left after the civil war? [Six hundred.] How did they get wives? [From the virgins in Jabesh Gilead and from the dancing virgins at the feast in Shiloh.]

Story:

Today’s story also takes place during the early judges, but it is not so tragic as some stories before it. In fact, although it starts out with great trouble, it becomes a refreshing story about faith and love for God. It is found in a Bible book entitled with a woman’s name—Ruth—who was not an Israelite but a Moabite.

Moving to Moab

The narrative begins with a man named Elimelech and his wife named Naomi who owned land and lived in Bethlehem. Do you know of anyone else in the Bible who lived in Bethlehem? [David, Jesus.] When Elimelech and Naomi were alive decades before David and centuries before Jesus, a terrible famine made them think they needed to leave Bethlehem and even their country, Israel. They packed up; took their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion (likely pronounced KILL ee on); and moved to Moab because they thought they could survive better down there. [Locate Bethlehem and Moab.]

Mahlon and Chilion grew up and married women from Moab. This was not a good thing to do—marry women who were not Israelites but from a pagan background. Sometimes, however, God’s grace overrules poor choices. That’s what happened in this story, but I’m getting ahead of myself.

Sorrowing

Moab, the country that had looked so promising to Elimelech and Naomi, became a place of great sorrow, especially for Naomi. By the time she had lived there about ten years, her husband died first and then both her sons also died. That left only Naomi and her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. In those days there was no way a poor woman could take care of herself after her husband died unless her son[s] took care of her. In this case, both the husband and the two sons of Naomi were gone, leaving her quite helpless. You say, “What about her daughters-in-law? Couldn’t they help her?” Well, yes and no, for they couldn’t get jobs at Wal-Mart or Pizza Hut or have another career as women do now.

Then Naomi heard that the famine in Bethlehem had ended. She wanted to go home—back to family and old friends and people of like faith. She packed up, and her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, prepared to accompany her back to Bethlehem.

Separating

“This isn’t right,” thought Naomi. “These girls shouldn’t have to leave their homeland for me. I could never provide them husbands. They would be better off if they would go back to their family homes. That’s what I’ll tell them.” And she did. “Go, return each of you to your mother’s house. May the Lord deal kindly with

you, as you have dealt with my dead sons and with me. The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of your ✓new husband!”

Orpah and Ruth cried out, “No, no! We will return with you to your people!”

Naomi continued to persuade the ladies: “Listen to me, girls. I cannot provide you husbands. You need to marry. Go back home where you can find a husband.”

At that point, Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and did return to Moab, but Ruth refused to go back, even when Naomi said, “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.”

Rather than go back to Moab, Ruth stayed with Naomi and expressed to her beautiful statements of her conviction and determination not to leave. She said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.”

What refreshing loyalty to Naomi! But the most significant words of Ruth’s speech showed loyalty to God. She said, “Your God will be my God.” ✓Ruth sincerely believed in the one true God of Israel.

When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said no more.

Returning

So the two of them trudged on to Bethlehem.* [See map below.] When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was abuzz because of them. The women asked, “Is this Naomi?” ✓Perhaps her years of aging masked Naomi’s identity. ✓More likely, her facial expression showed a bitterness that she had not known when she had left Bethlehem.

It was Naomi all right. She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi, which means pleasant. Call me Mara, which means bitter, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?”

What a sad testimony! Things had definitely gone sour for Naomi. Was she railing against God? Was she mad at Him? I hope not; yet she recognized that all events of life come from His hand. Will her life continue to be full of troubles? We will see.

*This journey, crossing the Jordan River, included a descent from the highlands of Moab of about 4500 feet to below sea level at the Dead Sea area and then an ascent to Bethlehem of 3750 feet (<http://timeline.biblehistory.com/event/ruth-and-naomi-come-to-bethlehem>). It was a trip of about 30-60 miles, depending on the route taken. “As the terrain is rugged and steep, the trip is estimated to take 7-10 days on foot” (http://www.answers.com/Q/What_is_the_distance_between_Moab_and_Bethlehem_Judea_in_the_book_of_Ruth).

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
He was born in the city of Bethlehem.
His direct ancestors are characters in this story.
- Should we blame God when life gives us great difficulty? Isn’t God in charge? Yes, He is. We may weep and lament in our situation, but let us be careful to remember that our present struggle is not all there is in this life. God may plunge us into despair, but He also lifts us up. We must cry out to God in our

affliction and still trust Him. “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God” (Psalm 43:5).

Activities:

- Play dough: suitcases
- Snack: *Bethlehem* means “house of bread.” Provide some sort of bread for a snack.
- *Naomi* means “pleasant”; *Mara* means “bitter.” Discuss the meanings of names. Find out the meanings of your students’ names. The following web site has an extensive list of names and their meanings: <https://www.behindthename.com/>. Spiritual context of names can be helpful if the original meaning is negative, e.g., *Mary*, “bitter,” becomes “blessed” (http://mykairos.org/docs/kt/names_meanings.pdf).
- Review questions: (Game: Print, color, and cut out eight larger items of Bible clothing clipart found below. For each correct answer a student may place a piece of clothing in a pocket chart, on a flannel board, or in a box made to look like a suitcase.)
 1. Why did a man and woman and their two sons leave Bethlehem? [Because there was a famine.]
 2. What was the name of the man? [Elimelech.]
 3. What was the name of the woman? [Naomi.]
 4. What happened to the two sons after they married and to Elimelech their father? [All three died.]
 5. Where did Naomi decide to go? [Back to Bethlehem.]
 6. Which daughter-in-law went back all the way to Bethlehem with Naomi? [Ruth.]
 7. When Ruth had decided to go with Naomi, what did she say to show her determination? Tell one thing. [“Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried.]
 8. Why did Naomi say, “Do not call me Naomi (pleasant); call me Mara (bitter)? [Because she thought the Almighty had dealt very bitterly with her in that she went away full but the Lord brought her back empty.]

Memory Verse[s]:

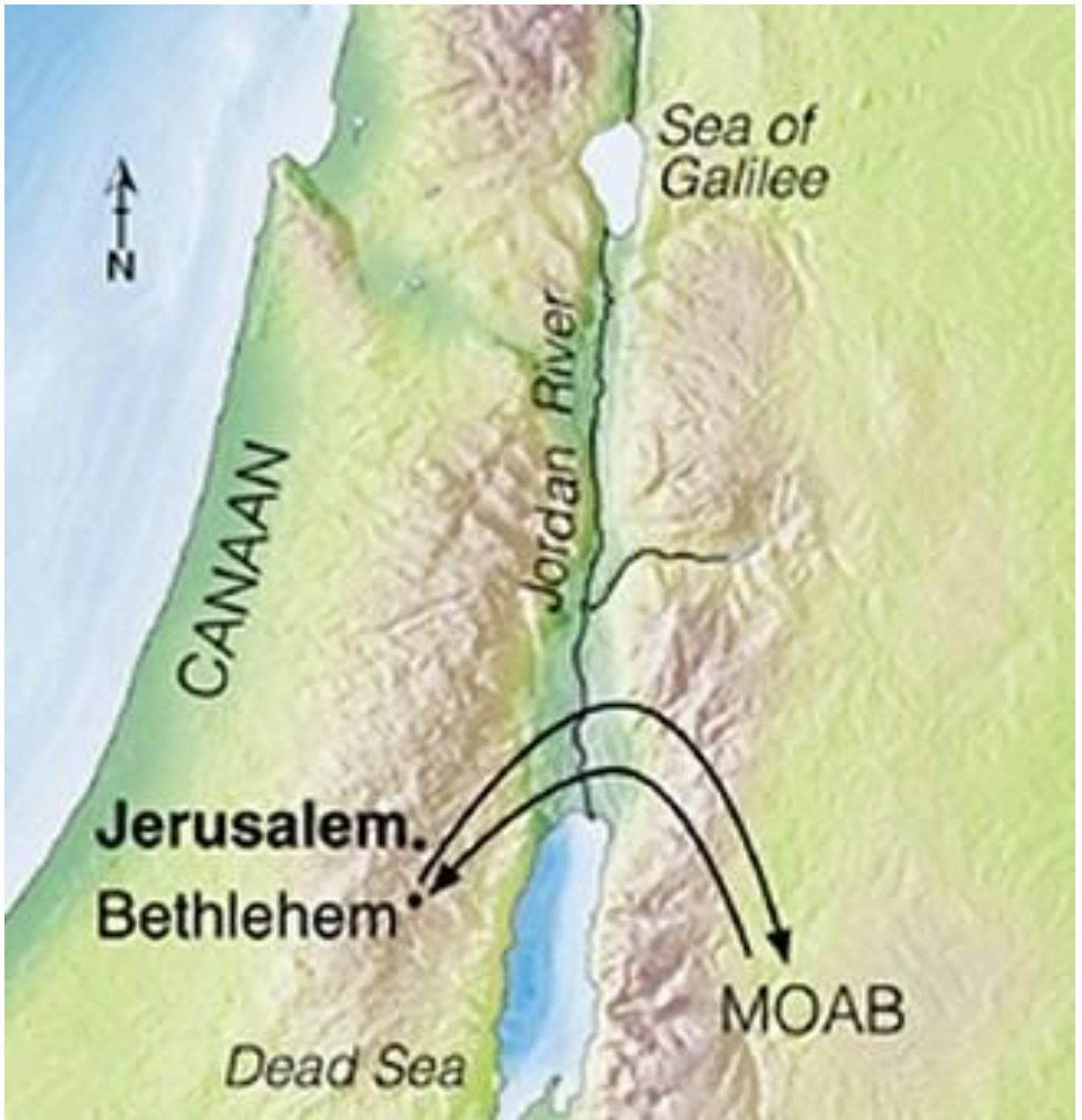
- Psalm 43:5: Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

Handwork:

- Using the sites given in “Activities” for information about names, print the template frames below on card stock. Create another document with students’ names and meanings in the fonts and sizes you desire. Cut each student’s information apart so that [s]he may glue it to a frame. Or print the templates and write in free hand (or have the students write) names and meanings. Laminate (optional) before giving to student.

famine

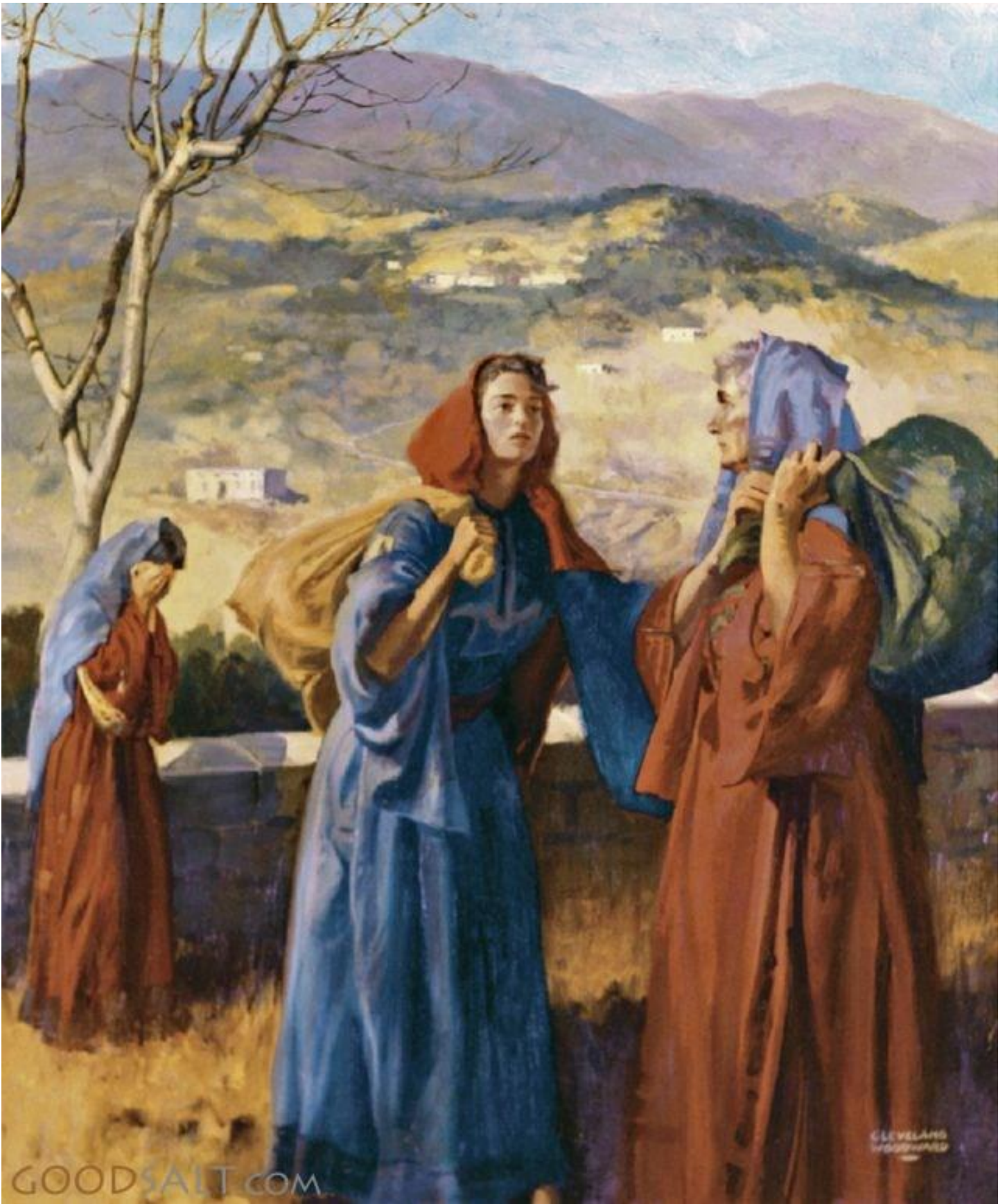
Moab





"Elimelech and Naomi journey to Moab with their two sons"





<http://timeline.biblehistory.com/event/ruth-and-naomi-come-to-bethlehem>



<https://c8.alamy.com/comp/C8N4K0/bible-stories-illustration-of-naomi-and-ruth-arriving-at-bethlehem-C8N4K0.jpg>

