
“All the City . . . “Doth Know That Thou Art a Virtuous Woman”

Lesson
20
Summary

Ruth 1; Elimelech and family go to Moab because of famine—Marriages—Death of father and sons—Ruth the Moabitess, her husband having died, remains constant to Naomi—They come to Beth-lehem.

Samuel 1; Hannah prays for a son, and vows to give him to the Lord—Eli the priest blesses her—Samuel is born—Hannah loans him to the Lord.

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights: **Few Women Revered in Jewish Thought:** Ruth is one of them. A woman convert to Judaism is given or “takes upon herself” a “New Name,” usually that of Ruth or another of the righteous women of the Bible. “The sages regarded Ruth as the prototype of the righteous convert. They taught that Elimelech and his sons were punished for going to Moab during the famine in Judah. They should have remained to share the hardships of their own people . . . Ruth on the other hand left her home not to seek an easier life, but to devote herself to the God of Israel, and to share the fortunes of Naomi and her people, whatever they were destined to be.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Stigma of “Gentile” Carried for a Long Time: Although modern Israel is now reflecting more gentile habits, some Orthodox describe assimilation of some gentile habits as a major problem. “. . . Decorating graves with flowers is strongly opposed by some Orthodox rabbis . . . neither Conservative nor Reform Judaism, however, object and it is also common practice in Israel, particularly in military cemeteries.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Understanding Jewish Thinking: This can assist Latter-day Saints (who are truly a part of the House of Israel) in improving their “Gentile” way of thinking. “An undoubted factor in the survival of the Jews as a people with a common identity has been their shared experience of persecution at the hands of gentiles (non-Jews). “. . . gentiles were either natives living in Erez Israel or travelers passing through it. Resident gentiles were protected by traditional hospitality and by contractual agreements made between Israel and the neighboring states. Native gentiles were expected to be loyal to Israel's civil laws in return for protection, but were generally in a humbler position than the Israelite population.”

Gentiles and Religion: “The gentile was not obliged to acknowledge God, but was at least obliged to abandon the worship of false gods. Unlike Jews, Noachides were not required to suffer martyrdom rather than break the law against idolatry; they were, however, required to choose martyrdom rather than shed human blood. In some instances gentiles were also required to observe Sabbath and the festivals, and to fast on the Day of Atonement. Social differences remained, nonetheless . . .” “During the latter part of the Second Temple period . . . the prohibition against Jews marrying gentiles, limited originally to the seven Canaanite nations --- Hittites, Gergashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites ("neither shalt thou make marriages with them" Deuteronomy 7:3) --- was extended to include all gentiles, who might lure Jews away from the true God. In order to prevent the possibility of intermarriage the rabbis enacted a series of laws intended to limit social contact between Jew and non-Jew. These included a strict prohibition on the use of gentile wine, originally limited to that used in idolatrous libations, but later extended to cover all non-Jewish produced wine.”

Righteous Gentiles: “The concept of the righteous gentile (*hasidei ummot ha-olam* -- the pious ones of the nations of the world) is first found in the Midrash. The Tosefta teaches that they are as eligible to a place in the hereafter as any member of the House of Israel. Rabbi Isaac Arama states that "every true pious gentile is equal to a son of Israel." The Zohar states that all gentiles who do not hate Israel, and who deal justly with Jews, qualify as pious ones. According to Maimonides righteous gentiles were those who observed the Noachide laws and were motivated by belief in the divine origin and authenticity of Moses' prophecy, and not merely by the reasonableness of the laws, in which case they were considered simply wise men but not *hasidei ummot ha-olam*. Since World War II

the concept of the righteous gentile has been used to refer to those non-Jews who helped Jews escape the persecutions of Nazism.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) At Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, there is an avenue of planted trees. Each one is dedicated to a “Righteous Gentile.” There is one planted in memory of a Dutch Latter-day Saint who helped Jews escape in Nazi occupied Europe. However, the Latter-day Saint is a member of the House of Israel, not a gentile! “**RIGHTEOUS GENTILES** (Hebrew: *Hasidei Ummot ha-Olam*), rabbinic term for those non-Jews who, because of their moral character or virtuous acts, rank equally in merit and grace with Jews. According to the Talmud, the righteous gentile is as eligible as any Jew for a place in the world to come.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Mormons and Gentiles: One of the Israeli travel agents once commented to a prospective traveler to the USA, “You’ve got to visit Salt Lake City, that’s the only place a Jew can walk down the street and feel like a gentile!” Of course, this needs correction. Latter-day Saints know they are a part of the House of Israel, in large part from the tribe of Joseph.

Latter-day Messiahs: “According to the Talmud, the Messiah will be a descendant of the House of David and will be preceded by a secondary Messiah, from the House of Joseph.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) There is a Jewish tradition that the Messiah’s return will reflect either the date or event of the destruction of the First and Second Temples. Joseph Smith’s mission was to restore temple worship. Eventually, the “Lord will suddenly come to his Temple (Malachi 3:1).”

Temple Mount: Abraham brought his son to the Mount Moriah (Hebrew: “Taught of the Lord”) which was later to become the place of the Temple, to offer Isaac as a human sacrifice. Human sacrifice is precisely the trouble that Abraham was spared in the Ur of Chaldees. It was a profound lesson in opposition, a Chiasmus. Jewish tradition states that Isaac was in his early thirties when he was to be sacrificed. The “trouble” was spared when God provided instruction that a “Lamb” was to be offered as a sacrifice. Abraham and Isaac found an “alternative sacrifice,” a ram in the thicket, and it was offered as a substitute for Isaac. Later, other animals, first born and unblemished, were brought to the same place where the Temple now stood. In some cases they were “blessed” with the sins (troubles) of the people in attendance. In one case, a lamb or goat would “escape” out the Gate Beautiful (also Gate of Forgiveness and Gate of Mercy). It would be tied with a red ribbon and let out into the wilderness to die on its own (carrying the sins of the people).

Sins Fastened In a Sure Place: Isaiah portrays the same principle when he describes the “glory” fastened in a “sure place.” It is a glory that we can bring our troubles (sins) to the Lord, at his house, and leave with greater blessings than we ever imagined. “. . . And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place . . . they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house . . . In that day. . . shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the LORD hath spoken it.” (*Isaiah 22:21-25*) In Jerusalem, there have been thousands of nails pounded into the old Western (Wailing) Wall, a remnant of the last known Jewish Temple. They remind us of a practice the Jews had until about a hundred years ago. They would “nail their sins in a sure place” and then get on with life. A glorious thought! Going to the Temple for Latter-day Saints not only blesses the ancestors whose work is being done, but those who are serving them. It is the Lord’s house where virtuous people meet, renew their souls, and remind themselves of the name they have taken upon themselves.

Daniel Rona, born in Israel and living in Jerusalem has authored Old & New Testament, Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Supplement Study Materials to be used in conjunction with the weekly LDS Gospel Doctrine Lesson study. NOTE: Three versions of the supplemental study materials are available *FREE* at www.HolyLandsRevealed.com. (Just click “LDS SUPPLEMENTS”)

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