Bible Study 92

August 30th, 2023

“Women of the Bible.” (continued….)

In chapter one of the Book of Exodus there is something to note. The beginning of Israel’s story of salvation is from the start begun by women. It is Moses’ mother and sister who plot, prepare and carry out the mission to save this child. In the story the Hebrew men are nowhere to be seen.

Men do not come into the picture till much later in the story. Yet everyone with knowledge of Hebrew History know that the woman is the center of the Jewish family. Moses will of course become the central figure of Exodus, but it will be left to the women to organize and pull off the Passover.

The books of Leviticus and Numbers that follow the Book of Exodus are formulated but not written during Israel’s 400 years as Nomads in the desert. The Laws and regulations of Judaism will not be written down for centuries. So many of those laws have to do with hygiene, health, childbirth, marriage, and regulations about the Sabbath and the practices of Judaism. In all of these women played a large part while at the same time being excluded from the priestly class.

No discussion of ‘Women in the Bible’ can ever be complete without speaking of “Ruth” why is this? Ruth is not a prophet, nor is she a judge. She is a Moabite and not even a Jew at the beginning of her story. More, where else could you find in the history of a people an entire book dedicated to one woman? More she was not even a Hebrew woman!

Ruth is the wife of a man who has died. He was the son of Naomi, a Jewish woman who emigrated to the land of Moab with her husband. The husband of Naomi dies and her two sons marry Moabite women. The sons die and Naomi decides to go home to Canaan. The daughters in law decide that they will go with her crossing the desert together. After Naomi pleads for them to return to their fathers in Moab one turns back. The other will not. At this point comes a famous passage that is often quoted.

Naomi begs Ruth to return to her own land and people. But Ruth replies: “ Where you go, I will go, Your land will become my land and your God will become my God.” Ruth 1: 17f. “Ruth” is a story of love, devotion, and redemption. It is about faithfulness and how God rewards the good. ------The relationship of Naomi and Ruth is built on endurance, pain, suffering and loss. They mutually rely on one another and forge a bond of love that unites them as family and in love of Yahweh. And it is mutual for Naomi cares for Ruth. Even though in Bethlehem they live in extreme poverty.

Ruth gleans in the wheat fields of Boaz the young landlord, till the day Boaz looks on her and immediately loves her. So begins the long line of David from the marriage of Boaz and Ruth. God’s plan continues.

Read Ruth 1 through 4. Page 237f.