

1st Samuel

Lesson 30

(b) Salvation of the Kenites

As we come to verse six, we come to the salvation of the Kenites. Chapter 15, verse 6.

“Saul said to the Kenites, ‘Go, depart, go down from among the Amalekites, so that I do not destroy you with them; for you showed kindness to all the sons of Israel when they came up from Egypt.’ So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.” (15:6)

Who were the Kenites that Saul was trying to save? Let us find out the connections to Israel. Moses’ father-in-law was Reuel. He was a priest of the tribe of Midian. His priestly name was Jethro. Jethro means *his excellence*. Reuel means *friend of God*. His daughter was Zipporah, who married Moses before he was called by the LORD at the burning bush. She gave Moses two sons.

As a Midianite, Jethro, and his daughter Zipporah, were distant relatives of Moses. Midian, the father of the tribe, was one of Abraham’s sons through Keturah (Genesis 25:1-6).

The first time Moses led the nation to leave Mount Sinai and camp at Kadesh-barnea, where the twelve spies were sent out, Jethro and his family joined Moses in the journey (Numbers 10:31-33). That short journey to Kadesh and back to Mount Sinai took almost a full year. Returning to Mount Sinai, Jethro and his family surely returned to his Midian home near the mountain.

Jethro was a Midianite, but he was also a Kenite, a branch of the Midianites. Some of this Kenite branch of the Midianites were evidently with Moses at the Plain of Moab, crossed the Jordan River on dry ground, and helped destroy the *city of palms*, another name for Jericho. These Kenites settled in with the people of the tribe of Judah, moving as they moved and living as they lived. But not all of the Kenites joined the tribe of Judah. In Judges chapter 4, we met Heber, with his wife Jael, who moved into the northern Promised Land instead of joining Judah in the south.

Much later, after our story here in 1st Samuel, during the time of Jeremiah and 2nd Kings, we will meet the descendants of these Kenites again through a man named Rechab. His tribe will be called Rechabites. One of his descendants will be called Hammath (1 Chronicles 2:55). His descendant will be named Jehonadab, who will join king Jehu in the ablation of Baal worship and the house of King Ahab. He also vowed that all Rechabites would never drink wine or plant vineyards (Jeremiah 35:6-7).

More can be found about the descendants of this Kenite group that joined the nation of Israel. Still, enough has been said to prove the point that they were ingrained in the life of the nation from the very beginning, starting with Moses’ marriage to Zipporah to the fall of the Southern Kingdom in the days of Jeremiah.

Once again, the Israelites are interacting with a cousin nation, just as the Amalekites were a cousin nation. What was the difference? The Kenites were constant friends of Israel; the Amalekites were constant enemies.

But, how could the Kenites, who were friends with Israel, live with the enemies of Israel. We might as well ask the same kind of questions about our world today. How can the godly live with the ungodly? How can the enemy of one section of the population live peaceably with the friends of another section of the population? Let us make it even closer to home. How can people who believe in one theology attend the same church building as people who believe in a totally different theology? How can Calvinists attend church with non-Calvinists? One is a false teaching; the other is a true teaching. How can those who believe that only men should be deacons attend a church with those who believe women can be deacons too? How can those who believe they are part of the elect

chosen of the LORD, eternally predestined to be saved, attend church with those who are not part of the elect chosen people who have absolutely no chance of ever entering through the gates of heaven? How can those who believe sharing the gospel is fulfilled by handing out food attend a church with those who believe sharing the gospel means telling the people what Jesus did for them on the cross and how those people can have eternal life if they will accept Him as their LORD and Savior? How can those who believe that the Church is a place to worship the LORD attend with people who believe the Church is a place where their social needs are met, regardless of what is being said from the pulpit? How can those who believe in the LORD as Savior attend a Church where the pastor constantly makes crude sexually charged claims from the pulpit? How can, how can be? I do not have that answer. It boggles my mind. The postmodern church of today is more interested in personal feelings rather than the commands and directions of the LORD. Yet, Church is where many people have friends, and they just cannot bear to leave that godless church because they will have to leave their friends. Their friends are more important to them than the LORD, His doctrines, His theology, His will for His Bride. None of this makes sense to me. In the case of our story, it does not make sense to me how the Kenites were living in harmony with the Amalekites in this story. Be that as it may, the Kenites were smart enough to leave the city of the Amalekites before Saul attacked.

(c) Slaughter of the Amalekites

Once the Kenites were gone, then came the slaughter of the Amalekites. Verse 7.

“So Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah as you go to Shur, which is east of Egypt. ⁸ He captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.” (15:7-8)

The city of the Amalekites must have been the village of Havilah. There are two mentions of Havilah in the Scripture. In Genesis, we learn of one Havilah at the source and location of the Garden of Eden. However, that Havilah is at least a thousand miles north of the tribal area of Judah. This Havilah was located in the far southern border of Judah’s land when Abraham and Sarah settled between Kadesh and Shur (Genesis 20:1), and Ishmael’s descendants settled between Havilah and Shur. Shur is a wilderness. The purpose of the writer telling us that this place was *“Havilah as you go to Shur.”* In other words, it was not the Havilah at the headwaters where the Garden of Eden was located. It was in the south of Judah’s land on the way to the wilderness of Shur. The wilderness of Shur is the stretch of land between the land of Goshen in Egypt and the wilderness of Zin. Its northern border is the Great Sea (Mediterranean Sea.) Its eastern border is the Wadi Egypt. Today, its western border is the Suez Canal. But in the days of Moses and 1st Samuel, the canal was just a tributary that led from the Mediterranean Sea to the western tongue of the Red Sea called the Sea of Suez. It will not become a great canal for another four hundred years or so when Nebuchadnezzar enslaves the Egyptians to dig the tributary into a canal large enough to float the great Cedars of Lebanon logs that he had cut down north of the Promised Land, floated south in the Mediterranean Sea to the newly deepened Suez Canal, through the Sea of Suez, through the Red Sea, west into the Indian Ocean, north through what will later be known as the Persian Gulf, to the shores of modern Kuwait, enter the mouth of the Euphrates, and up to the city of Babylon where he will use them to build his great projects. Some will come to be known as the Great Wonders of the World. The Wadi Egypt, to the east of Shur, is a tributary that begins at the Mediterranean Sea just south of the current Gaza Strip. From the Mediterranean, it runs southeast to the eastern tongue of the Red Sea. The eastern tongue is called the Sea of Aqaba. Since the time of the scattering of the nations from the Tower of Babel event, the Wadi Egypt has been the general boundary line between Egypt and Canaan Land, and later Egypt and the Promised Land after the Israelites took Canaan Land as promised by the LORD. The wilderness of Shur is mentioned six times in the Bible (Genesis 16:7; 20:1; 25:18; Exodus 15:22; 1st Samuel 15:7; 27:8). In each case, it is used to point in a direction in

each story. For instance, when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, heading east from the land of Goshen, it probably took the assembly less than an hour to cross the Suez tributary and step into the wilderness of Shur under the light of the full moon on Nisan 16th. While they were in the wilderness of Shur, they would not travel the normal road called the Way of Shur that led to Canaan Land; rather, Moses would lead the Israelites down the western border of Shur all through the night and the next day before stopping to camp for the first time (yet still on Egypt's property) at a place called Succoth. In Genesis 25:17–18, we find the villages of Havilah and Shur mentioned in the summary of the life of Ishmael and his descendants. As you will remember, Ishmael was the son of Abraham, born to Sarah's Egyptian maid named Hagar.

These are the years of the life of Ishmael, one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people. They settled from Havilah to Shur, which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria; he settled in defiance of all his relatives. (Genesis 25:17–18)

Even though Abraham was buried in Hebron, where he had purchased land and a cave to bury Sarah, much of Abraham's life was spent in Beersheba, which sat near the Wadi Egypt, near the border of the wilderness of Shur. When Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away from the camp at the bidding of Sarah, Ishmael was just fourteen years of age. It was natural for Hagar to wander with Ishmael back toward her home country of Egypt. All she had to do to return to her country was to cross the Wadi Egypt, which put her back in the land of Egypt. The wilderness of Shur was Egyptian property. The descendants of Ishmael scattered out and filled the land "*from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt...*" Havilah sat near Beersheba. The placement of the two names in this verse would make more sense if they were reversed because *from Havilah to Shur* is a westward movement. From Havilah to the wilderness of Shur, you must go west. But the whole wilderness of Shur sat in the eastern portion of Egypt, and the village of Havilah sat east of the wilderness of Shur.

When Moses tells us that Havilah was *east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria*," Moses is using the Assyrian name as an indication of a direction. He is telling us that the whole of Havilah and Shur is east of Egypt in the direction of Assyria. It is by far a long way from Assyria, about eight hundred miles from the border of Assyria and more than a thousand miles into the heart of Assyria and its capital named Nineveh. We must make an important point here in our explanation concerning the Exodus path out of Egypt. If Moses had led the Israelites out of Egypt straight up the Way of Shur, the Nation of Israel would have had to cross through the land dominated by their cousins, the Ishmaelites. This scenario would not have been good. Remember, Joseph was taken out of the pit by his brothers and sold to a band of Ishmaelites, who then sold him as a slave to the Egyptians (Genesis 38:28). That is a sample of what the Ishmaelites thought of the Israelites.

Now the word "*Shur*" means *wall*. In some sense, it was the wall of wilderness that protected Egypt from their cousins called the Canaanites, and it protected the Canaanites from their cousins, the Egyptians. Yes, the Egyptians and the Canaanites were cousins. When the Tower of Babel scattering occurred, Mizram (the Hebrew word for Egypt) settled in the Delta of the Nile River. His brother, Canaan, settled along the Jordan River (both rivers had different names at the time). As far as their other two brothers, Cush would settle in what we call Ethiopia today, way south in Africa where the Nile begins in the mountains and borders to the east on the Red Sea. Put will settle west of Mizram in modern-day Libya. Libya's northern border is the Mediterranean Sea. Those were the four sons of Ham, the son of Noah, and where they settled after the Tower of Babel event.

Let us look at one last thing before we move on. In the Wilderness of Shur, there must have been a village named Shur at one time. After all, we have already read how the descendants of Ishmael settled between the village of Havilah and the village of Shut. We do not have a record of this village anywhere in Scripture. By the time of Moses, about twenty-seven hundred years had

transpired since the time of creation, and about eleven hundred years had transpired since the flood with Noah. Ninety-eight years after the flood, the Tower of Babel scattering happened. In the thousand years from the arrival of Mizram and Canaan in the land, whose family tribes were divided by the wall of wilderness called *Shur*, the village of Shur must have existed, and its surrounding area took the name the Wilderness of Shur. From Egypt, traveling east, the road was called the Way of Shur, or the Road of Shur. No doubt it led to the Wadi Egypt, the general border between Egypt and Canaan, to a village by the name of Shur that was known as the wall between the tribes of the brothers. However, that village no longer exists, not even in the time of Moses; therefore, its location was never explicitly identified by Moses because it could not be pinpointed at the time for the Israelites to use as a landmark. Rather, the whole of its wilderness was used instead as a landmark.

Back in our passage in 1st Samuel, the Amalekites were still living in the land usually associated with the descendants of Ishmael, but it was also their land. In Genesis 14:7, we learn that the Amalekites were living around *Enmishpat*, which was an old name for Kadesh Barnea. Kadesh Barnea was where the camp of Israel sent the spies to search out the Promised Land. It was near Beersheba. Thus, during the days of Abraham, he was living in the neighborhood of the Amalekites. With all of that as a background, Saul marched up the ravine to the village of Havilah and killed the Amalekites. But he did not kill all the Amalekites in the land. He did not finish the job. But more than that, he did not kill the king of the Amalekites, whose name was Agag, and he did not follow the order to kill all the livestock.