

How is a Moabite Accepted: Through a Vow, a Legal Loophole, Reinterpretation of the Law, or Divine Benevolence?

Deuteronomy. 23:4

“No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted into the congregation of the Lord; none of their descendants, even in the tenth generation, shall ever be admitted into the congregation of the Lord, because they did not meet you with food and water on your journey after you left Egypt, and because they hired Balaam son or Beor, from Pethor of Aramnaharaim, to curse you. — But the Lord your God refused to heed Balaam; instead, the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, for the Lord your God loves you. — You shall never concern yourself with their welfare or benefit as long as you live.”

I. A Legal Loophole to Legitimize a Kingship

Midrash Rabbah Ruth, Chapter IV

“... in [Boaz's] day the new law was enacted: ‘Ammonite but not Ammonitess, Moabite but not Moabitess.’”

“[W]hen Saul saw the head of the Philistine [Goliath] he began to ask concerning David, ‘Is he a son of Perez, a king? Is he a descendant of Zarah, a judge?’ And Doeg, the Edomite, was there, at that time, and he said to him, ‘Even if he is a descendent of Perez, is he not of impure descent? Is he not a descendant of Ruth, the Moabitess?’ But Abner said to him, ‘But has not the law been made, “Ammonite but not Ammonitess, Moabite, but not Moabitess”?’ . . . And Saul said to him, ‘Go and enquire regarding that law you have forgotten from Samuel and his Court.’ When he came to Samuel and his Court, [Samuel] said to him . . . ‘*All glorious is the king's daughter within the palace* (Psalms, XLV, 14). It is not for a woman to go out and bring food, but only for a man. *And because they hired against thee Balaam* (Deuteronomy, XXIII, 5). A man hires, but not a woman.’ (R. Eliezer)

II. A Kind Reinterpretation of the Law

Four mitzvot through which Naomi rejoins the Jewish community after her long absence:

1. *Matanot ani'im*, agricultural gifts to the poor, such as permission to glean
2. *Geula*, the redemption of property from a kinsman
3. *Yibbum*, levirate marriage
4. Acceptance of the convert as part of Israel