

which oppose God in the world. They do not reveal facts about the one who was the instrument through which sin entered the world -- that great evil figure which stands in defiance of God - - and whose destruction God has promised. They deal with a small nation, one which is far less known.

Yet there are many places in the Bible where Moab comes into considerable prominence. The nation begins with the incestuous relation of Lot with his daughters (Gen. 19:30-37). The Israelites seem always to have felt that there was a relationship between Moab and themselves (cf. Deut. 2:9). Consequently it was quite a shock to them when the king of Moab refused them passage through his land when Moses was led them up from Egypt (Judges 11:16-18), and still more of a shock when the king of Moab hired Balaam to curse Israel. Numbers 22-24 tells us how God frustrated the efforts of this wicked king and turned the purchased curse into a blessing.

To understand why the Israelites desired to cross the territory of the Moabites, we should notice its position on the map. Originally, Moab seems to have occupied a large area east and northeast of the Dead Sea. Shortly before the Israelite exodus from Egypt, Sihon, king of the Amorites, conquered the northern part of the area (Num. 21:26), and the Moabites were for a time confined to the region south of the river Arnon, the most important river which runs into the Dead Sea from the east. Moab seems never to have thought of itself as restricted to the area south of the Arnon River. Our present chapters mention Moabite cities which were north of that dividing line.

Every Bible student is familiar with the story of Ruth, the Moabitess. When Naomi and her family went to the land of Moab to escape from the famine in Israel, they were received with friendship, and Ruth herself returned to Israel with Naomi. God blessed her and made her the great grandmother of King David and even an ancestor of Jesus Christ. David conquered the land of Moab, and it was part of Solomon's empire. After the disruption of the kingdom it remained under the control of the northern kingdom until its revolt after the death of Ahab (2 Kings 1:1). 2 Kings 3 tells of an unsuccessful attempt to reconquer Moab, in which the king of Judah joined forces with the king of Israel. Moab