

Chapter 4

IV. **Resolution:** Boaz legally establishes marriage for Ruth through covenant obedience.¹¹⁴

A. **Covenant Action:** Boaz first presents the case of Naomi's land to the nearer relative and to the elders at the gate of the city (4:1-4a).

4:1 Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, "Turn aside, friend, sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. 2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. 3 Then he said to the closest relative, "Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has¹¹⁵ to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother¹¹⁶ Elimelech. 4 "So I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy *it* before those who are sitting *here*, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem *it*, redeem *it*; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem *it*, and I am after you.'"¹¹⁷ And he said, "I will redeem *it*."¹¹⁸

B. **Covenant Reaction:** The nearer relative acts to repurchase the land of Naomi's (selfishly) to keep it in the family (4:4b).¹¹⁹

C. **Covenant Action:** Boaz informs him of the additional requirement of the covenant to bring up children to Mahlon by Ruth (4:5).¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ This section is marked out by Boaz' covenant response to find a husband for Ruth.

¹¹⁵ This is a *qal* perfect, which is difficult to translate, but likely implies that she holds the right of the land. However, I would suggest that it should be translated a past perfect, thus stating that Naomi has had to sell the land.

¹¹⁶ This may imply that Boaz and this unnamed *goel* were actual brothers of Elimelech, making Boaz Naomi's brother-in-law.

¹¹⁷ This was explicit within the covenant of Leviticus 25 that the *goel* was to repurchase a field lost through financial woe.

¹¹⁸ Thus, the *goel* here is willing to fulfill his obligation under the covenant. However at this point it does place the land back into the family. Whether he had to restore it to Naomi personally is a question, since his repossession kept it in the family generally. However, even if he did restore it to her, it would become his on her death since there was no heir.

¹¹⁹ The nearer kinsman acts to repurchase the land according to Lev. 25:25.

¹²⁰ The nearer kinsman was eager to obey the covenant when it benefited him, but uneager when it required a sacrifice. He was to marry her according to Deut. 25:5-10. The

4:5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire¹²¹ Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name¹²² of the deceased on his inheritance."

- D. **Non-covenant Reaction:** The nearer relative greedily rejects covenant requirements, rejecting the land and Ruth as wife based on the dilution of his own inheritance (4:6).
- E. **Narrator's Cov. Exp.:** Removing the sandal was the manner of attestation that the redemption right had been given to another (4:7).
- F. **Covenant Reaction:** The nearer relative removes his sandal (4:8).
- G. **Covenant Action:** Boaz calls the witnesses that he has acquired the field and Ruth (4:9-10).

Levirate marriage was a means of bringing up seed to the deceased man. However, the kinsman-redeemer act was to preserve the family's (at times the deceased) land. If the deceased had no children then on the widow's death the land would pass to the brother. Thus for the brother to bring up seed to his deceased brother meant that he would not inherit the land, but the child would. In addition, the child may also be considered his own and share in the inheritance of his sons. Thus the Levirate marriage was a sacrificial consideration for the Levir on behalf of the widow. This appears to be the difficulty of Onan in Genesis 38:9.

¹²¹ It is at this point that Boaz connects the *goel* of Leviticus 25 with Deuteronomy 25 and the Levirate marriage, just as Ruth appears to do in chapter 3 at the threshing-floor. The willingness to purchase the field according to covenant established him as a member of the family by his own admission, and thus seed for the continuance of the line and the inheritance would be sourced from the same covenant provider.

¹²² There is always the question as to how Boaz qualified as a Levir since he was, at closest, the uncle (by law) of Ruth and would have been the brother-in-law of Naomi. However, if one goes back to the story of Judah and Tamar (and granted this may not be the best example of the Levirate marriage) on which this story bears very close parallels, Judah provided the seed for his daughter-in-law, which did fulfill the requirement. The contrast to this story is Lot and his daughters, who are provided seed through their own father (incest) and not from their husband's seed. However, Naomi as a childless widow would have qualified for a Levir as well, and Boaz and his brother were qualifiers. So if Ruth is standing in for Naomi then she is bringing up a child to Naomi. Thus follows the assessment by the women of Bethlehem that Naomi has a child.

- H. **Covenant Reaction:** The elders and witnesses witness and ask a blessing on Boaz to produce progeny to the line of Jacob (4:11-12).¹²³

¹¹ And all the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, "*We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem.*"
¹² "Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the LORD shall give you by this young woman."

Note here the mention of Perez and Tamar.

- V. **Relief:** Boaz and Ruth provide covenant blessing of the womb to Naomi, but the deliverance of mankind is provided through Ruth (4:13-22).¹²⁴
- A. **Covenant Blessing:** Boaz marries Ruth, and the Lord blesses them with a child (4:13).¹²⁵
- B. **Covenant Response:** Women respond that Naomi has been blessed by the Lord through Ruth (whom she sought to send away) (4:14-15).
- C. **Response of Naomi:** Enjoys blessing of child (4:16).
- D. **Covenant Response:** Women recognize Naomi's womb has been blessed and thus she has Seed through her husband and Ruth and Boaz (4:16a).

¹²³ The reference here to Tamar, Perez and Judah bears great similarity to this story. Tamar was widowed and Judah was to send one of his sons to her as a husband, but was reluctant to follow up on the responsibility. Tamar then tricked Judah into it, and she bore Perez. It was very similar since the Levirate marriage allowed the Davidic (and Messianic) line to continue in both cases. Also the restriction of marrying outside the family is very prominent in both. In neither case is the brother ultimately the Levir.

¹²⁴ This section is marked out by the result of the covenant obedience. Not only children are provided but ultimately the seed of the woman. Note that Naomi receives progeny through Boaz and Ruth and their covenant obedience. What Naomi had lost at the beginning, YHWH had provided at the end. But not only that, had Naomi's common sense plans been successful she would never have received the immensely greater blessing that YHWH brought about.

¹²⁵ When Boaz fulfills the marital responsibility he is responding to the covenant. This was the requirement, to raise children. This is not implying romance, but covenant responsibility.

- E. **Conclusion:** The blessing of the womb through Ruth through Boaz to Naomi is David the king (4:17b-22) a blessing far beyond a simple child.¹²⁶

Note here the genealogy begins with Tamar!

NOTE: This genealogy goes back to Perez by Tamar and Judah, exactly where Genesis left it. It goes to David where 1 Samuel 17 will again pick up the Seed line. The point of the book is that God is guiding this Seed line through a disobedient time, that of the Judges.

¹²⁶ The ultimate blessing of this covenant obedience of Ruth and Boaz is the provision of ultimate blessing of David the King, the forerunner of the ultimate Seed of the Woman, Christ. David is the greatest of the Old Testament Covenant means of blessing to the nation (as Boaz had been to Naomi). Ultimately Jesus will be that Covenant-Blessor to all Israel to all nations.

APPENDIX I“Repent” or “Return”¹²⁷

שׁוּב (“return” or “turn”)

Deut. 30:1-6

30:1 "So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you return them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, 2 and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, 3 then the LORD your God will return you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. 4 "If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. 5 "And the LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

Ruth

- 1:6 Then she arose to RETURN from the land of Moab
 1:7 So she departed . . . and they went on the way to RETURN to the land of Judah.
 1:8 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, RETURN each of you to her mother’s house”
 1:10 And they said to her, “But we will surely RETURN with you to your people”
 1:11 But Naomi said, "RETURN, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?
 1:12 "RETURN, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons,
 1:15 Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has RETURNED to her people and her gods; RETURN after your sister-in-law."
 1:16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you *or* RETURN back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.
 1:21 "I went out full, but the LORD has RETURNED me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

¹²⁷ Refer to a thorough discussion of the use of this Hebrew word throughout the Old Testament into the Greek of the New Testament, based on its use in Deuteronomy 30:1-9. “Repentance in Acts based on Deuteronomy 30:1-6,” in Michigan Theological Journal. It can be accessed at www.TheBiblicalStory.org, “Resources,” “Articles.”

- 1:22 So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who **RETURNED** from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.
- 2:6 And the servant in charge of the reapers answered and said, "She is the young Moabite woman who **RETURNED** with Naomi from the land of Moab.
- 4:3 Then he said to the closest relative, "Naomi, who has **RETURNED** from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.

Summary

Naomi, here ignorant of the cause of her plight, and continuing in her search for her blessing, moves physically in tune with the covenant exhortation to "return". Of course, the literary indication is she is not returning in any spiritual sense of repentance but only physically. Her lack of understanding of the covenant word is clear as she exhorts her daughters to "return" to other gods. In a strong contrast, two pagan women actually argue using the covenant word.

APPENDIX II

The Levirate Marriage

1. Does the Levirate marriage require that the brother is single?

There does not appear to be an explicit requirement that the Levir be single. However, there is no example of a Levir who is married at the time when he performs his function with his sister-in-law. The cases that are known are Judah; who the text makes clear was a widower at the time of his relationship with Tamar, Boaz; who goes through a wedding ceremony and it lacks any mention of any conflicting wife (although that would not make it conclusive). The nearer kinsman does appear to have children (since he is worried about his inheritance, which probably indicates his children's interests, although not necessarily), indicating a marriage at some time. However, since these men (Boaz and the nearer kinsman) appear to be of Naomi's age; the death of the spouse would not be a rare thing.

Another example of this issue is Jesus confrontation by the Sadducees in the synoptic gospels. They confront Him with the issue of a woman who has seven husbands who repeatedly die. They are, in sequence, fulfilling the Levirate marriage. The question is posed as to whose wife she would be in the resurrection.