

Ruth 1:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

Analysis

And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

Naomi responds to their protest by presenting harsh reality. "Turn again" (shovnah, שׁוּבָנָה) repeats the verb from verse 8—she insists they return to Moab. The rhetorical question "why will ye go with me?" (lammah telekhnah immi, לָמָּה תֵּלַכְנָה עִמִּי) challenges their decision as irrational. Naomi sees no practical benefit for them in accompanying her.

The question "are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?" references the levirate marriage custom (Deuteronomy 25:5-10), where a deceased man's brother marries the widow to provide an heir for the deceased. The Hebrew idiom literally asks, "Are there still sons in my womb?" The obvious answer is no—Naomi is beyond childbearing years, her husband is dead, and even if she remarried and bore sons, the time lag would make this solution absurd (v. 12-13).

Naomi's logic is impeccably practical but spiritually deficient. She calculates based purely on human resources and visible circumstances, ignoring God's ability to provide beyond levirate law through other means. Her reasoning reflects the bitter perspective of verses 13 and 20-21, where she sees only divine opposition rather than divine providence. Yet this very "hopeless" situation creates the narrative space for God to work redemption through unexpected means—Boaz as kinsman-

redeemer, Ruth's initiative in gleaning, and God's sovereign orchestration of their meeting.

Historical Context

Levirate marriage (from Latin *levir*, "brother-in-law") addressed the ancient Near Eastern crisis of a man dying childless. The custom ensured the deceased's name and inheritance continued, provided for the widow, and maintained family land within the clan. Deuteronomy 25:5-10 regulated this practice in Israel, though it existed in various forms throughout the ancient Near East. The Hittite laws, Middle Assyrian laws, and practices attested in ancient Nuzi all included similar customs.

Naomi's reference to this custom reveals her traditional thinking but also her despair. Technically, levirate law applied to brothers of the deceased, not necessarily to sons born to the father after the son's death. However, Naomi uses this to illustrate the impossibility of her situation—she has no sons at all, neither living brothers of her deceased sons nor any prospect of future sons. Her argument is *ad absurdum*: even the most remote possibility (remarrying, bearing sons) is foreclosed by age and circumstance.

What Naomi doesn't yet perceive is that God's redemptive purposes transcend levirate law's mechanics. Boaz, though a relative, wasn't obligated under strict levirate law since he wasn't Mahlon or Chilion's brother. Yet the broader kinsman-redeemer principle (*goel*, גֹּאֵל) allowed him to redeem the property and marry Ruth voluntarily. God's provision often comes through unexpected means, not the exact mechanisms human logic predicts. This pattern—God working beyond expected systems—prefigures how Christ redeems those outside the covenant through grace beyond law.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. In what areas are you limiting God's provision to only the mechanisms you can imagine or calculate?
2. How does bitterness or disappointment with God's providence affect your ability to see His ongoing faithful purposes?
3. What "hopeless" circumstances in your life might actually be settings where God intends to display His redemptive creativity?

Interlinear Text

וַתֹּאמֶר	נָעֻמִּי	שׁ בָּנָה	בָּנוֹתַי	לְמָה	תֵּלַכְנָה	עִמִּי
said	And Naomi	Turn again	my daughters			
H559	H5281	H7725	H1323	H4100	H1980	H5973

הָעוֹד	לִי	בָּנִים	בְּמִעַי	וְהִיוּ	לְךָ
		with me are there yet any more sons	in my womb		
H5750	H0	H1121	H4578	H1961	H0

לְאִנָּשִׁים:

H376

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 25:5 (Parallel theme): If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.

Genesis 38:11 (Parallel theme): Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said,

Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

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