

LESSON 2: RETURN AND RELEASE

⁶Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to **return** from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food. ⁷So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to **return** to the land of Judah.

Key Word: _____ or _____.

Location: The fields of Moab

- Naomi heard a news report all the way in Moab.
- The LORD had _____ His people.
- The meaning can be as simple as to pay _____ to or _____.
- Something had changed in Judah: their _____ condition.
- The LORD gave them _____. The house of bread was full again.
- The author, based on the Pentateuch, has a strong sense of God's _____ in accordance with the covenant.

A Word (or a Few Hundred) About Providence

1. God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established. *WCF*, 3 Of God's Eternal Decree

“Thus, chastened by sore providence, Naomi seems to have been prepared by God to respond positively to the news she hears in Moab- perhaps from some passing merchant.” **Sinclair Ferguson**¹²

“The message is the same: *He will stop at nothing to bless us!* In a nutshell, that is what the providence of God really means.” **Sinclair Ferguson**¹³

¹² Ferguson, pp. 33.

¹³ Ferguson, 1985, pp. 141.

Is she repenting or simply “doing what seems right in her own eyes?”

⁸ But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, **return** each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. ⁹ The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!” Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. ¹⁰ And they said to her, “No, we will **return** with you to your people.”

Location: the road to Judah.

- Naomi wants them to return to their _____ homes.
 - Why?
 - Naomi had not _____ the Moabite gods, for she offers them the blessing of the Lord.
 - She wants Him to “_____” with them since they have dealt kindly with her.
- Genesis 12
- “*hesed*” is often used of God’s _____ love, goodness and _____.
 - There is more going on here than just a _____ across the Dead Sea and the Jordan River.

“And if Orpah and Ruth came with her, it would mean two more mouths to feed on a fixed and limited budget, two more bodies to clothe and house, all while dependent on the charity of family members.” **Iain Duguid**¹⁴

“Powerless to repay their kindness, her only recourse was to turn them over to God’s care.”
Robert Hubbard¹⁵

¹¹ But Naomi said, “**Turn back**, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? ¹² **Turn back**, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, ¹³ would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me.” ¹⁴ Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

“For Orpah and Ruth, going with Naomi would be choosing the road to nowhere, embracing the path that led to emptiness.” **Iain Duguid**¹⁶

Levirate Marriage

¹⁴ Duguid, pp. 140.

¹⁵ Hubbard, pp. 103.

¹⁶ Duguid, pp. 141.

⁵“If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. ⁷And if the man does not wish to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, ‘My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.’ ⁸Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he persists, saying, ‘I do not wish to take her,’ ⁹then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, ‘So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.’ ¹⁰And the name of his house shall be called in Israel, ‘The house of him who had his sandal pulled off.’ **Deuteronomy 25**

- This custom concerns one's inheritance of _____ which was their primary _____.
- If a married man died without an _____ (son) his wife is not to find a husband from outside the family. The closest brother or extended relative was to take her as his wife to produce an _____ for his brother.
- Since _____ was not forbidden it is unclear whether they had to be single.

“By sending Orpah and Ruth back to their gods, Naomi broke the first commandment and denied its practical application to a specific case.” **Dean Ulrich**¹⁷

- God will treat her _____ than Naomi deserves.
- Naomi recognizes the _____ of God in that “the hand of the LORD has gone out against” her. The hand of God is usually His _____ power.
- She does not _____ God's providence, but sees this instance as bitter.

Heidelberg Catechism

28. Q. What does it benefit us to know that God has created all things and still upholds them by His providence?

A. We can be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and with a view to the future we can have a firm confidence in our faithful God and Father that no creature shall separate us from His love; for all creatures are so completely in His hand that without His will they cannot so much as move.

What happens in your heart when God's providence is hard and contrary to your will?

¹⁷ Ulrich, pp. 32.

How can we foster patience in affliction, and a focus on God's goodness?

"Naomi's response was to affirm God's sovereignty but not his goodness." **Dean Ulrich**¹⁸

"Christians may experience the effects of living in a fallen world; they may undergo the refining discipline of a loving Father; but nothing can reverse the justification that God has declared on the strength of Christ's active obedience and his passive obedience." **Dean Ulrich**¹⁹

¹⁸ Ulrich, pp. 26.

¹⁹ Ulrich, pp. 35.