

Naomi Returns Lamenting

Ruth 1:19-22

Chapter 1 is Act I of Ruth's Story in Three Scenes:

Scene 1: Elimelech moves his family from Judah to Moab: 1:1-5

Scene 2: Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth Set Out for Moab: 1:6-18

A. Yahweh intervenes in and superintends human affairs:
v. 6

B. Yahweh rewards covenant faithfulness: vv.8-9

C. Yahweh determines destinies: vv. 13, 20-21

Scene 3: Naomi and Ruth Arrive in Bethlehem: 1:19-22

Naomi Comes Home

"The whole town was stirred because of them"

"Is this Naomi?" Life has taken its toll.

Naomi's Lament: Her Fourth Speech

There has been nothing but silence between Naomi and Ruth on the 80 mile journey from Moab to Bethlehem. Arriving in the city, returning to familiar surroundings, to old friends, seeing the places where no doubt she had previously been accompanied by Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion, Naomi bursts into lament.

This is no joyous homecoming for her. It is a stark reminder of all that she has lost and of her new status. No longer the wife of Elimelech, she is now Naomi the Widow.

"Do not call me pleasant; call me Bitter"

Naomi puts God in the dock and lays the blame for her circumstances squarely on God Almighty:

Until v. 20 it has been "the LORD" – Jehovah
In verse 20 she introduces the name of God as "Almighty"

- *"the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me" v. 20*
- *"the LORD has brought me home again empty" v. 21*
- *"the LORD has testified against me" v. 21b*
- *"the Almighty has afflicted me" v. 21c*

“The Almighty” El Shaddai / associated with God’s cosmic rulership; he dispenses blessings, promises great destinies, and assigns fates to the wicked and the righteous; he metes out terrible punishments:

“The Lord”

- *“has brought me back empty”* (v. 21)
 - But has Naomi really come back empty? Standing in the shadows of Naomi’s bitterness is Ruth! Ruth will meet Boaz and through them God gives Obed who will father King David.
 - Is there a Ruth standing in the shadows of your own bitterness?

- *“has testified against me”*
 - Naomi borrows this phrase from Israelite law
 - With this phrase, Naomi portrays herself as a defendant in a legal action who has already been found guilty and punished (the loss of her husband and children), but who knows neither the charges nor the testimony against her
 - The phrase evokes Job

Ruth stands open and honest before God in her suffering. When life has taken its toll, we must be honest with God:

1. Recognize that we receive good at the hand of God as well as bad things (Job 2:10)
2. The bitter providences of God in our lives are used by the Spirit of God to create repentance, dependence, and patience – yet not all of the bad things that happen to us are God’s punishments for our sinful actions. In fact, most of God’s bitter providences are intended by Him to cause us to trust ourselves and those we love to his tender care.
3. We do not see what is yet to come. Wait on the Lord.
 - a. Naomi needed another verse from her future offspring, David:
 - i. “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.” Psalm 27:14
 - ii. “I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.” Psalm 40:1-3
 - iii. Isaiah 40