

LEVIRATE MARRIAGE

The name levirate is derived from the Latin word, levir, referring to a husband's brother. **Genesis 38** is one of three major passages on Levirate Marriage (**Deut.25:5-10 and Book of Ruth**). Today's lesson is taken from Gen.38:6-11, the family of Judah, and the lineage of Jesus Christ. (Matt.1:3-5 covers these messianic lineages)

Today's lesson will study three aspects of Levirate Marriage within the family of Judah.

1. The Mosaic Law taught six important legal factors of Levirate Marriage (Deut.25:5-10; Lev.25:48; Ruth 4:1-15; Lev.25:23-28).

1st – Legal status of Levirate widow.

(Deut.25:5a) "If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family."

2nd - Duty of Goel brother-in-law.

(Deut.25:5b) "Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her."

3rd – First son of Levirate marriage kept the deceased name from being blotted out of Israel.

(Deut.25:6) "The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel."

4th – Widow's legal rights and consequent to a Goel who failed in this duty.

(Deut.25:7-10) "However, if a man does not want to marry his brother's wife, she shall go to the elders at the town gate and say, "My husband's brother refuses to carry on his brother's name in Israel. He will not fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to me." Then the elders of his town shall summon him and talk to him. If he persists in saying, "I do not want to marry her," his brother's widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, "This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother's family line." That man's line shall be known in Israel as The Family of the Unsandaled."

5th – Legal circle of Goel redeemers (uncles and cousins of family) (Ruth 2:20; 3:12; 4:1-10).

(Lev.25:48) "they retain the right of redemption after they have sold themselves. One of their relatives may redeem them:"

6th – property and debt and assets of widow's estate.

(Ruth 4:1-15) Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat down there just as the guardian-redeemer^[a] he had mentioned came along. Boaz said, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down." So, he went over and sat down. Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, "Sit here," and they did so. Then he said to the guardian-redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelek. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line." "I will redeem it," he said. Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the^[c] dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property." At this, the guardian-redeemer said, "Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it." (Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.) So, the guardian-

redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it yourself.” And he removed his sandal. Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, “Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. **I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon’s widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!**” Then the elders and all the people at the gate said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. Through the offspring, the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.” So, Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The women said to Naomi: “Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.”

(Lev.25:23-28) “The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers. Throughout the land that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land. “If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem what they have sold. If, however, there is no one to redeem it for them but later on they prosper and acquire sufficient means to redeem it themselves, they are to determine the value for the years since they sold it and refund the balance to the one to whom they sold it; they can then go back to their own property. But if they do not acquire the means to repay, what was sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and they can then go back to their property.”

2. Every male in the family of Judah will be affected by the Levirate marriage to Tamar (Er, Onan, Shelah, and Judah).

- **Er** married Tamar and refused to advance the messianic lineage and died the sin unto death (Gen.38:6-7).
- **Onan** married Tamar under Levirate marriage but would not consummate the marriage for messianic lineage and died the sin unto death (Gen.38:8-10).
- **Shelah** was not of age but was promised to Tamar for Levirate marriage. But Judah out of fear refused to confirm Levirate marriage (Gen.38:11).
- During this time Shua, wife of Judah, died, putting Judah in the circle of the redeemers for Levirate marriage (Gen.38:12-14).

3. Sadducees used the levirate marriage in an attempt to attack the doctrine of the resurrection and discredit Jesus as a teacher of Scriptures (Matt.22:23-33).

(Matt.22:23-28) long and loaded question - note the bracketed statement –
 (Matt.22:29) mistaken doctrinally
 (Matt.22:30) marriage
 (Matt.22:31) message
 (Matt.22:32) mistaken doctrinally - note the question in vs.32
 (Matt.22:33) multitude astonished at His teaching (sheep without a shepherd)
 (Matt.2:6; 9:36-38; 1 Pet.2:25)

(Job 19:25) “As for me, I know that **my redeemer (Goel)** lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth.”

(Ps.19:14) “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, **my Rock and my Redeemer (Goel).**”