

Veritas Class
Covenant Righteousness for the Glory of God
September 27, 2015
Deuteronomy 25:5–10

Maintaining Righteousness in Social and Economic Relationships (24:6–25:16)

A. Righteousness in the Face of Shameful Male Behavior (25:5–10)

1. Introduction:

Levirate Marriage Texts in the Bible: Genesis 38; Deuteronomy 25:5–12; Ruth 3–4

2. Exposition

a. The Principle Case (vv. 5–6)

- (1) The Problem (v. 5a)
- (2) The Prohibition (v. 5b)
- (3) The Prescription (vv. 5c–6a)
- (4) The Purpose (v. 6b)

b. The Corollary Case: What to Do with a Shameless Relative (vv. 7–10)

- (1) The Problem (v. 7)
- (2) The Prescription (vv. 8–9)
 - (a) The Role of the Elders (vv. 8–9a)
 - They authorize the bereaved widow to appear before them at the gate of the community and to present her complaint (v. 7b).
 - They summon the *yābām* and speak to him (v. 8a).
 - They give the *yābām* an opportunity to speak for himself (v. 8b).
 - They authorize the bereaved widow to humiliate the *yābām* publicly (v. 9a)
 - (b) The Ritual of the Bereaved Woman (vv. 9b–10)
 - The widow removes a sandal from the foot of the *yābām* (v. 9b).
 - The widow spits in the face of the *yābām* (v. 9b).
 - The woman interprets her action (v. 9c).
 - (c) The Result of the Action (v. 10)

B. Righteousness in the Face of Shameful Female Behavior (25:11–12)

Table 1: A Synopsis of Levirate Marriage Texts

Feature	Genesis 38	Deuteronomy 25:5–10	Ruth 4:1–13
Married Parties	Er and Tamar	A brother and his wife	Mahlon and Ruth
Cause of Death	Slain by Yahweh for his wickedness	Unspecified	Death in Moab-cause unspecified
Initiator of the Action	Judah—Widow's father-in-law	Brother's widow (<i>yēbāmā</i>)	Wife of the deceased (<i>'ēšet hammēt</i> , 3:9–13; cf. <i>yābemet</i> in 1:15)
Designation of Levir	By name: Onan the brother (<i>'āḥ</i>)	The levir <i>yābām</i> , <i>'āḥ</i>	<i>gō'ēl</i> , “kinsman redeemer”
Required Action	v. 8 And perform the duty of a <i>yābām</i> with her	v. 5 Her <i>yābām</i> shall go in to her And take her for his wife And perform the duty of a <i>yābām</i>	v. 5 You must acquire Ruth the Moabite the wife of the deceased. v. 10 And also Ruth the Moabite the wife of Mahlon I have acquired to be my wife.
Declared Purpose	v. 8 And raise up seed for your brother. v. 9 To give seed to his brother.	v. 6 To rise on the name of his deceased brother. v. 7 To establish for his brother a name in Israel. v. 9 To build the house of his brother.	v. 5 To establish the name of the deceased on his patrimony. v. 10 To establish the name of the deceased on his patrimony that the name of the deceased may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his home [town].
Action taken by the Women	When Judah fails to have Shelah serve as <i>yābām</i> , Tamar tricks her father-in-law into fulfilling this role.	When the brother fails to serve as <i>yābām</i> the widow may expose and shame him publicly before the elders.	When Boaz fails to recognize his duty as <i>gō'ēl</i> Naomi and Ruth scheme to alert him to his role. As a willing <i>gō'ēl</i> he then deals with the unwilling primary <i>gō'ēl</i> .
Response of Levir	v. 9 He wasted [his semen] on the ground.	v. 7 If the man prefers not/refuses to take his brother's widow.	v. 6 He says “I am unable to redeem for myself.”
Tone of the Proceedings	Conniving	Adversarial	Friendly
Participants in the proceedings	Tamar, Judah	Elders, brother-in-law, widow.	Elders, primary <i>gō'ēl</i> , secondary <i>gō'ēl</i> , other witnesses.
Initiator of the proceedings	Widow (<i>'almānāh</i>), feigning role of prostitute.	A widow (<i>yēbāmā</i>) whose husband has died with an heir.	A secondary <i>gō'ēl</i> who seeks to acquire the right to redeem a Moabite widow and preserve the patrimony of a relative.
Expression for the removal of the sandal	[The pledge of signet, cord, and staff, kept by the widow to prove paternity.]	Remove a sandal (<i>ḥālaš na'al</i>)	Slip off a sandal (<i>šālap na'al</i>)
Subject of the action	The widow	The widow (<i>yēbāmā</i>).	The primary <i>gō'ēl</i> .
Claimant to the sandal	The widow	The widow (<i>yēbāmā</i>).	The secondary <i>gō'ēl</i> .
Accompanying verbal utterance	She said, “What will you give me, that you may come in to me?” He answered, “I will send you a young goat from the flock.” And she said, “If you give me a pledge, until you send it—” He said, “What pledge shall I give you?” She replied, “Your signet and your cord and your staff that is in your hand.”	“This is how a man who refuses to build up the household of his brother is to be treated.”	“Acquire [the estate] for yourself.”
Purpose of the action	To confirm paternity	To humiliate the <i>yābām</i> .	To transfer the privileges and responsibilities of a <i>gō'ēl</i> from one claimant to another.