

There Is A Redeemer (Ruth 3-4) – May 18, 2025

Background

Let's recap:

Elimelech, and wife, Naomi, are from Bethlehem (west of the Dead Sea). During the time of a famine, Elimelech takes his wife and two sons, Mahlon, and Chilion, and travels over to Moab (east of the south end of the Dead Sea). Elimelech died, leaving a widow with two sons. The sons married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. Ten years later, both sons die, reducing this family to a collection of three widows. Naomi tells her daughters-in-law to go home to their families; after much discussion, Orpah does, but Ruth chooses to stick with her mother-in-law. Then Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem. While they are about to starve, Boaz, a relative of Naomi's dead husband, allows them to glean in his fields.

In some regards, "Ruth" is a typical story of a poor family in crisis, during the time of the Judges, when Israel did not have a king. Each person was doing what was right in his own eyes (not much good is going on).

The "land" that was sold was probably Elimelech's interest in a community field or pasture. Inheritance generally went from father to oldest son, or successively younger sons, then to daughters, oldest first, but not to widows.

Why was Naomi involved in selling this land?

(Probably on behalf of her oldest son, Mahlon.)

Who takes care of the old people? _____

Without male children, who would have taken care of the three widows?

Pertinent Laws:

A. Redemption of Property – Read Leviticus 25:25-28

When is Jubilee? _____

B. Mixed Marriage – Discussed in Deuteronomy 7:3 and Ezra 9:1-5.

(Your notes): _____

In the story of Ruth, who broke this rule? _____

C. Levirate Marriage

Based on the Latin word “levir” = brother-in-law

Read the definition in **Deuteronomy 25:5-6.**

By tradition, the first son of a levirate marriage was considered the son and heir of the dead husband; all further children were heirs of the new husband. (Remember the Sadducees questioning Jesus in Mark 12 about whose wife would a woman be in heaven after being passed through 7 brothers?)

What is the purpose of Levirate Marriage? _____

This was optional and not a requirement of the dead man’s brother. But, if the brother refused to take in the widow, then the widow could go to the city gate (center of commerce and activity) and call him out before the city elders and humiliate him in public.

D. Kinsman-Redeemer

- After conquering the Promised Land under Joshua, the land was allocated to tribes, clans and families.

- The land belonged to Yahweh, so the people “owned” the land as leaseholders, but could not permanently sell any part of their allotment, as could a freeholder. Read **Leviticus 25:23-28**.

Can one Jewish male purchase land from another and possess it forever? _____
So, in the worst case, the land would revert to the original “leaseholder” in the year of Jubilee.

Naomi’s Plan

With these rules and laws in mind, Naomi knew that she and Ruth desperately needed Boaz’ protection. So, here’s what she planned – read **Ruth 3:1-6**.

To our “western” minds, this would seem “forward” and immoral. But, not so in their culture. It is important to remember the Jewish law about property redemption, and rules for levirate marriage.

Verse 9 is a humble appeal to Boaz (from his “maidservant”) to marry her and share his protection over her and Naomi. Boaz fully understands the situation and its implications. Boaz commends Ruth for her kindness (“*hesed*”, term often used for covenant-love and faithfulness of Yahweh for His people)¹. Boaz is not the closest kin, but because of his good character, he promises to help, and Naomi knows he will do so quickly.

Who will redeem? _____

This transaction takes place at the gate of the city. “The gate” was the center of city life in these early communities, socially and economically, because the towns were small, tight, and closely confined, so there was little room internally.

I Kings 22:10

Dressed in their royal robes, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them.

Deuteronomy 22:15

¹ Jackman, p. 348.

then the young woman's father and mother shall bring to the town elders at the gate proof that she was a virgin.

What do you think were the family relationships between Naomi and Boaz, and Naomi and the kinsman? _____

Why did Boaz call on 10 elders? _____

Why do you think the kinsman refused to make the redemption?

Interesting points:

- That this “kinsman” was so interested in preserving his own heritage, yet his name is lost in history.
- Boaz points out that Ruth was the widow of Mahlon, the eldest son, presumably to justify the levirate marriage.

Boaz Fulfills Redemption

Also interesting, the fact that the story includes, “Now this was the custom...” implying that this was written long after it occurred and the audience needed an explanation of how the procedure used to work. And the custom was, since there was virtually no written documentation at that time, that a shoe was passed to the person favored by the transaction, in front of witnesses, to “seal the deal.”

(v. 9) Another point is that Boaz tied together the redemption of the land with acquiring rights to everything owned and owed to the two sons. This was not a requirement of Boaz, nor was it the law, but the elders and the people did not dispute it.

Why did the peoples' blessing list Rachel and Leah?

Trick Question: Why did they include Perez?

Boaz & Ruth Marry

Seven sons was considered the “perfect” family.

Obed means “servant.”

Why was Obed considered a gift from God?

Ruth is Part of the Davidic Line - Ruth 4:18

This is not intended to be a complete genealogy (it only lists 4 generations from Salmon {at the fall of Jericho, 1406 BC} to David {~1010 BC}, which was closer to 400 years). It just lists some of the more significant characters. This list is repeated in Matthew 1:5-6.

Summary:

This is about God watching over His people and providing for them. A very short book, but with a lot of complexities interwoven into a simple central point. God is over all men and all things, and He brings His plans to pass.

Some of the parallels between Boaz and God:

1. Compassion toward all, not just Jews
2. Redemption of outcasts into fellowship with Himself
3. He pays the price of redemption
4. He publicly claims his own
5. He restores and sustains Naomi, even in old age, through the birth of Obed

God provided redemption (through Boaz).

God provided heritage (through the gift of a child).

Though she did not know the eventual outcome of her situation, Naomi relied on Yahweh; she “walked by faith; not by sight.”

Why is the Book of Ruth included in the Old Testament? “...it merits a whole book of the Bible, indicating that the revelation it contains is clearly strategic to our understanding of the mind and purpose of God. The necessity and provision of redemption is at the very heart of God’s plan and the plan of His heart.”²

² Jackman., p. 351.

Poem from Anna L. Waring³:

Wherever He may guide me,
No want shall turn me back;
My Shepherd is beside me,
And nothing can I lack.
His wisdom ever waketh;
His sight is never dim.
He knows the way He taketh,
And I will walk with Him.

References:

1. Cundall, Arthur E., & Morris, Leon, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Judges & Ruth, D.J. Wiseman, General Editor, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1968, pp. 296-318.
2. Harper Study Bible, RSV, Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, MI, 1971.
3. Jackman, David, Mastering The New Testament, Judges, Ruth, Lloyd Ogilvie, General Editor, Word Publishing, Dallas, TX, 1991, pp. 339-363.
4. NIV Bible, on the Internet at www.biblegateway.com

³ Jackman, p. 350.