

Introduction

Context

Elimelech and Naomi moved from Bethlehem (in Judah) to Moab because of a famine. Elimelech's sons married Moabite wives. All three men died and Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem. To provide for Naomi, Ruth gathered grain from Boaz's field. Naomi and Ruth were widows without any children. They had no one to provide for them or protect them.

Preview

Chapters 3-4 introduce the Levirate marriage, God's plan for providing heirs for men after they died through a redeemer. Boaz redeems Elimelech's inheritance and marries Ruth to provide an heir for Elimelech's family.

Purpose

The book of Ruth introduces us to David. Boaz and Ruth are the ancestors of David. The book also teaches about God's plan for redemption. Ultimately, the book prepares the way for Jesus, the son of David who eternally redeems us from sin.

Ruth's request

Naomi's plan

[Ruth 3:1-5](#) “1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? 2 Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. 3 Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do.” 5 And she replied, “All that you say I will do.””

Naomi says that she wants to seek **rest** for Ruth. That is, she does not want Ruth to remain a widow. Naomi expects Boaz to winnow barley on his threshing floor. Threshing floors were open-air surfaces where the wind would blow freely. The wind would blow away the chaff, leaving the grain.

What does Naomi tell Ruth to do when Boaz lies down? Naomi instructs Ruth to uncover Boaz's feet and lie down. *Are Ruth's actions inappropriate?* Some scholars have suggested that Ruth's actions are inappropriate and the description allows for that possibility. However, there is no other indication that this was immoral.

Ruth's proposition

[Ruth 3:6-9](#) “6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her. 7 And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. 8 At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! 9 He said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.””

Boaz slept at the threshing floor. The fact that he slept outside in a public place further suggests that there was nothing inappropriate between Boaz and Ruth. When Boaz awoke and discovered someone lying at his feet, he inquired who she was.

What did Ruth ask from Boaz (verse 9)? Ruth asked Boaz to spread his “wings” over her. The word (רַגְלָךְ) can mean wing (e.g., [Exod 19:4](#)) or corner of the garment (e.g., [1 Sam 24:5-6](#)). Boaz had previously blessed Ruth: [Ruth 2:12](#) “12 The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose **wings** you have come to take refuge!” Now, Ruth is asking Boaz to be the **means** of God’s wings over her. A common Middle East custom was claiming a wife by covering her with the skirt of the garment. In [Ezekiel 16:8](#), God describes entering into a covenant (marriage) with Israel with the same words.

What is a redeemer? The term (גֹּאֵל) refers to a next-of-kin or a redeemer. Redemption and family relationship go hand-in-hand. The redeemer would purchase the family land if it was sold. The redeemer would provide an heir through the dead relative’s widow. [Deuteronomy 25:5-6](#) “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. 6 And 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.” This is often referred to as a Levirate marriage (from the Latin *levir*, meaning brother-in-law).

Boaz's commitment

[Ruth 3:10-13](#) “10 And he said, “May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. 11 And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman. 12 And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. 13 Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the Lord lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning.””

Boaz is grateful for Ruth's interest in him. Notice that he compares her kindness to him (this last kindness) with her previous kindness (the first). This may refer to Ruth's kindness to Naomi for which Boaz had previously praised her ([Ruth 2:11](#)).

What is the one obstacle to Boaz redeeming Ruth? Boaz is willing to redeem Ruth; however, there is a closer relative. He has the first right of redemption.

[Ruth 3:14-18](#) “14 So she lay at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, “Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.” 15 And he said, “Bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out.” So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her. Then she went into the city. 16 And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, “How did you fare, my daughter?” Then she told her all that the man had done for her, 17 saying, “These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said to me, ‘You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law.’ ” 18 She replied, “Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today.””

What did Boaz send home with Ruth? Boaz sent barley (possibly six seahs) to Naomi. Just as he had provided so well for Ruth ([Ruth 2:14-16](#)), he also provides well for Naomi, who is a widow.

Boaz redeems Ruth

Land Redemption

[Ruth 4:1-2](#) “1 Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, “Turn aside, friend; sit down here.” And he turned aside and sat down. 2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down.”

Boaz went to the city (Bethlehem) and sat at the gate until the nearest relative passed by. *Who did Boaz ask to sit with him and the (unnamed) redeemer?* He asked ten elders of the city to sit with them. The elders were the city's rulers.

[Ruth 4:3-4](#) “3 Then he said to the redeemer, “Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. 4 So I thought I would tell you of it and say, ‘Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.’ If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you.” And he said, “I will redeem it.””

What did Boaz offer to the man for redemption? Initially, Boaz only mentioned the piece of land. If this man did not want to redeem the land, then Boaz would redeem it. The man

agreed to redeem the land. It was important that land stay within the family. There were a few options for how this might be handled.

[Leviticus 25:23-24](#) “23 “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me. 24 And in all the country you possess, you shall allow a redemption of the land.” The land belonged to God, not Israel. [Leviticus 25:25](#) “25 “If your brother becomes poor and sells part of his property, then his nearest redeemer shall come and redeem what his brother has sold.” If someone has to sell their land, the nearest redeemer (relative) can buy the land. [Leviticus 25:26-28](#) “26 If a man has no one to redeem it and then himself becomes prosperous and finds sufficient means to redeem it, 27 let him calculate the years since he sold it and pay back the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and then return to his property. 28 But if he does not have sufficient means to recover it, then what he sold shall remain in the hand of the buyer until the year of jubilee. In the jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his property.” If the land cannot be bought back into the family, it would automatically revert back to the family in the Year of Jubilee (every 50 years).

In [Numbers 27](#), there was a debate about what should happen to land if a man had no sons. The first son was the heir of the land. If a man had no sons, the daughter inherited the land. If he had no daughter, the brother inherited the land. If he had no brother, his uncles inherited the land. If he had no uncles, the nearest relative inherited the land ([Numb 27:8-11](#)). In [Numbers 36](#), Moses instructed that land could not transfer from one tribe to another ([Numb 36:9](#)).

Redemption of Ruth

[Ruth 4:5-6](#) “5 Then Boaz said, “The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.” 6 Then the redeemer said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.””

What aspect of the redemption was the man unwilling to commit to? The man was unwilling to marry Ruth. It **may** be that he was unwilling to marry a Moabite ([Deut 23:3-4](#)). However, the context suggests it is because of the financial burden that would come with marrying Ruth. **Notice** that verse 5 says he would have to provide an heir for the dead husband. Ruth’s firstborn son would be considered the son of Mahlon (son of Elimelech and Naomi), not the redeemer. Her firstborn son would inherit the land, not the redeemer’s children. **Notice** that he says it would harm his own inheritance. The redeemer would take money from his own heirs to purchase the land which would transfer to Mahlon’s heir.

Boaz becomes the redeemer

[Ruth 4:7-10](#) “7 Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other,

and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. 8 So when the redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself,” he drew off his sandal. 9 Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. 10 Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.””

What all did Boaz commit to redeem? Boaz committed to redeem all that belonged to Elimelech, which would pass to Chilion and Mahlon (his sons). He also committed to redeem Ruth, Mahlon’s widow.

Notice that he redeemed Ruth “to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off ...” ([Ruth 4:10](#)). Ruth’s first son would be Mahlon’s son. Remember how Naomi had described Boaz’s kindness to her and Ruth. [Ruth 2:20](#) “20 And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the **dead!**” Naomi also said to her, “The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.””

[Ruth 4:11-12](#) “11 Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, “We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, 12 and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman.””

To what matriarchs did the elders compare Ruth? Rachel and Leah were the wives of Jacob (Israel). They, with the help of their female servants, literally built the house of Israel. The elders were expressing their prayer that God would bless Boaz through Ruth, just as he had blessed Jacob through Rachel and Leah with a nation of descendants. Ultimately, the blessing is that Ruth would provide an heir for Mahlon **and** Boaz.

To whose household do they compare Boaz’s household? The elders pray that Boaz’s house might be like the house of Perez, the son of Judah and Tamar. This was a fitting comparison for two reasons. First, Boaz was a descendent of Perez ([Ruth 4:18-22](#)).

Second, Boaz and Ruth were a similar situation to Judah and Tamar, except Boaz acted more faithfully than Judah. Judah had a son, named Er, who married Tamar ([Gen 38:6](#)). Er was wicked; therefore, the Lord killed him ([Gen 38:7](#)). Judah told his second son, Onan, to take Tamar as his wife and provide a son for Er ([Gen 38:8](#)). Onan did not want his son to be Er’s heir, so he refused to provide Tamar with a child ([Gen 38:9](#)). The Lord killed Onan ([Gen 38:10](#)). Judah had a younger son, named Shelah. He told Tamar to remain a widow until Shelah was older and could marry ([Gen 38:11](#)).

Shelah grew up, but Judah did not keep his word to Tamar ([Gen 38:14](#)). When Judah visited her town, Tamar covered her face. Judah thought she was a prostitute and had sex with her. Tamar gave birth to twin sons, Perez and Zerah ([Gen 38:27-30](#)).

Ruth's children

[Ruth 4:13-16](#) “13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. 14 Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! 15 He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.” 16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse.”

How did the Lord bless Naomi? The Lord restored life to Naomi. He provided a son to care for her in her old age. He provided a redeemer for her family

[Ruth 4:17-22](#) “17 And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. 18 Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, 19 Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, 20 Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, 21 Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, 22 Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.”

What king descended from Obed? David descended from Obed, through Jesse. *Who descended from David?* Jesus descended from David. [Matthew 1:1-6](#) “1 The book of the genealogy of **Jesus** Christ, the son of **David**, the son of Abraham. 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, 3 and **Judah** the father of **Perez** and Zerah by **Tamar**, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, 4 and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, 5 and Salmon the father of **Boaz** by **Rahab**, and Boaz the father of **Obed** by **Ruth**, and Obed the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse the father of **David** the king ...”

Redemption

The New Testament teaches a different kind of redemption through Jesus. Redemption in the Old Testament was release from slavery or poverty. Jesus's death redeems us from eternal matters and redeems us eternally.

What is the price of our redemption? [Romans 3:23-25](#) “23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over

former sins.” [1 Peter 1:18-19](#) “18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.” [Mark 10:45](#) “45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”” [Acts 20:28](#) “28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”

From what are we redeemed? [Colossians 1:14](#) “14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” [Ephesians 1:7](#) “7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,” [Titus 2:14](#) “14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

What is the extent of our redemption? [Hebrews 9:11-12](#) “11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.”

We have a better covenant in Christ. By His blood, He **eternally** redeemed us from sin and death.