



Ruth, Chapter 4:1-6

“Redeem it yourself?”

Timeline of Ruth So far

A family moves from Bethlehem to Moab (Famine to Respite.) This is seen by the narrator with a critical eye. After 10 or more years of tragedy, the family moves back from Moab to Bethlehem (From death to hope)... "The arrived at the beginning o the barley harvest."

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4:1-6

The women take matters into their own hands. The plan to uncover is presented to Ruth. Boaz reveals to Ruth that the right to redeem belongs to someone else. She spends the night at the threshing floor. Boaz provides for Naomi and promises marriage to Ruth but demands secrecy about the midnight meeting.

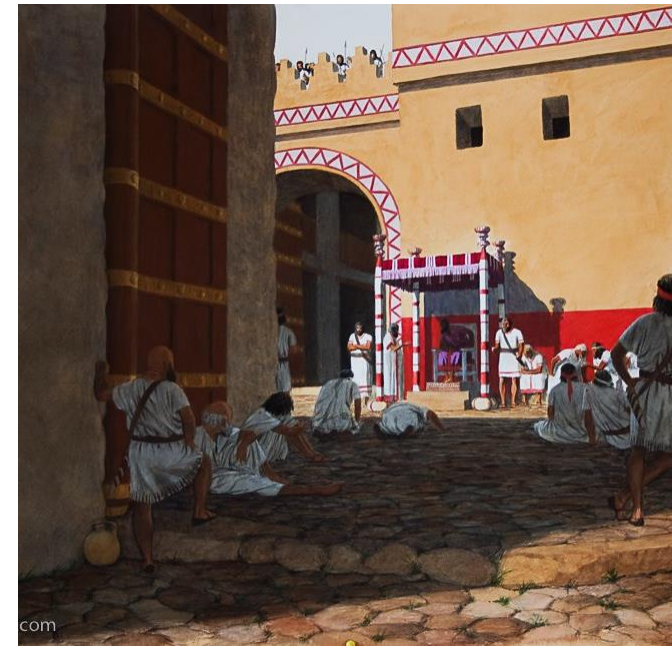
Ruth begins to work in the fields during the barley harvest. She meets Boaz who blesses her (Chesed) with special treatment. Naomi Introduces Boaz as a Go'el. Boaz seems to be interested in Ruth, but the chapter ends without a sense of resolution. Ruth goes back to live with her mother-in-law.

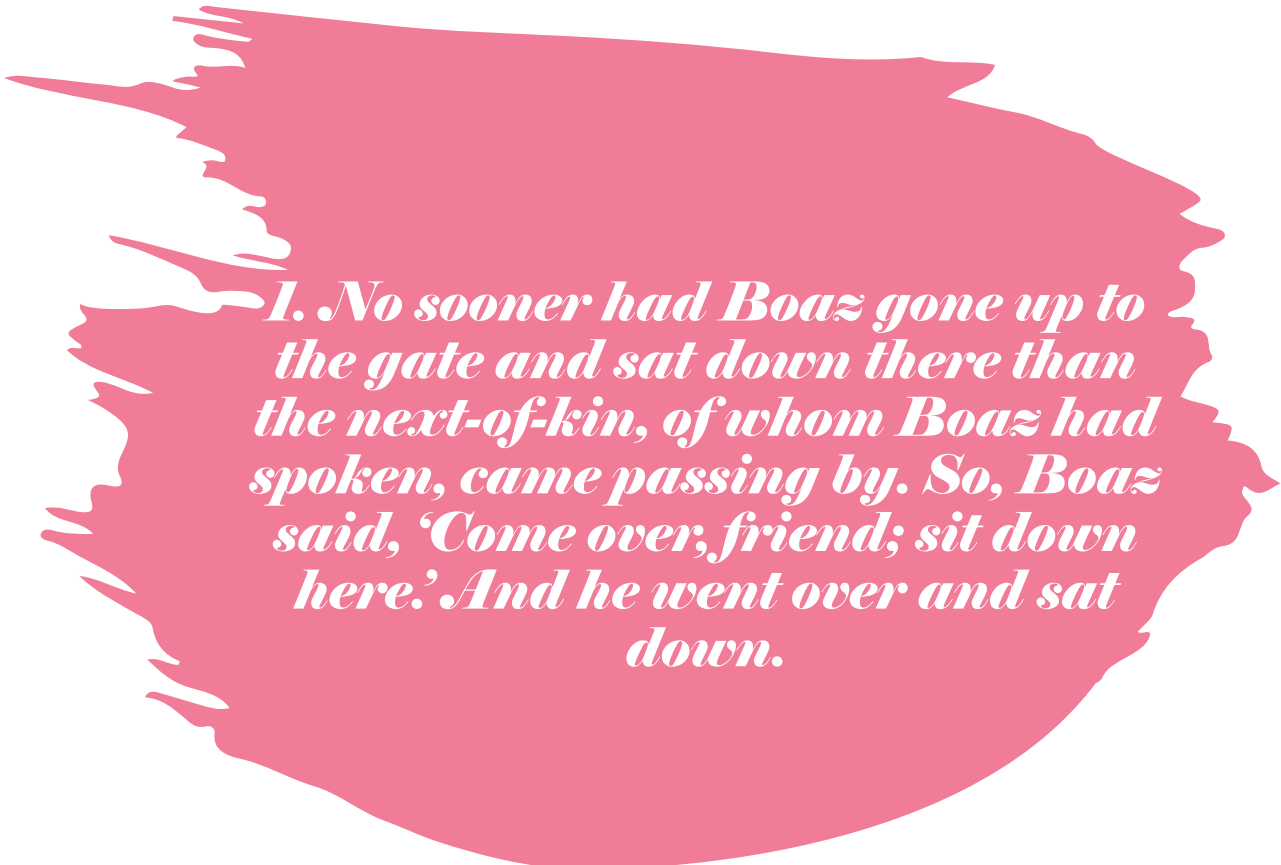
The negotiation between the kinsman redeemer and Boaz takes place. Boaz plan's is to demand care for the widow in an "all or nothing" strategy. This is a risky proposition, fraught with risk and possibilities.

Opening Prayer

Dear Lord, we have seen your providential hand throughout the entire book of Ruth. Providentially, you led Ruth to glean in Boaz's land. Providentially, you caused the next-of-kin to be passing the gate of the city as Boaz arrived to it. Providentially, you gave Boaz the right of redemption and provided for Ruth a suitable husband. Providentially, through this union you fulfilled your promise to Abraham (Genesis 17:6) that he would be exceedingly fruitful; that many nations would come from him; and that he would be the ancestor of kings. As in Ruth's life, we know your providential hand is active in our lives. We know that you are in charge and that you bless the lives of the faithful. Be with us today as we approach a conclusion to Ruth and help us to discern your will for our lives in this story of blessing and faithfulness. In Jesus' name we pray, amen!

Ruth 4:1-6





1. No sooner had Boaz gone up to the gate and sat down there than the next-of-kin, of whom Boaz had spoken, came passing by. So, Boaz said, 'Come over, friend; sit down here.' And he went over and sat down.

1. After a night in the threshing floor, Boaz accepts Ruth's request to marry her if her next of kin allows it.
2. He immediately made arrangements for the legal resolution of the issue. And, as the women "sit patiently to wait," Boaz approaches the city gate. The place where these types of issues are resolved.
3. By now the reader knows that nothing in this book happens by chance. The author wants the reader to see the hand of God at work when the next-of-kin happens to pass by the gate where Boaz has sat down.
4. Providentially, Boaz will have an assortment of credible elders to witness the whole interaction.
5. Providentially, as well, the meeting will go in accordance with Boaz's wishes.



Ploni' Almoni

Mr. So-and-So

Archeological digs have revealed that the gate area of most Israelite towns included a courtyard lined with benches. Many business transactions, including the settling of disputes, were conducted in this area, with townspeople acting as witnesses or as the jury. Boaz is in effect convening a court of law (NIB.)

The episode does not give us the name of the next-of-kin, a gesture that indicates he was not worthy of the respect given to a name, perhaps because he refused to honor the law.

“Doubtless Boaz both knew his name, and called him by it; but it is omitted by the holy writer, partly because it was unnecessary to know it; and principally in way of contempt, as is usual, and a just punishment upon him, that he who would not preserve his brother’s name might lose his own, and lie buried in the grave of perpetual oblivion.” (Poole)

The Medieval Rabbi Rashi explains, “his name is not written because he was not willing to redeem.” (NIB)

The expression literally means , “so and so.”

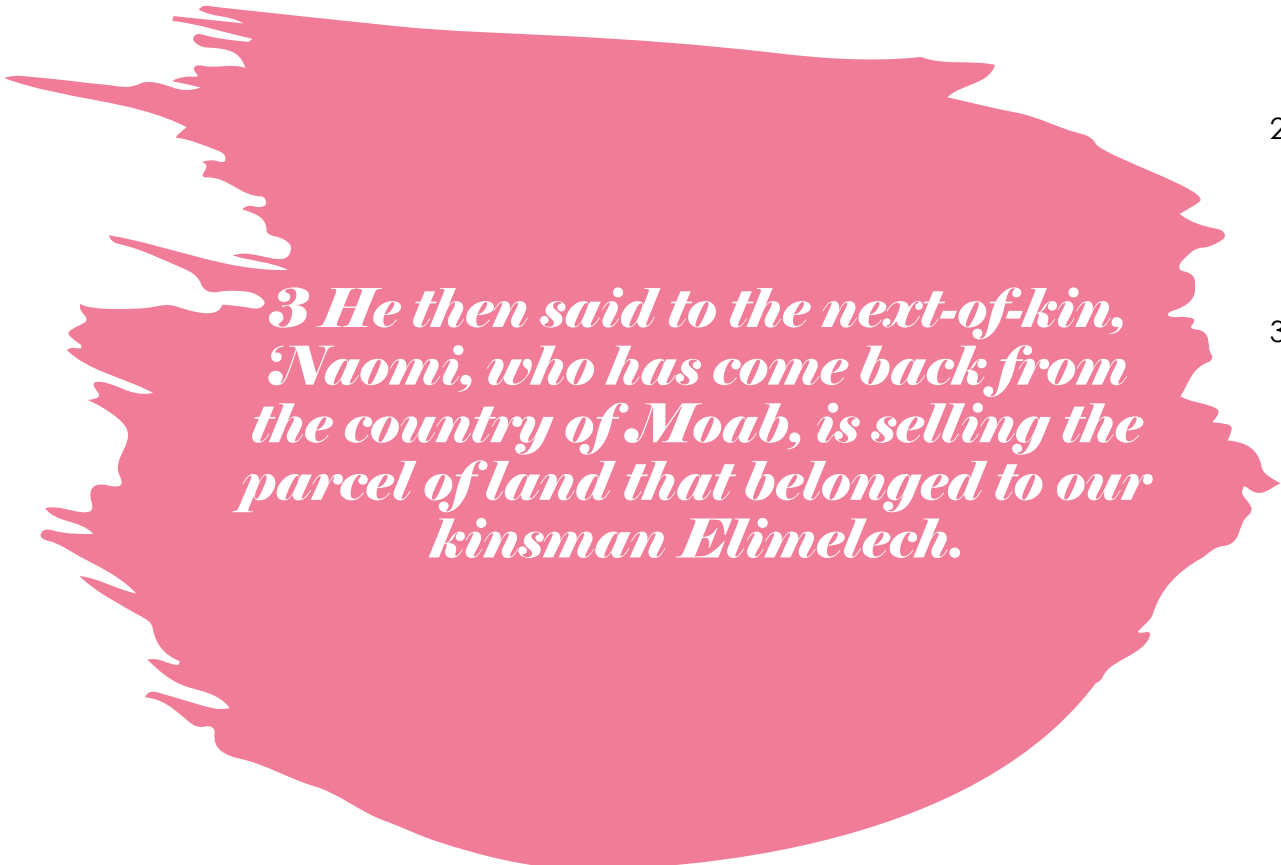


2 Then Boaz took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, 'Sit down here'; so they sat down.

The gate of the city was always the place where the esteemed and honorable men of the city sat. For an ancient city in Israel, it was a combination of a city council chamber and a courtroom.

i. The city gate was “A kind of outdoor court, the place where judicial matters were resolved by the elders and those who had earned the confidence and respect of the people... a place for business and as a kind of forum or public meeting place.” (Huey)

“Sit here”



3 He then said to the next-of-kin, Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our kinsman Elimelech.

1. Because Ruth had quietly gone back home after the threshing floor (at Boaz's instruction [Ruth 3:14], she does not witness the interaction. Boaz's approach to this nearer kinsman was planned as a complete surprise to the other man. Clearly this was a tactical advantage to Boaz. (Enduring Word)
2. Because we know the story so well, we know there is parcel of land to be redeemed, but in fact, this is the first time in Ruth that the reader is told that *Redemption* in this case is not just the redemption of the blood line (A child for Abimelech) but redemption of land. This explains Boaz's cunning.
3. The duty of the goel – the kinsman-redeemer – was more than the duty to preserve the family name of his brother in Israel. It was also to keep land allotted to members of the clan within the clan.(EW.)
 - a. When Israel came into the Promised Land during the days of Joshua, the land was divided among the tribes and then among the family groups. God intended that the land stay within those tribes and family groups, so the land could never permanently be sold. Every fifty years, it had to be returned to the original family group (Leviticus 25:8-17)
 - b. But fifty years is a long time. So, God made provision for land that was "sold," that it might be redeemed back to the family by the kinsman-redeemer before the Jubilee year.
 - c. Again, the kinsman-redeemer had the responsibility to protect the persons, property, and posterity of the larger family – and all of these duties went together. (EW)

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, so that I may know; for there is no one prior to you to redeem it, and I come after you.' So he said, 'I will redeem it.'

1. When Boaz brought the matter up to the nearer kinsman, he brought it up as a matter regarding property – something any man would be interested in. Anyone would want to buy back a piece of property and keep it in the family name by keeping it for oneself.

2. When Boaz put it in terms of purely a land transaction, there was no hesitation on the nearer kinsman's part. Of course, he said, "I will redeem it."

3. To buy a land at a discounted price and keep it in perpetuity would have been very advantageous to the man, not to mention the fact of the honor and respect the purchaser would derive from fulfilling Leviticus 25. This is a win-win proposition too enticing to pass up.



*To uncover
the ear*

“When Boaz reminds So-and-So that it is his duty to buy (or to pay for) the field that legally belongs to Elimelech’s heirs, he uses an idiom that in Hebrew means, “I thought I would uncover your ear.” The insipid English Translation of the NRSV , “I thought I would tell you of it” or the NIV, “I thought that I would bring it to your attention,” obscure the way in which the narrator links the uncovering done by Ruth on the threshing floor with the uncovering done by Boaz at the city gate. In Chapters 3 and 4, uncovering is closely related to recovering.” (NIB, 935.)





5 Then Boaz said, 'The day you acquire the field from the hand of Naomi, you are also acquiring Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead man, to maintain the dead man's name on his inheritance.'

1. Boaz then put the surprise on the nearer kinsman. He told him that he wasn't only dealing with Naomi and the property of Elimelech, he also had to deal with Ruth.

2. He had a duty to "Redeem the bloodline." Because Naomi was older and beyond the years of bearing children, the nearer kinsman was not expected to marry Naomi and raise up children to the family name of her deceased husband Elimelech. But Ruth was another matter – she was able to marry and bear children. Boaz explained what everyone knew – that this was a package deal. If someone was going to exercise the right of kinsman-redeemer towards the deceased Elimelech, he had to fulfill the duty in regard to both the property and the posterity.

3. Because of Boaz's wise (perhaps shrewd) way of framing the occasion, this was the first time the nearer kinsman considered this, and it was a pretty big question to take in all at once. When it was just a matter of property, it was easy to decide on; but if he must take Ruth as a wife, that was another matter.

The Consonantal Word Vs. The Spoken Word: qnyty Vs. Ganita. This is a substantial difference: “I acquire” vs. “You acquire.”

In the first case, the expression might mean, “It is only fair for you to know that I have chosen to take on the widow and give Abimelech an heir, so at the Jubilee time, the land will revert back to the rightful heir.”


In the second case, the expression might mean, “You have a Levitical duty to marry the widow and provide an heir who will inherit this land. If you don’t accept this duty, I will!”

In either case, the land is in So-and-So’s control only for a limited time: Until and heir is born or until the year of Jubilee.

If the land will revert to a legitimate heir, So-and-So will lose the initial investment and the land. This is a tough pill to swallow. In either case, the purchase of the land does not benefit (in fact, it might jeopardize) current children of “So-and-So.” (NIB.)

Qnyty or Ganita?

THE PROBLEM WITH
VERSE 5



6. At this, the next-of-kin said, 'I cannot redeem it for myself without damaging my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.'

1. If we accept the spoken Hebrew, we could say that though it would be great to receive the property associated with Ruth, the nearer kinsman knew that taking her into his home and raising up her children would ruin his own inheritance.

2. Probably, the man had grown sons to inherit his lands. The problem of dividing his inheritance to include future children he would have with Ruth was more than he wanted to deal with.

3. Also, no doubt, the man was married – and knew it would be awkward (at best!) to bring home Ruth as wife number two (or three?)

4. He then said, “You redeem...” These were glorious words. A moment before, all seemed lost for Ruth and Naomi, when the nearer kinsman had said, “I will redeem it.” But Boaz’s plan had a surprise and an unexpected wisdom to it. And it worked!

5. Some would think that Boaz’s plan was foolish: to gain Ruth by offering her and her land to the nearer kinsman. How could that work? But the seemingly foolish plan did work. In here, too, we see the hand of God (RW.)



*Translation determines
interpretation*



Closing Prayer