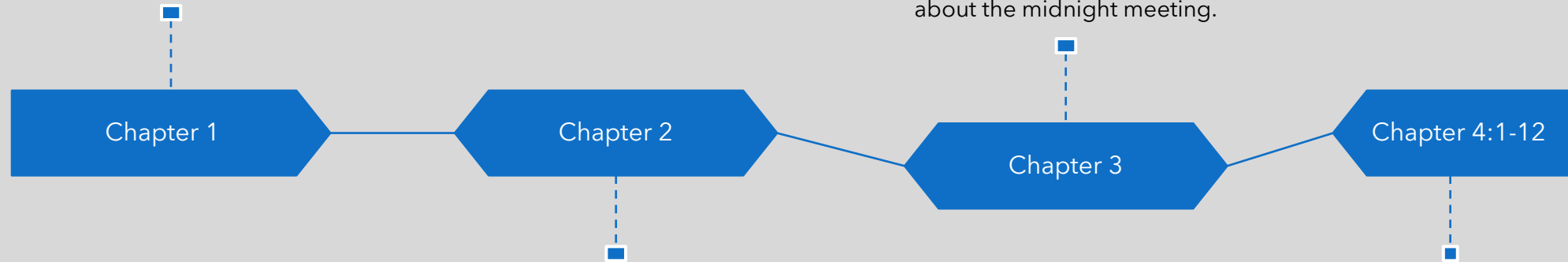


RUTH 4:7-12

"I give you my sandal"

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."



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. The Next of Kin gives up the right of redemption. A Sandal is exchanged. The elders of Bethlehem bless the union between Boaz and Ruth

Opening Prayer



7 Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, one party took off a sandal and gave it to the other; this was the manner of attesting in Israel.

In the case of raising up a name for a dead husband, when a man failed to perform his duty to the woman in the way he should, he was as much harming the name of her dead husband as shaming the woman.

Because of his failure to act, an ancient rite would now take place. The words of verse 7 “was the custom” are inserted by translators because this rite isn’t specifically addressed in the law in the manner it’s used here. The rite as stated in the law only covers one aspect of what transpires and so the custom is more inclusive, and probably older, than the provision detailed in the law. (SW)

“The narrator’s audience no longer exchanged sandals in order to confirm or legalize a transaction, so this detail in the story needed to be explained to them” (NIB, 938.)

The “taking” of the sandal comes from Deuteronomy 25:5-10: “... His brother’s wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, “so shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother’s house.” The man shall be called in Israel, “The house of him who had his sandal removed.” (Superior Word.)

The custom as described in Ruth is different in that the sandal is willingly given and received, an act of grace that reduces or eliminates the dishonor.

8 So when the next-of-kin said to Boaz, 'Acquire it for yourself', he took off his sandal.

In the law, the sandal went from the one who possessed the right to the one who should have received it. Knowing this, we know that it was the unnamed relative of Boaz who took off his shoe and gave it to Boaz. This was the formal transfer of his right of redemption.

Boaz graciously preempted any possible shame on the man by stating in advance that he was next in line, thus implying that he was willing to perform the duty. Instead of the name of the dead dying out and also shaming the woman, the name would continue on and the woman wouldn't be shamed. Therefore, there was no need to call this portion of the law out before the witnesses.

A Middle Eastern view of shoes or sandals, "Because we are mobile creatures, the shoe symbolizes several things. It symbolizes motion to where we are going and the footprints behind us which bear the shoe marks are a reminder of where we have been. When our feet stop, that is our time of rest in our place of rest, and thus our place of possession. Our shoes silently wait for us at the door."

The Bible has a rich theology of shoes or sandals. The word appears 35 times in Scripture. A shoe is often seen as a sign of reproach, "Over Edom I will cast my Shoe" (Psalm 60:8.) This remains the case in the Middle East: Two examples, Saddam Hussein and Muntadhar al-Zaidi "This is a farewell kiss from the Iraqi people, you dog."

Shoes are a sign of motion, especially God-ordained motion (Exodus 12:10-11, Deuteronomy 29:5.) Shoes also have a common parlance meaning of character (to walk in another man's shoes) and to finish another man's task of mission, "He walked in the dead man's shoes."

...he took off his sandal.

Taking off the sandal also denotes that a person is entering into someone else's house or land. In Exodus 3:5, God tells Moses, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." We see the same in Joshua 5:15. The "Holy" ground belong to the Lord and neither Moses nor Joshua could leave prints on it.

In the case of Ruth, the Nearest Kinsman is in fact saying, "I no longer have the right to enter property owned by Abimelech. I cannot place my footprints on it!" This is like saying, "I cannot longer walk in a dead man's shoes." In Jewish tradition, "Shoes represent the totality of the individual in many ways, both actual and potential. In this exchange then, the implication is that the right of walking on the land which was to be redeemed has been resigned and that the authority now belongs to Boaz. Because Naomi and Ruth are tied into the exchange, then the brother has given up all rights to them and their possessions as well." (SW)

Another common reason for the removing of footwear is respect, "By removing a shoe in the ancient Middle East, a person can be seen to be offering vulnerability - putting themselves at the mercy of the recipient. It is a statement of trust and submission." (<https://www.oneforisrael.org/bible-based-teaching-from-israel/take-off-your-shoes/>.) This is the reference to God's coup d'état in Isaiah 9:1-7. Because "to us a child has been born" the boots (sandals, shoes) of the warriors will be fuel for the fire.

9 Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, 'Today you are witnesses that I have acquired from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon.

- The ten witnesses that Boaz called together are representatives for all the people. Regardless of how many other people were actually present - ten or fifty, these ten testify to and for all. To them he acknowledges that he is both qualified to redeem and willing to redeem. (One for Israel) We know this is a legal procedure because Boaz's address to the elders starts and ends with "Today you are witnesses."
- The word for "I have bought" is the word qaniti which is from the word qanah. This form of the word, qaniti, is used 5 times in the Bible. Two of them are in this account today. And two of the others actually tie in directly with what this account pictures. The first is when Eve had her first child. She said, "qaniti ish eth Yehovah" - "I have acquired a man from the Lord." Another time that this word is used was when Joseph said to the people of Egypt, "Indeed I have bought you and your land this day for Pharaoh. Look, here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land." (Genesis 47:23.)
- In this context, "I have acquired" has the widest possible meaning: "I have acquired all that belonged to Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahalon, including the land, the bloodline, the widow, the right of inheritance for my elder (who shall be considered Abimelech's inheritor,) the care of Naomi, the right to walk on a dead man's shoes, the right to be the ancestor of kings..."

10 I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, to be my wife, to maintain the dead man's name on his inheritance, in order that the name of the dead may not be cut off from his kindred and from the gate of his native place; today you are witnesses.'

- Interestingly, he calls her "Ruth" but he again says, "the Moabite." The Bible is asking us to not forget that she is a gentile. This isn't a mistake or an unnecessary addition, but a reminder. After this, he notes that she is "the widow of Mahlon."
- Though a gentile, she was the wife of Mahlon and so through her, the name of the dead will be perpetuated "through his inheritance." This ties the name to that which the name is entitled under the law. The word "dead" here is singular, not plural.
- All three of the names will be linked through Ruth in a distinguished and loving manner for the future generations to remember. These hints are not unimportant, but all reflect a greater plan of redemption which is prefigured by this wondrous story of life and love in Bethlehem.
- Boaz again mentions "the name of the dead" but this time it is tied to his brethren. Not only will the name be raised up for the entitled inheritance, but it will also be raised up "among his brethren." This means that the Israelite heritage is also preserved, and yet it is through a Gentile! Think of the irony! Now, think of the church.
- Boaz has met the requirements of the law and has carried through with the accomplishment of His promise. In chapter 1 Naomi, during her time of great distress and anguish, had bid farewell to her daughters. At that time, she pronounced a blessing upon them when she said, "The Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." The blessing has come true for Ruth. She has found rest under the wing of Boaz and together they have their rest under the wings of the Lord God of Israel.

Charasho



11 Then all the people who were at the gate, along with 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 produce children in Ephrathah and bestow a name in Bethlehem;

- With their approval, the matter is now established. None have challenged the proceedings and rather, all who had gathered, both elders and any others, were in agreement. And so in agreement, a blessing upon them is pronounced.
- The name of Jehovah is pronounced once again over Ruth. Naomi blessed her in the first chapter, Boaz in the second. In the third, Boaz noted that she was blessed of the Lord. And now again, all those present heap a blessing in the name of the Lord upon her.
- Specifically, they tie her to Rachel and Leah, noting Rachel first. There are several reasons for putting her before Leah, even though the people of Bethlehem were descendants of Leah, Rachel was the beloved of Jacob and his first desire for a wife. She also died and was buried not far from Ephrathah where they lived.
- And finally, who Rachel pictures in the story of redemptive history explains why she would be named first in the Bible. To understand that completely, one would need to watch all of the sermons which encompass her lifetime. She pictured New Testament grace instead of Leah who pictured the Old Testament law. (SW)

Ephrathah and Bethlehem

- Rachel and Leah are credited with the building of the house of Israel, meaning the nation itself. This word translated as “build” is banah, the same word used to describe the “building” of Eve from Adam’s rib. So there is a hidden play on intent here. (SW)
- Their blessing is that Ruth will continue to “build” the great name of the House of Israel through subsequent heirs just as Rachel and Leah did when they “built” the house of Israel. This blessing then is literally fulfilled in her great-grandson David. It is reflected in the word of the Lord to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-14.
- “And may you prosper in Ephrathah...” Unclear if the “you” is Ruth or Boaz or both. Either way, this uses the same word, khayil, which was already used to describe both Boaz, in verse 2:1 and Ruth in verse 3:11. It indicates virtue and wealth. And not just material wealth, but wealth in all aspects of life. And so here is found another play on words. The name Ephrathah means “fruitfulness.” Therefore it is a blessing for great prosperity in the place of fruitfulness.
- While Ephrathah is the name of the clan to which Boaz belongs, mentioning it again at this point makes particularly good sense because of the name’s association with fertility (NIB, 939).
- “And be famous in Bethlehem” The Hebrew is uqera shem b’bethlehem - “and proclaim name in Bethlehem.” In this, it means that when people speak about the famous folks of Bethlehem, they will be included in the list. Surely this has been literally fulfilled in the mouths of God’s people for thousands of years. (SW)

12 and, through the children that the Lord will give you by this young woman, may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.'

- These words go directly back to Genesis 38 which is one of the most remarkable passages in Genesis as to what it pictures. Ruth, like Tamar, was denied her rightful justice until she personally came forward to claim it, just as Tamar did. Where Judah failed toward Tamar and was forced to state, "She is more righteous than I," Boaz proved his righteousness in doing what another would not do and fulfilled his obligation as the next closest relative to Ruth.
- Their blessing is that the same prosperous name which Tamar had been granted would be granted to Ruth also. In this union we see a continuation of the subtle bed-tricks which are detailed in the Bible which have led to great things. The first was when Lot's two daughters got him drunk and slept with him. The second was when Laban switched daughters on Jacob and gave him Leah instead of Rachel. The third was when Tamar posed as a prostitute and seduced her father-in-law Judah. And the fourth was when Ruth crept into the threshing floor of Boaz in order to request redemption. (SW)
- Lot's bed-tricking older daughter bore a son named Moab who was an ancestor of Ruth. Jacob's bed-tricking wife Leah, bore Judah who is an ancestor of Boaz. Tamar's bed-tricking of Judah likewise led to Boaz. And Ruth's bed-tricking of Boaz has resulted in her marriage. All the names involved in the bed-tricks, will lead to King David and then to Jesus. The stories have been misunderstood and unfairly maligned over the centuries when in fact they have been told for a much more important reason than merely teaching against perceived immorality.
- The blessing is pronounced and it finishes with these happy words for Boaz. He is an elderly man who will have a young and beautiful bride. He has proven himself faithful to both the letter and the spirit of the law and he has been blessed by his people in the name of the Lord. The marvel of the Bible is that it contains everything necessary to have a personal relationship with God. This is lacking in nature and can only be revealed by Him personally through special means.

Closing Prayer

For the Human Family

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.