

The Book of Ruth¹⁶

Lesson 2 Ruth Chapters 3 & 4

At the end of Chapter 2, Naomi is astounded that Boaz has noticed Ruth and offered such kindness to her. Naomi explains that Boaz is a close relative and encourages Ruth to do exactly as Boaz has instructed, knowing that Boaz has the ability to redeem both Ruth and her, if he wishes. Naomi develops a plan and gives Ruth specific instructions.

Naomi's Plan

Ruth 3:1 - 12

Ruth 3:1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? ^{3:2} "And now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, **he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight.**

Almost all winnowing was performed after 6:00 PM when a moderate west wind blew in from the sea. If the north wind was blowing, it was too strong for the process and the east wind came in spurts, so it would take hours to do what could be done in short order with a west wind. The workers would beat the stalks of grain, causing them to land on the threshing floor. The stalks were thrown away and then the workers used fans on sticks to toss the grain into the air. The steady west wind would blow the chaff, or inedible portion away, and the heavy grain would fall again to the threshing floor.¹⁷ The wind must have been blowing from the west. Naomi knew that Boaz would be spending the night in the field after the winnowing of the grain.



Ruth 3:3 **"Wash** yourself therefore, **and anoint** yourself and **put on your best clothes**, and go down to the **threshing floor**; *but* do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. ^{3:4} "And it shall be when he lies down, that you shall **notice the place where he lies**, and you shall go and **uncover his feet and lie down**; then **he will tell you what you shall do.**" ^{3:5} And she said to her, " All that you say I will do."

"Wash, ... anoint, ... put on your best clothes," Naomi tells Ruth. She is telling Ruth what she needs to do to meet her kinsman redeemer. She does not want Ruth to present herself to her redeemer in her everyday clothing, or without washing and putting on perfume. We should stand before our Redeemer in such a manner. We should wear our best clothing to meet the true Redeemer, whatever our best is. Worshiping our Redeemer is a special occasion worthy of wearing our best.

Naomi warns Ruth to be careful not to distract Boaz as he is working, eating and drinking, but when he lies down to sleep, Ruth must act. She is to uncover his feet and lie down by them. What does this mean? Please do not think that Naomi is asking Ruth to enter into an intimate relationship with Boaz that night. Naomi is asking Ruth to uncover the lower portions of his legs as he sleeps so he will notice that she is there. If Boaz notices, then he will speak with her. In the Middle East, this procedure is the way of presenting a request to the owner of the property, or in this case, Ruth and Naomi's possible redeemer.

¹⁶ All Scriptures in this lesson entitled "The Book of Ruth" are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE, Copyright (C) 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988, by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

¹⁷ Ruth 3:2; Isa 30:24; Jer 4:11, 12; Mat 3:12

Most likely, Ruth has a note from Naomi to present to Boaz when he notices her. Nothing is inappropriate in this passage; it is just the proper, traditional process by which a person could approach a redeemer and ask for redemption.

Ruth 3:6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her. ^{3:7} When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his **heart was merry**, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down.

Ruth agrees to Naomi's plan and complies exactly with its terms. The Scripture says that Boaz's heart is merry after he eats and drinks. Is he drunk? Not at all! His stomach is filled, his thirst is satisfied, and he has a place to lie down at the end of the huge heap of grain from the day's work. His heart is merry.

Ruth 3:8 And it happened in the middle of the night that **the man was startled** and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. ^{3:9} And he said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth your maid. **So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative.**"

When Ruth uncovers the lower portion of Boaz's legs, it startles him, just as Naomi has planned. "Who are you?" "I am Ruth your maid. ... spread your covering over your maid..." To cover Ruth with his covering means that Boaz is willing to go through the legal process to redeem both her mother-in-law and her and all it entails.

Ruth 3:10 Then he said, "May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich. ^{3:11} "And now, my daughter, do not fear. **I will do for you whatever you ask**, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.

Ruth's reputation has preceded her and the entire city knows that she is not in Bethlehem because her mother-in-law is wealthy; nor is she in the field because Boaz is wealthy, young, and handsome. Boaz is shocked when Ruth uncovers his feet. "I will do for you whatever you ask," he tells Ruth. It is time for Ruth to tell him that Naomi wants him to redeem her and Ruth.

Ruth 3:12 "And now it is true **I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.**

Boaz is willing to redeem Ruth and Naomi, but he cannot. His integrity will not let him because there is a closer relative; therefore, he does not put his cover over Ruth that night. Ruth and Boaz are not the only ones sleeping at the edge of the grain. All the maids and servants are also there. If Boaz had covered Ruth with his blanket, everyone would have known it, and the news would have spread throughout the community the next day. Although customs are different from tribe to tribe and nation to nation, a possible impropriety can never be kept quiet.

Kinsman Redeemer

Ruth 3:13 – 4:12

Ruth 3:13 "Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning." ^{3:14} So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."

Ruth spends the night uncovered at the feet of Boaz and she returns home early in the morning. Boaz does not hide the plans from his maids and servants. He tells them, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." He has a plan now and he will head to the gate of the city of Bethlehem to meet with the closer relative. All of his hired hands are to remain quiet about the night's activities until he gets back. Ruth will slip back into the city before anyone there can recognize her.

^{Ruth 3:15} Again he said, "Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it." So she held it, and **he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her**. Then she went into the city.

Boaz will not let her go back empty-handed. Six measures of barley are put in her cloak to take back to Naomi. In the Old Testament, a dry measure of anything is 2.175 bushels; therefore, Boaz gives her almost 13 bushels of barley to carry back to Naomi. ¹⁸ A great load!

^{Ruth 3:16} And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done for her. ^{3:17} And she said, "These six *measures* of barley he gave to me, for he said, '**Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.**'"

Boaz knows that Naomi is part of the redemption process and he does not want Ruth to return to her empty-handed. "How did it go?" Naomi asks Ruth. Ruth tells her and adds that it was Boaz who gave the gift of grain. It is neither a diamond ring nor a set of dishes. It is a provision to provide sustenance for two women. The gift means that Boaz is a willing redeemer, if possible.

^{Ruth 3:18} Then she said, "**Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today.**"

"Wait ... until you know how the matter turns out" Sometimes there is nothing else that can be done except to wait for the Redeemer. He will not tarry. He is working all for our good. He is jumping the legal hurdles. He is maneuvering all the cast of characters into just the right place for His plan to work. The maids cannot help and neither can the servants. Those being redeemed can do nothing to speed along the process. Only the Redeemer can handle the matter. Ruth and Naomi must wait to hear if Boaz or the other closer relative will be their redeemer.

^{Ruth 4:1} Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, "**Turn aside, friend, sit down here.**" And he turned aside and sat down.

At the gate, Boaz has time to sit while he waits for the close relative to arrive. He comes to the gate and Boaz invites him to sit and talk.

^{Ruth 4:2} And he took **ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here."** So they sat down.

A legal transaction is about to take place at the gate so witnesses are needed. The ten elders of Bethlehem are called to be the witnesses of the proceedings. It is neither new nor out of the ordinary. All business was handled this way in those days. That is why the elders are at the gate that morning. All business of any kind was handled at the gate of every city in the Promised Land. They were there every morning to witness business transactions between people.

¹⁸ Six measures of barley equal 12.94 bushels.

^{Ruth 4:3} Then he said to the closest relative, "**Naomi**, who has come back from the land of Moab, **has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.**" ^{4:4} "So I thought to inform you, saying, ' **Buy it before those who are sitting here**, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem *it*, redeem *it*; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem *it*, and I am after you.'" And he said, "I will redeem *it*."

Finally, we know what was in the petition that Ruth had presented to Boaz the night before when she uncovered the lower part of his legs. Naomi has land to sell to provide for her living needs. Boaz has the authority to sell the property for her because he is a relative too. Women could not transact legal contracts at the gate; only men were allowed to do so in that day. The close relative is more than willing to buy the land and redeem it. It will mean that the land will stay in the family and when the close relative dies, that portion of land will return to Elimelech's family, because it originally belonged to them.

^{Ruth 4:5} Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, **you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess**, the widow of the deceased, **in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance.**"

It is not indicated here, but, when the relative purchases the land, he will also acquire Naomi. Boaz makes it clear that there is more to the package than just the land and Naomi; "Ruth the Moabitess" is part of the legal transaction and their first born son must be raised in the name of her dead husband.

^{Ruth 4:6} And the closest relative said, "**I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself**; you *may have* my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem *it*."

The addition of the Moabite woman kills the transaction for the close relative. It will jeopardize his own inheritance when his father dies. The law is clear and the relative knows his parents will disown him if he takes Ruth as a wife. The law states, "No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their *descendants*, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD."¹⁹

^{Ruth 4:7} Now this was *the custom* in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of land to confirm any matter: **a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the manner of attestation in Israel.** ^{4:8} So the closest relative said to Boaz, "Buy *it* for yourself." And he removed his sandal.

Deuteronomy says,

When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be *married* outside *the family* to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And it shall be that the first-born whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out from Israel. But if the man does not desire to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, "My husband's brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband's brother to me." Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And *if* he persists and says, "I do not desire to take her," then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, "Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house."²⁰

¹⁹ Deuteronomy 23:3

²⁰ Deuteronomy 25:5-9

Traditionally, one shoe was exchanged as proof of a legal transaction. In this situation, the shoe is taken off and given to Boaz; therefore, neither Ruth nor Naomi are there to spit in the close relative's face and make the declaration. It is a legal transaction between two men because the women are not present to take part in the process as indicated in the Deuteronomy passage.

^{Ruth 4:9} Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. ^{4:10} "Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased may not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his *birth* place; you are witnesses today."

At the gate that day, Boaz redeems all that belongs to Elimelech and his deceased descendants, including the land, Naomi, and Ruth. Here we learn that Ruth's first husband was Mahlon. Boaz will marry Ruth, raise their first son with Mahlon's name, and give to him his father's inheritance when he is of age.

^{Ruth 4:11} And all the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, "**We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel;** and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem.

The ten men at the gate make up the court and verify the transaction. They are thrilled for Boaz and hope that Ruth will give him many sons, the first one to be raised in the name of Mahlon and the others in his name.

Obed, Jesse, and David

Ruth 4:13 – 22

^{Ruth 4:12} "**Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the LORD shall give you by this young woman.**" ^{4:13} So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

Earlier, Judah finally took Tamar as a wife and she gave birth to Perez whose descendants became the major tribal group that established Ephrath, the former name of the city of Bethlehem. ²¹ This blessing was entirely appropriate since most of the people in Bethlehem were relatives of Perez in some way and he was their direct ancestor who can be traced back to Abraham through Isaac, Jacob, and Judah. Eventually, Ruth gives Boaz a male child and he is raised in the name of Mahlon.

^{Ruth 4:14} Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. ^{4:15} "May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him."

Naomi is too old to have children by this time and the women of Bethlehem give her a blessing that extends to her through Ruth.

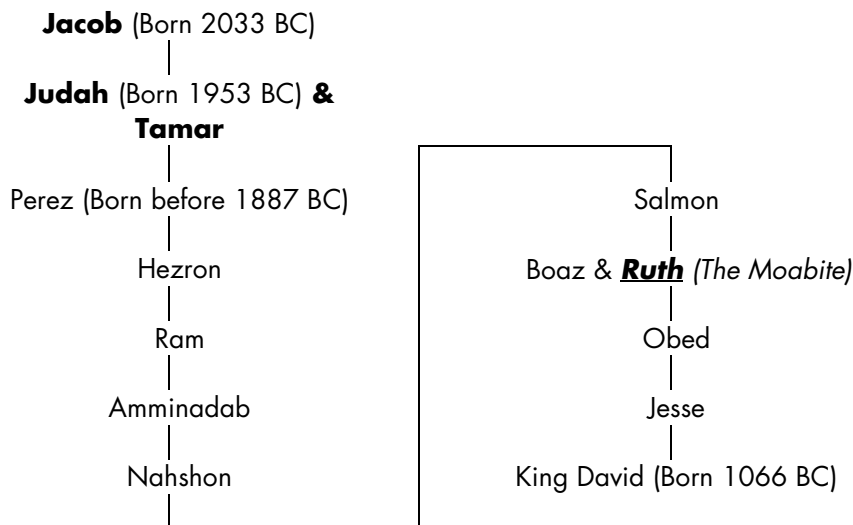
^{Ruth 4:16} Then Naomi took the **child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse.** ^{4:17} And the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" **So they named him Obed.** He is the **father of Jesse, the father of David.**

²¹ Genesis 38:39; Genesis 46:12

The boy is placed on Naomi's lap and the women of the town name him Obed. Why do they not name him Mahlon or Elimelech? Obed, which is not the family name, is the nickname given by the townspeople. It means "serving" and his birth shows the culmination of Ruth's serving heart towards Naomi. The son's legal name is Mahlon. Obed will become the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David.

^{Ruth 4:18} Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron, ^{4:19} and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab, ^{4:20} and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon, ^{4:21} and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed, ^{4:22} and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.

Genealogy of Jacob to King David



To conclude the story, the author of this book includes a list of the genealogy from Perez to King David. The chart above includes Judah and Jacob to show the connection all the way back to the formation of the nation of Israel. The characters on the chart represent 967 years from the birth of Jacob to the birth of David. Jacob was 79 or 80 when Judah was born.²² Perez and his twin were born after the sale of Joseph into Egypt in 1898 BC, but before Jacob and his family moved to Egypt during the famine in 1875 BC.²³ Nahshon helped consecrate the Tabernacle in 1473 BC.²⁴ If Salmon was born in Egypt, he was under 20 years of age in 1473 BC when the people in the wilderness voted not to go into the Promised Land. Therefore, Salmon was in his early 40's at the time of the entrance into the Promised Land. Boaz will be born when Salmon is very old and after he has established the town of Ephrath which becomes Bethlehem some time later. Boaz's marriage to Ruth leads to the birth of King David through Obed and Jesse. Jesse was very old when David was born in 1066 BC. For there to be just four men in the lineage of Salmon to Jesse, which encompassed 321 Hebrew years leading to the birth of David, each man was at least 80 years old when his son was born.

²² Genesis 29 through 32:2

²³ Genesis 27 - 38

²⁴ Numbers 7:1-89