

Introduction

1. The Law in Leviticus 25:25 stipulated that when an Israelite ran into financial trouble and was forced to sell his land, the nearest male relative (the kinsman) was obligated to buy back (i.e. redeem) the land back from the one it was sold to
 - a. This was to keep the land in the family
 - b. If the poor man recovered financially to the point where he could buy back the land, the kinsman was to sell it back to him, for the original price minus rent for the years that he owned it
 - c. If the poor man never able to buy it back, it was to be automatically returned to him during the year of Jubilee (every seven years)
2. This is where Naomi and Ruth find themselves; as widows they are poor and forced to sell their land (according to v. 9 it was the land of Elimelech as well as Chikion and Hahlon)
 - a. According to the Law, Naomi's nearest relative was to step in and redeem the land
 - b. According to the story, that hasn't happened yet
 - c. So, when Ruth approached Boaz and asked him to redeem her (and essentially the land), Boaz informed her that he wasn't the nearest relative (there was one that was closer)
 - d. As a Law-biding man, Boaz realizes that in order for him to redeem Ruth, the other relative must give up his rights first
 - e. So, Boaz comes up with a plan

A. The primary kinsman refuses to fulfill his obligation (4:1-6)

1. On the very next morning Boaz goes to the city gate and waits for the relative to walk by (1):
 - a. As you might imagine, the city gate was a busy place with people entering and exiting the city
 - b. It was also the place where legal matters—both business and judicial--were settled by the elders of the city
2. When Boaz sees the other relative, he calls him over to discuss the matter of Naomi's land (4):
 - a. In some translations, Boaz refers to the man as "**my friend**"—but the Hebrew is more literally "**a certain one**" and is an idiom best understood as something more generic and anonymous like "**Mr. So-and-so**" or "**John Doe**" (as the NET)
 - b. Boaz likely knew the man's name, but it is likely that the author's use of this idiom was his way of not including the man's name in the story because of his refusal to honor his obligation as kinsman
 - c. The relative sits down with him at the gate
3. Boaz presents the first part of the legal case: the matter of Naomi's land (2-4):
 - a. Boaz summons 10 of the city elders (2)
 - b. He then informs the relative of Naomi's dilemma (if you will; 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."**

- c. Boaz calls on the relative to fulfill his legal obligation and redeem the land, or forfeit his right so he could do it (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.'"**
 - d. The relative agrees to redeem Naomi's land (4b): **"And he said, 'I will redeem it.'"**
 - 1) The Hebrew here is emphatic, **"I, I will redeem it,"** indicating his enthusiasm to purchase the land
 - 2) Keep this in mind (hint: later he is just as enthusiastic in his refusal!)
4. Boaz presents the second part of the legal case: the matter involving Ruth (5-6)
- a. The kinsman's responsibility didn't end with Naomi's land
 - b. There was still the matter of Ebimelech's son, Mahlon, who was without offspring
 - c. The kinsman's responsibility included marrying Mahlon's widow, Ruth (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.'"**
 - 1) One purpose of the kinsman laws was to keep family land within the family
 - 2) A second purpose was to provide offspring for the deceased—so the family line would not disappear forever
 - 3) So, it was not enough to redeem the land; he must marry Ruth to provide his deceased relative Mahlon, with offspring
 - d. But, when Boaz brings up this point, the relative changes his mind and refuses to do either--redeem the land or marry Ruth (6): **"The closest relative said, 'I cannot redeem it for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem it.'"**
 - 1) The relative refuses to marry Ruth because it would **"jeopardize"** his own inheritance
 - a) The text isn't clear how marrying Ruth would impact his own inheritance
 - b) He apparently didn't feel buying the land would hurt his estate, but marrying Ruth somehow would
 - c) According to DEU 25:6 (we'll read later), when a man redeemed his brother's widow by marrying her, their first born child would assume the name of the deceased brother, not his actual biological father; subsequent children would take the biological father's name
 - d) The first born child normally got twice the inheritance of the other children, so in this case, this man was reluctant to give up so much of his inheritance to a child that would ultimately carry his brother's name and not his own
 - 2) It's interesting to note the emphatic nature of his refusal: **"you, you redeem my right of redemption for yourself"**:
 - a) He is just as eager now to renege on his obligation when he feels it will impact him financially, as he was when he agreed and thought it would benefit him financially!
 - b) He appears more interested in protecting his own fortunes, than helping his kin (something the Law demanded of close relatives)—read Lev 25:35 to see the spirit of the kinsman laws
 - 3) Maybe this is why the author refers to him as "Mr. So and So" and not by name

- a) Look at Deuteronomy 25:5-10—to not redeem a brother’s wife was a shameful act
- b) Think of this—all of the **primary** characters are given names except this man (Ebimelech and his sons are minor characters)
- c) Each of these—Boaz, Naomi, Ruth—have honorable qualities worthy of praise
- d) Each are also worthy examples for us:
 - 1) What mother-in-law shouldn’t strive to show the kind of love and concern for her daughters-in-law that Naomi did for Ruth?
 - 2) What young woman shouldn’t strive to be known for the kind of faithfulness and loyalty expressed by Ruth, both in her relationship to Naomi and to the Lord
 - 3) What young man wouldn’t make his parents proud if he grew up to be a man with the Godly qualities of Boaz?
- e) Is it any wonder why the only primary character not worthy of our praise and emulation is the one without a name? He is someone to be forgotten.

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| B. Boaz redeems Ruth and Naomi (4:7-12) |
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- 1. Boaz agrees to purchase Ebimelech’s land (and that of Chilion and Mahlon) from Naomi (7-9)
- 2. He also agrees to marry Ruth (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 will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his birth place; you are witnesses today.”**
 - a. Compare Boaz’ response to that of the unnamed relative who refused to redeem the land or Ruth
 - b. Whereas that relative’s focus was purely on himself, Boaz’s motives were honorable and highly Biblical:
 - 1) To **“raise up the name of the diseased on his inheritance”**—in reality, providing offspring to inherit Mahlon’s property and keep it in the family
 - 2) So that Mahlon’s name (and ultimately Ebimelech’s) would not be forgotten among his relatives and village:
 - 3) NET: **“I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, as my wife to raise up a descendant who will inherit his property so the name of the deceased might not disappear from among his relatives and from his village. You are witnesses today.”**
 - c. So once again we see the integrity of Boaz, and we see it in direct contrast to another who refused to honor the LORD by obeying the Law and carrying for his relatives
- 3. The elders pronounce blessings on Ruth and Boaz (11-12):
 - a. Blessings on Ruth (11): **“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;”**
 - 1) This is a blessing of fertility
 - 2) Leah had 7 sons (and is credited with two more through her hand-maiden, Zilpah)
 - 3) Rachel has 2 sons (and is credited with two more through her hand-maiden, Bilhah)
 - b. Blessings on Boaz (12):
 - 1) The first blessing was for wealth and standing (11b): **“and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem.”**

- 2) The second blessing appears to be a blessing of progeny (12): **“Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the LORD will give you by this young woman.”**
 - a) Perez was one of the sons of Judah and represents a long line of descendants
 - b) See vs. 18-22
 - c) In fact, he’s mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in both Matthew 1:3 and Luke 3:33

C. Boaz and Ruth gives birth to a son (4:13-15)

1. The LORD blessed Boaz and Ruth with a son (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.”**
2. This was not only a blessing for Ruth and Boaz, but a blessing for Naomi and part of the LORD’s provision for her (14-15a)
 - a) The LORD had provided her with a redeemer (14)
 - b) Obed would be a **“restorer of life”** to Naomi—likely a reference to removing the reproach for being childless, as well as restoring her joy (compare to 1:13, 20)
 - c) And he would **“sustain”** her in her old age
3. The women of the town also shower praise on Ruth for her loyalty to Naomi (15b): **“for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”**

D. The Line of David (4:16-22)

1. Some scholars believe this section was added by a scribe at a later date because it seems a bit out of place
 - a. There is no evidence to suggest that it was
 - b. There is no internal reason to believe it wasn’t original
2. One reason the author may have included it could be to show the sovereignty of God who works all things according to His plan, including the lineage of King David and the Messiah

Conclusion

1. Ultimately, the passage today is about redemption
2. Historically, it’s about a man named Boaz who rescues and redeems a woman in need
3. As a type, it’s all about a man, Jesus Christ, who rescues and redeems us--sinners in need of a savior