

## Chapter 4: redemption, marriage and the future of Israel & Judah

Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat down there just as the guardian-redeemer<sup>[a]</sup> he had mentioned came along. Boaz said, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down." So he went over and sat down.<sup>2</sup> Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, "Sit here," and they did so.<sup>3</sup> Then he said to the guardian-redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelek.<sup>4</sup> I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you<sup>[b]</sup> will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line." "I will redeem it," he said.

<sup>5</sup> Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the<sup>[c]</sup> dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property."<sup>6</sup> At this, the guardian-redeemer said, "Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it."<sup>7</sup> (Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.)<sup>8</sup> So the guardian-redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it yourself." And he removed his sandal.<sup>9</sup> Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon.<sup>10</sup> I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!"<sup>11</sup> Then the elders and all the people at the gate said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.<sup>12</sup> Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah."

<sup>13</sup> So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.<sup>14</sup> The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel!"<sup>15</sup> He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth."<sup>16</sup> Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him.<sup>17</sup> The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

<sup>18</sup> This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron,<sup>19</sup> Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab,<sup>20</sup> Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon,<sup>[d]</sup><sup>21</sup> Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed,<sup>22</sup> Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.

### Footnotes:

1. [Ruth 4:1](#) The Hebrew word for *guardian-redeemer* is a legal term for one who has the obligation to redeem a relative in serious difficulty (see Lev. 25:25-55); also in verses 3, 6, 8 and 14.
  2. [Ruth 4:4](#) Many Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac; most Hebrew manuscripts *he*
  3. [Ruth 4:5](#) Vulgate and Syriac; Hebrew (see also Septuagint) *Naomi and from Ruth the Moabite, you acquire the*
  4. [Ruth 4:20](#) A few Hebrew manuscripts, some Septuagint manuscripts and Vulgate (see also verse 21 and Septuagint of 1 Chron. 2:11); most Hebrew manuscripts *Salma*
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# Bible Study June 2020: the Book of Ruth

## Christ Church Woodley

### **A. Outcomes from the Bible Study on 24.6.20**

- a. It seems to us that Boaz, in every circumstance is honourable and his first concern is to give support.
- b. This being the case, the information he gives Ruth about the existence of a potential guardian-redeemer with a higher claim than his own has to be taken at face value – as the unselfish action of a principled man.
- c. We choose not to guess whether there were sexual relations between Boaz and Ruth in the barn, though there might have been.
- d. In the story, barley is apparently given the role of standing for staple food that underpins life. This simple image helps to convey both the idea of Boaz as a reliable provider, and of God's providence.
- e. We did not find much to add to the idea that 'empty' in this text connotes a sort of inner destitution, and its converse, 'full', might be associated with God's blessing.
- f. We were not sure that Ruth and Naomi left Moab with any sense of being called by God to help fulfil his purposes. This may only have been realised later.
- g. The author of the book of Ruth is a good storyteller, and we learn much more about the principal characters as people than is common in ancient literature.

### **Points to consider in advance of the meeting on 1.7.20**

- h. How straight is Boaz in his dealing with the senior potential guardian-redeemer?
- i. If you detect a cunning approach, then is this rightly to be expected in an ancestor of David, who has been recognized as a political genius because of his astute manoeuvrings?
- j. The Hebrew text of verse 5 says, "the day you acquire the field...I [not 'you'] will acquire Ruth". Scholars argue over this – but do you think that the sense supports this version, or the more usual one?
- k. We don't know who had the use of the land in question during Naomi's long absence. It could have been a certain close kinsman, who now stands to lose it.
- l. Why is it a central point that Ruth is not Jewish? The text refers to Rachel and Leah (who were Jewish), but who had difficult lives but are also notable for impacting history [Genesis 29-33].
- m. Do you agree that this story is about how God's blessing on these individual was formative for the nation? Could he not have brought about good in a simpler way? Does the lesson here help us in these days?