

Ruth Notes

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Introduction:

The theme of the book of Ruth is “redemption.” The Hebrew word (“goel”) is found in 10 verses (first seen in 2:20) and is used 21 times (in a book containing only 85 verses) and is translated “redeem” or “close relative,” (and “kinsman-redeemer” in KJV).

- Redeem means “to purchase out of debt and slavery for the purpose of setting it free.”
- “Yahweh” is mentioned 17 times, “Elohim” is mentioned 3 times, and “El Shaddai” is mentioned 2 times.

The context of the book of Ruth is the book of Judges... “Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled.” The Midrash, an ancient book of Judaism, says that Ruth is the daughter of Eglon, king of Moab (Judges 3:17).

- The books of Judges, Ruth, and 1 Samuel overlap some. Samson, Ruth, and Samuel were probably all alive at the same time.

Ruth is the 8th book of the Bible. (Biblically, 8 is the number of new beginnings.) It bridges the gap between Israel in disarray and the establishment of the kingdom. Prophetically, it may point to the period of history between 70AD, where Israel was in disarray, and the setting up of the kingdom of God under the redeemer, Jesus Christ.

- Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer, would then be a type of Jesus Christ redeeming the land to take a Gentile bride.
- Naomi, the Gentile bride’s Jewish mother-in-law, isn’t blessed again until after the wedding takes place. This may point to the future blessing awaiting Israel after the bride of Christ is taken to the groom.

Chapter 1:

1:1 – “in the days when the judges ruled” – Ruth takes place in context of Judges 17:6 and 21:25 and sets the Moabite, Ruth, in contrast to the men of Israel in Judges 17-21.

- In the middle of Israel’s sin, God hasn’t cast them off but continues to redeem those who will come, even a Moabite woman.
- The days of the judges was when “there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; and 21:25)
- “famine” – Famines in Israel were never accidents, but because God shut up the rain of heaven due to the people forsaking the Lord. (Lev. 26:18-20; Deut. 28:23-24) Israel was worshipping Baal, the god of fertility and harvest, therefore God could not bless them with a harvest.
- “Bethlehem” – means “the house of bread.”
 - There is no bread in “the house of bread.”
- “Moab” – God called Moab “My washpot” in Ps. 108:9 and placed a curse on Moab in Zeph. 2:9. A Moabite was not even to enter the assembly of the Lord until the tenth generation. (Deut. 23:3)
 - Instead of turning to the Lord in the famine, they turn to Moab. When there are famines in our lives, we would be much better off to turn to God than to try to take care of ourselves in Moab.

- 1:2 – “Elimelech” – means “God is my king.”
- “Naomi” – means “pleasant.”
 - “Mahlon” – means “sick, or sickly.”
 - “Chilion” – means “worn out, or tired.”
 - Maybe Elimelech and Naomi are “sick” and “tired” of waiting for God and the answer to all their questions in Bethlehem, so they run to Moab.
- 1:3 – “Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died” – “My God is king” dies in Moab...and he always does.
- 1:4 – “wives of the women of Moab” – Taking Moabite wives wasn’t prohibited in Israel (Num. 31:18), but their descendants were not to enter into the assembly of the Lord until the tenth generation (Deut. 23:3).
- 1:5 – “the woman survived her two sons and her husband” – There was no government welfare system in Moab or Israel. Naomi was utterly destitute.
- 1:6 – “return” – Naomi must go back in repentance.
- 1:8 – “kindly” – (Heb. “hesed”) Lit. “loving-kindness.”
- Naomi is releasing her daughters-in-law from their duty.
- 1:9 – “she kissed them” – There is a tremendous bond created in going through suffering and a grieving process together.
- 1:11 – “my daughters” – There is great tenderness here.
- “Are there still sons in my womb?” – This is an important question. Naomi is looking for a kinsman-redeemer. (Deut. 25:5-10)
- 1:13 – “the hand of the Lord has gone out against me” – Naomi is hopeless and faithless.
- Jesus came out of this hopeless and faithless situation.
 - “Lord” – At least Naomi is acknowledging Yahweh in this situation.
- 1:14 – “Orpah kissed her mother-in-law” – Orpah turned away when she would’ve had to turn away from the old life to the new life. Many turn back at that point.
- 1:15 – “to her gods” – Naomi doesn’t seem to have any hope in her God at this time.
- 1:16 – “Entreat me not” – Naomi underestimates the hunger for a relationship with God that is in Ruth. She is willing to sacrifice food and husband to pursue a relationship with God.
- “your God, my God” – The worst God gives is still better than the best the world can offer.
- 1:17 – “Lord” – Hebrew “Yahweh.”
- Ruth takes her oath in the name of the Lord. This is not only commitment to Naomi, but conversion to the Lord. (Ruth 2:12)
 - Ruth gives up all that is familiar and comfortable to follow the Lord of Israel.
 - Ruth makes this decision to follow Yahweh while Israel has at the same time turned away from God and despite seeing the miserable witness of Elimelech and Naomi.

- 1:19 – “came to Bethlehem” – This is over a 50 mile journey, a 4,500 ft. descent from the Jordan to Bethlehem, and then a 3,750 ft. ascent from the Jordan to Bethlehem. This is a difficult and treacherous journey for 2 women to make alone.
- “all the city” – This is big news after 10 years.
- 1:20 – “the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me” – She blames her tragedy on God, as we often tend to do.
- “bitterly” – Hebrews 12:15 tells us to remove all roots of bitterness.
 - If Naomi knew beforehand what God would do through this situation with Ruth and Boaz, would she still be feeling bitter? God is going to use these tragedies to even bring about the line of the Messiah.
- 1:21 – “I went out full” – They left because of a famine. In hindsight she realizes she had much to be thankful for when she thought they had nothing.
- 1:22 – “barley harvest” – This is the spring, at the time of the Passover. The Feast of Firstfruits came at the beginning of the barley harvest. (Lev. 23:10-11)
- They left when it was a dry famine. They return in a time of harvest.

Chapter 2:

- 2:1 – “relative” – This is not the word for kinsman-redeemer. It simply means “family member.”
- “man of great wealth” – During the time of famine, when Elimelech and his family left the Promised Land and went to Moab, Boaz stayed in Israel and was blessed by God.
 - “Boaz” – means “strength, or strengthen.”
 - Boaz is the son of Salmon and Rahab, the Canaanite of Jericho. (Matt. 1:5)
 - Solomon named one of the pillars of the Temple, Boaz, which means “strengthen.” (The other pillar was named Jason, which means “establish.”)
- 2:2 – “go to the field, and glean” – Lev. 19:9 and Deut 24:19 allowed for the poor to glean the remains of the fields for their food.
- No doubt, when this law was made, Ruth was on the heart of God.
- 2:3 – “she happened to come to the part of the field” – Lit. “her chance chanced to hit upon the field.” This is the providential hand of God. The land was separated by stone markers. Of all the different sections of the field, of all the reapers, she happens to pick the one run by Boaz.
- The Orthodox Jews say “coincidence is not a kosher word.”
 - Many times, God leads in very natural ways...“for the steps of a righteous man are ordered by the Lord” (Ps. 37:23) and “in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:6).
- 2:4 – “the Lord be with you” – This is a good work environment.
- Boaz seems to be of high moral standing at a time of national depravity.
- 2:5 – “Whose young woman is this?” – Boaz seems to have fallen for her at first sight.
- 2:6 – “the servant” – An unnamed servant introduces the bride to the groom. This is a beautiful picture of the work of the Holy Spirit.

- 2:7 – “she rested a little in the house” – She took one small break, but worked hard the rest of the day.
- Ruth’s trust in God motivated her to work.
- 2:8 – “Do not go” – Boaz provides for Ruth before he redeems her.
- Boaz is very gracious to Ruth, undeservedly.
- 2:9 – “not to touch you” – Boaz is offering his protection and covering to Ruth.
- Boaz, the son of a Canaanite, must understand Ruth’s plight.
 - The kinsman-redeemer was “Immanuel” (Matt. 1:23) and “made like His brethren” in every way (Heb. 2:17; 4:15).
- 2:10 – “bowed down to the ground” – She is humbled by his grace.
- “Why have I found favor?” – This is a good question.
- 2:11 – “answered” – Lit. “raised his voice.”
- 2:12 – “the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge” – Boaz recognizes Ruth’s faith and trust in God. (Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 63:7)
- 2:14 – “bread in the vinegar” – Boaz is serving the bride bread and wine, much like another redeemer.
- “she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back” – Ruth follows the “stop when you are full” diet.
- 2:15 – “do not reproach her” – Boaz is giving her free reign in his fields.
- 2:16 – “bundles fall purposely for her” – These were undeserved moments of harvest given to encourage the worker.
- All success in ministry is undeserved. It is all of His grace.
- 2:17 – “about an ephah” – This is estimated at about 30 lbs. of grain, equivalent to about 5½ gallons or 22 liters.
- 2:20 – “of the Lord” – Naomi is recognizing the hand of the Lord in all this.
- This act of grace is softening Naomi’s heart.
 - “close relatives” – (Heb. “goal”) Lit. “kinsman-redeemer.” This is the first use of “goel” in Ruth.
- 2:22 – “meet you” – Lit. “fall upon you.”
- 2:23 – “wheat harvest” – The time of Pentecost, 50 days later.

Chapter 3:

The kinsman-redeemer was responsible for 4 things:

1. to provide an heir for a brother who had died (Deut. 25:5-10),
2. to redeem land that a poor relative had sold outside the family (Lev. 25:25-28),
3. to redeem a relative who had been sold into slavery (Lev. 25:47-49) and
4. to avenge the killing of a relative as the avenger of blood (Num. 35:19-21).

The 4 requirements of the kinsman-redeemer were:

1. he had to be a near blood relative,
2. he had to be willing to do the redemptive work freely,
3. he had to be able to purchase the subjected property, and
4. he had to take the bride who was associated with the property.

3:1 – “shall I not seek” – Naomi is going to be doing some match-making.

- Naomi knows Boaz is able to redeem Ruth, but she isn't sure that she is willing.
- “security” – Lit. “resting place;” referring to being part of a family. (Ruth 1:9)

3:2 – “winnowing barley tonight” – Apparently Naomi has been snooping around to know of Boaz's whereabouts.

- There were probably only 2-3 threshing floors in Bethlehem. Naomi gets the schedule of this one.
- They generally built threshing floors on top of a hill where the wind was the strongest. They would first pull the tribulum over the wheat to break the chaff from the wheat and then they would throw the wheat into the air and the wind would carry away the chaff leaving only the kernels of wheat on the threshing floor.

3:3 – “wash yourself” – There are beautiful pictures of what God calls us to in this scene as we go to the threshing floor to have the chaff and the wheat separated, being washed with the water of the Word, being anointed with the Holy Spirit, and sitting at the feet of the kinsman-redeemer.

- “your best garment” – Ruth is dressing like a bride. It is a part of her culture.

3:4 – “notice the place” – It would be dark, they didn't have lights, and she didn't want to propose to the wrong man.

- “uncover his feet” – The hem of the robe of a Jewish man was a symbol of his authority. Ruth is taking the posture of submission.
- Four times in this chapter, it is mentioned that Ruth is to go to the feet of the redeemer.
- “he will tell you” – Boaz will recognize this ceremonial gesture and Ruth will soon know if he is willing to play the part of the kinsman-redeemer for her and her family.

3:5 – “all that you say to me I will do” – This is incredible obedience.

- “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise.” (1 Cor. 1:27)

3:7 – “his heart was cheerful” – The harvest and threshing was a time of celebration. (It doesn't seem that he would be drunk with wine.)

- 3:9 – “take your maidservant under your wing” – This is the marriage proposal.
- In the Jewish wedding, they lay the talif (cloth) over the bride to signify marriage.
 - “under your wing” – Earlier, Boaz acknowledged that Ruth had come under the wings of Jehovah. (Ruth 2:12)
 - This is a picture of God’s care for His people. (Ezek. 16:8-13; Isa. 61:1-3)
- 3:10 – “you are a virtuous woman” – Boaz is accepting her based on her character.
- Ruth’s righteous reputation has spread in this depraved society.
 - One translator translates this as “a bride worth winning.”
- 3:12 – “there is a relative closer than I” – Apparently, Boaz has done his research.
- 3:14 – “lay at his feet until morning” – This is a beautiful picture of resting at the feet of the redeemer.
- “Do not let it be known” – Boaz doesn’t want to bring reproach upon Ruth and he also doesn’t want to jeopardize his chances with the other near-of-kin. There is no hint of immorality in this scene.
- 3:15 – “six ephahs” – The measurement has been added by the translators. An ephah is between 30-40lbs and it seems hard to believe that this woman carries over 180lbs of grain to Naomi. The ephah is likely another measurement or simply a scoop Boaz found close by.
- 3:16 – “Is that you” – It is still dark.
- 3:18 – “Sit still” – The Hebrew underlying this word is translated “sat” in 4:1. Thus the author prepares the reader for the next major scene, in which Boaz sits at the town gate to see the matter through.
- “Be still, and know that I am God.” (Ps. 46:10)
 - “the man will not rest” – The reason we can rest is because we know that He will not rest until He brings His bride home to be with Him.

Chapter 4:

The Hebrew word “goel” is used 12 times in chapter 4.

- 4:1 – “Boaz went up to the gate” – This is Boaz not resting.
- “friend” – Lit. “so and so.” We never get the name of this nearest of kin.
- 4:4 – “I thought to inform you” – The nearest of kin has the right of first refusal. Ruth comes with Elimelech’s land in Bethlehem.
- The Law of the Levirate marriage keeps the land in the family and provides the wife with support. (Lev. 25:23-34; Deut. 25:5-10)
- 4:6 – “I cannot redeem it for myself” – This may speak of the failure of the Law (the ten witnesses of v. 2) to redeem.
- 4:7 – “took of his sandal and gave it to another” – He is passing off the right of redemption.

- 4:10 – “I have acquired as my wife” – Boaz is more interested in the bride than the field.
- Boaz is a picture of Christ who bought the field to take out of it a treasure (Matt. 13:44) and he stands in contrast to the nearest of kin who wanted the property without the responsibility of caring for another.
 - Revelation 5 speaks of a scroll that only Jesus was worthy to open. That scroll was a title deed (similar to Jer. 32) and is purchased by the shed blood of Jesus Christ.
- 4:11 – “Ephrathah” – means “fruitful place.”
- “Bethlehem” – means “house of bread.”
 - This may be prophetic. It might speak of the birth of the Messiah. (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:6)
- 4:12 – “the house of Perez” – Perez was born to Tamar after she deceived her father-in-law, Judah, into having sexual relations with her. (Gen. 38)
- This, too, is part of the lineage of the Messiah. (Matt. 1:3)
- 4:13 – “the Lord gave her conception” – It is interesting that Ruth was barren for 10 years in Moab with Naomi’s son. Now with Boaz, she quickly conceives.
- This is the last we hear of Ruth in this account.
- 4:15 – “a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age” – This is a lot like what Jesus does for us.
- 4:17 – “they called” – It seems as if the community is naming this child.
- “Obed” – means “the serving one, or servant.”
- 4:21 – “Salmon” – He married Rahab, the Canaanite prostitute (Matt. 1:5). They gave birth to Boaz.
- 4:22 – “David” – A Moabite was not to enter the assembly of the Lord to the 10th generation (Deut. 23:3), yet within 3 generations David will design and prepare the Temple.
- Ruth and Boaz are the great-grandparents of David.
 - The genealogy goes through Boaz, despite him marrying Ruth through the Leverite marriage. It seems as if the law of the Leverite marriage was set up for this one man, Boaz, to bring the ultimate kinsman-redeemer into our world.