Rut (Rut) ~ Part 4
Rut and Bo'az Marry

4 [1] Meanwhile, Bo'az had gone up to the gate and had sat down there, when the redeemer of whom Bo'az had spoken passed by. "Such-and-such," he said, "come over, and sit down"; so he came over and sat down.

Towns of that time were built tightly with no open squares or forums. Therefore, public business was done in the open space before the gate. The city elders and other men could always be found there to adjudicate disputes and to witness legal and business transactions.

[2] He took ten of the city's leaders and said, "Sit down here"; and they sat down.

Elimelekh … is selling the piece of land (v.4:3). This is the first we have heard of this property; apparently, the story leaves out some conversation in which **Elimelekh** told **Bo'az** she intended to sell. **Bo'az** and the women may have had considerable contact over the past two months. Technically, widows could not inherit their husbands' property (see Numbers 27:8–11). However, because **Elimelek** had no children, brothers, or uncles, the community apparently gave **Elimelekh** the right to dispose of the land. Because she couldn't farm it herself, she had to sell it, and buying it was part of the **go'el's** (redeemer) obligation to **Elimelek**.

[3] Then he said to the redeeming kinsman, "The parcel of land which used to belong to our relative Elimelekh is being offered for sale by Na'omi, who has returned from the plain of Mo'av. [4] I thought I should tell you about it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of the people sitting here and in the presence of the leaders of my people. If you want to redeem it, redeem it. But if it is not to be redeemed, then tell me, so that I can know, because there is no one else in line to redeem it, and I'm after you." He said, "I want to redeem it."

As a widow, **Elimelekh** could not sell **Elimelekh's** land; however, she could assign someone else the right to use that land until the next **Jubilee Year**. Rather than have control over the land go (or remain) outside the family, **Bo'az** requested an intervention in the spirit of the family redeemer laws to **buy … back** the use of the land. Since he was the primary relative entitled to **redeem** the property, **Bo'az** brought the matter to his attention. If he did not redeem the property, **Bo'az** was willing to act himself.

[5] Then Bo'az said, "The same day you buy the field from Na'omi, you must also buy Rut the woman from Mo'av, the wife of the deceased [son], in order to raise up in the name of the deceased an heir for his property." [6] The redeemer said, "Then I can't redeem it for myself, because I might put my own inheritance at risk. You, take my right of redemption on yourself; because I can't redeem it." [7] In the past, this is what was done in Isra'el to validate all transactions involving redemption and exchange: a man took off his shoe and gave it to the other party; this was the form of attestation in Isra'el. [8] So the redeemer said to Bo'az, "Buy it for yourself," and took off his shoe.

Along with the financial cost of redeeming the land, there was a social cost. The transaction also included a commitment to marry **Rut t**he **Mo'avitess** and thereby to seek **to perpetuate the dead man's name on his property**. This refers back to the practice of levirate marriage in Deuteronomy 25:5–10, by which the brother of a man who died without male offspring was required to marry his widow and raise up a family in the name of the dead man. In this case, **Bo'az** had a legal obligation, yet **Bo'az** asserted a moral one.

[9] Bo'az addressed the leaders and all the people: "You are witnesses today that I am purchasing from Na'omi all that belonged to Elimelekh and all that belonged to Kilyon and Machlon. [10] Also I am acquiring as my wife Rut the woman from Mo'av, the wife of Machlon, in order to raise up in the name of the deceased an heir for his property; so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his kinsmen and from the gate of his place. You are witnesses today." [11] All the people at the

gate and the leaders said, "We are witnesses. May Adonai make the woman who has come into your house like Rachel and like Le'ah, who between them built up the house of Isra'el. Do worthy deeds in Efrat; become renowned in Beit-Lechem. [12] May your house, because of the seed Adonai will give you from this young woman, become like the house of Peretz, whom Tamar bore to Y'hudah."

By receiving the sandal (v. 7), **Bo'az** committed himself to redeem **Nao'mi's** property, to marry **Rut**, and to perpetuate the names of **Elimelekh, Kilyon** and **Machlon** on their patrimony. The elders' blessing (vv. 11–12) may have been conventional for married couples in **Bethlehem**, but it carried greater significance for **Bo'az** and **Rut**. Through **Rut**, **Bo'az** would indeed become famous and have his name remembered in **Bethlehem**. The link with Perez, the son Tamar bore to Judah, invites a comparison and contrast between **Rut** and **Tamar**, two foreign women who became part of Judah's genealogy through very different means

Rut Gives Birth to 'Oved

[13] So Bo'az took Rut, and she became his wife. He had sexual relations with her, Adonai enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. [14] Then the women said to Na'omi, "Blessed be Adonai, who today has provided you a redeemer! May his name be renowned in Isra'el. [15] May he restore your life and provide for your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." [16] Na'omi took the child, laid it on her breast and became its nurse. [17] The women who were her neighbors gave it a name; they said, "A son has been born to Na'omi," and called it 'Oved. He was the father of Yishai, the father of David.

Although **Rut** had been unable to bear a son for **Machlon** for 10 years, the **Lord** intervened directly: she immediately conceived and bore a son for **Bo'az**. The child would be a comfort to **Nao'mi** in her old age (lit. *"would sustain her grey hair"*); he would be her family redeemer, providing for her needs in her declining years. He was named **'Oved**, a short form of **Obadiah**, which means *"servant of the LORD."* Though no one could bring back **Nao'mi's** husband or sons, now she had a daughter-in-law whom all recognized as better to you than seven sons—an astonishing accolade in the ancient world.

David's Genealogy from Judah's Son

[18] Here is the genealogy of Peretz. Peretz was the father of Hetzron, [19] Hetzron was the father of Ram, Ram was the father of 'Amminadav, [20] 'Amminadav was the father of Nachshon, Nachshon was the father of Salmon, [21] Salmon was the father of Bo'az, Bo'az was the father of 'Oved, [22] 'Oved was the father of Yishai, and Yishai was the father of David. [1]

The story concludes with a linear genealogy linking the child, **'Oved**, backward and forwards. It traces his roots back to **Perez**, the child born in Genesis 38 out of the dubious relationship between **Judah** and a foreign woman, **Tamar**. It also traces his progeny on to **King David**, who is highlighted not simply because he was a great king but also because he was the **Lord's** answer for the anarchy of the days of the **Judges**, in which this story took place (1:1). The genealogy thus shows us that the **Lord** had been pursuing bigger plans than just bringing together two worthy individuals or restoring the emptiness of a **Judean** widow. Their story formed part of the bigger plan to provide the **Redeemer**, **Yeshua HaMashiach**, whom **Isra'el** needed.

In your family, you might be facing tensions or unresolved conflicts. Just as **Boaz** showed kindness and responsibility towards **Rut** as a family redeemer, consider how you can act as a redeemer in your own home. This week, intentionally reach out to a family member you may have been estranged from. Call them or set aside time to talk. Show grace by listening first, then express your desire to mend the relationship, following the biblical principles of love and reconciliation. Focus on creating an atmosphere of forgiveness.

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[1] Rut 4:1-22.