
RUTH 4: 1 Now Boaz went up to the gate, and sat down there. Behold, the near kinsman of whom Boaz spoke came by; to whom he said, "Come over here, friend, and sit down!" He turned aside, and sat down.

Boaz gathers a council of the elders at the city gates, states the case, and proposes to the nearest kinsman to redeem the inheritance of Elimelech, and take Ruth to wife, Rut 4:1-5. The kinsman refuses, and relinquishes his right to Boaz, Rut 4:6. The manner of redemption in such cases, Rut 4:7, Rut 4:8. Boaz redeems the inheritance in the presence of the elders, and of the people, who witness the contract, and pray for God's blessing upon the marriage, Rut 4:9-12. Boaz takes Ruth for wife, and she bears a son, Rut 4:13. The people's observations on the birth of the child, Rut 4:14, Rut 4:15. It is given to Naomi to nurse, Rut 4:16. The neighboring women name the child, and the book concludes with the genealogy of David, Rut 4:17-22.

Verse 1

Then went Boaz up to the gate - We have often had occasion to remark that the gate or entrance to any city or town was the place where the court of justice was ordinarily kept. For an account of the officers in such places, see the note on Deu 16:18.

Ho, such a one! - sit down here - This familiar mode of compellation is first used here. The original is *הוֹ שֶׁבַח פְּלוֹנִי אֲלֹמֹנִי* shebah poh, peloni almoni! "Hark ye, Mr. Such-a-one of such a place! come and sit down here." This is used when the person of the individual is known, and his name and residence unknown. *אלמוני* almoni comes from *אלם* alam, to be silent or hidden, hence the Septuagint render it by *κρυφῆ* thou unknown person: *פלני* peloni comes from *פלה* palah, to sever or distinguish; you of such a particular place. Modes of compellation of this kind are common in all languages.

RUTH 4: 2 He took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, "Sit down here." They sat down.

Verse 2

He took ten men - Probably it required this number to constitute a court. How simple and how rational was this proceeding!

1. The man who had a suit went to the city gates.
2. Here he stopped till the person with whom he had the suit came to the gate on his way to his work.
3. He called him by name, and he stopped and sat down.
4. Then ten elders were called, and they came and sat down.
5. When all this was done, the appellant preferred his suit.
6. Then the appellee returned his answer.
7. When the elders heard the case, and the response of the appellee, they pronounced judgment, which judgment was always according to the custom of the place.

8. When this was done, the people who happened to be present witnessed the issue.

And thus the business was settled without lawyers or legal casuistry. A question of this kind, in one of our courts of justice, in these enlightened times, would require many days' previous preparation of the attorney, and several hours' arguing between counsellor Botherum and counsellor Borum, till even an enlightened and conscientious judge would find it extremely difficult to decide whether Naomi might sell her own land, and whether Boaz or Peloni might buy it! O, glorious uncertainty of modern law!

RUTH 4: 3 He said to the near kinsman, "Naomi, who has come back out of the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's.

Verse 3

Naomi - selleth a parcel of land - She was reduced to want; the immediate inheritors were extinct, and it was now open for the next heir to purchase the land, and thus preserve the inheritance in the family according to the custom of Israel.

RUTH 4: 4 I thought to disclose it to you, saying, 'Buy it before those who sit here, and before the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know. For there is no one to redeem it besides you; and I am after you." He said, "I will redeem it."

Verse 4

I thought to advertise thee - Both Dr. Kennicott and Father Houbigant have noticed several corruptions in the pronouns of this and the following verses; and their criticisms have been confirmed by a great number of MSS. since collated. The text corrected reads thus: "And I said I will reveal this to thy ear, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it; but if thou wilt not redeem it, tell me, that I may know; for there is none to redeem it but thou, and I who am next to thee. And he said, I will redeem it. And Boaz said, In the day that thou redeemest the land from the hand of Naomi, thou wilt also acquire Ruth, the wife of the dead, that thou mayest raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance;" Rut 4:4, Rut 4:5. - See Kennicott's Dissertations, vol. i., p. 449; Houbigant in loco; and the *Variae Lectiones* of Kennicott and De Rossi. This is Boaz's statement of the case before the kinsman, and before the people and the elders.

I will redeem it - I will pay down the money which it is worth. He knew not of the following condition.

RUTH 4: 5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must buy it also from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance."

 Verse 5

Thou must buy it also of Ruth - More properly, Thou wilt also acquire Ruth. Thou canst not get the land without taking the wife of the deceased and then the children which thou mayest have shall be reputed the children of Mahlon, thy deceased kinsman.

RUTH 4: 6 The near kinsman said, "I can't redeem it for myself, lest I mar my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption for yourself; for I can't redeem it."

 Verse 6

I cannot redeem it for myself - The Targum gives the proper sense of this passage: "And the kinsman said, On this ground I cannot redeem it, because I have a wife already; and I have no desire to take another, lest there should be contention in my house, and I should become a corrupter of my inheritance. Do thou redeem it, for thou hast no wife; for I cannot redeem it." This needs no comment. But still the gloss of the Targum has no foundation in the law of Moses. See the law, Deu 25:5-9.

RUTH 4: 7 Now this was the custom in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning exchanging, to confirm all things: a man took off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour; and this was the way of attestation in Israel.

 Verse 7

A man plucked off his shoe - The law of such a case is given at large in Deu 25:5-9. It was simply this: If a brother, who had married a wife, died without children, the eldest brother was to take the widow, and raise up a family to the brother deceased; and he had a right to redeem the inheritance, if it had been alienated. But if the person who had the right of redemption would not take the woman, she was to pull off his shoe and spit in his face, and he was ever after considered as a disgraced man. In the present case the shoe only is taken off, probably because the circumstances of the man were such as to render it improper for him to redeem the ground and take Ruth to his wife; and because of this reasonable excuse, the contemptuous part of the ceremony is omitted. See the note on Deu 25:9.

RUTH 4: 8 So the near kinsman said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself." He took off his shoe.

RUTH 4: 9 Boaz said to the elders, and to all the people, "You are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, from the hand of Naomi.

RUTH 4: 10 Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, I have purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance, that the name of the dead not be cut off from among his brothers, and from the gate of his place. You are witnesses this day."

RUTH 4: 11 All the people who were in the gate, and the elders, said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who has come into your house like Rachel and like Leah, which two built the house of Israel; and treat you worthily in Ephrathah, and be famous in Bethlehem.

Verse 11

We are witnesses - It is not very likely that any writing was drawn up. There was an appeal made to the people then present, whether they had seen and understood the transaction; who answered, We have witnessed it. If any minutes of court were kept, then the transaction was entered probably in some such words as these: "On ___ day of ____, Boaz bought the land of Elimelech from Naomi his widow, and took Ruth, her daughter-in-law, to wife; ____, who had the nearest right, refusing to buy the land on the conditions then proposed."

The Lord make this woman - like Rachel and like Leah - May thy family be increased by her means, as the tribes were formed by means of Rachel and Leah, wives of the patriarch Jacob!

Which two did build the house of Israel - We have already seen that בן ben, a son, comes from the root בנה banah, he built; and hence אבן eben, a stone, because as a house is built of stones, so is a family of children. There is a similar figure in Plautus, Mostell. Act i., sec. 2, ver. 37. - Nunc etiam volo Dicere, ut homines aedium esse similes arbitremini.

Primum dum parentes fabri liberum sunt,

Et fundamentum liberorum substruunt. "I would also observe, that ye men are similar to houses; ye parents are the fabricators of the children, and they are the foundation of the building."

RUTH 4: 12 Let your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give you of this young woman."

Verse 12

Like the house of Pharez - This was very appropriate; for from Pharez, the son of Judah, by Tamar, came the family of the Beth-lehemites and that of Elimelech.

RUTH 4: 13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son.

Verse 13

So Boaz took Ruth - The law of Moses had prohibited the Moabites, even to the tenth generation, from entering into the congregation of the Lord; but this law, the Jews think, did not extend to women; and even if it had, Ruth's might be considered an exempt case, as she had been already incorporated into the family by marriage; and left her own country, people, and gods, to become a proselyte to the true God in the land of Israel.

RUTH 4: 14 The women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a near kinsman; and let his name be famous in Israel.

RUTH 4: 15 He shall be to you a restorer of life, and sustain you in your old age, for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him."

RUTH 4: 16 Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse to it.

Verse 16

Naomi took the child - This might do for Naomi, but it was bad for the child. A child, unless remarkably healthy and robust, will suffer considerably by being nursed by an old woman, especially if the child sleep with her. The aged gain refreshment and energy by sleeping with the young; and from the same means the young derive premature decrepitude. The vigor which is absorbed by the former is lost by the latter. It is a foolish and destructive custom to permit young children, which is a common case, to sleep with aged aunts and old grandmothers. Bacon's grand secret of the cure of old age, couched in so many obscure and enigmatical terms, is simply this: Let young persons sleep constantly with those who are aged and infirm. And it was on this principle that the physicians of David recommended a young healthy girl to sleep with David in his old age. They well knew that the aged infirm body of the king would absorb a considerable portion of healthy energy from the young woman.

RUTH 4: 17 The women, her neighbours, gave him a name, saying, "There is a son born to Naomi"; and they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Verse 17

The neighbors gave it a name - That is, they recommended a name suitable to the circumstances of the case; and the parents and grandmother adopted it.

They called his name Obed - עֹבֵד obed, serving, from עָבַד abad, he served. Why was this name given? Because he was to be the nourisher of her old age, Rut 4:15. And so he must be by lying in her bosom, even if services in future life were wholly left out of the question. These neighbors of Naomi were skillful people. See on Rut 4:16 (note). Other meanings, of which I am not ignorant, have been derived from these words; those who prefer them have my consent.

He is the father of Jesse, the father of David - And for the sake of this conclusion, to ascertain the line of David, and in the counsel of God to fix and ascertain the line of the Messiah was this instructive little book written.

RUTH 4: 18 Now this is the history of the generations of Perez: Perez became the father of Hezron,

Verse 18

Now these are the generations - The Targum gives a copious paraphrase on this and the following verses, I shall insert the principal parts in their proper places.

RUTH 4: 19 and Hezron became the father of Ram, and Ram became the father of Amminadab,

Verse 19

Hezron begat Ram - He is called Aram here by the Septuagint, and also by St. Matthew, Mat 1:3.

RUTH 4: 20 and Amminadab became the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon became the father of Salmon,

Verse 20

Amminadab begat Nahshon - The Targum adds, "And Nahshon was chief of the house of his father in the tribe of Judah."

Nahshon begat Salmon - In the Hebrew it is שלמה Salmah, which Houbigant thinks was an error of an ancient scribe, before any final letters were acknowledged in the Hebrew alphabet: for then the word would be written שלמון Salmon, which a scribe, after final letters were admitted, might mistake for שלמה Salmah, and so write it, instead of שלמון Salmon, the ו vau and final nun in conjunction (ון) bearing some resemblance to ה.

The Targum calls him "Salmah the Just; he was the Salmah of Beth-lehem and Netopha, whose sons abolished the watches which Jeroboam set over the highways; and their works and the works of their father were good in Netopha."

RUTH 4: 21 and Salmon became the father of Boaz, and Boaz became the father of Obed,

Verse 21

And Salmon begat Boaz - The Targum goes on, "And Salmon begat Absan the judge; he is Boaz the Just, on account of whose righteousness the people of the house of Israel were redeemed from the hands of their enemies; and at whose supplication the famine departed from the land of Israel."

And Boaz begat Obed - "Who served the Lord in this world with a perfect heart."

RUTH 4: 22 and Obed became the father of Jesse, and Jesse became the father of David.

Verse 22

And Obed begat Jesse - "Who," says the Targum, "also is called Nachash, שחש because neither iniquity nor corruption was found in him, that he should be delivered into the hands of the angel of death, that he might take away his soul from him. And he lived many days until the counsel was remembered before the Lord, that the serpent gave to Eve the wife of Adam, that she should eat of the tree; by eating of the fruit of which they became wise, to distinguish between good and evil: and by that counsel all the inhabitants of the earth became guilty of death; and by this iniquity Jesse the Just died." Here is no mean or indistinct reference to the doctrine of original sin: and it shows us, at least, what the very ancient rabbins thought on the subject. I should observe that these additions are taken from the London Polyglot; they are not found in that of Antwerp; but they are the same that appear in the Targum of the great Bible printed by Bomberg, at Venice, in 1547-49.

And Jesse begat David - To this no comment is added by the Targumist, as the history of this king is found in the following book.

The ten persons whose genealogy is recorded in the five last verses, may be found, with a trifling change of name, in the genealogical list in Mat 1:3-6, as forming important links in the line of the Messiah. To introduce this appears to have been the principal object of the writer, as introductory to the following books, where the history of David, the regal progenitor and type of the Messiah, is so particularly detailed.

For the account of the birth of Pharez and his brother Zarah, the reader is requested to refer to Genesis 38:12-30, and to the notes there; and for several particulars in the genealogy itself, to the notes on Matthew 1:1-16 and Luke 3:23-38, where the wisdom, goodness, and providence of God, in the preservation of this line, are particularly noticed.

Masoretic Notes on Ruth

Number of verses in Ruth is 85.

Middle verse is Rut 2:21.

We have already seen that Archbishop Usher places the event mentioned here in A.M. 2686, about one hundred years after the conquest of Canaan.