

Ruth 4:1-6

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/ruth/ruth-4/ruth-41-6/>

Boaz offers the right of redemption to Naomi's closer relative who has the right before Boaz to act as a kinsman redeemer.

As Naomi predicted, Boaz is a man of action, and immediately seeks to settle the matter. *Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there.* In ancient times, the *gate* was like the town square with the court house in many modern towns. That is where people met, rulers judged, and legal transactions took place. It is also where you could find people. Sure enough, *the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by.* It being a small village, we can imagine that Boaz knew where to find the close relative. It is interesting that we are not told the closest relative's name.

Boaz asks his relative to have a chat. The relative agrees and *he turned aside and sat down.* Then Boaz gathers some witnesses. *He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down.*

Boaz is preparing to accomplish a transaction in the custom of the day. Boaz then addresses *the closest relative*, saying *"Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.* Boaz refers to Elimelech as *our brother*, showing that they are, indeed, closely related. Boaz then states the right of the closer relative to redeem the land of Naomi's husband. It is likely the land had been sold by the family, who then still had inadequate means to survive, and therefore moved to Moab. Per the Old Testament law, land could be sold or mortgaged, but only with a right of redemption, so the family would always have the opportunity to repurchase the land, and with it their means of economic survival.

The unnamed relative appears initially to view this as a rare opportunity to purchase land without a right of redemption, since he would be considered the redeeming party. Boaz states, *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.*

Boaz then makes it clear that if the closer relative does not desire to redeem the land then he is next in line and intends to redeem it for himself. The unnamed relative is quick to say that he desires to buy the land. Boaz now discloses that there is a condition that comes with the redemption. *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.* Boaz is making sure the unnamed, closest relative understands that his redemption will not benefit the investment portfolio of his own family, but rather that of Ruth and Naomi. This requirement is to fulfill the purpose of the redemption law, which was to perpetuate the affected family.

Similar to the story of Tamar, *the closest relative said, I cannot redeem it for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself.*

The closest relative was eager to acquire land for his own family, but was not willing to use his resources to secure an inheritance for *his brother Elimelech*. Ruth's offspring would not bring economic benefit to the unnamed relative with first rights to redeem. The first child born to Ruth by this relative would be deemed the heir of Elimelech (whose sons had died) and would be entitled to claim the deceased brother's share of inheritance, an inheritance that might otherwise benefit the unnamed relative. This relative did not desire to provide an heir for Ruth because it would interfere with his own wealth. He states this when he says to redeem Ruth would "*jeopardize my own inheritance.*"

Thus, now, the right has passed to Boaz. Boaz will accomplish the redemption. Boaz takes Ruth as wife at his own cost in order to raise up an heir for *his brother Elimelech*. He is sacrificing for the benefit of another. He is redeeming Ruth from being a widow. What remains is the complete the legal transaction. We are now provided a fascinating peek into the real estate custom of the day.

Biblical Text

Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, "Turn aside, friend, sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. ² He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. 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. 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.'" And he said, "I will redeem *it*."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."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*."