

Ruth 4:7-12

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Boaz completed the transaction in front of witnesses and acquired the land and Ruth as his wife.

In modern times real estate transactions are witnessed using notaries, and deeds are recorded in county courthouses. We rely on signatures of the parties and of witnesses (the notary.) But at a time prior to paper, they used a different custom. To confirm *the redemption and the exchange of land*, or to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another. This was the ancient way to create a legal transfer. The ten witnesses would provide the *attestation*. Given the phrasing, it seems likely that by the time this story was recorded in writing, the custom had changed.

So, according to the custom, *the closest relative said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself." And he removed his sandal.*⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech, the deceased husband of Naomi. But in addition to purchasing the land, Boaz announces that he has *acquired Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, Naomi's son, to be his wife.*

Boaz includes in his statement his rationale for marrying Ruth. He specifically commits *to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance*. Boaz is using his own resources to build up another branch of the family. The witnesses approve, and bless the transaction. They wish the union of Boaz and Ruth to be prolific, similar to their forefather Jacob, who was renamed Israel. They also pray that the offspring will have *wealth and become famous in Bethlehem*. This prayer is answered, since the offspring leads to the birth of king David.

They then appeal to the story of Tamar. When the brothers refused to do their duty and provide Tamar an heir, Tamar posed as a prostitute and induced Judah to lie with her. From that unseemly engagement came *Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah*. That is the forefather of Boaz. Tamar and Ruth are two of the four women mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1. They have in common that they were beneficiaries of the kinsman redeemer custom. Jesus is our kinsman redeemer, and this is likely a picture for believers. Jesus redeems those who believe and gives us an inheritance.

⁷ Now this was *the custom* in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of land to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the *manner of attestation* in Israel. ⁸ So the closest relative said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself." And he removed his sandal. ⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. ¹⁰ Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his *birth* place; you are witnesses today." ¹¹ All the

people who were in the court, and the elders, said, “*We are* witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem.¹² Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the Lord will give you by this young woman.”