

# The Book of Ruth

## Chapter 4

### Notes on Chapter 4

- vs. 1 – the presence of a gate implies the presence of walls, perhaps dating back to the town's Canaanite origins. The town's situation on a hill made it a good defensive position.
- vs. 1 - In Bible times, the gate of the city was a place for business and governmental affairs to be settled – Deuteronomy 16:18
- vs. 1 – The name of the nearer kinsmen is purposely obscured, likely to avoid shame on his family for not performing his duty here. A Jewish tradition gives him the name Tob.
- vs. 2 – These elders (see Exodus 18:21-22) act as both witness and judge. While 2 or 3 are enough in smaller matters, it seems weightier matters such as this required 10.
- vs. 3 – It appears that Elimelech had “sold” his family's field in Bethlehem before leaving for Moab. By “sold”, according to Jewish custom, it means someone had paid for the rights to use the field until the next Year of Jubilee, when it would return to the original owner's family (Leviticus 25:8-17).
- vs. 4 - What is being asked of the kinsmen here is to step in and buy back the rights to the field for Naomi and Ruth so that their family line could continue.
- vs. 5 – To perform the task of kinsmen-redeemer required that both property and posterity be redeemed. Likely he had only considered the possibility of having to take Naomi as a wife, which would not happen since she was past childbearing years.
- vs. 6 – Gill – “he considered, that as he had a wife and children already and as he might have more by marrying Ruth, his family expenses would be increased, and his estate diminished; and what would remain must be divided among many, and this estate in particular go to Ruth's firstborn, whereby his own inheritance would be scattered and crumbled, and come to little or nothing; add to all which, he might suppose that her ancient mother Naomi would be upon his hands to maintain also”
- vs. 7-8 – According to Deuteronomy 25:5-10, the shame of refusing to act as kinsmen-redeemer was highlighted by the slighted widow removing the refuser's sandal and spitting in his face. Here this element of shaming is removed, though the symbolic act of transferring the right to another involved giving them your sandal.
- vs. 9-10 – Boaz declares his legal redemption of the land and intention to enter a levirate marriage with Ruth.
- vs. 11-12 – The audience pronounces a beautiful blessing upon the marriage, that the offspring of the desolate line become as numerous as the tribes of Israel.

- The mention of Judah and Tamar in vs. 12 is interesting. The Bethlehemites are descendants of this son of Judah (vs. 18). But there is a curious parallel between the stories of Boaz/Ruth and Judah/Tamar. Tamar, a Canaanite, had to trick her father-in-law into honoring the levirate custom, in a sense (Genesis 38). Ruth, a Moabite, had Boaz willingly and joyfully honor the custom. Both of these Gentile women are in the lineage of Christ (Matthew 1:3,5)
- vs. 13 – Note that God blesses the union.
- vs. 14-15 – what a change from Naomi's gloom in 1:20-21!
- vs. 16 – Naomi raises the child, likely after he was weaned.
- vs. 17 – *Obed* means "serving". Barnes notes: "with allusion to the service of love and duty which he would render to his grandmother Naomi."
- vs. 17 – Here is noted the God's hand of providence at work in the lineage of King David.
- vs. 18-22 – A closing genealogy showing the descent of David's line from Judah's son Pharez.