

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON TWENTY-SEVEN: RUTH 2:1

"And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz."

Chapter two begins with the introduction of a new character. Boaz was a relative of Naomi's husband Elimelech. The exact relationship is never given in Scripture. It is interesting that the Hebrew word translated "kinsman" in verse 1 is "yada." It is a different word than the Hebrew "goel" used in the 11 occurrences of the word in chapters 3 and 4. Also, in 2:20 "kinsmen" (plural) is the same Hebrew word "goel" used in chapters 3 and 4.

The "goel" or Kinsman-Redeemer becomes a permanent figure in the story of Ruth later. But Boaz is initially introduced as an acquaintance, friend, someone acknowledged, or a person of whom one has knowledge or understanding. By use of this word "yada" the narrative indicates that Naomi probably knew him well, perhaps even as a friend.

Who was Boaz? Verse 1 only describes him as a "mighty man of wealth." The Hebrew word "chayil" translated here "wealth" also means "power, might, valor, strength." It has a military meaning such as "army, force of men (soldiers), war." Boaz, then, is a man of power and substance, a respected leader in the community.

Scripture gives us more information on Boaz than we find in the book of Ruth. We know that his father Salmon (Mt. 1:4, 5) was once a spy under the leadership of Joshua. General Joshua sent Salmon and a companion into the fortified city of Jericho to determine what it would take to conquer the city (Joshua 2). In Jericho, Salmon met the lady who would become Boaz's mother.

Rahab, like Ruth, was raised in idolatry. The Bible tells us plainly that she was a harlot. She probably owned an inn, which is why the spies "lodged there" (literally, "laid down there.") The inn most likely served drinks and food and was a place people gathered socially. This would be a good place for spies to gain information and to get an idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the city.

Rahab, like Ruth, had put her faith in the God of Israel. She had heard of the miracle He wrought at the Red Sea. She believed God would give the Israelites the land of Canaan. He had already given them the victory over the Amorites (Joshua 2:9-10). She gave the spies the information they sought, hid them, and let them down outside the wall to escape Jericho's soldiers. In return, the spies promised to spare Rahab and her family.

Boaz must have heard the story of the fall of Jericho (Joshua 6) and his parents' part in it many times growing up. Perhaps he saw something of his mother in Ruth. In spite of her pagan upbringing Rahab became a hero of the faith, memorialized in Hebrews 11 (verse 31) with Abraham, Moses, David, and others. James presents her as an example of a believer who proves her faith by her actions (James 2:25).

Boaz enters the story already having a connection to Naomi and Ruth. He knew Naomi and her family 10 years before when they lived in Bethlehem. He probably had a predisposition to be sympathetic to Moabite Ruth, an outsider like his mother had once been. He's a man of influence in Bethlehem. And

his family connection will put him in a position to aid Naomi and Ruth, two widows currently living in poverty.

God brings people into our lives at just the right time. For me, meeting Sandy and getting involved in the Naomi-Ruth Connection ministry has been a God send. The time I've spent studying the book of Ruth has been a blessing. I'm no longer focusing on what I lost or wishing things were like they used to be. As I read the story of how God worked in the lives of these widows I'm watching for ways God is working in my life. And I can see His hand at work! He's working in your life, too.

"The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works. All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee." Psalm 145:9-10