

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON SIXTY-SIX: RUTH 4:7-8

"Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbor: and this was a testimony in Israel. Therefore, the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe."

The nearer kinsman had publically admitted before ten witnesses that he could not redeem Naomi's land and redeem the widow Ruth without endangering his own estate. Therefore, he withdrew his right to redeem and passed the duty on to Boaz.

The author of Ruth breaks the story here to make a note concerning how property rights were exchanged during the time of the Judges. This tells us that the Book of Ruth was written after the time of the Judges, most likely during the Monarchy.

Generally, authorship of the Book of Ruth is attributed to Samuel the Prophet. Samuel was the last Judge and the man God had used to appoint the first two kings of Israel: Saul and David. The genealogy of David is added to the end of the book. This could indicate that the book was not written until the reign of David, in which case Samuel was not the author since he died before David was crowned. Or, Samuel authored the book trusting that David would be king since God directed him to anoint David when he was 17 years old. The last few verses may have been added after David became King of Israel. It does seem likely that the Book of Ruth was written because Ruth was an ancestor of David and Jesus.

In those days land was surveyed in triangles. Fieldstone markers were placed at each point to mark boundary lines. The sandal that was worn to walk the boundaries became a moveable title to the property. Thus, the owner would give his sandal to the purchaser (new owner). It signified the new owners right to walk the land. The dramatic action of the seller taking off his sandal and giving it to the purchaser would ensure the witnesses would remember the transaction in case any question of ownership should arise in the future. This was the normal business practice for exchanging land.

Under the Levirate Law, if the near kinsman refused to do his duty and marry the widow of his kinsman, the widow would remove the sandal from the near kinsman's foot and spit in his face (Dt. 25:9). It was considered a disgrace for a man to refuse to do his duty in redeeming the widow. The shame would follow the man so that he would be known as "him that hath the shoe loosed" (Dt. 25:10).

Boaz wanted to marry Ruth. Therefore, he wanted to make it as easy and painless as possible for the nearer kinsman to relinquish his rights. The widow Ruth was not present so the nearer kinsman didn't have to face her or endure public humiliation by having his sandal removed and be spit upon. Boaz handled the redemption of the land as an ordinary business deal. The nearer kinsman removed his own sandal (v. 8) voluntarily and handed it to Boaz. There was no mention of the widow. The kinsman said, "Buy it (the land) for thee." No spitting involved. Boaz accomplished his goal and everybody was satisfied including the nearer kinsman whose estate remained safely intact.

Ruth had stepped back from the situation and allowed Boaz to act on her behalf. Our Redeemer, Jesus, is willing to take the lead and work out our problems and issues, too. Sometimes that means that we just sit back and let Him fight our battles for us (Dt. 3:22).

"For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Psalm 48:14