

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON SIXTY-THREE: RUTH 4:4b

"And he said, I will redeem it."

The nearer kinsman was willing to redeem Elimelech's land for Naomi. He would, in fact, be making a prudent investment for the future by helping Naomi now. Elimelech's widow was past the age of child-bearing. Elimelech's sons were dead. There was, therefore, no heir to inherit after Naomi died. Elimelech's land would become the property of the nearer kinsman. Thus, in redeeming the land for Naomi, he was actually purchasing it for himself as a future inheritance.

The Bible doesn't tell us what the nearer kinsman's motivation was for agreeing to redeem the land for Naomi. He might have done it for selfish purposes, believing the land would eventually be added to his own holdings. He might have done it because it was his duty under the Mosaic Law. Perhaps he did it out of compassion for Naomi's situation. Although in that case he already knew if he didn't help Naomi Boaz would.

Whatever his motivation, God's purpose in making His Laws was that the stronger brother help the weaker. The nation of Israel was first and foremost a family. The people were all descendants of one man: Jacob. God expected them to act like a family and support each other.

The laws we've discussed so far have all been situations where kinsmen who have property or wealth help out their poorer relations. They did this by leaving grain in the fields to be gleaned or redeeming land that had been sold. Even the Levirate Law was a situation where a living brother would rescue his deceased brother's widow and preserve his brother's name and legacy by producing an heir for him.

Other laws were given that required the Israeli to give preference to his kin over strangers. For example, a Hebrew was forbidden to engage in usury (money-lending for profit) to another Hebrew while it was okay to do so to a non-Hebrew (Dt. 23:19-20). Similarly, a Hebrew could not own another Hebrew as a bondservant (slave) but must treat him/her as a hired servant (Lev. 25:39-42). However, it was permissible to own non-Hebrew bondservants (Lev. 25:44-46).

As Christians, we, too, belong to a family. We have a special relationship to one another. Jesus commanded us to love one another (John 15:12). It's not a suggestion. It's a commandment and it's repeated in verse 17 for emphasis. Love for other Christians is evidence that we are truly born again (1 John 3:14). It is the identifying mark by which the world can recognize we belong to Jesus: because we love one another (John 13:34-35). Love for one another is the purpose of this group. We are all part of the same family. We want to support one another. Proof that we are saved in the first place is our desire to reach out to our sisters who are hurting, grieving, and suffering. Don't be afraid or ashamed to ask for help. It is a privilege, not a burden, to help a sister in Christ.

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." 1 John 4:7-8