

Ruth 2:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Chapter 2 introduces a crucial character: **"And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz."** The narrator reveals information Naomi and Ruth don't yet have—Naomi has a kinsman (moda, מוֹדָע) through her deceased husband. The term moda indicates an acquaintance or relative, though not necessarily close family. This seemingly incidental detail proves critically important for the redemption narrative about to unfold.

Boaz is described as "a mighty man of wealth" (ish gibbor chayil, אִישׁ גִּבּוֹר חַיִּיל). The phrase gibbor chayil can mean "mighty warrior," "man of valor," or "man of substance/wealth." It describes someone of character, resources, and social standing—a pillar of the community. The same phrase describes Gideon (Judges 6:12) and David's warriors (2 Samuel 23:8), indicating strength, competence, and integrity beyond merely financial wealth.

The identification "of the family of Elimelech" (mimishpachat Elimelek, מִמִּישְׁפַּחַת אֱלִיעֶזֶר) establishes his kinship status, making him a potential kinsman-redeemer under Israelite law. Leviticus 25:25-28 and Deuteronomy 25:5-10 established the principle that near relatives had responsibility and rights to redeem family members in distress and preserve family lines through levirate marriage. Boaz's introduction with these specific details (kinsman, man of substance, family connection) signals to informed readers that redemption is possible.

Historical Context

The kinsman-redeemer (go'el, גֹּאֵל) concept was central to Israel's social and theological framework. A go'el had rights and responsibilities to:

1. buy back family property sold due to poverty (Leviticus 25:25-28)
2. redeem family members sold into slavery (Leviticus 25:47-49)
3. avenge the blood of murdered relatives (Numbers 35:19-21),
4. marry a deceased brother's widow to preserve the family line (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

The institution protected vulnerable family members and preserved tribal inheritances.

Boaz's wealth and character made him uniquely positioned to serve as go'el for Naomi and Ruth. He had financial resources to redeem Elimelech's property and social standing to navigate the legal complexities. His designation as gibbor chayil recalls other biblical heroes raised by God to deliver His people—a military term applied to a civilian underscores his exceptional character and capability.

The name "Boaz" (Bo'az, בֹּאֵז) possibly means "in him is strength," though etymology is uncertain. Ironically, one of the bronze pillars Solomon erected at the temple entrance was named Boaz (1 Kings 7:21), suggesting strength and stability. This man of strength will become the pillar supporting Naomi and Ruth's restoration, ultimately supporting the Davidic line and messianic hope.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What does God's provision of Boaz before Ruth and Naomi know they need a redeemer teach about divine foreknowledge and preparation?

2. How does Boaz's description as "mighty in wealth" and character foreshadow Christ, the ultimate Kinsman-Redeemer who has both the resources and worthiness to redeem us?
3. In what ways might God already be preparing provision for needs you don't yet recognize you have?

Interlinear Text

וְלִנְעֻמָּה	מִיָּד ע	אִישׁ	אִישׁ	גִּבּוֹר	חַיִּל	מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת
And Naomi	had a kinsman	man	man	a mighty	of wealth	of the family
H5281	H4129	H376	H376	H1368	H2428	H4940

אֵלִיֶּמֶךְ	וְשֵׁמוֹ	בְּעַז:
of Elimelech	and his name	was Boaz
H458	H8034	H1162

Additional Cross-References

Ruth 4:21 (Parallel theme): And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed,

Ruth 3:12 (Parallel theme): And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

Ruth 3:2 (Parallel theme): And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor.

Matthew 1:5 (Parallel theme): And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;