

David fulfilled this request in 2 Sam 9:3: **Is there still someone of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God to him?**

- It was this loving-kindness of God that made the people call Him both **Father & Shepherd**. He was the 'Father of the fatherless': Is 63: 15-16; Ps 68:5.
- As 'the sheep of His pasture' His people felt secure for time and eternity: Ps 95:7
- **Yahweh's Heseed** was seen particularly in His willingness to continue relationship with us in spite of our sinfulness.....when His Love turned to Mercy to the undeserved. This is seen clearly in the prophet Hosea where the prophet was asked to love an unfaithful wife so that he could tell the people how God felt about their continued unfaithfulness to Him: Hosea 11: 1-4
- This is continued in Jeremiah 31:20 **Is Ephraim my dear child?** the language he uses is like the parable of the Prodigal son in Luke 15!
- **NB:** This is the mystery of God, our Creator and Father, wanting communion with us His tiny creatures!
- It is **this heseed** which conquers Naomi's sorrow, gives new life to Ruth, and which makes Boaz an ancestor of the Messiah Himself! What a reward!

Channels of Grace: God can do everything by Himself.

- He needs no one, but He has **chosen to work with us and through us** to bring other souls to Himself. Grace also comes directly to those who are disposed to receive it. This is especially so in people who are in relationship with Him through His Covenant – those who are consecrated to Him.
- We not only become receivers of God's loving-kindness but also channels of that heseed to other souls so that God's love can be experienced by those who want to come close to Him.
- St. Paul shows the Corinthians **what grace means**; what Jesus did for us to make us rich and then what they must do to make others 'rich' also: 2 Cor 8:1-14.

- Here, Paul is actually talking about money, but the principle holds for every aspect of life. We not only give materially but most of all spiritually in the Divine Will Mission, so that Humanity will be enriched with all of God's gifts and graces, and that He can reign among us.
- Jesus is the model for us; we only do what He has done so that *God's hesed* can conquer the unbelieving world. To be like Him, we too, have to become givers and people who serve **for the Son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life for many** Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; Jn 13:1-7.
- To believe in God's grace commits us to serve God's Will in ourselves and in our neighbours.
- In Book of Ruth, we see that the gracious provision of God did not provoke Boaz to hoard his grain for some future 'rainy day' as the **rich farmer in Gospel** did, and was condemned for his selfishness: Lk 12: 13-21
- The important principle is that our lives and relationships are meant to mirror God's Life and His relationship with His children. Love is the most important commandment: Mt 22:37-40 **Jesus said: you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: you must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets also.**

Boaz is one who has the right of redemption over us: 2:20-23

- Chapter 1 ended on a note of sadness, bitterness, loneliness and poverty.
- Chapter 2 ends on a note of hope, comfort and provision. Bethlehem **has** again become a house of Bread for Naomi and Ruth. Both women have experienced God's Hesed through the agency of Boaz, and they know that everything is going to be okay once Yahweh is with them.
- Ps 27:1; 118:6; Ps 91: 1-2; **Is 41:10**; Jos 1:9; Ps 23:4; Phil 4:7; Deut 31:6; Ps 34:4; Ps 56:3-4; Rom 8: 38-39; **Is 43:1-3**; **Is 12:2**; etc

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## Ruth chapter 3

### The kinsman-redeemer: The **levir** and the **goel**:

- Behind the story of Ruth lies the doctrine of redemption, so we need to look at how the idea of a redeemer developed from ancient customs that were practiced not only by Israel but by other ancient cultures.
- It all had to do with **family solidarity, protection of inheritance and land ownership, so a man's NAME must live on.**
- The **levir** was a close relative – like a brother – who must keep the dead man's name alive **in a son** who will take the inheritance and therefore keep the land within the family.
- The land was owned by God, but He had leased it out to Israel as part of her Covenant privilege. Cf **story of Tamar** in Gen 38; Deut 25: 5-10 for later rules concerning the levir.
- Personal feelings regarding the widow were not to be taken into consideration – only one's duty to the dead man – so we are dealing **with altruistic love for God** and Covenant here. **Modern self-centeredness** cannot grasp this, but it is very clear in the story of Ruth, and in Tamar in Gen 38!
- Tamar risked death in order to have a son for her dead husband! Cf Deut 25:6-7 **that his name may not be blotted out in Israel**
- The duty of **the levir** in Ruth referred simply to the next of kin – this is why Naomi was excited about Boaz. The fact that Boaz was a good man was a bonus and a gift, but he would have had to do his duty **anyway!**

### The Goel or redeemer:

- There was a strong sense of solidarity among the Chosen people. Members of the family had a duty of care for each other, and must protect each other. This explains Boaz' response to Ruth as soon as he realises the family connection.... he protected her from being molested by the reapers, gave her food and provisions etc.
- **The goel** had to redeem the land (which belonged to Yahweh and therefore could not go out of Israelite hands). Lev 25:25-28 deals with land ownership and its complications – including redeeming the property if it has been sold for some reason.
- It is this redemption of property which underlines Ruth chapter 4

- In Lev 25:47-49 the redemption is not that of property **but of persons** who may have fallen into financial hardship and sold themselves as slaves to survive.
- Numbers 35: 16ff deals with the redeemer as the 'blood avenger' to restore justice after murder. He had to put the murderer to death himself. It was the strongest way the goel protected weak and frail members of the family.
- The duties of the *levir/goel* were not just that of family solidarity but that of the Covenanted people of God – so it reflected Covenant loyalty or hesed to God's people.

### Yahweh as our Goel/Levir

- These two words are used to mean **kinsman-redeemer**, and this is the way Israel referred to Yahweh!
- He proved Himself their **Goel** when He liberated them from slavery in Egypt: Ex 6:6-8 **I will deliver you from your bondage and I will redeem (Goel) you with an outstretched arm.....**
- The central focus of their calling to be God's people **is this act of redemption!** Then He gave them **family, land and a name** all of which had to be kept intact for Him.
- Isaiah chapters 40-45 celebrates this relationship with God: **do not be afraid for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine.**
- God is described as **the Lord, your Redeemer** in Isaiah 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; **63:16: our Redeemer is your ancient Name!**
- The Psalms also refer to God as the redeemer (Goel): Ps 19:14 **my rock and my redeemer Ps72:12ff from oppression and violence he redeems (goel) your life.** See also Ps 69:18; Ps 77:14ff; Ps 103:4; 106:10; 107:2 etc!
- God is seen as the One who stands by the oppressed, who delivers the needy, and with His mighty hand delivers His people from their enemies both natural and spiritual giving everyone who suffers freedom from their slaveries and hope for a new life in God. This is how He expressed His loving-kindness to humanity as He shows deep concern for our material, emotional and spiritual welfare for time and eternity.
- Naomi and Ruth will be able to say what Isaiah expressed in Is 25:9: **On that day it will be said: See, this is our God in whom we hoped for salvation; Yahweh is the One in whom we hoped. We exult and we rejoice that he has saved us.....**

**NB: The Cost for the Redeemer:**

- The idea of **the cost** for the redeemer to carry out his duty to the family is included in the word 'goel'. It was a heavy responsibility, where the goel might have to pay a ransom to redeem a slave brother (sold into slavery for financial reasons), or he may have to act as the avenger of blood.... and other things.
- Is 43: 3-4 Yahweh's ransom of Israel was costly: **I give Egypt for your ransom.... Because you are precious in my eyes....and I love you.**
- It is clear from the book of Exodus that the redemption of God's people **was** costly: In Is 52: 10 we read **the Lord bears his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.**
- So, we must not romanticise the actions of Boaz when he was behaving as a good Israelite to a foreigner for the sake of Naomi, a relative of his who is in trouble.
- We are not told whether he was married, single or widowed. It would be amazing if he were single when people were married by early teens, and the marriages arranged by their parents.

**A Future and a hope:** One of the purposes of Ruth is to explain the meaning of redemption.

- In the actions of Boaz we see the prophetic forecast of **the work of Jesus** his distant descendant. Just as Boaz had the right of redemption **and yet was under no obligation** to intervene on Ruth's behalf, so it was with Christ.
- As Boaz seeing the plight of the poor widows came to their rescue **because he loved Yahweh** so it was with Christ, **who did everything out of love and obedience to his Father** and was motivated only by love for God and man.
- He was particularly concerned with the plight of the poor Cf Ps 72:1-4, 12 and Isaiah 11:4
- Jesus' role as goel-redeemer is clear in Rom 5-8 where He creates a future full of hope for us all. Cf **Jer 29:11.**
- He became one of us in the Incarnation, identified with us in our sinfulness and paid the price to set us free creating a future full of hope in the KOG for us all. Rom 6:4-6

- What Jesus wanted was a new Family of God Rom 8:29 and we are His heirs 8:16-17
- Christ, our Goel, like Boaz for Ruth, was not just able **but willing** to redeem and He accepted to redeem the Gentile nations -which **He didn't have to do** as He was to **the lost sheep of the House of Israel**. Cf Mt 15:24
- The author wants us to contemplate Boaz as the figure of the kinsman/redeemer so that we will contemplate what Christ has done for us individually and collectively, paying the price for our liberation in the sight of the nations on calvary; taking us into the new family of God and giving us an eternal future of hope and joy with Him as His bride. He is the one who makes us fruitful spiritually to create a future full of hope for the rest of humanity also.
- For Naomi and Ruth, Boaz held out a future for them. How much more wonderful to have **a future in Christ** our Redeemer! Through Jesus **our name** will **be carried into an eternity of joy**, so we join Naomi's exclamation **Blessed be he by the lord who does not withhold his kindness either from the living or the dead! Amen!!**