

# Chapter 4

• THOU SHALT RENEW AND SUSTAIN ME •

## RUTH 4:1 THE CITY GATES

This chapter opens by telling us that Boaz went up and sat at the town gate. In ancient Israel, the city gates were more than just entrance points. Fortified with heavy stone and metal, they were vital to the city's defense. A typical gate design included an outer and inner entrance, leading to a guarded area between them that could be securely closed off. Towers were built over these gates, providing watchmen higher vantage points from which they could guard the city.

In addition to the protection they provided, the gates served as a meeting place, bustling with activity. These activities included:

- **Legal Matters:** This was where city leaders, like judges, would sit to resolve arguments and make big community decisions.
- **Marketplace:** The gates were also marketplaces, buzzing with traders selling their goods and people bargaining for the best deals.
- **News Hub:** If there was news to share or announcements to be made, the city gates were where everyone would hear about it.
- **Social Center:** Beyond business and news, the gates were also gathering spots where friends met, stories were exchanged, and community ties were strengthened.

Throughout scripture, we often find leaders sitting at the city gates, or people assembling at the gates. Some references include:



- **Lot at the Gate of Sodom (Genesis 19:1):** Lot was sitting at the gate when he welcomed the angels into the city.
- **Abraham and the Hittites (Genesis 23:10):** Abraham was at the city gate when he entered into negotiations with the Hittites to purchase a burial site for Sarah.
- **King David (2 Samuel 19:8):** David was at the gate when he met his people after Absalom's rebellion.
- **The Proverbs 31 Man (Proverbs 31:23):** The husband of the Proverbs 31 woman was known to sit among the elders at the city gate.
- **Mordecai at the King's Gate (Esther 2:19-21):** Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate when he uncovered a conspiracy against the king.

While verse 1 says, "just as the guardian-redeemer he had mentioned came along..." this encounter at the city gate was not a coincidence but a moment carefully arranged by the divine providence of God. Each step, from the very beginning, the famine in Bethlehem that prompted Naomi's departure, through to this moment was led by an unseen hand. It demonstrates the remarkable way God's providence operates, moving people and circumstances into place according to His perfect plan. Just as Ruth gleaned in the fields and found favor with Boaz, we too can find ourselves in the midst of God-ordained moments that shape the course of our lives.


Keep that thought in mind when it comes to your own life—He's leading the way. It's a mind-blowing thought to realize that the very same God who designed this universe and hung every star is directing your life. His timing is precise, and His thoughts are beyond anything we could ever imagine or think for ourselves.

Consider the words of Proverbs 16:9, "In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps." People don't walk into our lives by chance. And we aren't here by chance either. You were created for a purpose, and every breath that you take is drawn by His grace. As we journey through life, let's take comfort in the assurance that our days are planned with intention. Just as Boaz and Ruth were brought together at the perfect time, so too are we positioned for the plans He has for us.


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*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord,  
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you  
hope and a future."—Jeremiah 29:11, NIV*

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 How does Proverbs 16:9 encourage us in understanding our life's journey?

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 Can you identify other verses that reflect the concept of God directing our steps or paths? List one or two here:

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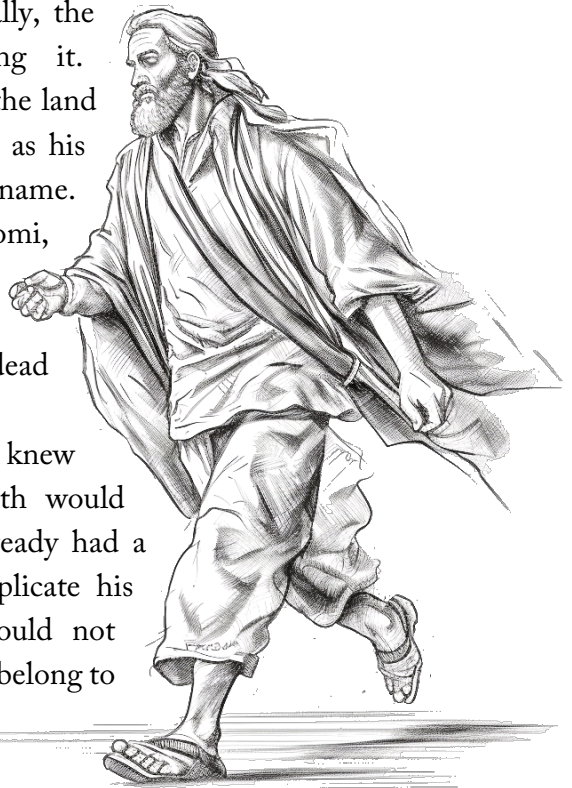
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### RUTH 4:2-6 THE UNNAMED RELATIVE

Rather than telling us his name, the narrator simply refers to the relative as the "guardian redeemer" (Hebrew go'el). Boaz invited the man to sit down. After gathering ten elders together to witness their conversation, Boaz clearly laid out the situation: he offered the unnamed relative the first chance to buy Elimelek's land. Initially, the man was interested in purchasing it. However, Boaz clarified that buying the land from Naomi also meant taking Ruth as his wife to carry on Elimelek's family name.

“On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man’s widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.” –Ruth 4:5, NIV

To clarify, the kinsman redeemer knew that any children he had with Ruth would inherit Elimelek's property. If he already had a family, this arrangement could complicate his own estate since those children would not inherit Elimelek's property—it would belong to Ruth's firstborn. This risk of dividing his estate and impacting

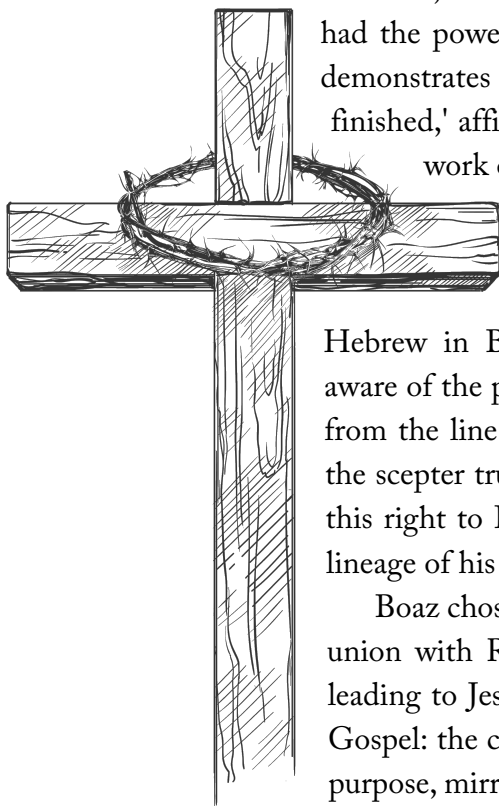


his current or future children's inheritance led him to relinquish his right of redemption to Boaz.

As we dig deeper into this narrative, we find that the unnamed guardian-redeemer can be seen as a representation of the law itself, which, like him, lacks the power to bring about redemption. And, just as ten elders witnessed this guardian's inability to redeem, the Ten Commandments stand as a testament to humanity's incapacity to fulfill the law's demands. The Hebrew word "yakol," which appears twice in verse 6, translates to "to be able," highlighting the guardian's capacity—or rather, his lack of capacity—to redeem fully and completely.

The law, symbolized by this unnamed kinsman, had the right of redemption but could not save. It could outline a righteous life and reveal sin but not offer salvation. The law was given to lead us to Christ. Similarly, the Ten Commandments, while highlighting God's holy standards, reveal our need for grace, as we fall short of God's glory.

Boaz, reflecting Christ, was not only willing but also had the power to redeem. In contrast to the law that demonstrates 'I cannot redeem,' Christ declares, 'It is finished,' affirming the completion of His redemptive work on the cross.



The unnamed relative wasn't prepared to give up his inheritance to become one with his people. As a Hebrew in Bethlehem, Judah, he would have been aware of the prophecy foretold in Genesis 49:10—that from the line of Judah would come the one to whom the scepter truly belongs—and yet he chose to pass on this right to Boaz. However, for Boaz, preserving the lineage of his family was a profound spiritual calling.

Boaz chose the path of self-denial and, through his union with Ruth, became an ancestor in the lineage leading to Jesus. His decision reflects the heart of the Gospel: the call to put aside personal gain for a higher purpose, mirroring the sacrifice of our Savior and Lord.

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*For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh. –Romans 8:3, NIV*

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❓ The unknown relative can be seen as a representation of the law. In your own words, briefly explain what the "law" is.

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❓ Just as ten elders witnessed this guardian's inability to redeem, the Ten Commandments stand as a testament to humanity's incapacity to fulfill the law. Can you explain how?

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How does the unnamed relative's decision in Ruth Chapter 4 reflect the mindset described in Romans 8:7?

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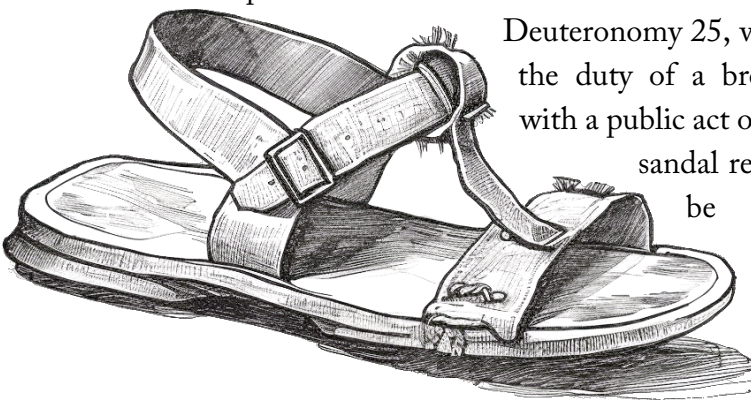
### RUTH 4:7-11 MAINTAINING THE FAMILY NAME

Verse 7 tells us, "Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel." (NIV)

While this may appear peculiar to us as a way of handling a business transaction, it's essential to understand that in those times, literacy was not as widespread as it is now. Contracts weren't routinely signed on a dotted line; instead, people conducted their business affairs in the presence of witnesses, finalizing agreements before departing. The act of exchanging shoes, two halves of a single pair, symbolized a binding legal agreement mutually accepted by both parties.

Moreover, it could also be that by handing over his sandal, the unnamed relative was symbolically acknowledging that he was not able to stand in the shoes or step into the role of a redeemer. This act is reminiscent of

Deuteronomy 25, where refusing to fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law was met with a public act of shame—having one's sandal removed. By refusing to be a redeemer, he demonstrated that he wasn't worthy of wearing the shoes,



signifying his inability to fulfill the role and responsibilities of a kinsman redeemer.

In a society where genealogy was highly valued, having a direct and unbroken line of descent was significant. It allowed families to trace their roots and maintain a sense of identity. Furthermore, in the biblical context, the preservation of the family name was often connected to the fulfillment of promises and covenants made by God. These promises and covenants were often tied to specific family lines, making it even more important to preserve those names as a means of ensuring God's ongoing plan and the fulfillment of His promises. Boaz's willingness to take on the responsibility of a kinsman redeemer was a profound expression of faith and obedience. His actions exemplified a deep commitment to God's covenant promises and the role of chosen families in the fulfillment of those promises.

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*I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!*

*—Ruth 4:10, NIV*

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❓ What is the references made to shoes in John 1:27? And what does his statement mean?

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❓ What actions did Boaz take to fulfill his duty as a kinsman redeemer?

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❓ What is the spiritual significance behind the practice of maintaining the name of the deceased?

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### RUTH 4:12-22 THE BIRTH OF OBED

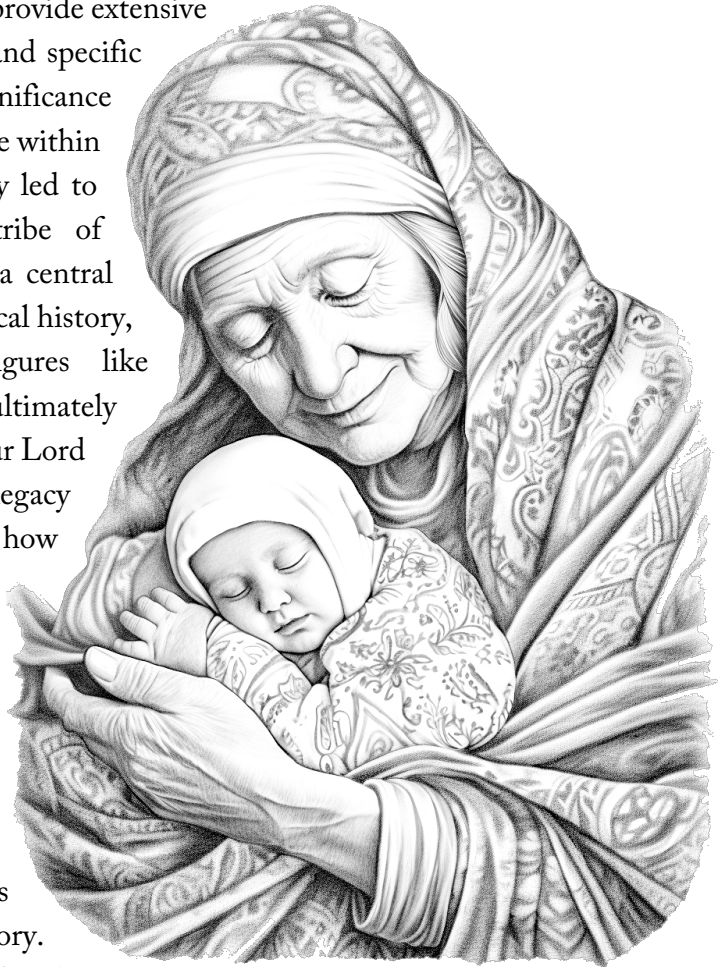
In verse 12, we find the blessing, “may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.” This blessing is a throwback to a story we discussed in chapter 2. Tamar, faced with unique circumstances, took questionable measures to ensure the continuation of her family's lineage. This chapter in Genesis 38 stands in stark contrast to the subsequent one, where Joseph flees from the advances of Potiphar’s wife.

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*It seems a wonder that of all Jacob's sons, our Lord should spring out of Judah, Heb 7:14. But God will show that his choice is of grace and not of merit, and that Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. —Matthew Henry*

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While the Bible does not provide extensive details about Perez's life and specific accomplishments, his significance lies in being a pivotal figure within the lineage that eventually led to the formation of the tribe of Judah. This tribe played a central and illustrious role in biblical history, producing renowned figures like Boaz, King David, and ultimately leading to the lineage of our Lord Jesus Christ. Perez's legacy serves as a reminder of how God's providence and faithfulness are integral to the rich history of our ancestors, each story contributing to the grand narrative of redemption.



Finally, we get to the birth of Obed, and this is very important to our story.


Notice at the birth of Obed that Naomi isn't left behind. In other words, Ruth doesn't replace Naomi in any way through this story. They are united together through the guardian redeemer. In the same way, when the Gentiles come to Christ we don't replace the Jewish people, we join them. Remember the timing of this story, the wheat harvest—"The Feast of Weeks"—aligning with the Pentecost. The birth of a church where both Jews and Gentiles, like Ruth and Naomi, are bound together by the redeeming work of Christ, forming one body, and sharing in the rich harvest of God's grace.

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*For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. –Ephesians 2:14–16, NIV*

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In closing here are a few verses from Romans. Let's consider each one deeply to see if we can find any parallels between them and the book of Ruth:

 No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God. (Romans 2:29, NIV)

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Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles. (Romans 11:11, NIV)

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Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:7-8, NIV)

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We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Romans 6:4, NIV)

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## GLEANING FROM RUTH CHAPTER 4

In Chapter 4, we witness the unfolding of God's providence, a reminder that our steps are divinely orchestrated. The encounter with the unnamed relative was not by chance; it was part of a greater plan, echoing those moments in our own lives that are indeed the work of God directing our steps.

This relative, akin to the law, finds himself unable to offer redemption, echoing our own limitations and our need for a Savior. The Ten Commandments testify to our shortcomings and our profound need for a Redeemer who can truly save.

Boaz's act of redemption is a powerful portrayal of Christ's redeeming love that not only honors the past but also secures a future, uniting lineages and fulfilling promises made long ago. Finally, the birth of Obed is a symbol of the joy and unity that redemption brings where every life finds renewal and purpose.



## SEEDS OF RENEWAL

Reflecting on the providential meeting between Boaz and the unnamed kinsman, what are some ways you have seen God orchestrate events in your life for His purpose?

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As you look back on the story of Ruth, what personal revelations have you gleaned about God's faithfulness in your life, and how will these insights shape your walk with Him in the days to come?

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# Answer Key

## Ruth Chapter 4

**How does Proverbs 16:9 encourage us in understanding our life's journey?**

Proverbs 16:9 ("In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.") encourages us by acknowledging that while we may make plans, it is ultimately God who guides our steps. This verse reassures us that God is in control and is directing our life's journey, which can bring us peace and confidence as we make decisions and face the future.

**Can you identify other verses (aside from Proverbs 16:9) that reflect the concept of God directing our steps or paths? List one or two here:**

Psalms 37:23: "The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him;"

Jeremiah 10:23: "Lord, I know that people's lives are not their own; it is not for them to direct their steps."

**How does the understanding of God's providence bring comfort during times of uncertainty?**

It brings comfort during times of uncertainty by reminding us that God is sovereign and has a plan for our lives. Knowing that God is working all things together for our good (as stated in Romans 8:28) can help us to trust in His wisdom and timing, even when the path ahead is not clear. It reassures us that we are not alone and that a loving God is actively involved in our lives, providing guidance and purpose.

**The unknown relative can be seen as a representation of the law. In your own words, briefly explain what the "law" is.**

The "law," in a biblical context, represents the comprehensive statutes and commandments given by God through Moses to the Israelites. It included the Ten Commandments, as well as a wide array of ceremonial and civil rules detailed in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. These laws were designed to guide the Israelites in a way of life that would reflect their covenant with God, detailing everything from worship to social justice.

The unknown relative's adherence to the letter of the law without embracing the spirit of sacrifice and redemption is reflective of the limitations of the law to bring about true righteousness and redemption on its own.

**Just as ten elders witnessed this guardian's inability to redeem, the Ten Commandments stand as a testament to humanity's incapacity to fulfill the law. Can you explain how?**

The Ten Commandments, as part of the law, set a standard of perfection that no human could fully meet due to our inherent sinful nature. They serve to show that people fall short of God's glory and need grace. The elders' witnessing of the guardian's inability to redeem parallels how the commandments highlight our moral shortcomings and point to our need for a savior who can truly redeem.

**How does the unnamed relative's decision in Ruth Chapter 4 reflect the mindset described in Romans 8:7?**

The unnamed relative's decision not to redeem Ruth reflects this mindset, as it shows a reluctance to fulfill a divine command for the greater good because it would inconvenience his personal inheritance. This can be seen as putting one's interests above God's commands, indicative of a heart not fully submitted to God's will.

**What is the references made to shoes in John 1:27? And what does his statement mean?**

John the Baptist speaks of his unworthiness to even untie the sandals of Jesus. He's acknowledging that Jesus' divine authority and sacred mission, is far above his own.

**What actions did Boaz take to fulfill his duty as a kinsman redeemer?**

Boaz fulfilled his role as a kinsman redeemer by taking several steps. He not only purchased the property of Elimelek but also acquired Ruth, Mahlon's widow, as his wife. This act was to ensure that the name of the deceased would be preserved within his family.

**What is the spiritual significance behind the practice of maintaining the name of the deceased?**

Maintaining the name of the deceased symbolized faith in God's promises, as it served to ensure the continuity of God's covenant promises and the preservation of family legacies.

**In closing here are a few verses from Romans. Let's consider each one deeply to see if we can find any parallels between them and the book of Ruth:**

No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God. (Romans 2:29, NIV)

Ruth's decision to leave Moab behind, her commitment to Naomi, and her devotion to God exemplify the concept of an inward change and God's recognition of the heart over outward appearances.

**Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles. (Romans 11:11, NIV)**

Naomi's departure from Bethlehem and her eventual return with Ruth parallels the idea in Romans 11:11, where what appears as stumbling or departure leads to a greater purpose—in Ruth's case, the inclusion of Ruth in God's plan and lineage.

**Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:7-8, NIV)**

We see throughout the Bible that some men simply refuse to give up their lives for the sake of redemption. And yes, some have redeemed relatives for the sake of the family. Boaz, however, was unique in that he gave up all that he had to redeem a Moabite woman. This echoes the work of Christ who demonstrated His love to us while we were yet sinners.

**We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Romans 6:4, NIV)**

Leaving Moab behind was a symbol of baptism in that Ruth buried her old self to embrace a new life and a new God. This death of her past was also evident in her vow to embrace Naomi and the God that she served.