

# Have You No Name?

Ruth 4:1-12 November 16, 2025

You would *not* want your legal name to be John Doe. Just ask John Doe, the 40 year old computer programmer living in New York City. Airport security grills him whenever he flies. "I have to sit in the office," he said. "Every time." Landlords, officials, even ladies he tries to date all ask him the same question: "What's your *real* name?"

The *biggest* problem with being named John Doe? Well, John says with a smile, "I guess I have to marry a girl named *Jane*."<sup>1</sup>

In our text we're introduced to the one man who stands between Ruth, Boaz, and happily ever after. We'd expect the author to tell us his name, but he *doesn't*. Instead, in the Hebrew, he is called *Peloni Almoni*. It's a rhyming idiom, like "hodge-podge" or "helter-skelter."

It means Mr. No-Name. Mr. So-And-So. A Hebrew John Doe.<sup>2</sup> It's striking that a story with *so much* emphasis on names, history, and destiny would leave a character anonymous. Let's find out why.

**Ruth 4:1 - Boaz went to the gate of the town and sat down there. Soon the family redeemer Boaz had spoken about came by. Boaz said, "Come over here and sit down." So he went over and sat down.**

Your version may have "come and sit down, *friend*." Mine takes out the word *friend*. That's where the author uses *peloni almoni*.

In our last text Ruth threw herself at the mercy of Boaz. She said, "Save me! Redeem me!" And Boaz told her he would do whatever he could for her. Now, he *immediately* makes good on his promise.

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden and brought death into the world, the Lord came and made a promise: "I will save you. I will conquer sin and death for you." And though the fullness of His plan has taken many centuries, He *immediately* set to work to save, to redeem, and give refuge.

Boaz rescue mission started at the city gate. It was in the broad daylight of the *gate* that Ruth would be saved, not at the threshing floor under the cover of night.

Now, just as Boaz arrived at the gate, *wouldn't you know it*, *Peloni Almoni happens* to show up. It was *just* the right moment.<sup>3</sup> But we know it's not coincidence, it's *providence*. God does not sit idly by as our lives play out. He actively engages in them to accomplish His will and His good purposes for us. Our part is to live out our faith *knowing* that the Lord is trustworthy and that He is with us and that He is working in our lives and to participate in His mission by walking in His ways.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://archive.nytimes.com/cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/07/29/a-name-only-a-lawyer-could-love/>

<sup>2</sup> *The NET Bible First Edition Notes*

<sup>3</sup> Edward Campbell, Jr. *Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*

**Ruth 4:2 - <sup>2</sup> Then Boaz took ten men of the town's elders and said, "Sit here." And they sat down.**

This was an official, legal proceeding. But more than just a business transaction was happening that day. Boaz, who was *also* a prominent man in Bethlehem, plus Pelsoni Almoni, plus the ten elders makes a group of twelve.

The Bible loves twelve. Twelve sons of Jacob, twelve tribes of Israel, twelve spies sent into Canaan, twelve governors in Solomon's kingdom, twelve disciples, twelve gates in the New Jerusalem which sits on twelve foundations and inside the walls a tree which bears twelve different fruits.

This meeting of 12 city leaders in Bethlehem that day was a pivotal moment in God's history. From *this* proceeding would proceed King David and, ultimately, Christ Himself.

**Ruth 4:3-4c - <sup>3</sup> He said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has returned from the territory of Moab, is selling the portion of the field that belonged to our brother Elimelech. <sup>4</sup> I thought I should inform you: Buy it back in the presence of those seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you want to redeem it, do it. But if you do not want to redeem it, tell me so that I will know, because there isn't anyone other than you to redeem it, and I am next after you."**

Boaz doesn't mean that Elimelech was their *literal* brother. The term is used in the more general sense of kinsman.<sup>4</sup>

Boaz says, "I thought I should inform you." In the Hebrew it's, "I thought I would uncover your ear."<sup>5</sup>

Pelsoni and Boaz are sharply contrasted. Boaz is seen with his eyes on Ruth, his heart burdened for Ruth, his ears open to her cries for help. Meanwhile, Pelsoni has to have his ears uncovered to even know what's going on. He's *not* mindful of her. He has no concern for her plight or her future.

In verse 3 we learn: Elimelech owned a field! He had land holdings. We could've *assumed* that, but now that it comes to it, it's a sobering reminder of what a life outside of God's plan leads to.

Remember: Elimelech had left Bethlehem - his Godly inheritance - to try to make a new life in Moab. The result was his death and the death of his sons. When Naomi and Ruth finally got *back* to Bethlehem, the field that *should have provided for them* was fallow. No crop, no fruit, no harvest.

Whereas *Boaz*, who is always shown to be a man of faith - a man who believes God and obeys God - *his* field is white with harvest. Providing not only for him but for many others.

<sup>4</sup> Frederic Bush *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 9: Ruth/Esther*

<sup>5</sup> Frank Gaebelien, et al. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 3: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*

That is *not* a guarantee that faithful Christians will *always* have full bank accounts, or that we never run into trouble in life. But what this demonstrates is that a *faithful* life is a *fruitful* life. A life lived in obedience to God is a life He uses for His supernatural purposes. A thriving, growing life.

**Ruth 4:4d - "I want to redeem it," he answered.**

In the Hebrew he speaks just 2 words.<sup>6</sup> It's as if he said, "Yeah, sure." But we're starting to sense that he doesn't know what's going on in this situation at all. He hasn't been worried about Naomi or Ruth or any of the rest of Elimelech's estate, and so he's unaware of what's actually needed.

Instead, his concern is himself - *his* portfolio. He doesn't ask any follow up questions. "Does the family need anything?" It's just, "Oh I can get some land without too much trouble? Sure."

**Ruth 4:5 - <sup>5</sup> Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from Naomi, you will acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the deceased man, to perpetuate the man's name on his property."**

Now listen: These two men did not *have* to redeem Ruth according to the *letter* of the Law.<sup>7</sup> In Deuteronomy it gives the command concerning a man who dies with no heirs and how his *direct brothers* must step in and provide an heir to the widow. But further removed relatives weren't included in the *letter* of the law. But Boaz knew they had a duty under the *spirit* of the law.

And so Boaz says to Peloni, "I am willing to be the redeemer. But if you're going to do it, it's not only for land." It wasn't only going to be about high-yield dividends, but about *hesed* duty.

**Ruth 4:6 - <sup>6</sup> The redeemer replied, "I can't redeem it myself, or I will ruin my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption, because I can't redeem it."**

Five seconds ago the guy said, "I want to redeem the field." Now, he *twice* says, "I *can't* do it." No, you *won't* do it.

He says, "If I do this, I will *ruin* my own inheritance." Meaning, "I don't want to pay my own money to care for Naomi and Ruth and produce a son who will then receive part of my inheritance." He says, "If I do this, it could bring me into poverty."<sup>8</sup> This attitude is the exact *opposite* of *hesed*.

*There's* the person in need. I *could* save them, but I *won't* because I don't want to pay.

His un-hesed-ness is even more palpable as we realize what his refusal might mean for Naomi and Ruth. Robert Hubbard writes, "One must fully grasp how important it was for an Israelite to have an

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Block *The New American Commentary, Volume 6: Judges, Ruth*

<sup>7</sup> Block

<sup>8</sup> Bush

heir living on the family land. The loss of land and heirs amounted to personal annihilation - the greatest tragedy imaginable."<sup>9</sup>

Christ Jesus did not shrink at the thought of redeeming us. Though He was rich, for your sake He became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich.<sup>10</sup>

Have you ever wondered why God promises in Ephesians, in 1 Peter, in Hebrews to give us a share of His inheritance? Because it's part of *redemption*. Not just saving us *from* death, but bringing us *into* His family and giving us a future. *That's* the *hesed* love of God, demonstrated here by Boaz.

**Ruth 4:7-8 - <sup>7</sup> At an earlier period in Israel, a man removed his sandal and gave it to the other party in order to make any matter legally binding concerning the right of redemption or the exchange of property. This was the method of legally binding a transaction in Israel.**

**<sup>8</sup> So the redeemer removed his sandal and said to Boaz, "Buy back the property yourself."**

This sandal thing makes us think of the passage in Deuteronomy that talks about Levirate marriage and what to do when someone refuses to fulfill his duty. But the truth is, this seems to have been the custom for *any* exchange of property.<sup>11</sup> It was their version of signing on the dotted line.

With that said, Pelson Almoni got off pretty easy. Let me read you the statute from Deuteronomy 25:

**Deuteronomy 25:7-10 - <sup>7</sup> But if the man doesn't want to marry his sister-in-law, she is to go to the elders at the city gate and say, 'My brother-in-law refuses to preserve his brother's name in Israel. He isn't willing to perform the duty of a brother-in-law for me.' <sup>8</sup> The elders of his city will summon him and speak with him. If he persists and says, 'I don't want to marry her,' <sup>9</sup> then his sister-in-law will go up to him in the sight of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, and spit in his face. Then she will declare, 'This is what is done to a man who will not build up his brother's house.' <sup>10</sup> And his family name in Israel will be 'The house of the man whose sandal was removed.'**

That's not what was happening in Ruth 4, but maybe it *should* have. There is a hint here why we don't know Pelson Almoni's real name. If he was not willing to perpetuate the name of Elimelech, why should *his* name be remembered? He is forever Mr. So-And-So because he refused his duty.

**Ruth 4:9-10 - <sup>9</sup> Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I am buying from Naomi everything that belonged to Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon. <sup>10</sup> I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, to perpetuate the deceased man's name on his property, so that his name will not disappear among his relatives or from the gate of his hometown. You are witnesses today."**

<sup>9</sup> Robert Hubbard *The Book Of Ruth*

<sup>10</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:9

<sup>11</sup> Gaebelin

Boaz calls the attention of the witnesses and says, "I have finished the transaction. I've redeemed it all." From the cross, Jesus Christ called out "It is *finished*." The work was done. The price was paid. Only He didn't buy us with dollars and cents. Peter wrote:

**1 Peter 1:18-19 - <sup>18</sup> For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb.**

Boaz paid and it was done. And in an *instant*, Ruth was no longer a widow and would never again be called a *Moabitess* in the book. She was brought into the family. Now she was an Israelite.

Boaz said that s he was going to perpetuate the deceased man's name on his property. That phrase can also be translated, "to raise up the name of the dead."

That is what Christ does for us in redemption. He raises us up. He brings life where there was death. Where we only had the grave before us, He gives us the way to glory.

One more thing - the land, Elimelech's field, was property that he had *forfeited*. He abandoned it by choice. It was a *terrible* choice. But, by God's grace, it was being restored. Given back.

The world that mankind forfeited will be given back to us again one day, restored and made new, made alive by the grace of God. And when *Christ* is King over it, it will never lay fallow.

**Ruth 4:11 - <sup>11</sup> All the people who were at the city gate, including the elders, said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is entering your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built the house of Israel. May you be powerful in Ephrathah and your name well known in Bethlehem.**

The people celebrated and honored Boaz. They praise him for his *worthiness*. In Revelation 5, seeing the Redeemer in heaven, all *the elders* cry out, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"<sup>12</sup>

The elders of Bethlehem also give a blessing to Ruth, praying for her children. Remember: Ruth had been married for 10 years but had no children. But the people still have faith in the goodness and generosity of God. They say, "May she be like Rachel and Leah." Two ladies who began their stories as Arameans and who both struggled with infertility, but became Hebrews blessed by God.

**Ruth 4:12 - <sup>12</sup> May your house become like the house of Perez, the son Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring the LORD will give you by this young woman."**

If you're familiar with Genesis, the Tamar incident is not usually a story we enjoy reading. But it was also a story of Levirate marriage, but more importantly a story of God working good and rescuing a

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<sup>12</sup> Revelation 5:12

woman in need. And, like Tamar, Ruth has now been swept into the grand destiny of redemption. Redemption *for* her life and redemption that would come *through* her life.

What a great Biblical moment! Here we see the unstoppable, loving triumph of God.

But as we close, what can we apply from these verses to our own lives? Yes, seeing Boaz, we get a lovely perspective on how Christ redeems. His goodness and sacrifice. But the other characters who we identify more readily with - Ruth and Naomi - they are passive. So is there something we can implement as we live out our faith?

I have for us two points of application. One in our relationship to God and one in our relationship to others.

In our relationship to God, *surrender*. Back in verse 3 Boaz says Naomi is *selling* the field. The term can mean she is surrendering her right.<sup>13</sup> That's all she could do. But *that* was the key to her salvation. *If* she would surrender, the redeemer could sweep in and rescue her, change her life, give her everything she needed. Her part was to surrender in faith and trust to the redeemer who was full of hesed love toward her and her family.

Surrender to Jesus. He is mighty to save, ready to help you and make you His own. But He will not force you. Give your heart and your life to Him. Trust Him and walk in His ways so *He can* do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power He wants to work in our lives.

And second, in our relationship to others, *serve*. Boaz did not *have* to do all this. But look at how he *kept* serving both Ruth and Naomi. Yes, it was motivated by love, but he lived out his love in faithful, sacrificial, generous service. Yes, it's going to cost us time and effort and attention. Yes, sometimes it seems like our small service isn't going to make that big of a difference. But who do we want to be in this story? Not Paloni Almoni. We want to be the people used by God to change lives. Caught up and used in the ongoing story of redemption.

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<sup>13</sup> Bush