
CONGLOMERATE MARRIAGE AND DESTITUTE WIDOW: A NARRATIVE STUDY OF BOAZ AND RUTH'S LOVE STORY IN BOOK OF RUTH CHAPTERS 1-4

Sugihyono

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Rahmat Emmanuel, Indonesia
Email: sugihyono_ministry@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS

Boaz and Ruth's Love Story; Boaz and Ruth's Marriage; Commensurate Life Partners

This study aims to conduct a theological study to answer questions, including: why did Boaz want to marry Ruth? Isn't Boaz a wealthy man, famous and of good character? and was not Ruth a poor widow, a cursed Moabite woman (Deuteronomy 23:3)? What was the advantage of the Moabite female Ruth, over the Israelite woman? Are there any values that Boaz held as a prerequisite for him to determine a life partner? In Ruth chapters 2 and 3, it shows that Ruth received preferential treatment from Boaz while picking up barley in her field, Ruth also received a good reception from Boaz when at night she came to her threshing place. This is what the author refers to in discussing and developing this research, especially finding the values that Boaz has to get a wife, as well as knowing the character that Boaz and Ruth have to be a husband and wife who are commensurate with God's will. Using a qualitative approach with a literature study method, through the source of books and literature that correlates with this research problem. From this research it can be concluded that both Boaz and Ruth both had very commendable characters who eventually united them into a commensurate and blessed husband and wife of God. However, above all there was God's involvement and guidance that made the process of Ruth and Boaz's encounter perfect.

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Ruth is an interesting short book in the Old Testament, it tells of a non-Jewish woman who married into a Jewish family and later became the great-grandfather of King David and ancestors Jesus. The love story of Ruth and Boaz was blessed by God, so that the two of them became equal partners (Ariyanti & Hutabarat, 2021).

The story in this book begins with the misfortune that befell the Elimelech family and his wife Naomi, starting from famine in Bethlehem, the flight to the country of Moab, the death of Elimelech and his two sons Mahlon and Kilyon in the country of Moab, until finally Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem with her daughter-in-law Ruth. Naomi's decision to return to Bethlehem with Ruth was the right decision and became the forerunner of restoring the good name of the Elimelech family.

Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem at the start of the barley harvest (Ruth 1:22), where the field workers were harvesting their master's barley and wheat. In order to get a job to eat, Ruth, the Moabite woman asked permission and said to Naomi: "Let me go to the fields to pick up barley ears behind someone who is generous to me." And Naomi said to him: "Go, my child." (Ruth 2:2). Ruth rushes to go to the fields without knowing whose field she should go to, only to discover that Ruth has arrived at Boaz's field. As a foreigner in the area, Ruth picked barley behind the workers. For the Israelites, it was permitted and even recommended for all the owners of the fields, according to what is written in the Bible: *Deuteronomy 24:19* "If you are reaping in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, do not return to collect it. this is the

share of the foreigner, the orphan and the widow - that the Lord your God may bless you in all your work."

It was this job of barley gathering that brought Ruth and Boaz together in the fields, followed by a very memorable introduction and finally continued to the wedding. This story is indeed very interesting so that it raises a big question, why did Boaz, who incidentally was a wealthy man and had good character, want to marry a widow, a Moabite woman who is a cursed nation (Deuteronomy 23:3)? moreover that Ruth is also a poor materially. Why did Boaz want to marry this woman?

In normal life, of course there are many women who like and approach Boaz and maybe even mothers who try to match their daughters with Boaz. This is normal in everyday life. But why isn't Boaz interested in all the women around? They are women of the same nation, of course beautiful, attractive, and still girls. But why instead choose widows, Moabites and poor? Boaz is certainly not a person who blindly chooses a partner, nor is he in love blindly, nor is he an idiot, but he is a smart man who has proven to be able to manage his life so that he becomes a wealthy man.

Various possibilities can be used as answers to the questions above, including: the possibility that Boaz saw the motives that were not sincere from the women who approached him; or these women have the motivation to target Boaz's wealth; or there is no suitable woman in accordance with the criteria and values of his life. This reason made Boaz at that time not make a choice with whom he married. According to Wycliffe's interpretation, Boaz was already around eighty years old when he married Ruth (Word Bible, nd). This shows that Boaz is no longer a young man, but he is already old and has passed the normal age for a man to marry. And when he met Ruth, Boaz discovered the difference between Ruth and other women that he could feel in his heart.

The topic of this research will discuss what values does Boaz have as a prerequisite for him to get a life partner; other than that discovering the character sides of Boaz and Ruth that have led them to become a husband and wife that are equal according to God's will. This study aims to conduct a theological study to answer questions, including: why did Boaz want to marry Ruth? Wasn't Boaz rich, famous and of good character? and wasn't Ruth a poor widow, a cursed Moabite woman (De 23:3)? What are the advantages of the Moabite woman Ruth, compared to Israeli women? Are there values held by Boaz as a prerequisite for him to determine a life partner?

The author hopes that this research will help every couple in finding a suitable partner; as well as provide inspiration for many Christian young people to maintain the association of their youth and live in holiness in order to find a life partner that God wants.

RESEARCH METHOD

Using a qualitative approach with the literature study method, through sources of books and literature that correlate with the problem of this research, especially in conducting theological studies to find the values that Boaz has as a prerequisite for him to get a life partner, and know the character possessed by Boaz and Ruth to be a husband and wife who are equal according to God's will.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Family Background of Ruth and Boaz

Ruth (Hebrew: רוּת) means friend, was a Moabite woman who married Mahlon, a son of Naomi and Elimelech (Park, 2012). Mahlon's husband later died while they were still living in Moab. Since then, Ruth's status changed to that of a widow who did not have Mahlon's inheritance. In the Bible, the mention of the name Ruth is several times associated with the term

Moabite woman (Ruth 1:4,22; 2:2,21; 4:5,10). Moab is the ancient name of a region located east and southeast of the Dead Sea, which is now included in the territory of the country Jordan. In the Bible record (Gen. 19:30-38), the Moabites were the descendants of Lot and his eldest daughter. This event occurred after God saved Lot and his two daughters from His wrath on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. So, actually between the Moabites and the tribes of Israel still have blood or family ties (Gen. 19:30-37). However, the relationship between the two nations did not get along and was actually hostile. The Moabites were a nation of worshipers of many gods, they did not worship the God of Israel, but worshiped gods Chemos as the chief god of the Moabites (Num. 21:29; Jer. 48:46) (Sugihyono, 2022). From the explanation above, it can be said that before Ruth became a proselyte, she was a worshiper of the god Chemos.

Unlike Boaz, Boaz is a Jewish family (son of Salmon), who is wealthy (Ruth 2:1), fears God and is generous, but apparently he doesn't want a beautiful and "classy" girl to be his wife (Gulo, 2021). It was evident that he was willing to marry Ruth, a simple woman and even a widow.

In the book of Ruth, it can be seen how the author of the book of Ruth directly exposes the identity of Boaz. Boaz is described as a man who is rich from the people Elimelech (The Book of Ruth 2:1). However, to add to the reader's description of Boaz, theologians and Christian figures often provide arguments or opinions about the character of Boaz which are quoted from the actions taken by Boaz based on what is written in the Book of Ruth. among others: Boaz was known as a man who was very wealthy during his lifetime. This is based on the size of the field and the number of people working on it. Boaz is a generous person and has a good personality. The generous character that Boaz has shows when he allowed Ruth to glean barley in her own field, and forbade the reapers to pick up the fallen barley but let Ruth pick up the barley. Abraham Park stated that Boaz had a good personality, he was friendly and willing to get along with lower-class people without discrimination and compassion for poor people (Park, 2012). Boaz is also described as a responsible figure. Boaz is responsible for what he said to Ruth, regarding his promise that he would redeem and marry Ruth if someone who was supposed to be Ruth's redeemer refused this right. Boaz took care of everything by calling the redeemer before the city elders to get confirmation whether the redeemer was willing to redeem Elimelech's land and marry the Moabite woman Ruth in order to uphold the Elimelech family name. From the trial, Boaz received confirmation that the person refused to redeem Ruth, and Boaz immediately fulfilled his promise and married Ruth. Boaz is also described as a person of integrity. The integrity that Boaz had was shown when Ruth came to him at night, and Boaz did nothing bad to her.

The story of the meeting of Ruth and Boaz

The meeting of Ruth and Boaz in Boaz's field has become a turning point from the previous story of Ruth and Naomi's life, which was colored by heavy sadness and suffering. This story then continues to be the most beautiful love story in the Bible that ends in happiness.

The scenario of happiness begins when Boaz from Bethlehem pays a visit to his farm. As usual, Boaz always greeted his sick people, saying: "The LORD may be with you." (Ruth 2:4). Unintentionally, Boaz set his sights on a woman who was a stranger to him in his field. Boaz was curious so he asked: "Where is this woman from?" (Ruth 2:5). Her maid answered: "She is a Moabite woman, she came back with Naomi from the region of Moab. Earlier she said: Please allow me to gather the barley behind the reapers. That's how she came and has been busy from morning till now and he didn't stop for a moment." (Ruth 2:6-7). That's the bachelor's explanation. According to the author, Boaz had actually heard the story of Naomi returning to

Bethlehem with her daughter-in-law, because their return had caused an uproar in the city of Bethlehem (Ruth 1:19), but it is possible that Boaz had never met Ruth in person.

Ruth did work hard picking and gathering barley in Boaz's field as a form of responsibility to support himself and Naomi in law. As a foreign woman, Ruth gleaned the barley behind the crowd harvesting workers barley in the field. Somehow Ruth knew that there was the law of Moses in Israel forbade workers to pick the barley until it was finished, the workers were deliberately obliged to leave the ears of barley for foreigners, orphans and widows (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 24:19), who would pick up the leftover barley behind the workers who are harvesting.

According to the author, Ruth's presence as a foreign woman in Boaz's field occurred naturally, because it was a custom in Israel for poor people, foreigners and widows to pick up the leftover barley from the harvested fields. In Ruth 2:3 it states that 'coincidentally' Ruth was in the land belonging to Boaz who was still a relative of Elimelech's family. The word 'accidentally' in this verse becomes a highlight that will clarify its true meaning. In KBBI, the word "coincidence" has the meaning: 1) did not happen on purpose; 2) by accident; 3) circumstances that occur unexpectedly. According to Kuswanto, Ruth's arrival to Boaz' field seemed like a coincidence, but actually Ruth's journey was guided by God's arrangement (Kuswanto, 2000). This is in line with the views Charles F. Pfeiffer, which states: what appears to be a coincidence, when observed from the whole story, this is part of God's arrangement (Pfeiffer & Harrison, 1962). It is very visible how God's hand worked in guiding Ruth's journey to Boaz's fields (OMF, 1982). From the views above, the author concludes that the verse in Ruth 2:3 has a meaning, that is, Ruth basically did not intend to go to collect barley in a certain field, but 'unintentionally', that is, on God's guidance, she arrived in Boaz's field.

After Boaz found out the identity of the foreign woman, at a verses next state that Ruth it turns out get attention special from Boaz, although He know that Ruth is a woman foreign from Moab, which is taken for granted in eye nation Israel, but Boaz still treated Ruth special. The question arises, was it at that time that Boaz began to be attracted to the figure of Ruth?

Boaz and Goel

Goel is a term in Hebrew related to the concept of redemption (Linafelt, 2010). The term 'Goel' comes from the Hebrew word *ga'al*, which means to redeem, to act as a relative, to buy back (Park, 2012). In Christian theology, said Goel pointing to Jesus who is believed to be God who saves people (man) from sin (Farrar, 2023). But in the Book of Ruth, this term refers to Boaz, because Boaz is seen as playing the role of goel through levirate marriage (levirate = Latin word for levir, meaning brother-in-law) (Peipman, 2008). Levirate Marriage is marriage with a brother-in-law to continue the descendants of people who have died (Pabubung, 2018). So, when there is an Israel man, if the person dies and does not yet have male offspring, then his closest brother is obliged to become a redeemer (goel) by marrying the widow in order to obtain male offspring, this is done so that the name of the Israelite man is not lost among the Israelis (Deut. 25:6) (Lasor & Hubbard, 1997).

The story in Ruth chapter 3, states that Boaz was a wealthy man and was one of Naomi's relatives or relatives (Park, 2012). Thus it can be said that he is one of those who is also responsible for being a redeemer for Naomi and her family. Naomi knew exactly about this condition, so she devised a strategy so that Boaz was willing to become her redeemer, namely by ordering Ruth to meet Boaz at his threshing floor at night. According to the customs in force in Israel, Naomi's actions cannot be blamed, even when Ruth covered her body with Boaz's robes as a sign of a request that Boaz was willing to become her redeemer (OMF, 1982). Naomi's strategy can be said to be successful, because in the end Boaz accepted Ruth's plea and

promised that he would redeem Ruth, if only one condition the next of kin who are more entitled to ransom Ruth, refused to do so (Loken, 2008).

In a situation like this, a problem arose which was a challenge for Boaz in fulfilling his promise to Ruth. Naomi apparently still has relatives or relatives who are closer and more entitled to ransom Ruth than Boaz (Ruth 4:1-4). Boaz is an exemplary man who does not want to ignore the rights of others. With full integrity, in front of the Israelite elders, Boaz presented Naomi and her family's condition as it was, without hiding anything, and asked that this closest relative was willing to buy Elimelech's land, as well as accept the Moabite woman Ruth, the widow of Mahlon, as his wife to uphold the Elimelech family name. However, it turned out that the relatives were not willing to carry out the redemption obligation, and handed over the right to redeem it to Boaz (Ruth 4:4-6). So it happened, Boaz finally redeemed Elimelech's land and took Ruth as his wife.

In Naomi's view, the appearance of Boaz as Ruth's husband is a figure that has helped her get out of the slump she has been experiencing all this time (Peipman, 2008). Bushnell added, Naomi was also lucky because Boaz was a wealthy and respected man (Bushnell, 2009). However, Naomi did not focus on Boaz' possessions but on the descendants Boaz would give her through Ruth (Karman, 2009). This is Naomi's real happiness, finally she got offspring so that the family name Elimelech was not lost among the Israelites.

The Marriage of a Conglomerate and a Destitute Widow: A Narrative Study of the Love Story of Boaz and Ruth in the Book of Ruth Chapters 1-4

The story of the couple Boaz and Ruth is an inspiring love story in the Bible. They are considered as role models for every couple in finding a suitable match. These two figures show that love, loyalty, trust, and honesty are the main foundations for building a happy and lasting relationship. But apart from their love story, a controversial question arises, why did Boaz, a man who is rich and has good character, want to marry a poor/impoverished widow, a Moabite woman who is a cursed nation (Deuteronomy 23:3)?

Based on historical facts, Boaz and Ruth are a husband and wife who have different national, cultural, economic and religious backgrounds. Boaz was a rich man who came from Bethlehem the land of Judah (Ruth 2:1-23) worshiped Yahweh (LORD) of the Israelites, while Ruth was a poor widow descended from the Moabites (Ruth 1:4), who worshiped many gods, and their principal god was Chemos (Num. 21:29; Jer. 48:46) (Sugihyono, 2022). But the two of them became husband and wife, and became the great-grandfathers of King David and ancestor of Jesus Christ (Ruth 4:17-22; cf. Matthew 1:5).

Looking at the chronology in Ruth 1:1-22, it can be seen that the reason Boaz married Ruth was because Ruth had commendable character and personality. Ruth's commendable character has been seen since the death of her husband Mahlon and she decided to serve Naomi's in-laws. He proved his sincere devotion by willingly leaving his people, his parents and relatives for Bethlehem. Of course this is not an easy thing for anyone to do, but Ruth has chosen, and she has chosen to believe in the God of Israel (Sugihyono, 2022).

There are Four Commendable Characters and Personalities that Boaz admires in Ruth *Sincere Loyalty*

Ruth's sincere faithfulness has shown her to be a model woman throughout Bible history. Several acts of loyalty that Ruth has done, including: First, Ruth's loyalty to her late husband. On the journey for ten years, Ruth faithfully accompanied her husband until the end of her life. Lelono et al., are of the view that Ruth is an example of a wife who deserves to be an example, because Ruth underwent her marriage according to the teachings of the Bible as the word of God (Lelono et al., 2021).

Second, Ruth's Loyalty To Naomi. Ruth loved Naomi so much that she was determined to follow Naomi back to her hometown in Bethlehem, Judah. Ruth and Naomi's relationship was more than that between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Ruth loved her parents-in-law so much that she was committed to living with her parents-in-law anywhere and under any circumstances. Ruth's loyalty to her mother-in-law Naomi was very evident through the concrete actions she showed throughout her life. In all circumstances, Ruth always obeyed and respected Naomi, she took responsibility for caring for Naomi's daily life and needs by working as a barley collector in the fields (Ruth 2:2, 5, 17-18). All the real actions that Ruth did were solely because of her love for Naomi. Thus it can be said that Ruth's loyalty cannot be doubted.

Third, Ruth's loyalty to the God of Naomi. When Naomi urged Orpah and Ruth to return home to her parents and her people, Ruth made a statement following Naomi wherever she went, and declaring her faith to believe in Naomi's God (Ruth 1:16). In this case, Ruth has made a big confession that she is giving up her people and her old beliefs and turning to the God of Israel.

In an effort to find a suitable partner, the important thing that every husband and wife must have is loyalty, which will be the main capital to enter into a holy marriage. The Bible teaches that in marriage a husband and wife must take care of themselves and maintain loyalty with their partner, so as to produce divine offspring (Mal. 2:15). This is the highest call in a marriage, husband and wife are called to be totally faithful under any circumstances and not to do things that trigger fights and lead to divorce.

Kindness

Everyone in Bethlehem called Ruth a good woman (Ruth 3:11). Why did they give that nickname to Ruth? There are two actions of Ruth which according to the residents of Bethlehem are a kindness. First, Ruth has become a daughter-in-law who is responsible for all of Naomi's needs, that is, she accompanies Naomi who is old and has no possessions to return to Bethlehem and meet her needs. Second, Ruth did good not only for Naomi, but also for Naomi's late husband (Elimelech), to continue and uphold his family name among the Israelites.

From the two things above, it can be said that Ruth was not a selfish person, who only wanted to be selfish, but a kind person who cared about others. When viewed from an age perspective, Boaz really understands that it is very easy for a young and good woman like Ruth to find a husband who is younger than Boaz, whether rich or poor, but Ruth doesn't do that because she loves her parents-in-law very much. This was what impressed Boaz with Ruth's good personality, so he said: "Therefore, my child, do not be afraid; everything you say I will do to you; because everyone in our city knows that you are a good woman" (Ruth 3:11).

Every man or woman who is looking for a life partner will always crave a good partner who cares for others and is full of gentleness. In Christianity, good deeds are an expression of love for God through others for the salvation that God has bestowed upon them. Paul firmly reminded that your kindness should be known by everyone (Phil. 4:5), or felt by everyone. Equal life partners are those who do good to each other so that it can be felt by those around them.

Diligent and Hardworking

The arrival of Ruth and Naomi in Bethlehem was not an easy matter for him, but a new challenge on how he had to meet the needs of both of them. Because Naomi was old, Ruth took the initiative to work. Without shame and prestige, Ruth went to the wheat fields to ask for the leftover grain that had fallen in the fields, so she could collect it and bring it home. Even though she received mercy and generosity from the owner of the field, namely Boaz, Ruth still refused

to sit still. He was busy working as hard as he could and witnessing how God works miraculously behind that hard work. The workers in the fields explained well to Boaz about Ruth, that Ruth was a hard worker who worked non-stop from the morning when she came, until the time of Boaz' arrival (Ruth 2:7, 17, 23).

In general, men really like women who have a strong determination to work, and care for the family they love. The Bible teaches an example for the Eve, that a capable, diligent, agile and God-fearing wife will receive praise from her husband and children (Prov. 31:10-31).

Humble and willing to thank

She showed Ruth's humble attitude when Boaz approached her and showed compassion and kindness to her, namely giving special privileges and security to Ruth while in Boaz's field (Ruth 2:8-9). Ruth greeted Boaz' kindness with grateful humility, "Then Ruth bowed down and worshiped with her face to the ground and said to him, "Why did I have mercy on you, so that you pay attention to me, even though I am a stranger?" (Ruth 2:10).

As a normal man, of course Boaz really admires the attitude of a woman who is humble, not arrogant and always grateful and grateful, as Ruth has shown him. For Boaz, Ruth's character is perfect to accompany him as his life partner. Because basically all couples want their partners to be humble and grateful, because that is happiness in a household.

The loving care that Boaz showed for Ruth indicated that Boaz cared deeply about Ruth's needs and safety. A woman like Ruth must have the sensitivity to know whether the man who comes to her is the right man or not. And vice versa, a man like Boaz will know the right woman for him through the woman's acceptance. In this story, Boaz does not care about Ruth's status as a widow and national background, because judging from the family tree, Boaz's mother was Rahab (Matt 1:5), who incidentally was a former prostitute and a proselyte from the Jericho nation (Josh. 2:1; Heb. 11:31). So the matter of marrying a foreign woman (proselyte), who was also not a girl, was not too difficult for Boaz and his family. For Boaz status was not important, the most important thing was how Ruth had the character she had been looking for all this time.

CONCLUSION

The story of the couple Ruth and Boaz is an inspiring love story in the Bible. They are considered as role models for every couple in finding a suitable match. Both Boaz and Ruth have a united heart to build their respective characters for a happy and lasting relationship: First, belief in God is the main foundation of their love story. Ruth as a Moabite woman chose to follow the God of Israel, the God worshiped by Naomi, and also the God worshiped by Boaz. Second, Loyalty and Sincerity are the keys to the success of Boaz and Ruth's relationship. Ruth with her loyalty to Naomi and Boaz, has set an example that sincere loyalty in building relationships is very important in achieving good relationships. Likewise, Boaz himself showed his maturity and sincerity when helping Ruth and Naomi who were in need, and providing protection and security for them. Third, Building Good Relationships with family and the surrounding environment. Ruth, who showed her loyalty to Naomi and her family, earned her great trust from the Boaz family and the people of Bethlehem. This illustrates that good relations with people around can affect the happiness of the husband and wife relationship itself.

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