

What Happened to the Land Owned by Elimelech & Naomi in Israel When the Men Died in Moab?

When Naomi's husband Elimelech and her sons died in Moab, ownership of their family land in Bethlehem reverted to Naomi as her husband's surviving dependent. Because she was impoverished and women could not easily farm or clear encumbrances alone, Naomi prepared to sell or redeem the property rights, which ultimately led her kinsman Boaz to buy the land and marry Ruth to keep the property within the family.

The Legal and Financial Status of the Land

- **Retention of Rights:** Even though the family moved away and the men died abroad, the title to the ancestral land in Judah remained tied to Elimelech's household.
- **Naomi's Claim:** As a widow without living sons, Naomi held the temporary right to use or dispose of the property to survive.
- **The Need for a Redeemer:** Lacking the means to clear or work the land herself, Naomi offered the property rights to close relatives, setting the stage for levirate-style redemption.

Resolution through Boaz

- **The Purchase:** A closer relative than Boaz declined to buy the land because it meant marrying Ruth to preserve the dead son's estate.
- **Keeping the Inheritance:** Boaz stepped forward, legally purchasing the land from Naomi and marrying Ruth so that the property and family name would remain with Elimelech's lineage.