

*Annotated Analysis of*

# RUTH

## "Relative-Redemption"

9 He [Boaz] said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a **close relative**." [Boaz said,] 12 "Now it is true I am a **close relative**; however, there is a **relative** closer than I. 13 Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will **redeem** you, good; let him **redeem** you. But if he does not wish to **redeem** you, then I will **redeem** you, as the Lord lives. Lie down until morning."

(Ruth 3:9, 12-13, emphasis added)

Annotated Analysis of Ruth  
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# RUTH

## "RELATIVE-REDEMPTION"

9 He [Boaz] said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a **close relative**." [Boaz said,] 12 "Now it is true I am a **close relative**; however, there is a **relative** closer than I. 13 Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will **redeem** you, good; let him **redeem** you. But if he does not wish to **redeem** you, then I will **redeem** you, as the Lord lives. Lie down until morning."  
(Ruth 3:9, 12-13, emphasis added)

### A 1 GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORKING TO CAUSE DEPENDENCY ON HIMSELF 1

#### B 1 Disruptive Forces 1:1-5

C 1 The famine in Israel: {1} Now it came about in the days when the judges governed,<sup>1</sup> that there was a famine in the land.<sup>2</sup> 1:1a

C 2 The departure to Moab 1:1b-2

D 1 Their departure: And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn<sup>3</sup> in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons. 1:1b

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth 1:1 - in the days when the judges governed: This time indicator places the events of the book of Ruth squarely in the history recorded in the book of Judges. The book of Ruth itself, however, as is typical with much of the writing in Hebrew Scripture, does not explicitly indicate who the author is. Liberal critics date the book much later, but they have a subjective agenda which they follow. [The Babylonian Talmud attributes authorship](#) to the Prophet / Judge Samuel. That is as good a guess as any. The end of the book of Ruth (Ruth 4:17-22) gives the family line of Boaz to David, but David is never there depicted as being king. Samuel knew, however, that David was to *become* king, for he himself anointed him (1 Sam. 16:1-14). That being said, the book of Ruth could easily have been written some time before David became [king in Hebron in 1011 B.C.](#) Another possibility is that an unnamed author close to the time of the events of the book of Ruth wrote the historical narrative. A later editor could have added the genealogical significance at the end of the book (and the time indicator in Ruth 4:7). That would not alter the fact that the book was written substantially by one author. Evidently the book as we have it today in the Masoretic Text is the book God wanted us to have.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth 1:1 - a famine in the land: God had Noah record, in Deuteronomy 28, the consequences to Israel of obedience and disobedience to His laws. Specifically, if Israel were to obey (Deut. 28:1, 13b-14), Yahweh would bless her (Deut. 28:2), cause her to abound in prosperity (Deut. 28:11), and open his storehouse of seasonal rain in the heavens and bless the work of their hands (Deut. 28:12). If, however, Israel were to disobey God, fail to keep His commandments, and serve other gods (Deut. 28:14-15), curses would come upon her (Deut. 28:16-20). The heavens above would become bronze, and the earth beneath iron (Deut. 28:23). "The LORD will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed" (Deut. 28:24).

It is safe to conclude, therefore, that the famine that engulfed the land of Israel in the days when the judges governed was a disciplinary action upon Israel because of her disobedience.

<sup>3</sup> Ruth 1:1 - went to sojourn: Was Elimelech justified in departing into the land of Moab because of the famine in Israel? I do not believe so. Israel was the land of promise (Gen. 12:1-3), and forsaking the land of promise without specific instructions or permission from God was tantamount to forsaking the place of God's blessing IF Israel obeyed. An unauthorized trip to Egypt to avoid famine, for example, did not bode well for Abraham (Gen. 12:10). One unintended consequence of Abram's departure into Egypt was, evidently, his purchase of an Egyptian slave girl, Hagar, for his wife Sarai. From the union of Abram and Sarai's slave girl, Hagar, came Ishmael, the father of the Arab peoples (Gen. 16:1-15; 25:12-16). For millennia, the Arabs have been amongst Israel's most inveterate enemies.

God does not appear to have blessed Elimelech's departure to Moab. He died, and his two sons died. Moreover, his sons married Moabite women. God, in His mercy, called one of these Moabite women to Himself, and she turned out to be a great blessing for Elimelech's surviving widow, Naomi. That fact is an illustration of the

- D 2 Their identification 1:2a
- E 1 The husband/father: {2} The name of the man *was* Elimelech,<sup>4</sup>
  - E 2 His wife: and the name of his wife, Naomi;<sup>5</sup>
  - E 3 Their two sons: and the names of his two sons *were* Mahlon and Chilion,<sup>6</sup>
  - E 4 Their origin: Ephrathites<sup>7</sup> of Bethlehem in Judah.
- D 3 Their entrance into Moab: Now they entered the land of Moab<sup>8</sup>

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principle that God is able to bring good out of evil to bless His people (Rom. 8:28).

<sup>4</sup> Ruth 1:2 - Elimelech: His name most likely [means](#) “My God is King.”

<sup>5</sup> Ruth 1:2 - Naomi: Her name means “[My pleasantness](#)”.

<sup>6</sup> Ruth 1:2 - [Mahlon and Chilion](#): Mahlon means “Sickly” and Chilion means “Failing”. Whether these names were descriptive or predictive, both died prematurely in the land of Moab. If the former is true, the poor health of these men contributed to their premature deaths.

<sup>7</sup> Ruth 1:2 - Ephrathites: “Ephrathite” [may refer to a clan](#) in the area of Bethlehem, but it may simply be a synonym for Bethlehem with an association which we do not presently fully understand (Gen. 35:16-19; 48:7; 1 Sam. 17:12).

<sup>8</sup> Ruth 1:2 - they entered the land of Moab: Moab (*Moab*, [4124](#)) is the land populated by Lot’s son by way of an incestuous relationship with his older daughter (Gen. 19:30-38). She and her younger sister had grown up in the city of Sodom, populated by aggressive homosexuals (Gen. 19:1-14). This evil must have spread throughout the surrounding region, for Yahweh incinerated Sodom and Gomorrah and other cities of the valley at the South end of the Dead Sea (Gen. 19:15-29). Lot and his two daughters escaped by fleeing to Zoar (Gen. 19:18-23). His wife did not survive the judgment (Gen. 19:26). Lot grew fearful of staying in Zoar and fled into the mountains and lived in a cave with his two daughters (Gen. 19:30). Having experienced first hand the corrupt men of Sodom and, evidently, the corrupt men of Zoar, and having witnessed the God’s destruction of the entire region, save Zoar, the older daughter concluded, “Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of the earth” (Gen. 19:31). Thus, Lot’s older daughter persuaded her sister to join her in drugging their father with wine on successive nights. When he was unconscious each slept with him (Gen. 19:32-38). The older daughter’s son by her father she named “Moab” – “From Father”. Moab is the father of the Moabites. The younger daughter’s son by her father she named “Ben-ammi” – “Son of My People” – meaning Lot. Ben-ammi is the father of the sons of Ammon. That name is preserved today in the city of Amman, capital city of Jordan.

Then as now, the Moabites and the Ammonites were enemies of Israel. God placed a curse upon the Moabites because they would not assist Israel with food and water on their journey to Canaan and because the Moabites hired Balaam, son of Beor, to curse Israel. No Moabite or Ammonite (male?) could enter the sanctuary of the LORD to the tenth generation (Deut. 23:3-6). Furthermore the god of each nation was evil. He was called Molech (1 Kings 11:27) or Milcom (1 Kings 11:33) by the Ammonites and Chemosh (Num. 21:29) by the Moabites. Worshiping Molech meant child sacrifice (Lev. 20:2-5). The same was true with worshiping Chemosh (2 Kings 3:26-27).

Today in the West, people worship the god of convenience and have their own babies murdered in their wombs. We are no better than the worshipers of ancient Chemosh and Molech! (See the off-site article, “[What does the Bible say about child sacrifice?](#)”)

It is fascinating to observe that the name “Moab” is used an amazing number of times in the book of Ruth – 21. It appears in Ruth 1:2, 3, 8, 11, 19, 20, 21, 22; 2:1, 2, 6, 20, 20, 22; 3:1; 4:3, 5, 9, 14, 16, 17. As we go along, we will see what that signifies.

and remained there.<sup>9</sup> 1:2b

C 3 The death of Elimelech 1:3

D 1 His death: {3} Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died;<sup>10</sup>

D 2 The effect upon Naomi: and she was left with her two sons.

C 4 The marriages to the Moabitesses 1:4

D 1 The statement of marriage: {4} They took for themselves Moabite women *as* wives;<sup>11</sup>

D 2 The name of one: the name of the one was Orpah<sup>12</sup>

D 3 The name of the other: and the name of the other Ruth.<sup>13</sup>

D 4 The duration of the marriages: And they lived there about ten years.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ruth 1:2 - and remained there: Sometimes, under duress, we deliberately depart from the revealed will of God (in this case, the promised land of Canaan), planning only to “sojourn” there (Ruth 1:1). But we end up staying there far longer than we had initially planned. It is better to remain in the revealed will of God, however difficult that may seem.

<sup>10</sup> Ruth 1:3 - Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died: Tragedy struck the family of Elimelech. The leader of the family, the husband and father, died. Not only had the family been confronted with a life-altering famine; not only had they been forced to endure an uprooting from their own country, people, and God; not only had they suffered being assimilated into a foreign, godless culture; but now the leader of the family, the patriarch, had died. He was their moral support and their chief source of income. What would happen now? We know what God would bring out of this tragedy. We know the end of the story. But Naomi didn’t. And gradually, step by step, she began to grow bitter against God.

<sup>11</sup> Ruth 1:4 - they took for themselves Moabite women *as* wives: Things seemed to be spiraling out of control for Naomi. Without the guidance and the approval of their late father or their mother, Mahlon and Chilion took matters into their own hands. They desired wives, and they took them. Their mother did not arrange these marriages. I imagine she had hoped her sons would marry good Israeli women who believed firmly in the God of Israel (cf. Neh. 13:23-29). But such was not to be the case. Her sons determined to marry Moabite women who worshiped the vile god [Chemosh](#).

<sup>12</sup> Ruth 1:4 - Orpah: The [name means](#) “neck”. If memory serves me correctly, the entertainer Oprah Winfrey was named after the Orpah of the book of Ruth. As sometimes happens, Oprah’s mother mis-spelled the name.

<sup>13</sup> Ruth 1:4 - Ruth: The [name means](#) “friendship”. The reader is not informed until Ruth 4:10 that it was Mahlon who married Ruth. That means it must have been Chilion who married Orpah.

<sup>14</sup> Ruth 1:4 - lived there about ten years: Two observations are in order – (1) neither Orpah nor Ruth bore children during the prime years of child-bearing. Was this the hand of God? I think so. (2) Presumably, Naomi would have remained in Moab had not the next tragedy struck. Both her sons died! Was this also the hand of God? Again, I think so.

- C 5 The deaths of Mahlon and Chilion 1:5
  - D 1 The statement of their deaths: {5} Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died,<sup>15</sup>
  - D 2 The plight of Naomi: and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.<sup>16</sup>

## B 2 Returning Choices 1:6-18

- C 1 Naomi's initiation of a return to Judah 1:6-7
  - D 1 Her move to depart Moab: {6} Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, 1:6a
  - D 2 Her reason: for she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD had visited His people in giving them food. 1:6b
  - D 3 Her departure: {7} So she departed from the place where she was, 1:7a
  - D 4 Her companions: and her two daughters-in-law with her;<sup>17</sup> 1:7b
  - D 5 Their destination: and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. 1:7c
- C 2 Naomi's dissuasion of Orpah from moving to Judah 1:8-14a
  - D 1 Naomi's initial speech 1:8-9
    - E 1 The objects of her speech: {8} And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 1:8a
    - E 2 The substance of her speech 1:8b-9
      - G 1 Return to your mothers' homes: "Go, return each of

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<sup>15</sup> Ruth 1:5 - Then both Mahlon and Chilion died: For Naomi, events in her life have now gone beyond painful. They have become grotesque. The family had departed from their homeland. They had been assimilated into Moabite culture. Her husband had died. Her sons had married Moabite, not Israeli wives. And now, horror of all horrors, her sons had died – *both* of them! Naomi had not given up her faith in Yahweh, but it was sadly tarnished. She had, as the narrative will reveal, become embittered against God. She blamed Him for what had happened. He was against her!

<sup>16</sup> Ruth 1:5 - bereft of her two children and her husband: "Children" is the plural of *yeled* (3206), more accurately here, "young men." The NASB frequently, as here, translates *yeled* as "children" when the gender of the person or persons in question is clearly male. The noun is masculine in gender and should be translated that way except when the context clearly is indeterminate as to the gender of the child or children. Most of the time in the OT, the context indicates the person in question is male. There are a few exceptions, such as Neh. 12:43. Occasionally, the word refers to the offspring of animals (e.g., Isa. 11:7).

<sup>17</sup> Ruth 1:7 - and her two daughters-in-law with her: Evidently Middle Eastern culture at that time dictated that when a woman married, she became so completely immersed in her husband's family that, even if he died, she still retained strong ties with his surviving family.

- you to her mother's house. <sup>18</sup> 1:8b
- G 2 May Yahweh bless you: May the LORD deal kindly with you <sup>19</sup> as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 1:8c
- G 3 May Yahweh provide each of you a husband: {9} "May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." <sup>20</sup> 1:9a
- G 4 She kissed them goodbye: Then she kissed them, <sup>21</sup> 1:9b
- G 5 The emotional venting: and they lifted up their voices and wept. <sup>22</sup> 1:9c
- D 2 The refusal of the two daughters-in-law: {10} And they said to her, "No, but we will surely return with you to your people." <sup>23</sup> 1:10
- D 3 Naomi's second speech 1:11-13
- E 1 Her urging them to return: {11} But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. 1:11a
- E 2 What is the point of their accompanying her? Why should you go with me? 1:11b

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<sup>18</sup> Ruth 1:8 - return each of you to her mother's house: After initially setting out for the land of Judah with her two daughters-in-law, Naomi had a change of heart. She thought it was more just of her, and more expedient for her daughters-in-law, to cease following her into the land of Judah. She attempted to persuade them to return, instead, to the homes of their mothers. Implicitly, this meant returning to their people and to their god, [Chemosh](#) (Ruth 1:15).

<sup>19</sup> Ruth 1:8 - May the LORD deal kindly with you: Even though Naomi is advising Ruth and Orpah to return to the homes of their mothers and, implicitly, to their people and their god (Ruth 1:15), she nonetheless asks that Yahweh, the God of Israel, may act with loyal love (*chesed*, [2617](#)) toward them as they have acted toward their dead husbands and toward her. This theologically important word will occur again in Ruth 2:20 and in Ruth 3:10.

<sup>20</sup> Ruth 1:9 - find rest ... in the house of her husband: Naomi has carefully thought through her farewell speech. (1) She advised them to return to their mother's house. (2) She asked that Yahweh might treat them with loyal love. (3) Now she asks that Yahweh will provide each of them a place of rest in the home of a new husband from among the men of Moab. (4) Finally, she will kiss them goodbye.

<sup>21</sup> Ruth 1:9 - she kissed them: This was a good-bye kiss.

<sup>22</sup> Ruth 1:9 - they ... wept: It is difficult to know who is meant by "they ... wept." Was it the two daughters-in-law? Certainly, with all the emotion going on in this farewell speech, they are meant. But I have been in the midst of farewell scenes when I, as the one departing, wept. I am certain that all three women wept. I cannot imagine it any other way.

<sup>23</sup> Ruth 1:10 - but we will surely return with you to your people: It is difficult for us Westerners to imagine the Middle-Eastern familial bond between these two daughters-in-law and their mother-in-law. In our country it would be unthinkable that two daughters-in-law owed their mother-in-law anything whatsoever except a polite good-bye. But not so in their culture. Even though Orpah was eventually dissuaded, initially, she and Ruth both resist Naomi's appeal. After all, they were both already on their way to Israel with their mother-in-law!

- E 3 Does she have sons left in her womb? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? <sup>24</sup> 1:11c
- E 4 Her urging them again to return: {12} "Return, my daughters! 1:12a
- E 5 She is too old to remarry: Go, for I am too old <sup>25</sup> to have a husband. 1:12b
- E 6 Supposing she had a husband, would they wait? 1:12c-13b
- G 1 Her hypothesis – if she had a husband immediately: If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight 1:12c
- G 2 If she should bear a son for each of them: and also bear sons, 1:12d
- G 3 Would they wait twenty years until her sons were old enough to marry? {13} would you therefore wait until they were grown? <sup>26</sup> 1:13a
- G 4 Would they refrain from marrying? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? 1:13b
- E 7 Her situation in life is difficult than theirs 1:13c
- G 1 Life has been harder on her: No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, <sup>27</sup>
- G 2 Yahweh has been against her: for the hand of the

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<sup>24</sup> Ruth 1:11 - Have I yet sons ... that they may be your husbands?: Naomi's question is a powerful one. One of the cultural forces driving the loyalty of her daughters-in-law was the custom of levirate marriage – marriage to a brother's widow. It was generally forbidden in the Law for a man to marry his brother's wife (Lev. 18:16; 20:21). However, if she had no children, it became an obligation (Deut. 25:5-10). This custom long antedated the giving of the Law (Gen. 38:6-8). The term "levirate" derives from the Latin word *levir*, meaning "husband's brother." Historically, the custom of Levirate marriage has been practiced in a number of countries, chiefly in Africa, but also in Asia, in the Middle East, and even in Europe.

Ruth's question expects a negative reply. She doubted she had the capacity any longer to provide sons whom her daughters-in-law might marry. Her argument was a powerful one, at least in the case of Orpah.

<sup>25</sup> Ruth 1:12 - too old: Naomi considered herself too old to remarry. Who would want her? She presumed she no longer had the capacity to bear children – one of the primary expectations in marriage. And age pays no compliments to a woman's physical attractiveness.

<sup>26</sup> Ruth 1:13 - wait until they were grown?: With impeccable logic, Naomi talks through the absurdity of her daughters-in-law waiting for any sons she might have, assuming she were married and assuming she could even yet bear children, to grow old enough to marry. Would they wait twenty years?

<sup>27</sup> Ruth 1:13 - harder for me than for you: As difficult as the lives of her daughters-in-law have been, Naomi asserted, her own life has been more difficult. Her reason is startling – God has been against her. She didn't think God had been against them, but she was certain God had been against her! Literally, the text reads, "for it is more bitter for me than for you", where "it is more bitter" is the Qal Perfect stem of the verb, *marar*, (4843), "bitter." Naomi will use this verb again in Ruth 1:21. She will describe herself with the related noun, *Mara* (4755) in Ruth 1:20.

LORD has gone forth against me." <sup>28</sup>

D 4 The impact of Naomi's second speech 1:14

- E 1 They all wept again: {14} And they lifted up their voices and wept again;
- E 2 Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law,
- E 3 Ruth's opposite reaction: but Ruth clung to her.

C 3 Ruth's adamant choice of Naomi, her God and her people 1:15-18

D 1 Naomi's third speech, directed at Ruth 1:15

- E 1 Her observation of Orpah's departure: {15} Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back
  - G 1 to her people
  - G 2 and her gods; <sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Ruth 1:13 - the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me: Naomi here openly blamed God for her misfortunes. Absent here is any sense that God may have been disciplining her family for having left the promised land, the land of Israel. In Biblical history, departure from the promised land of Canaan without authorization from God has not been problem-free for those who departed. But there is no indication that either Naomi or the author of the book considered that possibility.

I do not believe Naomi lost her faith in Israel's God. After all, she had just wished for God's blessing upon and guidance for her daughters-in-law. It is beyond denial, however, that Naomi blamed God for her trials. In short, she became bitter against God. There is a truth here: just because a person is a believer does not exempt him from difficult times in life. It behooves the Christian to learn to trust God in times of trouble – to believe that, in the end, God's goodness and wisdom will triumph (Romans 8:28).

There is a [prosperity gospel](#) that teaches it is God's will for Christians to be healthy and wealthy. That theology, I believe, represents a failure to interpret Scriptures in light of the recipients to whom they were originally given. Said another way, the "gospel of health and wealth" fails to interpret Scripture dispensationally. While it is true that Israelis were promised blessings of health and wealth if they obeyed God (Deut. 28:1-14); and while it is true that Israelis were promised cursings of deprivation and illness if they disobeyed (Deut. 28:15-68); the same types of promises are not repeated for the New Testament Christian. On the one hand, New Testament Christians are promised spiritual blessings because of their chosen position in the Messiah (Eph. 1:3-4). On the other hand, however, Jesus, in fact, told his followers that in the world, they would experience tribulation (John 16:33). They were to take courage, however, for Jesus has conquered the world.

<sup>29</sup> Ruth 1:15 - and her gods: Technically the translation is correct. Naomi acknowledged that Orpah had returned to her people and her *elohim* (430), the plural of *eloah* (433). The difficulty is that *elohim* is the standard plural appearance of the generic word for the God of Israel. When *elohim* (in the plural) refers to the God of Israel, it is always translated as "God", never as "Gods" or as "gods". We should be consistent. If we translate the *elohim* of Israel as singular, i.e. "God", we should translate the *elohim* of Orpah as singular also, i.e. the god of Orpah, or the god of Moab. At the very least, the translators need a footnote to show what they have translated and why. That is a failure on their part, in my opinion.

Hebrew scholars insist that the plural "*Elohim*" is a "plural of majesty." I take it another direction. Referring to the God of Israel, the plural "*Elohim*" subtly leaves room for the truth that, though Yahweh, the God of Israel, is one (Deut. 6:4), He exists eternally as a Unity of Three Persons. That is, He is a complex Being unlike any other being in all the universe. He exists, and has always existed in the three persons we know today as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And yet He is one. Thus, the term Tri-Unity is exceedingly apropos.

The uncomfortable part of this discussion is that Naomi knew, and in fact, encouraged, both Orpah and Ruth to go back to the vile god of Moab, [Chemosh](#). She wished them the true God's blessing and grace, but nonetheless, she knew that to go back was to worship [Chemosh](#). Though we can understand what Naomi was doing

- E 2 Her command to Ruth to follow: return after your sister-in-law." <sup>30</sup>
- D 2 Ruth's impassioned and eloquent oration 1:16-17b
  - E 1 Her command to Naomi to cease dissuading her: {16} But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you <sup>31</sup> or turn back from following you; 1:16a
  - E 2 Her commitment to follow Naomi: for where you go, I will go, 1:16b
  - E 3 Her commitment to live with Naomi: and where you lodge, I will lodge. 1:16c
  - E 4 Her commitment to adopt Naomi's people: Your people *shall be* my people, 1:16d
  - E 5 Her commitment to adopt Naomi's God: and your God, my God. <sup>32</sup> 1:16e

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and why, we cannot praise her for it.

<sup>30</sup> Ruth 1:15 - return after your sister-in-law: Sadly, Naomi encouraged Ruth to return to her Moabite people and to her Moabite god, [Chemosh](#).

<sup>31</sup> Ruth 1:16 - Do not urge me to leave you: Ruth's impassioned response to Naomi is astonishing! There is no more beautiful speech written down anywhere than here. In it, she made a series of commitments to her mother-in-law – (1) She would follow Naomi wherever she went (Ruth 1:16). This means she would follow her all the way back to the land of Israel. In so doing, she would forsake her own father and mother and family. She would probably never see them again. (2) She would lodge wherever Naomi did (Ruth 1:16). "Lodge" (*lun*, [3885](#)) has to do with finding temporary lodging while traveling. This means on their way back to Israel, wherever Naomi found an inn, Ruth would pass the night there with her. (3) Naomi's people would be her people (Ruth 1:16). This means she would forsake her own people, the people of Moab, and adopt the nation of Israel as her own. (4) Naomi's God would be her God (Ruth 1:16). This means she was deliberately forsaking the Moabite god [Chemosh](#) and adopting the God of Israel, named Yahweh, as her own. (5) Where Naomi died, Ruth would die (Ruth 1:17). This means Naomi made a life-long commitment to the land of Israel. She was making the Promised Land (Gen. 12:1; 13:14-17; 15:7-21) her own. (6) Where Naomi would be buried, Ruth would be also (Ruth 1:17). Even after Naomi had died, Ruth would remain in the same town and be buried in the same cemetery. Even in death, she would not revert back to Moab, but would remain in the same Promised Land! Ruth's commitment was total, and it was irrevocable. Whether or not she ever married again, whether or not she was able to overcome the stigma of childlessness made no difference to Ruth. She was committed to Naomi and everything Naomi stood for – for life, and even afterwards!

Again, Ruth's commitment is nothing short of astonishing! Ruth did not make it into the "Faith Hall of Fame" found in Hebrews 11. Had I written it, I would have placed her there! But she did make it into the line of succession leading to Jesus, the Messiah, the greatest man ever to exist (Ruth 4: 13-22; Matt. 1:1-16)!

<sup>32</sup> Ruth 1:16 - and your God, my God: To me this is the most significant part of Ruth's unwavering commitment – she had already, in her heart and mind, made an irrevocable commitment to the one true God – the God of Israel. This theological commitment to God was the basis for her personal commitment to Naomi. Take away Ruth's commitment to the God of Israel, and you take away all the other commitments she here vocalized!

It should be mentioned that Ruth's two references to "God" here, the plural *Elohim* ([430](#)) is the identical word that Naomi used of Orpah's departure after her *Elohim* (Ruth 1:15). The words are identical. They should be translated the same way one verse apart in the same conversation! You can't translate the same word as a plural on one occasion and as a singular, seconds later, on the next two occasions.

- E 6 Her commitment to die where Naomi dies: {17} "Where you die, I will die,"<sup>33</sup> 1:17a
- E 7 Her commitment to be buried where Naomi is buried: and there I will be buried. 1:17b
- D 3 Her taking of a vow in the name of Yahweh: Thus may the LORD do to me,<sup>34</sup> and worse, if *anything but* death parts you and me." 1:17c
- D 4 Naomi's cessation of disuasion: {18} When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.<sup>35</sup> 1:18
- C 4 Naomi's bittersweet return to Bethlehem 1:19-22
- D 1 The return to Bethlehem: {19} So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. 1:19a

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<sup>33</sup> Ruth 1:17 - where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried: Ruth makes a life-long commitment to Naomi, to Naomi's people, to Naomi's God, and to Naomi's land. This is absolutely stunning! She plans, deliberately, never to return to Moab, never to see again her parents or other relatives. She has committed herself to Naomi and to all Naomi stands for – forever!

<sup>34</sup> Ruth 1:17 - Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if *anything but* death parts you and me: Ruth takes upon herself a deadly vow. In effect, she said, "May Yahweh kill me if I don't stay with you until death."

<sup>35</sup> Ruth 1:18 - she said no more to her: Ruth's impassioned identification of herself with Naomi and Naomi's God so thoroughly impressed Naomi that she ceased to seek to dissuade her daughter-in-law.

I have pondered the three women, Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah. Once Ruth and Orpah were married into Naomi's family, they experienced the same amount of sorrow and heartache. Apparently Elimelech had died before his and Naomi's sons married Moabite wives. But once they were married, each daughter-in-law suffered the same loss as Naomi. Naomi lost two sons, but Ruth and Orpah both lost a husband and a brother-in-law. The grief was not identical to Naomi's, but it was still comparable, and no less palpable.

Three different women with approximately the same grief. One, Naomi, became embittered against her God. Orpah ultimately left the God of Israel for the false god of Moab, [Chemosh](#). Instead of being turned off by Orpah's defection or by Naomi's bitterness, Ruth became resolutely committed to the God of Israel, overcoming all obstacles in the process. Why? Why the three different reactions? More to the point, why did Ruth commit herself irrevocably to the God of Israel given the disincentives from both of the other women in her life?

It will not do to say, "Well, Ruth was just more committed." That begs the question. Why was she more committed? Nor will it do to say, "God knew Ruth's heart and He called her to Himself." That makes God the prisoner of the whims and foibles of human nature. The truth is that God does not call us to Himself because He knows we will respond. To the contrary, we come to God because God calls us to Himself.

The Old Testament is filled with God's choices. God chose Abram, later called Abraham. God chose Isaac, but not Ishmael. God chose Jacob, but not Esau. Paul, in Romans 9:10-13, made it abundantly clear that He chose Jacob over Esau before the boys had even been born, and thus before either of them had done anything good or bad! So to say that God calls us to Himself because He knows how we will respond is to invalidate grace. God's choice becomes a meritorious choice – we are entitled to be chosen because we are good people – we will accept God's call!

That is far from what the New Testament, quoting the Old, says about human nature. To the contrary, there is not a single righteous person. There is not a single person who seeks after God. There is not a single person who does good (Rom. 3:10-12)! We are all sinners (Rom. 3:23)! This understanding of God's gracious, non-meritorious calling of sinners that I have elucidated is repugnant to some of my friends. They believe it is a disincentive to evangelism. To which I answer, if God did not call some to repentance, evangelism would be a total exercise in futility! The truth remains that people today will only come to Jesus if God draws them (John 6:44, 65). For a further study of God's election, see "[God's Part in Salvation – Election](#)."

## D 2 The stir in the city 1:19b

E 1 Their arrival: And when they had come to Bethlehem,

E 2 The stir: all the city was stirred because of them,<sup>36</sup>E 3 The query of the women: and the women said, "Is this Naomi?"<sup>37</sup>

## D 3 The attitude of Naomi 1:20-21

E 1 Her request: {20} She said to them, 1:20a

G 1 Her denial: "Do not call me Naomi;

G 2 Her preference: call me Mara,<sup>38</sup>

E 2 Her reason 1:20b-21

G 1 Her assessment of God: for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.<sup>39</sup> 1:20b

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<sup>36</sup> Ruth 1:19 - the city was stirred because of them: This is the passive Hebrew stem (Niphal) of the word *hum* (1949). This word is used only six times in the entire OT, but it is used in this sense (Niphal stem) only three times – 1 Sam. 4:5; 1 Kings 1:45; and Ruth 1:19. The whole city was in an uproar! There were audible questions and exclamations murmured back and forth by the citizenry. I can imagine the questions – “Who are these two women traveling by themselves?” “Oh, is that older one Naomi?” “What happened to her husband?” “And what happened to her two sons?” “And who on earth is the young woman with her?”

<sup>37</sup> Ruth 1:19 - “Is this Naomi?”: I’m certain the women were more perceptive in their observations and their conclusions than the men. That is the typical way of women. They fairly quickly identified Naomi. But it had been more than ten years since they had seen her. Undoubtedly she had aged. But I suspect there was more. I suspect the hardships Naomi endured had left her disillusioned, depressed, and bitter. She blamed God, and her cynicism affected her whole demeanor. She had become a different person, a bitter, hardened old woman. She was not the same Naomi that had left their town years earlier. I think the tone of their question was something along this line, “Can this possibly be Naomi? This isn’t the same person we used to know. Something bad has happened to her. I wonder what it was?”

<sup>38</sup> Ruth 1:20 - Naomi ... Mara: Naomi took the occasion of the women’s query using her name to ask for a name change. She wasn’t really asking for a name change, but she used the occasion to describe the difficult circumstances that she had been forced to endure. Naomi, of course, means “Pleasant,” but Naomi had not experienced pleasantness. She asked to be called Mara, “Bitter.” Her life had been bitter, and she was not upbeat about what had happened. I believe she had turned into a bitter, depressed person, and I think it showed on her face and in her demeanor. *Mara* (4755) is used only here in the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>39</sup> Ruth 1:20 - for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me: Naomi then justified the women’s renaming her *Mara* (4755, bitter). Using a play on words, she stated with utmost conviction that the Almighty had, in great degree, wrought bitterness (*Hiphil* stem of the verb, *marar*, 4843) in her life. Sadly, Naomi’s life was filled with bitterness. But it wasn’t God’s fault. It was hers. The New Testament warns us against bitterness. The writer to the Hebrews wrote, “See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness (*pikria*, 4088) springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled” (Heb. 12:15). Esau is given as an example not to emulate (Heb. 12:16-17). Ruth went through many of the same difficulties as Naomi. She did not become bitter. She became more committed to God! In this regard, Ruth, not Naomi, is an excellent example to follow!

“Almighty,” the name for God, is *Shadday* (7706). The first time this name of God was used in the Hebrew Bible was in Genesis 17:1, where Yahweh identified Himself as “God Almighty” (*El Shadday*) to Abram when he was 99 years old. In that passage “God” is the abbreviated form of *Elohim* (430), *El* (410).

*Shadday* is often used in combination with other names of God, but not here in Ruth. She uses it twice, by itself, here in Ruth 1:20, and again in Ruth 1:21. Exodus 6:3 provides an interesting commentary on the name

- G 2 Her explanation: {21} "I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty."<sup>40</sup> 1:21a
- G 3 Her question: Why do you call me Naomi, 1:21b
- H 1 Yahweh's adversarial testimony: since the LORD has witnessed against me<sup>41</sup>
- H 2 The Almighty's adversarial affliction: and the Almighty has afflicted me?"<sup>42</sup>

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Shadday. God says He appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty (*El Shadday*), but by the name *Yahweh* He did not make Himself known to them.

The name *Shadday* for God is used more often in the book of Job (31X) than in any other book of the Hebrew Bible. In an instructive passage for defining the term, in three successive lines God is referred to as "Yahweh" (by the author) (Job 40:1). In the next two lines (Job 40:2) God refers to Himself as "Almighty" (*Shadday*) and as "God" (*Elohim*). He queries the wisdom of Job's trying to find fault with the Almighty and trying to reprove God. So "Almighty" (*Shadday*) seems to have the sense here of being all-powerful, with the authority and power to do whatever He wishes. No one should question Him. This instance is instructive in the light of Naomi's blaming the Almighty for whatever happened to her. In one sense, she was right. The Almighty did deprive her of her husband and her two sons. But she should not have questioned the Almighty's justice or fairness.

The sense that the Almighty is just and righteous in His dealings with man appears several times in the book of Job (Job 8:3; 34:10, 12; 35:12-13; 37:23). But Job, like Naomi, had problems with the way in which the Almighty was treating him (Job 6:4). He wished to argue His case with the Almighty (Job 13:3; 31:35). He stated that God had made his heart faint, and the Almighty had dismayed him (Job 23:16). Job complained that the Almighty did not publish His calendar for judging people (Job 24:1). What Job meant was that bad things happen to people, but God never explains *why* in this life. Without that Divine commentary, life sometimes seems very unjust. Job complained that God had taken away his rights, that the Almighty had embittered his soul (Job 27:2). Yet Job was convinced that, in the end, the Almighty would do what was right with the wicked (Job 27:13-14). Job yearned for the time in the past when the Almighty was with him and he was surrounded by his children (Job 29:4-5). In the end, God reproved Job for finding fault with the Almighty and reproofing Him (Job 40:1-2).

<sup>40</sup> Ruth 1:21 - full ... empty: Naomi justified her charge that the Almighty had dealt bitterly with her. She had left "House of Bread" (Bethlehem) during a famine full, with a husband and two sons. She had returned to "House of Bread" empty, without a husband and without a son. Though she didn't mean it that way, her reaction was a slap in the face of Ruth, who had dutifully followed her. Later, these same women, to whom Naomi was bitterly complaining, would offer a different assessment of Ruth. From their view, Ruth, who loved her, was better to her "than seven sons" (Ruth 4:15)! Perspective is an amazing thing. At this stage in her life, Naomi did not have a proper perspective. Her glass was completely empty, she thought. But God was just beginning to fill it!

<sup>41</sup> Ruth 1:21 - the LORD has witnessed against me: The word "witnessed" (*anah*, [6030](#)), appearing here in the Qal stem, is a simple word for "answer" or "respond." However, the addition of the prefixed *beth* (b) before "me" connotes an adversarial setting, perhaps even in a court of law. "Yahweh has responded against me," Naomi asserted.

<sup>42</sup> Ruth 1:21 - the Almighty has afflicted me: The verb "afflicted" (*raa*, [7489](#)), here a Hiphil perfect, is a harsh word. *Shadday* had brought calamity, disaster upon her. To give some examples, Lot pleaded with the homosexuals of Sodom not to "act wickedly" against his two house guests (Gen. 19:7); to which they replied, "we will 'treat you worse' than them" (Gen. 19:9). Interestingly, this word is used only once in the whole book of Job. It is used as a Hiphil participle in Job 8:20, where Bildad asserts that God will not support "the ones doing evil."

This was a serious charge that Naomi brought against God. But God did not strike her dead. In fact, all along He had been in control, working to bring about greater blessings than Naomi could possibly imagine. But right now she was in no state of mind to believe in blessings. She was bitter and depressed.

- D 4 The time of the return 1:22
  - E 1 The summary of the return
    - G 1 The return of Naomi: {22} So Naomi returned,
    - G 2 The companion of Naomi: and with
      - H 1 Her name: her Ruth
      - H 2 Her nationality: the Moabitess,<sup>43</sup>
      - H 3 Her relationship: her daughter-in-law,
      - H 4 Her severing of ties with Moab: who returned from the land of Moab.<sup>44</sup>
  - E 2 The time of their arrival: And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ruth 1:22 - Moabitess: Repeatedly Ruth is identified as a Moabitess in the book of Ruth. The word is used seven times – Ruth 1:4, 22; 2:2, 6, 21; 4:5, 10. To me, this book speaks strongly of God’s elective grace even among the outcast Gentiles!

<sup>44</sup> Ruth 1:22 - who returned from the land of Moab: This clause describes Ruth as, literally, “the one returning from the country of Moab.” The verb “returned” (*shub*, [7725](#)) is a Qal perfect verb, third person singular, here serving, with the prefixed “h” as a participle. The author is underscoring the fact that, though Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem together, Ruth was a foreigner of the accursed Moab, and that she returned to Bethlehem from the land of Moab.

One of the themes of the book of Ruth is God’s grace for Gentiles, who were not among God’s chosen people. Moabites were under a curse – unable to enter the sanctuary of the LORD for two reasons – (1) They did not provide the journeying sons of Israel with food and water on their way to their promised land; (2) and because they hired Balaam the son of Beor to curse Israel (Deut. 23:3-6). It is possible that Ruth was exempt from this curse because the term “Moabite” in Deut. 23:3 is male in gender. Nevertheless, she was not born amongst the chosen people.

Yet God graciously called her to Himself despite her pagan background. Why? The answer, I believe, is found in John 6:44, 65; 10:26-27; Rom. 8:28-30; 9:10-16; Ephesians 1:4, and other passages. This is a difficult truth for some Christians to digest. There is something in us that makes us want to earn our way into God’s grace. Some attempt to dilute this truth by saying, “Well, God simply chose certain people on the basis of His prior knowledge of who would respond and who wouldn’t. But that makes God a puppet to man’s choices. And it redefines grace as meaning “merited favor.” Quite to the contrary, grace is “unmerited favor” (Eph. 2:8-10). God does not call us because He knew we would respond affirmatively. Rather, we respond affirmatively because God called us. If you have problems with that, you will have to take up your questions with God Himself, because [that is what the Scripture teaches](#).

<sup>45</sup> Ruth 1:22 - at the beginning of barley harvest: Naomi had become a bitter, depressed woman. She asked to be named “Bitter” (*Mara*). Yet, in this beautifully written historical narrative, the author here gives a hint that the events which caused Naomi such angst are about to change. She, and her outcast Moabite daughter-in-law, arrived in the “House of Bread” (Bethlehem) at the beginning of barley harvest. This time indicator signifies that something propitious is about to unfold. Indeed, one half of the book, chapters 2 and 3, centers around events out in the harvest field! What will happen to the accursed Gentile? What will happen to the bitter Jewess? It is harvest time!

**A 2 GOD'S SOVEREIGN ASSISTANCE OF RUTH'S PROVISION FOR NAOMI 2****B 1 Ruth's "Coincidental" Selection of Boaz' Field in Which to Harvest 2:1-3****C 1 Naomi's in-law, Boaz 2:1**

D 1 Naomi's in-law: {1} Now Naomi had a kinsman <sup>46</sup> of her husband,

D 2 His status: a man of great wealth, <sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Ruth 2:1 - kinsman: The word is *moda* (4129). This word is used only twice in the OT, in Prov. 7:4 and here in Ruth 2:1. It is here translated "kinsman," and in Prov. 7:4, "intimate friend." It is not to be confused with the word *qarob* (7138), "relative," in Ruth 2:20; 3:12; nor with the term *gaal* (1350), "closest relatives," also in Ruth 2:20, one of the most important Hebrew words in the entire narrative. *Gaal* is so important it is used 19 times in this brief book! It constitutes the theme of the book!

<sup>47</sup> Ruth 2:1 - a man of great wealth: NASB footnote – "Or mighty, valiant man". This English phrase translates the three Hebrew words which describe Boaz (as forms of the words) in the phrase *ish* (376) *gibbor* (1368) *chayil* (2428). There is no debate as to what *ish* means. It means "man." But there is room for debate in the meanings of *gibbor* and *chayil* as the NASB translators have assigned them. The possible meaning provided in the footnote, for example, substantially differs with the meaning preferred by the translators in the main text. In my opinion, the translation in the footnote is superior to the one in the text. Let me explain.

In the NASB preferred reading, "great" apparently translates the Hebrew *gibbor* (1368), and "wealth" apparently translates the Hebrew *chayil* (2428). But that this is a questionable translation is demonstrated in that this is the only time in the entire OT that *gibbor* is translated "great" in the NASB. *Gibbor* is consistently used in military contexts. The men so indicated as *gibbor* are not only in the military, but they are exceptional soldiers. David's "mighty men" come to mind. Whatever else you want to say about Boaz, he was not your average man. He probably possessed great physical strength. Whether he ever fought in the military, the text does not say, unless it says so here. Regardless, if he did fight, he would have been among the most formidable opponents an opposing soldier could have faced. He was among the elite.

In the alternative translation supplied by the footnote, the editors translate *gibbor* (1368) as "mighty," and *chayil* (2428) as "valiant." This is quite a different sense than the meaning preferred by the editors in the text proper. This is more consistent with how this combination of words are used elsewhere in the O.T. For example, the two words, *gibbor chayil* together are translated "valiant warriors" in Josh. 1:14; 6:2; 8:3; 10:7. Now let us turn our attention to the way the writer used the word *chayil* in the book of Ruth. I think the evidence is telling.

The word *chayil* (2428) is used only three times in Ruth. In Ruth 2:1, NASB translates it as "wealth." So also in Ruth 4:11. But in Ruth 4:11, the word is paired off with the word "famous." So more likely, the meaning in Ruth 4:11 should have more to do with notoriety (in a good sense) than with wealth. The deciding factor is in the author's use of the word *chayil* in describing Ruth in Ruth 3:11. There she is described by Boaz, agreeing with the townspeople, as being a woman of *chayil*, here translated "excellence." *Chayil* here cannot possibly mean "wealth." Whatever else you wish to say about Ruth, she was not wealthy. So "wealth," I believe, is a poor translation of *chayil* in both Ruth 2:1 and Ruth 4:11. If I were to use three words, the sum total of which would describe both Ruth and Boaz in regard to their being people of *chayil*, it would be these – they were people of initiative, industry, and determination. It is difficult to find one word that conveys all those three ideas. With regard to Boaz, the author, in Ruth 2:1, was not attempting to describe Boaz as a wealthy man, although he was certainly not poverty-stricken. The point is that he, and later Ruth, were to be understood as people of initiative, industry, and determination. In particular, Boaz, as the two words *gibbor* and *chayil* point out, was a warrior of initiative, industry, and determination. Whether or not he actually fought in pitched battles is irrelevant. He was a man who had the character and the physical and mental prowess of what would later be termed a centurion in the Roman army – an exceptional leader of 100 infantrymen. In short, Boaz and Ruth were a matched pair! They didn't yet know that, but they were!

Ruth showed initiative, industry, and determination in leaving her family, leaving her people, leaving her god, and attaching herself to Naomi, to Naomi's people, to Naomi's God, and to Naomi's land. She showed the same three traits in looking for work to support herself and Naomi, and by diligently working day by day in the harvest fields. Boaz showed initiative, industry, and determination in running a good-sized farming operation and in looking out for his employees. He showed the same traits in immediately taking the legal steps to secure the land of Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion as he had been requested. And he showed the same traits in taking the legal steps necessary to bring about his marriage to Ruth, as he had been requested. These two were a matched pair!

- D 3 His family: of the family of Elimelech, <sup>48</sup>
- D 4 whose name was Boaz. <sup>49</sup>
- C 2 Ruth's request to glean 2:2
  - D 1 Ruth's request: {2} And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." <sup>50</sup>
  - D 2 Naomi's permission: And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."
- C 3 Ruth's chance arrival in Boaz' field 2:3
  - D 1 Her departure to reap: {3} So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers;
  - D 2 Her chance destination: and she happened to come <sup>51</sup> to the portion

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<sup>48</sup> Ruth 2:1 - of the family of Elimelech: We might say, "extended family." The author is preparing the way for the rest of the narrative. Though he does not yet so indicate, the fact that Boaz was of the family of Boaz would qualify him to be a *gaal*, a relative redeemer. But we are a long way from the significance of that word in the progression of the narrative.

<sup>49</sup> Ruth 2:1 - Boaz: The etymology of Boaz' name is uncertain. The *Nelson Study Bible* (p. 444) says it means "Swift Strength." If that is true, it certainly matches up well with his characterization as being a *gibbor chayil* – a warrior of determination.

<sup>50</sup> Ruth 2:2 - favor: The word is *chen* (2580), most often in the NASB translated "favor" (51X); less often "grace" (8X), "gracious" (3X), and "graceful" (2X). One has found favor in the eyes of someone else when that other person, whether a fellow-human or God Himself, looks favorably upon oneself. The reader is not always told why the favor exists. But sometimes a reason is given. The first occurrence of *chen* in the Hebrew Bible is in Gen. 6:9, where it is stated that Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. Was it because Noah was a Godly man, or was it simply because God chose to be favorably disposed toward Noah? We are not told why. Jacob hoped to purchase favor from Esau with his many gifts (Gen. 32:5, 8, 10). Shechem hoped to find favor in the eyes of Jacob and his sons (Gen. 34:11). He was mistaken, however, and was killed (Gen. 34:13-29). Joseph found favor in the eyes of his slave-owner, Potiphar (Gen. 39:4), but we are not told why. In Gen. 39:21, the chief jailer extended favor to Joseph, and we do know why. It was because "the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer."

*Chen*, favor, is used three times in the book of Ruth, all in this chapter. Here, Ruth asked for permission to go out and look for someone who might show her favor by letting her harvest in his field. When she did find favor, which she perceived to be unmerited and incomprehensibly bountiful (Ruth 2:10), she was incredulous! Boaz, however, assigned reasons as to why he had shown her favor (Ruth 2:11-12). At the end of that same conversation with Boaz, she again acknowledged that she had found favor in his eyes (Ruth 2:13).

Just like Ruth, when we in the NT era fully understand God's grace (*charis*, 5485) toward us, we are also incredulous. Why should God show any favor toward us, since there is not one of us who is righteous, who understands, who even seeks God, who has not turned aside from God's ways, who does any good (Rom. 3:9-12)?

<sup>51</sup> Ruth 2:3 - she happened to come: The Hebrew is explicit – "Her hap was to happen ..." or, "her chance was to chance upon the portion of the field belonging to Boaz ...." The writer was using a common human expression to underscore subtly a strong theme in the book of Ruth – the Sovereignty of God on behalf of those whom He has chosen. From a human point of view it was mere coincidence that Ruth just happened to find herself in the field of Boaz. But from God's point of view, there is no such thing as an accident or a coincidence (Prov. 16:33; Rom. 8:28). In other words, there is never a time when God is not in control, even, I might add, when Satan seems to be (see the book of Job, for example).

of the field <sup>52</sup> belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

**B 2 Boaz' Inquiry about Ruth Following His Timely Return from Bethlehem 2:4-7**

- C 1 Boaz' arrival from Bethlehem: {4} Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem <sup>53</sup> 2:4a
- C 2 Boaz' greetings with his workers
- D 1 His greeting to them: and said to the reapers, "May the LORD be with you." <sup>54</sup>
- D 2 Their reply to him: And they said to him, "May the LORD bless you." <sup>55</sup>
- C 3 Boaz' curiosity about Ruth 2:5-7
- D 1 His question 2:5
- E 1 The object of his question: {5} Then Boaz said to his servant <sup>56</sup> who was in charge of the reapers,
- E 2 The substance of his question: "Whose young woman is

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<sup>52</sup> Ruth 2:3 - portion of the field: God's precision is amazing. Even though Ruth had no idea whose field in which she was going to glean, God did. This field apparently had multiple owners. God, in His providence, guided Ruth to just that portion of the field owned by Boaz! This is absolutely amazing! Boaz, of course, belonged to the extended family of Elimelech. [Rabbinic tradition](#) states that Boaz was Elimelech's nephew, but that can hardly be proven.

<sup>53</sup> Ruth 2:4 - Boaz came from Bethlehem: Not only did God synchronize Ruth's movements, though she was utterly unaware of it, He also synchronized the movements of Boaz, also oblivious of the fact. This was not difficult for the One who choreographed the movement of the moon around the earth, the earth and its fellow planets around the sun, the movement of our entire solar system within the Milky Way Galaxy, and the movements of all galaxies and galaxy clusters in an apparently expanding universe!

<sup>54</sup> Ruth 2:4 - May the LORD be with you: The author records the greeting of Boaz to his workers to indicate what sort of character this relative of Elimelech possessed. He was a Godly man, a good man. The name of Yahweh was on His lips without thinking – and it was not a swear word or flippant punctuation of his sentence, as is so often true, sadly, in our country today. His spontaneous, candid greeting of his workers consisted of a desire that Yahweh might go with them in their work and in their ever-day lives. He was a good man, and he had a good relationship with his harvest hands.

<sup>55</sup> Ruth 2:4 - May the LORD bless you: The reply of the workers of Boaz to him is equally impressive. They asked that Yahweh would bless (bring good to) their boss! The word they used was *barak* (1288). (See the footnote on "bless" in Ruth 2:19 for a fuller discussion.) In a few short words, the writer has conveyed that Boaz is a spiritual man, a Godly man, a good man, one who positively affected the demeanor and attitude of those around him. Our speech is often the most accurate barometer of our heart. That is true of God. His most eloquent speech, the Word of God, is the best barometer of God's heart (John 1:1-3, 14-18).

<sup>56</sup> Ruth 2:5 - servant: Hardly, in my opinion, the best translation. The word is *naar* ([5288](#)), a young man. This word does not indicate whether the male referenced happens to be a servant or slave or freeman. We are not told. All we can surmise is that he was a capable, relatively young adult male, perhaps in his mid to late twenties or early thirties whom Boaz had trusted to supervise his harvest crew. We are not informed as to his socio-economic status.

this?" <sup>57</sup>

D 2 His foreman's reply 2:6-7

E 1 Her identity 2:6

G 1 The identification of the one replying: {6 } The servant in charge of the reapers replied,

G 2 The substance of his reply: "She is the young Moabite <sup>58</sup> woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab.

E 2 Her request: {7} "And she said, 'Please let me glean <sup>59</sup> and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' 2:7a

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<sup>57</sup> Ruth 2:5 - Whose young woman is this: The two English words, "young woman" translates the single Hebrew word *naarah* (5291). *Naarah* is the feminine version of the previously mentioned masculine *naar* (5288). *Naarah* simply refers to young women without any reference to their socio-economic condition. Rebekah was a *naarah* (Gen. 24:14, 16, 28, 55) as was Dinah (Gen. 34:3, 12). Ruth would have been perhaps in her late twenties, or at the very most, her early thirties, but she was still a *naarah*. This word is most often translated in the NASB as some variation of *girl* (32X), or *maids* or *maidens* (15X). In the book of Ruth this word is used in Ruth 2:5, 6, 8, 22, 23; 3:2; 4:12.

The interesting thing is that Boaz noticed the young woman at all. Boaz could have been an aloof landowner who was only interested in the profit he might receive from the harvest. He might have been an introverted man who, while possessing some curiosity about this woman, was too insecure to ask about her. He was neither. He was obviously not out in the field harvesting, but he has already indicated a genuine interest in the well-being of his workers. He has blessed them with the words, "May Yahweh be with you." They have responded with a blessing of Yahweh upon Him.

Boaz is a delegator. He is not afraid to put someone else in charge of his harvest crew. But is still sufficiently "hands-on" to know which workers are already under his employ and which workers are not. He knows he did not hire this woman. And he is curious enough to ask who she might be.

<sup>58</sup> Ruth 2:6 - young Moabite woman: It casually slips from the lips of the leading hand on the harvest crew that the young woman – he perhaps does not know her name – is the Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the land of Moab. There is no animosity in his voice – he merely is stating the facts – she is the Moabite from Moab. Once again, the reader is reminded that this woman will probably never be fully assimilated into the people of Bethlehem. She will forever be known as "the Moabite from Moab." And yet God, in His ongoing love for Gentiles, even for outcast Moabites, has a program of redemption for them. Most will not respond, of course. But some will! And Ruth was one of those who had responded, while Orpah was one who had not.

My wife and I have descended from Mennonite backgrounds. We heard once of some friends of ours who were also Mennonites. He became pastor of a Mennonite church in a small midwestern town. After they had been there some time, one of the Mennonite women confided to the pastor's wife, "You'll never be one of us." That's probably how the people of Bethlehem felt toward Ruth. They had no animosity toward her, but she would never be one of them. But she would always be one of God's chosen, and soon, she would be chosen by Boaz. But we are not nearly there yet in our historical narrative.

<sup>59</sup> Ruth 2:7 - Please let me glean: Ruth had done the right thing. She had enquired of the female harvest workers who was in charge. They had pointed her to the young man in charge of the harvest crew. She had asked for permission to garner left-behind stalks of barley missed in the actions of the harvest crew. She was within her rights, of course – the Law made provision for her (Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22). She probably would not have known that except that Naomi had almost certainly informed her. In any event, Ruth was far from being a presumptuous person. She politely asked for permission, and had obviously been granted it. The foreman of the harvest crew apparently had adopted the magnanimous policy that he knew Boaz would have approved.

## E 3 Her activities 2:7b

G 1 Her previous hard work: Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now;<sup>60</sup>G 2 Her present rest: she has been sitting in the house for a little while."<sup>61</sup>**B 3 Boaz' Invitation to Ruth to Harvest in His Fields 2:8-13**

## C 1 Boaz' offer 2:8-9

D 1 His request for her to work in his field: {8} Then Boaz said to Ruth,<sup>62</sup> 2:8aE 1 His solicitous address: "Listen carefully, my daughter."<sup>63</sup>

E 2 His admonition

G 1 Do not leave: Do not go to glean in another field;<sup>64</sup>

G 2 Rather, stay: furthermore, do not go on from this one,

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<sup>60</sup> Ruth 2:7 - has remained from the morning until now: Ruth was a diligent worker. She was not a slacker. The supervisor had been impressed with her diligence and industry. She, like the woman of Proverbs (Prov. 31:10-31), was what a missionary friend of mine once called "a real keeper"!

<sup>61</sup> Ruth 2:7 - sitting in the house for a little while: It was hot, the work was not easy, and it had been awhile since Ruth had worked like this. She deserved a mid-morning break and was taking it. There was no recrimination from the foreman. The over-all impression remained – Ruth was a hard worker.

<sup>62</sup> Ruth 2:8 - Then Boaz said to Ruth: Having ascertained who she was, Boaz took the initiative, being the gregarious man that he was, to walk up to her and address her personally. He was not being forward. It was his personality. As his conversation would reveal, he was solicitous of her well-being and also her safety. He knew if she stayed with his harvest girls, she would be safe. He would make sure she gleaned enough to make it worth her while to stay with him and his harvest hands. There was no amorous intent on his part. Only concern for her well-being. Her reputation had already preceded her (Ruth 2:11-12).

<sup>63</sup> Ruth 2:8 - Listen carefully, my daughter: "Daughter" is *bath* (1323). To the modern Western ear, this sounds patronizing. But that point of view is the fault of the West's plummeting derangement caused by a systematic and progressive disregard for God and truth. Boaz was acting in a gentlemanly fashion with nothing but concern for Ruth's well-being. She was not the least bit offended by his concern. That is so because she had not been indoctrinated with today's anti-biblical, anti-Christian feminism. Quite to the contrary, she was astounded, respectful, and humbled. It is quite possible that Boaz was almost old enough to be Ruth's father. He had no amorous intention toward her. He was more than casually concerned for her well-being, however, as his following explanation revealed. He simply wanted her to listen carefully to the advice he had to offer her.

<sup>64</sup> Ruth 2:8 - Do not go to glean in another field: Boaz strongly advised Ruth to remain in the field in which she found herself. He will try to persuade her that she cannot possibly do better than remain where she is. He has reasons for the advice he is giving her. His reasons will become apparent as he continues in his speech.

- D 2 His urging her to work alongside his maids 2:8b-9a
- E 1 Stay here: but stay here with my young women. <sup>65</sup> 2:8b
- E 2 {9} "Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, <sup>66</sup> and go after them. <sup>67</sup> 2:9a
- D 3 His solicitation of her safety: Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. <sup>68</sup> 2:9b
- D 4 His offer of water: When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants <sup>69</sup> draw." 2:9b

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<sup>65</sup> Ruth 2:8 - stay here with my maids: Boaz has more advice for Ruth. Instead of trying to pursue the elusive "best field" and "best working conditions", she should remain with the young women working in *his* field. The word "maids" is the feminine version (*naarah*, [5291](#)) of the previously mentioned masculine *naar* ([5288](#)). *Naarah* simply refers to young women without any reference to their socio-economic condition. These young women may have been a little younger than Ruth, but they were all younger women.

The fact that Boaz encouraged Ruth to associate with the young women working in his fields indicates that he was concerned for her social well-being. This harvest business was a male-dominated world, but there were some young women working out there as well. She would feel most at home if she were to associate with these young women. If the young women stuck together, they would less likely fall prey to some male worker with less-than-honorable intentions. Ruth would feel most comfortable working alongside the young women in the harvest crew. She should stick near to them.

<sup>66</sup> Ruth 2:9 - Let your eyes be on the field which they reap: Here, Boaz expanded the parameters of his advice. Not only was Ruth not to seek another field to work in as long as this field remained unharvested, but she should not look elsewhere after the harvesting of this field had been completed. There were other fields to harvest in this extensive harvest season. Ruth should follow the women who worked in this field of Boaz to the next field, and the next. So long as there were fields to harvest, Ruth should remain in his fields, and not seek work in fields belonging to some other landowner. This whole process would last a number of weeks, almost months.

<sup>67</sup> Ruth 2:9 - and go after them: Boaz is not one of those "dirty old men" who have ulterior motives. He was genuinely concerned about Ruth's social well-being. He did not want her to feel awkward in this male-dominated harvesting business. So he advised her, as the harvest went along, to keep following after the young women who were working for him. She would be taken care of, and she would always have work to do as long as the harvest lasted. No matter where the harvesting took them, she was to remain working alongside the women who worked for Boaz. She would be well-taken-care-of there.

<sup>68</sup> Ruth 2:9 - Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you: Now Boaz revealed a deeper, more sinister reason for his advice. He openly admitted to the possibility, at least, that one of the less honorable male workers might have a sinister impulse. He had already commanded, or would soon command (see [Net Bible](#)) the "servants", i.e. the "young men" (*naar* - [5288](#)), not to touch her. In other words, he commanded them not to molest her physically or sexually in any way. This doesn't mean that Boaz had some scurvy "ne'er-do-wells" working for him. It does mean he knows human nature. He has pre-empted any designs any of them might have by warning them that they had better leave Ruth alone. He knows she is a single woman. They would all know that. But that should make no difference. He, the boss, was looking out for her. They had better be on their best behavior! Boaz believes that warning will make it safest for Ruth, and that she should be confident of working in the fields in which his workers are employed. So not only is Boaz looking out for her financial well-being, and for her social well-being, but he is also looking out for her physical and moral well-being – her personal safety.

<sup>69</sup> Ruth 2:9 - drink from what the servants draw: Again, "servants" may not be the best translation. The word is the plural of *naar* ([5288](#)), which means simply "young men" without reference to their socio-economic status. Whether these young men were slaves or servants or simply freemen he hired off the street to help him harvest, the context does not tell us.

The point of what Boaz was telling her, however, was that she should take advantage of the drinking water which his laborers used. We Americans would say, "Please make yourself at home here. Consider yourself part of the family!" Boaz was going far above and beyond the call of duty in his treatment of this Moabite immigrant. He was looking out for her monetary well-being, her physical well-being, her social well-being, and her personal safety. This

## C 2 Ruth's incredulity 2:10

D 1 Her prostration: {10} Then she fell on her face,<sup>70</sup>

D 2 Her bowing: bowing to the ground

D 3 Her baffled question: and said to him,

E 1 Her question as to why she should have found favor: "Why have I found favor<sup>71</sup> in your sight

E 2 That he should take notice: that you should take notice of me,

E 3 Considering her status as a foreigner: since I am a foreigner?"<sup>72</sup>

## C 3 Boaz' explanation 2:11-12

D 1 His explanation of favor – his awareness of her commitment 2:11

E 1 Her care for her mother-in-law: {11} Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law<sup>73</sup>

E 2 The time of her care for her mother-in-law: after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me,

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astounded Ruth!

<sup>70</sup> Ruth 2:10 - Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground: Ruth was overwhelmed by Boaz' generosity and kindness! She prostrated herself in deference to his elevated status and her own, inferior position. Why was she so incredulous of his attention? Her questions would reveal her reasons.

<sup>71</sup> Ruth 2:10 - Why have I found favor in your sight: The word "favor" is *chen* (2580), most often in the NASB translated "favor" (51X). This is the second time the author has used this word in the book. *Chen*, favor, is used three times in the book of Ruth, all in this chapter. In Ruth 2:2, Ruth asked for permission to go out and look for someone who might show her favor by letting her harvest in his field. When she did find favor, which she perceived to be unmerited and incomprehensibly bountiful (Ruth 2:10), she was incredulous! In Ruth 2:13, she humbly acknowledged that she, Boaz maidservant, had found favor (*chen*) in Boaz' eyes, even though she was not on a par with, and thus even less-deserving than Boaz' (real) maidservants!

<sup>72</sup> Ruth 2:10 - since I am a foreigner: This reason, given by Ruth, reveals the deep-seated source of her incredulity. She is a foreigner. The word is *nokriy* (5237), used only here in Ruth. It means an alien, someone from a different country. Everyone in Bethlehem recognized her as a Moabitess from Moab, and she was painfully aware that she would always be that. She accepted her own outsider status as an inevitable reality, not as an unfair discrimination. Consequently she was genuinely amazed at what she perceived to be Boaz' generous thoughtfulness and concern for her well-being. The first time this word was used in the O.T. was when Laban's two daughters accused him of treating them like foreigners (Gen. 31:15). But Ruth's reaction was the opposite. She was surprised that Boaz was *not* treating her as a foreigner!

<sup>73</sup> Ruth 2:11 - All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me: From Ruth's perspective, she was utterly surprised that Boaz would be so kind to her. From Boaz' perspective, however, he had reasons for looking out for this Moabitess. Foremost among them was her commitment to and care for her mother-in-law. What made her loyalty even more special was the fact that her own husband had died. Consequently, she could hardly have been expected to continue the same level of care for Naomi, her mother-in-law, since the *reason* for her care – the relationship through her own husband – had ceased some time ago, in view of his tragic death!

- E 3 Her departure from all she knew
  - G 1 From her parents: and how you left your father and your mother <sup>74</sup>
  - G 2 From her home country: and the land of your birth, <sup>75</sup>
- E 4 Her adherence to the Israeli people, previously unknown to her: and came to a people that you did not previously know. <sup>76</sup>
- D 2 His prayer for God's reward 2:12
  - E 1 That Yahweh would reward her work: {12} "May the LORD reward your work, <sup>77</sup>
  - E 2 That her wages from Yahweh would be full: and your wages be full <sup>78</sup> from the LORD, the God of Israel,
  - E 3 His acknowledgment that she had sought refuge under the wings of the God of Israel: under whose wings <sup>79</sup> you have

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<sup>74</sup> Ruth 2:11 - you left your father and your mother: Boaz was impressed that Ruth had left her own father and mother to be committed to her mother-in-law. This was another factor that contributed to his high esteem of her.

<sup>75</sup> Ruth 2:11 - and the land of your birth: Boaz was furthermore impressed that Ruth had voluntarily given up, for the rest of her life, her own country that she had been born in.

<sup>76</sup> Ruth 2:11 - and came to a people that you did not previously know: Yet another factor about Ruth's behavior stood out to Boaz. Not only had she voluntarily left her own people, but she had adopted as her own people a race of people – the sons of Israel – that she had not know before! Ruth's level of commitment astounded Boaz!

<sup>77</sup> Ruth 2:12 - May the LORD reward your work: Boaz was so impressed with Ruth's sacrifice and commitment that he asked Yahweh to reward her work (*po'al*, [0647](#)), a generic sort of word for "work" or "activity." It is used only here in the book of Ruth. In effect, Boaz has taken notice of her effort in the harvest field, but also in her support of Naomi. He asks that God will reward her for her diligence and commitment. He will do his part to reward her also, but he does not here state that.

<sup>78</sup> Ruth 2:12 - and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel: "And your wages" is the Hebrew word *maskoreth* ([4909](#)), used only here in Ruth and elsewhere, only in Genesis 29:15; 31:7, 41. "Be full" translates *shalem* ([8003](#)), used only about 30 times in the OT and only here in Ruth. Boaz can certainly help Ruth out, but only Yahweh can fully repay her for the sacrifice she has made and is making.

<sup>79</sup> Ruth 2:12 - wings: Having enumerated all the things that Ruth has done that impress him, Boaz relates the key factor in her whole approach to life – Ruth has come to seek refuge under the wings of the God of Israel! The word "wings" is the plural of *kanash* ([3671](#)). Boaz acknowledged that Ruth had sought refuge and protection under the wings of the God of Israel, rather than *Chemosh*, the vile god of the Moabites. The metaphor is of a baby bird taking refuge under the powerful wings of its mother, who would protect it from predators. A powerful eagle, for example, comes to mind. Later, following the instruction of Naomi, her rejuvenated mother-in-law, Ruth would ask Boaz to spread his wing over her (Ruth 3:9)!

In summary then, there are a significant number of steps which Ruth had taken which motivated Boaz to show her favor. From her point of view, she was owed no favor since she was a foreigner. But from his point of view, however, the incredible support Ruth had given to Naomi, her decision to leave her own parents, her own country, and her own people, her decision to align herself with the people of Israel, and especially, perhaps, her decision to trust in the God of Israel, had given him, Boaz, ample reason to extend favor or grace to her.

It should be pointed out, however, that God's decision to show favor to certain individuals throughout

come to seek refuge."

C 4 Ruth's appreciation 2:13

D 1 Her acknowledgment of having found favor in Boaz' sight: {13}  
Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord,"<sup>80</sup>

D 2 Her appreciation of his treatment of her

E 1 His comfort: for you have comforted me

E 2 His kind speech: and indeed have spoken kindly

D 3 Her acknowledgment of her inferior position

E 1 She is his maidservant: to your maidservant,<sup>81</sup>

E 2 She is not even comparable to his real maidservants: though I am not like one of your maidservants."<sup>82</sup>

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human history is unlike man's favor. Man's extension of favor is generally based on perceived merit, as was the case of Boaz extending favor to Ruth. God, however, deliberately does *not* extend favor to people based on their merit. For example, (1) God declared that Esau, the elder, would serve Jacob, the younger, before either one of them had done anything good or evil (Rom. 9:10-13). (2) Salvation is by grace through faith apart from works (Eph. 2:8-10). (3) God demonstrated His own love toward us through Christ's death for us when we were still sinners (Rom. 5:8) and even God's enemies (Rom. 5:10)!

<sup>80</sup> Ruth 2:13 - I have found favor in your sight, my lord: Favor is again, *chen* (2580), the third and last time this word is used in the book of Ruth. Here, Ruth acknowledged that she has found favor in Boaz' sight. She calls him her lord, or master (*adon*, 113), a title indicating her submission and respect. She also humbly classifies herself as Boaz' maidservant, but one not as deserving of favor as his real maidservants. She is an outsider, but a grateful one.

<sup>81</sup> Ruth 2:13 - maidservant: The word is *shipchah* (8198). This word is most often translated as "maid" or "maids" (25X); less often as "maidservant" or "maidservants" (16X); still less often as "slave" or "slaves" or "slave girl" (6X). An example of the translation of "slave girl" appears in Exod. 11:5. That there was oftentimes a degree of servitude connected with *shipchah* is undeniable. Though some *shipchahs* had an elevated position, being the personal attendant of a notable freewoman, the *shipchahs* had evidently been purchased as slaves or were the daughters of slaves. They were not free to come and go as they pleased, but served at the behest of their mistress. Such is the case, for example, with Hagar (Gen. 16:1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8). So also was the case with Zilpah (Gen. 29:24; 30:9, 10, 12, 18; 35:26) and Bilhah (Gen. 29:29; 30:4, 7; 35:25).

Ruth, of course, was not owned by Boaz, and was a freewoman. She was not literally a *shipchah*. But she was a woman of great humility who didn't believe the world, and especially Boaz, owed her a living. She used the metaphor of being Boaz' *shipchah* as an indication of her humility and her appreciation. She acknowledged that, as a Moabitess, Boaz owed her absolutely nothing.

<sup>82</sup> Ruth 2:13 - though I am not like one of your maidservants: Though Ruth perceived herself as being a lowly maidservant of Boaz (even though she was not literally his maidservant), she, nonetheless, ascribed to herself even lower status than his real maidservants! She was an outsider, deserving of nothing. The favor she was receiving from Boaz was all the more remarkable in her eyes.

**B 4 Boaz' Provision of Additional Favor for Ruth 2:14-17**

- C 1 His provision of a meal 2:14
  - D 1 The time: {14} At mealtime
  - D 2 The invitation of Boaz: Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat <sup>83</sup> of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar."
  - D 3 The response of Ruth: So she sat beside the reapers;
  - D 4 The kindness of Boaz: and he served her roasted grain,
  - D 5 The satisfaction of Ruth: and she ate and was satisfied and had some left. <sup>84</sup>
- C 2 His instructions to his servants 2:15-16
  - D 1 To allow her to glean among the sheaves 2:15
    - E 1 The occasion: {15} When she rose to glean,
    - E 2 The command of Boaz: Boaz commanded his servants, saying,
    - E 3 The substance of his command: "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. <sup>85</sup>
  - D 2 To leave loose grain stalks for her 2:16
    - E 1 His command to deliberately leave extra for Ruth: {16} "Also you shall purposely pull out for her *some grain* from the bundles and leave *it* that she may glean, <sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ruth 2:14 - Come here that you may eat: Boaz had not finished extending favor to Ruth. Now he invited her to come eat the food that had been prepared for his reapers! Boaz did not owe this generosity even to an Israeli indigent who might have been working in his field. He certainly did not owe it to an alien indigent from Moab! Nevertheless, he deliberately made the overture! I'm sure Ruth must have shaken her head in disbelief, but she gratefully accepted his invitation!

<sup>84</sup> Ruth 2:14 - had some left: Ruth took what was an appropriate portion from the common store. When she had finished eating, she discovered she had some left over. This she wrapped in a bundle, perhaps, and eventually took home to her mother-in-law (Ruth 2:18).

<sup>85</sup> Ruth 2:15 - Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her: Boaz was really looking out for this young Moabite widow! He gave specific instructions to his harvest crew to relax the rules for Ruth. Indigents were permitted to glean in the corners of the field and along the edges. But Ruth was allowed privileged access with no rebuke! Boaz wanted to make certain she had enough grain to last a long time. He was thinking not only of Ruth, but also of Naomi, her mother-in-law.

<sup>86</sup> Ruth 2:16 - you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may glean: Boaz was really stacking the deck here! He instructed his harvest crew to deliberately leave stalks of grain in her path. He even instructed them, after the shocks of grain were already standing, to pull out some stalks with grain

E 2 His command not to scold her: and do not rebuke her."

C 3 Ruth's diligent work until evening 2:17

D 1 Ruth's diligent harvesting: {17} So she gleaned in the field until evening.<sup>87</sup>

D 2 Ruth's threshing: Then she beat out what she had gleaned,<sup>88</sup>

D 3 The amount of her harvest: and it was about an ephah of barley.<sup>89</sup>

## **B 5 Naomi's Grateful Reception of Ruth's Report 2:18-23**

C 1 Ruth's delivery of the grain to Naomi 2:18

D 1 Her departure: {18} She took *it* up and went into the city,

D 2 Naomi's observation: and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned.

D 3 Ruth's delivery: She also took *it* out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied.

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still on them, and to leave them in Ruth's pathway behind. Boaz wanted to make certain Ruth harvested a sizeable amount of grain! He was looking out for her and for her mother-in-law. We are not told how the author knew these details. Someone must have told Boaz' side of the story and it eventually reached the ears of the author.

<sup>87</sup> Ruth 2:17 - she gleaned in the field until evening: Gleaning means to cut stalks of grain and gather the stalks into bundles. In Ruth's case, much of her store came from simply picking up from off the ground loose stalks of grain that Boaz' harvesters had left behind for her. This saved a step in her gleaning process. Regardless, all of her work during the day was back-breaking work! Most certainly, she was a tired young woman at the end of the day!

<sup>88</sup> Ruth 2:17 - she beat out what she had gleaned: Gathering the stalks of grain into bundles comprised the majority of Ruth's work day. But that was far from the end of her labors. Somehow she had to beat the heads of barley so that the grain fell upon the ground. The barley straw had to be disposed of somehow. Typically this was done by transporting the barley bundles to a threshing floor, and perhaps driving an ox or some other animal around and around over the grain bundles. Perhaps the animal would be pulling something that would roll over the heads of grain. This would dislodge the grain. But then a worker would have to toss the waste straw up in the air, so the wind would blow it away. The grain, being heavier, would fall back to the ground. Gradually the pile of grain would grow larger and the straw would be blown away. This was a time-consuming and back-breaking process. Exactly how Ruth threshed out her grain, we are not told. But it would have taken a lot of time and energy. Once again, Ruth would have been exhausted at the end of her day!

<sup>89</sup> Ruth 2:17 - about an ephah of barley: This would have been [about 3/5 of a bushel of barley, or about 36 pounds](#). This was equivalent to half a month's wages, which she had earned in one day! This was an impressive haul, in large part because the workers had left extra barley stalks for her. All she had to do was to pick them up and add them to her collection. At the end of the day, of course, she beat out the grain from the stalks and took the harvested grain home.

- C 2 Naomi's surprise 2:19-20
- D 1 Her inquiry as to the benefactor's identity 2:19a
- E 1 Naomi's surprised question: {19} Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work?"<sup>90</sup>
- E 2 Her preliminary blessing: May he who took notice of you be blessed."<sup>91</sup>
- D 2 Ruth's identification of her benefactor: So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz." 2:19b
- D 3 Naomi's prayer of blessing upon Boaz: {20} Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the LORD<sup>92</sup> who<sup>93</sup> has not withdrawn his kindness<sup>94</sup> to the living and to the dead." 2:20a

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<sup>90</sup> Ruth 2:19 - Where did you glean today and where did you work: The reader must understand that Naomi must have asked this question with a crescendo of incredulity. She could not believe the amount of grain Ruth brought home after a single day's effort! Her question and subsequent comment revealed that Naomi understood someone had been exceedingly benevolent to Ruth! She wanted to know who the kind-hearted soul was!

<sup>91</sup> Ruth 2:19 - May he who took notice of you be blessed: This is an exclamation of amazement mixed with gratefulness. The sentence needs an exclamation point at the end! "Blessed" translates the Hebrew *barak* (1288). To bless someone is to pronounce well-being upon him, generally as proceeding from the hand of Yahweh. Conversely, to curse someone is to pronounce disaster upon him. Here, Naomi is, in effect, stating that she wishes Yahweh to pronounce good upon Ruth's benefactor.

Boaz' workers had blessed him (Ruth 2:4). Here (Ruth 2:19), Naomi blesses Boaz, though she does not yet know who the name of the generous farmer. In Ruth 2:20, having found out the name of the landowner, Boaz, Naomi again blesses him and ascribes her reason. In Ruth 3:10, Boaz would bless Ruth for requesting redemption-marriage from him instead of from a younger man. Finally, in Ruth 4:14, the women of Bethlehem would bless Yahweh for having given Naomi a relative-redeemer in the person of her grandson!

<sup>92</sup> Ruth 2:20 - May he be blessed of the LORD: Having ascertained the name of Ruth's benefactor, Naomi repeated her desire for good to befall him (the meaning of "blessed" – *barak* (1288)). This time, she is more specific. This good shall befall Boaz at the hand of Yahweh! See the note on "blessed" in Ruth 2:19 for a fuller discussion of the term.

<sup>93</sup> Ruth 2:20 - who: The NASB and other English translations have Yahweh as the antecedent of the pronoun *asher*. The meaning of this translation is that Yahweh has not withdrawn His kindness to the living and the dead. However, that is probably not the best translation. The actual antecedent of the pronoun *asher* in Hebrew is Boaz, not Yahweh. So Naomi is asking that Boaz be blessed by Yahweh because he, Boaz, has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and the dead. (See the [NET Bible translation on Ruth 2:20](#) and the lengthy explanation in note 79.) Naomi believes that Boaz has been unusually generous because he is acting in the best interests of Boaz' deceased relatives, Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion. He is also acting in the best interests of those deceased relatives' surviving widows, namely Naomi and Ruth.

<sup>94</sup> Ruth 2:20 - kindness: *chesed* (2617) refers to the "loyal love" of Boaz toward his deceased relatives and their surviving widows. In Ruth 1:8 Naomi asked that Yahweh may show *chesed* (loyal love) toward her daughters-in-law just as they have so treated her. In Ruth 3:10, Boaz will state that Ruth has demonstrated *chesed* (loyal love) toward him by asking him to marry her, rather than for asking a younger man for marriage. The greatest dispenser of *chesed* (loyal love) is God Himself (Gen. 39:21; Ps. 23:6 – "Surely goodness and lovingkindness (*chesed*) will follow me all the days of my life ....").

- D 4 Naomi's revelation of Boaz as relative-redeemer: Again Naomi said to her, 2:20b
- E 1 He is near to us: "The man is our relative,"<sup>95</sup>
  - E 2 He is our relative-redeemer: he is one of our closest relatives."<sup>96</sup>
- C 3 Naomi's advice 2:21-23
- D 1 Ruth's telling of Boaz' invitation: {21} Then Ruth the Moabitess<sup>97</sup> said, "Furthermore, he said to me, 'You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.'" 2:21
  - D 2 Naomi's agreement: {22} Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, 2:22
    - E 1 Accept his invitation: "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids,"<sup>98</sup>
    - E 2 Avoid danger: so that *others* do not fall upon you in another field."<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ruth 2:20 - This man is our relative: Literally, "This man is near to us." "Relative," lit., "near" is the translation of *garowb* (7138). It is used twice in Ruth. Naomi used it of Boaz here in Ruth 2:20. Boaz used it of himself in Ruth 3:12. It is a more general, less specific term than Naomi would use in her very next phrase.

<sup>96</sup> Ruth 2:20 - he is one of our closest relatives: Better, "he is our relative-redeemer." The word is *ga'al* (1350). This is its first use in the book of Ruth. It always appears in the Qal stem in Ruth. NET Bible translates it here "guardian." According to footnote 81 in Ruth in NET Bible, "In this context Boaz, as a 'redeemer,' functions as guardian of the family interests who has responsibility for the widows of his deceased kinsmen." This is an exceedingly important word in Ruth. In fact, it is the key word of Ruth and is the basis of the theme of Ruth.

This is its first use in the book, but it is used a total of 21 times in the following references: Ruth 2:20; 3:9, 12, 13; 4:1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 14. The reader should note that *ga'al* is used twice in Ruth 3:12; 4 times in Ruth 3:13; 5 times in Ruth 4:4; and 5 times in Ruth 4:6. There is a stunning concentration of uses in the last two chapters of a small, four-chapter book! Here in Ruth 2:20, Naomi used the word as a *goel*, a Qal participle, 3 person masculine singular. Literally, "one existing as a relative-redeemer." *Ga'al* so appears (1) as a participle (*goel*) 9 times in Ruth – at Ruth 2:20; 3:9; 3:12; 3:12; 4:1, 3, 6, 8, 14; it appears (2) as a Qal imperfect 5 times in Ruth – at Ruth 3:13; 3:13; 4:4; 4:4; 4:4; it appears (3) as a Qal infinitive construct 5 times in Ruth – at Ruth 3:13; 4:4; 4:6; 4:6; 4:6; it appears (4) as a Qal imperative twice in Ruth – at Ruth 4:4; 4:6; it appears (5) as a Qal perfect once in Ruth 3:13.

<sup>97</sup> Ruth 2:21 - Ruth the Moabitess: The author deliberately continues to paint the heroine of his historical narrative as an outsider – a Moabitess, a despised Gentile.

<sup>98</sup> Ruth 2:22 - It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids: Naomi here agrees with the advice Boaz had given her earlier that day. Ruth would do well to stay alongside and work with Boaz' female workers.

<sup>99</sup> Ruth 2:22 - so that *others* do not fall upon you in another field: Naomi states explicitly what Boaz had earlier implied. To reap in the fields of other landowners invited the possibility of rape. Boaz himself had felt it necessary to warn his own male workers to leave Ruth alone. If the virtuous Boaz, who presumably did his best to hire virtuous workers, was concerned about the possibility of Ruth being molested, the grim truth was that less scrupulous landowners would hire workers who could not be trusted, and who might succeed in assaulting her. So Naomi reinforced the good advice of Boaz.

On a related issue, it is a sad commentary on the nation of Israel, God's own chosen people, that women would even have to fear the possibility of rape. God's people, who live under God's laws, ought to be different. The men of Israel ought to be God-fearing, woman-respecting and protecting sort of men. One day, the rebels in Israel

- D 3 Ruth's continuing work 2:23a
  - E 1 Her harvesting alongside the young women working for Boaz: {23} So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz<sup>100</sup> in order to glean
  - E 2 The time of her work
    - G 1 until the end of the barley harvest
    - G 2 and the wheat harvest.<sup>101</sup>
- D 4 Ruth's living situation: And she lived with her mother-in-law.<sup>102</sup> 2:23b

### A 3 GOD'S MOTIVATION OF NAOMI'S PROVISION FOR RUTH 3

#### B 1 Naomi's Instruction to Ruth to Request Redemption from her Relative-Redeemer, Boaz 3:1-5

- C 1 Naomi's decision: to seek security (i.e. marriage) for Ruth 3:1
  - D 1 Her proposal: {1} Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security<sup>103</sup> for you,

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will be removed from the nation and will not be permitted to enter the kingdom of the Messiah (Ezek. 20:33-38). There will be a remnant whom God will purify. He will give them a new heart and put His Spirit within them and cause them to observe His Laws (Ezek. 36:22-38).

<sup>100</sup> Ruth 2:23 - So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz: Ruth dutifully followed the advice of Boaz reinforced by Naomi.

<sup>101</sup> Ruth 2:23 - until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest: Ruth worked tirelessly for a number of weeks. Presumably she and her mother-in-law continued to benefit from the beneficial treatment Boaz had commanded. A considerable amount of time passed while the plot of the narrative slowed down. One verse of the Hebrew Bible covers this time. "*Barley* was harvested from late March through late April, *wheat* from late April to late May" (O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Ancient Israel*, 88, 91, as quoted in NET Bible, [Ruth 2:23](#), note 89). Ruth was probably working out in the harvest fields for [six or seven weeks](#).

<sup>102</sup> Ruth 2:23 - She lived with her mother-in-law: Ruth had vowed to remain with Naomi, and now she was making good on her vow. Almost from the beginning of the narrative in the book of Ruth, the two had been together. That remained true, and now they were inseparable. Would this alliance perpetuate itself?

<sup>103</sup> Ruth 3:1 - security: The word *manoach* ([4494](#)) is seldom used, appearing only seven times in the Hebrew Bible. It means "resting place," and is so translated in Gen. 8:9 (Noah's dove found no resting place); Deut. 28:65; Isa. 34:14. Elsewhere it is translated "rested" (1 Chron. 6:31); "rest" (Ps. 116:7; Lam. 1:3). To paraphrase, Naomi was asking Ruth, "Shall I not seek for you a place where you can settle down and be at home?" And perhaps she meant, "in your own home?" The security Naomi envisioned for Ruth would include the latter's marriage to Boaz.

- D 2 Her reasoning: that it may be well with you? <sup>104</sup>
- C 2 Naomi's reason: Boaz their relative: {2} "Now is not Boaz our kinsman,<sup>105</sup> with whose maids <sup>106</sup> you were? 3:2a
- C 3 Naomi's timing: Threshing time: Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight. <sup>107</sup> 3:2b
- C 4 Naomi's plan 3:3-4
- D 1 Preparation: {3} "Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your *best* clothes,<sup>108</sup> 3:3a

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<sup>104</sup> Ruth 3:1 - that it may be well with you: Finally, it seems, Naomi's disposition has come full circle. As she was leaving Moab and returning to Israel, she was filled with bitterness, depression, and resentment toward God. She did think of the well-being of her daughters-in-law as they began the trip to Bethlehem – she encouraged them strongly to stay in Moab and return to the homes of their parents. But at the same time she maintained that she had suffered more than they had. When she returned to Bethlehem at the end of chapter 1, she was filled with gloom and pessimism. She asked the ladies to call her “Bitter” instead of “Pleasant.”

By the close of chapter 2, Naomi's spirits had been lifted. She was surprised at the amount of grain Ruth had brought home. She was startled and grateful to find out that Ruth's benefactor was a relative redeemer. But now, at the beginning of chapter 3, Naomi finally stopped thinking primarily of herself and began to focus on what was good for her daughter-in-law. Of course, Naomi also may have presumed that whatever good happened to Ruth might also spill over to herself, but that does not seem to be her primary motivation here.

Part of the process of overcoming depression and bitterness is asking God to help us focus on meeting the needs of someone else. When we focus on helping others, we become less self-absorbed, and depression and resentment both are lifted. In the case of Naomi, the sovereign acts of God in changing the outlook of the two women cannot be ignored. God is the Divine Healer, and unless He steps in, there can be no healing.

<sup>105</sup> Ruth 3:2 - kinsman: The word is *modaath* ([4130](#)), used only here in the Hebrew Bible. It means kinsman. A synonym would be “relative.” The NASB footnote gives the alternative meaning, “Or *acquaintance*.” It differs from the word *ga'al* ([1350](#)), used in Ruth 21 times: Ruth 2:20; 3:9, 12, 13; 4:1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 14.

<sup>106</sup> Ruth 3:2 - maids: The word is *naarah* ([5291](#)) – “young women.”

<sup>107</sup> Ruth 3:2 - he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight: We are not told how Naomi knew this. Perhaps on her own she had done some investigating. Whatever the case, her information turned out to be accurate. A potential problem arises. The reader is told in Ruth 2:23 that Ruth continued to work alongside Boaz' young women through barley harvest and the subsequent wheat harvest. Yet here, in our thinking, the barley harvest is still in progress, and yet events will occur in the next 24 hours (if we read ahead in Ruth 3:11 - 4:13) that would forestall the need to work any more, since she will be pledged to marry Boaz.

My solution to the apparent problem is this: Harvesting crops in that non-mechanized era was very labor intensive and time-consuming. The first task in harvesting is to cut the stalks of grain with some kind of sickle or scythe. The next step would be to shock the cut grain stalks. That means to gather the cut stalks of grain into upright bundles, or shocks. The cut ends of the shocks would rest on the ground and the heads of grain would be at the top of the shock. This would help protect the grain heads from damage from rain and vermin. The next step would be to transport the shocks of grain to the threshing floor. There, threshing, or winnowing would take place. Dislodging the grain from the stalks with the aid of an ox or donkey, then using a pitchfork to throw the empty stalks up in the air so the wind would blow them away and leave the grain alone on the ground would take considerable time and effort.

It makes sense to surmise that, long after the grain from the barley harvest had been shocked, the workers were already well on their way to cut and shock in the wheat fields. In this manner, Ruth may have been at or near the end of her work in the wheat fields while Boaz was still finishing up threshing barley and guarding the pile of winnowed barley on the threshing floor.

<sup>108</sup> Ruth 3:3 - wash ... anoint ... *best* clothes: [Warren Wiersbe](#) suggested that Naomi was urging Ruth to dress up like a bride (cf. Ezek. 16:9-14). Bob Deffinbaugh, a conservative, and a fellow [DTS](#) alumnus, places a sinister motive upon Naomi. He believes Naomi was advising Ruth to [seduce Boaz into sleeping with her](#). Then he would be obliged to redeem her. While Deffinbaugh covers the chapter well, I believe he is reading too much into

- D 2 Destination: and go down to the threshing floor; 3:3b
- D 3 Hesitation: *but* do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. 3:3c
- D 4 Encounter 3:4
  - E 1 {4} "It shall be when he lies down,<sup>109</sup> that you shall notice the place where he lies,
  - E 2 and you shall go and uncover his feet<sup>110</sup> and lie down;
  - E 3 then he will tell you what you shall do."<sup>111</sup>
- C 5 Ruth's willingness: {5} She said to her, "All that you say I will do."<sup>112</sup> 3:5

## **B 2 Ruth's Obedient Request of Boaz at the Threshing Floor 3:6-9**

- C 1 Her compliance 3:6
  - D 1 Her arrival at the threshing floor: {6} So she went down to the threshing floor
  - D 2 Her doing all her mother-in-law commanded her: and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her.<sup>113</sup>

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the narrative. Naomi did not advise Ruth to sleep with Boaz. She advised him to uncover his feet so he would get cold and wake up so she could talk to him. I do not believe, furthermore, that the Biblical record of Naomi's advice covers everything she said. How would Ruth, a Moabitess, have known what to ask Boaz without some instruction from Naomi, a Jewess (Ruth 3:9)? In short, I do not assign sinister motives to Naomi. Whatever the case, I agree with Deffinbaugh that both Boaz and Ruth conducted themselves honorably that night.

<sup>109</sup> Ruth 3:4 - when he lies down: Boaz would spend the night at his pile of winnowed barley so no one would steal it. It is sad when even God's chosen people cannot be trusted, but that was and remains the grim truth.

<sup>110</sup> Ruth 3:4 - uncover his feet: There was no sexual innuendo whatever here. Naomi was asking Ruth to raise Boaz' blanket from off his feet and ankles for two purposes. First, he would get cold during the night and wake up. Second, Ruth would implicitly ask him to cover her with his blanket, and thus, in effect, be asking for marriage.

<sup>111</sup> Ruth 3:4 - then he will tell you what you shall do: Evidently Naomi also told Ruth what to say to Boaz (see Ruth 3:9), but the author does not here go into that much detail.

<sup>112</sup> Ruth 3:5 - All that you say I will do: Ruth was a model of submission and cooperation. Her subsequent actions and speech revealed that she completely trusted both Naomi and Boaz. By way of application, if we trust someone, we will cooperate with him. If we don't, we won't. If we trust God, we will cooperate with Him. If we don't trust Him, we won't. Without faith it is impossible to please God. He who comes to God must believe both that He exists, and that He rewards those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

<sup>113</sup> Ruth 3:6 - did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her: Ruth followed all Naomi's instructions "to a T," as we say. She bathed herself, attired herself, and went to the threshing floor. She waited until Boaz had retired for the night and was asleep, just as she had been instructed.

- C 2 Boaz' actions 3:7a
  - D 1 His mealtime: {7} When Boaz had eaten and drunk
  - D 2 His merry attitude: and his heart was merry,
  - D 3 His retiring for the night: he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain;<sup>114</sup>
- C 3 Ruth's stealth 3:7b
  - D 1 Her secret coming: and she came secretly,
  - D 2 Her uncovering of his feet: and uncovered his feet
  - D 3 Her lying down at his feet: and lay down.<sup>115</sup>
- C 4 Boaz' surprise 3:8-9
  - D 1 The time: {8} It happened in the middle of the night 3:8a
  - D 2 His startled awakening: that the man was startled and bent forward;<sup>116</sup> 3:8b
  - D 3 His shock at seeing a woman at his feet: and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. 3:8c
  - D 4 His inquiry as to her identity: {9} He said, "Who are you?"<sup>117</sup> 3:9a

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<sup>114</sup> Ruth 3:7 - lie down at the end of the heap of grain: Boaz planned to spend all night there at the threshing floor. Obviously he felt it necessary to stay on "guard duty" lest anyone come and steal his hard-earned grain. It is interesting that Ruth was in her best attire, while Boaz was at his worst. He was in his smelly work clothes, soiled with his perspiration and body odor, with no chance to bathe or to change into something clean.

<sup>115</sup> Ruth 3:7 - uncovered his feet and lay down: There was nothing of impropriety here. Highly unusual, yes. Improper, no. Evidently Naomi, the architect of this "plot," felt this was the best way for Ruth to have a face-to-face encounter with Boaz with no one else observing. Besides, there was the opportunity for some subtle symbolism here, to be explained in a moment. The plan was that Boaz' feet would grow cold in the night and he would wake up. The scheme worked exactly as it had been planned!

<sup>116</sup> Ruth 3:8 - in the middle of the night ... the man was startled and bent forward: Something woke Boaz up. I suspect his feet his feet grew cold. But I also suspect, though the text does not specify, that God Himself, or one of His angels, startled Boaz with a dream or some other means. God's "alarm clock" "rang" at just the right time, and Boaz woke up with a start!

<sup>117</sup> Ruth 3:9 - Who are you?! I suspect the question needs a couple of question marks and exclamation points as well. We might paraphrase it, "Who are YOU, and what on earth are you doing here this time of night??!!!" There might even have been some hoarse indignation in his voice. No one likes to be awakened from a sound sleep to be confronted with a startling, inexplicable discovery!

## C 5 Ruth's response 3:9b

- D 1 Her reply: And she answered, "I am Ruth your maid." <sup>118</sup>
- D 2 Her request: So spread your covering <sup>119</sup> over your maid, <sup>120</sup>
- D 3 Her reason: for you are a close relative." <sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Ruth 3:9 - I am Ruth your maid: I'm certain Naomi had told Ruth exactly what to say. I am certain also that Ruth had rehearsed these words time and again in her mind. Boaz' abrupt, startled question may have caught Ruth off-guard. She had not anticipated that question. But she answered it honestly from the depths of her personality. Ruth was exceedingly self-deprecating. The word translated "maid" here is the word *amah* ([519](#)), which often literally refers to a female slave, though typically the word is translated as "servant." The word has the meaning of slave, for example, in the case of Hagar in Gen. 21:10, 12, 13. (Paul associated Hagar with slavery in Gal. 4:24, 25.) *Amah* is translated as "female slave" in Exod. 21:7 in the context of being sold. The assumption there is, apparently, that the purchaser obtains conjugal rights to the female slave. Thus, she can never be freed. It is translated as "female slave" in Job 31:13. Here, of course, Ruth uses the word metaphorically. She is not literally Boaz' female slave, of course, but she puts herself in that menial and subservient position. Similarly, when Abigail attempted to dissuade David from attacking her churlish husband Nabal, she portrayed herself as David's female slave (*amah*) in 1 Sam. 25:24, 25, 28, 31. She did so again when accepting David's marriage proposal (1 Sam. 25:41).

<sup>119</sup> Ruth 3:9 - spread your covering over your maid: Literally, Ruth asked Boaz to spread his wing (*kanaph*, [3671](#)) over his female slave. See Gen. 1:21, which refers to a "winged" (*kanaph*) bird. She was asking him to take her under his protection. In other words, she was asking him to marry her as part of his job description of being a relative-redeemer. The word *kanaph* is sometimes used to depict the edge of a garment or blanket. So it had a dual meaning appropriate for the occasion, as in, "I'm cold – would you please share the edge of your blanket with me?" There was no hint of impropriety here. Everything is above-board and moral. But it was not every day that a woman asked a man to marry her. It would have been inappropriate for her to go to his house, evidently. Naomi thought this was the best way to arrange this marriage in secret. Ruth was willing to follow Naomi's counsel. It is an amazing narrative! According to Note 33 at [Ruth 3:9 in NET Bible](#), "By proposing marriage, Ruth goes beyond the letter of Naomi's instructions (see v. 4, where Naomi told Ruth that Boaz would tell her what to do). Though she is more aggressive than Naomi told her to be, she is still carrying out the intent of Naomi's instructions, which were designed to lead to marriage...." While technically, that is true according to the text, I can't help but believe that Naomi's instructions and accompanying explanations must have been considerably more detailed than the conversation recorded in Ruth 3:4.

There is an important application here. Like Ruth, all of us humans stand in need of the services of a relative-redeemer. We all need redemption. We are dead in our trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). Out of great love for us, even though we were sinners and enemies of God (Rom. 5:8, 10), God sent the Messiah to pay the purchase price for the redemption of all humanity. Jesus, like Boaz, is able to redeem us and willing to redeem us. But He, like Boaz, will not actually redeem us unless we ask. Have you asked Jesus to redeem you (John 1:11-13)?

<sup>120</sup> Ruth 3:9 - your maid: Once again, Ruth used the word *amah* ([519](#)), female slave.

<sup>121</sup> Ruth 3:9 - close relative: These two English words translate the single Hebrew participle *go'el* from the verb *ga'al* ([1350](#)) "to redeem (according to the Oriental law of kinship, i.e. to be the next of kin – and as such to buy back a relative's property, marry his widow, etc.):...avenger, deliver, (do, perform the part of near, next) kinsfolk, purchase, ransom, redeem, revenger." [An aside to the reader: I read this quotation somewhere and forgot to include the source. These words are not original with me. My apologies to the author!] Various forms of the word *ga'al* are to be found in Ruth 2:20; 3:9, 12, 13; 4:1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 14, 21 times in all. It appears twice in Ruth 3:12, four times in Ruth 3:13, and twice it appears five times in a single verse (Ruth 4:4, 6)! This is the second time a form of the word *ga'al* has been used in Ruth. The first was in Ruth 2:20; the next will be in Ruth 3:12. See the note at Ruth 2:20 for an enumeration of the various verbal forms.

For a brief summary, see [The Duties of a Relative Redeemer](#).

**B 3 Boaz' Agreement in Principle to Redeem Ruth in Marriage 3:10-15****C 1 Boaz' nighttime reply 3:10-13****D 1 His appreciation 3:10**

E 1 His blessing her: {10} Then he said, "May you be blessed of the LORD,<sup>122</sup> my daughter.<sup>123</sup>

E 2 His referring to her kindness in not going after a younger man: You have shown your last kindness<sup>124</sup> to be better than the first<sup>125</sup> by not going after young men, whether poor or rich.<sup>126</sup>

**D 2 His agreement 3:11**

E 1 His asking her not to fear: {11} "Now, my daughter, do not fear."<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ruth 3:10 - May you be blessed of the LORD: The word "blessed" is *barak* (1288). It has already been used in Ruth 2:4, 19, 20. Boaz used it here in Ruth 3:10. It will again be used by the women of Bethlehem in Ruth 4:14. These spontaneous words of Boaz are consistent with the personality he exhibited in his first speech in this historical narrative. Boaz had greeted his workers, "May the LORD be with you!" (Ruth 2:4). Here, awakened, startled, in the middle of the night, he hears this fascinating request from this Gentile Moabitess, Ruth. His first response is, "May Yahweh bless you!" Ruth must have been encouraged!

<sup>123</sup> Ruth 3:10 - my daughter: "Daughter" is the commonly used word *bath* (1323). Naomi used the word of her daughters-in-law in Ruth 1:11, 12, 13. She used it of Ruth in Ruth 2:2, 22; 3:1, 16, 18. Boaz had already addressed Ruth with this term in Ruth 2:8. He did so again in Ruth 3:10 and Ruth 3:11. It is a family-relationship term and probably carries some of that significance here. But it also does not disguise the great disparity in their respective ages. [NET Bible](#) translates "my daughter" as "my dear" here and in Ruth 3:11. In my opinion, that translation is unwarranted. He called her "my daughter."

<sup>124</sup> Ruth 3:10 - You have shown your last kindness: "Kindness" is *chesed* (2617) is "loyal love." Naomi had asked that Yahweh treat her daughters with "loyal love" the same way they had treated her (Ruth 1:8). Naomi had stated that Boaz had not withdrawn his "loyal love" to the living and dead (Ruth 2:20 – see the footnote there). Here (Ruth 3:10) Boaz speaks of Ruth has having just now shown her "loyal love" toward him. He defines her "loyal love" as "not going after young men, whether poor or rich."

<sup>125</sup> Ruth 3:10 - to be better than the first: It is difficult to determine what Boaz meant. He refers to a previous "loyal love" shown by Ruth. [According to Constable](#), "Evidently her first kindness was her willingness to stay near Boaz by serving as his maidservant and by gleaning in his fields." That seems improbable to me. More likely it was her decision to forsake her own home, culture and religion, and adhere to Naomi, her people, her culture, her land, and her God (see Ruth 1:8, 16-17).

<sup>126</sup> Ruth 3:10 - by not going after young men, whether poor or rich: This is how Boaz describes present "loyal love." He was impressed with her willingness to seek "relative-redemption" from him, a "relative redeemer" perhaps old enough to be her father, rather than to seek marriage to a younger man of whatever socio-economic status.

<sup>127</sup> Ruth 3:11 - Now, my daughter, do not fear: Once again, Boaz referred to Ruth as his daughter (*bath*, 1323), albeit kindly and warmly. See previous comments on *bath* in the footnotes on Ruth 2:8; 3:10. Once again, "my daughter" is a more accurate and thus more preferable translation than [NET Bible's](#) "my dear."

Boaz had already tipped his hand by his preceding response. Now he instructed her not to be afraid. He will do for her what she has requested.

- E 2 His willingness to do all she asked: I will do for you whatever you ask, <sup>128</sup>
- E 3 His reason: for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence. <sup>129</sup>
- D 3 His caution: a relative nearer than he 3:12
- E 1 {12} "Now it is true I am a close relative; <sup>130</sup>
- E 2 however, there is a relative closer than I. <sup>131</sup>
- D 4 His resolve 3:13
- E 1 {13} "Remain this night, <sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Ruth 3:11 - I will do for you whatever you ask: Boaz assured her he would, in response to her request, marry her and undertake the other redemptive tasks she was implicitly requesting. This, as his next day's activities revealed, would include purchasing from Naomi all the land that belonged to the three dead husbands, Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion (Ruth 4:1-10). His purpose in doing so was to raise up a son by Ruth. This son would inherit all the land that had belonged to his deceased forbears. He would perpetuate their name and their land. Though Ruth may not have understood all these implications, Boaz certainly did. Naomi predicted that Boaz would know what to do (Ruth 3:4). Boaz did not disappoint her!

<sup>129</sup> Ruth 3:11 - a woman of excellence: "Excellence" translates *chayil* (2428), which we have already discussed at great length in a footnote at Ruth 2:1, where it describes Boaz. It will also be used by the townspeople in regard to Boaz in Ruth 4:11. "Excellence" is not a bad translation of *chayil*, but if so, the NASB editors should have translated the word that way in Ruth 2:1 and 4:11 also. There, unfortunately, they translated it as "wealth" when used of Boaz. Expanding on the idea of "excellence," I believe the word signifies that Ruth was "a woman of initiative, industry, and determination," as I pointed out in the note on Ruth 2:1. That same description applies equally well to Boaz, and, in addition, to the woman described in Prov. 31:10. She was certainly a woman of initiative, industry, and determination! This word is used three times in Ruth, twice of Boaz, and once of Ruth. It ought to be translated the same way all three times. To translate it twice as "wealth" when referring to Boaz, and once as "excellence" when referring to Ruth, as the NASB has done, is, in my view, both inappropriate and misleading.

<sup>130</sup> Ruth 3:12 - a close relative: The two words, "close relative," translate the single Hebrew word *ga'al* (1350), which Boaz used here as a Qal participle, masculine singular (*goel*). A better translation, I believe, is the hyphenated word, "relative-redeemer." A literal translation would be, "I am one existing as a relative-redeemer." This word is the most important word in the Book of Ruth, and it is used 21 times. This is its third usage; the next will occur later here in Ruth 3:12. Naomi had already described Boaz as being her and Ruth's relative-redeemer in Ruth 2:20. In Ruth 3:9, Ruth had justified her request for marriage on the basis of Boaz' being her relative-redeemer. Now here in Ruth 3:12, Boaz acknowledges that he is Ruth's relative-redeemer. But, as he will say momentarily, there exists another relative-redeemer who by blood is even closer in proximity than Boaz.

<sup>131</sup> Ruth 3:12 - there is a relative closer than I: Boaz has just agreed that he is a *ga'al* (1350), a relative-redeemer, in relation to Ruth. Now he cautions that there is a *ga'al* (1350) even closer to her blood-wise than he is. This presents a potential obstacle in his agreement to act as a relative-redeemer in regard to Ruth. Once again he used the word as a Qal participle, masculine singular (*goel*). This is the fourth use of the word *ga'al* in the Book of Ruth. The next will occur at Ruth 3:13. See the note at Ruth 2:20 for more information.

<sup>132</sup> Ruth 3:13 - Remain this night: Boaz continued to look out after Ruth's well-being. Here at the threshing floor, she would remain under his protection. He did not want her traipsing her way back home in the dead of night. Who knows what evil might be lurking in the dark? She would remain safe with him during the remainder of the night. Once again, there are no hints whatever of inappropriate or immoral behavior.

- E 2 and when morning comes,<sup>133</sup>
- E 3 if he will redeem you, good;<sup>134</sup> let him redeem you.<sup>135</sup>
- E 4 But if he does not wish to redeem you,<sup>136</sup>
- E 5 then I will redeem you,<sup>137</sup> as the LORD lives.<sup>138</sup>
- E 6 Lie down until morning."
- C 2 Boaz' gift 3:14-15
- D 1 The early rising 3:14
- E 1 {14} So she lay at his feet<sup>139</sup> until morning<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Ruth 3:13 - and when morning comes: Boaz immediately informed Ruth that he would begin working on her request immediately the next day. That is exactly what you would expect from a man of *chayil* (2428) – a man of initiative, industry, and determination. See the discussions on *chayil* in the footnotes at Ruth 2:1 and Ruth 3:11.

<sup>134</sup> Ruth 3:13 - if he will redeem you, good: Here, Boaz uses the word as a 3<sup>rd</sup> masc. sing. Qal imperfect with a 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular feminine suffix of *ga'al* (1350). This is the fifth use of the word *ga'al* in the book of Ruth. If this closer relative-redeemer exercises his option as Ruth's relative-redeemer on the next day, well and good. She will be taken care of. See the note at Ruth 2:20 for more information.

<sup>135</sup> Ruth 3:13 - let him redeem you: Literally, simply, "let him redeem." The word "redeem" is the third person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of the word *ga'al* (1350). There is no second person singular suffix attached to the verb. This is now the sixth use of the word *ga'al* in the Book of Ruth. See the footnote at Ruth 2:20 for a parsing of each use.

<sup>136</sup> Ruth 3:13 - if he does not wish to redeem you: "to redeem you" is a Qal infinitive construct with a second person feminine singular suffix of *ga'al* (1350). This is the seventh use of this word in Ruth. My preferred translation is, "if he does not wish to serve as your relative-redeemer ...."

<sup>137</sup> Ruth 3:13 - then I will redeem you: *ga'al* (1350) is used here as a Qal Perfect first person common singular with a second person feminine singular suffix. This is the only time in Ruth that *ga'al* is used as a Qal Perfect. It stands as a predictive statement of resolve or intent. This is the eighth use of *ga'al* in Ruth.

<sup>138</sup> Ruth 3:13 - as the LORD lives: Boaz uttered a mild form of vow. He put the name and veracity of Yahweh forward as a guarantee he was serious about his promise. If the other relative-redeemer chose not to redeem Ruth, i.e., marry her, he, Boaz, most certainly would. His promise could be depended on as much as could any promise of God!

<sup>139</sup> Ruth 3:14 - at his feet: This phrase translates the single word *margeloth* (4772), used only five times in the OT, 4 of them here in Ruth (Ruth 3:4, 7, 8, 14). (There is a *Kethiv* (received) = singular and a *Qere* (emended) = plural reading in Ruth 3:14.) The other occurrence is in Dan. 10:6. The word means "feet." The periphrastic translation of the NET Bible at [Ruth 3:13](#), "So she slept beside him" is unfortunate. There is no hint whatever of impropriety.

<sup>140</sup> Ruth 3:14 - until morning: Boaz did not want Ruth to go home at nighttime, putting her safety at risk. When morning came, even at early dawn, there was enough light for her to safely make her way back to Naomi's home.

E 2 and rose before one could recognize another;<sup>141</sup>

E 3 and he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."<sup>142</sup>

D 2 Six measures of barley 3:15

E 1 His request: {15} Again he said, "Give me the cloak that is on you<sup>143</sup> and hold it." So she held it,

E 2 His gift: and he measured six *measures* of barley and laid *it* on her.<sup>144</sup>

D 3 Her departure: Then she went into the city.

#### B 4 Ruth's Report to Naomi 3:16-18

C 1 Naomi's question 3:16

D 1 Her question: {16} When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?"<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Ruth 3:14 - rose before one could recognize another: It was so early dawn that peoples' faces were unrecognizable. The third person feminine singular verb of "rose" (*qum*, [6965](#)) reveals that Ruth was the first to arise. She wanted to avoid any possible suspicion of impropriety.

<sup>142</sup> Ruth 3:14 - let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor: Some assume that there were [other reapers present](#) at the threshing floor that night, and that Boaz was asking them not to tell anyone. But I place a different construction on the events. First of all, no other people are stated to be present. Second, Ruth apparently arose first. I believe her arising awakened Boaz. He jumped up and, seeing the first hints of dawn, promptly agreed it was time for Ruth to be on her way home before anyone could recognize that she had been there. His statement simply meant he was agreeing with her. Note 54 in the [NET Bible](#) opines that "The article on ... (ha'ishah, 'the woman') is probably dittographic (note the final he on the preceding verb ... [va'ah, 'she came'])." That note explains the NET Bible's reading on [Ruth 3:14b](#), "No one must know that a woman visited the threshing floor." That suggestion is speculative, and is not supported by a Kethiv - Qere reading in the MT. Regardless, Boaz' comment was a sort of "truism" – "Good thinking – it's time to leave now. No one should find out that "the woman" – that Moabite woman – visited the threshing floor!" They both knew nothing amiss had taken place. If no one else found out about their rendezvous – that would be best! What people do not know will not hurt them!

<sup>143</sup> Ruth 3:15 - the cloak that is on you: Ruth had worn a cloak to keep herself warm that night. When she carried the gift of barley he was about to give her, she wouldn't need to wear the cloak – her exertion would warm her up rather quickly!

<sup>144</sup> Ruth 3:15 - six *measures* of barley and laid *it* on her: There is no word for "measures" in the Hebrew text. It was supplied by translators. But the word "measured" (*madad*, [4058](#)) does appear here, its only use in Ruth. Evidently Boaz kept a measuring container handy at the threshing floor. Perhaps people came to buy grain from him there, and it was convenient to keep the container nearby. The [amount of barley Boaz gave to Ruth](#) was six seahs, about sixty pounds. A hard-working young woman like Ruth would have been able to carry this burden back to the village, probably on her head. Most sedentary men in today's American society would struggle to do that, much less most women. But people of that day were accustomed to demanding physical labor.

<sup>145</sup> Ruth 3:16 - "How did it go, my daughter?": First of all, the text reads, literally, "Who are you, my daughter?" Clearly, Naomi was not asking who Ruth was. She knew that, for she immediately called her, "my daughter." What Naomi was asking was, "What is the relationship between you and Boaz?" Note that Naomi calls Ruth "my daughter", just as Boaz had (Ruth 2:8; 3:10, 11. In both cases affection was intended. But now that Ruth had tipped her hand, Boaz' affection, I suspect, was undergoing a rapid transformation!

- D 2 The author's summary: And she told her all that the man had done for her.
- C 2 Ruth's reply 3:17
  - D 1 Boaz' gift: {17} She said, "These six *measures* of barley he gave to me,
  - D 2 Boaz' reason: for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'" <sup>146</sup>
- C 3 Naomi's shrewd assessment 3:18
  - D 1 Her advice to Ruth to wait: {18} Then she said, "Wait, my daughter, <sup>147</sup> until you know how the matter turns out;
  - D 2 Her prediction: for the man will not rest until he has settled it today." <sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Ruth 3:17 - he said, "Do not go ... empty-handed." The narrative's description is linguistically economical. This is typical of Hebrew narrative. Ruth was not adding something unfactual here – Boaz had indeed made this statement to her back at the threshing floor. But it was unnecessary to include that detail there. Similarly, I am confident Naomi had instructed Ruth what to request of Boaz at the threshing floor that night, even though the text does not record that fact. I believe Boaz' intention was that the six measures of barley, double what Ruth had been taking home each night, was a symbolic gesture for Naomi's benefit that he, Boaz would take care of Ruth. But not only that, he would take care of Naomi also.

<sup>147</sup> Ruth 3:18 - Wait, my daughter: Once again, Naomi calls Ruth her daughter (Ruth 1:11, 12, 13; 2:2, 8, 22; 3:1, 16, 18).

<sup>148</sup> Ruth 3:18 - the man will not rest until he has settled it today: Having heard from Ruth Boaz' response, and having witnessed his abundant gift of barley, meant for her, Naomi was convinced Boaz would act expeditiously. And why not? She knew he was a man of *chayil* ([2428](#)), a man of initiative, industry, and determination (see the footnote on *chayil* at Ruth 2:1).

**A 4 GOD'S MOTIVATION OF BOAZ' PROVISION FOR RUTH AND NAOMI 4****B 1 Boaz' Redemption of Ruth 4:1-12**

C 1 Boaz' offering the right of redemption to a nearer relative 4:1-4

D 1 Boaz' preparation 4:1-2

E 1 His trip to the city gate 4:1a

G 1 His journey: {1} Now Boaz went up to the gate <sup>149</sup>

G 2 His seat: and sat down there,

E 2 His calling aside the relative 4:1b

G 1 The entrance of the close relative-redeemer: and behold, the close relative <sup>150</sup> of whom Boaz spoke was passing by,G 2 The instruction of Boaz: so he said, "Turn aside, friend, <sup>151</sup> sit down here."

G 3 The acquiescence of the relative-redeemer: And he turned aside and sat down.

E 3 His calling aside ten elders of the city 4:2

G 1 The action of Boaz: {2} He took ten men of the elders of the city <sup>152</sup> and said, "Sit down here."

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<sup>149</sup> Ruth 4:1 - gate: The gate of a city was where business was transacted and legal proceedings took place. Boaz' first act out in public that morning was to enter into a legal proceeding to secure, one way or another, the redemption of Elimelech's land and a marriage for Ruth. Either the nearer relative redeemer would take care of these things or Boaz would. Boaz was a man of action. He would not procrastinate. Naomi knew him well enough to predict that (Ruth 3:18). He was a man of *chayil* ([2428](#)), a man of initiative, industry, and determination (see the footnote on *chayil* at Ruth 2:1).

<sup>150</sup> Ruth 4:1 - the close relative: I.e., the relative-redeemer (*ga'al*, [1350](#)) of which Boaz had spoken to Ruth. Here it appears in the participle form of *goel* along with the prefix *ha*, the word "the". This word constitutes the main theme of the book of Ruth. In this chapter alone a form of the word *ga'al* appears a staggering fourteen times! This is the ninth use of *ga'al* in Ruth. It will next appear in Ruth 4:3. Altogether, it appears in Ruth 21 times. See the note at 3:13 for the preceding use. See the note at Ruth 2:20 for more information.

<sup>151</sup> Ruth 4:1 - friend: That is not really an accurate translation. Literally, Boaz, according to the writer, said, "Turn aside, certain one, sit down here." Boaz was not, in his culture being unkind. But it is clear the author does not wish to do this nearer relative-redeemer any favors – he leaves him unnamed. In our culture we refer to someone as "what's his name" if we are talking about him and cannot immediately remember his name. But this is different. Boaz had plenty of time to think up his name, but he chose not to. Boaz' approach was rather impersonal without being uncharitable.

<sup>152</sup> Ruth 4:2 - ten men of the elders of the city: There was no requirement in the Law of Moses that ten elders be chosen as witnesses. The text does not explain why Boaz chose ten. Later on in the history of Israel, ten became the [quorum \(minyan\) for a synagogue](#). Boaz chose elders to be the legal witnesses of a legal transaction. It

- G 2 The response of the elders: So they sat down.
- D 2 Boaz' explanation of the situation 4:3-4a
  - E 1 Naomi's need to sell land belonging to Elimelech: {3} Then he said to the closest relative,<sup>153</sup> 4:3
    - G 1 The situation of Naomi: "Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab,
    - G 2 The need of Naomi: has to sell the piece of land<sup>154</sup> which belonged to our brother Elimelech.<sup>155</sup>
  - E 2 The closer relative's option to redeem the land 4:4a
    - G 1 His offer to the closer relative-redeemer to purchase Elimelech's land: {4} "So I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy *it*'<sup>156</sup>
      - H 1 before those who are sitting *here*,
      - H 2 and before the elders of my people.

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would be difficult for the unnamed, closer relative-redeemer to refute Boaz' claim to the property if it were properly witnessed in a Jewish court of law, which is what Boaz here assembled.

<sup>153</sup> Ruth 4:3 - to the closest relative: The words "closest relative" translate the single word *lagoel*, which consists of a prefixed letter *lamdedh*, used as the preposition "to," and the masculine singular Qal participle of *ga'al* (1350). A woodenly literal translation would be as follows, "And he said to one existing as relative-redeemer ...." The context would indicate the person to whom Boaz was speaking. This is the tenth use of *ga'al*, which appears 21 times in Ruth. See the footnote on this word at Ruth 2:20, its first use. The previous use was in Ruth 4:1.

<sup>154</sup> Ruth 4:3 - has to sell the piece of land: Nowhere in this narrative have we been informed previously that it was necessary for Naomi to sell the land belonging to Elimelech. Boaz, according to the record, did not stop to speak to Naomi before he headed to the city gate. There is an economy of conversations quoted in Hebrew narrative. If Boaz did, indeed, stop by to see Naomi before he headed to the "court" at the city gate, the author did not deem it necessary to inform us readers. Whether there are unrecorded conversations or not, the author included in the subsequent, fairly detailed conversation, all that we need to know to advance the historical story-line. By some means or another, Boaz determined that not only did he need to marry Ruth, but also to acquire all the property belonging to all of Ruth's deceased husband, brother, and father. He was evidently not fearful that Naomi would object to his acquisition of her property. It would be held for Naomi's heirs anyway – that was the plan. Boaz evidently felt he could manage Naomi's interests the best if he, as her relative-redeemer, owned her land outright.

<sup>155</sup> Ruth 4:3 - Elimelech: Not only would Boaz purchase Elimelech's land, he would also purchase land belonging to both Mahlon and Chilion (Ruth 4:9).

<sup>156</sup> Ruth 4:4 - Buy *it*: One of the main responsibilities of a *ga'al* (1350), relative-redeemer, was to purchase land for the benefit of the relative who needed to be redeemed (Lev 25:25). Boaz was very shrewd. He knew human nature well enough, and perhaps he knew this man well enough to understand that every farmer of any means is always looking to buy more land, or at least control its production. This farmer was no different. After offering him the first right of redemption of the land, which right Boaz correctly assumed the relative would only be too happy to exercise, Boaz then began to outline the complicating factor – the necessity of marriage. This man presumably already had a wife and children, so an additional wife and offspring by her would complicate matters. I suspect Boaz was shrewdly anticipating that this would be the case.

- G 2 His encouragement of the relative to redeem the land: If you will redeem <sup>157</sup> *it*, redeem <sup>158</sup> *it*;
- G 3 His request for a decision: but if not, <sup>159</sup> tell me <sup>160</sup> that I may know;
- G 4 The sequence of eligibility for purchase: for there is <sup>no</sup> one but you to redeem <sup>161</sup> *it*, and I am after you."<sup>162</sup>
- D 3 The closer relative's decision to redeem the land: And he said, "I will redeem <sup>163</sup> *it*." 4:4b

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<sup>157</sup> Ruth 4:4 - If you will redeem: Boaz used the second person masculine singular of the Qal Imperfect of *ga'al* (1350), absent any object (the word "it" is in italics). Literally, he said, "If you will (serve as) relative-redeemer ...." (I supply the words "serve as" because there is no appropriate verbal form of "relative-redeemer.") This is the eleventh use of *ga'al*, which appears 21 times in Ruth. See the footnote on this word at Ruth 2:20, its first use. The previous use was in Ruth 4:3. Its next use is here in Ruth 4:4.

<sup>158</sup> Ruth 4:4 - redeem *it*: This clause consists of the single verb (*ga'al*, 1350), which Boaz used as a masculine singular Qal Imperative – "(Serve as) relative-redeemer!" Or, to use more economical (but less accurate) language, Boaz said, "If you will redeem, redeem!" This word (*ga'al*, 1350) is used a staggering five times in this single verse! This verse reveals clearly that one of the responsibilities of a *ga'al*, a relative redeemer, was to redeem land, i.e. to purchase land – for the benefit of a deceased relative and his descendants. Boaz was giving the closer *ga'al* every chance to redeem the land as a relative-redeemer. This is the twelfth use of *ga'al*, which appears 21 times in Ruth. See the footnote on this word at Ruth 2:20, its first use. The previous use was in Ruth 4:4. Its next use is here in Ruth 4:4.

<sup>159</sup> Ruth 4:4 - but if not: This is a most unfortunate translation by the NASB. It completely excises, presumably for stylistic purposes, an occurrence of the most important word in the book of Ruth, *ga'al* (1350). One would have expected the second person masculine singular Qal Imperfect, "But if you will not redeem ...." But Boaz does not do so. Instead he employs the third masculine singular Qal Imperfect, "But if he will not redeem ...." The most plausible explanation is that Boaz briefly turns to address the crowd of witnesses seated at the city gate (so NET Bible's note 13 at [Ruth 4:4](#)). This is the thirteenth use of *ga'al*, which appears 21 times in Ruth. See the footnote on this word at Ruth 2:20, its first use. The previous use was in Ruth 4:4. Its next use is here in Ruth 4:4.

<sup>160</sup> Ruth 4:4 - tell me: Boaz now turns back to the other *ga'al*, and commands him, "Announce to me!" Boaz used the masculine singular of the Hiphil Imperative of *nagad* (5046). The singular number indicates that Boaz was issuing the imperative to one person only, not to the entire group.

<sup>161</sup> Ruth 4:4 - for there is no one but you to redeem: Boaz used the Qal Infinitive construct of *ga'al* (1350). The word "it" does not appear in the Hebrew text. This is the fourteenth use of *ga'al*, which appears 21 times in Ruth. See the footnote on this word at Ruth 2:20, its first use. The previous use was in Ruth 4:4. Its next use is here in Ruth 4:4.

<sup>162</sup> Ruth 4:4 - and I am after you: Here Boaz placed some mild pressure on this nearer relative redeemer. The unnamed man needed to make a snap decision. If the other man decided against redeeming the property, Boaz hinted that he, Boaz, was next in line and that, presumably, he would exercise his option if the nearer relative did not.

<sup>163</sup> Ruth 4:4 - I will redeem: Obviously the unnamed closer relative-redeemer wanted the property. Thus far, marriage had not been thrown into the equation, and legally, it did not need to be. The two different acts of a relative-redeemer – redemption of property and redemption of persons (i.e. marriage) were not joined together. However, there was a moral requirement. Perhaps the other *goel*, eager to acquire property, did not consider the matrimonial obligation that was present. Boaz had not brought up that part of the transaction. This is the fifteenth use of *ga'al*, which appears 21 times in Ruth. See the footnote on this word at Ruth 2:20, its first use. The previous use was in Ruth 4:4. Its next use is in Ruth 4:6. *Ga'al* (1350) appears here as a first person common singular Qal Imperfect.

## C 2 Boaz' reminder of the obligation of marrying Ruth 4:5

- D 1 The requirement of marriage: {5} Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess,<sup>164</sup> the widow of the deceased,<sup>165</sup>
- D 2 The purpose of marriage: in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance."<sup>166</sup>

## C 3 The relative's refusal 4:6

- D 1 The fact of refusal: {6} The closest relative<sup>167</sup> said, "I cannot redeem *it* for myself,<sup>168</sup>
- D 2 The reason for refusal: because I would jeopardize my own inheritance."<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Ruth 4:5 - Ruth the Moabitess: Once again, Ruth is identified as "the Moabitess." Perhaps, under normal circumstances, a woman would be identified as the daughter of a certain man. But no one knew who Ruth's father was. So she was identified as "Ruth from Moab." At least no one had any doubts which woman was being described. Did Boaz point out that Ruth was a Moabitess in order to prejudice the other man into declining marriage? We will probably never know until we ask Boaz himself.

<sup>165</sup> Ruth 4:5 - you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased: Boaz had the other *goel* right where he wanted him. Perhaps the closer *goel*, in the back of his mind had considered the possibility of marriage, or perhaps not. If he had considered the possibility of marriage, perhaps he had thought of marriage to Naomi. But Boaz stipulated marriage to Ruth. That was an entirely different proposition for the other *goel*. Ruth was young enough to bear a son, perhaps a number of sons. Suddenly the prospect of purchasing Elimelech's property was far more complicated than he had at first thought! Boaz was obligated to specify Ruth, not Naomi, as the marriage partner, precisely because it was Ruth who had requested marriage (Ruth 3:9).

One of the earliest known examples of Relative Redemption through marriage is found in Genesis 38:6-10, complicated by the ensuing historical narrative (Gen. 38:11-30). This historical event antedated the giving of the Law by hundreds of years.

<sup>166</sup> Ruth 4:5 - in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance: Here Boaz very accurately quoted from the provision of the law found in Deut. 25:5-10.

<sup>167</sup> Ruth 4:6 - The closest relative: The English reader cannot see what the Hebrew reader sees. The term "The closest relative" and the subsequent statement, "(I cannot) redeem" are variations of the identical Hebrew word (*ga'al*, 1350). "Closest relative" occurs as a masculine singular Qal participle "the one redeeming". This is the sixteenth use of *ga'al*, which appears 21 times in Ruth. See the footnote on this word at Ruth 2:20, its first use. The previous use was in Ruth 4:4. Its next use is in Ruth 4:6.

<sup>168</sup> Ruth 4:6 - I cannot redeem it for myself: This instance of "redeem" (*ga'al*, 1350) appears as a Qal Infinitive Construct. There is a Kethiv-Qere reading. The received (or "written") (Kethiv) reading is a Qal Infinitive Construct with a prefixed *lamedh* (letter l). It reads simply, "I am not able to redeem." The emended reading (Qere – "that which is to be read") appears as a Qal Infinitive Construct with a pre-fixed *lamedh* but also with a suffixed *lamedh* – a particle serving as a preposition with a first person common singular suffix – "for myself." The NASB uses the Qere reading. Neither reading substantially alters the meaning or the interpretation of the text. Here again, in this single verse some form of *ga'al* appears an amazing five times! This is the seventeenth use of *ga'al*, which appears 21 times in Ruth. See the footnote on this word at Ruth 2:20, its first use. The previous use was in Ruth 4:6. Its next use is also in Ruth 4:6.

<sup>169</sup> Ruth 4:6 - because I would jeopardize my own inheritance: Suddenly, the closer *goel* is confronted with the moral obligation of marriage. Perhaps marriage to an older woman like Naomi, who was past the age of child-bearing, would not have been a problem. But marriage to a younger woman like Ruth was an entirely different matter. Apparently this man already had sons. Producing one or more sons through a younger woman like Ruth

## D 3 His relinquishing of redemption

E 1 His asking Boaz to redeem the land: Redeem *it* for yourself;<sup>170</sup>

E 2 His ceding of his right: you *may have* my right of redemption,<sup>171</sup>

E 3 His reason: for I cannot redeem *it*.<sup>172</sup>

## C 4 The legal contract 4:7-12

## D 1 The legal explanation – the giving of the sandal 4:7

E 1 The time of the custom: {7} Now this was *the custom* in former times<sup>173</sup> in Israel concerning the redemption<sup>174</sup> and the exchange of *land* to confirm any matter:

E 2 The exchange of a sandal: a man removed his sandal and

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would definitely complicate matters for his present family. Given these facts, the man declined the opportunity to purchase Elimelech's land. Whether or not the man was already married, we are not told. Perhaps if he had been, his wife had died. Regardless, the man possessed an inheritance which, presumably, he wanted to pass on to his descendants. Marrying Ruth would complicate that whole matter, and he did not wish to do so.

<sup>170</sup> Ruth 4:6 - Redeem *it* for yourself: The word "it" does not appear in Hebrew. "Redeem for yourself" is the text. "Redeem" appears as a Qal masculine singular Imperative ("Redeem!") with a suffixed preposition *lamedh*, second masculine singular "for yourself." This is the eighteenth use of *ga'al* (1350), which appears 21 times in Ruth. See the footnote on this word at Ruth 2:20, its first use. The previous use was in Ruth 4:6. Its next use is also in Ruth 4:6. The unnamed "relative-redeemer" gives permission to Boaz to jump in the front of the line and redeem the property that Naomi was selling. In so doing, he also accedes his right to marry Ruth to Boaz.

<sup>171</sup> Ruth 4:6 - right of redemption: This is the single word *geullah* (1353), but it contains the same three radicals (consonants) as "redeem" or "redeemer" – g a l. "Right of redemption" is a noun, and as such, ends with the "h" radical or consonant. It is obviously related to the verb *ga'al* (1350), but it is not the same word. The word *geullah* appears only twice in Ruth – here in Ruth 4:6 and again in Ruth 4:7.

<sup>172</sup> Ruth 4:6 - for I cannot redeem *it*: The unnamed relative redeemer once again asserts that he cannot redeem the land being offered for sale. The other man uses the Qal Infinitive construct without any object, "I am not able to redeem." This is the nineteenth use of *ga'al* (1350), which appears 21 times in Ruth. See the footnote on this word at Ruth 2:20, its first use. The previous use was in Ruth 4:6. Its next use is also in Ruth 4:6

<sup>173</sup> Ruth 4:7 - in former times: This editorial comment may indicate that the book of Ruth was written a considerable amount of time after the events described therein. Alternatively, the author could have written his historical narrative shortly after the events described, and a later editor added the sandal explanation and the subsequent genealogy (Ruth 4:17b-22). If the latter view is correct, it does not alter the fact that one person wrote the narrative, nor does it affect the inspiration of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

<sup>174</sup> Ruth 4:7 - redemption: This is the second and final occurrence in Ruth of the noun *geullah* (1353). It means "redemption" or "right of redemption." It is a noun composed of the same three radicals (consonants) – g a l – *gimel, aleph, lamedh* – as the verb *ga'al* (1350), "to redeem" or "to serve as relative-redeemer." The previous occurrence of *geullah* was in Ruth 4:6.

- gave it to another;<sup>175</sup>
- E 3 The legality of the custom: and this was the *manner of* attestation in Israel.
  - D 2 The closer relative's transfer of the property to Boaz – the giving of the sandal 4:8
    - E 1 His urging Boaz to buy the land: {8} So the closest relative<sup>176</sup> said to Boaz, "Buy *it* for yourself."
    - E 2 His removal of his sandal: And he removed his sandal.<sup>177</sup>
  - D 3 Boaz' address to the elders and the people 4:9-10
    - E 1 His calling them to witness his purchase from Naomi 4:9
      - G 1 His audience: {9} Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people,
      - G 2 The purpose of the audience: "You are witnesses<sup>178</sup> today
      - G 3 His identification of the seller: that I have bought from the hand of Naomi
      - G 4 His identification of the purchase
        - H 1 all that belonged to Elimelech
        - H 2 and all that belonged to Chilion and

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<sup>175</sup> Ruth 4:7 - a man removed his sandal and gave it to another: "Probably the practice of standing on land one possessed led to the custom of using the sandal as a symbol of possession in land transactions (v. 7; cf. Gen. 13:17; Deut. 1:36; 11:24; 25:8-10; Josh. 1:3; 14:9)" Thomas Constable, [Notes](#), citing Ernest R. Lacheman, "Note on Ruth 4:7-8," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 56 (1937):53-56, [Note 122](#).

However, that is definitely not the sense of Deuteronomy 25:5-10. There a widow standing in need of redemption, but spurned by her potential relative-redeemer, takes possession of the rejector's sandal in a court of law and humiliates him by spitting in his face! Her possession of his sandal is a legal testament to his unwillingness to do what the law required of him. Her spit in his face is supreme humiliation. Few men would enjoy being publicly humiliated by a woman in a court of law!

<sup>176</sup> Ruth 4:8 - closest relative: These two words translate the single word *ga'al* ([1350](#)). It appears here as a Qal masculine singular participle with a prefixed *he*, the article, "the." Literally, it could be translated, "The one existing as relative-redeemer." This is the twentieth use of the word. The previous occurrence was in Ruth 4:6. The next and final occurrence is Ruth 4:14. See the note at Ruth 2:20 for a more thorough discussion.

<sup>177</sup> Ruth 4:8 - And he removed his sandal: Though Ruth does not even appear in court and certainly does not spit in this unnamed potential *goel's* face (see Deut. 25:5-10), there is, without doubt, an element of stigma here. Boaz had permanent possession of the man's sandal as legal testimony that the other *goel* surrendered his rights to Boaz. Ruth would have no reason to humiliate the man because Boaz would be her "knight in shining armor"!

<sup>178</sup> Ruth 4:9 - witnesses: The word "witnesses" is the plural of *ed* ([5707](#)). This word appears three times in Ruth. Twice Boaz charged the audience that they were witnesses (Ruth 4:9, 10). In Ruth 4:11, they all agreed.

Mahlon.<sup>179</sup>

- E 2 His calling them to witness his marriage to Ruth to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance 4:10
  - G 1 His acquisition of Ruth: {10} "Moreover, I have acquired<sup>180</sup> Ruth
    - H 1 Her description: the Moabitess,<sup>181</sup>
    - H 2 Her relationship: the widow of Mahlon,<sup>182</sup>
    - H 3 Her status: to be my wife<sup>183</sup>
  - G 2 His purpose
    - H 1 To preserve the inheritance of the deceased: in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance,<sup>184</sup>
    - H 2 To preserve the name of the deceased: so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off
      - J 1 from his brothers<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Ruth 4:9 - Chilion and Mahlon: For the first time the reader is informed that not only is Boaz buying Elimelech's land, he is also buying the land of Chilion and Mahlon. An alternative view is that, when Elimelech left Judah, his sons were not old enough to inherit any land. In that event, to purchase Elimelech's land was also to purchase the land of Chilion and Mahlon, for it was one and the same parcel of land.

<sup>180</sup> Ruth 4:10 - I have acquired: Literally, "I have acquired for myself ...." The word order in Hebrew reads literally as follows: "Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, woman of Mahlon, I have acquired for myself [supply "to be"] to me for woman." The word "woman" is *ishshah* (802). Context determines whether "wife" or "woman" is meant. In this context "wife" is to be understood in both instances.

<sup>181</sup> Ruth 4:10 - Almost to the bitter end, Ruth is destined to be identified as "Ruth, the Moabitess." She is so identified by the man who is to marry her! At least no one in the audience would have any difficulty identifying which woman he was speaking about!

<sup>182</sup> Ruth 4:10 - the widow of Mahlon: For the first time in our narrative, we are informed as to which Israel had married which Moabitess: Mahlon had married Ruth, and Chilion had married Orpah. The word translated "widow" is really the word *ishshah* (802), which can be translated either "woman" or "wife", depending on the context. Here it is understood that she had been the "woman" or "wife" of the deceased Mahlon. In English we would call that person a widow.

<sup>183</sup> Ruth 4:10 - to be my wife: Lit., "to be my woman" (*ishshah*, 802). Hebrew does not distinguish between "woman" and "wife." The context must define meaning. Here, in this court of law, Boaz obviously meant "wife."

<sup>184</sup> Ruth 4:10 - to raise up the name of the deceased upon his inheritance: As Boaz saw it, he was correctly and willingly fulfilling the decrees of the Law to preserve the *name* of the deceased (Deut. 25:5-6) and to preserve the *property* of the deceased (Lev. 25:25).

<sup>185</sup> Ruth 4:10 - from his brothers: This has to do with preserving the name of the deceased among his clan.

- J 2 or from the court<sup>186</sup> of his *birth* place;<sup>187</sup>
- G 3 His repetition of the audience's function as witnesses: you are witnesses today."<sup>188</sup>
- D 4 The reaction of the people and the elders 4:11-12
- E 1 Their acknowledgment of their role as witnesses: {11} All the people who were in the court,<sup>189</sup> and the elders, said, "*We are* witnesses."<sup>190</sup> 4:11a
- E 2 Their blessings 4:11b-12
- G 1 May Ruth be like Rachel and Leah: May the LORD<sup>191</sup> make the woman<sup>192</sup> who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah,<sup>193</sup> both of whom built the house of Israel; 4:11b

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<sup>186</sup> Ruth 4:10 - court: NASB footnote: "Lit *gate*." WordExplain: In other words, the gate of the city was where the legal proceedings of court took place. This has to do with legally preserving the inheritance of the deceased among his clan.

<sup>187</sup> Ruth 4:10 - or from the court of his *birth* place: The word "birth" does not appear in the original. More literally, "or from the gate of his place." This has to do with preserving the property of the deceased. Boaz was quite eloquent in his speech in the Hebrew court of law.

<sup>188</sup> Ruth 4:10 - you are witnesses today: Boaz was holding the elders and the townspeople present as legal witnesses to this transaction. The townspeople and elders agreed (Ruth 4:11). The word "witnesses" is the plural of *éd* (5707). This word appears three times in Ruth. Twice Boaz charged the audience that they were witnesses (Ruth 4:9, 10). In Ruth 4:11, they all agreed.

<sup>189</sup> Ruth 4:11 - court: NASB footnote: Lit *gate*

<sup>190</sup> Ruth 4:11 - "*We are* witnesses": As the italicized words indicate, the Hebrew text is merely one word here, "Witnesses!" The people acknowledged that they were legal witnesses of the two transactions – Boaz' purchase of the property of all the deceased, and his marriage to Ruth. The word "witnesses" is the plural of *éd* (5707). This word appears three times in Ruth. Twice Boaz charged the audience that they were witnesses (Ruth 4:9, 10). In Ruth 4:11, they all agreed.

<sup>191</sup> Ruth 4:11 - May the LORD: The townspeople knew the spiritual fervor of Boaz' heart. They had no qualms whatever about bring the name and the activity of Yahweh into their subsequent blessing. Some Israelis might be offended, but not Boaz!

<sup>192</sup> Ruth 4:11 - the woman: A literal translation of *haishshah* (802), the prefixed *ha* meaning the article, "the." Here, the editors translated *ishshah* as "woman" instead of "wife." And in English, it makes perfect sense.

<sup>193</sup> Ruth 4:11 - Rachel and Leah: Between Rachel and Leah and each of their slave-girl maids, twelve sons and at least one daughter were born to Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel.

- G 2 May Boaz achieve wealth and fame: and may you achieve wealth <sup>194</sup> in Ephrathah <sup>195</sup> and become famous <sup>196</sup> in Bethlehem. 4:11c
- G 3 May your house be like the house of Perez 4:12
- H 1 The comparison: {12} "Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, <sup>197</sup>
- H 2 The means of fulfillment: through the offspring <sup>198</sup> which the LORD will give you <sup>199</sup> by this young woman." <sup>200</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Ruth 4:11 - wealth: In my judgment this is a most unfortunate translation of the Hebrew word *chayil* (2428). This word is used but three times in the book of Ruth (Ruth 2:1; 3:11; 4:11). It has nothing to do with wealth here, as it had nothing to do with wealth in Ruth 3:11, where Boaz acknowledged that Ruth was a woman of *chayil*. "Wealthy" is the last thing anyone would call Ruth. She and her mother-in-law were widows. Ruth had become a common laborer. She was not wealthy. *Chayil* has more to do with initiative, industry and determination than it does with wealth. (See the note on *chayil* at Ruth 2:1.) This is poetic language here, using synonymous parallelism. The parallel member is "famous." A better translation would be, "May you achieve *notoriety* in Ephrathah and become *famous* in Bethlehem." Boaz was already wealthy enough, it would seem. Why would they wish him more wealth? It is notoriety (in a good sense) they were wishing upon him. At least the NASB footnote here reads, "Or *power*." For a catalogue of a variety of translations, see note 33 at [Ruth 4:11](#) in the NET Bible.

<sup>195</sup> Ruth 4:11 - Ephrathah: Most likely another name for Bethlehem (see Gen. 35:16-19). In this verse they are synonymous.

<sup>196</sup> Ruth 4:11 - become famous: The NASB footnote here reads, "Lit *call the name in*."

<sup>197</sup> Ruth 4:12 - like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah. It is frankly a bit surprising that the people of Bethlehem referred to this incestuous and embarrassing piece of Israeli history. The sordid details are recorded in Genesis 38:1-30. However, past history cannot be altered. As we say today, "It is what it is." And of course Perez, the product of Judah and Tamar's immoral union, was not to blame for his parents' dysfunctional behavior.

On the other hand, the comparison was entirely appropriate since, as the remainder of the narrative outlines, Boaz himself was a descendant of Perez (Ruth 4:18-21). Perez had only two sons – Hezron and Hamul (Gen. 46:12; Num. 26:21; 1 Chron. 2:5). But Hezron had five sons by two or, perhaps, three different wives – Jerahmeel, Ram, Chelubai (1 Chron. 2:9), who was also known as Caleb (1 Chron. 2:18-19), Segub (1 Chron. 2:21), and Ashur (1 Chron. 2:24).

<sup>198</sup> Ruth 4:12 - offspring: The Heb. word is "seed" (*zera*, 2233). When the context indicates the author is referring to a human's progeny, most modern day translators are understandably loathe to use the word "seed." The translators of the KJV were not afraid to use it. The NKJV uses the word "offspring." The first occurrence was Gen. 1:11, where God spoke of "plants yielding seed."

<sup>199</sup> Ruth 4:12 - which the LORD will give you: The people of the court understood what our modern society does not understand – that it is Yahweh who gives us children. "Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward" (Psa. 127:3).

<sup>200</sup> Ruth 4:12 - young woman: These two words translate the single word *naarah* (5291), most often translated in the NASB as some variation of *girl* (32X), or *maids* or *maidens* (15X). In the book of Ruth this word is used in Ruth 2:5, 6, 8, 22, 23; 3:2; 4:12.

**B 2 God's Blessing of Boaz, Ruth and Naomi 4:13-22 (and Matt. 1:1-16)**

## C 1 Short-term blessing 4:13-17

## D 1 Yahweh's enabling Ruth to conceive and bear a son 4:13

E 1 Boaz' marriage to Ruth: {13} So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife,<sup>201</sup>

E 2 The Lord's enabling Ruth to conceive

G 1 The consummation: and he went in to her.<sup>202</sup>

G 2 The blessing of Yahweh: And the LORD enabled her to conceive,<sup>203</sup>

E 3 The birth of her son offspring: and she gave birth to a son.

## D 2 The women's acknowledgment of Yahweh's provision of a redeemer for Naomi to care for her in her old age 4:14-16

E 1 The women's blessing of the Lord: {14} Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the LORD 4:14a

E 2 Their realization that God had provided Naomi a redeemer: who has not left you without a redeemer today,<sup>204</sup> 4:14b

E 3 Their requests 4:14c-15a

G 1 That the redeemer's name might become famous in Israel: and may his name become famous in Israel.<sup>205</sup> 4:14c

G 2 That the boy might be to her a restorer of life and a

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<sup>201</sup> Ruth 4:13 - she became his wife: Literally, "and she became of him for a woman (*ishshah*, [802](#)). The language indicates marriage, of course.

<sup>202</sup> Ruth 4:13 - he went in to her: Literally, "he went to her." This is a Hebrew euphemism for "he had sexual relations with her."

<sup>203</sup> Ruth 4:13 - And the LORD enabled her to conceive: Let us remember that, in her marriage to Mahlon, Ruth had been unable to bear him any children. It is the LORD who gives children (Psa. 127:3). Children are not automatic, and they are never an accident. They should never be aborted.

<sup>204</sup> Ruth 4:14 - redeemer: Though Boaz was the primary relative-redeemer of both Ruth and Naomi, this son of Ruth and Boaz would have the ability to sustain her in her old age should the older Boaz die. He, the son of Boaz, would also be Naomi's relative-redeemer (*ga'al*, [1350](#)). The word appears here as a Qal singular masculine participle. The previous use was in Ruth 4:8. This is the twenty-first and final use. See Ruth 2:20 for the first use and a more extensive note.

<sup>205</sup> Ruth 4:14 - and may his name become famous in Israel: Literally, "and may his name be called in Israel." "Called" is the word *qara*, [7121](#).

- sustainer of her old age: {15} "May he also be to you 4:15a
- H 1 a restorer of life
- H 2 and a sustainer of your old age;
- E 4 Their respect for Ruth 4:15b
- G 1 Their acknowledgment of Ruth's love for Naomi: for your daughter-in-law, who loves you
- G 2 Their assessment of Ruth's worth
- H 1 She is better than many sons: and is better to you than seven sons,<sup>206</sup>
- H 2 She has given birth to Naomi's redeemer: has given birth to him."
- E 5 Naomi's care of the baby 4:16
- G 1 {16} Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap,
- G 2 and became his nurse.<sup>207</sup>
- D 3 The women's naming the baby Obed 4:17a
- E 1 The naming: {17} The neighbor women gave him a name, saying,
- E 2 The significance: "A son has been born to Naomi!"

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<sup>206</sup> Ruth 4:15 - better to you than seven sons: The number "seven" seems to be the number of completeness in Hebrew thought. Seven days make up one week, the number of the days of creation plus God's day of rest in view of His having completed the earth, the universe, the animals on the earth and man, the crown of God's creation (Gen. 1:1-2:3). For other instances of seven in the book of Genesis alone, see Gen. 4:15, 24; 7:2, 3, 4, 10; 8:10, 12; 21:28, 29, 30; 29:18, 20, 27, 30; 33:3; 41:2-7, 18-30, 34, 36, 47, 48, 53, 54; 50:3, 10.

In Exodus, God instituted the Sabbath (seventh) day for Israel (Exod. 20:10-11). A Hebrew slave must be set free in the seventh year of his servitude (Exod. 21:2). The Feast of Unleavened Bread was to be observed for seven days (Exod. 23:15). Many other instances could be observed, but this will have to suffice.

More to the point, however, "seven sons" seems to be the ideal Hebrew family (1 Sam. 2:5; Job 1:2; 42:13; Acts 19:14-17) (Thomas Constable, [notes on Ruth](#)). The women's point was that Ruth had been better to Naomi than seven sons! This was high praise, indeed!

<sup>207</sup> Ruth 4:16 - became his nurse: Naomi served as her grandson's nanny. "Naomi adopted this grandson as her own child" (Constable, citing Keil and Delitzsch, p. 492). Whether or not that is true is open to question. What is clear is that Naomi took a major role in caring for her grandson.

- E 3 The name: So they named him Obed. <sup>208</sup>
- D 4 The baby's significance as the ancestor of King David: He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. <sup>209</sup> 4:17b
- C 2 Long-term blessing – the ancestry of David, Israel's greatest king 4:18-22
  - D 1 {18} Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron, <sup>210</sup> 4:18
  - D 2 {19} and to Hezron was born Ram, 4:19a
  - D 3 and to Ram, Amminadab, 4:19b
  - D 4 {20} and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, 4:20a
  - D 5 and to Nahshon, Salmon, 4:20b
  - D 6 {21} and to Salmon was born Boaz, 4:21a
  - D 7 and to Boaz, Obed, 4:21b
  - D 8 {22} and to Obed was born Jesse, 4:22a
  - D 9 and to Jesse, David. <sup>211</sup> 4:22b

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<sup>208</sup> Ruth 4:17 - Obed: The name Obed ([5744](#)) means “worshiper” (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon*). [Constable](#) and Charles Ryrie (*Ryrie Study Bible* note) state that there is a nuance of “servant” in his name.

<sup>209</sup> Ruth 4:17 - the father of David: If Samuel was the one who wrote the book of Ruth, he was not too far removed from the days of the judges. In fact, he was the final judge. And he himself anointed David to be king, so he would have known of David's significance.

<sup>210</sup> Ruth 4:18 - to Perez was born Hezron: The original genealogy should be consulted: 1 Chronicles 2:3-5, 9-15. Though this genealogy in Ruth does not mention it, Perez was the son of Judah by his own daughter-in-law, Tamar (see 1 Chron. 2:4 and Genesis 38:1-30). It is amazing grace that the line of David and thus, of Jesus, includes men and women of questionable and even immoral backgrounds! Notice the women included in Jesus' genealogy as recorded in Matthew 1:1-17.

<sup>211</sup> Ruth 4:22 - David: David was, of course, Israel's most famous merely human king. But David became the ancestor of Israel's truly greatest King, Jesus of Nazareth, who was both human and Divine. For the ancestry of Jesus through Boaz and Ruth and their son, Obed, see Matthew 1:1-16 and the opening pages of the author's [Annotated Outline of Matthew](#).

### Addendum

The following principles derived from the book of Ruth are drawn from Sermon Notes for a Mother's Day sermon on the entirety of Ruth preached by [Pastor Hayden Norris](#) at [Crosspoint Bible Church](#), Omaha, NE on May 8, 2022.

“Ordinary People. Extraordinary God”

Main idea of the Book: “God uses ordinary people as part of His extraordinary plan.”

Applications:

- (1) God is working, don't quit.
- (2) Feelings should follow, not lead.
- (3) Choose to follow God.
- (4) God uses difficulty for His glory. Keep going.
- (5) Step out in faith. God rewards faith.

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