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# Ruth 2

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## Ruth 2:1–22

## Boaz Notices Ruth in his Field

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18). “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

### Outline of Chapter 2:

- Vv. 1–3 **Ruth goes to glean a field of grain**
- Vv. 4–7 **Boaz inquires about Ruth, who is gleaning in his field**
- Vv. 8–14 **Boaz speaks to Ruth directly, to protect and provide for her**
- Vv. 15–17 **Boaz provides for Ruth apart from her knowledge**
- Vv. 18–23 **Ruth and Naomi talk about Boaz**

**Introduction:** By Ruth 2, Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, have moved back to Bethlehem and apparently have been living there for awhile. It is clear that they are not very well off, financially speaking, as Ruth will request to go out to the fields to get the produce that the reapers left behind. It was God’s determination that when a field was harvested, that a reasonable percentage of produce was left behind for the poor. Therefore, those who were poor could go into the fields after the reapers and get enough to eat for themselves and their family. In this case, the field belonged to a close acquaintance of Naomi’s husband—Boaz. With Boaz, we have the doctrine of the *kinsman-redeemer*, which, because of the Hebrew, is

Boaz will notice this woman out in his field, and he will inquire about her. She is not necessarily the only poor person out in his field—although she may be the only poor woman out in his field. He notices her and takes steps to see that she is protected and provided for.

In this chapter, I will quote from J. Vernon McGee rather extensively. He is a preacher, originally from Texas, who just flat out sounds like a hick. He has this folksy, uneducated-sounding drawl—in fact, I once tuned in to him on the radio when a lady friend was with me—a Christian girl, and she made it clear within 30 seconds that she did not want to listen to that hick! McGee was a Biblical scholar with few equals in his day. Theologians fight over various nuances, and sometimes, the things they disagree about are hard to understand. McGee could take the same complex doctrines—God’s leading, God’s sovereignty, man’s free will, God’s overruling will, God’s essence—McGee could take those doctrines and explain them so that they made sense and were simple to understand. You might read a dozen different authors on the same perplexing Biblical topic, and still not feel as though you have a grasp of it. Then you listen to Dr. McGee for a few minutes, and the doctrine makes perfect, logical sense. He had a knack and an ability to take the deep things of Scripture and explain them so that any believer could understand them. I’ve listened to a lot of *Christian* radio today, and much of it is just tripe and nonsense. I don’t even bother with so-call *Christian* television broadcasting, as I have yet to see a worthwhile

teacher on television—but McGee’s half hour, daily show, broadcast years and years after he went to be with the Lord, is a testimony to this man’s deceptive brilliance and his dedication to the Word of God.

## Ruth Goes to Glean a Field of Grain

Slavishly literal:

**And to Naomi, a friend to her man, a man of valor, wealth from a relative of Elimelech and his name Boaz.**

Ruth  
2:1

Moderately literal:

**And to Naomi, a close friend of her husband, a man of wealth from the family of Elimelech and his name [was] Boaz.**

**And Naomi knew of a close friend of her late husband’s, Boaz, who was a wealthy man in the family of Elimelech.**

The word that we should zero in on is the masculine singular noun *môwda* (מִוְדָּע) [pronounced *moh-DAHQ*], which is generally translated *kinsman* or *relative*. It could simply be *an acquaintance* or *a friend*. We find this word only in this verse and in Prov. 7:4 (we will find the feminine version of this noun in Ruth 3:2). It is tough to make a judgment upon the meaning of a word when it has no cognates and is found only two or three times in Scripture. However, by its use in Prov. 7:4,<sup>2</sup> it is unlikely that this word means *relative*, but means *close acquaintance* or *close friend*. Strong’s #4129 BDB #396. My concern, when I examine this word was, what happens to our concept of the *kinsman-redeemer*, particularly if we no longer have a *kinsman*? This problem is solved in this verse as well as in v. 20.

Boaz is said to be a *man of*, and then we have the adjective *gibbôwr* (גִּבּוֹר) [pronounced *gib-BOAR*], which means, as an adjective, *strong, mighty, valiant*. We saw this word a great deal in the books of Joshua and Judges to refer to valiant soldiers. Strong’s #1368 BDB #150. This is followed by the *chayil* (חַיִּל) [pronounced *CHAH-yil*] and it means *efficiency, army, strength, valour, power, might*; as well as that which is gotten through military strength—*wealth, substance*. Strong’s #2428 BDB #298. Here, it refers to the wealth and prosperity of Boaz. Many of us are jealous of those who are wealthy. In fact, those of us who are wealthy, are jealous of those who are wealthier. It is as though a few extra dollars in our pocket would make the difference between frustration and happiness. However, with money comes responsibility. As a teen does not have any clue as to how his new freedom as a young adult is tied to responsibility, so the adult without wealth does not fully grasp the responsibility which accompanies wealth. It is not as though a fistful of dollars suddenly takes away our problems (or even all of our financial ones). And with this newly acquired wealth comes a whole new set of problems and a whole new set of responsibilities. Boaz understood the responsibility that came with his wealth and throughout this book acts with great honor and integrity.

Then we have *from* and the feminine singular construct of *mishpâchâh* (מִשְׁפַּחָהּ) [pronounced *mish-paw-KHAWH*], which means *family, clan, sub-tribe*. Strong’s #4940 BDB #1046. This is affixed to the noun *Boaz*. Therefore, Boaz was both a friend and a relative to Elimelech. Apparently he was not a near enough relative for Naomi to plop herself and Ruth down on his front steps when they returned from Moab.

**And so said Ruth, the Moabite, unto Naomi, “Let me go into, please, the field and let me glean in the ears [of grain] after whom I will find favor in his eyes.” And so she said to her, “Go, my daughter.”**

Ruth  
2:2

**So Ruth, the Moabite, said to Naomi, “Let me go, please, into the field and let me glean among the ears [of grain] behind one, in whose eyes I find grace.” And she answered her, “Go, my daughter.”**

**So Ruth, the Moabite, said to Naomi, “Please let me go into this field and glean for leftover produce, in the field of him whom I will find grace.” And she answered here, “Go, my daughter.”**

<sup>1</sup> This word is actually read differently than it is written. It is read as *môwda*, although written as *myda*. I am not aware of *y* being used as a vowel in Hebrew apart from a vowel point, so that makes the reading more likely than what is written.

<sup>2</sup> *Speak to wisdom: “You [are] my sister and a close friend; you call to the understanding.”* (Prov. 7:4).

When Ruth begins to speak, the first two verbs that she uses are in the voluntative state, which allows us to insert the word *let*. What she desires to gather are the feminine plural of shibbôleth (שִׁבּוֹלֶת) [pronounced *shib-BOH-leth*], which means *ears of grain*. Strong's #7641 BDB #987. This would be the barley harvest, as we will see later. Generally speaking, this is mid-April.

Since the next portion is moderately difficult, we will look at some other translations first of what Ruth said:

NASB	“Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.”
NIV	“Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftovers behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor.”
Owen's Translation	“Let me go to the field and let me glean among the ears of grain after him I shall find favor in whose sight.”
Young's Lit. Translation	‘Let me go, I pray thee, into the field, and I gather among the ears of corn after him in whose eyes I find grace;’

The idea is not difficult—Ruth checks to see if she would have permission to go into a field and gather grain after anyone in whose eyes she would find grace—that is, after anyone who would allow her to do so. Let's work out some of the details. After *ears of grain*, we have the preposition `achar (אַחַר) [pronounced *ah-KHAHR*], which means *after, following, behind*. Strong's #310 BDB #29. Then we have the relative pronoun `asher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *ash-ER*], which means *that, which, when or who*. We might could get away with *anyone*. Strong's #834 BDB #81. We then have the Qal imperfect of *to find* followed by the masculine noun chêk (חֵק) [pronounced *cake*], which means *grace, favor, blessing*. Strong's #2580 BDB #336. We then have *in his eyes*. This gives us: *after whom in his eyes I find favor or behind him in whose sight I find grace*.

Note that it is not Naomi who suggests to Ruth that she go to the fields and glean wherever she is allowed to. Also note that Ruth does not implore Naomi to join her. She has chosen from her own free will to provide for Naomi. Given that Naomi had two adult sons who married and then passed away, leaving behind wives who are still attractive, we may reasonably determine that Ruth is in her late 20's or 30's and that Naomi is in her 50's at least. Given life in the ancient world, Naomi would have had her hands full with taking care of the house, the water and the other necessities of the home.

It was the Law that required those with a field to harvest not to pick up that which they had dropped and to leave patches of the field untouched during harvest (Lev. 19:9–10 23:22 Deut. 24:19–21). The intention was that those who were poor and hungry could go into the field after the harvesters and get enough to get by on. Those who were poor still had to do some work to gain the food, but they did not have to own the field nor did they have to plant in order to take from it. One of the things with which the Law was concerned was the poor and the helpless. Though the Bible is based upon a laissez-faire capitalism, that does not mean that it teaches that only the strong should survive. The Bible is not Darwinism. The Law very certainly teaches, from the very beginning, that the poor, the sick, the helpless should be taken care of. If God has prospered you, that is wonderful—however, He often provides for the less fortunate through you. **If a brother or a sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, “God in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?** (James 2:15–16). Now, during this time period of apostasy—the time of the Judges—there would certainly be those who would harvest everything that they could (Israel in general ignored the Sabbath Year; therefore, we can assume there were great portions of the Law which were ignored. However, there were also those who did obey God's Law, and Boaz was one of these. He saw to it that produce was left behind for the poor to take.

McGee: *God told His people that they had to take care of the poor, and do it in this very unusual way. God didn't put them on relief. He didn't have an anti-poverty program that just gave them money. God did it, I think, in a very sensible way. They had to go and glean. The law is directed, you see, to the land owner...It was God's way of taking care of the poor people of that day. He didn't put them on relief; He didn't get them in a bread line; He didn't*

*make them recipients of charity. He gave them something to do. They had to work for what they got.. They could go into the fields and glean, and they would have to do it by hand.*<sup>3</sup>

Bear in mind, that even though there were provisions in the Law for the poor, that doesn't mean that the Law was always adhered to. According to Keil and Delitzsch (and I don't know where they got their information), some farmers would throw obstacles in the way of the poor and others would even forbid them from gleaning in their fields.<sup>4</sup> It would be human nature, particularly during a time of great degeneracy (during which times, there would be famine as well), we would expect that many landowners would not obey the Law. For that reason, Ruth undoubtedly needed to carefully search out a field where the corners remained unharvested, as per the Mosaic Law.

Now, you might vote for whatever party you believe to take the best care of the poor, yet, if there are one or two bums hanging around your shop door so that you believe them to be decreasing your business, you're going to want them out of there. Landowners aren't going to want their fields filled with transients and poor people either. So we can expect that many Israelites did not follow the Law here.

You must further realize that going out and picking up what the harvesters have left behind is both humiliating and dangerous. The owner of a field might be wealthy and have some integrity, but the workers in the field and the slaves in the field may have been less refined. The owner may not want a beggar gleaning his field and hint that whatever happens to the beggar is none of his concern. As an attractive woman, Ruth is risking sexual assault. Furthermore, since Ruth is a foreign woman without means, she would be even less safe in the harvesting fields. However, she is willing to take the risk, as she has assumed responsibility to take care of her mother-in-law.

Now, what is most interesting, is the Ruth was aware of this provision of the Mosaic Law. We do not know exactly how, as Bibles were no in great proliferation then as they are now. In any case, what this would indicate is that her promise to Naomi that Naomi's God would be her God was more than just a verbal nicety. She did know something about the God of Israel and knew something of His Word.

It should be obvious that Ruth and Naomi are in great poverty. Naomi still owns the land which was originally her husband's by inheritance; however, she does not have enough money to even work the land. They are so poor that the only way that Ruth can provide for them is to go out to someone else's field and pick up the grain which the reapers drop onto the ground. The Bible has a lot to say about money and the lack thereof. The poor are often presented as analogous to unbelievers. **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to proclaim the good news to the poor."** (Luke 4:18a Isa. 61:1). Our Lord proclaimed the gospel to the literal poor (as He did to the rich), but the poor illustrated salvation more perfectly. They came to Christ without assets, without anything to give Him, without anything to offer Him. Jesus took nothing from them, yet offered them everything. Also, so that no one would view the poor as an evil or as cursed by God, God made ample provision for the poor in the Pentateuch.

Conversely, the rich were occasionally presented as those who brought themselves and their own works to Christ. When the rich young ruler came to Christ, he presented Jesus with his great morality, but left unable to save himself.

Now, this is not to say that poverty is good and being rich is bad—they are simply presented at times as analogous to our coming to Christ. We can approach Him in our poverty or we can approach Him in our wealth. When we come to Him in our poverty, we can be saved, as we are in need of a Savior. However, in the normal sense of the terms, poverty is not presented in the Bible as a blessing, nor are riches presented as a curse. In fact, it is quite the opposite. We are sometimes blessed with wealth and God presents Himself as wealthy. **For every beast of the forest is Mine; the cattle on a thousand hills** (Psalm 50:10). Therefore, prosperity, in and of itself, is not evil or wrong. In fact, it is often one form of blessing from God. The oft mis-quoted verse—*Money is the root of all evil*, is actually, **The love of money is the root of all evil** (I Tim. 6:10).

<sup>3</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth*, Thru the Bible Radio, ©1976 in La Verne, California, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 348.



And so she went and so she came in and so she gleaned in the field after the reapers and so chanced upon her chance a part of the field to Boaz who [was] from a family of Elimelech.

Ruth  
2:3

So she walked and went into and gleaned in a field following the reapers, and then her chance befell [her] in the part of the field [which belonged] to Boaz, who [was] from the family of Elimelech.

She left and went into a field where she picked up that produce left behind by the reapers, and it just so happened that she was in a portion of the field which belonged to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

We have a pairing of words in this verse which are difficult to render. The noun is *mîq<sup>e</sup>reh* (מִקְרֵה) [pronounced *mik<sup>e</sup>-REH*], which means, *accident, chance, fortune*. Strong's #4745 BDB #899. It is affixed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine suffix and preceded by its verbal cognate, *qârâh* (קָרָה) [pronounced *kaw-RAWH*] which means *to encounter, to meet, to befall*. However, in this word is just the slight hint of *chance*; something just *might* happen. Strong's #7136 (noun #4745) BDB #899. These two together are variously rendered *and her chance lighted* (Owen), *as it turned out* (NIV), *and her chance happeneth* (Young), *her chance chanced upon* (NASB literally), *and she happened to come upon* (NASB), *her chance chanced to hit upon the field* (Keil and Delitzsch). The sense is that she had been gleaned the fields—i.e., picking up that which the reapers dropped or did not harvest—and she just happened to go into the field owned by Boaz. *On the human side, it was the fortuitous concurrence of circumstances. At this time Ruth had not even so much as heard of Boaz. Not until she returned at the conclusion of that day did she learn from the lips of Naomi, “The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.”...[Many] would interpret the episode of that day as fate. In the program of God, there is no such thing as fate, chance or accident. As the remainder of the story well illustrates, this was not chance, but the leading of the unseen hand of God. All this happened according to his direction. This was one instance out of millions of the providential dealings of God in the everyday affairs of man. Cromwell said: “Let us look into providences; surely they mean somewhat. They hang so together, have been so constant, so clear, so unclouded.”*<sup>5</sup>

McGee continues: *In the final analysis, no accident can happen to a child of God. He may be in a car wreck or he may be killed instantly; but for the child of God, that cannot be finally defined as an accident. Nothing can come to a Christian that does not first receive the permission of God. Chance is removed from the child of God, for he is like Job, of whom Satan said, “Hast not thou made an hedge about him?” The Christian can arise amidst the alarming vicissitudes of life and affirm, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).*<sup>6</sup>

What appears to be the case is that a huge field may have been planted and harvested, with portions of this field belonging to different families or family members. Although Boaz is mentioned in v. 1, this does not mean that Naomi steered Ruth toward his fields. The use of *qârâh* indicates that she just happened to end up in his field—apart from any direction from Naomi—and v. 1 tells us that Boaz was a close acquaintance of Naomi's late husband, as well as a relative. We know this as divine providence. God steers and guides us at various periods of time. We don't have to over-think simple situations, and ponder, *does God want me to make a left turn or a right turn?* God takes care of these things. God saw to it that Ruth ended up in the field of Boaz.

McGee comments: *How is she going to find her way into the field of Boaz? It's going to be very important that she go into the right field...When Ruth went out of Bethlehem that day, she had no notion where to go...From her viewpoint, it was just by chance...Now this brings us again to the question: How did she find her way into the field of Boaz when it was so very important that she go into the right field? Did God put up a stop and go sign, a red and green light, or point an arrow into the rightfield? He did not. Well then, did a voice speak out of heaven? No, no voice spoke out of heaven. Well, she must have had a vision, someone thinks. But she didn't have a vision. Well, how in the world is this girl going to get into the right field? Let's ask Ruth. I would say to her, “Ruth, I'm sure that you had some pretty definite*

<sup>5</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth, the Romance of Redemption*; Thru the Bible Books, ©Pasadena, California, p. 64.

<sup>6</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth, the Romance of Redemption*; Thru the Bible Books, ©Pasadena, California, p. 65.

leading about the field of Boaz.” And she’d say, “No, I didn’t...I just happened to go in there.” May I say to you, from the human viewpoint, it was just happenstance. From God’s viewpoint, it’s something else. He’s going to lead her into the right field. But He’s not going to lead her in the way a lot of people talk about it today. Some folks talk about God’s will as if they’d just had a Western Union telegram from Him or a Special Delivery air mail letter from heaven. My friend, God doesn’t lead that way today, and I don’t think He has ever led very many that way. Back in the Old Testament He led some in a very direct manner, but Ruth was not one of them. It seems to me that Ruth’s decision is more important than some other decisions that were made...because Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem is dependent upon her going into the right field.... God is going to guide in the background. That’s the wonderful thing about the Lord’s will. I’m not sure that it’s necessary for God to give you and me a road map. Sometimes I wish He would. And I hear some people talk today as if they have a road map. They say, “The Lord’s will was for me to do this, and I knew this was the Lord’s will.” I wish I could be that clear, that sure.<sup>7</sup>

McGee then relates a personal decision which was rather momentous in his own life: *Years ago, when I was pastor in Cleburne, Texas, I received two calls from other churches, one to the east of Texas and the other to the west in California. And I didn’t know which to take. I’m being honest with you. I actually got down on the floor and cried out to God to show me which call to accept. He didn’t. I had no vision. But then I heard Dr. Harry Ironside make the statement that of the decisions he had to make in his life, eight per cent (I think this is the figure he gave) were made without knowing at the time they were God’s will. He did not know until sometime later on. After hearing that, I went back home and told my wife that the atmosphere had all cleared, that I felt we were to go to California. I wasn’t sure, but I felt that was the way I was to move.*

*As far as God’s will for your life is concerned, if you think that He’s going to put up a green light for you at every corner or an arrow pointing or a voice out of heaven, you’re just wrong. He doesn’t do it that way. And when I hear people say that, I just know there’s something radically wrong with them, or they’re trying to kid somebody...Dr. Ironside said that afterward he knew whether it had been God’s will or not. And I think that sometimes God does let us go down the wrong road. “But,” somebody is going to say, “you could make a pretty bad decision.” You sure can. But the interesting thing is that if you have two ways before you and you take the wrong way, there’s nothing in the world that’ll keep you from coming back and starting over again. And you can be sure of some thing: If you had two ways to choose from and chose the wrong way first, then you know which is the right way. It’s amazing today how many people interpret God’s will as being the easy way. Well, it’s not always the easy way. It certainly wasn’t for Ruth.<sup>8</sup>*

McGee continues: *One of the glorious things, as we go through this world today, is to know that our times are in His hands; to know that He is ordering the events of this universe; and to know that God has said that nothing can come to a child of His without His permission. You must remember that there was a hedge around Job, and even Satan couldn’t touch him until God gave permission. God will not give permission unless it serves some lofty and worthy purpose. It did serve a lofty and worthy purpose in the life of Job. And I’m sure that Ruth did not realize the significance of the decision she was making. She just went in...For the child of God today who is frustrated because he’s looking for some sign, some experience, some light, some voice, some vision, some dream, he must realize that God is not speaking to us in that way today. God today is speaking to us through His Word. And the child of God who walks in fellowship with God, with no unconfessed sin in his life, and has not grieved the Holy Spirit, can commit his life to God. And when he gets to a place where he isn’t clear just what god’s will is for him, he can make a decision and move into the situation. Now maybe he makes a wrong decision, but God has permitted it for a purpose. As I look back on my life, there is one instance where I expected God to open up a door for me, and He didn’t open up that door. In fact, He slammed the door, as it were, in my face, and I felt very badly about it. But I thank God that He did it, because now I can look back and see that it was best. It’s like what Joseph said to his brethren when they came to him after the death of old Jacob, their father. He said in Genesis 50:20, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto*

<sup>7</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth*, Thru the Bible Radio, ©1976 in La Verne, California, pp. 29–30.

<sup>8</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth*, Thru the Bible Radio, ©1976 in La Verne, California, pp. 30–31.

*good.” How wonderful that is, and may it be an encouragement to you today. Perhaps you are actually biting your fingernails and are wondering why you don’t get clear leading. You know Christians who act like they have a hotline to heaven. Now it’s wonderful that all of us have access to God, but I’m not sure that He always talks right back to us. So let’s be very careful today about the way we banter about the statement, “I know this is the Lord’s will.” We just can’t always be sure. But we can commit our way to Him, have no unconfessed sin in our lives, not grieve the Holy Spirit, and be in the center of the Lord’s will as best we know. Yes, my friend, you can commit yourself to Him in a wonderful way. And even if you got into the same predicament that Joseph did, or even that Job didn’t say with him, “**Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him**” (Job 13:15). My friend, that’s the glorious truth that brings a joy and an expectancy to life. The providence of God makes every day a thrill for the child of God. I’m glad that He didn’t give me a blueprint because, frankly, I like to take a trip over a new road, going into an area I’ve never been before. I did that one autumn when we were in the Ozarks. My, how that road twisted and turned. And every twist and turn was a thrill—the autumn leaves were a riot of color. Nature seemed lavish, covering every hillside with polychrome pictures. And I’m so glad, friend, that God didn’t send me pictures of it all ahead of time. What a thrill life can become for us!<sup>9</sup>*

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### **Boaz Inquires about Ruth, Who Is Gleaning in His Field**

**And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and so he said to the reapers, “Y<sup>e</sup>howah with you.”**  
**And so they said to him, “Bless you, Y<sup>e</sup>howah.”**

Ruth  
2:4

**And, observe, Boaz came in from Bethlehem and he said to the reapers, “Y<sup>e</sup>howah [be] with you.”** **And they said to him, “Y<sup>e</sup>howah bless you.”**

**And then Boaz came into the field from Bethlehem and he said to his reapers, “May Jehovah be with you.”**  
**And they answered him, “May Jehovah bless you as well.”**

Boaz, Ruth and Naomi all live in Bethlehem. When Israel originally settled Canaan, there was a large number of them (according to a numbering system which we do not fully understand, it appears as though there were two million Israelites who populated Israel). Prior to entering the land, 76,500 of these were males from the tribe of Judah over the age of 21. Given that there were about 115 cities in Judah, this means that the average city had a population of 1500–2000 in all (if the numbering of the Old Testament is off by a factor of 10, then we might be talking about 150–200 people per village, on average). Bethlehem is not even mentioned in the distribution of cities, and there are passages which indicate that it was a small town, dwarfed in the shadow of Jerusalem. This would indicate that we are dealing with a small town. My guess is that we have a town with a population of anywhere between 300 and 1000.<sup>10</sup> Now would be a good time to stop for a moment and examine the **City of Bethlehem (PDF version)**.

Here in v. 4, Boaz and those who worked for him understood that the source of their prosperity was God. What we have here is a ritual not unlike a blessing prior to a meal which indicates that both Boaz and his workers were believers. They understood that, although they planted and then harvested the field, the watering and the yield came from God. According to James Freeman, such salutations are heard even today in the east.<sup>11</sup>

*McGee: Notice what [Boaz] did when he got out there. He said to the reapers, “**The Lord be with you.**” That’s capital speaking. And they responded, “**The Lord bless thee,**” and that’s labor answering. Say, that doesn’t sound like some of the labor leaders and capitalists of our day, does it? It doesn’t sound like the steel workers or the steel owners either. Unfortunately, capital and labor both are very far from God*

<sup>9</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth*, Thru the Bible Radio, ©1976 in La Verne, California, pp. 31–33.

<sup>10</sup> I am taking other factors into consideration; e.g., the number of elders that Boaz was able to round up; the fact that he had several people harvesting his field; the fact that there is an implication that there were several owners of large fields; the fact that it was easy for Boaz to locate the other near relative of Naomi, etc.

<sup>11</sup> *Manners and Customs of the Bible*; James M. Freeman; reprinted in 1972 by Logos International; p. 128.

today. Now, frankly, I am a poor preacher, and I'm not a capitalist. My Dad was a working man. I remember him in overalls most of the time because he was a hard worker. I just can't sanction godless capitalism today. From listening to them, I get the impression that most of the labor leaders are very godless. I don't take sides today. I just wish that we could get something of real Christianity, the real born-again type, into this area. It would certainly help the relationship. You'd hear language like this. Capital: *"The Lord be with you."* And then labor answering: *"The Lord bless thee."* My, what a marvelous capital/labor relationship existed there in the fields of Boaz!<sup>12</sup>

You will note that Boaz is very hands on with his prosperity. In Matt. 6:25–31, Jesus tells his disciples not to be anxious about their daily provisions—that God has taken care of these things for us. This does not mean that we sit at the dinner table waiting for God to drop food before us. Boaz works and Boaz is involved in his business, as he well should be. It is a part of his responsibility in having wealth. When you hear about those who buy lottery tickets, and they will tell you that the first thing they are going to do when they win is to quit their jobs and travel or *live the good life*. They simply want to get this money and go out and spend it on themselves. Boaz is wealthy and notice where he is—he is out in the field with his foreman and his concern is to his workmen and the harvest. Then he turns his concern to the beggar woman he sees in his field. This is why Boaz is rich and you are not. He handles his wealth with godly responsibility.

**And so said Boaz to his young man, the one standing over the reapers, "To whom the maiden the this?"**

Ruth  
2:5

**Then Boaz said to his servant, the one stationed over the reapers, "To whom [belongs] this maiden?"**

**Then Boaz said to his servant, the foreman over the reapers, "To what family does this maiden belong?"**

Boaz speaks to the masculine singular of na'ar (נַעַר) [pronounced *NAH-gahr*], which means *boy, youth, young man, personal attendant*. It can also refer to a *slave* or a *servant*, as in Gen. 24:2 II Kings 5:20, or to a *personal attendant* (Judges 19:2). Strong's #5288 & 5289 BDB #654. This young attendant was the foreman in charge over the reapers. He is described with the definite article and the masculine singular, Niphal participle of natsav (נָצַב) [pronounced *naw-TSAH<sup>B</sup>V*], which means *to station oneself, to take one's stand, to stand up, to set something upright, to erect*. In the Niphal, the passive stem, it means *to be stationed, to be left standing, to station oneself, to take one's stand*. The participle is used as a noun here, referring to his position—the one standing over the reapers. Strong's #5324 BDB #662.

You may wonder if Boaz was able to immediately determine that this was a foreign woman. Absolutely not. Lot was the nephew of Abraham, and Boaz was descended from Abraham and Ruth was descended from Lot. Their families had both lived in the mid-east with 100 miles from one another—therefore, it is unlikely that there would be any physical characteristics which would distinguish Ruth from the Israelite women. She was just a woman in the fields of Boaz. However...

It apparently was unusual for an attractive women to be gleaning the fields after the reapers; and it is obvious that Ruth was particularly attractive, catching the eye of Boaz. Therefore, he asks about her. McGee: *Now, our King James translation here is rather stilted...What Boaz said here is not quite, "Whose damsel is this?" May I just give you several very free translations? He says, "Well, where in the world has she been that I haven't met her before?"...He fell for this girl. This is love at first sight.*

Then McGee gets personal again: *And maybe you're wondering if I believe in love at first sight. May I say to you, I believe in it very strongly. I proposed to my wife on the second date we had. The reason I didn't propose to her on the first date was because I didn't want her to think I was in any hurry. Now don't get any ideas if you're a young person. It was a year before we got married. We wanted to make sure. Yes, I believe in love at first sight, but I think love ought to be bested by quite a bit of time before*

<sup>12</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth*, Thru the Bible Radio, ©1976 in La Verne, California, pp. 34–35.



marriage takes place. Boaz had a case of love at first sight. This man really fell for Ruth, and this is romance in the fields of Boaz, if you please.<sup>13</sup>

**And so answered the young man, the one standing over the reapers, and so he said, “A maiden—Moabitess—she [is] the turning back with Naomi from field of Moab.**

Ruth  
2:6

**And the servant, the one stationed over the reapers, answered, and said, “The maiden [is] a Moabitess; she returned with Naomi from the country of Moab.**

**And the servant, the foreman over the reapers, responded with, “The maiden is a Moabitess who returned with Naomi from the country of Moab.**

In the previous verse and in this verse, Ruth is called the feminine singular of *na ʿārâh* (נַעֲרָה) [pronounced *nah-ar-AWH*], which usually refers to an *unmarried woman*. Strong’s #5291 BDB #655. Although Boaz asks to whom Ruth belonged (i.e., to what family), what Boaz really wanted to know was, *is this an unmarried woman?* He asks this question without asking it by using the term *na ʿārâh*. His young man, by using the term again, confirms that she is an unmarried woman. It is interesting that the overseer knows about her. Bethlehem, being a small town, is possibly a place where everyone knew everyone’s business. It is just as reasonable that Ruth volunteered this information when asking permission to glean (see the next verse). Then the servant adds some additional information concerning Ruth:

**“And so she says, ‘Let me glean, please and gather in the sheaves after the reapers.’ And so she came and so she is taking a stand then, the morning and until now. This, her sitting of the house a little.”**

Ruth  
2:7

**“She had asked, ‘Please let me glean as well as gather in the rows of fallen grain after the reaper.’ So she came in and she has remained [since] then, the morning, until now. Here, her sitting a little [in] the house.”**

**“She had asked, ‘Please allow me to glean and to gather in the rows of fallen grain after the reapers go through.’ She has been working since this morning and now she is resting in the shelter.**

Although most of this verse is straightforward, we need to look at a portion of it in detail:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	...and she said— Let me glean, I pray thee, and gather among the sheaves, after the reapers; so she came in, and hath continued from that time all the morning until just now, and hath not rested in the house for a little.
NASB	“And she said, ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.’ Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while.”
NIV	“She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.’ She went into the field and has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter.”
Owen's Translation	“She said, ‘Pray, let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.’ So she came and she has continued from early morning until now. This her staying in the house a little.”
REB	‘She asked if she might glean, gathering among the sheaves behind the reapers. She came and has been on her feet from morning till now; she has hardly had a moment’s rest in the shelter.’
The Septuagint	“And she said, ‘I pray you, let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.’ And she came and stood from morning till evening and rested not [even] a little in the field.”

<sup>13</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth*, Thru the Bible Radio, ©1976 in La Verne, California, pp. 34–35.

*Young's Lit. Translation* ...and she saith, Let me glean, I pray thee—and I have gathered among the sheaves after the reapers; and she cometh and remaineth since the morning and till now; she sat in the house a little.

I don't know about you, but I didn't know what the hell sheaves were. When people sing *Bringing in the sheaves* in church, I didn't know whether the church would be better served by leaving them outdoors for awhile. The word is ʿômer (עֹמֶר) [pronounced GŌH-mer], and this is found more often in that song than in the Bible. We find this about a dozen times in Scripture. It means *sheaf* or *a row of fallen grain*. Strong's #6016 BDB #771.

Ruth came into the field and then she did the Qal imperfect of ʿāmad (אָמַד) [pronounced gaw-MAHD], which means *to take a stand, to stand, to remain, to endure, to withstand*. This is the same word used to describe the position of authority of the young man speaking to Boaz. Strong's #5975 BDB #763. After that, we have the adverb *then* and the masculine singular noun bôqer (בֹּקֶר) [pronounced BOH-ker], which means *morning*. Strong's #1242 BDB #133. This is followed, literally, by *and, until now*.

So far, we know that Boaz obeys the Law of Moses and allows the poor to glean in his fields. We also know that Ruth asked permission to do this. She did not just wander into the field and begin gathering things—she asked permission of the overseer.

It is the second part of this verse which is rather difficult. If you will notice the various translations, the REB and Septuagint (as well as other translations, e.g., the NRSV) seem to say just the opposite of what the other translations say. We begin this sentence with the demonstrative adjective zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh], which means *here, this*. Strong's #2063, 2088, 2090 BDB #260. Although I like the meaning given by the NIV—*except for a short rest in the shelter*—we don't have any reason to think that *zeh* should be rendered *except*. Then we have the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal infinitive construct of yāsha<sup>b</sup>v (יָשָׁב) [pronounced yaw-SHAH<sup>b</sup>V] and it means *to remain, to inhabit, to sit, to dwell*. Strong's #3427 BDB #442. With the feminine singular suffix, we render this *her remaining, her sitting*. The house referred to is likely a shelter or a building for the workers outside, which may have been little more than open shelter with a roof to shelter them from the sun. The last word in this sentence is m<sup>e</sup> ʿat̄ (מֵעַתָּה) [pronounced m<sup>e</sup>-GAHT], which means *a little, fewness, few*. Strong's #4592 BDB #589. The Septuagint throws in the negative, as apparently does the Vulgate, which accounts for the almost contradictory renderings. Although the NRSV says that the Hebrew is unclear, it really isn't. The problem is that the Hebrew says one thing, and the Greek and the Latin say something else. Therefore, this either means that Ruth worked for a long time, and has only now paused to rest in the shelter; or, she worked from morning till now without even taking a rest in the shelter. In any case, the point is that she had worked a long time in Boaz's field.

The reasonable scenario is that Boaz came out and took a look at what was going on in his field and spent over an hour in observation. During that time, Ruth took a rest in a building designed for the workers. Then Boaz inquires his foreman concerning her.

McGee: *Although it's very clear to us that Boaz has fallen for this little foreign girl, his superintendent didn't see that at first, and he seems quite apologetic. "This Moabitish woman came out here and asked to glean, and I couldn't turn her down. After all, the Mosaic system permits her to come in here and glean since she's poor and a stranger." But he didn't need to be apologetic, because Boaz has fallen in love with this girl.*<sup>14</sup>

One of your concerns might be, *why has not Boaz gone to look in on Naomi and offer them some assistance since their return?* This answer is fairly simple: Boaz and Naomi are not related and Boaz is not closely related to her late husband. There is a relative in Bethlehem who is more closely related to Elimelech than Boaz and if anyone should have lent a helping hand, that relative should have. However, it is clear that he has not. I have an unusual name; and certainly, if one of my brothers or one of their children needed help, that would become a concern of mine. However, if I ran into another person with my last name, or someone who was related to someone with my last name, and they needed help, I would feel less obligated. I have had some tenants who, when they are in financial trouble, think that I am the one who should bear the brunt of their difficulties, when in fact, it should be

<sup>14</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth*, Thru the Bible Radio, ©1976 in La Verne, California, p. 35.

a near relative of theirs. Boaz is far enough removed from Naomi that it is not his obligation to see to her needs and to do so would have been presumptuous. Because it is a small town, he is probably aware that a Naomi has come back into Bethlehem with a daughter-in-law, and he probably realizes that she is a distant relative of his by marriage. He may have even assumed that the nearer relatives had been taking care of them. For instance, if one of my nephews or nieces were in financial trouble, I would just assume that my brother and sister-in-law are taking care of the matter—and I would assume that unless I am told otherwise. This is where Boaz is—if he knows of the troubles of Naomi and Ruth, then he has assumed that the nearer relative was taking care of them. However, he knows no more than that, and he certainly did not know, until this time, how fetching Ruth was. However, now that Ruth is in his field gleaning for food, he becomes more proactive.

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## Boaz Speaks to Ruth Directly, to Protect and Provide for Her

**And so said Boaz unto Ruth, “Have you not heard, my daughter? You will not go to glean in a field another and now you will not pass over from this, and thus you will cling with my maidens.**

Ruth  
2:8

**Later, Boaz said to Ruth, “Have you not heard, my daughter? You will not go to glean in another field and you will not now pass over from this [field]; and you will thus keep close to my young women.**

**Later, Boaz spoke to Ruth, saying, “Listen carefully, my daughter. I would prefer that you not go and glean in another field and that you not leave this portion of the field, but that you would stay close to my young female servants.**

As with many of the quotations, it is difficult to always grasp what is being said. According to the following translations, this is what Boaz said to Ruth:

NASB	“Listen carefully [lit., Have you not heard?], my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids.”
NIV	“My daughter, listen to me. Don’t go and glean in another field and don’t go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls.”
Owen’s Translation	“Now, listen, my daughter: do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my maidens.”
Young’s Lit. Translation	‘Hast thou not heard, my daughter? go not to glean in another field, and also, pass not over from this, and thus thou dost cleave to my young women;...’

What Boaz first says to Ruth is, “*Have you not heard?*” We would take this as someone has (or, was supposed to) speak previously to Ruth about this matter. However, I think this expression is more of a colloquialism, expressed reasonably well by the NIV (*listen to me*) or by the NASB (*Listen carefully*). Bullinger treats this as a kindly admonition.

The next three main verbs are all found in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect, and the first two are affixed to a negative. Often, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person, Qal imperfect functions as a command. This is essentially the format for the Ten Commandments. It is a command which recognizes volition. This negative command is one which is made out of love. Boaz is not looking to run Ruth’s life at this point. Him telling her *not* to glean in any other field is his way of telling her that he will watch over her and protect her. He is not looking to prohibit her free movement. Similarly, the Laws of God—particularly those given from Mount Sinai—do not reflect God’s desire to limit our freedom and to rain on our parade; these Laws are given to us out of love and for our protection. When a parent tells a child that they are *not* to do this or that, it is a prohibition given out of love, a prohibition given to protect the object of that love.

The second main verb is <sup>ʿ</sup>ā<sup>b</sup>var (אָבַר) [pronounced *aw<sup>b</sup>-VAHR*], which means *to pass over, to pass through, to pass, to go over*. Strong’s #5674 BDB #716. The third main verb is dā<sup>b</sup>vaq (דָּבַח) [pronounced *daw<sup>b</sup>-VAHK*],

which means *to cling, to cleave, to hold close, to keep close, to adhere*. Strong's #1692 BDB #179. With this, we have the adverb *kôh* (כֹּה) [pronounced *koh*], which means *so, thus, here, hence*. Strong's #3541 BDB #462.

Barnes tells us that the forms of two of the verbs appear to be Chaldaic, and he suggests that is the dialect spoken in Bethlehem in that day.<sup>15</sup> I personally wonder if the verb form is Moabite, and that Boaz is using some of Ruth's native dialect to make her feel at ease.

In going from the Hebrew into the English, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly the point of view of Boaz. Was he presenting himself as a fatherly protector over Ruth; did he have a personal interest in Ruth apart from simply desiring to watch over her? It would not be unreasonable to suppose that his words were intentionally chosen not to reveal any more than a fatherly interest, whether or not his interest in her was more personal.

**“You eyes in the field where they are reaping and you have gone after them. Have I not charged the young men to not touch you? And you have thirsted and you have gone to the vessels and you have drunk from that which have drawn the young men.”**

Ruth  
2:9

**“Your eyes [are] upon the field where they are reaping, and you will go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to molest you? And, [when] you become thirsty, you will go to the vessels and you will drink from that which the young men have drawn.”**

**“You are looking at the field where the reapers are. I would like you to follow them, and I have commanded the young men not to harass you. When you are thirsty, then you will drink from the vessels which the young men have drawn.”**

What Boaz charged the young men not to do is the Qal infinitive construct of *nâga'* (נָגַע) [pronounced *naw-GAHG*], which means *to touch*. This word is used in several senses; here, the sense is that he has commanded his men not to molest her. Strong's #5060 BDB #619. Boaz tells Ruth to examine the field where the reaping is taking place, and tells her to follow right after the reapers. This way, she remains within his field and under the protection of his workers. Please realize that Ruth is a single, young woman, without any man to look out for her. She is a foreign woman, one who may be despised because she is a Moabitess, despite the fact that she is attractive. To be quite frank, while in the harvest fields, she is very vulnerable to an attack as well as to rape. Boaz put his cloak of protection around her, as McGee puts it.

At the beginning of a work day, the young men also draw out water to drink, and she is told that she may drink of that water when she is thirsty. This is obviously a privilege which is given to those who work for Boaz. In fact, the protection he has afforded her, his allowance of her harvesting in the fields (which, although is required by the Law, was certainly not always obeyed), and the access to the workers' water are all special privileges. She will certainly ask why she is given these privileges.

**And so she fell upon her faces and so she was bowing ground-ward and so she said unto him, “Why have I found grace in your eyes to your regard of me and I [am] a foreigner?”**

Ruth  
2:10

**Then she fell upon her face and she bowed to the ground and said to him, “Why have I found grace in your eyes that you acknowledge me, [as] I am a foreigner?”**

**She prostrated herself before him, bowing, and said, “Why have I found grace in your sight that you even acknowledge me, seeing that I am a foreigner?”**

What she found was the masculine singular noun *chêk* again, (חֵק) [pronounced *cake*], which means *grace, favor, blessing*. Strong's #2580 BDB #336. After *grace*, we have *in your eyes*, which is followed by the Hiphil infinitive construct of *nâkar* (נָכַר) [pronounced *naw-KAHR*], and it means *to regard, to recognize, to acknowledge*. Strong's #5234 BDB #647.

<sup>15</sup> Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 475.



What she calls herself is the feminine singular adjective (used as a substantive) of *nâk<sup>e</sup>rîy* (נִכְרִיָּה) [pronounced *nawck<sup>e</sup>-REE*], and it means *foreign, alien*. Strong's #5237 BDB #648. Ruth is a Moabite, and, as we have seen, there were problems between the Jews and the Moabites. The Jews were either under Moabite oppression at that time or were recently under Moabite oppression (Judges 3:14). The people of Moab did not provide any food or water for the Israelites when they traveled from Egypt to Canaan. Moses had told the people not to allow Moabites or Ammonites into the worship services of Jehovah for this reason (Deut. 23:3–6). Therefore, Ruth expected just the opposite of consideration from Boaz. She *recognized that she was the recipient of grace and she knew that she had done nothing to deserve it.*<sup>16</sup>

*Lawson: Ruth thought of herself greatly honoured by the attentions of Boaz. She was a stranger and foreigner, an alien to the commonwealth of Israel, and did not reckon herself entitled to any kindness from the people of the lord. Perhaps she did not yet know how kindly the laws of Israel required them to treat strangers. The children of Israel had themselves been strangers for many generations in the land of Egypt, and were required to show that kindness to strangers which they would have gladly received from the people among whom they sojourned. Boaz, above all other Israelites at that time, might be expected to treat foreign women with favour; for his own mother had been not only a stranger, but one of the accursed nation of Canaan; and yet there was not an Israelite entitled to more respect, for she was famous, and deserved to be famous to all generations, both for her faith and her good works.*

*Lawson continues: Most men and women entertain too high notions of themselves, because they think with complacency on those qualities that seem to entitle them to consideration, but overlook those which diminish their own value.*<sup>17</sup>

We all have our personal prejudices against those we see as foreign. Perhaps it's those from Mexico, who come into the United States with no money and few skills—who do not speak our language and have trouble learning it. Or maybe it is the Jew or the Oriental who invades our culture, keeps to himself or to herself, and outscores us in school and on all of the standardized tests, then takes the last of the few openings at the good colleges and eventually takes the better positions out in the job force. Or maybe it's the Arab, who looks different, talks funny, eats food which smells funny and just never fits in as we think a person should. Ruth was from the out-group. Israel and Moab were long enemies—either right then or recently, Moab had oppressed Israel and was collecting tribute from Israel's labors. Now, when a person is successful and wealthy, even from an out-group, they can shield themselves to some degree from the inherent prejudices from those around them—they may never feel as though they fit in, but, at least it is not in their face all of the time. However, there was no such shield for Ruth. If she wanted to eat, she had to work, taking what remained in the fields as a common beggar. She had to be out and among those who had intense dislike for her.

Boaz and Ruth are from different countries; two which are at enmity with each other. He is apparently significantly older than her (Ruth 3:10), and, although he takes an interest in her (we don't know whether it is romantic or not, although we suspect that it is), he is careful in what he says to her. Her words to him are equally guarded. Essentially, we have these two people asking these things of one another, without allowing their personal feelings to be revealed, and yet searching for information which might reveal more of the motivations of the other.

Now, let's look at you and me. In the most intimate recesses of our beings, we are against God. We were born with an old sin nature; our natural response early in life was that we believed ourselves to be the center of the universe. In fact, some of us have never gotten over that notion. We commit heinous sins. Often we know what is right and what is wrong and we just flat out do that which is wrong. Some of us even rationalize it away. We convince ourselves that what is wrong is right—deep inside, we know we are lying to ourselves, but we do that. I have seen so many people who struggle to take the words of Jesus totally out of context and use it to support some lame position they have taken in life—often a position of sin and evil. Finally, on the legal side, we carry with us Adam's imputed sin, and the penalty which is due us for that. We are at enmity with God. We couldn't be more unlikeable to God. But Scripture comforts us, **Even while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us** (Rom. 5:8).

<sup>16</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth, the Romance of Redemption*; Thru the Bible Books, ©Pasadena, California, p. 68.

<sup>17</sup> Lawson and Carson, *An Exposition of Ruth and Esther*; ©Tyndale Bible Society, Florida; p. 37.

There is every reason in the world that Boaz should hate Ruth—she is poor and a foreigner from a country at enmity with Israel, as well as a beggar in his fields (if you are a store owner, do you want a beggar right outside your shop door?). Yet Boaz gives grace to Ruth. Now, certainly, we understand to a great degree his motivation—however, the picture that this paints is a picture of what Christ has done for us. To the Israelite whose Bible ends with II Chronicles—he will never fully get the Book of Ruth. However, for those who know the One Who fulfills Scripture, Boaz is a foreshadowing of that One.

McGee continues: *...there is a question I cannot answer: Why have I found grace in the eyes of God? Now don't tell me to go home and look in the mirror, because I've done that. Frankly, friend, the image is something that's not quite attractive. I don't see the answer in the mirror. But God has extended grace towards us. And there are those who consider the theme of the book of Ruth to be just that. The grace of God is exhibited here in the grace that was manifested to this woman. And I must concur to the extent that this is certainly a marvelous example of grace. You and I both can ask Ruth's question as we come to God: Why have I found grace in Thine eyes? We cannot find the answer within ourselves; we're not lovely; we're not beautiful to Him; we are not attractive; we do not have those qualities that God adores and that He rewards and respects. We're sinners, and we're in rebellion against God. And yet, in spite of all that, God loves us! That is one of the great truths of the Word of God. He demonstrated that love, because "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He extended His grace to us. And, friend, that's the basis upon which He saves us today. He hasn't any other reason for saving us.*<sup>18</sup>

**And so answered Boaz and so said to her, "A declaration has been declared to me all that you have done [for] your mother-in-law after a death of your man and so you left your father and your mother and you land of your birth and so you came unto a people who you did not know before.**

Ruth  
2:11

**Then Boaz answered and said to her, "An explanation was expounded to me [concerning] all that you have done [for] your mother-in-law after the death of your husband. [I know that] you left your father and mother, and the land of your birth and that you came to a people whom you did not previously know.**

**The Boaz responded, saying, "I was told all that you have done for your mother-in-law after your husband died. I am aware that you left your father and mother, as well as the land where you were born, and that you came to a people that you did not previously know.**

What Boaz begins to say is the Hophal infinitive absolute of *nâgad* (נָגַד) [pronounced *naw-GAHD*], which means *to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to explain, to declare, to inform, to confess, to make it pitifully obvious that*. Strong's #5046 BDB #616. The infinitive absolute here acts as a noun, as the subject of the verb. The verb is the Hophal perfect of the same verb. In this sort of a construction, it not only intensifies the verb, but often intensifies the entire phrase.

What Boaz says ends with two adverbs: the first is *t<sup>e</sup>môl* (תֵּמֹל) [pronounced *t<sup>e</sup>MOHL*], which means *yesterday*; and is used figuratively for *recently, formerly*. Strong's #8543 and Strong's #865 BDB #1069. The second is *shil<sup>e</sup>shôm* (שִׁלְשֹׁמִים) [pronounced *shil-SHOHM*], which means *three days ago, the day before yesterday*. Strong's #8032 BDB #1026. Together, they simply mean *before* or *previously* (see Gen. 31:2 II Kings 13:5).

We don't know when Boaz amassed this information. This appears to all have occurred on the same morning. Boaz noticed Ruth in the field in the morning, made some inquiries in town mid-morning, and then returned to his field in the afternoon, having a better idea who Ruth was. It would be also reasonable to suppose that Naomi saw that he was contacted with this information and that he was looking for the girl that Naomi had told him about, and that Naomi had asked him to look out for her. It is also possible that his foreman gathered this information, but less likely (although his foreman could have made the requisite inquiries). Furthermore, it is not necessary that this conversation took place all at one time. Any sort of a gap in the conversation between Boaz and his foreman and Boaz and Ruth, would have afforded him the opportunity to make the necessary inquiries about her. What Boaz found out concerning Ruth would have been quite unusual. She did not remain in Moab, where she was

<sup>18</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth*, Thru the Bible Radio, ©1976 in La Verne, California, pp. 38–39.

born—she stayed with her mother-in-law, coming to Israel to help support her mother-in-law. When she arrived, she did not run around after the young men, but she went to work gleaning the fields, indicating that she was not afraid of hard work. In other words, Boaz finds out that Ruth’s beauty is more than skin deep.

Again, we do not know, because of his guarded language, whether Boaz sees this young lady and is looking out for her, as would a father; or whether he has developed a quick interest in her.

**“Will recompense Y<sup>e</sup>howah your work, and will be your wage complete from with Y<sup>e</sup>howah, God of Israel, where you have come to take refuge under His wings.”**

Ruth  
2:12

**“Y<sup>e</sup>howah will recompense your work and your wages will be complete from Y<sup>e</sup>howah, God of Israel, where you have come to take refuge under His wings.”**

**“Jehovah will reward you for what you have done and your reward will be complete from Jehovah, the God of Israel, where you have come to take refuge under His protection.”**

The first word in this verse is the Piel imperfect of *shâlêm* (שָׁלַם) [pronounced *shaw-LAME*] and it means *to recompense, to repay, to restore, to complete, to make perfect, to requite*. There does not appear to be a great difference between this verb in the Qal or the Piel, except, of course, the Piel intensifies its meaning. Strong’s #7999 BDB #1022. The subject of the verb is Jehovah, and what He will reward or recompense Ruth for is the masculine singular of *pô’al* (פֹּעַל) [pronounced *POH-ahl* or *POH-gahl*], which means *work, deed, doing*. The KJV renders this *work* 90% of the time. Strong’s #6467 BDB #821.

Then we have the verb *to be* which is often rendered *and it will come to pass, and it shall be*, etc. However, the morphology of the verb and any nearby nouns indicate in what sort of way this verb is used. The verb is in the feminine singular and the noun which follows is also in the feminine singular. The noun is only found three other times in Scripture (Gen. 29:15 31:7, 41) and it means *wages* [of a servant] or *reward* [for faithfulness to God]. Strong’s #4909 BDB #969. What Boaz promises her wages or reward to be is the feminine singular adjective *shâlêm* (שָׁלַם) [pronounced *shaw-LAIM*], which means *whole, complete, safe, at peace*. Strong’s #8003 BDB #1023.

Near the end of this verse, when it speaks of taking refuge under God’s wings, this is a reference to protection (Psalm 17:8 36:7 57:1 61:4 63:7 71:1 91:4 Matt. 23:37). The verb is Qal infinitive construct of *châçâh* (חָצַח) [pronounced *khaw-SAW*] and it means *to take refuge, and hence to trust [in]*. Its usage in Ruth 2:12 Psalm 57:1 61:4 91:4 allow for us to take the former meaning as primary and the latter by implication. Strong’s #2620 BDB #340. Boaz, from what he has said here and earlier in this chapter is obviously a believer in Christ Jesus, the God of Israel. He also recognizes that Ruth has trusted in the Jehovah God of Israel as well. Ruth, in order to help her mother-in-law, has become poor and has started at the very bottom. She could have returned to her own parents and have been supported by them. However, because of the living testimony of Naomi, she chose to remain with God’s people. Boaz assures her that her faithfulness to Naomi would result in the application of the faithfulness of God.

Most believers are not in a highly visible arena (or, so we think). Many of us send our donations by mail, we pray in private, and some of the things that we do in the Spirit are witnessed by very few people. This is how it should be. We should not expect the approbation of the world for our faithfulness. However, what we do when filled with the Spirit does not go unnoticed by God. Our giving, our praying, those that we visit who are sick or in prison or who are ill—all of these things, when done in the Spirit, are observed and noted by a faithful God. Furthermore, all that we do in the Spirit, will result in eternal rewards (1 Cor. 3:6–15). Those who score touchdowns, those who produce memorable movies or television, or act in same, those who give large donations to various charities—their reward is here on earth, mostly in the approbation that they receive. That which is done in the Spirit is eternal.

And so she said, “I have found grace in your eyes, my lord for you have comforted me and because you have spoken unto [the] heart of your maidservant and I—I am not as one of your maidservants.”

Ruth  
2:13

Then she replied, “I have found grace in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and you have spoken to the heart of your maidservant, even though I am not as one of your maidservants.”

Then she replied, “I have found grace in your eyes, my lord, and you have comforted me with the kind words that you have expressed to your maidservant—even though I am not one of your servants.”

What Ruth calls him is the masculine singular of *ʾadôwn* (אָדוֹן) [pronounced *aw-DOHN*], the word we often know as *adonai*; and this word means *lord, master, owner, superior, sovereign*. This is a word which can be used of man or of God. Strong’s #113 BDB #10.

What she said Boaz has done is the Piel perfect of *dâʿvar* (דַּבַּר) [pronounced *dawʰ-VAHR*], which simply means *to speak, to declare, to proclaim, to announce*. In the Piel, it is stronger and it can carry with it the idea of providing guidance and direction, or even a set of mandates (and this would be determined by context). In this case, the concept of comfort and kindness is involved, as she says he has spoken *unto a heart of his maidservant*.

Strong’s #1696 BDB #180. She first refers to herself as his *maidservant*, and then quickly adds that she recognizes that she is not as high-ranking as one of his maidservants. You will note that grace in the Old Testament is as important as it is in the New. Carpzov gives the interpretation: “*But what am I saying when I call myself your maiden? since I am not worth to be compared to the least of your maidens.*”<sup>19</sup> According to Keil and Delitzsch, there is an optative sense to be gathered from this verse—Ruth expresses the desire that the grace and kindness already expressed might continue.<sup>20</sup>

And so said to her Boaz, “For a time of meat come near here and you have eaten from the bread and you have dipped your morsel in the vinegar.”

Ruth  
2:14a

So Boaz said to her, “For meal-time, come near here and you will eat of the bread and you will dip your bread portion into the vinegar [sauce].”

The Boaz said to her, “It is time for supper. Come join us for a meal and eat of our bread and dip into the vinegar sauce.”

You no doubt tire of me speaking about these verse divisions, but here is a place where a natural division of the verse occurs and it is carried as one verse. What Boaz says is fairly easy to understand in general, but the vocabulary and usage is not always easy to grasp in pieces. *For meal-time* is actually the lamed prefixed preposition (*to, for*) and the feminine construct of *ʿêth* (עֵת) [pronounced *ġayth*], and it means *time, the right time, the proper time*. Strong’s #6256 BDB #773. This is affixed to the masculine noun *ʾôkel* (אֹכֵל) [pronounced *OH-keh*], which means *food, prey, meat*. Strong’s #400 BDB #38. Together, they mean *meal-time*.

What she will eat is the masculine singular *lechem* (לֶחֶם) [pronounced *LEH-khem*], which means *bread* literally. However, it often has the wider application of being translated *food*. Strong’s #3899 BDB #536. What she will be allowed *to dip* is the feminine singular of *path* (פַּת) [pronounced *path*], which means *fragment, morsel, piece* [of bread]. Strong’s #6595 BDB #837. What she will dip this bread into is the masculine singular of *chômets* (חֹמֶט) [pronounced *KHOH-mets*], which means *vinegar*. It is an ancient world condiment. Keil and Delitzsch claim that it is a mixture of vinegar and oil, calling it a soup beverage which is still drunk in the east. The dipping of the bread into the vinegar makes that unlikely (when did you last dip your bread into your co-cola?). Strong’s #2558 BDB #330. Having a bowl of sauce that people dipped into was a common condiment on the ancient world table (Matt. 26:23 Mark 14:20). Today, we carry on the ancient world tradition with chips and salsa or chips and dip.

<sup>19</sup> Keil & Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 349.

<sup>20</sup> Keil & Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 349.



And so she sat from a side of the reapers and so he passed to her roasted corn and so she ate and so she was satisfied and so she left [some of her food].

Ruth  
2:14b

So she sat at the side of the reapers and he passed to her roasted corn [or, grain] and she ate and was satisfied, leaving [some].

so she sat next to the reapers and Boaz passed her the roasted corn and she ate so much that, not only was she satiated, but she could not finish all of her food.

Where she sat is described by the preposition *mîn* (*from, away from, from off*) and the masculine singular construct of *tsad* (ט צ) [pronounced *tzahd*], which means *side*. With the *mîn* preposition, it means *at the side of*. Strong's #6654 BDB #841. There is actually no table here, but a rug thrown on the ground with a pot of food (in this case, a vinegar sauce) sitting in the middle, from which everyone dipped. Only the very rich had tables and certainly, a table would not be left out in the covered area for the workers to use. It is reasonably assumed that he *passed* the food to her; this verb is found only here and has no nearby cognates (Strong's #6642 BDB #840). What Boaz passed to her was *qâlîy* (ק ל י) [pronounced *kaw-LEE*], which means *roasted corn, roasted grain*. It was some sort of a prepared food which is found a half-dozen times in Scripture. According to Freeman, this was prepared from grains of wheat which were not completely ripe. They could be roasted in a pan or on an iron plate; sometimes the stalks were tied together and the grain portion was held over a fire (I imagine, quite carefully). It was eaten with or without bread. Strong's #7039 BDB #885. The vinegar is either wine or a strong drink which had been made to turn sour. Today, those in the east prepare it by pouring water on grape juice and they simply leave it to ferment. It is quite similar to the Roman G.I. issued wine, which was not intoxicating<sup>21</sup> and used by the poor or the troops in the field. This is the wine or vinegar which was offered to our Lord on the cross (Matt. 27:34, 48 Luke 23:36 John 19:29–30). Some think that the vinegar sauce offered here was similar to a grape juice found in Turkey, which is boiled for hours to reduce it to a thick sauce with an agreeable sweet-sour taste, and which is nonalcoholic. Robinson described what he observed during a harvest in the neighborhood of Kubeibeh, which is in the middle east: *In on field nearly two hundred reapers and gleaners were at work, the latter being nearly as numerous as the former. A few were taking their refreshment, and offered us some of the 'parched corn.'* *In the season of harvest, the grains of wheat had not yet fully dry and hard, are roasted in a pan or on an iron plate, and constitute a very palatable article of food; this is eaten along with bread, or instead of it.*<sup>22</sup>

I've been mentioning this food, and you may be wondering why. Much of this was forbidden in one way or another at various times.

Food	Forbidden to...	New Testament
Vinegar sauce	Could not be enjoyed by the Nazarite (Num. 6:3).	GI wine, almost a vinegar, given to our Lord on the cross (Mark 15:36).
Bread	Could not be eaten by the Jews at the Feast of the First Fruits until they first made an offering to God of their first fruits (Lev. 23:9–14).	Jesus was the Bread of Life.
Roasted grain (or corn)	Could not be eaten by the Jews at the Feast of the First Fruits until they first made an offering to God of their first fruits (Lev. 23:9–14).	The roasting of the bread was analogous to our Lord dying on the cross and being judged for our sins.

I am not certain what the implication is here, but I thought I should mention this in case someone else does.

Boaz was treating Ruth as he treated those who worked for him, which was an honor for a woman who was a foreigner and had nothing. You will note that Boaz was not parsimonious in what he provided for his servants.

<sup>21</sup> This is according to *Manners and Customs of the Bible*; James M. Freeman; reprinted in 1972 by Logos International; p. 128. If I recall, Thieme used to teach that it was intoxicating.

<sup>22</sup> Robinson, *Palestine II*; p. 394.

That is, Boaz did not just provide them with the minimum amount of food to make it through the day. If that were the case, then Ruth would have reduced again, by one portion, the amount of food still available to them. However, she had an overabundance of food (note the remainder of this verse), meaning that Boaz provided more for his workers than he had to. He was not just putting on a good face for Ruth because he found her attractive. I point this out because I want you to note that Boaz treated those who worked for him with great respect and he provided for them. If you are in the position of authority, you must realize that you are there to provide for those under you. You are, in many respects, the servant to those who are under you. Some people want to become the boss so that they can have the last say—they want to be able to make the rules and expect everyone else to follow them. Their concern for those under their authority is nil. This is absolutely wrong and this is why there is no loyalty on the part of workers to their company or to their superiors. The workers resent their superiors because those over them have no clue as to their responsibilities. A person in authority has much greater responsibility than those below them, and a great portion of that responsibility is to those who are below them. If you are in a position of authority, observe the little that can be gleaned from that aspect of Boaz's behavior, demeanor and authority. When it comes to being in authority, emulate Boaz.

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### Boaz Provides for Ruth Apart from Her Knowledge

**And so she arose to glean and so Boaz mandated his young men, to say, “Also in a midst of the sheaves, let her glean and you will not humiliate her.**

Ruth  
2:15

**When she stood up to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, “Furthermore between the rows of fallen grain, let her glean and do not humiliate her.**

**After she arose to glean what had been left by the reapers, Boaz further instructed his staff, saying, “Even when she is in the middle of the rows of fallen grain, she is to be allowed to glean without being humiliated or made to feel out of place.**

What Boaz did to his young men was the Piel imperfect of *tsâwâh* (צָוָה) [pronounced *tsaw-WAW*], which means *to commission, to mandate, to lay charge upon, to give charge to, charge, command, order*. This is a verb found only in the Piel. In Judges 13:14 and in Deut. 4:23, it refers to that which God commanded someone *not to do*. Strong's #6680 BDB #845.

What they were not to do is the Hiphil imperfect of *kâlam* (כָּלַם) [pronounced *kaw-LAHM*], which means *to humiliate, to disgrace, to mortify, to shame, to disgrace*. In the Hiphil, it means *to reproach, to hurt some one, to treat shamefully, to injure, to put someone to shame*. We had a similar association of words when I was in high school—to *cut low* meant *to humiliate*. Strong's #3637 BDB #483. They were not to do or say anything that would indicate to her that she was out of place. The servants of Boaz were not to humiliate her or to contradict what he has allowed in his field. Since Boaz was the boss, he could call the shots.

God provides for us in several ways. We can look around us and see his great blessings and provisions in our lives. However, He also works behind the scenes, doing things which we never observe. Boaz provides for Ruth in these ways. It is obvious that he provided for her a large meal in v. 14—that she observed. However, in this verse and the next, Boaz also works behind the scenes, providing for her in ways that will not necessarily be obvious to her. Furthermore, the Law only requires that Boaz leave the corners of his field unharvested. Boaz goes beyond the Law when providing for Ruth, which is an obvious shadow of our Lord's provision for us that goes beyond the Law. The Law provides for us condemnation and death. Christ went beyond the Law. He fulfilled all of the requirements of the law and then took away the burden of the Law. Boaz is a picture of that here. Boaz is a picture of God's provision for those who were formerly at enmity with Him. As Paul wrote to Gentile believers: **So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and you are of God's household (Eph. 2:19). For while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we will be delivered by His life (Rom. 5:10).**

**“And also a plundering you will plunder for her from out from the bundles and you have left and she will glean and you will not [bring a] rebuke against her.”**

Ruth  
2:16

**“Furthermore, you will loot from the bundles for her and you will leave [them behind]. Then she will glean and you will not rebuke her.”**

**“Furthermore, you will even take some of the grain which you have harvested out from the bundles and leave that behind. Then she will harvest behind you, and you will not dissuade her.”**

Literally, this begins with *and also*. Then we have Qal infinitive absolute of *shâlal* (שָׁלַל) [pronounced *shaw-LAHL*], which means *to spoil, to plunder, to loot, to pillage*. Strong’s #7997 BDB #1021. This is followed by the Qal imperfect of the same verb. Boaz is going beyond the requirements of the Law. In the Law, if they accidentally dropped any of the grain, they were to leave it. In the Law, they were not to harvest the corners of the field. However, Boaz goes one step further. They are to purposely leave behind barley from some of the bundles that they had already made. That is grace. God is also gracious toward us with respect to the Law. Not only did He give us the Law so that we could differentiate between right and wrong, but He went one step further and fulfilled the Law Himself, and then imputed the fulfillment of the Law to us. Only God’s grace explains the great gap between what we deserve and what we have been given and what we will be given.

When it says *you will leave* or *you will forsake*, it probably refers to taking out harvested grain and leaving it behind in the rows between the fallen grain, rather than for them to leave themselves. What they are not to do is the Qal imperfect of *gâ’ar* (גָּעַר) [pronounced *gaw-AHR* or *gaw-GAHR*], which means *to rebuke, to rebuff, to castigate*. Strong’s #1605 BDB #172. Ruth is going to go home with a whole mess of grain taken from the field. Lawson adds: *Charity, wisely directed, will not tempt the poor to be idle. Habitual idleness is not consistent with virtue or happiness.*<sup>23</sup>

**And so she gleaned in the field until the evening and so she beat out what she had gleaned and he was about an ephah of barley.**

Ruth  
2:17

**So she harvested in the field until evening and she pounded out that which she had harvested and [it] was about an ephah of barley.**

**And she harvested in the field until evening and then she pounded out that which she had harvested, and she had about an ephah of barley.**

Ruth used rocks or a stick to beat the grain with, probably over hard-clay earth. According to Scofield, this was about five quarts of the grain apart from the chaff. Since there are ten omers in an ephah (Ex. 16:36), and since one omer of food is approximately a daily ration (Ex. 16:16), this was enough food for the two of them for about five days (Keil and Delitzsch estimate 20–25 lbs. of grain). This is not bad for an individual who has worked but one day in the field. Plus she has a doggy bag of food from lunch that she’ll bring home and give to Naomi. What we have here is a marvelous presentation of the union between a Jew and a Gentile. Ruth has come out of a people who have been traditional enemies of the Jews. She has cast her lot fully with Naomi. She did more than simply agree to endure the hardships that Naomi endured. Ruth, by returning with Naomi back into Canaan, has implicitly agreed to provide for her, which was quite difficult to do in the ancient world as a woman. Ruth could have easily returned to her family and been provided for. She chose to stay with Naomi, meaning that she would have to do the providing.

Anti-Semitism is rampant in our world, and in places where it is incongruous. We have great provision from God, which came to us, in part, because of the Jew. In fact, almost the entire foundation of our faith is dependant upon the Jew (Luke was the only Gentile writer of Scripture). The Jews recorded God’s Word and the presented the shadow of the good things to come by their observance of the Law. For any believer to treat a Jew as a second-class citizen or to malign a person because of his Jewish heritage or to speak disparagingly of the Jews as a group is inexcusable. To blame the Jews as a whole for the death of Christ on the cross is to have no understanding of history or of the gospel whatsoever. **Has God rejected His people? Hell, no! For I too am an Israelite, a**

<sup>23</sup> Lawson and Carson, *An Exposition of Ruth and Esther*; ©Tyndale Bible Society, Florida; p. 41.

descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew, or do you not know what the Scripture says? ...But if some of the branches [individual Jews] were broken off, and you, being a wild olive [a Gentile], were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the prosperity of the olive tree, then do not be arrogant toward the branches, But if you are arrogant, recall that it is not you who supports the root, but the root [the Jewish foundation of the relationship between God and man] supports you. You might say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, and you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for If God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you (Rom. 11:1–2a, 17–21).

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## Ruth and Naomi Talk about Boaz

And so she took it up and so she went [into] the city and so saw her mother-in-law what she had gleaned; and so she also brought out and so she gave to her what she had remaining from her satiety.

Ruth  
2:18

She then took it up and went into the city and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and gave to her what remained from her abundance.

She took up the ephah of barley and carried it into the city and showed her mother-in-law what she had gleaned. She also had some of her lunch left over, which she gave to her mother-in-law.

Naomi returned to her mother-in-law in the city and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned from the fields. If you are not careful, it sounds as though she brought home a bunch of barley and gave her mother-in-law however much she did not want for herself. That is not what this verse says.

The last couple words are the mîn preposition (*from, out from, away from*) and the masculine singular noun Sô<sup>b</sup>va<sup>ʿ</sup> (שׂוֹבָה) [pronounced *SOH-vahg*], which means *satiety, abundance, satiation*. It is the act of being satiated. Strong's #7648 BDB #959. This is not a reference to the grain which Ruth harvested, but to the lunch which she had. The words which are used here: *what remained* and *satiety* both refer back to the end of v. 14 where the same words (or their cognates) are used. Boaz had given her way too much food to eat, and, unlike us today, she did not simply throw the food away. That was not something which was done in the ancient world. She put it in a doggy bag and brought it home to share with Naomi.

And so said to her, her mother-in-law, "Where did you glean the day and where did you do? He is, him acknowledging you, being blessed."

Ruth  
2:19a

Then her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work? He is, the one noticing you, blessed."

Then her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you harvest today and from where did you get all of this? Blessed be the man who took notice of you."

The gist of what Naomi said is fairly easy to get; however, let's just work out a few kinks in the translation:

KJV	Where hast thou gleaned today? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee.
NASB	"Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed."
Young's Lit. Translation	'Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where hast thou wrought? may he who is discerning thee be blessed.'

In what she says, Naomi asks Ruth *where* and then uses the Qal perfect of ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] which means *to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare*. Strong's #6213 BDB #793. I don't exactly know why Naomi used this word instead of the Hebrew word meaning *to work*. What Ruth brought



home was rather surprising. She brought home way more grain than Naomi had expected; and the excess lunch was another unexpected bonus.

The next portion of the phrase is rather difficult. After the two-part question, Naomi literally says *he is* and then she uses the masculine singular, Hiphil participle of *nâkar* (נָכַר) [pronounced *naw-KAHR*], and it means *to regard, to recognize, to acknowledge*. This word is not found in the Qal. Strong's #5234 BDB #647. The masculine singular means that this refers to a person who is identified by what he does. The 2<sup>nd</sup> person, feminine singular suffix affixed to this word refers to Ruth. This is followed by the Qal passive participle of *bârak*<sup>e</sup> (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced *baw-RAHK*<sup>e</sup>], which means *to bless, to make happy, to prosper*. Strong's #1288 BDB #138. This is a continuation of the phrase *he is* and it describes what Naomi wishes for the man who took notice of Ruth. This indicates that Naomi did not steer Ruth toward the field of Boaz—it indicates that she did not know where Ruth had gleaned.

What had happened was quite unusual—Ruth had come in from the field as if she were a regular worker and had enough of a harvest to make it seem as though she had worked her own field. She also brought in some food which was apparently unusual to have been given as a poor person. She was treated very graciously. It is apparent that Naomi did not know where Ruth had gone to glean and she did not realize that she was gleaning in the field of Boaz, who was either a relative and associate of Naomi's late husband.

Naomi says that the person who took notice of Ruth should be blessed. This is in accordance with the spirit of Psalm 41:1–2a, which reads: *How blessed is he who considers the helpless; Jehovah will deliver him in a day of trouble. Jehovah will protect him, and keep him alive, and he will be blessed on the earth.*

**And so she made known to her mother-in-law who she did with him and so she said, "A name of the man who I did with him the day [is] Boaz."**

Ruth  
2:19b

**So she made known to her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, saying, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz."**

**So she told her mother-in-law the name of the man with whom she worked: "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz."**

The meaning again is fairly clear, but it is a good idea to clean up some of the nuances by looking at what others did:

**KJV** And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought today *is* Boaz.

**NASB** 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."

**Young's Lit. Translation** And she declareth to her mother-in-law with whom she hath wrought, and saith, 'The name of the man with whom I have wrought to-day *is* Boaz.'

The first verb is the Hiphil imperfect of *nâgad* (נָגַד) [pronounced *naw-GAHD*], which means *to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to explain, to declare, to inform*. This verb is found only in the Hiphil and the Hophal. Strong's #5046 BDB #616.

In the Hebrew, we have the relative pronoun, the verb *to do, to make*; and then the phrase *with him*. In the English, we would place the relative pronoun with the preposition *with* and render this *with whom*. Naomi did not direct Ruth toward any particular field. Ruth just happened to end up working in a field which belonged to Boaz.

**And so said Naomi to her daughter-in-law, "Blessing him to Y<sup>e</sup>howah who did not forsake His grace [toward] those living and those dead."**

Ruth  
2:20a

**So Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessings [be to] him in regards to Y<sup>e</sup>howah, Who has not forsaken grace [toward] those [who are] alive and those [who have] died."**

**So Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “Blessed be him by Jehovah, Who has not forsaken His kindness toward those living and those who have passed on.”**

You will note that I am dividing up these verses. With the few comments that I am making, small bites seem to be more appropriate and easier to work with. Naomi begins by saying “*Blessing him...*” This is often rendered *Blessings be to him* or *blessed is he*. This is followed by the lamed preposition and Y<sup>e</sup>howah. Lamed (ל) means *to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to*. No Strong’s # BDB #510. The use of the lamed means that Jehovah is not the subject of the verb directly. It is actually somewhat unclear whether the blessings are pronounced upon Boaz or upon Jesus Christ, the God of Israel. The 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular pronoun which is between *blessing* and *to Jehovah* would seem to indicate that Naomi is asking blessings to be upon Boaz. However, the gist of this usage seems to be given with the understanding that all of this is overseen by God. According to Bullinger, this simply means that Naomi wishes Boaz to be divinely blessed with all things. This is similar to what she says in Ruth 3:10 to Ruth.

The relative pronoun applies to *Jehovah*, Who is the nearest noun. What God has not done is the Qal perfect of ʿâza<sup>b</sup>v (אָזַב) [pronounced *aw-ZA<sup>B</sup>V*], which means *to leave, to forsake*. Strong’s #5800 BDB #736. What has not been forsaken is the ,masculine singular noun cheçed (חֶסֶד) [pronounced *KHEH-sed*], which means *grace, benevolence, mercy, kindness*. Strong’s #2617 BDB #338. I would theorize that, since we have two different words for grace in these two chapters, that this word is being applied to God, while the other is applied to man (in Ruth 1:8, the other time in this book where this word occurs, the subject is God).

Then we have the untranslated word indicating a direct object followed by the definite article and the masculine plural adjective chay (חַיִּים) [pronounced *KHAH-ee*], which means *living, alive*. Strong’s #2416 BDB #311. This could be rendered *the living ones, those living, or those who are alive*. *The ones who are dead* is the definite article plus the masculine plural, Qal active participle of *to die*.

**And so said to her, Naomi, “Near to us, the man; from our redeeming [is] he.”**

Ruth  
2:20b

**Then Naomi said, “The man [is] near to us; he [is] from our redeeming.”**

**Then Naomi said, “He is a relative of ours—he is among our redeemers!”**

It is interesting that what Naomi said in the previous half of the verse and this half of the verse are broken up. This would indicate that some time had passed between the two statements. Naomi identifies Boaz with the masculine singular adjective qârô<sup>b</sup>v (קָרֹב) [pronounced *kaw-RO<sup>B</sup>V*], which means *near, contiguous, imminent, near in relation*. Strong’s #7138 BDB #898. Naomi knows of Boaz through her husband; they are apparently related, although not necessarily closely (they could be cousins, or uncle and nephew, or even more distantly related than that). This is followed by *to us the man*. Then we have the Qal active participle of gâ`al (גָּאַל) [pronounced *gaw-AHL*], which means *to redeem, to purchase*. We find this verb translated *avenger, revenger, redeemer, kinsman, kinsman-redeemer*. Those who render this as a kinsman-redeemer do so more by interpretation rather than by translation. The proper rendering for the verb here is *redeeming, purchasing*. Strong’s #1350 BDB #145. Now, together the words indicate a kinsman-redeemer. We will go into more detail concerning the doctrine of the *kinsman-redeemer* in Ruth 4:10. However, we will cover the concept briefly here:

We should be asking, *just what could Boaz redeem (or, purchase)?* The obvious, and most often given answer, is that Boaz could redeem (or, purchase) Ruth and Naomi through marriage to Ruth, as this is what eventually happened. However, what Naomi says here is not based upon future knowledge or even of a future plan that she is hatching as she speaks. It was important for the land given by God to various families to remain with that family. In fact, every 50 years, during the Year of Jubilee, the land which had been purchased or traded for was to revert back to the original family (the original owner may or may not still be on the scene). This means that, ideally speaking, if land changed hands and went from one family to another, it was for more of an extended lease rather than an outright purchase (at least, insofar as the Law was concerned). Obviously, if a property were sold outside a family, then it would be valued less than it would be in an outright purchase, as, in less than 50 years, it would revert back to the original owner. If a property was sold within a family, then there would be no reason for the

property to revert back to that family in the Year of Jubilee. Now, since Boaz was a member of the family of Elimelech, he could purchase the land and the land remained within the family. Therefore, he would be one of those who could redeem the property of Naomi which she had inherited by virtue of her marriage to Elimelech. In other words, this was a package deal. Boaz could bail Naomi out of her financial woes by purchasing her property which she inherited by virtue of marriage to Elimelech; and he could bail Ruth out of her financial woes by marrying her, and keeping the land in that particular branch of the family (their first child would be raised under the name of her late husband). The first child of Boaz and Ruth has a legal claim to this land, even though he is not actually the direct descendant of Mahlon, Ruth's late husband, or of Elimelech, who actually were the original owners of the property.

When Boaz presents this to the other relative of Naomi who is more closely related than Boaz, it is presented as a package deal. The relative who acquired the land, acquired it certainly through marriage (he would marry Ruth, and the first-born would be raised up in Elimelech's name, preserving the land under Elimelech's name). There would certainly have been some financial consideration as well. Given what occurred, given the terms of the terms of a Levirate marriage, and given Naomi's mention of same in Ruth 1:11—all of these things would indicate that Naomi is thinking of a package deal.

I hope that you note the parallels between Naomi and Israel. She is old and without support. Her husband and children died off several years previous. It is as though God had forgotten about her. And suddenly, through Ruth, a Gentile, Naomi has hope. Israel, throughout the Church Age, appears to be abandoned by God; however, through the church (during the Church Age), Israel does have hope. And once the church leaves this earth, then Israel will have a short time on earth alone, away from the church. However, in no wise is Israel fully cast down. God does not work that way, for **His calling and gifts are without a changing of mind** (Rom. 11:29).

**And so said Ruth, the Moabitess, “Also, that he said to me with the young men who [were] to him, ‘You will keep close until if they complete all the harvest which [is] to me.’ ”**

Ruth  
2:21

**Then Ruth, the Moabitess, said, “Also, what he said to me with his servants, ‘You will keep close until they complete my entire harvest.’ ”**

**Then Ruth, the Moabitess said, “Furthermore, what he said to me while with his servants was, ‘You will remain close until my entire harvest has been completed.’ ”**

Ruth begins gam (גַּם) [pronounced *gahm*], which means *also, furthermore, in addition to, moreover*. Gam has five primary usages. ❶ It is used to denote *in addition to* or a continuation of or an adding to a previous thought or point. It is often rendered *also*. ❷ Gam can be used as an intensifier (*even*) and is sometimes used this way with a negative. ❸ Gam can be used to make a sentence emphatic (*yea, indeed, truly*) or it can simply be used to give considerable emphasis to the next word. ❹ It can be rendered *even if* when followed by an imperfect verb. ❺ Finally, it can be rendered as an adverb—*however, but*—but usually followed by a negative particle. Strong's #1571 BDB #168. Here, gam is followed by the conjunction *kîy* (כִּי) [pronounced *kee*], which means *when, that, for, because*. The conjunction *kîy* (כִּי) [pronounced *kee*], which means *that, so that, when, at that time, which, what time, because, since, while*. However, we do have a rare usage of this conjunction; it originally functioned as a relative pronoun—this is a very ancient usage—and that is the way that Ruth is using it. Strong's #3588 BDB #471. Therefore, this should be rendered *also, what...* Given two words which have such a variety of meanings would suggest that there is no agreement here. Owen renders these two words *besides*; the NASB, *furthermore* [lit., *also that*]; Young, *also...surely*; the KJV, *also*; and the NIV, *even*. Being that Ruth was a foreigner, it would be reasonable for her to speak occasionally in a more *classical Hebrew* (for that time), hence my application of the primitive meaning.

We should look at what Ruth said Boaz said to her as translated by others:

NASB  
NIV

*Young's Lit. Translation*

‘You should stay very close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.’

‘Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.’

Near the young people whom I have thou dost cleave till they have completed the whole of the harvest which I have.

Boaz used the 2<sup>nd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect of *dâ<sup>b</sup>vaq* (דָּבַק) [pronounced *daw<sup>b</sup>-VAHK*], which means *to cling, to cleave, to hold close, to keep close, to adhere*. Strong's #1692 BDB #179. This is followed by *until, as far as, while*; which is followed by *ʿim* (עִם) [pronounced *eem*], which usually means *if*. However, *ʿim* can mean *when, since, though* when followed by a perfect tense which refers to a past event. Strong's #518 BDB #49. You will note that many of the translators translated these two words as one (*until*). Then we have, literally, *they have completed all of the harvest which [is] to me*.

Ruth may have gathered five days worth of food for Naomi and herself, but the harvest season is only so long, and she needs to work full-time, even as a beggar, in order to get enough food to last them throughout the remainder of the year. While Ruth gleaned, Boaz made certain that she would be fully protected while she was picking up the leftovers and the grain which was intentionally missed. We tend to forget that God has done the same for us—God has seen to it that we are protected in the devil's world. A growing believer has no idea as to the demonic attacks to which he could find himself subject. However, it is not anything with which we need to concern ourselves. God has seen to our protection in eternity past.

**And so said Naomi unto Ruth, her daughter-in-law, “Good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women and they not fall upon against you in a field another.”**

Ruth  
2:22

**Then Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, “[It is] good, my daughter, that you go out with his maidservants so others [lit., and they] will not attack you [lit., strike against you] in another field.”**

**Then Naomi said to Ruth, “It is good, my daughter, that you are among his maidservants; therefore, you will not fall prey to unsavory types while alone in another field.”**

In the previous verse, the word used to refer to the servants of Boaz was *na ʿar* (נַעֲרָה) [pronounced *NAH-ġahr*], which means *boy, youth, young man, personal attendant*. The plural is *na ʿarîym* (נַעֲרִים) [pronounced *nah-gah-REEM* or *nah-ah-REEM*], should be rendered *servants* or *slaves*. Strong's #5288 & 5289 BDB #654. As is found in most languages, the male gender often takes in the female gender. In this verse, Naomi, instead, uses the designation *na ʿarâh* (נַעֲרָה) [pronounced *nah-ar-AWH*] means *girl, damsel, miss, young woman*. In the plural, it refers to female attendants or maids. Strong's #5291 BDB #655. Therefore, the people referred to by Ruth in the previous verse are the same people referred to by Naomi in this verse. It is the same word with the feminine suffix added in this verse.

This is followed by *and not* and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of *pâga ʿ* (פָּגַע) [pronounced *paw-GAHĠ*], which means *to fall upon, to meet, to encounter, to strike [against]*. This is a word of subtlety, which can imply violence. Strong's #6293 BDB #803. It is followed by *against you in another field*.

Lawson: *Ruth profited much by the instructions and advices of Naomi; and it was one of the great comforts of Naomi's declining years, that she could be useful to Ruth, by giving her the counsels of experience. Let the young have their hands prepared for the service of the old; and the old may recompense them abundantly by the words of their mouth. Happy would it have been for Rehoboam, and for all his people, had he known what respect is due to the wise counsels of the aged. What numbers of young persons take rash steps in the journey of life, which cannot be retraced, because they rather choose to follow the impulse of their own passions, than to ask and follow the advices of those who brought them into the world.*<sup>24</sup> Note that Naomi neither made herself a burden upon Boaz when she returned to Bethlehem, nor does she refuse his help out of some sort of misguided pride. *It is good to be as independent in the world as our circumstances will allow; but to be absolutely independent is impossible; and to have a spirit above the acceptance of favours, when our circumstances render the acceptance of them needful, is a proud resistance of our spirits to that Providence which manages our concerns.*<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Lawson and Carson, *An Exposition of Ruth and Esther*; ©Tyndale Bible Society, Florida; p. 44.

<sup>25</sup> Lawson and Carson, *An Exposition of Ruth and Esther*; ©Tyndale Bible Society, Florida; p. 44.

Boaz allowed that there was safety in numbers, and placed Ruth in the group along with his maidservants. Therefore, there was no way they could be attacked or approached in this group, as Ruth might be if in another field by herself.

**And so she kept close in [the] young women of Boaz, to glean until an end of [the] harvest of the barley and [the] harvest of the wheat. And so she lived with her mother-in-law.**

Ruth  
2:23

**So she remained close to the maidservants of Boaz until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. She continued to live with her mother-in-law.**

**So Ruth remained close with Boaz's maidservants up until the end of the barley harvest; she continued live to with her mother-in-law.**

The barley harvest usually took place in mid-April and the wheat harvest ended during the first few weeks of June. This means that Boaz and Ruth have known each other for two months. Once the harvest has been completed, then the edible grain must be removed from the straw and chaff. All of Boaz's servants are fully involved in the harvest; once that has been completed, they will take the grain to the threshing floor, which is the setting for the first half of our next chapter.

This final verse is a summation of the above. Ruth worked under the protection of the maidservants of Boaz, and she continued living with her mother-in-law (the imperfect tense indicates ongoing action). Just as Boaz saw to the protection, preservation and provision of Ruth and Naomi, so God takes care of the church and Israel.

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