
RUTH 2: 1 Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech, and his name was Boaz.

Ruth goes to glean in the field of Boaz, Rut 2:1-3. Boaz finds her, and inquires who she is, Rut 2:4-7. He speaks kindly to her, gives her permission to follow his reapers, and orders them to use her well, Rut 2:8-16. She returns in the evening to Naomi, and tells her of her fare; from whom she receives encouragement and advice, Rut 2:17-23.

Verse 1

A mighty man of wealth - We have already seen that some suppose Boaz to have been one of the judges of Israel; he was no doubt a man of considerable property.

RUTH 2: 2 Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me now go to the field, and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favour." She said to her, "Go, my daughter."

Verse 2

Glean ears of corn - The word glean comes from the French glaner, to gather ears or grains of corn. This was formerly a general custom in England and Ireland; the poor went into the fields and collected the straggling ears of corn after the reapers; and it was long supposed that this was their right, and that the law recognized it. But although it has been an old custom, I find that it is now settled, by a solemn judgment in the court of common pleas, that a right to glean in the harvest field cannot be claimed by any person at common law; see Law Dictionary, article gleaning. Any person may permit or prevent it in his own grounds. By the Irish acts, 25 Hen. VIII., c. 1, and 28 Hen. VIII., c. 24, gleaning and leasing are so restricted as to be in fact prohibited in that part of the United Kingdom. See the note on Lev 19:9.

After him in whose sight I shall find grace - She did not mean Boaz; but she purposed to go out where they were now reaping, and glean after any person who might permit her, or use her in a friendly manner. The words seem to intimate that, notwithstanding the law of Moses, the gleaners might be prevented by the owner of the field.

RUTH 2: 3 She went, and came and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

Verse 3

And her hap was - So she was accidentally or providentially led to that part of the cultivated country which belonged to Boaz.

RUTH 2: 4 Behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you." They answered him, "The LORD bless you."

Verse 4

Boaz came from Beth-lehem - This salutation between Boaz and his reapers is worthy of particular regard; he said, יהוה עמכם Yehovah immachem, "Jehovah be with you!" They said, יברכך יהוה yebarechecha Yehovah, "May Jehovah bless thee!" Can a pious mind read these godly salutations without wishing for a return of those simple primitive times? The words may be thus paraphrased: "May God be with you, to preserve you from accidents, and strengthen you to accomplish your work!" "May God bless Thee with the increase of the field, and grace to use his bounty to the glory of the Giver!"

RUTH 2: 5 Then Boaz said to his servant who was set over the reapers, "Whose young lady is this?"

Verse 5

His servant that was set over the reapers - This was a kind of steward or hind who had the under management of the estate. Some think that an officer of this kind is intended in the description given by Homer of the labors of a harvest field, as represented by Vulcan on one compartment of the shield which he made for Achilles: - Εν δ' ετιθει τεμενος βαθυληϊον· ενθα δ εριθοι Ημων, οξειας δρεπανας εν χερσιν εχοντες· Δραγματα δ' αλλα μετ' ογμον επμον επητριμα πιπτον εραζε, Αλλα δ' αμαλλοδετηρες εν ελλεδανοισι δεοντο. Τρεις δ' αρ' αμαλλοδετηρες εφεστασαν· αυταρ οπισθε Παιδες δραγμαυοντες, εν αγκαλιδεσσι φεροντες, Ασπερχες παρεχον· βασιλευς δ' εν τοισι σιωπη Σκηπτρον εχων εστηκε επ' ογμου γηθοσυνος κηρ. Κηρυκες δ' απανευθεν υπο δρυϊ δαιτα πενοντο· Βουν δ' ιερου σ α ν τ ε ς μεγαν, αμφεπον· αι δε γυναικες Δειπνον εριθοισιν, λευκ' αλφιτα πολλα παλυνον.

Iliad xviii., v. 550.

There too he form'd the likeness of a field
 Crowded with corn, in which the reapers toil'd,
 Each with a sharp-tooth'd sickle in his hand.
 Along the furrow here, the harvest fell
 In frequent handfuls; there, they bound the sheaves.
 Three binders of the sheaves their sultry task
 All plied industrious, and behind them boys
 Attended, filling with the corn their arms,
 And offering still their bundles to be bound.
 Amid them, staff in hand, the master stood,
 Enjoying, mute the order of the field:

While, shaded by an oak, apart his train
Prepared the banquet - a well thriven ox
New slain, and the attendant maidens mix'd
Large supper for the hinds, of whitest flour.
Cowper.

This scene is well described; and the person who acts as overseer is here called βασιλευς, king, and his staff is called σκηπτρον, a scepter; and he stands in mute dignity, merely to see that the work is well done, and that each person performs his task; and there appear to me to be gleaners in the description, viz., the boys who gather the handfuls after the three binders. See the Greek.

RUTH 2: 6 The servant who was set over the reapers answered, "It is the Moabite lady who came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab.

RUTH 2: 7 She said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came, and has continued even from the morning until now, except that she stayed a little in the house."

Verse 7

That she tarried a little in the house - It seems as if the reapers were now resting in their tent, and that Ruth had just gone in with them to take her rest also.

RUTH 2: 8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Don't go to glean in another field, and don't go from here, but stay here close to my maidens.

Verse 8

Abide here fast by my maidens - These were probably employed in making bands, and laying on them enough to form a sheaf, which the binders would tie and form into shocks or thraves. When the maidens had gathered up the scattered handfuls thrown down by the reapers, Ruth picked up any straggling heads or ears which they had left.

RUTH 2: 9 Let your eyes be on the field that they reap, and go after them. Haven't I commanded the young men not to touch you? When you are thirsty, go to the vessels, and drink from that which the young men have drawn."

Verse 9

The young men that they shall not touch thee - This was peculiarly necessary, as she was a stranger and unprotected.

RUTH 2: 10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favour in your sight, that you should take knowledge of me, since I am a foreigner?"

Verse 10

Then she fell on her face - Prostrated herself, as was the custom in the East when inferiors approached those of superior rank. The Targum adds to the conversation between Ruth and Boaz: "How, says she, have I obtained grace in thy sight, that thou shouldst acknowledge me who am a stranger and one of the daughters of Moab, of whom it is said, The unclean shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord? And Boaz, answered, It has been certainly told me by the word of the wise, that what the Lord hath decreed, he hath not decreed concerning the women but the men. And it hath been surely said to me by prophecy, that kings and prophets shall proceed from thee because of the good which thou hast done," etc.

RUTH 2: 11 Boaz answered her, "It has fully been shown me, all that you have done to your mother-in-law since the death of your husband; and how you have left your father and your mother, and the land of your birth, and have come to a people that you didn't know before.

RUTH 2: 12 May the LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

Verse 12

The Lord recompense thy work - The dutiful respect which thou hast paid to thy husband, and thy tender and affectionate attachment to thy aged mother-in-law.

And a full reward be given thee - This is spoken with great modesty and piety: The kindness I show thee is little in comparison of thy desert; God alone can give thee a full reward for thy kindness to thy husband and mother-in-law, and he will do it, because thou art come to trust under his wings - to become a proselyte to his religion. The metaphor is taken from the young of fowls, who, seeing a bird of prey, run to their mother to be covered by her wings from danger, and also to take shelter from storms, tempests, cold, etc. It is evident from this that Ruth had already attached herself to the Jewish religion.

RUTH 2: 13 Then she said, "Let me find favour in your sight, my lord, because you have comforted me, and because you have spoken kindly to your handmaid, though I am not as one of your handmaidens."

Verse 13

Not like unto one of thine hand-maidens - I am as unworthy of thy regards as any of thine own maidservants, and yet thou showest me distinguished kindness.

RUTH 2: 14 At meal time Boaz said to her, "Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your morsel in the vinegar." She sat beside the reapers, and they reached her parched grain, and she ate, and was satisfied, and left some of it.

Verse 14

Dip thy morsel in the vinegar - The $\gamma\mu\eta\kappa$ chomets, which we here translate vinegar, seems to have been some refreshing kind of acid sauce used by the reapers to dip their bread in, which both cooled and refreshed them. Vinegar, rob of fruits, etc., are used for this purpose in the East to the present day; and the custom of the Arabs, according to Dr. Shaw, is to dip the bread and hand together into these cooling and refreshing articles.

Parched corn - This was a frequent repast among the ancients in almost all countries; see the notes on Lev 2:1-14 (note).

RUTH 2: 15 When she had risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and don't reproach her."

Verse 15

Let her glean even among the sheaves - This was a privilege; for no person should glean till the sheaves were all bound, and the shocks set up.

RUTH 2: 16 Also pull out some for her from the bundles, and leave it, and let her glean, and don't rebuke her."

RUTH 2: 17 So she gleaned in the field until evening; and she beat out that which she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

Verse 17

An ephah of barley - Not less than seven gallons and a half; a good day's work. On Hebrew measures of capacity, see the note on Exo 16:16.

RUTH 2: 18 She took it up, and went into the city; and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought out and gave to her that which she had left after she was sufficed.

Verse 18

And gave to her that she had reserved - As Ruth had received a distinct portion at dinner-time, of which she had more than she could eat, Rut 2:14; it appears she brought the rest home to her mother-in-law, as is here related.

RUTH 2: 19 Her mother-in-law said to her, "Where have you gleaned today? Where have you worked? Blessed be he who noticed you." She showed her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, "The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz."

RUTH 2: 20 Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead." Naomi said to her, "The man is a close relative to us, one of our near kinsmen."

Verse 20

To the living and to the dead - Naomi and Ruth were the living; and they were also the representatives of Elimelech and Mahlon, who were dead. Naomi was of the family; and Ruth, though not of the family, was a representative of one of its deceased branches, being the widow of Mahlon.

One of our next kinsmen - מגאלינו miggoaleynu, of our redeemers, one who has the right to redeem the forfeited inheritance of the family. The word גאל goel signifies a near kinsman - one who by the Mosaic law had a right to redeem an inheritance, and also was permitted to vindicate or revenge the death of his relation by killing the slayer, if he found him out of the cities of refuge.

In order to prevent families from running to decay, if a brother died childless, the next unmarried brother took his widow; and the children from that marriage were reputed the children of the deceased brother. The office of the next akin was threefold:

1. It belonged to him to buy back the forfeited inheritance, or the liberty of him who had been obliged to sell himself for a servant.
2. It was his right to avenge the blood of any of the family who had been killed, by killing the murderer.
3. It belonged to him to take the widow of a deceased brother or relative, if he died childless.

If the nearest akin in any case refused, he was treated with indignity, lost his right to the inheritance, and the next akin to him might come forward and take the widow, etc., as in the case of Boaz. See Rut 4:4-10.

RUTH 2: 21 Ruth the Moabitess said, "Yes, he said to me, 'You shall stay close to my young men, until they have ended all my harvest.'"

Verse 21

Keep fast by my young men - The word הנערים hannearim should be translated servants, both the male and female being included in it; the latter especially, as we see in Rut 2:22, Rut 2:23.

RUTH 2: 22 Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maidens, and that they not meet you in any other field."

RUTH 2: 23 So she stayed close to the maidens of Boaz, to glean to the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and she lived with her mother-in-law.

Verse 23

And of wheat harvest - That is, she was to continue gleaning in the farm of Boaz to the end of the barley harvest; and then, when the wheat harvest began, to continue to its conclusion in the same way. In the interim, as well as each night, she lodged with her mother-in-law.

1. Ruth seems to have been a woman of a very amiable mind: she was modest, and she was industrious, and most probably a comely woman; and all these things served to attract the attention of Boaz, and to engage his affection. Her attachment also to her mother-in-law could not fail to secure his esteem. All these things worked together in the course of Providence, to bring about a matrimonial connection, which in its issue was intimately connected with the salvation of a lost world; for, from this very line, Jesus Christ, according to the flesh, sprang; and Ruth showed herself as worthy to be one of His progenitors as the Virgin Mary was to be His mother. See the notes on Matthew 1:1-16 (note).

2. We should carefully attend to the leadings and to the workings of God's providence; it is our duty and our interest to do both, for the path of duty is ever the way of safety. Had not Ruth acted thus, how dreary and uncomfortable must her life have been! but she followed God fully, and in a path apparently dangerous, and yet, not only sustained no injury, but succeeded well in all things: from this, as well as from innumerable other circumstances, we see the truth of that word, Acknowledge him in all thy ways, and he will direct thy steps; and with this we may ever connect, Trust in the Lord with thy whole heart, and lean not to thy own understanding. Whosoever follows God in simplicity of heart, will most assuredly be guided into all truth.