

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO RUTH 2

In this chapter we have an account of Ruth's gleaning corn in the fields of Boaz, a relation of Naomi, (^{<RTH>}Ruth 2:1-3), and of Boaz coming to his reapers, whom he saluted in a very kind manner; and observing a woman gleaning after them, inquired of them who she was, and they informed him, (^{<RTH>}Ruth 2:4-9), upon which he addressed himself to her, and gave her leave to glean in his field, and desired her to go nowhere else, and bid her eat and drink with his servants, (^{<RTH>}Ruth 2:8-14) and gave directions to his servants to let her glean, and to let fall some of the handfuls on purpose, that she might gather them up, (^{<RTH>}Ruth 2:15-17) and then an account is given of her returning to her mother-in-law with her gleanings, to whom she related where she had gleaned, who was owner of the field, and what he had said to her, upon which Naomi gave her advice, (^{<RTH>}Ruth 2:18-23).

Ver. 1. *And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's*, etc.] That was her kinsman by her husband's side, who now lived at Bethlehem; and yet it does not appear that Naomi made any application to him for assistance in her circumstances, though well known to her, as the word used signifies; which might arise from her modesty, and being loath to be troublesome to him, especially as he was a relation, not of her own family, but of her husband's; but, what is more strange, that this kinsman had taken no notice of her, nor sent to her, who yet was a very generous and liberal man, and had knowledge of her coming, for he had heard of the character of Ruth, (^{<RTH>}Ruth 2:11,12) but perhaps he was not acquainted with their indigent circumstances:

a mighty man of wealth; a man of great wealth and riches, and of great power and authority, which riches give and raise a man to, and also of great virtue and honour, all which the word "wealth" signifies; to which may be added the paraphrase the Targumist gives, that he was mighty in the law; in the Scriptures, in the word of God, a truly religious man, which completes his character:

of the family of Elimelech; the husband of Naomi; some say that his father was Elimelech's brother, (see Gill on "⁽⁴⁸¹²⁾Ruth 2:2"),

and his name was Boaz; which signifies, "in him is strength", strength of riches, power, virtue, and grace; it is the name of one of the pillars in Solomon's temple, so called from its strength. This man is commonly said by the Jews to be the same with Ibzan, a judge of Israel, (⁽⁴⁷¹³⁾Judges 12:8 (see Gill on "⁽⁴⁷¹³⁾Judges 12:8"): he was the grandson of Nahshon, prince of the tribe of Judah, who first offered at the dedication of the altar, (⁽⁴⁴⁷²⁾Numbers 7:12), his father's name was Salmon, and his mother was Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, (⁽⁴⁰⁰⁵⁾Matthew 1:5). A particular account is given of this man, because he, with Ruth, makes the principal part of the following history.

Ver. 2. *And Ruth the Moabites said to Naomi*, etc.] After they had been some little time at Bethlehem, and not long; for they came at the beginning of barley harvest, and as yet it was not over, nor perhaps for some time after this; and knowing and considering the circumstances they were in, and unwilling to live an idle life, and ready to do any thing for the support of her life, and of her ancient mother-in-law; which was very commendable, and showed her to be an industrious virtuous woman: she addressed her, and said:

let me now go to the field; she did not choose to go any where, nor do anything, without her advice and consent; so dutiful and obedient was she to her, and so high an opinion had she of her wisdom and goodness; she desired to go to the field which belonged to Bethlehem, which seems to have been an open field, not enclosed, where each inhabitant had his part, as Boaz, (⁽⁴⁸¹³⁾Ruth 2:3) though Jarchi interprets it of one of the fields of the men of the city; hither she asked leave to go, not with any ill intent, nor was she in any danger of being exposed, since it being harvest time the field was full of people: her end in going thither is expressed in the next clause,

and glean ears of corn after him, in whose sight I shall find grace; or "in" or "among the ears of corn"^{f28}; between the ears of corn bound up into sheaves, and there pick up the loose ears that were dropped and left. This she proposed to do with the leave of the owner of the field, or of the reapers, whom she followed; she might be ignorant that it was allowed by the law of God that widows and strangers might glean in the field, (⁽⁴⁸¹⁰⁾Leviticus 19:9,10 ⁽⁴²⁴⁹⁾Deuteronomy 24:19) or if she had been acquainted with it by Naomi, which is not improbable, such was her

modesty and humility, that she did not choose to make use of this privilege without leave; lest, as Jarchi says, she should be chided or reproved, and it is certain she did entreat the favour to glean, (~~4887~~Ruth 2:7)

and she said unto her, go, my daughter; which shows the necessitous circumstances Naomi was in; though perhaps she might give this leave and direction under an impulse of the Spirit of God, in order to bring about an event of the greatest moment and importance, whereby she became the ancestor of our blessed Lord.

Ver. 3. *And she went, and came,* etc.] That is, she went out of the house where she was, and out of the city, and came into the field; though, according to the Midrash ^{f29}, she marked the ways as she went, before she entered into the field, and then came back to the city to observe the marks and signs she made, that she might not mistake the way, and might know how to come back again:

and gleaned in the field after the reapers; when they had cut down and bound up the corn, what fell and was left she picked up, having first asked leave so to do:

and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech; the providence of God so ordering and directing it; for though it was hap and chance to her, and what some people call good luck, it was according to the purpose, and by the providence and direction of God that she came to the reapers in that part of the field Boaz, a near kinsman of her father-in-law, was owner of, and asked leave of them to glean and follow them.

Ver. 4. *And, behold, Boaz came to Bethlehem,* etc.] Into the field, to see how his workmen went on, and performed their service, and to encourage them in it by his presence, and by his courteous language and behaviour, and to see what provisions were wanting, that he might take care and give orders for the sending of them, it being now near noon, as it may be supposed; and though he was a man of great wealth, he did not think it below him to go into his field, and look after his servants, which was highly commendable in him, and which showed his diligence and industry, as well as his humility. So a king in Homer ^{f30} is represented as among his reapers, with his sceptre in his hand, and cheerful. Pliny ^{f31} relates it, as a saying of the ancients, that the eye of the master is the most fruitful thing in the field; and Aristotle ^{f32} reports, that a Persian being asked what fattened a horse

most, replied, the eye of the master; and an African being asked what was the best dung for land, answered, the steps of his master:

and said unto the reapers, the Lord be with you; to give them health, and strength, and industry in their work; the Targum is,

“may the Word of the Lord be your help:”

and they answered him, the Lord bless you; with a good harvest, and good weather to gather it in; and though these salutations were of a civil kind, yet they breathe the true spirit of sincere and undissembled piety, and show the sense that both master and servants had of the providence of God attending the civil affairs of life, without whose help, assistance, and blessing, nothing succeeds well.

Ver. 5. *Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers,* etc.] To direct them their work, what part each was to do, and to see that they did it well; to take care for provisions for them, and to pay them their wages when their work was done. Josephus^{f33} calls him *αγροκομος*, that had the care of the field, and all things relative to it; the Jews^{f34} say, he was set over two and forty persons, whom he had the command of:

whose damsel is this? to whom does she belong? of what family is she? whose daughter is she? or whose wife? for he thought, as Aben Ezra notes, that she was another man’s wife; the Targum is, of what nation is she? perhaps her dress might be somewhat different from that of the Israelitish women.

Ver. 6. *And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said,* etc.] Who had taken a great deal of notice of Ruth, and had conversed with her, and so was capable of giving answers to his master’s question:

it is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi, out of the country of Moab; perhaps he had not got knowledge of her name, and therefore only describes her by the country from whence she came; and by her coming from thence along with Naomi, when she returned from Moab, with whose name Boaz was well acquainted, and of whose return he had been informed; and perhaps had seen her in person, and even Ruth also, though he might have forgot her; the Targum makes the servant to add, that she was become a proselytess.

Ver. 7. *And she said*, etc.] These are the words of the servant continued, who goes on with the account of Ruth, and her conduct, since she had been in the field:

I pray you let me glean, and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: for though by the law of Israel she had a right, as a poor widow and stranger, to glean, yet as the owner of the field, and his servants, by his appointment, under him, might have power of fixing the time when such might glean, and of judging who were the proper persons to be admitted, Ruth in her great modesty and meekness did not choose to enter on this work without leave:

so she came; into the field and gleaned, having obtained leave:

and hath continued even from the morning until now; had been very diligent and industrious in gathering up the loose ears of corn among the sheaves, as she followed the reapers cutting down and binding up the corn in sheaves; she began pretty early in the morning, and had stuck close to it till that time, which may be supposed to be about noon, or pretty near it, for as yet it was not mealtime, (^{<RUT4>}Ruth 2:14). The Septuagint version is therefore very wrong, which reads

“from the morning until the evening,”

for that was not yet come, (^{<RUT7>}Ruth 2:17) but

she tarried a little in the house; not that she went home to the city, and stayed a little in the house of Naomi her mother, and then returned again, for she went not home until the evening, (^{<RUT14>}Ruth 2:17,18), but the meaning of the passage is, that she had been constant and diligent in gleaning all the morning, only a very little time that she was in the house, which was in the field; either a farm house of Boaz adjoining to the field; or rather a cottage or booth, as Aben Ezra interprets it, which was in the field, whither the reapers betook themselves when they ate their meals; or to shelter themselves under the shade of it, as Abendana, from the heat of the sun at noonday; and here Ruth set herself down awhile for a little rest, and ease, and refreshment; and some think she was here when Boaz came, and therefore took the more notice of her.

Ver. 8. *Then said Boaz unto Ruth*, etc.] Having heard what the servant said concerning her, he turned himself to her, and addressed her in the following manner:

hearest thou not, my daughter? meaning not what the servant had said, but hereby exciting her to hearken to what he was about to say to her. Noldius ^{f35} takes the particle to signify beseeching and entreating, and renders the words, “hear, I pray thee, my daughter”. Some from hence conclude that Boaz was a man in years, and Ruth much younger than he, and therefore calls her his daughter:

go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence; which she might be inclined to, lest she should be thought to be too troublesome to be always in one man’s field; but Boaz taking a liking to her, and willing to do her some favour, chose she should not go elsewhere:

but abide here fast by my maidens; not maidens that gleaned also as she did, poor maidens he permitted to glean; or that gleaned for the poor, and much less that gleaned for him; a person so rich and liberal as he was would never employ such for his advantage, and to the detriment of the poor; nor would it be admitted of it being contrary to the law as it should seem, and certain it is to the later traditions of the elders; for it is said ^{f36},

“a man may not hire a workman on this condition, that his son should glean after him; he who does not suffer the poor to glean, or who suffers one and not another, or who helps any one of them, robs the poor.”

But these maidens were such, who either gathered the handfuls, cut and laid down by the reapers, and bound them up in sheaves, or else they also reaped, as it seems from the following verse; and it was very probably customary in those times for women to reap, as it is now with us.

Ver. 9. *Let thine eyes be upon the field that they do reap, and go thou after them,* etc.] And gather up the loose ears of corn dropped and left by them:

have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? do her no hurt, or offer any incivility or rudeness to her, or even play any wanton tricks with her, as is too common with young persons in the fields at harvest time. This charge he now gave in her hearing, or however suggests that he would, and therefore she might depend upon it she should have no molestation nor any affront given her:

and when thou art athirst: as at such a season of the year, and in the field at such work, and in those hot countries, was frequently the case:

go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn; which they had fetched from wells and fountains in or near the city, and had put into bottles, pitchers, etc. for the use of the reapers and gatherers; we read of the well of Bethlehem, (~~12315~~ 2 Samuel 23:15) now she is ordered to go to these vessels, and drink when she pleased, without asking leave of any; and Boaz no doubt gave it in charge to his young men not to hinder her.

Ver. 10. *Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground,* etc.] In great humility, and under a deep sense of the favour done her, and as showing the greatest respect, in a civil manner, she was capable of:

and said unto him, why have I found grace in thine eyes: how is it that one so mean and unworthy should have such favour shown?

that thou shouldest take knowledge of me; take such notice of her, show such affection to her, and bestow such kindness on her:

seeing I am a stranger? not a citizen of Bethlehem, nor indeed one of the commonwealth of Israel; but, as the Targum,

“of a strange people, of the daughters of Moab, and of a people who were not fit and worthy to enter into the congregation of the Lord.”

Ver. 11. *And Boaz answered and said unto her,* etc.] Alshech thinks, that he lift up his voice that all that stood by might hear:

it hath fully been showed me; either by Naomi, or rather by some persons of Boaz’s Naomi and acquaintance, that had conversed with Naomi and related to Boaz what passed between them, by which he was fully informed of the following things mentioned by him; though the above writer supposes, that it was showed him by the Holy Ghost:

all that thou hast done to thy mother in law since the death of thine husband; how that, instead of going home to her father and mother, she continued with her; how tenderly she used her; what strong expressions of love she had made unto her; what care she had taken of her, and how she had fed and nourished her, as the Targum, and now was gleaning for her support, as well as her own:

and how thou hast left thy father and mother; in a literal sense, to go along with her mother-in-law, to assist her in her journey, and see her safe to the

end of it: and in a figurative sense her idol gods, as in (^{<2477>}Jeremiah 2:27) so the Midrash ^{f37}:

and the land of thy nativity; the land of Moab, where she was born, and where her kindred, relations, and friends lived, dear and engaging to her:

and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore; but by hearsay, and what she learned of them from her husband and mother-in-law, even the people of Israel; to whom she was come to be a proselyte, and dwell among them, as the Targum.

Ver. 12. *The Lord recompence thy work*, etc.] The Targum adds, in this world; meaning the kind offices she had performed, and the good service she had done to her mother-in-law; nor is God unrighteous to forget the work and labour of love, which is shown by children to their parents; and though such works are not in themselves meritorious of any blessing from God here or hereafter, yet he is pleased of his own grace to recompence them, and return the good into their bosom manifold, it being acceptable in his sight:

and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel; the Targum adds, in the world to come; which is called the reward of the inheritance, (^{<51934>}Colossians 3:24) a reward not of debt, but of grace; and that will be a full one indeed, fulness of joy, peace, and happiness, an abundance of good things not to be conceived of, (see ^{<6108>}2 John 1:8),

under whose wings thou art come to trust; whom she professed to be her God, and whom she determined to serve and worship; whose grace and favour she expected, and to whose care and protection she committed herself: the allusion is either to fowls, which cover their young with their wings, and thereby keep them warm and comfortable, and shelter and protect them, (see ^{<1917>}Psalm 36:7 57:1) or to the wings of the cherubim overshadowing the mercy seat, (^{<1250>}Exodus 25:20) and the phrase is now adopted by the Jews to express proselytism; and so the Targum here,

“thou art come to be proselyted, and to be hid under the wings of the Shechinah of his glory,”

or his glorious Shechinah.

Ver. 13. *Then she said, let me find favour in thy sight, my lord*, etc.] Or rather, since she had found favour in his sight already: the words are to be

considered, not as a wish for it, but as acknowledging it, and expressing her faith and confidence, that she should for time to come find favour in his sight, and have other instances of it; for so the words may be rendered, “I shall find favour”^{f38}, for which she gives the following reasons:

for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid; had spoken in her commendation, and wished her all happiness here and hereafter; said kind and comfortable words to her, to her very heart, as in (^{2301B}Isaiah 40:2) which were cheering, refreshing, and reviving to her:

though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens; not worthy to be one of them, or to be ranked with them, being meaner than the meanest of them, a poor widow, and a Moabitish woman; the Septuagint and Syriac versions leave out the negative particle, and read, “I shall be as one of thine handmaids”.

Ver. 14. *And Boaz said, at mealtime come thou hither*, etc.] This looks as if she was now in the booth, or house in the field, where the reapers used to retire to eat their food, or rest themselves, or take shelter from the heat of the sun. This meal was very likely dinner, the time of which was not yet come, but would soon, and to which Boaz invited Ruth:

and eat of the bread; his servants did, that is, partake of the provisions they should have; bread being put for all. So Homer^{f39} speaks of a large ox slain for such a meal for the reapers, besides the “polenta” afterwards mentioned, which the women prepared, and who uses the same word for it the Septuagint does here: “to dip thy morsel in the vinegar”; which was used because of the heat of the season, as Jarchi and Aben Ezra remark, for cooling and refreshment; and such virtues Pliny^{f40} ascribes to vinegar, as being refreshing to the spirits, binding and bracing the nerves, and very corroborating and strengthening; and it is at this day used in Italy, it is said, in harvest time, when it is hot; where they also use wine mixed with vinegar and water, as Lavater says^{f41}; and who from a learned physician^{f42} observes, that reapers, instead of wine, use vinegar mixed with a great deal of water, which they call household wine, allayed with water; to which if oil and bread be put, it makes a cooling meal, good for workmen and travellers in the heat of the sun; and the Targum calls it pottage boiled in vinegar. The Romans had an “embamma”, or sauce, made of vinegar, in which they dipped their food^{f43}; and Theocritus^{f44} makes mention of vinegar as used by reapers: in the Syriac version it is bread dipped in milk;

and in the Arabic version milk poured upon it. The Midrash ^{f45} gives an allegorical sense of these words, and applies them to the Messiah and his kingdom, and interprets the bread of the bread of the kingdom, and the vinegar of the chastisements and afflictions of the Messiah, as it is said, “he was wounded for our transgressions”, etc. (^{<281B>}Isaiah 53:5) which, by the way, is a concession that the prophecy in that chapter relates to him:

and she sat beside the reapers; the women reapers; she did not sit along with them, or in thee midst of them, in the row with them, as ranking with them, but on one side of them, which was an instance of her great modesty:

and he reached her parched corn; either Boaz himself, or he that was set over the reapers. This parched corn seems to be the new barley they were reaping, which they fried in a pan and ate. Galen says ^{f46}, the parched corn which is best is made of new barley moderately dried and parched; and that it was the custom of some to drink the same with new sweet wine, or wine mixed with honey, in the summertime, before they went into the bath, who say they feel themselves by this drink freed from thirst. But this seems to be a kind of food, what is sometimes called “polenta”, which is barley flour dried at the fire, and fried after it hath been soaking in water one night; so Lavater says, they dry the barley, having been soaked one night in water, the next day they dry it, and then grind it in mills; some dress new barley beaten out of green ears, and make it while moist into balls, and being cleansed, grind it; and thus dressed with twenty pound of barley, they put three pound of linseed, half a pound of coriander seed, and of salt, all being dried before, are mingled in a mill; and if to be kept, are put into new earthen vessels with the meal and bran: but a later writer ^{f47} takes this “Kali”, rendered parched corn, not to be anyone certain species, but something made of corn and pulse, as lentiles, beans, etc. and especially fried or parched vetches, of all which together was this kali or pulse; and he refutes the notion of some, who take it to be “coffee”, since that has only been in use since the beginning of the sixteenth century, and at first in Arabia; and is not of the kind of pulse, but is the fruit of a certain tree, of which a liquor is made, something to drink; whereas this was food, and was ate, as follows, (see ^{<117B>}2 Samuel 17:28)

and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left; she had such a plentiful share given her, that she had more than she could eat, and was obliged to leave some, and which it seems she carried home to her mother-in-law, (^{<121B>}Ruth 2:18).

Ver. 15. *And when she was risen up to glean,* etc.] After she had ate sufficiently, and refreshed herself, she rose up from her seat to go into the field and glean again; which shows her industry:

Boaz commanded his young men; the reapers, or who gathered the handfuls, and bound them up in sheaves:

saying, let her glean even among the sheaves; this she had requested of the reapers when she first came into the field, and it was granted her, (~~RUTH~~ Ruth 2:7) but this, as it was granted by Boaz himself, so was still a greater favour; and there is some difference in the expression, for it may be rendered here, “among those sheaves”^{f48}, pointing to a particular spot where might be the best ears of corn, and where more of them had fallen:

and reproach her not; as not with her being a poor woman, a widow, a Moabitish woman, so neither with being a thief, or taking such corn she should not, or gleaning where she ought not.

Ver. 16. *And let fall some of the handfuls on purpose for her,* etc.] That is, when they had reaped an handful, instead of laying it in its proper order, to be taken up by those that gathered after them, or by themselves, in order to be bound up in sheaves, scatter it about, or let it fall where they reaped it:

and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not for taking them, as if she did a wrong thing.

Ver. 17. *So she gleaned in the field until even,* etc.] An instance of her great diligence and industry, attending to this mean employment constantly from morning tonight:

and beat out that she had gleaned: she did not bind up her gleanings in a bundle, and carry it home on her head, as gleaners with us do, but she beat it out with a staff in the field, where she gleaned it, and winnowed it, very probably in the threshingfloor of Boaz; by which means what she had gleaned was brought into a lesser size and weight, and was a lighter burden to carry home:

and it was an ephah of barley; or three seahs of barley, as the Targum; which, according to Bishop Cumberland^{f49}, was six gallons, and three pints, and three solid inches: an omer is said to be the tenth part of an ephah, and, made into bread, was as much as a man could eat in one day,

(^{<12166>}Exodus 16:16,36), so that Ruth got enough in one day, for herself and her mother-in-law, which would last five days at least. This was a great deal for one woman to pick up, ear by ear, in one day; and must be accounted for, not only by her diligence and industry, but by the favour shown her by the reapers, under the direction of Boaz, who suffered her to glean among the sheaves, and let fall handfuls for her to pick up.

Ver. 18. *And she took it up*, etc.] The ephah of barley, into her arms, or on her shoulders:

and went into the city; the city of Bethlehem;

and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: she set it down before her, and she looked at it with admiration, that she should glean so much in one day:

and she brought forth; not Naomi, as Josephus ^{f50} represents it, who understood it as if she brought forth some food her neighbours had brought her, part of which she kept for Ruth, though he takes it in the other sense also; but the meaning is, that Ruth brought forth out of a scrip, as the Targum adds; besides the ephah of barley she set before her, she brought some victuals out of a bag:

and gave to her, that she had reserved after she was sufficed; not that she ate of the barley, and her mother-in-law also; and then she gave her the rest to lay up against another time, as some interpret it; but the remainder of the food which Boaz gave her at dinner time, which she could not eat, (^{<1824>}Ruth 2:14) she reserved for her mother, and now gave it to her; an instance of that piety commended by the apostle, (^{<5181>}1 Timothy 5:4).

Ver. 19. *And her mother in law said unto her, where hast thou gleaned today?* etc.] In what part of the field of Bethlehem? or on whose land, that she had gleaned so much? not that she suspected that she had got it in an illicit manner, but supposed she had been directed by the providence of God to a spot of ground where there was good gleaning; of that she had met with some hand, that had dropped ears of corn plentifully in her favour:

and where wroughtest thou? which is the same question repeated in other words, and shows that gleaning is a work, and a hard work too, closely followed, to be stooping and picking up ears of corn a whole day together:

blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee: she knew, by the quantity of corn she brought home, that she must have had kindness shown her by somebody; and especially she knew it by the food she brought home, and therefore pronounced the man blessed, or wished him happiness, before she knew who he was; though perhaps she might guess at him, or conjecture in her mind who it was that had taken notice of her:

and she showed her mother in law with whom she had wrought: that is, with whose reapers, men and maidens, she had wrought, whom she followed in gleaning, they working in one sort of work, and she in another, yet in the same field:

the man's name with whom I wrought today is Boaz; that is, in whose field, and with whose servants, she wrought; for Boaz wrought not himself, unless this can be understood of her eating and drinking with him; but the other sense is best.

Ver. 20. *And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, blessed be he of the Lord*, etc.] Or the Lord bless him with all kind of blessings, temporal and spiritual; and as he has blessed him already, may he be blessed more and more:

who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead; he had been kind to Elimelech and to his sons, who were now dead, and he continued his kindness to the reliefs of them, Naomi and Ruth, who were living, and was kind to them for the sake of the dead; and showing kindness to them expressed his respect to the memory of the dead:

and Naomi said unto her; continued her speech to her, and added to what she had said:

the man is near of kin to us; a near relation of ours, meaning by her husband's side: yea,

one of our next kinsmen; the nearest we have, there was but one nearer than he: the word for kinsman here is "Goel", a redeemer; for to such who were in the degree of kindred as Boaz was, and he that was nearer still than he to them, belonged the right of redemption, and therefore were called by the name of "Goel", a redeemer, as Ben Melech observes; they had a right to avenge the blood of the slain, to redeem their houses and possessions, if sold or mortgaged, and their persons by marrying them, and raising up seed to a deceased brother, or kinsman.

Ver. 21. *And Ruth the Moabitess said, he said unto me also,* etc.] Besides the favours he has shown me already, he has given me reason to expect more, for he has given me this strict order:

thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest; both barley harvest and wheat harvest; his will was, that she kept following them, and gleaned after them, as long as both harvests lasted. The Septuagint version is, “with my maidens”, and which agrees with (~~the~~ Ruth 2:8), where the order of Boaz is expressed, and with the instructions of Naomi in the next verse, who so understood it; but if we understand it of young men here, there is no contradiction; for both young men and maidens wrought together in the same field, either in reaping or binding up; so that if she kept fast by the one, she also would do the same by the other.

Ver. 22. *And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law,* etc.] Observing the charge Boaz had given her, she thought fit to advise her upon it:

it is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens; that is, go out in the morning with them, set out from Bethlehem when they went to work, and so continue with them all the day:

that they meet thee not in any other field; the meaning is, either that men might not meet her in another field alone, or rush upon her at once and unawares, and reproach her, or beat her, or indeed force her; or else that the servants of Boaz might not meet her, or see her in another field, and report it to their master, who would be offended at her; and take it as a slight of his kindness to her; which latter seems rather to be the sense.

Ver. 23. *So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean,* etc.] Accepting the kindness of Boaz, and attending to the advice of her mother-in-law, as well as using all diligence to get a livelihood for her mother and herself; in which she was a wonderful instance of dutiful affection, humility, and industry: and so she continued

unto the end of barley harvest, and of wheat harvest; which latter began at Pentecost, as the former did at the passover; and, according to the Midrash^{f51}, from the beginning of the one, to the end of the other, were three months; though it may be, they were gathered in sooner: indeed from the passover to Pentecost were seven weeks, which was the difference between the beginning of one harvest, and the beginning of the other:

and dwelt with her mother in law; which is to be understood either of her coming home at night, after she had been gleaning all day, and lodging with her mother-in-law, which was her constant custom during both harvests; or that after the harvests were ended, she continued to dwell with her mother-in-law; which seems to be added for the sake of carrying on the history in the following chapter.