

Ruth

A Family Tragedy: Famine and Death

1:1 During the time of the judges¹ there was a famine in the land of Judah.² So a man from Bethlehem³ in Judah went to live as a resident foreigner⁴ in the region of Moab, along with his wife and two sons.⁵ 1:2 (Now the man's name was Elimelech,⁶ his wife was Naomi,⁷ and his

¹ **tn** *Heb* "in the days of the judging of the judges." The LXX simply reads "when the judges judged," and Syriac has "in the days of the judges." Cf. NASB "in the days when the judges governed (ruled NRSV)."

sn Many interpreters, reading this statement in the light of the Book of Judges which describes a morally corrupt period, assume that the narrator is painting a dark backdrop against which Ruth's exemplary character and actions will shine even more brightly. However, others read this statement in the light of the book's concluding epilogue which traces the full significance of the story to the time of David, the chosen king of Judah (4:18-22).

² **tn** *Heb* "in the land." The phrase "of Judah" is supplied in the translation to clarify the referent.

³ **sn** The name *Bethlehem* (בֵּית לֶחֶם, *bet lekhem*) is from "house, place" (בֵּית) and "bread, food" (לֶחֶם), so the name literally means "House of Bread" or "Place of Food." Perhaps there is irony here: One would not expect a severe famine in such a location. This would not necessarily indicate that Bethlehem was under divine discipline, but merely that the famine was very severe, explaining the reason for the family's departure.

map For location see Map5-B1; Map7-E2; Map8-E2; Map10-B4.

⁴ **tn** Or "to live temporarily." The verb *גור* (*gur*, "sojourn") may refer to (1) temporary dwelling in a location (Deut 18:6; Judg 17:7) or (2) permanent dwelling in a location (Judg 5:17; Ps 33:8). When used of a foreign land, it can refer to (1) temporary dwelling as a visiting foreigner (Gen 12:10; 20:1; 21:34; 2 Kgs 8:1-2; Jer 44:14) or (2) permanent dwelling as a resident foreigner (Gen 47:4; Exod 6:4; Num 15:14; Deut 26:5; 2 Sam 4:3; Jer 49:18,33; 50:40; Ezek 47:22-23). Although Naomi eventually returned to Judah, there is some ambiguity whether or not Elimelech intended the move to make them permanent resident foreigners. Cf. NASB "to sojourn" and NIV "to live for a while," both of which imply the move was temporary, while "to live" (NCV, NRSV, NLT) is more neutral about the permanence of the relocation.

sn Some interpreters view Elimelech's departure from Judah to sojourn in Moab as lack of faith in the covenant God of Israel to provide for his family's needs in the land of promise; therefore his death is consequently viewed as divine judgment. Others note that God never prohibited his people from seeking food in a foreign land during times of famine but actually sent his people to a foreign land during a famine in Canaan on at least one occasion as an act of deliverance (Gen 37-50). In this case, Elimelech's sojourn to Moab was an understandable act by a man concerned for the survival of his family, perhaps even under divine approval, so their death in Moab was simply a tragedy, a bad thing that happened to a godly person.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* "he and his wife and his two sons." The LXX omits "two."

⁶ **sn** The name "Elimelech" literally means "My God [is] king." The narrator's explicit identification of his name seems to cast him in a positive light.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* "and the name of his wife [was] Naomi." This has been simplified in the translation for stylistic reasons.

two sons were Mahlon and Kilion.⁸ They were of the clan of Ephrath⁹ from Bethlehem in Judah.) They entered the region of Moab and settled there.¹⁰ 1:3 Sometime later¹¹ Naomi's husband Elimelech died, so she and her two sons were left alone. 1:4 So her sons¹² married¹³ Moabite women. (One was named Orpah and the other Ruth.)¹⁴ And they continued to live there

sn The name Naomi (נְאוֹמִי, *na'omi*) is from the adjective נָעַם (*noam*, "pleasant, lovely") and literally means "my pleasant one" or "my lovely one." Her name will become the subject of a wordplay in 1:20-21 when she laments that she is no longer "pleasant" but "bitter" because of the loss of her husband and two sons.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "and the name[s] of his two sons [were] Mahlon and Kilion."

sn The name Mahlon (מַחְלוֹן, *makhlon*) is from מָלַח (*malah*, "to be weak, sick") and Kilion (כִּלְיוֹן, *khiyion*) is from קָלַח (*khalah*, "to be frail"). The rate of infant mortality was so high during the Iron Age that parents typically did not name children until they survived infancy and were weaned. Naomi and Elimelech might have named their two sons Mahlon and Kilion to reflect their weak condition in infancy due to famine – which eventually prompted the move to Moab where food was abundant.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* "[They were] Ephrathites." Ephrathah is a small village (Ps 132:6) in the vicinity of Bethlehem (Gen 35:16), so close in proximity that it is often identified with the larger town of Bethlehem (Gen 35:19; 48:7; Ruth 4:11; Mic 5:2 [MT 5:1]; HALOT 81 s.v. אֶפְרַתָּה); see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 64. The designation "Ephrathites" might indicate that they were residents of Ephrathah. However, the adjectival form אֶפְרַתִּים (*ephratim*, "Ephrathites") used here elsewhere refers to someone from the clan of Ephrath (cf. 1 Chr 4:4) which lived in the region of Bethlehem: "Now David was the son of an Ephrathite from Bethlehem in Judah whose name was Jesse" (1 Sam 17:12; cf. Mic 5:2 [MT 5:1]). So it is more likely that the virtually identical expression here – "Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah" – refers to the clan of Ephrath in Bethlehem (see R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth* [NICOT], 91).

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* "and were there"; KJV "continued there"; NRSV "remained there"; TEV "were living there."

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "And Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died." The vav (ו) functions in a consecutive sense ("then"), but the time-frame is not explicitly stated.

¹² **tn** *Heb* "they." The verb is 3rd person masculine plural referring to Naomi's sons, as the translation indicates.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "and they lifted up for themselves Moabite wives." When used with the noun "wife," the verb נָסַח (*nasa'*, "to lift up, carry, take") forms the idiom "to take a wife," that is, to marry (BDB 673 s.v. קָלַח.3; 2 Chr 11:21; 13:21; 24:3; Ezra 9:2,12; 10:44; Neh 13:25).

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* "the name of the one [was] Orpah and the name of the second [was] Ruth."

sn The name Orpah (עֹרְפָה, *'orpah*) is from the noun עֹרֶף (*'oref*, "back of the neck") and the related verb ("to turn one's back"). The name Ruth (רוּת, *rut*) is from the noun רְעוּת (*re'ut*, "friendship"), derived from the root רָעָה (*rea'*, "friend, companion"). Ironically, Orpah will eventually turn her back on Naomi, while Ruth will display extraordinary friendship as her life-long companion (see 1:14). Since they seem to mirror the most definitive action of these women, perhaps they designate character types (as is the case with the name *Mara* in 1:21 and *Peloni Almoni* in 4:2) rather than their original birth names.

about ten years. 1:5 Then Naomi's two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, also died.¹ So the woman was left all alone – bereaved of her two children² as well as her husband! 1:6 So she decided to return home from the region of Moab, accompanied by her daughters-in-law,³ because while she was living in Moab⁴ she had heard that the LORD had shown concern⁵ for his people, reversing the famine by providing abundant crops.⁶

Ruth Returns with Naomi

1:7 Now as she and her two daughters-in-law began to leave the place where she had been living to return to the land of Judah,⁷ 1:8 Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Listen to me! Each of you should return to your mother’s home!⁸ May

the LORD show⁹ you¹⁰ the same kind of devotion that you have shown to your deceased husbands¹¹ and to me!¹² 1:9 May the LORD enable each of you to find¹³ security¹⁴ in the home of a new husband!”¹⁵ Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept loudly.¹⁶ 1:10 But they said to her, “No!¹⁷ We will¹⁸ return with you to your people.”

1:11 But Naomi replied, “Go back home, my daughters! There is no reason for you to return to Judah with me!¹⁹ I am no longer capable of giving birth to sons who might become your husbands!²⁰ 1:12 Go back home, my daughters!

¹ **tn** Heb “and the two of them also died, Mahlon and Kilion.”

² **tn** The term יָלַד (*yalad*, “to give birth to”), is used only here of a married man. By shifting to this word from the more common term בֵּן (*ben*, “son”); see vv. 1-5a) and then using it in an unusual manner, the author draws attention to Naomi's loss and sets up a verbal link with the story's conclusion (cf. 4:16). Although grown men, they were still her “babies” (see E. F. Campbell, *Ruth* [AB], 56; F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 66).

³ **tn** Heb “and she arose, along with her daughters-in-law, and she returned from the region of Moab.”

⁴ **tn** Heb “in the region of Moab”; KJV, NRSV “in the country of Moab.” Since this is a repetition of the phrase found earlier in the verse, it has been shortened to “in Moab” in the present translation for stylistic reasons.

⁵ **tn** Heb “had visited” or “taken note of.” The basic meaning of פָּקַד (*paqad*) is “observe, examine, take note of” (T. F. Williams, *NIDOTTE* 3:658), so it sometimes appears with זָכַר (*zakhar*, “to remember”); Pss 8:4 [MT 5]; 106:4; Jer 14:10; 15:15; Hos 8:13; 9:9) and רָאָה (*ra'ah*, “to see”; Exod 4:31; Ps 80:14 [MT 15]; *NIDOTTE* 3:659). It often emphasizes the cause/effect response to what is seen (*NIDOTTE* 3:659). When God observes people in need, it is glossed “be concerned about, care for, attend to, help” (Gen 21:1; 50:24, 25; Exod 4:31; Ruth 1:6; 1 Sam 2:21; Jer 15:15; Zeph 2:7; Zech 10:3b; *NIDOTTE* 3:661). When humans are the subject, it sometimes means “to visit” needy people to bestow a gift (Judg 15:1; 1 Sam 17:18). Because it has such a broad range of meanings, its use here has been translated variously: (1) “had visited” (KJV, ASV, NASV, RSV; so BDB 823-24 s.v. “פָּקַד”); (2) “had considered” (NRSV) and “had taken note of” (TNK; so HALOT 955-57 s.v. פָּקַד); and (3) “had come to the aid of” (NIV), “had blessed” (TEV), and “had given” (CEV; so *NIDOTTE* 3:657). When God observed the plight of his people, he demonstrated his concern by benevolently giving them food.

⁶ **tn** Heb “by giving to them food.” The translation “reversing the famine and providing abundant crops” attempts to clarify the referent of לֶחֶם (*lekhem*, “food”) as “crops” and highlights the reversal of the famine that began in v. 1. The infinitive construct לֶחֶם לֶחֶם (laet lahem lakhem) may denote (1) purpose: “[he visited his people] to give them food” or (2) complementary sense explaining the action of the main verb: “[he visited his people] by giving them food.” The term לֶחֶם (*lakhem*) here refers to agricultural fertility, the reversal of the famine in v. 1.

⁷ **tn** Heb “and she went out from the place she had been, and her two daughters-in-law with her, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.”

⁸ **tn** Heb “each to the house of her mother.” Naomi's words imply that it is more appropriate for the two widows to go home to their mothers, rather than stay with their mother-in-law (see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 75).

⁹ **tc** The MT (*Kethib*) has the imperfect יַעֲשֶׂה (*ya'aseh*, “[the LORD] will do”), but the marginal reading (*Qere*) has the shortened jussive form יַעֲשֵׂ (*ya'as*, “may [the LORD] do”), which is more probable in this prayer of blessing. Most English versions adopt the jussive form (KJV, ASV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV, JPS, TEV, CEV, NLT).

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “do with you”; NRSV “deal kindly with you”; NLT “reward you for your kindness.” The pronominal suffix “you” appears to be a masculine form, but this is likely a preservation of an archaic dual form (see E. F. Campbell, *Ruth* [AB], 65; F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 75-76).

¹¹ **tn** Heb “the dead” (so KJV, NRSV); NLT “your husbands.” This refers to their deceased husbands.

¹² **tn** Heb “devotion as you have done with the dead and with me.” The noun חֶסֶד (*chesed*, “devotion”) is a key thematic term in the book of Ruth (see 2:20; 3:10). G. R. Clark suggests that חֶסֶד “is not merely an attitude or an emotion; it is an emotion that leads to an activity beneficial to the recipient”; an act of חֶסֶד is “a beneficent action performed, in the context of a deep and enduring commitment between two persons or parties, by one who is able to render assistance to the needy party who in the circumstances is unable to help him – or herself” (*The Word Hessed in the Hebrew Bible* [JSOTSup], 267). HALOT 336-37 s.v. חֶסֶד defines the word as “loyalty” or “faithfulness.” Other appropriate glosses might be “commitment” and “devotion.”

¹³ **tn** Heb “may the LORD give to you, and find rest, each [in] the house of her husband.” The syntax is unusual, but following the jussive (“may he give”), the imperative with vav (ו) conjunctive (“and find”) probably indicates the purpose or consequence of the preceding action: “May he enable you to find rest.”

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “rest.” While the basic meaning of מְנוּחָה (*m^hmukhah*) is “rest,” it often refers to “security,” such as provided in marriage (BDB 629-30 s.v.; HALOT 600 s.v.). Thus English versions render it in three different but related ways: (1) the basic sense: “rest” (KJV, ASV, NASV, NIV); (2) the metonymical cause/effect sense: “security” (NRSV, NJPS, REB, NLT, GW); and (3) the referential sense: “home” (RSV, TEV, CEV, NCV).

¹⁵ **tn** Heb “in the house of her husband” (so KJV, NASB); NRSV “your husband.”

¹⁶ **tn** Heb “they lifted their voice[s] and wept” (KJV, ASV, NASB all similar). This refers to loud weeping characteristic of those mourning a tragedy (Judg 21:2; 2 Sam 13:36; Job 2:12).

¹⁷ **tn** The particle כִּי (*ki*) here has the force of “no, on the contrary” (see Gen 31:26; Ps 44:22; HALOT 470 s.v. כִּי 3).

¹⁸ **tn** Or perhaps “we want to” (so NCV, CEV, NLT), if the imperfect is understood in a modal sense indicating desire.

¹⁹ **tn** Heb “Why would you want to come with me?” Naomi's rhetorical question expects a negative answer. The phrase “to Judah” is added in the translation for clarification.

²⁰ **tn** Heb “Do I still have sons in my inner parts that they might become your husbands?” Again Naomi's rhetorical question expects a negative answer.

For I am too old to get married again.¹ Even if I thought that there was hope that I could get married tonight and conceive sons,² 1:13 surely you would not want to wait until they were old enough to marry!³ Surely you would not remain unmarried all that time!⁴ No,⁵ my daughters, you must not return with me.⁶ For my intense suffering⁷ is too much for you to bear.⁸ For the LORD is afflict-

ing me!”⁹

1:14 Again they wept loudly.¹⁰ Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye,¹¹ but Ruth¹² clung tightly to her.¹³ 1:15 So Naomi¹⁴ said, “Look, your sister-in-law is returning to her

¹ **sn** *Too old to get married again.* Naomi may be exaggerating for the sake of emphasis. Her point is clear, though: It is too late to roll back the clock.

² **tn** Verse 12b contains the protasis (“if” clause) of a conditional sentence, which is completed by the rhetorical questions in v. 13. For a detailed syntactical analysis, see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 78-79.

³ **tn** *Heb* “For them would you wait until they were grown?” Some understand הֲיָחֵן (*halahen*) as an interrogative *he* (ה) with an Aramaic particle meaning “therefore” (see GKC 301 §103.b.2 [n. 4]; cf. ASV, NASB), while others understand the form to consist of an interrogative *he*, the preposition ל (*lamed*, “for”), and an apparent third person feminine plural pronominal suffix (CEV, NLT “for them”). The feminine suffix is problematic, for its antecedent is the hypothetical “sons” mentioned at the end of v. 12. For this reason some emend the form to הֲיָחֵןם (“for them,” a third person masculine plural suffix). R. L. Hubbard raises the possibility that the nunated suffix is an archaic Moabite masculine dual form (*Ruth* [NICOT], 111, n. 31). In any case, Naomi’s rhetorical question expects a negative answer.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “For them would you hold yourselves back so as not to be for a man?” Again Naomi’s rhetorical question expects a negative answer. The verb עָנָן (*agan*, “hold back”; cf. KJV, ASV “stay”; NRSV “refrain”) occurs only here in the OT. For discussion of its etymology and meaning, see HALOT 785-86 s.v. עָנָן, and F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 79-80.

⁵ **tn** The negative is used here in an elliptical manner for emphasis (see HALOT 48 s.v. אֵינִי; GKC 479-80 §152.g).

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “No, my daughters.” Naomi is not answering the rhetorical questions she has just asked. In light of the explanatory clause that follows, it seems more likely that she is urging them to give up the idea of returning with her. In other words, the words “no, my daughters” complement the earlier exhortation to “go back.” To clarify this, the words “you must not return with me” are added in the translation.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “bitterness to me.” The term מַרְמָר (*marar*) can refer to emotional bitterness: “to feel bitter” (1 Sam 30:6; 2 Kgs 4:27; Lam 1:4) or a grievous situation: “to be in bitter circumstances” (Jer 4:18) (BDB 600 s.v.; HALOT 638 s.v. מַרְמָר). So the expression מַרְמָרִי (*mar-li*) can refer to emotional bitterness (KJV, NKJV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NIV, NJPS, CEV, NLT) or a grievous situation (cf. NRSV, NAB, NCV, CEV margin). Although Naomi and her daughters-in-law had reason for emotional grief, the issue at hand was Naomi’s lamentable situation, which she did not want them to experience: being a poor widow in a foreign land.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “for there is bitterness to me exceedingly from you.” The clause כִּי־מַרְמָרִי מְאֹד מִכֶּם (*ki-mar-li me’od mikkem*) is notoriously difficult to interpret. It has been taken in three different ways: (1) “For I am very bitter for me because of you,” that is, because of your widowed condition (cf. KJV, NKJV, ASV, RSV, NJB, REB, JB, TEV). This does not fit well, however, with the following statement (“for the LORD has attacked me”) nor with the preceding statement (“You must not return with me”). (2) “For I am far more bitter than for you” (cf. NASB, NIV, NJPS, NEB, CEV, NLT). This does not provide an adequate basis, however, for the preceding statement (“You must not return with me”). (3) “For my bitterness is too much for you [to bear]” (cf. NAB, NRSV, NCV, CEV margin). This is preferable because it fits well with both the preceding and following statements. These three options reflect the three ways the preposition לָּ may be taken here: (1) causal: “because of, on account of” (BDB 580 s.v. לָּ 2.f; HALOT 598 s.v. לָּ 6), not that Orpah and Ruth were the cause of her calamity, but that Naomi was grieved because they had become widows; (2) comparative:

“more [bitter] than you” (BDB 581 s.v. 6.a; HALOT 598 s.v. 5b), meaning that Naomi’s situation was more grievous than theirs – while they could remarry, her prospects were much more bleak; and (3) elative, describing a situation that is too much for a person to bear: “too [bitter] for you” (BDB 581 s.v. 6.d; HALOT 598 s.v. 5a; IBHS 267 §14.4f; e.g., Gen 4:13; Exod 18:18; Deut 17:8; 1 Kgs 19:17), meaning that Naomi’s plight was too bitter for her daughters-in-law to share. While all three options are viable, the meaning adopted must fit two criteria: (1) The meaning of this clause (1:13b) must provide the grounds for Naomi’s emphatic rejection of the young women’s refusal to separate themselves from her (1:13a); and (2) it must fit the following clause: “for the hand of the LORD has gone out against me” (1:13c). The first and second options do not provide adequate reasons for sending her daughters-in-law back home, nor do they fit her lament that the LORD had attached her (not them); however, the third option (elative sense) fits both criteria. Naomi did not want her daughters-in-law to share her sad situation, that is, to be poor, childless widows in a foreign land with no prospect for marriage. If they accompanied her back to Judah, they would be in the same kind of situation in which she found herself in Moab. If they were to find the “rest” (security of home and husband) she wished for them, it would be in Moab, not in Judah. The LORD had already deprived her of husband and sons. She could do nothing for them in this regard because she had no more sons to give them as husbands, and she was past the age of child-bearing to raise up new husbands for them in the future – as if they could wait that long anyway (1:13a). For a discussion of these three options and defense of the approach adopted here, see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 80-81.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “for the hand of the LORD has gone out against me” (KJV, ASV, NASB, NIV all similar). The expression suggests opposition and hostility, perhaps picturing the Lord as the Divine Warrior who is bringing calamity upon Naomi. See R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth* (NICOT), 113.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “they lifted their voice[s] and wept” (so NASB; see v. 9). The expression refers to loud weeping employed in mourning tragedy (Judg 21:2; 2 Sam 13:36; Job 2:12).

¹¹ **tc** The LXX adds, “and she returned to her people” (cf. TEV “and went back home”). Translating the Greek of the LXX back to Hebrew would read a consonantal text of וַתָּשָׁב אֵלֶי עַמָּהּ. Most dismiss this as a clarifying addition added under the influence of v. 15, but this alternative reading should not be rejected too quickly. It is possible that a scribe’s eye jumped from the initial *vav* on וַתָּשָׁב (“and she returned”) to the initial *vav* on the final clause וַתָּשָׁב רֹוּת [רֹוּת], “and Ruth”), inadvertently leaving out the intervening words, “and she returned to her people.” Or a scribe’s eye could have jumped from the final *he* on לַחֲמוֹתָהּ (*lakhamotah*, “to her mother-in-law”) to the final *he* on עַמָּהּ (*ammah*, “her people”), leaving out the intervening words, “and she returned to her people.”

¹² **tn** The clause is disjunctive. The word order is conjunction + subject + verb, highlighting the contrast between the actions of Orpah and Ruth.

sn *Orpah* is a literary foil for Ruth. Orpah is a commendable and devoted person (see v. 8); after all she is willing to follow Naomi back to Judah. However, when Naomi bombards her with good reasons why she should return, she relents. But Ruth is special. Despite Naomi’s bitter tirade, she insists on staying. Orpah is a good person, but Ruth is beyond good – she possesses an extra measure of devotion and sacrificial love that is uncommon.

¹³ **sn** *Clung tightly.* The expression suggests strong commitment (see R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth* [NICOT], 115).

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “she”; the referent (Naomi) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

people and to her god.¹ Follow your sister-in-law back home!” 1:16 But Ruth replied,

“Stop urging me to abandon you!²

For wherever you go, I will go.

Wherever you live, I will live.

Your people will become my people,
and your God will become my God.

1:17 Wherever you die, I will die – and
there I will be buried.

May the LORD punish me severely if I do
not keep my promise!³

Only death will be able to separate me
from you!⁴”

1 tn Or “gods” (so KJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, CEV, NLT), if the plural form is taken as a numerical plural. However, it is likely that Naomi, speaking from Orpah’s Moabite perspective, uses the plural of majesty of the Moabite god Chemosh. For examples of the plural of majesty being used of a pagan god, see BDB 43 s.v. אֱלֹהִים 1.d. Note especially 1 Kgs 11:33, where the plural form is used of Chemosh.

2 tn Heb “do not urge me to abandon you to turn back from after you.” Most English versions, following the lead of the KJV, use “leave” here. The use of נוּב (“abandon”) reflects Ruth’s perspective. To return to Moab would be to abandon Naomi and to leave her even more vulnerable than she already is.

3 tn Heb “Thus may the LORD do to me and thus may he add...” The construction נְהַיֶּה יְיָ...כִּי...יַעֲשֶׂה (*koh ya’aseh... v’khoz yosif*, “May he do thus...and may he do even more so...”) is an oath formula of self-imprecation (e.g., 1 Sam 3:17; 14:44; 20:13; 25:22; 2 Sam 3:9,35; 19:14; 1 Kgs 2:23; 2 Kgs 6:31). In this formula the exact curse is understood but not expressed (GKC 472 §149.d; BDB 462 s.v. נָה 1.b). In ancient Near Eastern imprecations, when the curse was so extreme, it was not uttered because it was unspeakably awful: “In the twelve uses of this formula, the calamity which the speaker invokes is never named, since OT culture (in keeping with the rest of the ancient Near East) accorded such power to the spoken word” (F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 82). Ruth here pronounces a curse upon herself, elevating the preceding promise to a formal, unconditional level. If she is not faithful to her promise, she agrees to become an object of divine judgment. As in other occurrences of this oath/curse formula, the specific punishment is not mentioned. As Bush explains, the particle כִּי (*ki*) here is probably asseverative (“indeed, certainly”) and the statement that follows expresses what underscores the seriousness of her promise by invoking divine judgment, as it were, if she does otherwise. Of course, the LORD would not have been obligated to judge her if she had abandoned Naomi – this is simply an ancient idiomatic way of expressing her commitment to her promise.

4 tn Heb “certainly death will separate me and you.” Ruth’s vow has been interpreted two ways: (1) Not even death will separate her from Naomi – because they will be buried next to one another (e.g., NRSV, NCV; see E. F. Campbell, *Ruth* [AB], 74-75). However, for the statement to mean, “Not even death will separate me and you,” it would probably need to be introduced by אִם (“if”) or negated by לֹא (“no,” “not”; see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 83). (2) Nothing except death will separate her from Naomi (e.g., KJV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NIV, TEV, NJPS, REB, NLT, GW; see Bush, 83). The particle כִּי introduces the content of the vow, which – if violated – would bring about the curse uttered in the preceding oath (BDB 472 s.v. כִּי 1.c; e.g., Gen 42:16; Num 14:22; 1 Sam 20:3; 26:16; 29:6; 2 Sam 3:35; 1 Kgs 2:23; Isa 49:18). Some suggest that כִּי is functioning as an asseverative (“indeed, certainly”) to express what the speaker is determined will happen (Bush, 83; see 1 Sam 14:44; 2 Sam 3:9; 1 Kgs 2:23; 19:2). Here כִּי probably functions in a conditional sense: “if” or “if...except, unless” (BDB 473 s.v. כִּי 2.b). So her vow may essentially mean “if anything except death should separate me from you!” The most likely view is (2): Ruth is swearing that death alone will separate her from Naomi.

sn Ruth’s devotion to Naomi is especially apparent here. In-

1:18 When Naomi⁵ realized that Ruth⁶ was determined to go with her, she stopped trying to dissuade her.⁷ 1:19 So the two of them⁸ journeyed together until they arrived in Bethlehem.⁹

Naomi and Ruth Arrive in Bethlehem

When they entered¹⁰ Bethlehem,¹¹ the whole village was excited about their arrival.¹² The women of the village said,¹³ “Can this be Naomi?”¹⁴ 1:20 But she replied¹⁵ to them,¹⁶ “Don’t call me ‘Naomi’!¹⁷ Call me ‘Mara’¹⁸ because the Sovereign One¹⁹ has treated me very

stead of receiving a sure blessing and going home (see v. 8), Ruth instead takes on a serious responsibility and subjects herself to potential divine punishment. Death, a power beyond Ruth’s control, will separate the two women, but until that time Ruth will stay by Naomi’s side and she will even be buried in the same place as Naomi.

5 tn Heb “she”; the referent (Naomi) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

6 tn Heb “she”; the referent (Ruth) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

7 tn Heb “she ceased speaking to her.” This does not imply that Naomi was completely silent toward Ruth. It simply means that Naomi stopped trying to convince her to go back to Moab (see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 84-85).

8 tn The suffix “them” appears to be masculine, but it is probably an archaic dual form (E. F. Campbell, *Ruth* [AB], 65; F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 75-76).

9 map For location see Map5-B1; Map7-E2; Map8-E2; Map10-B4.

10 tn The temporal indicator וַיָּבֵי (vay’ehi, “and it was”) here introduces a new scene.

11 map For location see Map5-B1; Map7-E2; Map8-E2; Map10-B4.

12 tn Heb “because of them” (so NASB, NIV, NRSV); CEV “excited to see them.”

13 tn Heb “they said,” but the verb form is third person feminine plural, indicating that the women of the village are the subject.

14 tn Heb “Is this Naomi?” (so KJV, NASB, NRSV). The question here expresses surprise and delight because of the way Naomi reacts to it (F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 92).

15 tn Heb “said.” For stylistic reasons the present translation employs “replied” here.

16 tn The third person feminine plural form of the pronominal suffix indicates the women of the village (see v. 19) are the addressees.

17 sn The name *Naomi* means “pleasant.”

18 sn The name *Mara* means “bitter.”

19 tn Heb “Shaddai”; traditionally “the Almighty.” The etymology and meaning of this divine name is uncertain. It may be derived from: (1) שָׁדַד (*shaddad*, “to be strong”), cognate to Arabic *sadd*, meaning “The Strong One” or “Almighty”; (2) שָׂדֵד (*shadah*, “mountain”), cognate to Akkadian *shadu*, meaning “The Mountain Dweller” or “God of the Mountains”; (3) שָׁדַד (*shadad*, “to devastate”) and שָׂדַד (*shad*, “destroyer”), Akkadian *Shedum*, meaning “The Destroyer” or “The Malevolent One”; or (4) שֶׁ (*she*, “who”) plus דַּי (*diy*, “sufficient”), meaning “The One Who is Sufficient” or “All-Sufficient One” (*HALOT* 1420-22 s.v. שָׂדֵד). In terms of use, Shaddai (or El Shaddai) is presented as the sovereign king/judge of the world who grants life/blesses and kills/judges. In Genesis he blesses the patriarchs with fertility and promises numerous descendants. Outside Genesis he blesses/protects and also takes away life/happiness. In light of Naomi’s emphasis on God’s sovereign, malevolent deprivation of her family, one can understand her use of this name for God. For discussion of this divine name, see T. N. D. Mettinger, *In Search of God*, 69-72.

harshly.¹ 1:21 I left here full,² but the LORD has caused me to return empty-handed.³ Why do you call me 'Naomi,' seeing that⁴ the LORD has opposed me,⁵ and the Sovereign One⁶ has caused me to suffer?⁷ 1:22 So Naomi returned, accompanied by her Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth, who came back with her from the region of Moab.⁸ (Now they⁹ arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.)¹⁰

Ruth Works in the Field of Boaz

2:1 Now Naomi¹¹ had a relative¹² on her husband's side of the family named Boaz. He was a wealthy, prominent man from the clan of Elimelech.¹³ 2:2 One day Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go¹⁴ to the fields so I can gather¹⁵ grain behind whoever permits me to do so."¹⁶ Naomi¹⁷ replied, "You may go, my daughter."¹⁸ 2:3 So Ruth¹⁸ went and gathered grain in the fields¹⁹ behind the harvesters. Now she just happened to end up²⁰ in the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.

Boaz and Ruth Meet

2:4 Now at that very moment,²¹ Boaz arrived from Bethlehem²² and greeted²³ the harvesters, "May the LORD be with you!" They replied,²⁴ "May the LORD bless you!" 2:5 Boaz asked²⁵ his

¹ **tn** Or "caused me to be very bitter"; NAB "has made it very bitter for me."

² **sn** I left here full. That is, with a husband and two sons.

³ **tn** *Heb* "but empty the LORD has brought me back." The disjunctive clause structure (vav + adverb + verb + subject) highlights the contrast between her former condition and present situation. Cf. TEV "has brought me back without a thing."

sn *Empty-handed*. This statement is highly ironic, for ever-loyal Ruth stands by her side even as she speaks these words. These words reflect Naomi's perspective, not the narrator's, for Ruth will eventually prove to be the one who reverses Naomi's plight and "fills" her "emptiness." Naomi's perspective will prove to be inaccurate and the women will later correct Naomi's faulty view of Ruth's value (see 4:15).

⁴ **tn** The disjunctive clause structure (vav [ה] + subject + verb) here introduces either an attendant circumstance ("when the LORD has opposed me") or an explanation ("seeing that the LORD has opposed me").

⁵ **tc** The LXX reads "humbled me" here, apparently understanding the verb as a Piel (נָהַח, *'anah*) from a homonymic root meaning "afflict." However, נָהַח ("afflict") never introduces its object with בְּ (*bet*); when the preposition בְּ is used with this verb, it is always adverbial ("in, with, through"). To defend the LXX reading one would have to eliminate the preposition.

tn *Heb* "has testified against me" (KJV, ASV both similar); NAB "has pronounced against me." The idiom נָהַח בִּי (*'anah b'ni*, "testify against") is well attested elsewhere in legal settings (see BDB 773 s.v. נָהַח Qal.3.a; HALOT 852 s.v. נָהַח qal.2). Naomi uses a legal metaphor and depicts the LORD as testifying against her in court.

⁶ **sn** The divine name translated *Sovereign One* is שַׁדַּי (*shaddai*, "Shaddai"). See further the note on this term in Ruth 1:20.

⁷ **tn** Or "brought disaster upon me"; NIV "brought misfortune (calamity NRSV) upon me"; NLT "has sent such tragedy."

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "and Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, the one who returned from the region of Moab."

sn This summarizing statement provides closure to the first part of the story. By highlighting Ruth's willingness to return with Naomi, it also contrasts sharply with Naomi's remark about being empty-handed.

⁹ **tn** The pronoun appears to be third person masculine plural in form, but it is probably an archaic third person dual form (see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 94).

¹⁰ **tn** This statement, introduced with a disjunctive structure (vav [ו] + subject + verb) provides closure for the previous scene, while at the same time making a transition to the next scene, which takes place in the barley field. The reference to the harvest also reminds the reader that God has been merciful to his people by replacing the famine with fertility. In the flow of the narrative the question is now, "Will he do the same for Naomi and Ruth?"

sn *The barley harvest* began in late March. See O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 91.

¹¹ **tn** The disjunctive clause (note the vav [ו] + prepositional phrase structure) provides background information essential to the following narrative.

¹² **tc** The marginal reading (Qere) בּוֹרֵעַ (*moda'*, "relative"), while the consonantal text (*Kethib*) מִיֻּדָּה (*miyudda'*, "friend"). The textual variant was probably caused by orthographic confusion between consonantal בּוֹרֵעַ and מִיֻּדָּה. Virtually all English versions follow the marginal reading (Qere), e.g., KJV, NAB, NASB, NRSV "kinsman"; NIV, NCV, NLT "relative."

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "and [there was] to Naomi a relative, to her husband, a man mighty in substance, from the clan of Elimelech, and his name [was] Boaz."

¹⁴ **tn** The cohortative here ("Let me go") expresses Ruth's request. Note Naomi's response, in which she gives Ruth permission to go to the field.

¹⁵ **tn** Following the preceding cohortative, the cohortative with vav conjunctive indicates purpose/result.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* "anyone in whose eyes I may find favor" (ASV, NIV similar). The expression אֶמְצָא־יָחַד בְּעֵינֵי *'emtsa'-khen b'einay*, "to find favor in the eyes of [someone]" appears in Ruth 2:2, 10, 13. It is most often used when a subordinate or servant requests permission for something from a superior (BDB 336 s.v. יָחַד). Ruth will play the role of the subordinate servant, seeking permission from a landowner, who then could show benevolence by granting her request to glean in his field behind the harvest workers.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* "she"; the referent (Naomi) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "she"; the referent (Ruth) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* "and she went and entered [a field] and gleaned in the field behind the harvesters." Cf. KJV, NASB, NRSV "the reapers"; TEV "the workers."

²⁰ **sn** The text is written from Ruth's limited perspective. As far as she was concerned, she randomly picked a spot in the field. But God was providentially at work and led her to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who, as a near relative of Elimelech, was a potential benefactor.

²¹ **tn** *Heb* "and look"; NIV, NRSV "Just then." The narrator invites the audience into the story, describing Boaz's arrival as if it were witnessed by the audience.

²² **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map7-E2; Map8-E2; Map10-B4.

²³ **tn** *Heb* "said to." Context indicates that the following expression is a greeting, the first thing Boaz says to his workers.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* "said to him." For stylistic reasons "replied" is used in the present translation.

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* "said to." Since what follows is a question, "asked" is appropriate in this context.

servant¹ in charge of the harvesters, “To whom does this young woman belong?”² 2:6 The servant in charge of the harvesters replied, “She’s the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the region of Moab. 2:7 She asked,³ ‘May I follow the harvesters and gather⁴ grain among the bundles?’⁵ Since she arrived she has been working hard⁶ from this morning until now⁷ – except for⁸ sitting⁹ in the resting

hut¹⁰ a short time.”¹¹

2:8 So Boaz said to Ruth, “Listen carefully,¹² my dear!¹³ Do not leave to gather grain in another field. You need not¹⁴ go beyond the limits of this field. You may go along beside¹⁵ my female workers.¹⁶ 2:9 Take note of¹⁷ the field where the men¹⁸ are harvesting and follow behind with the female workers.¹⁹ I will tell the

1 tn Heb “young man.” Cf. NAB “overseer”; NIV, NLT “foreman.”

2 sn In this patriarchal culture Ruth would “belong” to either her father (if unmarried) or her husband (if married).

3 tn Heb “said.” What follows is a question, so “asked” is used in the translation.

4 tn On the use of the perfect with vav consecutive after the cohortative, see *IBHS* 530 §32.2.2b.

5 tn Heb “May I glean and gather among the bundles behind the harvesters?” Others translate, “May I glean and gather [grain] in bundles behind the harvesters?” (cf. NAB; see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 117). For discussion of the terminology and process of harvesting, see O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 59-61.

6 tn Heb “and she came and she has persisted.” The construction *vattavo vata amod* (וַתָּבוֹא וַתֵּאֲמֹד) forms a dependent temporal sequence: “since she came, she has persisted.” Because *amad* (אָמַד, “to stand, remain, persist”; BDB 764 s.v. עָמַד; HALOT 840-42 s.v. עָמַד) has a broad range of meanings, *amad* has been understood in various ways: (1) Ruth had stood all morning waiting to receive permission from Boaz to glean in his field: “she has stood (here waiting)”; (2) Ruth had remained in the field all morning: “she has remained here” (NAB, NASB, NCV); and (3) Ruth had worked hard all morning: “she has worked steadily” (REB), “she has been working” (TEV, CEV), “she has been on her feet (all morning)” (JPS, NJPS, NRSV). For discussion, see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 118-19.

7 tn Heb “and she came and she stood, from then, the morning, and until now, this, her sitting [in] the house a little.” The syntax of the Hebrew text is awkward and the meaning uncertain. For discussion see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 118-19.

8 tn Heb “except this.” The function and meaning of the demonstrative adjective *zeh* (זֶה, “this”) is difficult: (1) MT accentuation joins *zeh* with *shivtah* (שִׁבְתָּהּ, “this her sitting”), suggesting that *zeh* functions as a subject complement (see BDB 261 s.v. *zeh* 2.a and Josh 9:12). (2) Others suggest that *zeh* functions as an emphasizing adverb of time (“just now”; BDB 261 s.v. 4.h) and connect it with *attach* (אַתָּה, “now”) to form the idiom *zeh attach* (זֶה אַתָּה, “now, just now”; BDB 261 s.v. 4.h; GKC 442-43 §136.d; see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 118-19). The entire line is translated variously: KJV “until now, (+ save ASV) that she tarried a little in the house”; NASB “she has been sitting in the house for a little while”; NIV “except for a short rest in the shelter”; NJPS “she has rested but little in the hut”; “her sitting (= resting) in the house (has only been) for a moment.” A paraphrase would be: “She came and has kept at it (= gleaning) from this morning until now, except for this: She has been sitting in the hut only a little while.” The clause as a whole is an exceptive clause: “except for this...”

9 tc The MT vocalizes consonantal *shivtah* as *shivtah* (שִׁבְתָּהּ, “her sitting”; Qal infinitive construct from *yashav*, “to sit” + 3rd person feminine singular suffix), apparently taking the 3rd person feminine singular suffix as a subjective genitive: “she sat [in the hut only a little while]” (so KJV, ASV, NASB, NIV, REB, TEV, NCV, NJPS). On the other hand, LXX κατέπαυσεν (“she rested”) reflects the vocalization *shavtah* (שָׁבְתָהּ, “she rested”); Qal perfect 3rd person feminine singular from *shavat*, “to rest”: “she rested [in the hut only a little while]” (so RSV, NRSV, NAB, CEV, NJB, JPS). The MT reading is more difficult and is therefore probably original.

tn Heb “and she came and she stood, from then, the morning, and until now, this, her sitting [in] the house a little.” The syntax of the Hebrew text is awkward here and the meaning uncertain. F. W. Bush (*Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 118-19) takes עָמַד

(*amad*, “to stand”) in the sense “to stay, remain,” connects *zeh* (זֶה, “this”) with the preceding *attach* (אַתָּה, “now”) as an emphasizing adverb of time (“just now”), and emends שִׁבְתָּהּ הַבַּיִת (שִׁבְתָּהּ הַבַּיִת, “her sitting [in] the house”) to שִׁבְתָּהּ (שִׁבְתָּהּ, “she rested”), omitting הַבַּיִת (*habbayit*) as dittographic. Another option is to translate, “She came and has stood here from this morning until now. She’s been sitting in the house for a short time.” According to this view the servant has made Ruth wait to get permission from Boaz. It is difficult, however, to envision a “house” being in the barley field.

10 tc Several English versions (NAB, NEB, RSV, NRSV, JB, CEV) suggest deleting MT הַבַּיִת (*habbayit*, lit. “the house”) due to dittography with שִׁבְתָּהּ הַבַּיִת (*shivtah*) which precedes; however, several ancient textual witnesses support the MT (medieval Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac, Targum). The LXX reading ἐν τῷ ἀργῷ (*en tō argō*, “in the field”) probably does not represent an alternate Hebrew textual tradition, but merely the translator’s attempt to smooth out a difficult Hebrew text.

tn “[in] the house.” The noun הַבַּיִת (lit. “the house”) functions as an adverbial accusative of location, and probably refers to a “hut, shelter,” providing shade for workers in the field, such as those still used by harvesters in modern Israel (H. A. Hoffner, *TDOT* 2:111-15). This kind of structure is probably referred to using different terms in Isaiah 1:8, “like a shelter (בֵּיתָהּ, *k’sukkah*) in a vineyard, like a hut (בְּמִלְנוּהַ הַחֵט, *kimlunah*) in a field of melons.” Some translations render הַבַּיִת (*habbayit*) literally as “the house” (KJV, NKJV, NASB), while others nuance it as “the shelter” (NIV, NCV, TEV, NLT).

11 tn Heb “a little while.” The adjective מְעַט (*me’at*) functions in a temporal sense (“a little while”; e.g., Job 24:24) or a comparative sense (“a little bit”); see BDB 589-90 s.v. The foreman’s point is that Ruth was a hard worker who only rested a short time.

12 tn Heb “Have you not heard?” The idiomatic, negated rhetorical question is equivalent to an affirmation (see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 119, and GKC 474 §150.e).

13 tn Heb “my daughter.” This form of address is a mild form of endearment, perhaps merely rhetorical. It might suggest that Boaz is older than Ruth, but not necessarily significantly so. A few English versions omit it entirely (e.g., TEV, CEV).

14 tn The switch from the negative particle אַל (*al*, see the preceding statement, “do not leave”) to לֹא (*lo*) may make this statement more emphatic. It may indicate that the statement is a policy applicable for the rest of the harvest (see v. 21).

15 tn Heb “and thus you may stay close with.” The imperfect has a permissive nuance here.

16 sn The female workers would come along behind those who cut the grain and bundle it up. Staying close to the female workers allowed Ruth to collect more grain than would normally be the case (see O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 61, and F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 121).

17 tn Heb “let your eyes be upon” (KJV, NASB similar).

18 tn Heb “they.” The verb is masculine plural, indicating that the male workers are the subject here.

19 tn Heb “and go after them.” The pronominal suffix (“them”) is feminine plural, indicating that the female workers are referred to here.

men¹ to leave you alone.² When you are thirsty, you may go to³ the water jars⁴ and drink some of the water⁵ the servants draw.”⁶

2:10 Ruth⁷ knelt before him with her forehead to the ground⁸ and said to him, “Why are you so kind⁹ and so attentive to me,¹⁰ even though¹¹ I am a foreigner?”¹² **2:11** Boaz replied to her,¹³ “I have been given a full report of¹⁴ all

that you have done for your mother-in-law following the death of your husband – how you left¹⁵ your father and your mother, as well as your homeland, and came to live among people you did not know previously.¹⁶ **2:12** May the LORD reward your efforts!¹⁷ May your acts of kindness be repaid fully¹⁸ by the LORD God of Israel, from whom you have sought protection!”¹⁹ **2:13** She said, “You really are being kind to me,²⁰ sir,²¹ for you have reassured²² and encouraged²³ me, your servant,²⁴ even though I am²⁵ not one of your servants!”²⁶

2:14 Later during the mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come here and have²⁷ some food! Dip your bread²⁸ in the vinegar!” So she sat down beside the harvesters. Then he handed²⁹ her some roasted grain. She ate until she was full and saved the rest.³⁰ **2:15** When she got up to gather grain, Boaz told³¹ his male servants, “Let

¹ **tn** Male servants are in view here, as the masculine plural form of the noun indicates (cf. KJV, NAB, NRSV “the young men”).

² **tn** *Heb* “Have I not commanded the servants not to touch [i.e., “harm”] you?” The idiomatic, negated rhetorical question is equivalent to an affirmation (see v. 8). The perfect is either instantaneous, indicating completion of the action concurrent with the statement (see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 107, 121-22, who translates, “I am herewith ordering”) or emphatic/rhetorical, indicating the action is as good as done.

³ **tn** The juxtaposition of two perfects, each with *vav* consecutive, here indicates a conditional sentence (see GKC 337 §112.kk).

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “vessels (so KJV, NAB, NRSV), receptacles”; NCV “water jugs.”

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “drink [some] of that which” (KJV similar); in the context “water” is implied.

⁶ **tn** The imperfect here either indicates characteristic or typical activity, or anterior future, referring to a future action (drawing water) which logically precedes another future action (drinking).

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “she”; the referent (Ruth) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “she fell upon her face and bowed to the ground” (KJV, NASB similar).

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “Why do I find favor in your eyes...?” The expression *מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינַי* (*matsa' khen b'ency*, “to find favor in the eyes of [someone]”) is often characterized by the following features: (1) A subordinate or servant is requesting permission for something from a superior (master, owner, king). (2) The granting of the request is not a certainty but dependent on whether or not the superior is pleased with the subordinate to do so. (3) The granting of the request by the superior is an act of kindness or benevolence; however, it sometimes reciprocates loyalty previously shown by the subordinate to the superior (e.g., Gen 30:27; 32:6; 33:8, 10, 15; 34:11; 39:4; 47:25, 29; 50:4; Num 32:5; Deut 24:1; 1 Sam 1:18; 16:22; 20:3, 29; 27:3; 2 Sam 14:22; 16:4; 1 Kgs 11:19; Esth 5:8; 7:3; BDB 336 s.v. חָן). While Boaz had granted her request for permission to glean in his field, she is amazed at the degree of kindness he had shown – especially since she had done nothing, in her own mind, to merit such a display. However, Boaz explains that she had indeed shown kindness to him indirectly through her devotion to Naomi (v. 11).

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “Why do I find favor in your eyes by [you] recognizing me.” The infinitive construct with prefixed *לְ* (*lamed*) here indicates manner (“by”).

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “and I am a foreigner.” The disjunctive clause (note the pattern *vav* + subject + predicate nominative) here has a circumstantial (i.e., concessive) function (“even though”).

¹² **sn** The similarly spelled Hebrew terms *נָכַר* (*nakhar*, “to notice”) and *נָכְרִי* (*nokhriy*, “foreigner”) in this verse form a homonymic wordplay. This highlights the unexpected nature of the attentiveness and concern Boaz displayed to Ruth.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “answered and said to her” (so NASB). For stylistic reasons this has been translated as “replied to her.”

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “it has been fully reported to me.” The infinitive absolute here emphasizes the following finite verb from the same root. Here it emphasizes either the clarity of the report or its completeness. See R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth* (NICOT), 153, n. 6. Most English versions tend to downplay the nuance of completeness (e.g., KJV “fully been shewed”; NAB “a complete account”; NASB, NRSV “All that you have done”).

¹⁵ **tn** The *vav* (ו) consecutive construction here has a specifying function. This and the following clause elaborate on the preceding general statement and explain more specifically what she did for her mother-in-law.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “yesterday and the third day.” This Hebrew idiom means “previously, in the past” (Exod 5:7,8,14; Exod 21:29,36; Deut 4:42; 19:4,6; Josh 3:4; 1 Sam 21:5; 2 Sam 3:17; 1 Chr 11:2).

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “repay your work”; KJV, ASV “recompense thy work.” The prefixed verbal form is understood as a jussive of prayer (note the jussive form in the next clause).

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “may your wages be complete”; NCV “May your wages be paid in full.” The prefixed verbal form is a distinct jussive form, indicating that this is a prayer for blessing.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “under whose wings you have sought shelter”; NIV, NLT “have come to take refuge.”

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “I am finding favor in your eyes.” In v. 10, where Ruth uses the perfect, she simply states the fact that Boaz is kind. Here the Hebrew text switches to the imperfect, thus emphasizing the ongoing attitude of kindness displayed by Boaz. Many English versions treat this as a request: KJV “Let me find favour in thy sight”; NAB “May I prove worthy of your kindness”; NIV “May I continue to find favor in your eyes.”

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “my master”; KJV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV “my lord.”

²² **tn** Or “comforted” (so NAB, NASB, NRSV, NLT).

²³ **tn** *Heb* “spoken to the heart of.” As F. W. Bush points out, the idiom here means “to reassure, encourage” (*Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 124).

²⁴ **tn** Ruth here uses a word (*שִׁפְחָה*, *shifk'kha*) that describes the lowest level of female servant (see 1 Sam 25:41). Note Ruth 3:9 where she uses the word *אִמָּה* (*amah*), which refers to a higher class of servant.

²⁵ **tn** The imperfect verbal form of *הָיָה* (*hayah*) is used here. F. W. Bush shows from usage elsewhere that the form should be taken as future (*Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 124-25).

²⁶ **tn** The disjunctive clause (note the pattern *vav* [ו] + subject + verb) is circumstantial (or concessive) here (“even though”).

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “eat” (so KJV, NRSV).

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “your portion”; NRSV “your morsel.”

²⁹ **tn** The Hebrew verb *סָבַב* (*tsavat*) occurs only here in the OT. Cf. KJV, ASV “he reached her”; NASB “he served her”; NIV “he offered her”; NRSV “he heaped up for her.” For discussion of its meaning, including the etymological evidence, see BDB 840 s.v.; R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth* (NICOT), 174; and F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 125-26.

³⁰ **tn** *Heb* “and she ate and she was satisfied and she had some left over” (NASB similar).

³¹ **tn** Or “commanded” (so KJV, NASB, NCV).

her gather grain even among¹ the bundles! Don't chase her off!² **2:16** Make sure you pull out³ ears of grain for her and drop them so she can gather them up. Don't tell her not to!⁴ **2:17** So she gathered grain in the field until evening. When she threshed⁵ what she had gathered, it came to about thirty pounds⁶ of barley!

Ruth Returns to Naomi

2:18 She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw⁷ how much grain⁸ she had gathered. Then Ruth⁹ gave her the roasted grain she had saved from mealtime.¹⁰ **2:19** Her mother-in-law asked her,¹¹ "Where did you gather grain today? Where did you work? May the one who

took notice of you be rewarded!"¹² So Ruth¹³ told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked. She said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz." **2:20** Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be rewarded by the LORD because he¹⁴ has shown loyalty to the living on behalf of the dead!"¹⁵ Then Naomi said to her, "This man is a close relative of ours; he is our guardian."¹⁶ **2:21** Ruth the Moabite replied, "He even¹⁷ told me, 'You may go along beside my servants¹⁸ until they have finished gathering all my harvest!'"¹⁹ **2:22** Naomi then said to her daughter-in-law Ruth, "It is good, my daughter, that you should go out to work with his female servants.²⁰ That way you will not be harmed,

¹² **tn** Or "blessed" (so NAB, NIV, NRSV). The same expression occurs in the following verse.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "she"; the referent (Ruth) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁴ **tn** Many English versions translate this statement, "May he [Boaz] be blessed by the LORD, who has not abandoned his loyalty to the living and dead." In this case the antecedent of אֲשֶׁר ('*asher*', "who") would be the immediately preceding "the LORD." However, this understanding of the construction is not accurate. The antecedent of אֲשֶׁר is Boaz, not the LORD. Elsewhere when אֲשֶׁר follows the blessing formula בְּרִיךְ (*barukh*, Qal passive participle) + proper name/pronoun, it always introduces the reason the recipient of the blessing deserves a reward. (For this reason one could analyze אֲשֶׁר as a causal conjunction in this construction.) If אֲשֶׁר refers to the LORD here, then this verse, unlike others using the construction, gives no such reason for the recipient being blessed. 2 Sam 2:5, which provides the closest structural parallel to Ruth 2:20, supports this interpretation: בְּרִכְיָם אֲתָם לַיהוָה אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂי: תָּם וְרַחֲמֵי יְהוָה עִם אֲדֹנֵיכֶם עִם שְׂאוּל הַלֹּדֶד. "May you [plural] be blessed by the LORD, you who [plural]/because you [plural] have extended such kindness to your master Saul." Here אֲשֶׁר refers back to the second plural pronoun אֲתָם ('*atem*', "you") in the formula, as the second plural verb עָשִׂי (*asitem*) after אֲשֶׁר indicates. Though יְהוָה (*yehwah*) is in closer proximity to אֲשֶׁר, it is not the antecedent. The evidence suggests that Ruth 2:20 should be translated and interpreted as follows: "May he [Boaz] be blessed by the LORD, he who [i.e., Boaz]/because he [i.e., Boaz] has not abandoned his loyalty to the living and dead." Cf. NIV, NCV, CEV, NLT. See B. A. Rebera, "Yahweh or Boaz? Ruth 2.20 Reconsidered," *BT* 36 (1985): 317-27, and F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 134-36. By caring for the impoverished widows' physical needs, Boaz had demonstrated loyalty to both the living (the impoverished widows) and the dead (their late husbands). See R. B. Chisholm, *From Exegesis to Exposition*, 72.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* "to the living and the dead" (so KJV, NASB).

¹⁶ **tn** The Hebrew term גַּאֲלָה (*ga'al*) is sometimes translated "redeemer" here (NIV "one of our kinsman-redeemers"; NLT "one of our family redeemers"). In this context Boaz, as a "redeemer," functions as a guardian of the family interests who has responsibility for caring for the widows of his deceased kinsmen.

¹⁷ **tn** On the force of the phrase גַּם כִּי (*gam ki*) here, see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 138-39.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "with the servants who are mine you may stay close." The imperfect has a permissive nuance here. The word "servants" is masculine plural.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* "until they have finished all the harvest which is mine"; NIV "until they finish harvesting all my grain."

²⁰ **tn** Naomi uses the feminine form of the word "servant" (as Boaz did earlier, see v. 8), in contrast to Ruth's use of the masculine form in the preceding verse. Since she is concerned for Ruth's safety, she may be subtly reminding Ruth to stay with the female workers and not get too close to the men.

¹ **tn** *Heb* "even between"; NCV "even around."

² **tn** *Heb* "do not humiliate her"; cf. KJV "reproach her not"; NASB "do not insult her"; NIV "don't embarrass her." This probably refers to a verbal rebuke which would single her out and embarrass her (see v. 16). See R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth* (NICOT), 176-77, and F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 126.

³ **tn** The infinitive absolute precedes the finite verb for emphasis. Here שָׁלַל (*shalal*, "pull out") is a homonym of the more common Hebrew verb meaning "to plunder." An Arabic cognate is used of drawing a sword out of a scabbard (see BDB 1021 s.v.).

⁴ **tn** *Heb* "do not rebuke her" (so NASB, NRSV); CEV "don't speak harshly to her"; NLT "don't give her a hard time."

⁵ **tn** *Heb* "she beat out" (so NAB, NASB, NRSV, NLT). Ruth probably used a stick to separate the kernels of grain from the husks. See O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 63.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* "there was an ephah." An ephah was a dry measure, equivalent to one-tenth of a homer (see HALOT 43 s.v. אֵפָה). An ephah was equivalent to a "bath," a liquid measure. Jars labeled "bath" found at archaeological sites in Israel could contain approximately 5.8 gallons, or one-half to two-thirds of a bushel. Thus an ephah of barley would have weighed about 29 to 30 pounds (just over 13 kg). See R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth* (NICOT), 179.

⁷ **sn** This was a huge amount of barley for one woman to gather in a single day. It testifies both to Ruth's industry and to Boaz's generosity.

⁸ **tc** MT vocalizes הָרִיא as the Qal verb וָרִיא (*vattere*, "and she saw"), consequently of "her mother-in-law" as subject and "what she gathered" as the direct object: "her mother-in-law saw what she gathered." A few medieval Hebrew MSS (also reflected in Syriac and Vulgate) have the Hiphil אָרִיא (*vattar*, "and she showed"), consequently taking "her mother-in-law" as the direct object and "what she gathered" as the double direct-object: "she showed her mother-in-law what she had gathered" (cf. NAB, TEV, CEV, NLT). Although the latter has the advantage of making Ruth the subject of all the verbs in this verse, it would be syntactically difficult. For one would expect the accusative sign הָא (*et*) before "her mother-in-law" if it were the direct object of a Hiphil verb in a sentence with a double direct object introduced by the accusative sign הָא, e.g., "to show (Hiphil of הָרִיא, *ra'ah*) your servant (direct object marked by accusative sign הָא) your greatness (double direct object marked by accusative sign הָא) (Deut 3:24). Therefore the MT reading is preferred.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* "that which"; the referent (how much grain) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* "she"; the referent (Ruth) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "and she brought out and gave to her that which she had left over from her being satisfied."

¹² **tn** *Heb* "said to her." Since what follows is a question, the translation uses "asked her" here.

which could happen in another field.¹⁴ 2:23 So Ruth² worked beside³ Boaz's female servants, gathering grain until the end of the barley harvest as well as the wheat harvest.⁴ After that she stayed home with her mother-in-law.⁵

Naomi Instructs Ruth

3:1 At that time,⁶ Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home for you so you will be secure.⁷ 3:2 Now Boaz, with whose female servants you worked, is our close relative.⁸ Look, tonight he is winnowing barley at the threshing floor.⁹ 3:3 So bathe yourself,¹⁰ rub on some perfumed oil,¹¹ and get dressed up.¹² Then go down¹³ to the threshing

floor. But don't let the man know you're there until he finishes his meal.¹⁴ 3:4 When he gets ready to go to sleep,¹⁵ take careful notice of the place where he lies down. Then go, uncover his legs,¹⁶ and lie down¹⁷ beside him.¹⁸ He will tell¹⁹ you what you should do." 3:5 Ruth replied to Naomi,²⁰ "I will do everything you have told²¹ me²² to do."²³

Ruth Visits Boaz

3:6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law had in-

¹ **tn** Heb "and they will not harm you in another field"; NRSV "otherwise you might be bothered in another field."

² **tn** Heb "she"; the referent (Ruth) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³ **tn** Heb "and she stayed close with"; NIV, NRSV, CEV "stayed close to"; NCV "continued working closely with."

⁴ **sn** Barley was harvested from late March through late April, wheat from late April to late May (O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Ancient Israel*, 88, 91).

⁵ **tn** Heb "and she lived with her mother-in-law" (so NASB). Some interpret this to mean that she lived with her mother-in-law while working in the harvest. In other words, she worked by day and then came home to Naomi each evening. Others understand this to mean that following the harvest she stayed at home each day with Naomi and no longer went out looking for work (see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 140). Others even propose that she lived away from home during this period, but this seems unlikely. A few Hebrew mss (so also Latin Vulgate) support this view by reading, "and she returned to her mother-in-law."

⁶ **tn** The phrase "sometime later" does not appear in Hebrew but is supplied to mark the implicit shift in time from the events in chapter 2.

⁷ **tn** Heb "My daughter, should I not seek for you a resting place so that it may go well for you [or which will be good for you]?" The idiomatic, negated rhetorical question is equivalent to an affirmation (see 2:8-9) and has thus been translated in the affirmative (so also NAB, NCV, NRSV, TEV, CEV, NLT).

⁸ **tn** Heb "Is not Boaz our close relative, with whose female servants you were?" The idiomatic, negated rhetorical question is equivalent to an affirmation (see Ruth 2:8-9; 3:1) and has thus been translated in the affirmative (so also NCV, NRSV, TEV, CEV, NLT).

⁹ **tn** Heb "look, he is winnowing the barley threshing floor tonight."

sn Winnowing the threshed grain involved separating the kernels of grain from the straw and chaff. The grain would be thrown into the air, allowing the wind to separate the kernels (see O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 65-66). The threshing floor itself was usually located outside town in a place where the prevailing west wind could be used to advantage (Borowski, 62-63).

¹⁰ **tn** The perfect with prefixed *vav* (ו) consecutive here introduces a series of instructions. See GKC 335 §112.aa for other examples of this construction.

¹¹ **tn** For the meaning of the verb *סוּךְ* (*sukh*), see HALOT 745-46 s.v. II סוּךְ, and F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 150. Cf. NAB, NRSV "anoint yourself"; NIV "perfume yourself"; NLT "put on perfume."

¹² **tc** The consonantal text (*Kethib*) has the singular שְׂמֹלֶתְךָ (*simlotekh*, "your outer garment"), while the marginal reading (*Qere*) has the plural שְׂמֹלֹתֶיךָ (*simlotayikh*) which might function as a plural of number ("your outer garments") or a plural of composition ("your outer garment [composed of several parts])."

¹³ **tn** Heb "and put your outer garment on yourself"; NAB "put on your best attire." The noun שְׂמֹלֶת (*simlah*) may refer

to clothes in general (see R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth* [NICOT], 197, n. 7) or a long outer garment (see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 150-51). Mourners often wore mourning clothes and refrained from washing or using cosmetics (Gen 38:14, 19; 2 Sam 12:20; 14:2), so Ruth's attire and appearance would signal that her period of mourning was over and she was now available for remarriage (see Bush, 152).

¹³ **tc** The consonantal text (*Kethib*) has יֵרָדְתִּי (יֵרָדְתִּי *yaradti*, "then I will go down"; Qal perfect 1st person common singular), while the marginal reading (*Qere*) is יֵרָדְתִּי (יֵרָדְתִּי *yaradt*, "then you go down"; Qal perfect 2nd person feminine singular) which makes more much sense in context. It is possible that the *Kethib* preserves an archaic spelling of the 2nd person feminine singular form (see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 144-45).

¹⁴ **tn** Heb "until he finishes eating and drinking"; NASB, NIV, NRSV, TEV, CEV "until he has finished."

¹⁵ **tn** Heb "and let it be when he lies down"; NAB "But when he lies down."

¹⁶ **tn** Some define the noun כַּרְסֵי לֶגְגִּים (*marg'lot*) as "the place for the feet" (see HALOT 631 s.v.; cf. KJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, NLT), but in Dan 10:6 the word refers to the legs, or "region of the legs." For this reason "legs" or "lower body" is the preferred translation (see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 152). Because "foot" is sometimes used euphemistically for the genitals, some feel that Ruth uncovered Boaz's genitals. For a critique of this view see Bush, 153. While Ruth and Boaz did not actually have a sexual encounter at the threshing floor, there is no doubt that Ruth's actions are symbolic and constitute a marriage proposal.

¹⁷ **tc** The consonantal text (*Kethib*) has וְיִשְׁכַּבְתִּי (v'ishkavti, "then I will lie down"; Qal perfect 1st person common singular), while the marginal reading (*Qere*) is וְיִשְׁכַּבְתִּי (v'shakhavt, "then you lie down"; Qal perfect 2nd person feminine singular) which makes more sense. It is possible that the *Kethib* preserves an archaic spelling of the 2nd person feminine singular form (see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 144-45).

¹⁸ **tn** The words "beside him" are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons; cf. NLT "lie down there."

¹⁹ **tn** The disjunctive clause structure (*vav* [ו] + subject + verb) highlights this final word of instruction or signals the conclusion of the instructions.

²⁰ **tn** Heb "she said to her." The referents (Ruth and Naomi) have been specified in the translation for clarity.

²¹ **tn** The Hebrew imperfect is used, even though Naomi's instructions appear to be concluded. The imperfect can sometimes express actions which although (strictly speaking) are already finished, yet are regarded as still lasting into the present, or continuing to operate in it (GKC 316 §107.h).

²² **tc** The MT (*Kethib*) lacks the preposition אֵלַי (*'elay*, "to me") which is attested in the marginal reading (*Qere*). Many medieval Hebrew mss agree with the marginal reading (*Qere*) by including the phrase.

²³ **tn** Heb "everything which you are saying I will do." The Hebrew word order emphasizes Ruth's intention to follow Naomi's instructions to the letter.

structed her to do.¹ 3:7 When Boaz had finished his meal and was feeling satisfied, he lay down to sleep at the far end of the grain heap.² Then Ruth³ crept up quietly,⁴ uncovered his legs,⁵ and lay down beside him.⁶ 3:8 In the middle of the night he was startled⁷ and turned over.⁸ Now⁹ he saw a woman¹⁰ lying beside him!¹¹ 3:9 He said, “Who are you?”¹² She replied, “I am Ruth, your servant.¹³ Marry your servant,¹⁴ for you are a guardian of the family interests.”¹⁵ 3:10 He said,

“May you be rewarded¹⁶ by the LORD, my dear!¹⁷ This act of devotion¹⁸ is greater than what you did before.¹⁹ For you have not sought to marry²⁰ one of the young men, whether rich or poor.²¹ 3:11 Now, my dear, don’t worry!²² I intend to do for you everything you propose,²³ for everyone in the village²⁴ knows that you are a worthy woman.²⁵ 3:12 Now yes, it is true that²⁶ I

¹ **tn** *Heb* “and she did according to all which her mother-in-law commanded her” (NASB similar). Verse 6 is a summary statement, while the following verses (vv. 7-15) give the particulars.

² **tn** *Heb* “and Boaz ate and drank and his heart was well and he went to lie down at the end of the heap”; NAB “at the edge of the sheaves.”

³ **tn** *Heb* “she”; the referent (Ruth) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁴ **sn** Ruth must have waited until Boaz fell asleep, for he does not notice when she uncovers his legs and lies down beside him.

⁵ **tn** See the note on the word “legs” in v. 4.

⁶ **tn** The words “beside him” are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons. Cf. TEV “at his feet”; CEV “near his feet.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “trembled, shuddered”; CEV, NLT “suddenly woke up.” Perhaps he shivered because he was chilled.

⁸ **tn** The verb לָפַת (*lafat*) occurs only here, Job 6:18, and Judg 16:29 (where it seems to mean “grab hold of”). Here the verb seems to carry the meaning “bend, twist, turn,” like its Arabic cognate (see HALOT 533 s.v. לָפַת, and F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 163).

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “and behold” (so KJV, NASB). The narrator invites the reader to view the situation through Boaz’s eyes.

¹⁰ **sn** *Now he saw a woman*. The narrator writes from Boaz’s perspective. Both the narrator and the reader know the night visitor is Ruth, but from Boaz’s perspective she is simply “a woman.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “[at] his legs.” See the note on the word “legs” in v. 4.

¹² **tn** When Boaz speaks, he uses the feminine form of the pronoun, indicating that he knows she is a woman.

¹³ **tn** Here Ruth uses אָמָה (*amah*), a more elevated term for a female servant than שִׁפְחָה (*shifkha*), the word used in 2:13. In Ruth 2, where Ruth has just arrived from Moab and is very much aware of her position as a foreigner (v. 10), she acknowledges Boaz’s kindness and emphasizes her own humility by using the term שִׁפְחָה, though she admits that she does not even occupy that lowly position on the social scale. However, here in chap. 3, where Naomi sends her to Boaz to seek marriage, she uses the more elevated term אָמָה to describe herself because she is now aware of Boaz’s responsibility as a close relative of her deceased husband and she wants to challenge him to fulfill his obligation. In her new social context she is dependent on Boaz (hence the use of אָמָה), but she is no mere שִׁפְחָה.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and spread your wing [or skirt] over your servant.” Many medieval Hebrew mss have the plural/dual “your wings” rather than the singular “your wing, skirt.” The latter is more likely here in the context of Ruth’s marriage proposal. In the metaphorical account in Ezek 16:8, God spreads his skirt over naked Jerusalem as an act of protection and as a precursor to marriage. Thus Ruth’s words can be taken, in effect, as a marriage proposal (and are so translated here; cf. TEV “So please marry me”). See F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 164-65.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “for you are a גֹּאֵל [*go’el*],” sometimes translated “redeemer” (cf. NIV “a kinsman-redeemer”; NLT “my family redeemer”). In this context Boaz, as a “redeemer,” functions as a guardian of the family interests who has responsibility for caring for the widows of his deceased kinsmen. For a discussion of the legal background, see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 166-69.

sn By proposing marriage, Ruth goes beyond the letter of Naomi’s instructions (see v. 4, where Naomi told Ruth that Boaz would tell her what to do). Though she is more aggressive than Naomi told her to be, she is still carrying out the intent of Naomi’s instructions, which were designed to lead to marriage.

¹⁶ **tn** Or “blessed” (so NASB, NRSV).

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “my daughter.” This form of address is a mild form of endearment, perhaps merely rhetorical. A few English versions omit it entirely (e.g., TEV, CEV). The same expression occurs in v. 11.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “latter [act of] devotion”; NRSV “this last instance of your loyalty.”

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “you have made the latter act of devotion better than the former”; NIV “than that which you showed earlier.”

sn *Greater than what you did before*. Ruth’s former act of devotion was her decision to remain and help Naomi. The latter act of devotion is her decision to marry Boaz to provide a child to carry on her deceased husband’s (and Elimelech’s) line and to provide for Naomi in her old age (see Ruth 4:5, 10, 15).

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “by not going after the young men” (NASB similar); TEV “You might have gone looking for a young man.”

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “whether poor or rich” (so KJV, NAB, NASB, NRSV); the more common English idiom reverses the order (“rich or poor”; cf. NIV, NCV, TEV, CEV, NLT).

sn *Whether rich or poor*. This statement seems to indicate that Ruth could have married anyone. However, only by marrying a גֹּאֵל (*go’el*, “family guardian”; traditionally “redeemer”) could she carry on her dead husband’s line and make provision for Naomi.

²² **tn** *Heb* “do not fear” (so NASB); NRSV “do not be afraid.”

²³ **tn** *Heb* “everything which you are saying I will do for you.” The Hebrew word order emphasizes Boaz’s intention to fulfill Ruth’s request. As in v. 5, the Hebrew imperfect is used (note “you are saying”), even though Ruth’s request appears to be concluded. According to GKC 3:16 §107.h, the imperfect can sometimes “express actions, etc., which although, strictly speaking, they are already finished, are regarded as still lasting on into the present time, or continuing to operate in it.” The imperfect אֶעֱשֶׂה (*e’eseh*) could be translated “I will do” (so NAB, NIV, NRSV, NLT), but since there are legal complications which must first be resolved, it is better to take the form as indicating Boaz’s desire or intention, if the legal matters can be worked out.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “all the gate of the town,” which by metonymy could refer to everyone in town (NIV “All my fellow townsmen”; NLT “everyone in town”), or only to the leaders and prominent citizens of the community (Boaz’s peers) who transacted business and made legal decisions at the town gate (NRSV “all the assembly of my people”).

²⁵ **tn** Or “woman of strong character” (cf. NIV “woman of noble character”). The same phrase is used in Prov 31:10 to describe the ideal wife. Prov 31 emphasizes the ideal wife’s industry, her devotion to her family, and her concern for others, characteristics which Ruth had demonstrated.

²⁶ **tc** The sequence בִּי אֲנִימָה *ki’omnam ki’im; Kethib*) occurs only here in the OT, as does the sequence בִּי אֲנִימָה *ki’im; Qere*). It is likely that אֲנִימָה *ki’im* is dittographic (note the preceding sequence בִּי אֲנִימָה). The translation assumes that the original text was simply the otherwise unattested בִּי אֲנִימָה, with אֲנִימָה and בִּי both having an asseverative (or emphatic) function.

am a guardian,¹ but there is another guardian who is a closer relative than I am. 3:13 Remain here tonight. Then in the morning, if he agrees to marry you,² fine,³ let him do so.⁴ But if he does not want to do so, I promise, as surely as the LORD lives, to marry you.⁵ Sleep here until morning.⁶ 3:14 So she slept beside him⁷ until morning. She woke up while it was still dark.⁸ Boaz thought,⁹ “No one must know that a woman visited the threshing floor.”¹⁰ 3:15 Then he said, “Hold out the shawl¹¹ you are wearing¹² and grip it tightly.” As she held it tightly, he measured out about sixty pounds¹³ of barley into the shawl and put it on her shoulders. Then he¹⁴ went into town, 3:16 and she returned to her mother-in-law.

Ruth Returns to Naomi

When Ruth returned to her mother-in-law, Naomi¹⁵ asked¹⁶ “How did things turn out for you,¹⁷ my daughter?” Ruth¹⁸ told her about all the man had done for her.¹⁹ 3:17 She said, “He gave me these sixty pounds of barley, for he said to me,²⁰ ‘Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”²¹ 3:18 Then Naomi²² said, “Stay put,²³ my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out. For the man will not rest until he has taken care of the matter today.”

Boaz Settles the Matter

4:1 Now Boaz went up²⁴ to the village gate and sat there. Then along came the guardian²⁵ whom Boaz had mentioned to Ruth!²⁶ Boaz said, “Come²⁷ here and sit down, ‘John Doe!’”²⁸ So

¹ **tn** Sometimes translated “redeemer” (also later in this verse). See the note on the phrase “guardian of the family interests” in v. 9.

² **tn** *Heb* “if he redeems you”; NIV “if he wants to redeem”; NRSV “if he will act as next-of-kin for you.” The verb גָּאֵל (*go'el*) here refers generally to fulfilling his responsibilities as a guardian of the family interests. In this case it specifically entails marrying Ruth.

³ **tn** Or “good” (so NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV); TEV “well and good.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “let him redeem” (so NIV); NLT “then let him marry you.”

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “but if he does not want to redeem you, then I will redeem you, I, [as] the LORD lives” (NASB similar).

⁶ **sn** Sleep here. Perhaps Boaz tells her to remain at the threshing floor because he is afraid she might be hurt wandering back home in the dark. See Song 5:7 and R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth* (NICOT), 218.

⁷ **tc** The consonantal text (*Kethib*) has the singular מְגִלָּתוֹ (*meḡlatav*, “his leg”); with the marginal reading (*Qere*) has the plural מְגִלּוֹתָיו (*meḡlotav*, “his legs”).

tn *Heb* “[at] his legs.” See the note on the word “legs” in v. 4.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “and she arose before a man could recognize his companion”; NRSV “before one person could recognize another”; CEV “before daylight.”

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “and he said” (so KJV, NASB, NIV). Some translate “he thought [to himself]” (cf. NCV).

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “let it not be known that the woman came [to] the threshing floor” (NASB similar). The article on הַאִשָּׁה (*ha'ishah*, “the woman”) is probably dittographic (note the final *he* on the preceding verb בָּהָא [*va'ah*, “she came”]).

¹¹ **tn** Or “cloak” (so NAB, NRSV, NLT); CEV “cape.” The Hebrew noun occurs only here and in Isa 3:22.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “which [is] upon you”; NIV, NRSV “you are wearing.”

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “and she gripped it tightly and he measured out six of barley and placed upon her.” The unit of measure is not indicated in the Hebrew text, although it would probably have been clear to the original hearers of the account. Six ephahs, the equivalent of 180-300 pounds, is clearly too heavy, especially if carried in a garment. Six omers (an omer being a tenth of an ephah) seems too little, since this would have amounted to six-tenths of an ephah, less than Ruth had gleaned in a single day (cf. 2:17). Thus a seah (one third of an ephah) may be in view here; six seahs would amount to two ephahs, about 60 pounds (27 kg). See R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth* (NICOT), 222, and F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 178.

¹⁴ **tc** The MT preserves the 3rd person masculine singular form וָיָחַד (*vayyavo*, “then he went”; cf. ASV, NAB, NIV, NCV, NRSV, NLT), while many medieval MSS (supported by the Syriac and Vulgate) have the 3rd person feminine singular form וָיָחַדָּה (*vattavo*, “then she went”; cf. KJV, NASB, TEV).

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “she”; the referent (Naomi) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “said.” Since what follows is a question, the present translation uses “asked” here.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “Who are you?” In this context Naomi is clearly not asking for Ruth’s identity. Here the question has the semantic force “Are you his wife?” See R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth* (NICOT), 223-24, and F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 184-85.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “she”; the referent (Ruth) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁹ **sn** All that the man had done. This would have included his promise to marry her and his gift of barley.

²⁰ **tc** The MT (*Kethib*) lacks the preposition אֵלַי (*'elay*, “to me”) which is attested in the marginal reading (*Qere*).

²¹ **sn** ‘Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’ In addition to being a further gesture of kindness on Boaz’s part, the gift of barley served as a token of his intention to fulfill his responsibility as family guardian. See R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth* (NICOT), 225-26, and F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 187.

²² **tn** *Heb* “she”; the referent (Naomi) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²³ **tn** *Heb* “sit”; KJV “Sit still”; NAB “Wait here”; NLT “Just be patient.”

²⁴ **tn** The disjunctive clause structure (note the pattern *vav* [י] + subject + verb) here signals the beginning of a new scene.

²⁵ **tn** Sometimes translated “redeemer.” See the note on the phrase “guardian of the family interests” in 3:9.

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “look, the guardian was passing by of whom Boaz had spoken.”

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “turn aside” (so KJV, NASB); NIV, TEV, NLT “Come over here.”

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “a certain one”; KJV, ASV “such a one.” The expression פְּלוֹנֵי אֲדָמוֹנִי (*pe'loni 'admoni*) is not the name of the nearest relative, but an idiom which literally means “such and such” or “a certain one” (BDB 811-12 s.v. פְּלוֹנִי), which is used when one wishes to be ambiguous (1 Sam 21:3; 2 Kgs 6:8). Certainly Boaz would have known his relative’s name, especially in such a small village, and would have uttered his actual name. However the narrator refuses to record his name in a form of poetic justice because he refused to preserve Mahlon’s “name” (lineage) by marrying his widow (see 4:5, 9-10). This close relative, who is a literary foil for Boaz, refuses to fulfill the role of family guardian. Because he does nothing memorable, he remains anonymous in a chapter otherwise filled with names. His anonymity contrasts sharply with Boaz’s prominence in the story and the fame he attains through the child born to Ruth. Because the actual name of this relative is not recorded, the translation of this expression is difficult since contemporary English style expects either a name or title. This is usually supplied in modern translations: “friend” (NASB, NIV, RSV, NRSV, NLT), “so-and-so” (JPS, NJPS). Perhaps “Mr. So-And-So!” or “Mr. No-Name!” makes the point. For discussion see Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of*

he came¹ and sat down. 4:2 Boaz chose ten of the village leaders² and said, “Sit down here!” So they sat down. 4:3 Then Boaz said to the guardian,³ “Naomi, who has returned from the region of Moab, is selling⁴ the portion of land that belongs to our relative Elimelech. 4:4 So I am legally informing you:⁵ Acquire it before those sitting here and before the leaders of my people!⁶ If you want to exercise your right to redeem it, then do so.⁷ But if not, then tell me⁸ so I will know.⁹ For you possess the first option to redeem it; I am next in line after you.”¹⁰ He replied, “I will redeem it.” 4:5 Then Boaz said,

“When¹¹ you acquire the field¹² from Naomi,¹³ you must also¹⁴ acquire Ruth the Moabite,¹⁵ the wife of our deceased relative,¹⁶ in order to preserve his family name by raising up a descendant who will inherit his property.”¹⁷ 4:6 The guardian said, “Then I am unable to redeem it, for I would ruin my own inheritance¹⁸ in that case.

Biblical Narrative, 99-101; R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth* (NICOT), 233-35; F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 196-97. In the present translation “John Doe” is used since it is a standard designation for someone who is a party to legal proceedings whose true name is unknown.

1 tñ Heb “and he turned aside” (so KJV, NASB); NRSV “And he went over.”

2 tñ Heb “and he took ten men from the elders of the town.”

3 tñ Or “redeemer.” See the note on the phrase “guardian of the family interests” in 3:9.

4 tñ The perfect form of the verb here describes as a simple fact an action that is underway (cf. NIV, NRSV, CEV, NLT); NAB “is putting up for sale.”

sn Naomi...is selling. The nature of the sale is uncertain. Naomi may have been selling the property rights to the land, but this seems unlikely in light of what is known about ancient Israelite property laws. It is more likely that Naomi, being a woman, held only the right to use the land until the time of her remarriage or death (F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 202-4). Because she held this right to use of the land, she also had the right to buy it back from the its current owner. (This assumes that Elimelech sold the land prior to going to Moab.) Since she did not possess the means to do so, however, she decided to dispose of her rights in the matter. She was not selling the land per se, but disposing of the right to its redemption and use, probably in exchange for room and board with the purchaser (Bush, 211-15). If this is correct, it might be preferable to translate, “Naomi is disposing of her rights to the portion of land,” although such a translation presumes some knowledge of ancient Israelite property laws.

5 tñ Heb “and I said [or perhaps, “thought to myself”], ‘I will [or “must”] uncover your ear, saying”]; NAB “So I thought I would inform you”; NIV “I thought I should bring the matter to your attention.”

6 tñ The phrase “before those sitting here and before the leaders of my people” appears to refer to the leaders who were specially chosen as witnesses (v. 2) and the larger group of community leaders standing by. It is possible, however, that the phrases “before those sitting here” and “before the leaders of my people” are appositional and that both refer to the ten leaders mentioned in v. 2 (cf. NLT “in the presence of these witnesses”).

7 tñ Heb “if you will redeem, redeem” (KJV, NASB, NRSV all similar); NCV “If you want to buy back the land, then buy it.”

8 tñ Heb “but if he will not redeem, tell me.” Most English versions emend the third person verb form (“he”) to the second person form because Boaz is addressing the closer relative. But it is possible that he briefly addresses the witnesses and refers to the closer relative in the third person. See J. M. Sasson, *Ruth*, 118.

9 tñ Following the imperative, the prefixed verb form with *vav* indicates purpose or result.

10 tñ Heb “for there is no one besides you to redeem, and I am after you” (NASB similar).

11 tñ Heb “in the day”; NASB, NIV “On the day.”

12 sn *Acquire the field.* This probably refers to the right to redeem and use the field. See the note on the word “selling” in v. 3.

13 tñ Heb “from the hand of Naomi” (so NASB, NRSV).

14 tc The MT וּמִיָּמֶיךָ (*ume'et*) may be understood in two ways: (1) “and from” (*vav* conjunction “and,” plus preposition מִן [*min*] “from,” plus definite direct object marker אֶת) parallel to the preceding מִיָּד (*mīyad*, “from [the hand of]”), suggesting the field would be purchased from Naomi and from Ruth; or (2) “and” (*vav* [ו] conjunction “and,” plus enclitic *mem* [ם], plus direct object marker אֶת) introducing the second part of the acquisition: the nearest kinsman would be acquiring the field and Ruth (for discussion see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 202). However, the BHS editors suggest reading וְגַם אִתּוֹ (“as well as...”; emphatic particle וְ: [“also”] and the definite direct object marker אֶת) introducing the second part of the acquisition: He would be acquiring the field and Ruth. This alternate reading is reflected in the *Vulgate* reading *quoque* (“and also”) and supported by parallel usage in v. 9, “I am acquiring the field from Naomi, and also (וְגַם אִתּוֹ, *gam 'et*) Ruth the Moabitess the wife of the deceased.”

15 tc The MT (*Kethib*) reads קָנִיתִי (*qaniti*, “I acquire,” Qal perfect 1st person common singular): “When you acquire the field from the hand of Naomi, I acquire Ruth the Moabitess....” However, the marginal reading (*Qere*) קָנִיתָהּ (*qanitah*, “you acquire,” Qal perfect 2nd person masculine singular, reflected in 2nd person masculine singular forms in Greek, Latin, Aramaic, and Syriac): “When you acquire the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess....” The *Qere* is probably original because the *Kethib* is too difficult syntactically and contextually, while the *Qere* makes perfect sense: (1) Boaz stated in 3:13 that the nearest kinsman had the first right to acquire Ruth if he wanted to do so, and only the *Qere* reading here presents him with that option; and (2) Boaz announces in 4:9-10 that he was acquiring the field and Ruth as a package deal in 4:9-10, and only the *Qere* reading here presents the nearest kinsman with the same package deal. The *Kethib* probably arose by a scribe trying to harmonize 4:5 with the 1st person common singular form in 4:9-10 without fully understanding the ploy of Boaz in 4:5. See F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 216-17.

16 tc The presence of two difficult textual problems in this line (see two preceding notes) has produced a combination of four different ways in which this line can be rendered: (1) “When you acquire the field from Naomi, you must acquire [it] from Ruth the Moabitess the wife of the deceased” (KJV, NKJV); (2) “When you acquire the field from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you must acquire the wife of the deceased” (JPS, NJPS, NIV); (3) “When you acquire the field from Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess the wife of the deceased” (NASB, NCV, TEV, RSV, NRSV, NLT); and (4) “When you acquire the field from Naomi, then I acquire Ruth the Moabitess the wife of the deceased” (REB). The third option is adopted here.

sn *Our deceased relative.* This refers to Mahlon, viewed as Elimelech’s heir.

17 tñ Heb “in order to raise up the name of the deceased over his inheritance” (NASB similar); NRSV “to maintain the dead man’s name on his inheritance.”

18 sn *I would ruin my own inheritance.* It is not entirely clear how acquiring Ruth and raising up an heir for the deceased Elimelech would ruin this individual’s inheritance. Perhaps this means that the inheritance of his other children would be diminished. See R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Ruth* (NICOT), 245-46.

You may exercise my redemption option, for I am unable to redeem it.”¹ **4:7** (Now this used to be the customary way to finalize a transaction involving redemption in Israel:² A man would remove his sandal and give it to the other party.³ This was a legally binding act⁴ in Israel.) **4:8** So the guardian said to Boaz, “You may acquire it,” and he removed his sandal.⁵ **4:9** Then Boaz said to the leaders and all the people, “You are witnesses today that I have acquired from Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech, Kilion, and Mahlon. **4:10** I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, as my wife to raise up a descendant who will inherit his property⁶ so the name of the deceased might not disappear⁷ from among his relatives and from his village.⁸ You are witnesses today.” **4:11** All the people who were at the gate and the elders replied, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is entering your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built up the house of Israel! May⁹ you prosper¹⁰ in Ephrathah and become fa-

mous¹¹ in Bethlehem.¹² **4:12** May your family¹³ become like the family of Perez¹⁴ – whom Tamar bore to Judah – through the descendants¹⁵ the LORD gives you by this young woman.”

A Grandson is Born to Naomi

4:13 So Boaz married Ruth and had sexual relations with her.¹⁶ The LORD enabled her to conceive¹⁷ and she gave birth to a son. **4:14** The village women said to Naomi, “May the LORD be praised because he has not left you without a guardian¹⁸ today! May he¹⁹ become famous in Israel!²⁰ **4:15** He will encourage you and provide for you when you are old,²¹ for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, has given him birth. She²² is better to you than seven sons!” **4:16** Naomi took the child and placed him on her lap;²³ she became his caregiver.²⁴ **4:17** The neighbor women named him, saying, “A son has

¹ **tn** *Heb* “redeem for yourself, you, my right of redemption for I am unable to redeem.”

sn Here it appears that the acquisition of Ruth along with the land was an obligatory package deal (“When you acquire the field from Naomi, you *must also* acquire Ruth...”). On the other hand, Boaz viewed marriage to Ruth as voluntary in 3:13 (“If he does not *want* to redeem you, I will redeem you”), and presented the acquisition of the field as voluntary in 4:4 (“If you *want* to exercise your right...but if not, tell me!”). Initially, Boaz makes the transaction appear to be a mere land deal in 4:4. When the nearest relative jumped at the land offer, Boaz confronted him with the attendant social/family obligation of marrying Ruth to raise up an heir for the deceased to inherit this very land. By conducting the transaction in public where the close relative would need to save face, Boaz forced him either to reject the offer entirely or to include Ruth in the deal – but he could not take the land and reject Ruth. Either way, Ruth would be cared for and Elimelech’s line continued. But if he took Ruth, the acquisition of the land would be more economically burdensome than beneficial, so he yielded his purchase option to Boaz. For discussion, see F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC), 229-33.

² **tn** *Heb* “and this formerly in Israel concerning redemption and concerning a transfer to ratify every matter.”

³ **tn** *Heb* “a man removed his sandal and gave [it] to his companion”; NASB “gave it to another”; NIV, NRSV, CEV “to the other.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “the legal witness”; KJV “a testimony”; ASV, NASB “the manner (form NAB) of attestation.”

⁵ **tc** The LXX adds “and gave it to him” (cf. TEV, CEV), which presupposes the reading לו יתן. This seems to be a clarifying addition (see v. 7), but it is possible the scribe’s eye jumped from the final vav (ו) in גילו (na’alo, “his sandal”) to the final vav (ו) in לו (lo, “to him”), accidentally omitting the intervening letters.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “in order to raise up the name of the deceased over his inheritance” (NASB similar).

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “be cut off” (so NASB, NRSV); NAB “may not perish.”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “and from the gate of his place” (so KJV, ASV); NASB “from the court of his birth place”; NIV “from the town records.”

⁹ **tn** Following the jussive, the imperative with prefixed vav indicates purpose or result.

¹⁰ **tn** The phrase וְעָשָׂה רֵיחַ (va’aseh-khayil, literally, “do strength”) has been variously translated: (1) financial prosperity: “may you become rich” (TEV), “may you be a rich man” (CEV), “may you achieve wealth” (NASB), “may you prosper” (NKJV, NJPS); (2) social prominence: “may you become powerful” (NCV), “may you have standing” (NIV), “may you be

great” (NLT), “may you do well” (NAB); (3) reproductive fertility: “may you produce children” (NRSV); and (4) social activity: “may you do a worthy deed” (REB).

¹¹ **tc** *Heb* “and call a name.” This statement appears to be elliptical. Usually the person named and the name itself follow this expression. Perhaps וְקָרָא שֵׁם (uq’ra’-shem) should be emended to וְקָרָא שְׁמָה (v’iqqare’-shem), “and your name will be called out,” that is, “perpetuated” (see Gen 48:16, cf. also Ruth 4:14b). The omission of the suffix with “name” could be explained as virtual haplography (note the letter bet [ב], which is similar to kaf [כ], at the beginning of the next word). The same explanation could account for the omission of the prefixed yod (י) on the verb “call” (yod [י] and vav [ו] are similar in appearance). Whether one reads the imperative (the form in the MT) or the jussive (the emended form), the construction indicates purpose or result following the earlier jussive “may he make.”

¹² **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map7-E2; Map8-E2; Map10-B4.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “your house” (so NAB, NASB, NRSV).

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, from the offspring whom the LORD gives to you from this young woman.”

sn Perez is an appropriate comparison here, because (1) he was an ancestor of Boaz, (2) he was born to Tamar by a surrogate father (Judah) after the death of her husband, and (3) he had an unbroken line of male descendants extending over several generations (see vv. 18-22).

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “from the seed” (KJV, ASV both similar); NASB, NIV “through the offspring”; NRSV “through the children.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “and Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife and he went in to her.” Here the phrase “went in to her” (so NASB) is a euphemism for having sexual relations (cf. NCV); NLT “When he slept with her.”

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “gave her conception” (so KJV); NRSV “made her conceive”; NLT “enabled her to become pregnant.”

¹⁸ **tn** Or “redeemer.” See the note on the phrase “guardian of the family interests” in 3:9. As the following context indicates, the child is referred to here.

¹⁹ **tn** The “guardian” is the subject of the verb, as the next verse makes clear.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “may his name be called [i.e., “perpetuated”]; see Gen 48:16] in Israel.”

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “and he will become for you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age” (NASB similar).

²² **tn** *Heb* “who, she”; KJV “which is better to thee.”

²³ **tn** Or “breast”; KJV, NRSV “in her bosom.”

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “his nurse,” but this refers to a dry nurse, not a medical attendant. Cf. NIV “and cared for him”; TEV “and took (+ good CEV) care of him.”

been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed.¹ Now he became the father of Jesse – David’s father!

Epilogue: Obed in the Genealogy of David

4:18 These are the descendants² of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron, **4:19** Hezron was the father of Ram, Ram was the father of Amminadab, **4:20** Amminadab was the father of Nachshon, Nachshon was the father of Salmah, **4:21** Salmon³ was the father of Boaz, Boaz was the father of Obed, **4:22** Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse was the father of David.⁴

¹ **tn** The name “Obed” means “one who serves,” perhaps anticipating how he would help Naomi (see v. 15).

² **tn** Or “generations” (so KJV, NASB); NIV, NLT “family line.”

sn The concluding genealogy demonstrates that the prayers of blessing made earlier were fulfilled. Boaz’s line did become like the line of Perez, and both Boaz and Obed became famous. God’s blessing upon Ruth and Boaz extended beyond their lifetime and immediate family, for their great descendant, David, became the greatest of Israel’s kings, and his descendant in turn, Jesus the Messiah, became greater still.

³ **sn** *Salmon* appears to be an alternate spelling of *Salmah* in the preceding line.

⁴ **sn** The theological message of the Book of Ruth may be summarized as follows: God cares for needy people like Naomi and Ruth; he is their ally in this chaotic world. He richly rewards people like Ruth and Boaz who demonstrate sacrificial love and in so doing become his instruments in helping the needy. God’s rewards for those who sacrificially love others sometimes exceed their wildest imagination and transcend their lifetime.