

# THE BOOK OF RUTH <sup>fi</sup>

TRANSLATED BY  
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## Introduction

### CONTENT, CHARACTER, AND ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF RUTH.

The book of *Ruth* (רֹוּת) introduces us to the family life of the ancestors of king David, and informs us, in a simple and attractive form of historical narrative, and one in harmony with the tender and affectionate contents, how *Ruth* the Moabitess, a daughter-in-law of the Bethlehemite Elimelech, of the family of Judah, who had emigrated with his wife and his two sons into the land of Moab on account of a famine, left father and mother, fatherland and kindred, after the death of her husband, and out of childlike affection to her Israelitish mother-in-law Naomi, whose husband had also died in the land of Moab, and went with her to Judah, to take refuge under the wings of the God of Israel (Rut. 1); and how, when there, as she was going in her poverty to glean some ears of corn in the field of a wealthy man, she came apparently by accident to the field of Boaz, a near relation of Elimelech, and became acquainted with this honourable and benevolent man (Rut. 2); how she then sought marriage with him by the wish of her mother-in-law (Rut. 3), and was taken by him as a wife, according to the custom of Levirate marriage, in all the ordinary legal forms, and bare a son in this marriage, named Obed. This Obed was the grandfather of David (Rut. 4: 1-17), with whose genealogy the book closes (Rut. 4:18-22).

In this conclusion the meaning and tendency of the whole narrative is brought clearly to light. The genealogical proof of the descent of David from Perez through Boaz and the Moabitess Ruth (Rut. 4:18-22) forms not only the end, but the starting-point, of the history contained in the book. For even if we should not attach so much importance to this genealogy as to say with *Auberlen* that “the book of Ruth contains, as it were, the inner side, the spiritually moral background of the genealogies which play so significant a part even in the Israelitish antiquity;” so much is unquestionably true, that the book contains a historical picture from the family life of the ancestors of David, intended to show how the ancestors of this great king walked uprightly before God and man in piety and singleness of heart, in a modesty and purity of life. “Ruth, the Moabitish great-great-grandmother of David, longed for the God and people of Israel to them with all the power of love; and Boaz was an upright Israelite, without guile, full of holy reverence for every ordinance of God and

man, and full of benevolent love and friendliness towards the poor heathen woman. From such ancestors was the man descended in whom all the nature of Israel was to find its royal concentration and fullest expression” (*Auberlen*). But there is also a Messianic trait in the fact that Ruth, a heathen woman, of a nation so hostile to the Israelites as that of Moab was, should have been thought worthy to be made the tribe-mother of the great and pious king David, on account of her faithful love to the people of Israel, and her entire confidence in Jehovah, the God of Israel. As Judah begat Perez from Tamar and Canaanitish woman (Gen. 38), and as Rahab was adopted into the congregation of Israel (Jos. 6:25), and according to ancient tradition was married to Salmon (Mat. 1: 5), so the Moabitess Ruth was taken by Boaz as his wife, and incorporated in the family of Judah, from which Christ was to spring according to the flesh (see Mat. 1: 3, 5, where these three women are distinctly mentioned by name in the genealogy of Jesus).

The incidents described in the book fall within the times of the judges (Rut. 1: 1), and most probably in the time of Gideon (see at Rut. 1: 1); and the book itself forms both a supplement to the book of Judges and an introduction to the books of Samuel, which give no account of the ancestors of David. So far as its contents are concerned it has its proper place, in the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Lutheran and other versions, between the book of Judges and those of Samuel. In the Hebrew Codex, on the contrary, it is placed among the *hagiographa*, and in the Talmud (*bab bathr.f. 14b*) it is even placed at the head of them before the Psalms; whilst in the Hebrew MSS it stands among the five *megilloth*: *Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther*. The latter position is connected with the liturgical use of the book in the synagogue, where it was read at the feast of weeks; whilst its place among the *hagiographa* is to be explained from the principle upon which the general arrangement of the Old Testament canon was founded, — namely, that the different books were divided into three classes according to the relation in which their authors stood to God and to the theocracy, and the books themselves in their contents and spirit to the divine revelation (see *Keil, Lehrbuch der Einleitung*, § 155).

The latter is therefore to be regarded as the original classification, and not the one in the Septuagint rendering, where the original arrangement has unquestionably been altered in the case of this and other books, just because this principle has been overlooked. <sup>12</sup>

The book of Ruth is not a mere (say a third) appendix to the book of Judges, but a small independent work, which does indeed resemble the two appendices of the book of Judges, so far as the incidents recorded in it fall within the period of the Judges, and are not depicted in the spirit of the prophetic view of history; but, on the other hand, it has a thoroughly distinctive character both in form and

contents, and has nothing in common with the book of Judges either in style or language: on the contrary, it differs essentially both in substance and design from the substance and design of this book and of its two appendices, for the simple reason that at the close of the history (Rut. 4:17), where Obed, the son of Boaz and Ruth, is described as the grandfather of David, and still more clearly in the genealogy of Perez, which is brought down to David (Rut. 4:18-22), the book passes beyond the times of the Judges. In this simple fact the author very plainly shows that his intention was not to give a picture of the family life of pious Israelites in the time of the judges from a civil and a religious point of view, but rather to give a biographical sketch of the pious ancestors of David the king.

The *origin* of the book of Ruth is involved in obscurity. From its contents, and more especially from the object so apparent in the close of the book, it may be inferred with certainty that it was not written earlier than the time of David's rule over Israel, and indeed not before the culminating point of the reign of this great king. There would therefore be an interval of 150 to 180 years between the events themselves and the writing of the book, during which time the custom mentioned in Rut. 4: 7, of taking off the shoe in acts of trade and barter, which formerly existed in Israel, may have fallen entirely into disuse, so that the author might think it necessary to explain the custom for the information of his contemporaries. We have not sufficient ground for fixing a later date, say the time of the captivity; and there is no force in the arguments that have been adduced in support of this (see my Lehrb. der Einl. § 137). The discovery that words and phrases such as מְרַגְלוֹת (Rut. 3: 7, 8, 14), פָּרַשׁ בְּנַפְיִים (Rut. 3: 9), מְקַרָּה, chance (Rut. 2: 3), either do not occur at all or only very rarely in the earlier writings, simply because the thing itself to which they refer is not mentioned, does not in the least degree prove that these words were not formed till a later age. The supposed Chaldaisms, however, — namely the forms תַּעֲבוּרִי and תִּדְבְּקִין (Rut. 2: 8, 21), יִקְצְרוּן (Rut. 2: 9), יִרְדְּתִי, שְׂמֵת, שְׂכַבְתִּי (Rut. 3: 3, 4), מְרָא for מְרָה (Rut. 1:20), or the use of לֵהֲיִן, and of the ὄπ. λεγ. ἔγιν (Rut. 1:13), etc., — we only meet with in the speeches of the persons acting, and never where the author himself is narrating; and consequently they furnish no proofs of the later origin of the book, but may be simply and fully explained from the fact, that the author received these forms and words from the language used in common conversation in the time of the judges, and has faithfully recorded them. We are rather warranted in drawing the conclusion from this, that he did not derive the contents of his work from oral tradition, but made use of written documents, with regard to the origin and nature of which, however, nothing certain can be determined.

## EXPOSITION

### Ruth Goes with Naomi to Bethlehem. — Ch. 1.

In the time of the judges Elimelech emigrated from Bethlehem in Judah into the land of Moab, along with his wife Naomi, and his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, because of a famine in the land (vv. 1, 2). There Elimelech died; and his two sons married Moabitish women, named Orpah and Ruth. But in the course of ten years they also died, so that Naomi and her two daughters-in-law were left by themselves (vv. 3-5). When Naomi heard that the Lord had once more blessed the land of Israel with bread, she set out with Orpah and Ruth to return home. But on the way she entreated them to turn back and remain with their relations in their own land; and Orpah did so (vv. 6-14). But Ruth declared that she would not leave her mother-in-law, and went with her to Bethlehem (vv. 15-22).

**Rut. 1: 1-5.** ELIMELECH'S EMIGRATION (vv. 1, 2). — By the word **יָמֵי** the following account is attached to other well-known events (see at Jos. 1: 1); and by the definite statement, "*in the days when judges judged,*" it is assigned to the period of the judges generally. "*A famine in the land,*" i.e., in the land of Israel, and not merely in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem. The time of this famine cannot be determined with certainty, although it seems very natural to connect it, as *Seb. Schmidt* and others do, with the devastation of the land by the Midianites (Jud. 6); and there are several things which favour this. For example, the famine must have been a very serious one, and not only have extended over the whole of the land of Israel, but have lasted several years, since it compelled Elimelech to emigrate into the land of the Moabites; and it was not till ten years had elapsed, that his wife Naomi, who survived him, heard that Jehovah had given His people bread again, and returned to her native land (vv. 4, 5). Now the Midianites oppressed Israel for seven years, and their invasions were generally attended by a destruction of the produce of the soil (Jud. 6: 3, 4), from which famine must necessarily have ensued. Moreover, they extended their devastations as far as Gaza (Jud. 6: 4). And although it by no means follows with certainty from this, that they also came into the neighbourhood of Bethlehem, it is still less possible to draw the opposite conclusion, as *Bertheau* does, from the fact they encamped in the valley of Jezreel (Jud. 6:33), and were defeated there by Gideon, namely, that they did not devastate the mountains of Judah, because the road from the plain of Jezreel to Gaza did not lie across those mountains. There is just as little force in the other objection raised by *Bertheau*, namely, that the genealogical list in Rut. 4:18ff. would not place Boaz in the time of Gideon, but about the time of the Philistian supremacy over Israel, since this objection is founded partly upon

an assumption that cannot be established, and partly upon an erroneous chronological calculation. For example, the assumption that every member is included in this chronological series cannot be established, inasmuch as unimportant members are often omitted from the genealogies, so that Obed the son of Boaz might very well have been the grandfather of Jesse. And according to the true chronological reckoning, the birth of David, who died in the year 1015 B.C. at the age of seventy, fell in the year 1085, i.e., nine or ten years after the victory gained by Samuel over the Philistines, or after the termination of their forty years' rule over Israel, and only ninety-seven years after the death of Gideon (see the chronological table, pp. 210f.). Now David was the youngest of the eight sons of Jesse. If therefore we place his birth in the fiftieth year of his father's life, Jesse would have been born in the first year of the Philistian oppression, or forty-eight years after the death of Gideon. Now it is quite possible that Jesse may also have been a younger son of Obed, and born in the fiftieth year of his father's life; and if so, the birth of Obed would fall in the last years of Gideon. From this at any rate so much may be concluded with certainty, that Boaz was a contemporary of Gideon, and the emigration of Elimelech into the land of Moab may have taken place in the time of the Midianitish oppression. "To sojourn in the fields of Moab," i.e., to live as a stranger there. The form שְׂדֵי (vv. 1, 2, 22, and Rut. 2: 6) is not the construct state singular, or only another form for שְׂדֵה, as Bertheau maintains, but the construct state plural of the absolute שְׂדֵים, which does not occur anywhere, it is true, but would be a perfectly regular formation (comp. Isa. 32:12, 2Sa. 1:21, etc.), as the construct state singular is written שְׂדֵה even in this book (v. 6 and Rut. 4: 3). The use of the singular in these passages for the land of the Moabites by no means proves that שְׂדֵי must also be a singular, but may be explained from the fact that the expression "the field (= the territory) of Moab" alternates with the plural, "the fields of Moab."

**Rut. 1: 2, 3.** אֶפְרַתִּים, the plural of אֶפְרַת, an adjective formation, not from אֶפְרַיִם, as in Jud. 12: 5, but from אֶפְרַת (Gen. 48: 7) or אֶפְרַתָּה (Rut. 4:11, Gen. 35:19), the old name for Bethlehem, *Ephrathite*, i.e., sprung from Bethlehem, as in 1Sa. 17:12. The names — *Elimelech*, i.e., to whom God is King; *Naomi* (נְעֻמִי, a contraction of נְעֻמִית, LXX Νοομείν, *Vulg. Noëmi*), i.e., the gracious; *Machlon*, i.e., the weakly; and *Chilion*, pining — are genuine Hebrew names; whereas the names of the Moabitish women, *Orpah* and *Ruth*, who were married to Elimelech's sons, cannot be satisfactorily explained from the Hebrew, as the meaning given to *Orpah*, "turning the back," is very arbitrary, and the derivation of *Ruth* from רְעוּת, a friend, is quite uncertain. According to Rut. 4:10, Ruth was the wife of the elder son Mahlon. Marriage with daughters of the Moabites was not forbidden in the law, like marriages

with Canaanitish women (Deu. 7: 3); it was only the reception of Moabites into the congregation of the Lord that was forbidden (Deu. 23: 4).

**Rut. 1: 5.** *“Thus the woman (Naomi) remained left (alone) of her two sons and her husband.”*

**Rut. 1: 6-14.** After the loss of her husband and her two sons, Naomi rose up out of the fields of Moab to return into the land of Judah, as she had heard that Jehovah had visited His people, i.e., had turned His favour towards them again to give them bread. From the place where she had lived Naomi went forth, along with her two daughters-in-law. These three went on the way to return to the land of Judah. The expression “to return,” if taken strictly, only applies to Naomi, who really *returned* to Judah, whilst her daughters-in-law simply wished to accompany her thither.

**Rut. 1: 8ff.** *“On the way,”* i.e., when they had gone a part of the way, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, *“Go, return each one to her mother’s house,”* — not her father’s, though, according to Rut. 2:11, Ruth’s father at any rate was still living, but her mother’s, because maternal love knows best how to comfort a daughter in her affliction. *“Jehovah grant you that ye may find a resting-place, each one in the house of her husband,”* i.e., that ye may both be happily married again. She then kissed them, to take leave of them (vid., Gen. 31:28). The daughters-in-law, however, began to weep aloud, and said, *“We will return with thee to thy people”* כִּי before a direct statement serves to strengthen it, and is almost equivalent to a positive assurance.

**Rut. 1:11.** Naomi endeavoured to dissuade them from this resolution, by setting before them the fact, that if they went with her, there would be no hope of their being married again, and enjoying the pleasures of life once more.

*“Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?”* Her meaning is: I am not pregnant with sons, upon whom, as the younger brothers of Mahlon and Chilion, there would rest the obligation of marrying you, according to the Levitical law (Deu. 25: 5; Gen. 38: 8). And not only have I no such hope as this, but, continues Naomi, in vv. 12, 13, I have no prospect of having a husband and being blessed with children: *“for I am too old to have a husband;”* yea, even if I could think of this altogether improbable thing as taking place, and assume the impossible as possible; *“If I should say, I have hope (of having a husband), yea, if I should have a husband to-night, and should even bear sons, would ye then wait till they were grown, would ye then abstain from having husbands?”* The כִּי (if) before אֲמַרְתִּי refers to both the perfects which follow. לָהֶן is the third pers. plur. neuter suffix הֶן with the prefix לָ, as in Job. 30:24, where הֶן is pointed with seghol, on account of the toned syllable which follows, as here in

pause in v. 9: *lit.* in these things, in that case, and hence in the sense of *therefore* = לָכֵן, as in Chaldee (e.g., Dan. 2: 6, 9, 24, etc.). תִּעְגְּנָה (vid., Isa. 60: 4, and *Ewald*, § 195, a.), from עָגַן *ἀπ. λεγ.* in Hebrew, which signifies in Aramaean to hold back, shut in; hence in the Talmud עֲגִינָה, a woman who lived retired in her own house without a husband. Naomi supposes three cases in v. 12, of which each is more improbable, or rather more impossible, than the one before; and even if the impossible circumstance should be possible, that she should bear sons that very night, she could not in that case expect or advise her daughters-in-law to wait till these sons were grown up and could marry them, according to the Levirate law. In this there was involved the strongest persuasion to her daughters-in-law to give up their intention of going with her into the land of Judah, and a most urgent appeal to return to their mothers' houses, where, as young widows without children, they would not be altogether without the prospect of marrying again. One possible case Naomi left without notice, namely, that her daughters-in-law might be able to obtain other husbands in Judah itself. She did not hint at this, in the first place, and perhaps chiefly, from delicacy on account of the Moabitish descent of her daughters-in-law, in which she saw that there would be an obstacle to their being married in the land of Judah; and secondly, because Naomi could not do anything herself to bring about such a connection, and wished to confine herself therefore to the one point of making it clear to her daughters that in her present state it was altogether out of her power to provide connubial and domestic happiness for them in the land of Judah. She therefore merely fixed her mind upon the different possibilities of a Levirate marriage. <sup>ב</sup> אֵל בְּנֹתַי, "not my daughters," i.e., do not go with me; "for it has gone much more bitterly with me than with you." מָרַר relates to her mournful lot. מִמְּכָם is comparative, "before you;" not "it grieveth me much on your account," for which עַל־יְכֶם would be used, as in 2Sa. 1:26. Moreover, this thought would not be in harmony with the following clause: "for the hand of the Lord has gone out against me," i.e., the Lord has sorely smitten me, namely by taking away not only my husband, but also my two sons.

**Rut. 1:14.** At these dissuasive words the daughters-in-law broke out into loud weeping again (תִּשְׁנָה with the *ש* dropped for תִּשְׁאָנָה, v. 9), and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, and took leave of her to return to her mother's house; but Ruth clung to her (דָּבַק as in Gen. 2:24), forsaking her father and mother to go with Naomi into the land of Judah (vid., Rut. 2:11).

**Rut. 1:15-22.** To the repeated entreaty of Naomi that she would follow her sister-in-law and return to her people and her God, Ruth replied:

*“Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return away behind thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou stayest, I will stay; thy people is my people, and thy God my God! where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried. Jehovah do so to me, and more also (lit. and so may He add to do)! Death alone shall divide between me and thee.”*

The words **כִּי יֵשֶׁה ... יָסִיף** are a frequently recurring formula in connection with an oath (cf. 1Sa. 3:17; 14:44; 20:13, etc.), by which the person searing called down upon himself a severe punishment in case he should not keep his word or carry out his resolution. The following **כִּי** is not a particle used in swearing instead of **אִם** in the sense of “if,” equivalent to “surely not,” as in 1Sa. 20:12, in the oath which precedes the formula, but answer to **ὅτι** in the sense of *quod* introducing the declaration, as in Gen. 22:16, 1Sa. 20:13, 1Ki. 2:23, 2Ki. 3:14, etc., signifying, I swear that death, and nothing else than death, shall separate us. Naomi was certainly serious in her intentions, and sincere in the advice which she gave to Ruth, and did not speak in this way merely to try her and put the state of her heart to the proof, “that it might be made manifest whether she would adhere stedfastly to the God of Israel and to herself, despising temporal things and the hope of temporal possessions” (*Seb. Schmidt*). She had simply the earthly prosperity of her daughter-in-law in her mind, as she herself had been shaken in her faith in the wonderful ways and gracious guidance of the faithful covenant God by the bitter experience of her own life. <sup>14</sup>

With Ruth, however, it was evidently not merely strong affection and attachment by which she felt herself so drawn to her mother-in-law that she wished to live and die with her, but a leaning of her heart towards the God of Israel and His laws, of which she herself was probably not yet fully conscious, but which she had acquired so strongly in her conjugal relation and her intercourse with her Israelitish connections, that it was her earnest wish never to be separated from this people and its God (cf. Rut. 2:11).

**Rut. 1:18.** As she insisted strongly upon going with her (**הִתְאַמְצֵי**, to stiffen one’s self firmly upon a thing), Naomi gave up persuading her any more to return.

**Rut. 1:19.** So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived, the whole town was in commotion on their account (**הִתְהַלְּלוּ**, imperf. *Niph.* of **הוֹמֵם**, as in 1Sa. 4: 5, 1Ki. 1:45). They said, “*Is this Naomi?*” The subject to **הִתְאַמְצֵי** is the inhabitants of the town, but chiefly the female portion of the inhabitants, who were the most excited at Naomi’s return. This is the simplest way of explaining the use of the feminine in the verbs **הִתְאַמְצֵי** and



תִּקְרָאנָהּ. In these words there was an expression of amazement, not so much at the fact that Naomi was still alive, and had come back again, as at her returning in so mournful a condition, as a solitary widow, without either husband or sons; for she replied (v. 20), “*Call me not Naomi (i.e., gracious), but Marah*” (the bitter one), i.e., one who has experienced bitterness,

*“for the Almighty has made it very bitter to me. I, I went away full, and Jehovah has made me come back again empty. Why do ye call me Naomi, since Jehovah testifies against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?”*

“Full,” i.e., rich, not in money and property, but in the possession of a husband and two sons; a rich mother, but now deprived of all that makes a mother’s heart rich, bereft of both husband and sons. “*Testified against me,*” by word and deed (as in Exo. 20:16, 2Sa. 1:16). The rendering “*He hath humbled me*” (LXX, *Vulg.*, *Bertheau*, etc.) is incorrect, as עָנָהּ with בִּי and the construct state simply means to trouble one’s self with anything (Ecc. 1:13), which is altogether unsuitable here. — With v. 22 the account of the return of Naomi and her daughter-in-law is brought to a close, and the statement that “*they came to Bethlehem in the time of the barley harvest*” opens at the same time the way for the further course of the history. הַשָּׂבָהּ is pointed as a third pers. perf. with the article in a relative sense, as in Rut. 2: 6 and 4: 3. Here and at Rut. 2: 6 it applies to Ruth; but in Rut. 4: 3 to Naomi. הַמָּזֶה, the masculine, is used here, as it frequently is, for the feminine הַמָּזֶה, as being the more common gender. The harvest, as a whole, commenced with the barley harvest (see at Lev. 23:10, 11).

## Ruth Gleans in the Field of Boaz. — Ch. 2.

**Rut. 2.** Ruth went to the field to glean ears of corn, for the purpose of procuring support for herself and her mother-in-law, and came by chance to the field of Boaz, a relative of Naomi, who, when he heard that she had come with Naomi from Moabitis, spoke kindly to her, and gave her permission not only to glean ears in his field and even among the sheaves, but to appease her hunger and thirst with the food and drink of his reapers (vv. 1-16), so that in the evening she returned to her mother-in-law with a plentiful gleaning, and told her of the gracious reception she had met with from this man, and then learned from her that Boaz was a relation of her own (vv. 17-23).

**Rut. 2: 1-7.** The account of this occurrence commences with a statement which was necessary in order to make it perfectly intelligible, namely that Boaz, to whose field Ruth went to glean, was a relative of Naomi through her deceased husband Elimelech. The *Kethibh* מוֹדַע is to be read מוֹדַע, an acquaintance (cf. Psa. 31:12; 55:14). The *Keri* מוֹדַע is the construct state of

מוֹדַע, *lit.* acquaintanceship, then an acquaintance or friend (Pro. 7: 4), for which מוֹדַעַת occurs afterwards in Rut. 3: 2 with the same meaning. That the acquaintance or friend of Naomi through her husband was also a relation, is evident from the fact that he was “of the family of Elimelech.” According to the rabbinical tradition, which is not well established however, Boaz was a nephew of Elimelech. The ל before אִשָּׁה is used instead of the simple construct state, because the reference is not to *the* relation, but to *a* relation of her husband; at the same time, the word מוֹדַע has taken the form of the construct state notwithstanding this ל (compare *Ewald*, § 292, *a.*, with § 289, *b.*). גִּבּוֹר הָיִל generally means the brave man of war (Jud. 6:12; 11: 1, etc.); but here it signifies a man of property. The name *Boaz* is not formed from בּוֹעַז, in whom is strength, but from a root, בָּעַז, which does not occur in Hebrew, and signifies *alacrity*.

**Rut. 2: 2, 3.** Ruth wished to go to the field and glean at (among) the ears, i.e., whatever ears were left lying upon the harvest field (cf. v. 7), אַחֲרֵי אֲשֶׁר, behind him in whose eyes she should find favour. The Mosaic law (Lev. 19: 9; 23:22, compared with Deu. 24:19) did indeed expressly secure to the poor the right to glean in the harvest fields, and prohibited the owners from gleaning themselves; but hard-hearted farmers and reapers threw obstacles in the way of the poor, and even forbade their gleaning altogether. Hence Ruth proposed to glean after him who should generously allow it. She carried out this intention with the consent of Naomi, and chance led her to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, a relation of Elimelech, without her knowing the owner of the field, or being at all aware of his connection with Elimelech. וַיִּקַּר מִקְרָהּ, *lit.*, “*her chance chanced to hit upon the field.*”

**Rut. 2: 4ff.** When Boaz came from the town to the field, and had greeted his reapers with the blessing of a genuine Israelites, “*Jehovah be with you,*” and had received from them a corresponding greeting in return, he said to the overseer of the reapers, “*Whose damsel is this?*” to which he replied,

*“It is the Moabitish damsel who came back with Naomi from the fields of Moab, and she has said (asked), Pray, I will glean (i.e., pray allow me to glean) and gather among the sheaves after the reapers, and has come and stays (here) from morning till now; her sitting in the house that is little.”*

מִן, *lit.* a conjunction, here used as a preposition, is stronger than מִן, “*from then,*” from the time of the morning onwards (see *Ewald*, § 222, *c.*). It is evident from this answer of the servant who was placed over the reapers,

(1) that Boaz did not prohibit any poor person from gleaning in his field; (2) that Ruth asked permission of the overseer of the reapers, and availed herself of this

permission with untiring zeal from the first thing in the morning, that she might get the necessary support for her mother-in-law and herself; and

(3) that her history was well known to the overseer, and also to Boaz, although Boaz saw her now for the first time.

**Rut. 2: 8-16.** The good report which the overlooker gave of the modesty and diligence of Ruth could only strengthen Boaz in his purpose, which he had probably already formed from his affection as a relation towards Naomi, to make the acquaintance of her daughter-in-law, and speak kindly to her. With fatherly kindness, therefore, he said to her (vv. 8, 9), “*Dost thou hear, my daughter?* (i.e., ‘thou hearest, dost thou not?’ *interrogatio blande affirmat;*) *go not to reap in another field, and go not away from here, and keep so to my maidens* (i.e., remaining near them in the field). *Thine eyes* (directed) *upon the field which they reap, go behind them* (i.e., behind the maidens, who probably tired up the sheaves, whilst the men-servants cut the corn). *I have commanded the young men not to touch thee* (to do thee no harm); *and if thou art thirsty* (צָמָה, from צָמָה = צָמָה: see Ewald, § 195, b.), *go to the vessels, and drink of what the servants draw.*”

**Rut. 2:10.** Deeply affected by this generosity, Ruth fell upon her face, bowing down to the ground (as in 1Sa. 25:23, 2Sa. 1: 2; cf. Gen. 23: 7), to thank him reverentially, and said to Boaz, “*Why have I found favour in thine eyes, that thou regardest me, who am only a stranger?*” הִבִּיר, to look at with sympathy or care, to receive a person kindly (cf. v. 19).

**Rut. 2:11, 12.** Boaz replied,

*“Everything has been told me that thou hast done to אֵת, prep. as in Zec. 7: 9, 2Sa. 16:17) thy mother-in-law since the death of thy husband, that thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and thy kindred, and hast come to a people that thou knewest not heretofore”*

(hast therefore done what God commanded Abraham to do, Gen. 12: 1).

*“The Lord recompense thy work, and let thy reward be perfect* (recalling Gen. 15: 1) *from the Lord the God of Israel, to whom thou hast come to seek refuge under His wings!”*

For this figurative expression, which is derived from Deu. 32:11, compare Psa. 91: 4; 36: 8; 57: 2. In these words of Boaz we see the genuine piety of a true Israelite.

**Rut. 2:13.** Ruth replied with true humility,

*“May I find favour in thine eyes; for thou hast comforted me, and spoken to the heart of thy maiden* (see Jud. 19: 3), *though I am not like one of thy maidens,”*

i.e., though I stand in no such near relation to thee, as to have been able to earn thy favour. In this last clause she restricts the expression “thy maiden.” *Carpzov* has rightly pointed this out: “But what am I saying when I call myself thy maiden? since I am not worthy to be compared to the least of thy maidens.” The word **נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה** is to be taken in an optative sense, as expressive of the wish that Boaz might continue towards her the kindness he had already expressed. To take it as a present, “I find favour” (*Clericus* and *Bertheau*), does not tally with the modesty and humility shown by Ruth in the following words.

**Rut. 2:14.** This unassuming humility on the part of Ruth made Boaz all the more favourably disposed towards her, so that at meal-time he called her to eat along with his people (**לֶחֶם** without *Mappik*, as in Num. 32:42, Zec. 5:11; cf. *Ewald*, § 94, b. 3). “*Dip thy morsel in the vinegar.*” *Chomez*, a sour beverage composed of vinegar (wine vinegar or sour wine) mixed with oil; a very refreshing drink, which is still a favourite beverage in the East (see *Rosenmüller*, A. and N. Morgenland, iv. p. 68, and my *Bibl. Archäologie*, ii. p. 16). “*And he reached her parched corn.*” The subject is Boaz, who, judging from the expression “come hither,” either joined in the meal, or at any rate was present at it. **לֶחֶם** are roasted grains of wheat (see at Lev. 2:14, and my *Bibl. Arch.* ii. p. 14), which are still eaten by the reapers upon the harvest field, and also handed to strangers. <sup>f5</sup>

Boaz gave her an abundant supply of it, so that she was not only satisfied, but left some, and was able to take it home to her mother (v. 18).

**Rut. 2:15, 16.** When she rose up to glean again after eating, Boaz commanded his people, saying,

*“She may also glean between the shaves (which was not generally allowed), and ye shall not shame her (do her any injury, Jud. 18: 7); and ye shall also draw out of the bundles for her, and let them lie (the ears drawn out), that she may glean them, and shall not scold her,”*

sc., for picking up the ears that have been drawn out. These directions of Boaz went far beyond the bounds of generosity and compassion for the poor; and show that he felt a peculiar interest in Ruth, with whose circumstances he was well acquainted, and who had won his heart by her humility, her faithful attachment to her mother-in-law, and her love to the God of Israel, — a face important to notice in connection with the further course of the history.

**Rut. 2:17-23.** Thus Ruth gleaned till the evening in the field; and when she knocked out the ears, she had about an ephah (about 20-25 lbs.) of barley.

**Rut. 2:18.** This she brought to her mother-in-law in the city, and “*drew out*” (sc., from her pocket, as the Chaldee has correctly supplied) *what she had left from her sufficiency,*” i.e., of the parched corn which Boaz had reached her (v. 14).

**Rut. 2:19.** The mother inquired, “*where hast thou gleaned to-day, and where wroughtest thou?*” and praised the benefactor, who, as she conjecture from the quantity of barley collected and the food brought home, had taken notice of Ruth: “*blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee!*” When she heard the name of the man, Boaz, she saw that this relative of her husband had been chosen by God to be a benefactor of herself and Ruth, and exclaimed, “*Blessed be he of the Lord, that he has not left off (withdrawn) his favour towards the living and the dead!*” On עֹזֵב חֶסֶד see Gen. 24:27. This verb is construed with a double accusative here; for אֶת cannot be a preposition, as in that case מֵאֵת would be used like מֵעַם in Gen. *l.c.* “*The living,*” etc., forms a second object: as regards (with regard to) the living and the dead, in which Naomi thought of herself and Ruth, and of her husband and sons, to whom God still showed himself gracious, even after their death, through His care for their widows. In order to enlighten Ruth still further upon the matter, she added, “*The man (Boaz) is our relative, and one of our redeemers.*” He “*stands near to us,*” sc., by relationship. נִאֲלָנוּ, a defective form for נִאֲלָנוּ, which is found in several MSS and editions. On the significance of the *goël*, or redeemer, see at Lev. 25:26, 48, 49, and the introduction to Rut. 3.

**Rut. 2:21.** Ruth proceeded to inform her of his kindness: גַּם כִּי, “*also (know) that he said to me, Keep with my people, till the harvest is all ended.*” The masculine הַנְּעָרִים, for which we should rather expect the feminine נְעָרוֹת in accordance with vv. 8, 22, 23, is quite in place as the more comprehensive gender, as a designation of the reapers generally, both male and female; and the expression אֲשֶׁר לִי in this connection in the sense of *my* is more exact than the possessive pronoun: the people who belong to my house, as distinguished from the people of other masters.

**Rut. 2:22.** Naomi declared herself fully satisfied with this, because Ruth would be thereby secured from insults, which she might receive when gleaning in strange fields. “*That they meet thee not,*” *lit.* “*that they do not fall upon thee.*” פָּגַע בְּ signifies to fall upon a person, to smite and ill-treat him.

**Rut. 2:23.** After this Ruth kept with the maidens of Boaz during the whole of the barley and wheat harvests gleaning ears of corn, and lived with her mother-in-law, sc., when she returned in the evening from the field. In this last remark

there is a tacit allusion to the fact that a change took place for Ruth when the harvest was over.

### Ruth Seeks for Marriage with Boaz. — Ch. 3.

**Rut. 3.** After the harvest Naomi advised Ruth to visit Boaz on a certain night, and ask him to marry her as redeemer (vv. 1-5). Ruth followed this advice, and Boaz promised to fulfil her request, provided the nearer redeemer who was still living would not perform this duty (vv. 6-13), and sent her away in the morning with a present of wheat, that she might not return empty to her mother-in-law (vv. 14-18). To understand the advice which Naomi gave to Ruth, and which Ruth carried out, and in fact to form a correct idea of the further course of the history generally, we must bear in mind the legal relations which came into consideration here. According to the theocratical rights, Jehovah was the actual owner of the land which He had given to His people for an inheritance; and the Israelites themselves had merely the usufruct of the land which they received by lot for their inheritance, so that the existing possessor could not part with the family portion or sell it at his will, but it was to remain for ever in his family. When any one therefore was obliged to sell his inheritance on account of poverty, and actually did sell it, it was the duty of the nearest relation to redeem it as *goël*. But if it should not be redeemed, it came back, in the next year of jubilee, to its original owner or his heirs without compensation. Consequently no actual sale took place in our sense of the word, but simply a sale of the yearly produce till the year of jubilee (see Lev. 25:10, 13-16, 24-28). There was also an old customary right, which had received the sanction of God, with certain limitations, through the Mosaic law, — namely, the custom of Levirate marriage, or the marriage of a brother-in-law, which we meet with as early as Gen. 38, viz., that if an Israelite who had been married died without children, it was the duty of his brother to marry the widow, that is to say, his sister-in-law, that he might establish his brother's name in Israel, by begetting a son through his sister-in-law, who should take the name of the deceased brother, that his name might not become extinct in Israel. This son was then the legal heir of the landed property of the deceased uncle (cf. Deu. 25: 5ff.). These two institutions are not connected together in the Mosaic law; nevertheless it was a very natural thing to place the Levirate duty in connection with the right of redemption. And this had become the traditional custom. Whereas the law merely imposed the obligation of marrying the childless widow upon the brother, and even allowed him to renounce the obligation if he would take upon himself the disgrace connected with such a refusal (see Deu. 25: 7-10); according to Rut. 4: 5 of this book it had become a traditional custom to require the Levirate marriage of the redeemer of the portion of the deceased relative, not only that the landed

possession might be permanently retained in the family, but also that the family itself might not be suffered to die out.

In the case before us Elimelech had possessed a portion at Bethlehem, which Naomi had sold from poverty (Rut. 4: 3); and Boaz, a relation of Elimelech, was the redeemer of whom Naomi hoped that he would fulfil the duty of a redeemer, — namely, that he would not only ransom the purchased field, but marry her daughter-in-law Ruth, the widow of the rightful heir of the landed possession of Elimelech, and thus through this marriage establish the name of her deceased husband or son (Elimelech or Mahlon) upon his inheritance. Led on by this hope, she advised Ruth to visit Boaz, who had shown himself so kind and well-disposed towards her, during the night, and by a species of bold artifice, which she assumed that he would not resist, to induce him as redeemer to grant to Ruth this Levirate marriage. The reason why she adopted this plan for the accomplishment of her wishes, and did not appeal to Boaz directly, or ask him to perform this duty of affection to her deceased husband, was probably that she was afraid lest she should fail to attain her end in this way, partly because the duty of a Levirate marriage was not legally binding upon the redeemer, and partly because Boaz was not so closely related to her husband that she could justly require this of him, whilst there was actually a nearer redeemer than he (Rut. 3:12). According to our customs, indeed, this act of Naomi and Ruth appears a very objectionable one from a moral point of view, but it was not so when judged by the customs of the people of Israel at that time. Boaz, who was an honourable man, and, according to Rut. 3:10, no doubt somewhat advanced in years, praised Ruth for having taken refuge with him, and promised to fulfil her wishes when he had satisfied himself that the nearer redeemer would renounce his right and duty (Rut. 3:10, 11). As he acknowledge by this very declaration, that under certain circumstances it would be his duty as redeemer to marry Ruth, he took no offence at the manner in which she had approached him and proposed to become his wife. On the contrary, he regarded it as a proof of feminine virtue and modesty, that she had not gone after young men, but offered herself as a wife to an old man like him. This conduct on the part of Boaz is a sufficient proof that women might have confidence in him that he would do nothing unseemly. And he justified such confidence. “The modest man,” as *Bertheau* observes, “even in the middle of the night did not hesitate for a moment what it was his duty to do with regard to the young maiden (or rather woman) towards whom he felt already so strongly attached; he made his own personal inclinations subordinate to the traditional custom, and only when this permitted him to marry Ruth was he ready to do so. And not knowing whether she might not have to become the wife of the nearer *goël*, he was careful for her and her reputation, in order that

he might hand her over unblemished to the man who had the undoubted right to claim her as his wife.”

**Rut. 3: 1-5.** As Naomi conjectured, from the favour which Boaz had shown to Ruth, that he might not be disinclined to marry her as *goël*, she said to her daughter-in-law, “*My daughter, I must seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee.*” In the question **הֲלֹא אֶבְרָכֶשׁ**, the word **הֲלֹא** is here, as usual, an expression of general admission or of undoubted certainty, in the sense of “Is it not true, I seek for thee? it is my duty to seek for thee.” **מְנוּחָה = מְנוּחָה** (Rut. 1: 9) signifies the condition of a peaceful life, a peaceful and well-secured condition, “a secure life under the guardian care of a husband” (*Rosenmüller*). “*And now is not Boaz our relation, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he is winnowing the barley floor (barley on the threshing-floor) to-night,*” i.e., till late in the night, to avail himself of the cool wind, which rises towards evening (Gen. 3: 8), for the purpose of cleansing the corn. The threshing-floors of the Israelites were, and are still in Palestine, made under the open heaven, and were nothing more than level places in the field stamped quite hard.<sup>16</sup>

### **Rut. 3: 3, 4.**

*“Wash and anoint thyself (סִבֵּתָ, from סִבָּת = סִבָּת), and put on thy clothes (thy best clothes), and go down (from Bethlehem, which stood upon the ridge of a hill) to the threshing-floor; let not thyself be noticed by the man (Boaz) till he has finished eating and drinking. And when he lies down, mark the place where he will sleep, and go (when he has fallen asleep) and uncover the place of his feet, and lay thyself down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.”*

**Rut. 3: 5.** Ruth promised to do this. The **אֲלֵי**, which the Masorites have added to the text as *Keri non scriptum*, is quite unnecessary. From the account which follows of the carrying out of the advice given to her, we learn that Naomi had instructed Ruth to ask Boaz to marry her as her redeemer (cf. v. 9).

**Rut. 3: 6-13.** Ruth went accordingly to the threshing-floor and did as her mother-in-law had commanded; i.e., she noticed where Boaz went to lie down to sleep, and then, when he had eaten and drunken, and lay down cheerfully, at the end of the heap of sheaves or corn, and, as we may supply from the context, had fallen asleep, came to him quietly, uncovered the place of his feet, i.e., lifted up the covering over his feet, and lay down.

**Rut. 3: 8.** About midnight the man was startled, namely, because on awaking he observed that there was some one lying at his feet; and he “bent himself” forward, or on one side, to feel who was lying there, “*and behold a woman was lying at his feet.*” **מִרְגְּלָתוֹ** is *accus. loci*.



**Rut. 3: 9.** In answer to his inquiry,

*“Who art thou?” she said, “I am Ruth, thine handmaid; spread thy wing over thine handmaid, for thou art a redeemer.”*

כַּנְפֶיךָ is a dual according to the Masoretic pointing, as we cannot look upon it as a pausal form on account of the position of the word, but it is most probably to be regarded as a singular; and the figurative expression is not taken from birds, which spread their wings over their young, i.e., to protect them, but refers, according to Deu. 23: 1; 27:20, and Eze. 16: 8, to the wing, i.e., the corner of the counterpane, referring to the fact that a man spreads this over his wife as well as himself. Thus Ruth entreated Boaz to marry her because he was a redeemer. On this reason for the request, see the remarks in the introduction to the chapter.

**Rut. 3:10.** Boaz praised her conduct:

*“Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter (see Rut. 2:20); thou hast made thy later love better than the earlier, that thou hast not gone after young men, whether poor or rich.”*

Ruth’s earlier or first love was the love she had shown to her deceased husband and her mother-in-law (comp. Rut. 2:11, where Boaz praises this love); the later love she had shown in the fact, that as a young widow she had not sought to win the affections of young men, as young women generally do, that she might have a youthful husband, but had turned trustfully to the older man, that he might find a successor to her deceased husband, through a marriage with him, in accordance with family custom (vid., Rut. 4:10). “*And now,*” added Boaz (v. 11), “*my daughter, fear not; for all that thou sayest I will do to thee: for the whole gate of my people (i.e., all my city, the whole population of Bethlehem, who go in and out at the gate: see Gen. 34:24, Deu. 17: 2) knoweth that thou art a virtuous woman.*” Consequently Boaz saw nothing wrong in the fact that Ruth had come to him, but regarded her request that he would marry her as redeemer as perfectly natural and right, and was ready to carry out her wish as soon as the circumstances would legally allow it. He promised her this (vv. 12, 13), saying,

*“And now truly I am a redeemer; but there is a nearer redeemer than I. Stay here this night (or as it reads at the end of v. 13, ‘lie till the morning’), and in the morning, if he will redeem thee, well, let him redeem; but if it does not please him to redeem thee, I will redeem thee, as truly as Jehovah liveth.”*

כִּי (Kethibh, v. 12), after a strong assurance, as after the formula used in an oath, “*God do so to me,*” etc., 2Sa. 3:35; 15:21 (Kethibh), and 2Ki. 5:20, is to be explained from the use of this particle in the sense of nisi, except that, =

only: “only I am redeemer,” equivalent to, assuredly I am redeemer (cf. *Ewald*, § 356, *b.*). Consequently there is no reason whatever for removing the **ס** from the text, as the Masorites have done (in the *Keri*).<sup>17</sup>

Ruth was to lie till morning, because she could not easily return to the city in the dark at midnight; but, as is shown in v. 14, she did not stay till actual daybreak, but “before one could know another, she rose up, and he said (i.e., as Boaz had said), *It must not be known that the woman came to the threshing-floor.*” For this would have injured the reputation not only of Ruth, but also of Boaz himself.

**Rut. 3:15.** He then said, “Bring the cloak that thou hast on, and lay hold of it” (to hold it open), and measured for her six measures of barley into it as a present, that she might not to back empty to her mother-in-law (v. 17).

**מַטְפֵּיחָהּ**, here and Isa. 3:22, is a broad upper garment, *pallium*, possibly only a large shawl. “As the cloaks worn by the ancients were so full, that one part was thrown upon the shoulder, and another gathered up under the arm, Ruth, by holding a certain part, could receive into her bosom the corn which Boaz gave her” (*Schröder*, *De vestit. mul.* p. 264). Six (measures of) *barley*: the measure is not given. According to the Targum and the Rabbins, it was six seahs = two ephahs. This is certainly incorrect; for Ruth would not have been able to carry that quantity of barley home. When Boaz had given her the barley he measured out, and had sent her away, he also went into the city. This is the correct rendering, as given by the *Chaldee*, to the words **וַיָּבֵא הָעִיר**; though Jerome referred the words to Ruth, but certainly without any reason, as **וְבֵא** cannot stand for **וְבָא**. This reading is no doubt found in some of the MSS, but it merely owes its origin to a mistaken interpretation of the words.

**Rut. 3:16-18.** When Ruth returned home, her mother-in-law asked her, “*Who art thou?*” i.e., as what person, in what circumstances dost thou come? The real meaning is, What hast thou accomplished? Whereupon she related all that the man had done (cf. vv. 10-14), and that he had given her six measures of barley for her mother. The Masorites have supplied **אֵלַי** after **אָמַר**, as at v. 5, but without any necessity. The mother-in-law drew from this the hope that Boaz would now certainly carry out the matter to the desired end. “*Sit still,*” i.e., remain quietly at home (see Gen. 38:11), “*till thou hearest how the affair turn out,*” namely, whether the nearer redeemer mentioned by Boaz, or Boaz himself, would grant her the Levirate marriage. The expression “fall,” in this sense, is founded upon the idea of the falling of the lot to the ground; it is different in Ezr. 7:20. “*For the man will not rest unless he has carried the affair to an end this day.*” **כִּי־אָסַם**, except that, as in Lev. 22: 6, etc. (see *Ewald*, § 356, *b.*).

## Boaz Marries Ruth. — Ch. 4.

**Rut. 4.** To redeem the promise he had given to Ruth, Boaz went the next morning to the gate of the city, and calling to the nearer redeemer as he passed by, asked him, before the elders of the city, to redeem the piece of land which belonged to Elimelech and had been sold by Naomi; and if he did this, at the same time to marry Ruth, to establish the name of the deceased upon his inheritance (vv. 1-5). But as he renounced the right of redemption on account of the condition attached to the redemption of the field, Boaz undertook the redemption before the assembled people, together with the obligation to marry Ruth (vv. 6-12). The marriage was blessed with a son, who became the father of Jesse, the father of David (vv. 13-17). The book closes with a genealogical proof of the descent of David from Perez (vv. 18-22).

**Rut. 4: 1-5.** “*Boaz had gone up to the gate, and had sat down there.*” This circumstantial clause introduces the account of the further development of the affair. The gate, i.e., the open space before the city gate, was the forum of the city, the place where the public affairs of the city were discussed. The expression “went up” is not to be understood as signifying that Boaz went up from the threshing-floor where he had slept to the city, which was situated upon higher ground, for, according to Rut. 3:15, he had already gone to the city before he went up to the gate; but it is to be explained as referring to the place of justice as an ideal eminence to which a man went up (vid., Deu. 17: 8). The redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken — that is to say, the nearer relation of Elimelech — then went past, and Boaz requested him to come near and sit down. סוֹר as in Gen. 19: 2, etc.: “*Sit down here, such a one.*” פִּלְנֵי אֶלְמָנִי, any one, a certain person, whose name is either unknown or not thought worth mentioning (cf. 1Sa. 21: 3, 2Ki. 6: 8). Boaz would certainly call him by his name; but the historian had either not heard the name, or did not think it necessary to give it.

**Rut. 4: 2.** Boaz then called ten of the elders of the city as witnesses of the business to be taken in hand, and said to the redeemer in their presence,

*“The piece of field which belonged to our brother (i.e., our relative) Elimelech (as an hereditary family possession), Naomi has sold, and I have thought (lit. ‘I said,’ sc., to myself; cf. Gen. 17:17; 27:41), I will open thine ear (i.e., make it known, disclose it): get it before those who sit here, and (indeed) before the elders of my people.”*

As the field had been sold to another, getting it (קִנְיָה) could only be accomplished by virtue of the right of redemption. Boaz therefore proceeded to say,

*“If thou wilt redeem, redeem; but if thou wilt not redeem, tell me, that I may know it: for there is not beside thee (any one more nearly entitled) to redeem, and I am (the next) after thee.”*

הַיִּשְׁבִּים is rendered by many, those dwelling, and supposed to refer to the inhabitants of Bethlehem. But we could hardly think of the inhabitants generally as present, as the word “before” would require, even if, according to v. 9, there were a number of persons present besides the elders. Moreover they would not have been mentioned first, but, like “*all the people*” in v. 9, would have been placed after the elders as the principal witnesses. On these grounds, the word must be taken in the sense of sitting, and, like the verb in v. 2, be understood as referring to the elders present; and the words “before the elders of my people” must be regarded as explanatory. The expression נִשְׂאֵל (third pers.) is striking, as we should expect the second person, which is not only found in the Septuagint, but also in several codices, and is apparently required by the context. It is true that the third person may be defended, as it has been by *Seb. Schmidt* and others, on the assumption that Boaz turned towards the elders and uttered the words as addressed to them, and therefore spoke of the redeemer as a third person: “*But if he, the redeemer there, will not redeem.*” But as the direct appeal to the redeemer himself is resumed immediately afterwards, the supposition, to our mind at least, is a very harsh one. The person addressed said, “*I will redeem.*” Boaz then gave him this further explanation (v. 5):

*“On the day that thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou buyest it of the hand of Ruth the Moabitess, of the wife of the deceased (Mahlon, the rightful heir of the field), to set up (that thou mayest set up) the name of the deceased upon his inheritance.”*

From the meaning and context, the form קְנִיתִי must be the second pers. masc.; the *yod* at the end no doubt crept in through an error of the pen, or else from a ך, so that the word is either to be read קְנִיתִיךָ (according to the *Keri*) or קְנִיתִיו, “*thou buyest it.*” So far as the fact itself was concerned, the field, which Naomi had sold from want, was the hereditary property of her deceased husband, and ought therefore to descend to her sons according to the standing rule of right; and in this respect, therefore, it was Ruth’s property quite as much as Naomi’s. From the negotiation between Boaz and the nearer redeemer, it is very evident that Naomi had sold the field which was the hereditary property of her husband, and was lawfully entitled to sell it. But as landed property did not descend to wives according to the Israelitish law, but only to children, and when there were no children, to the nearest relatives of the husband (Num. 27: 8-11), when Elimelech died his field properly descended to his sons; and when they died without children, it ought to have passed to his nearest relations. Hence the question arises, what right had Naomi to sell her husband’s field as her own

property? The Rabbins suppose that the field had been presented to Naomi and Ruth by their husbands (vid., *Selden*, de success. in bona def. c. 15). But Elimelech could not lawfully give his hereditary property to his wife, as he left sons behind him when he died, and they were the lawful heirs; and Mahlon also had no more right than his father to make such a gift. There is still less foundation for the opinion that Naomi was an heiress, since even if this were the case, it would be altogether inapplicable to the present affair, where the property in question was not a field which Naomi had inherited from her father, but the field of Elimelech and his sons. The true explanation is no doubt the following: The law relating to the inheritance of the landed property of Israelites who died childless did not determine the time when such a possession should pass to the relatives of the deceased, whether immediately after the death of the owner, or not till after the death of the widow who was left behind (vid., Num. 27: 9ff.). No doubt the latter was the rule established by custom, so that the widow remained in possession of the property as long as she lived; and for that length of time she had the right to sell the property in case of need, since the sale of a field was not an actual sale of the field itself, but simply of the yearly produce until the year of jubilee. Consequently the field of the deceased Elimelech would, strictly speaking, have belonged to his sons, and after their death to Mahlon's widow, since Chilion's widow had remained behind in her own country Moab. But as Elimelech had not only emigrated with his wife and children and died abroad, but his sons had also been with him in the foreign land, and had married and died there, the landed property of their father had not descended to them, but had remained the property of Naomi, Elimelech's widow, in which Ruth, as the widow of the deceased Mahlon, also had a share. Now, in case a widow sold the field of her deceased husband for the time that it was in her possession, on account of poverty, and a relation of her husband redeemed it, it was evidently his duty not only to care for the maintenance of the impoverished widow, but if she were still young, to marry her, and to let the first son born of such a marriage enter into the family of the deceased husband of his wife, so as to inherit the redeemed property, and perpetuate the name and possession of the deceased in Israel. Upon this right, which was founded upon traditional custom, Boaz based this condition, which he set before the nearer redeemer, that if he redeemed the field of Naomi he must also take Ruth, with the obligation to marry her, and through this marriage to set up the name of the deceased upon his inheritance.

**Rut. 4: 6-13.** The redeemer admitted the justice of this demand, from which we may see that the thing passed as an existing right in the nation. But as he was not disposed to marry Ruth, he gave up the redemption of the field.

**Rut. 4: 6.** *“I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance.”* The redemption would cost money, since the yearly produce of the field would have to be paid for up to the year of jubilee. Now, if he acquired the field by redemption as his own permanent property, he would have increased by so much his own possessions in land. But if he should marry Ruth, the field so redeemed would belong to the son whom he would beget through her, and he would therefore have parted with the money that he had paid for the redemption merely for the son of Ruth, so that he would have withdrawn a certain amount of capital from his own possession, and to that extent have detracted from its worth. *“Redeem thou for thyself my redemption,”* i.e., the field which I have the first right to redeem.

**Rut. 4: 7, 8.** This declaration he confirmed by what was a usual custom at that time in renouncing a right. This early custom is described in v. 7, and there its application to the case before us is mentioned afterwards.

*“Now this was (took place) formerly in Israel in redeeming and exchanging, to confirm every transaction: A man took off his shoe and gave it to another, and this was a testimony in Israel.”* From the expression *“formerly,”*

and also from the description given of the custom in question, it follows that it had gone out of use at the time when our book was composed. The custom itself, which existed among the Indians and the ancient Germans, arose from the fact that fixed property was taken possession of by treading upon the soil, and hence taking off the shoe and handing it to another was a symbol of the transfer of a possession or right of ownership (see the remarks on Deu. 25: 9 and my *Bibl. Archäol.* ii. p. 66). The *Piel* 𐤀𐤍𐤏 is rarely met with in Hebrew; in the present instance it was probably taken from the old legal phraseology. The only other places in which it occurs are Eze. 13: 6, Psa. 119:28, 106, and the book of Esther, where it is used more frequently as a Chaldaism.

**Rut. 4: 9, 10.** After the nearest redeemer had thus renounced the right of redemption with all legal formality, Boaz said to the elders and all the (rest of the) people,

*“Ye are witnesses this day, that I have acquired this day all that belonged to Elimelech, and to Mahlon and Chilion (i.e., the field of Elimelech, which was the rightful inheritance of his sons Mahlon and Chilion), at the hand of Naomi; and also Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to raise up the name of the deceased upon his inheritance, that the name of the deceased may not be cut off among his brethren and from the gate of his people”*

(i.e., from his native town Bethlehem; cf. Rut. 3:11). On the fact itself, see the introduction to Rut. 3; also the remarks on the Levirate marriages at Deu. 25: 5ff.

**Rut. 4:11.** The people and the elders said, “*We are witnesses,*” and desired for Boaz the blessing of the Lord upon this marriage. For Boaz had acted as unselfishly as he had acted honourably in upholding a laudable family custom in Israel. The blessing desired is the greatest blessing of marriage:

*“The Lord make the woman that shall come into thine house (the participle בָּנָה refers to what is immediately about to happen) like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel (“build” as in Gen. 16: 2; 30: 3); and do thou get power in Ephratah, and make to thyself a name in Bethlehem.”*

עָשָׂה חַיִּיל does not mean “get property or wealth,” as in Deu. 8:17, but get power, as in Psa. 60:14 (cf. Pro. 31:29), sc., by begetting and training worthy sons and daughters. “*Make thee a name,*” literally “call out a name.” The meaning of this phrase, which is only used here in this peculiar manner, must be the following: “Make to thyself a well-established name through thy marriage with Ruth, by a host of worthy sons who shall make thy name renowned.”

**Rut. 4:12.** “*May thy house become like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah*” (Gen. 38). It was from *Perez* that the ancestors of Boaz, enumerated in vv. 18ff. and 1Ch. 2: 5ff., were descended. As from *Perez*, so also from the seed which Jehovah would give to Boaz through Ruth, there should grow up a numerous posterity.

**Rut. 4:13-17.** This blessing began very speedily to be fulfilled. When Boaz had married Ruth, Jehovah gave her conception, and she bare a son.

**Rut. 4:14.** At his birth the women said to Naomi, “*Blessed be the Lord, who hath not let a redeemer be wanting to thee to-day.*” This redeemer was not Boaz, but the son just born. They called him a redeemer of Naomi, not because he would one day redeem the whole of Naomi’s possessions (*Carpzov, Rosenmüller, etc.*), but because as the son of Ruth he was also the son of Naomi (v. 17), and as such would take away the reproach of childlessness from her, would comfort her, and tend her in her old age, and thereby become her true *goël*, i.e., her deliverer (*Bertheau*). “*And let his name be named in Israel,*” i.e., let the boy acquire a celebrated name, one often mentioned in Israel.

**Rut. 4:15.** “*And may the boy come to thee a refresher of the soul, and a nourisher of thine old age; for thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee (who hath left her family, her home, and her gods, out of love to thee), hath born him; she is better to thee than seven sons.*” *Seven*, as the number of the works of God, is used to denote a large number of sons of a mother whom God has richly blessed with children (vid., 1Sa. 2: 5). A mother of so many sons was to be congratulated, inasmuch as she not only possessed in these sons a powerful support to her old age, but had the prospect of the permanent continuance of

her family. Naomi, however, had a still more valuable treasure in her mother-in-law, inasmuch as through her the loss of her own sons had been supplied in her old age, and the prospect was now presented to her of becoming in her childless old age the tribe-mother of a numerous and flourishing family.

**Rut. 4:16.** Naomi therefore adopted this grandson as her own child; she took the boy into her bosom, and became his nurse.

**Rut. 4:17.** And the neighbours said, “*A son is born to Naomi,*” and gave him the name of *Obed*. This name was given to the boy (the context suggests this) evidently with reference to what he was to become to his grandmother. *Obed*, therefore, does not mean “servant of Jehovah” (*Targum*), but “*the serving one,*” as one who lived entirely for his grandmother, and would take care of her, and rejoice her heart (*O. v. Gerlach*, after *Josephus*, Ant. v. 9, 4). The last words of v. 17, “*he is the father of Jesse, the father of David,*” show the object which the author kept in view in writing down these events, or composing the book itself. This conjecture is raised into a certainty by the genealogy which follows, and with which the book closes.

**Rut. 4:18-20.** “*These are the generations of Perez,*” i.e., the families descended from Perez in their genealogical order (*toledoth*: see at Gen. 2: 4). The genealogy only goes back as far as *Perez*, because he was the founder of the family of Judah which was named after him (Num. 26:20), and to which Elimelech and Boaz belonged. *Perez*, a son of Judah by Tamar (Gen. 38:29), begat *Hezrom*, who is mentioned in Gen. 46:12 among the sons of Judah who emigrated with Jacob into Egypt, although (as we have shown in our comm. on the passage) he was really born in Egypt. Of this son *Ram* (called *Aram* in the *Sept. Cod. Al.*, and from that in Mat. 1: 3) nothing further is known, as he is only mentioned again in 1Ch. 2: 9. His son *Amminidab* was the father-in-law of Aaron, who had married his daughter (Exo. 6:23), and the father of *Nahesson* (*Nahshon*), the tribe-prince of the house of Judah in the time of Moses (Num. 1: 7; 2: 3; 7:12). According to this there are only four or five generations to the 430 years spent by the Israelites in Egypt, if we include both Perez and Nahesson; evidently not enough for so long a time, so that some of the intermediate links must have been left out even here. But the omission of unimportant members becomes still more apparent in the statement which follows, viz., that Nahshon begat *Salmah*, and *Salmah* *Boaz*, in which only two generations are given for a space of more than 250 years, which intervened between the death of Moses and the time of Gideon. *Salmah* (שַׁלְמָה or שְׁלֵמָה, 1Ch. 2:11) is called *Salmon* in v. 21; a double form of the name, which is to be explained from the fact that *Salmah* grew out of *Salmon* through the elision of the *n*, and that the terminations *an* and *on* are used promiscuously, as we may



see from the form שָׂרִיָּה in Job. 41:18 when compared with שָׂרִיָּן in 1Ki. 22:34, and שָׂרִיָּן in 1Sa. 17: 5, 38 (see *Ewald*, § 163-4). According to the genealogy of Christ in Mat. 1: 5, Salmon married Rahab; consequently he was a son, or at any rate a grandson, of Nahshon, and therefore all the members between Salmon and Boaz have been passed over. Again, the generations from Boaz to David (vv. 21, 22) may possibly be complete, although in all probability one generation has been passed over even here between Obed and Jesse (see p. 343). It is also worthy of notice that the whole chain from *Perez* to *David* consists of ten links, five of which (from Perez to Nahshon) belong to the 430 years of the sojourn in Egypt, and five (from Salmon to David) to the 476 years between the exodus from Egypt and the death of David. This symmetrical division is apparently as intentional as the limitation of the whole genealogy to ten members, for the purpose of stamping upon it through the number ten as the seal of completeness the character of a perfect, concluded, and symmetrical whole.

The genealogy closes with David, an evident proof that the book was intended to give a family picture from the life of the pious ancestors of this great and godly king of Israel. But for us the history which points to David acquires a still higher signification, from the fact that all the members of the genealogy of David whose names occur here are also found in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. “The passage is given by Matthew word for word in the genealogy of Christ, that we may see that this history looks not so much to David as to Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed by all as the Saviour and Redeemer of the human race, and that we may learn with what wonderful compassion the Lord raises up the lowly and despised to the greatest glory and majesty” (*Brentius*).

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>ft1</sup> The book of *Ruth* does not indeed belong to the prophetic books of history so far as its historical character is concerned, and even in the Hebrew canon it is placed among the hagiographa; but as its contents directly follow upon those of the book of Judges, it seemed advisable to place the exposition immediately after that of Judges.]

<sup>ft2</sup> Many critics of the present day, indeed, appeal to the testimony of Josephus and the earlier fathers as favouring the opposite view, viz., that the book of Ruth was originally placed at the close of the book of Judges, to which it formed an appendix. *Josephus* (c. Ap. i. 8) reckons, as is well known, only twenty-two books of the Old Testament; and the only way by which this number can be obtained is by joining together the books of Judges and Ruth, so as to form one book. Again, *Melito of Sardes*, who lives in the second century, and took a journey into Palestine for the purpose of obtaining correct information concerning the sacred writings of the Jews (πόσα τὸν ἀριθμὸν καὶ ὅποια τὴν τάξιν εἶεν), places Ruth after Judges in the list which has been preserved by *Eusebius* (*h. e.* iv. 26), but does not give the number of the books, as *Bertheau* erroneously maintains, nor observes that “Judges and Ruth form one book under the name of *Shofetim*.” This is first done by *Origen* in his list as given by *Eusebius* (*h. e.* vi. 25), where he states that the Hebrews had twenty-two ἑνδιαθήκους βίβλους, and then adds in the case of Ruth, παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἐν ἐνὶ Σωφετίμ. Ruth occupies the same place in the lists of the later Greek fathers, as in *Rufinus* (*Expos. in Symb. Apost.*) and *Jerome* (in *Prolog. Gal.*), the latter of whom makes this remark on the book of Judges, *Et in eundem compingunt Ruth, quia in diebus Judicium facta ejus narratur historia*; and after enumerating the twenty-two books of the Old Testament, adds, *Quanquam nonnulli Ruth et Kinoth inter Hagiographa scriptitent et hos libros in suo putent numero supputandos*, etc. But all these testimonies prove nothing more than that the Hellenistic Jews, who made use of the Old Testament in the Greek rendering of the LXX, regarded the book of Ruth as an appendix of the book of Judges, and not that the book of Ruth ever followed the book of Judges in the Hebrew canon, so as to form one book. The reduction of the sacred writings of the Old Testament to twenty-two is nothing more than the product of the cabalistic and mystical numbers wrought out by the Hellenistic or Alexandrian Jews. If this numbering had been the original one, the Hebrew Jews would never have increased the

number to twenty-four, since the Hebrew alphabet never contained twenty-four letters. *Josephus*, however, is not a witness with regard to the orthodox opinions of the Hebrew Jews, but was an eclectic and a Hellenist, who used the Old Testament in the Septuagint version and not in the original text, and who arranged the books of the Old Testament in the most singular manner. The fathers, too, with the exception of *Jerome*, whenever they give any account of their inquiries among the Jews with regard to the number and order of the books accepted by them as canonical, never give them in either the order or number found in the Hebrew canon, but simply according to the Septuagint version, which was the only one that the Christians understood. This is obvious in the case of *Melito*, from the fact that he reckons Βασιλειῶν τέσσαρα and Παραλειπομένων δύο, and places *Daniel* between the twelve minor prophets and Ezekiel. We find the same in *Origen*, although he gives the Hebrew names to the different books, and states in connection with the four books of Kings and the two books of *Paralipomena*, that the Hebrews named and numbered them differently. Lastly, it is true that *Jerome* arranges the writings of the Old Testament in his Prol. Gal. according to the three classes of the Hebrew canon; but he endeavours to bring the Hebrew mode of division and enumeration as much as possible into harmony with the Septuagint numbering and order as generally adopted in the Christian Church, and to conceal all existing differences. You may see this very clearly from his remarks as to the number of these books, and especially from the words, *Porro quinque litterae duplices apud Hebraeos sunt, Caph, Mem, Nun, Pe, Sade.... Unde et quinque a plerisque libri duplices existimantur, Samuel, Melachim, Dibre Hajamim, Esdras, Jeremias cum Kintoh, i.e., Lamentationibus suis.* For the *plerisque* who adopt two books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, are not Hebrew but Hellenistic Jews, as the Hebrew Jews did not divide these writings in their canon into two books each, but this mode of dividing them was first introduced into the Hebrew Bibles by *Dan. Bomberg* from the *Septuagint* or *Vulgate*. The further remark of this father, *quanquam nonnulli Ruth et Kintoh inter hagiographa scriptitent*, etc., is also to be estimated in the same way, and the word *nonnulli* to be attributed to the conciliatory efforts of *Jerome*. And lastly, his remark concerning the connection between the book of Ruth and that of Judges is not to be regarded as any evidence of the position which this book occupied in the Hebrew canon, but simply as a proof of the place assigned it by the Hellenistic Jews.

<sup>ft3</sup> The objections raised by *J. B. Carpzov* against explaining vv. 12 and 13 as referring to a Levirate marriage, — namely, that this is not to be thought of, because a Levirate marriage was simply binding upon brothers of the

deceased by the same father and mother, and upon brothers who were living when he died, and not upon those born afterwards, — have been overthrown by *Bertheau* as being partly without foundation, and partly beside the mark. In the first place, the law relating to the Levirate marriage speaks only of brothers of the deceased, by which, according to the design of this institution, we must certainly think of sons by one father, but not necessarily the sons by the same mother. Secondly, the law does indeed expressly require marriage with the sister-in-law only of a brother who should be in existence when her husband died, but it does not distinctly exclude a brother born afterwards; and this is the more evident from the fact that, according to the account in Gen. 38:11, this duty was binding upon brothers who were not grown up at the time, as soon as they should be old enough to marry. Lastly, Naomi merely says, in v. 12*a*, that she was not with child by her deceased husband; and when she does take into consideration, in vv. 12*b* and 13, the possibility of a future pregnancy, she might even then be simply thinking of an alliance with some brother of her deceased husband, and therefore of sons who would legally be regarded as sons of Elimelech. When *Carpzov* therefore defines the meaning of her words in this manner, “I have indeed no more children to hope for, to whom I could marry you in time, and I have no command over others,” the first thought does not exhaust the meaning of the words, and the last is altogether foreign to the text.

<sup>ft4</sup> “She thought of earthly things alone; and as at that time the Jews almost universally were growing lax in the worship of God, so she, having spent ten years among the Moabites, though it of little consequence whether they adhered to the religion of their fathers, to which they had been accustomed from their infancy or went over to the Jewish religion.” — *Carpzov*.

<sup>ft5</sup> Thus *Robinson* (Pal. ii. p. 394) gives the following description of a harvest scene in the neighbourhood of Kubeibeh: “In one field nearly two hundred reapers and gleaners were at work, the latter being nearly as numerous as the former. A few were taking their refreshment, and offered us some of their ‘parched corn.’ In the season of harvest, the grains of wheat not yet fully dry and hard, are roasted in a pan or on an iron plate, and constitute a very palatable article of food; this is eaten along with bread, or instead of it.”

<sup>ft6</sup> “A level spot is selected for the threshing-floors, which are then constructed near each other, of a circular form, perhaps fifty feet in diameter, merely by beating down the earth hard.” — *Robinson*, Pal. ii. p. 277.

<sup>ft7</sup> What the *ל* *maju* sc., in *ליני* signifies, is uncertain. According to the smaller Masora, it was only found among the eastern (i.e., Palestinian) Jews.

Consequently *Hiller* (in his *Arcanum Keri et Ctibh*, p. 163) conjectures that they used it to point out a various reading, viz., that לְנִי should be the reading here. But this is hardly correct.