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Book of Ruth

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).

Ruth 1:1-5

Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

Verse 1-5. **Elimelech's Emigration** (vv. 1, 2). - By the word *way^ahiy* (OT:1961) the following account is attached to other well-known events (see at Josh 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 (Judg 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 (Judg 6:3-4), from which famine must necessarily have ensued. Moreover, they extended their devastations as far as Gaza (Judg 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 (Judg 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 Ruth 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 BC 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

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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 *s^adeey* (OT:7704) (vv. 1, 2, 22, and Ruth 2:6) is not the construct state singular, or only another form for *s^adeeh* (OT:7704), as *Bertheau* maintains, but the construct state plural of the absolute *saadayim*, which does not occur anywhere, it is true, but would be a perfectly regular formation (comp. Isa 32:12; 2 Sam 1:21, etc.), as the construct state singular is written *s^adeeh* (OT:7704) even in this book (v. 6 and Ruth 4:3). The use of the singular in these passages for the land of the Moabites by no means proves that *s^adeey* (OT:7704) 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."

Verse 2-4. *'ep^araatiym* (OT:673), the plural of *'ep^araatiy* (OT:673), an adjective formation, not from *'ep^arayim* (OT:669), as in Judg 12:5, but from *'ep^araat* (OT:672) (Gen 48:7) or *'ep^araataah* (OT:672) (Ruth 4:11; Gen 35:19), the old name for Bethlehem, *Ephrathite*, i.e., sprung from Bethlehem, as in 1 Sam 17:12. The names - *Elimelech*,

i.e., to whom God is King; *Naomi* (*naa`aamiy* (OT:5281), a contraction of *naa`aamiyt*, LXX *Gommei'n*, *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 *r^auwt* (OT:7468), a friend, is quite uncertain. According to Ruth 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 (Deut 7:3); it was only the reception of Moabites into the congregation of the Lord that was forbidden (Deut 23:4).

Verse 5. "**Thus the woman** (Naomi) *remained left (alone) of her two sons and her husband.*"

Ruth 1:6-7

Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.

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.

Ruth 1:8-10

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And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.

"**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 Ruth 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*" **kiy** (OT:3588) before a direct statement serves to strengthen it, and is almost equivalent to a positive assurance.

Ruth 1:11-13

And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

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 Levitate law (Deut 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;***" year, 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 *kiy* (OT:3588) (*if*) before *'aamar^atiy* (OT:559) refers to both the perfects which follow. *laaheen* (OT:3861) is the third pers. plur. neuter suffix *heen* (OT:2005) with the prefix *l^a*, as in Job 30:24, where *heen* (OT:2005) 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* = *laakeen* (OT:3651), as in Chaldee (e.g., Dan 2:6,9,24, etc.). *tee`aageenaah* (OT:5702) (vid., Isa 60:4, and *Ewald*, §195, *a.*), from *`aagan* (OT:5702) *hap leg* in Hebrew, which signifies in Aramaean to hold back, shut in; hence in the Talmud *`aguwnaah*, 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

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of Judah. She therefore merely fixed her mind upon the different possibilities of a Levirate marriage.

(Note: 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. 12a, that she was not with child by her deceased husband; and when she does take into consideration, in vv. 12b 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.) *b^anotay* (OT:1323) '*al* (OT:408), "*not my daughters,*" i.e., do not go with me; "*for it has gone much more bitterly with me than with you.*" *maarah* (OT:4843) relates to her mournful lot. *mikem* (OT:4480) is comparative, "before you;" not "it grieveth me much on your account," for which *aleeykem* would be used, as in 2 Sam 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.

Ruth 1:14

And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in

law; but Ruth clave unto her.

At these dissuasive words the daughters-in-law broke out into loud weeping again (*tisenaah* (OT:5375) with *the ' (OT:589) dropped for tise'naah* (OT:5375), 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 (*daabaq* (OT:1692) as in Gen 2:24), forsaking her father and mother to go with Naomi into the land of Judah (vid., Ruth 2:11).

Ruth 1:15-17

And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.

To the repeated entreaty of Naomi that she would follow her sister-in-law and return to her people and her God,

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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 ***yociyp*** (OT:3254)... ***y' ya`aseh*** (OT:6213) ***koh*** (OT:3541) are a frequently recurring formula in connection with an oath (cf. 1 Sam 3:17; 14:44; 20:13, etc.), by which the person swearing called down upon himself a severe punishment in case he should not keep his word or carry out his resolution. The following ***kiy*** (OT:3588) is not a particle used in swearing instead of ***'im*** (OT:518) in the sense of "if," equivalent to "surely not," as in 1 Sam 20:12, in the oath which precedes the formula, but answer to ***ho'ti*** (NT:3754) in the sense of *quod* introducing the declaration, as in Gen 22:16; 1 Sam 20:13; 1 Kings 2:23; 2 Kings 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.

(Note: "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.*)

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. Ruth 2:11).

Ruth 1:18

When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

As she insisted strongly upon going with her (*hit^aameets* (OT:553), to stiffen one's self firmly upon a thing), Naomi gave up persuading her any more to return.

Ruth 1:19-22

So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?

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So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived, the whole town was in commotion on their account (*teehom* (OT:1949), imperf. *Niph.* of *huwm* (OT:1949), as in 1 Sam 4:5; 1 Kings 1:45). They said, "*Is this Naomi?*" The subject to *to'mar^anaah* (OT:559) 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 *to'mar^anaah* (OT:559) and *tiq^are'naah* (OT:7122). 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 Ex 20:16; 2 Sam 1:16). The rendering "*He hath humbled me*" (LXX, *Vulg.*, *Bertheau*, etc.) is incorrect, as *`aanaah* (OT:6030) with *b^a* and the construct state simply means to trouble one's self with anything (Eccl 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. *hashaabaah* (OT:7725) is pointed as a third pers. perf. with the article in a relative sense, as in Ruth 2:6 and 4:3. Here and at ch. 2:6 it applies to Ruth; but in ch. 4:3 to Naomi. *heemaah* (OT:1992), the masculine, is used here, as it frequently is, for the feminine *heenaah* (OT:2007), 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.

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).

Ruth 2:1-7

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz.

Verse 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 myd`* is to be read *m^ayudaa`*, an acquaintance (cf. Ps 31:12; 55:14). The *Keri mowda`* (OT:4129) is the construct state of *mowdaa`* (OT:4129), *lit.* acquaintanceship, then an

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acquaintance or friend (Prov 7:4), for which *mowda`at* (OT:4130) occurs afterwards in Ruth 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 *l^a* before '*iyshaah* (OT:582) 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 *mowda`* (OT:4129) has taken the form of the construct state notwithstanding this *l^a* (compare *Ewald* , §292, *a.* , with §289, *b.*). *chayil* (OT:2428) *gibowr* (OT:1368) generally means the brave man of war (Judg 6:12; 11:1, etc.); but here it signifies a man of property. The name *Boaz* is not formed from *`aaz* (OT:5794) *bow* (OT:871a), in whom is strength, but from a root, *baa`az* , which does not occur in Hebrew, and signifies *alacrity*.

Verse 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), '*asher* (OT:834) '*achar* (OT:310), behind him in whose eyes she should find favour. The Mosaic law (Lev 19:9; 23:22, compared with Deut 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. *miq^areehaa* (OT:4745) *wayiqer* (OT:7136), lit., "*her chance chanced to hit upon the field.*"

Verse 4-7. 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." **mee'aaz** (OT:227), *lit.* a conjunction, here used as a preposition, is stronger than **min** (OT:4480), "*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.

Ruth 2:8-9

Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens:

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* (**tsaamit** (OT:6770), from **tsaamaah** = **tsaamee'**

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(OT:6771): see *Ewald* , §195, *b.*), *go to the vessels, and drink of what the servants draw."*

Ruth 2:10

Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

Deeply affected by this generosity, Ruth fell upon her face, bowing down to the ground (as in 1 Sam 25:23; 2 Sam 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?" hikiyr* (OT:5234), to look at with sympathy or care, to receive a person kindly (cf. v. 19).

Ruth 2:11-12

And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

Boaz replied, "*Everything has been told me that thou hast done to ('eet* (OT:853), prep. as in Zech 7:9; 2 Sam 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 Deut 32:11, compare Ps 91:4; 36:8; 57:2. In these words of Boaz we see the genuine

piety of a true Israelite.

Ruth 2:13

Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.

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 Judg 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 '*em^atsaa*' (OT:4672) 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

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humility shown by Ruth in the following words.

Ruth 2:14

And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.

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 (*laah* (OT:3807a) without *Mappik* , as in Num 32:42; Zech 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. *qaaliy* (OT:7039) 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.

(Note: 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.")

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).

Ruth 2:15-16

And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not:

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, Judg 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 fact important to notice in connection with the further course of the history.

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Ruth 2:17-23

So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.

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.

Verse 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).

Verse 19-20. 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 *chac^dow* (OT:2617) *aazab* (OT:5800) see Gen 24:27. This verb is construed with a double accusative here; for *'eet* (OT:853) cannot be a preposition, as in that case *mee'eet* (OT:853) would be used like *mee'im* (OT:5973) 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. *go'aleenuw* (OT:1350), a defective form for *go'aleeynuw*, 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 ch. 3.

Verse 21. Ruth proceeded to inform her of his kindness: *kiy* (OT:3588) *gam* (OT:1571), "*also (know) that he said to me, Keep with my people, till the harvest is all ended.*" The masculine *han^aaariym* (OT:5288), for which we should rather expect the feminine *n^aaarowt* (OT:5291) 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 *liy* (OT:3807a) *'asher* (OT:834) 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.

Verse 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." *b^apaaga`* (OT:6293) signifies to fall upon a person, to smite and ill-treat him.

Verse 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.

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Ruth Seeks for Marriage with Boaz. Ch. 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. Deut 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 Deut 25:7-10); according to Ruth 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 (Ruth 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 (Ruth 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 Ruth 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 (Ruth 3:10-11).

As he acknowledge by this very declaration, that under certain

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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."

Ruth 3:1-5

Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

Verse 1-2. 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 '*abaqesh halo*', the word *halo*' 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." *maanowach* (OT:4494) = *m^an^uwchaah* (OT:4496) (Ruth 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.

(Note: "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.)

Verse 3-4. "**Wash and anoint thyself** (*cak^{at}* (OT:5480), from *cuwk^a* (OT:5480) = *naacak^a* (OT:5258)), *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.*"

Verse 5. Ruth promised to do this. The '*eelay* (OT:413), 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).

Ruth 3:6-7

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And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.

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.

Ruth 3:8

And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.

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.*" *mar^ag^lotaayw* (OT:4772) is *accus. loci*.

Ruth 3:9

And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.

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." *k^anaapekaa* (OT:3671) 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 Deut 23:1; 27:20, and Ezek 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.

Ruth 3:10-14

And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

Boaz praised her conduct: "*Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter* (see Ruth 2:20); *thou hast made thy*

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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. Ruth 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., Ruth 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; Deut 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.*" '*im* (OT:518) *kiy* (OT:3588) (*Kethibh* , v. 12), after a strong assurance, as after the formula used in an oath, "*God do so to me,*" etc., 2 Sam 3:35; 15:21 (*Kethibh*), and 2 Kings 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 '*im* (OT:518) from the text, as the Masorites have done (in the *Keri*).

(Note: What the *l maju* sc., in *liyniy* (OT:3885) 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 *laniy* should be the reading here. But this is hardly correct.)

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.

Ruth 3:15

Also he said, Bring the veil that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city.

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). *miT^apachat* (OT:4304), 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 *haa`iyar* (OT:5892) *wayaabo'*

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(OT:935); though Jerome referred the words to Ruth, but certainly without any reason, as *yaabo'* (OT:935) cannot stand for *taabo'* (OT:935). This reading is no doubt found in some of the MSS, but it merely owes its origin to a mistaken interpretation of the words.

Ruth 3:16-18

*And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter?
And she told her all that the man had done to her.*

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 *'elay* (OT:413) after *'amar* (OT:559), 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 Ezra 7:20. "*For the man will not rest unless he has carried the affair to an end this day.*" *kiy-'im* , except that, as in Lev 22:6, etc. (see *Ewald* , §356, *b*).

Boaz Marries Ruth. Ch. 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).

Ruth 4:1-5

Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down.

Verse 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 Ruth 3:15, he had already gone to the city before he went up to the

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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., Deut 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. *cuwr* (OT:5493) as in Gen 19:2, etc.: "***Sit down here, such a one.***" *'al^amoniy* (OT:492) *p^aloniy* (OT:6423), any one, a certain person, whose name is either unknown or not thought worth mentioning (cf. 1 Sam 21:3; 2 Kings 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.

Verse 2-5. 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 (*qaanaah* (OT:7069)) 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.*" *haysh^abiym* (OT:3427) 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 *yig^aal* (OT:1350) (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 ***qnyty*** (OT:7069) 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 *w*, so that the word is either to be read ***qaaniytaa*** (OT:7069) (according to the *Keri*) or ***q'niytow***, "*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

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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.

Ruth 4:6-13

And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it.

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.

Verse 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.

Verse 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

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"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 Deut 25:9 and my *Bibl. Archäol.* ii. p. 66). The *Piel qayeem* (OT:6965) 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 Ezek 13:6; Ps 119:28,106, and the book of Esther, where it is used more frequently as a Chaldaism.

Verse 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. Ruth 3:11). On the fact itself, see the introduction to ch. 3; also the remarks on the Levirate marriages at Deut 25:5ff.

Verse 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 *baa'aah* (OT:935) 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.*" *chayil* (OT:2428) *`aasaah* (OT:6213) does not mean "get property or wealth," as in Deut 8:17, but get *power*, as in Ps. 60:14 (cf. Prov 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."

Verse 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 1 Chron 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.

Ruth 4:13-17

So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son.

This blessing began very speedily to be fulfilled. When Boaz had married Ruth, Jehovah gave her conception, and she bare a son.

Verse 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

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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.

Verse 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., 1 Sam 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.

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

Verse 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.

Ruth 4:18-22

Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron,

"**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 Matt 1:3) nothing further is known, as he is only mentioned again in 1 Chron 2:9. His son *Amminidab* was the father-in-law of Aaron, who had married his daughter (Ex 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* (*sal^amaah* (OT:8008) or *sal^amaa'* (OT:8007), 1 Chron 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

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that the terminations *an* and *on* are used promiscuously, as we may see from the form *shir^ayaah* in Job 41:18 when compared with *shir^ayaan* in 1 Kings 22:34, and *shir^ayown* (OT:8302) in 1 Sam 17:5,38 (see *Ewald* , §163-4).

According to the genealogy of Christ in Matt 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*).

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