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Ruth Gleans in the Field of Bo’az
2: 1-3

Ruth gleans in the field of Bo’az DIG: What are four ways that Bo’az foreshadows the coming of Messiah? What is a *go’el*? What were the three obligations of the kinsman-redeemer? Why would Bo’az be sympathetic to the plight of a foreign woman like Ruth? How were Na’omi’s and Ruth’s roles reversed in these verses? What provision did ADONAI make for the poor of Isra’el? What did Ruth ask Na’omi’s permission to do? What was Na’omi’s reaction? What does this tell us about her? What signs of hope do you see in these verses?

REFLECT: Describe some of the trials you have persisted through. If you are in the midst of a trial, do you see a “field of hope” nearby? Where is it? Who is in it with you? What provision have you made for the poor in your community? What signs of hope has the LORD given to you? How has ADONAI guided your steps? Does YHVH have a plan for your life? Can you say no to God and make it stick? How do you reconcile the sovereignty of God in our lives and our free will to choose?

Before **ADONAI** changes our circumstances, **He** wants to change our hearts. If our circumstances change for the better, but we remain the same, then we will become **embittered**. **God’s** purpose is not to make us comfortable, but to make us comfortable in being **conformed into the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).** Christlike character is the divine goal for all of **His** children.

Na’omi was **bitter** against **God**, but **Ruth** was willing for **YHVH** to have **His** way in **her** life, so **God** began **His** gracious work with **Ruth**. **She** would influence **Na’omi**, and then **God** would bring to pass a wonderful work that would eventually bring **Jesus** into the world. **Ruth** and **Na’omi** had no idea that they were part of an eternal plan that would fulfill **God’s** promise to Abraham that his seed would bring blessing to the whole world (see the commentary on **Genesis, to see link click Dt – I Will Bless Those Who Bless You and Whoever Curses You I Will Curse**).

As with Joseph (see the commentary on **Genesis Iw – The Written Account of the Generations of Jacob**)**, while not identified as a type of Christ in the B'rit Chadashah, Bo'az prepares us for, or foreshadows, Messiah. There are twelve ways that the life of Bo'az illustrates the coming of our Lord as seen in his actions.**

There were three obligations of **the kinsman-redeemer** (Hebrew: *go'el*). First, **he** was to redeem **his** brother and **his** brother's inheritance, according to **his** ability to do so if it was poverty that compelled **his** brother to sell **himself** into slavery or to dispose of **his** land. Secondly, **he** was to serve as the avenger of **his** brother's blood. And thirdly, **he** was to rise up a successor to **his** brother, if **his** brother had died without leaving a son.

A ***go'el*** was usually a prominent male in one's extended family. **He** was the official guardian of the family's honor. If the occasion arose, **he** would be the one to avenge the blood of a murdered relative **(Joshua 20:2-9)**. **He** could buy back family lands sold in times of hardship **(Leviticus 25:23-28)**. **He** could pay the redemption-price for family members sold into slavery **(Leviticus 25:47-49)**. Or if **he** were a single man or widower and thus eligible to marry, **he** could revive the family lineage when someone died without an heir by marrying the widow and fathering offspring who would inherit the name and the property of the one who had died. This was known as the duty of levirate marriage, and **Deuteronomy 25:5-10** presented it as a duty in cases where one brother (obviously unmarried and presumably younger) was living in the household of a married brother who died. If the surviving brother refused to fulfill of **the *go'el*** by marrying his brother's widow, he was treated with contempt by the entire village or city.

The TaNaKh places a great deal of emphasis on the role of **the *go'el***. There was a significant redemptive aspect to this person's function. Every **kinsman-redeemer** was, in effect, a living illustration of the position and work of **Messiah** with respect to **His** people. **1. Bo'az foreshadows Messiah as our true Kinsman-Redeemer, and Yeshua becomes our human Brother and buys us back from our bondage to sin. He bought us back from spiritual death with His blood and ultimately returns to us everything we lost because of our sin.** In a very real sense, **Jesus** is **the Kinsman-Redeemer** of Adam. **He** will act as **the Redeemer** who comes to take back the earth that is rightfully His, and to claim **His** bride **(Revelation 19:7, 21:2** and **9, 22:17)**. And like the Year of Jubilee **(Leviticus 25)**, all debts will be **paid in full (John 19:30),** and the slaves (of sin) will go free.

2. Bo'az foreshadows Messiah because one requirement of a kinsman-redeemer was to be a blood relative. Now Na'omi had a [blood] relative on her husband's side (2:1a). The Bible doesn't spell out the relationship. **He** might have been **Elimelek's** brother, but that seems unlikely, since **he** wasn't, technically, **Na'omi's** next of kin **(3:12)**. Therefore, **he** was more likely a cousin or nephew of **Elimelek**. **Jesus was a blood relative of humanity in general (John 1:14; Philippians 2:1-11), but He was particularly a blood relative of the Jewish people (Matthew 1:1-16).**

Bo'az was also a direct descendant of **Rahab**. **Matthew 1:5** says: **Salmon the father of Bo'az, whose mother was Rahab**, and that agrees with **Ruth 4:21**, but the number of years spanning the time between the fall of Jericho and the start of the **Davidic** dynasty suggest that there be more generations between **Salmon** and **David** than either **Matthew 1** or **Ruth 4** explicitly name. Hebrew genealogy often used a kind of shorthand, skipping generations between well-known ancestors. **Matthew** seems to do this deliberately to achieve a kind of numerical symmetry in the genealogical listing (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ai – The Genealogies of Joseph and Mary**) – probably as an aid to memorization. So rather than being an immediate son of **Rahab**, **Bo'az** may very well have been a great-grandson. Nevertheless, **he** was a direct descendent of **Rahab**. **He** undoubtedly knew **her** story well and was proud of **his** heritage. **His** connection with **Rahab** would certainly have softened **his** heart to be sympathetic to the plight of a foreign woman like **Ruth** who had embraced **YHVH** with a faith reminiscent of **Rahab's**.[42]

3. Bo'az foreshadows Messiah because another requirement of a kinsman-redeemer was to be able to pay the price of redemption, and Bo'az was a man of great wealth from the clan of Elimelek (2:1b). He lived an exemplary lifestyle (Hebrew: *gabor*, meaning *familiarity,* or *a mighty man of valor*). **Yeshua is more than able to save those who come to God through Him because He always lives to intercede for them at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 7:25; Acts 7:55-56). He also lived an exemplary lifestyle: Be imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1).**

4. Bo'az foreshadows Messiah because another requirement of a kinsman-redeemer is that he must possess the means of redemption, and, once again, **Bo'az** had the means to take care of **Ruth. Messiah possessed the means of redemption, His own, innocent, human blood (Isaiah 53:5; John 1:29; First Peter 1:18-19). This is My blood of the covenant, which is**

poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Mattityahu 26:28).

Ruth was now a believer. **She** was in the land of **Isra'el**. How would **she** act? How would **she** survive? Since **Moabites** were excluded from the congregation **of Isra'el (Deuteronomy 23:3), she** would be sustained by the grace and mercy of **the LORD**. **Ruth, gentle, kind, considerate and hardworking, goes out into the fields of Beit-Lechem to glean for food.**

In this short scene the roles of the two women reverse. For the first time **Ruth** is portrayed as the primary actor, and **Na'omi's** role is secondary. **And Ruth the Moabite said to Na'omi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor" (2:2).** The poor were not simply to depend on handouts from the state (what a concept); rather, **they were entitled by the Torah to the ears of corn that fell from the hands of the harvesters (Leviticus 19:9-10, 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19)**. But some landowners were more willing to follow the commands of the Torah than others. Nothing was guaranteed. The reader wonders if **Ruth** will find a gracious harvest host. If so, this would relieve **Na'omi** of the humiliation **she** would suffer having to **glean** among the very poor. But this was a dangerous proposal on **Ruth's** account, especially for a foreign woman, **a Moabites**, who had no clan connections to protect **her** or call on in times of distress.

Tersely, **Na'omi replied:** *yalak beth*, **"Go ahead, my daughter."** Still absorbed with **her bitterness**, **Na'omi** only managed to mumble two Hebrew words. No words of encouragement or appreciation. No warning of danger. Without explanation, the narrator pushes on to **the fields** and the meeting with **Bo'az**. Indeed, the hurried push ahead hinted that this day might be a turning point for **Ruth**. **So Ruth** chose to go **out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters (2:3a).** This is to be understood not as the beginning of **Ruth's gleaning**, but as a summary statement of the entire account **(2:1-17)**.[43] To live by

faith means to take **God** at **His** word and then act upon it, for **faith without works is dead (James 2:20 NKJV).** Since **Ruth** believed **YHVH** loved **her** and would provide for **her**, **she** made the decision to find **a field** in which **she** could **glean**.

Whether or not despair and **bitterness** drove **Na'omi's** apathy, it is clearly a problem with us as well. When we stop believing in the goodness of **ADONAI** and give ourselves over to doubt and worry, we can easily sink into depressing laziness. This can lead to a downward spiral in which our inactivity makes our situation worse and deepens our despair, which in turn makes us feel less inclined than ever to step out into what we believe is a hostile world. The key to breaking the cycle is grasping hold of **the LORD's** promise to favor us. If we can look to the cross and grasp the height and depth of **God's** love for us in **Yeshua**, then how can we doubt **His** desire to give us everything necessary for life and godliness? If we feel the smile of **the Father's** favor toward us in **Messiah**, in spite of our history of sin and failure, then we will be encouraged to step out again in faith. We will still not know what the future holds, yet if we know that **the One** who holds the future cares for us, that is the first step upward on the long road to obedience becomes possible again.[44]

As it turned out God guided **her** steps for **she was working in a field belonging to Bo'az (2:3b). The Hebrew reads, "Her chance chanced upon the field of Bo'az."** From **a human perspective Ruth** did not realize the full significance of what **she** was doing. **She** did not know the people; **she** did not know the owner of **the field**. **She** came to **the field** and, apparently by chance, worked in the section of **the field** belonging to **Bo'az**. The Hebrew refers to *the piece of the field belonging to Bo'az.* This probably means *that part of the common field that belonged to Bo'az.* At that time **the** grain **fields** were not divided from on another by a fence or hedge, but the boundary was simply indicated by stones.[45]

But from **a divine perspective** this was the providence of **YHVH**. We know from the teaching of Scripture that **God Himself** providentially orchestrated these events. **Proverbs 16:33** says: **The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from ADONAI** (also see the commentary on **Exodus Gb – The Urim and Thummim: The Means of Making Decisions**)**.** *Nothing happens by "chance," but **God** is always behind the scenes*, **working all things together for the good of His people (Rom 8:28).** There is no such thing as "luck" or "fate" for believers.[46] This was all part of a higher plan. There were no angelic visions to direct **her** to **the** right **field** or voices from heaven to guide **her**. However, as **she** trusted in **the LORD, He** directed **her** steps unwittingly to exactly the right location. **In**

their hearts humans plan their course, but ADONAI establishes their steps (Proverbs 16:9).[47]

Ruth's arrival at the field of **Bo'az** is providential on two accounts. First, **Bo'az** was a gracious man in whose **eyes Ruth would find favor.** And second, the author then repeats the fact that **Bo'az was from the clan of Elimelek, a near kinsman (2:3c).** The hand of **ADONAI** was over **Ruth's** life, and he doesn't want us to miss the point.

Having thus spoken of **God's** providence, however, we must rescue ourselves from the very wooden view of **YHVH** that some have. A wiser view is that we're not like pawns in some divine chess game, or puppets on strings worked by some celestial **Puppeteer**. Exactly the opposite. Both the TaNaKh and the B'rit Chadashah leave us with the paradox that on the one hand, human choices and responsibilities are very much our concern and that we work out our faith **with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12)**, and on the other hand, **it is God who works in us to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose (Philippians 2:13).**[48] So which is it? Did **God** guide **Ruth's** steps so **she** ended up gleaning in the field of **her kinsman-redeemer** or did **Ruth** make a decision to go **herself**? The answer is yes.

ADONAI is sovereign in our lives; but we can say no to **God** and make it stick. Let's look at our salvation for example. One the one hand, the Bible teaches that **the LORD** has chosen us **before the foundations of the world (Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:14; First Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8).** But the other hand, the Scriptures also teach that we have the freedom to choose or reject the salvation that **He** offers **(Mark 8:34; John 1:12-13; Romans 10:9-10; Revelation 3:20)**. How can these two truths be reconciled? They are antimony, meaning *two biblical truths that seem to be mutually exclusive, but both are true.* Another example of antimony is the Trinity. We can't explain it – we just accept it. So yes, **YHVH** ordained **Ruth** end up in **the field of Bo'az**, and **Ruth** decided to go glean there. Antimony.

*Dear **Father God**, We love and praise **You**. How wise and caring **You** are! Just as **You** guided **Ruth** to the right field to glean, so as **Your** children listen to **You**, **You** guide every step of their lives. Praise **You** for redeeming our lives and for walking with us **(Hebrews 13:5)** on a daily basis – guiding, and caring for each detail of **Your** children's lives to mold them to be more like **Your** holy **Son** and to bring you glory **(First Peter 1:7).** How gracious **You** are to not only pay the penalty for our*

sin, ***He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Second Corinthians 5:21);*** *but* ***You*** *also give eternal rewards to your children when they do deeds out of a heart of love for* ***You (First Corinthians 3:14).*** *We love* ***You*** *and rejoice in telling others about* ***You****. It is like finding our perfect partner when we find* ***You*** *– even better! In your holy* ***Son’s*** *name and power of resurrection. Amen*