

# Na'omi Evaluates the Meeting

## 2: 18-23

**DIG:** What caused the positive change in Na'omi's attitude? What obstacles to faith did Na'omi have to overcome? What role did Bo'az play as the kinsman-redeemer? What does this reveal about the power of God's love? About Na'omi, Ruth, and Bo'az? Given the sad state of relations between Isra'el and Mo'av (Genesis 19:30-38; Numbers 25:1-3), what surprising turn of events would the original readers see in this chapter? How does Ruth's loyalty to Na'omi and Bo'az's loyalty to Ruth, defy the historical prejudices of the original readers? How does their loyalty reflect God's values?

**REFLECT:** When have you shared Na'omi's experience of God using a "Ruth" in your life to show kindness to you? How did this unmerited act of kindness change you? How was Ruth's response to Bo'az an example for believers to follow in their response to Yeshua? How is the hope of a believer different from the hope that the world clings to? What reasons do you have to rejoice in hope? What was an important turning point in your life? Describe it. Whom do you know that needs to be reminded that YHVH still loves them? What will you do today to demonstrate such love?

Ruth carried the thirty pounds of barley that she had gleaned in the field back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Na'omi saw how much barley Ruth had gleaned she was shocked. She knew it was way more than would have been expected for a foreign woman in her position. And she not only brought home the barley, but a meal. Ruth also brought it out and gave her what she had quietly slipped in her pocket after she had eaten enough with Bo'az earlier. Na'omi asked her, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Na'omi seemed to have instinctively understood that Ruth could not possibly have done so well without someone's help. So she asked where Ruth had gleaned and pronounced a special blessing on the man who took notice of you! Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. She said: The name of the man I worked with today is Bo'az (2:18-19).

**Na'omi's response is the crucial turning point at exactly midway through the book.** Faced with the mountain of food that Ruth had brought home, the practical evidence of God's goodness, Na'omi moved from bitterness to blessedness. Slowly her heart began to soften toward God and she cried out: **May he be blessed by God, whom has never stopped showing grace, neither to the living (Ruth and Na'omi) or the dead (Elimelek, Mahlon and Kilion), meaning the family as a whole.** This change came about because of the new hope she had in her heart, and the one who gave the new hope was Bo'az (2:20a CJB).

The words here have their only real counterpart in **Genesis** (see the commentary on **Genesis Fx - Go to My Country and My Own Relatives and Get a Wife for My Son Isaac**). Abraham's chief servant (a picture of the Holy Spirit) traveled from Canaan to Mesopotamia to bring back a wife for Isaac from among his master's relatives. When he discovered the bride, Rebekah, the servant praises YHVH for His guidance using a variation of the language spoken by Na'omi, in **Ruth 2:20**, saying: **Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His chesed and His truth toward my master; as for me, the LORD has guided me in the way to the house of my master's brothers (Genesis 24:27 NASB)**. The similarity of **Ruth 2** and **Genesis 24** suggests that Na'omi had marriage in mind with the blessing she pronounced. What is more, the entire conversation between Bo'az and Ruth conforms to a common Jewish literary motif, "the betrothal type-scene." That is, in the narrative of **2:8-17**, the author employed certain literary clues well known to his audience in order to portray the scene as a betrothal, more exactly, the prelude to betrothal. This further confirms that Na'omi's words implied marriage.<sup>64</sup>

The reference to Bo'az as redeemer, points our eyes beyond him to the figure of the Redeemer, the blessed hope (**Titus 2:13**). For believers, hope is not a shallow "hope-so-feeling" fueled by optimistic fantasies. Our hope is an inner sense of joyful assurance and confidence as we trust in the promises of ADONAI and face the future with His help. This hope is God's gift to His children through the Holy Spirit, who reminds us of the LORD's promises found in His Word. **My God, the source of hope, fill you completely with joy and shalom as you continue trusting, so that by the power of the Ruach HaKodesh you may overflow with hope (Romans 15:13 CJB)**.

The exciting new hope that the two widows experienced centered in a person, Bo'az, just as our hope is centered in the Son of God. In fact Christ is our hope (**First Timothy 1:1; First Thessalonians 1:3; Colossians 1:27**). Through faith in Jesus, we have been born again into a living hope (**First Peter 1:3**), and because it is a living hope, it grows stronger each day and produces fruit. The hopes that the world clings to are dead hopes, but ours is a living hope because it is rooted in the living Messiah.<sup>65</sup>

Na'omi also told her, "That man is one of our closest relatives; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers" (**2:20b CJB**). The Hebrew word translated one of our closest relatives is *go'el*. It is a technical term that means much more than kinsman. The word *go'el* includes the idea of redemption, or deliverance. In fact, in order to express the idea more perfectly in English, the phrase kinsman-redeemer is used. In Scripture, the word is sometimes translated as redeemer (**Job 19:25 NKJV**) or avenger (**Numbers 35:12**).

**Bo'az** became **Ruth's go'el**. **He** would buy **her** life back from poverty and widowhood. **He** would be **her** deliverer - and **Na'omi** grasped the potential of this wonderful turn of events the very moment **she** learned it was **Bo'az** who had taken an interest in **Ruth**. **He** was not only a **kinsman**; **he** had the means to be a **redeemer** also. The contrast between **Na'omi's** previous bitterness (1:20-21) and **her** current joy signaled a reversal of **her** fortunes.

**Na'omi** strongly encouraged **Ruth** to follow **Bo'az's** instructions and stay exclusively in **his** fields. **Then Ruth the Moabites** said, there is one more thing: **Bo'az even said to me, "Stay close to my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain" (2:21)**. The fact that the narrator again mentions that **she** is a **Moabites** to stress that fact of how unusual it was for a foreigner to gain this much favor, and that amazingly, **she** apparently understood that **she** "belonged" to **Bo'az's** clan. If to **cling to** (Hebrew: *dabaq*) **Na'omi** meant to embrace Judah and **the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**, and if to **stay close to Bo'az's workers** (Hebrew: *dabaq*) meant to belong to **them**, then **Bo'az** was indeed **her kinsman-redeemer**.<sup>66</sup>

There was a hint of repentance when **Na'omi** strongly urged **her daughter-in-law** to listen to **Bo'az's** advice, saying: **It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for him, because in someone's else's field you might be harmed." (2:22)**. This may have seemed like a pretty obvious response to the gracious offer of **Bo'az**. Who wouldn't say in **Bo'az's** field? **Ruth** would be crazy to go anywhere else. But that's exactly the point! **Na'omi** and **Elimelek** had demonstrated precisely that kind of foolish blindness a decade ago; they ignored **ADONAI's** faithful provision in the past and went to someone else's field. Instead of staying in **Isra'el**, they went to the greener fields of **Mo'av**. **Na'omi** had realized **her** mistake and was warning **Ruth** not do the same thing. It was if **she** was saying, "Stay in **the field** of blessing. Don't go wandering off as I did!"<sup>67</sup>

In the background of **Ruth**, the clock is ticking. It's not noticeable at first because our ears are not attuned to the calendar of redemptive history, but it is remarkable when we notice it. **Na'omi** and **Ruth** arrived back in Beit-Lechem at the beginning of the barley harvest (1:22); in other words, **they** came home at the time of Pesach and Unleavened Bread or sometimes called **firstfruits**, when the grain harvest began (**Deuteronomy 16:9**). In ancient times, on this day a sheaf of barely (the first grain crop to ripen) was waved before **the LORD** in a prescribed ceremony (**Leviticus 23:9-12**) to mark the start of the forty-nine day countdown to the harvest festival of **Shavu'ot** (see **Ah - The Book of Ruth and Shavu'ot**). This would cover a period of three months, **corresponding to the time that must elapse before a female proselyte is permitted to marry**, and **Ruth** and **Bo'az** would see each other on an almost daily basis and got better acquainted at that time.

What better time for an exodus from the fields of **Mo'av** to the **Promised Land**? It was the beginning of the year in the Jewish calendar, the fitting time for a fresh start by **ADONAI's** grace. As in **Chapter 1**, the storyteller again stepped forward to close the scene: **So Ruth stayed close to the women of Bo'az to glean until the barley harvest was completed. And she lived with her mother-in-law (2:23).** By this time **they** had experienced the **firstfruits** of **God's** deliverance in the gift of **Bo'az's** grain, but **they** had not yet seen the fullness of what **YHVH** had in store for **them**.

**Ruth** not only experiences the **firstfruits** of **ADONAI's** grace, but in a profound sense, **she is the firstfruits**. **Shavu'ot**, which is one of the three major festivals in Judaism, was the day that **YHVH** chose to pour out **His Spirit** on Jews to form a new messianic community (**Acts 2:1-39**). **Ruth's** inclusion by faith into the righteous of the TaNaKh was a foreshadowing of the much greater harvest that **God** one day would reap among the *Gentiles* as **His** grace extended to the *goyim* (**Acts 15:1-35; Romans 11:11-24**). Focused on their personal needs, **Na'omi** and **Ruth** didn't hear the redemptive clock ticking, but the narrator wants us to hear the sound and reflect on **the LORD's** perfect timing.

The clock is ticking for us too. We, who have received the **firstfruits** of our salvation await its fullness: **And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as His adopted children, including the new bodies He has promised us (Romans 8:23 NLT).** Often, we are so distracted with the challenge of daily living that we also forget the clock's persistent beat. And even when we do think about it, our redemption seems to be in slow motion. Yet **God is never late** and we need to remember that our present **groaning** will one day give way to shouts of joy, as **we are released from sin** and receive our glorified **bodies**. Quietening our hearts and focusing our attention on the reality of the inheritance that is stored up for us in heaven will encourage us to persevere patiently until the sands of **God's** time clock runs out.<sup>68</sup>