

RUTH 2

Ruth 2:1

Boaz means “by strength.” It is also the name of the left pillar in the portico of the temple of Solomon (see 1 Kings 7:21). Boaz is included in both genealogies of Jesus in the New Testament (see Matthew 1:5 and Luke 3:32).

Ruth 2:2–3

The biblical writer of Ruth regularly identifies Ruth as a Moabitess to remind us of her foreign status among the Israelites.

Harvesting at that time was done by men with hand sickles. Women followed, binding the cut grain into sheaves. Donkeys, sometimes pulling carts, transported the sheaves to the threshing floor. After the sheaves were removed, the poor were allowed to gather any grain that had been left behind. These people were called gleaners. This was part of the law of Moses and was intended to help provide for the poor, the widows, and the orphans as explained in Leviticus 19:9–10: “And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger.”

“Her hap” means that it was by chance that Ruth had chosen to glean in a field belonging to Boaz, who Naomi recognized as a kinsman and possible *go’el* (see commentary for Ruth 1:10–13).

Ruth 2:4–7

Boaz's greeting to his servants demonstrated his kindness, and their response indicated he was a good master that they respected.

Boaz noticed Ruth among the gleaners and asked who she was. His servant not only told Boaz who Ruth was but also added that she had worked hard since the morning and had stopped only for a short rest in the shelter.

Ruth 2:8–14

Boaz sought Ruth out and told her not to go to other fields but to do all her gleaning in his fields. He explained that he had instructed his servants to protect her and that she could even drink from the vessels set aside for his servants.

When Ruth bowed to Boaz and asked why she was being so favored, Boaz told her that he had been impressed by her faithfulness to Naomi and her conversion to the God of Israel.

At mealtime Boaz invited Ruth to share his food. He let her eat until she was full and even permitted her to take home what was left.

Ruth 2:15–18

After Ruth returned to gleaning, Boaz instructed his servants to let Ruth glean among the sheaves, which meant she didn't have to wait until the grain had been transported to the threshing floor to glean. In addition, he told the servants to purposefully leave grain for her and not to rebuke her.

After her day of gleaning, Ruth threshed her grain and had an ephah of barley. An ephah is about three-fifths of a bushel (about twenty-three quarts) and is an unusually large amount for one day's gleaning.

That evening Ruth returned to Naomi and gave her the barley and the food left from her meal with Boaz.

Ruth 2:19–23

Surprised at how much Ruth had gathered in such a short time, Naomi asked where she had gleaned that day. When she found out it was in Boaz's fields she praised God, recognizing His tender mercies: not only was Boaz a rich man but he was also a close relative of her husband Elimelech, making him eligible to be

a *go'el* according to the levirate law of marriage (see commentary for Ruth 1:10–13). This was the turning point for Naomi, whose emptiness was beginning to be filled with hope.

At Boaz's invitation, Ruth continued to glean in his fields not only for the barley harvest but also for the wheat harvest.

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