

Exegetical Notes for Ruth 2:1-7

KEY

Barber = *Ruth: An Expository Commentary* (Cyril J. Barber). Chicago: Moody Press, 1983.

BBC = *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*. Edited by John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Block = Block, Daniel I., *Judges, Ruth in the New American Commentary, Vol 6*. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1999.

Bush = Bush, Frederick. *Ruth/Esther in the Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 9*. Edited by David H. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker. Dallas: Word Books, 1996.

Campbell = Campbell, Edward F., *Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary in The Anchor Bible, Vol 7*. Edited by William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1975.

Harrison = *Introduction to the Old Testament* (R.K. Harrison). Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969.

K&D = Keil, C.F. and Delitzsch, F. in the *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol 2*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989.

MBC = MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005.

PC = *The Pulpit Commentary: Ruth*. (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909.

Piper = *A Sweet and Bitter Providence* (John Piper). Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.

TWOT = *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (R. Laird Harris; Gleason L. Archer, Jr.; Bruce Waltke). Chicago: Moody Press, 1980. Two Volumes.

UBS = *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Ruth* (2nd ed.) (Waard, J. d., & Nida, E. A.). New York: United Bible Societies, 1991.

Wood = *Distressing Days of the Judges* (Leon Wood). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975.

Wiersbe = *Be Committed. "Be" Commentary Series* (Wiersbe, W. W. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993).

Three Steps of Exegesis

1. **Translation.** Work through a transliteration of the text and translate the passage directly, if possible.
2. **Exegesis.** Detailed exegesis of the passage by way of a "shot-gun" approach, using various exegetical tools.
 - Work from critical commentaries to practical.
 - Word studies and cross-references (analogy of the faith).
 - Applicational analysis - applicational issues arising from the text.
 - Theological analysis - theological issues arising from the text.
3. **Structural Analysis.** Diagram the passage developing a detailed outline and central proposition.
 - Smooth away all of the wrinkles.
 - The process is to yield an accurate "statue" as I chisel away the debris.

Basic English Diagram

1 Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband,
a man of great wealth,
of the family of Elimelech,
whose name was Boaz.

2 And Ruth the Moabitess
said to Naomi, => “Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.”

And she said to her, => “Go, my daughter.”

3 So she departed
and went
and gleaned in the field
after the reapers;
and she happened to come
to the portion of the field
belonging to Boaz,
who was of the family of Elimelech.

4 Now behold =>, Boaz came from Bethlehem
and said to the reapers, => “May the Lord be with you.”
And they said to him, => “May the Lord bless you.”

5 Then Boaz said to his servant
who was in charge of the reapers, => “Whose young woman is this?”

6 And the servant in
charge of the reapers answered and said, => “She is the young Moabite woman
who returned with Naomi
from the land of Moab.

7 “And she said, => ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.’
Thus she came and has remained
from the morning until now;
she has been sitting in the house for a little while.”

TRANSLATION, OUTLINE AND CENTRAL PROPOSITION

HEBREW TEXT (BHS):

וּלְנַעֲמִי מִיַּדַּע לְאִשָּׁה אִישׁ גְּבוֹר חֵיל מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ וּשְׁמוֹ בְּעֹז: ² וַתֹּאמֶר רוּת ¹
הַמוֹאֲבִיָּה אֶל־נַעֲמִי אֲלֶכֶה־נָּא הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֶלְקָטָה בְּשִׁבְלִים אַחַר אֲשֶׁר אֲמַצְא־חַן בְּעֵינָיו
וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ לְכִי בְּתִי: ³ וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתָּבוֹא וַתִּלְקָט בַּשָּׂדֶה אַחֲרֵי הַקֹּצְרִים וַיִּקֶר מִקֶּרֶה חִלְקַת
הַשָּׂדֶה לְבַעֲזוֹ אֲשֶׁר מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ: ⁴ וְהִנֵּה־בָּעֹז בָּא מִבֵּית לָחֶם וַיֹּאמֶר לְקוֹצְרִים
יְהוּה עִמָּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוּה: ⁵ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּעֹז לְנַעֲרוֹ הַנֹּצֵב עַל־הַקֹּצְרִים לְמִי
הַנֹּעֵרָה הַזֹּאת: ⁶ וַיַּעַן הַנֹּעֵר הַנֹּצֵב עַל־הַקֹּצְרִים וַיֹּאמֶר נֹעֵרָה מוֹאֲבִיָּה הִיא הַשָּׂבָה
עִם־נַעֲמִי מִשָּׂדֶה מוֹאֵב: ⁷ וַתֹּאמֶר אֶלְקָטָה־נָּא וְאֶסְפְּתִי בְּעֵמְרִים אַחֲרֵי הַקֹּצְרִים וַתָּבוֹא
וַתַּעֲמֹד מֵאֲז הַבֶּקֶר וְעַד־עֵתָה זֶה שְׁבִתָּה הַבַּיִת מְעַט:

ENGLISH TRANSLATION (NASB):

¹ Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.² And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."³ So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.⁴ Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the LORD be with you." And they said to him, "May the LORD bless you."⁵ Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?"⁶ And the servant in charge of the reapers answered and said, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab."⁷ "And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while."

PASSAGE / BOOK OUTLINE:

I. Act One: The Royal Line with Hope in Ruin (1:1-22)

- A. Scene One: Retreat from Bethlehem (vv. 1-2)
- B. Scene Two: Ruin in Moab (vv. 3-5)
- C. Scene Three: Returning to Bethlehem (vv. 6-22)

II. Act Two: The Royal Line with Hope Renewed (2:1-23)

- A. Scene One: Ruth Reaping (vv. 1-7)

- B. Scene Two: Ruth Rewarded - Part 1(vv. 8-13)
- C. Scene Three: Ruth Rewarded - Part 2 (vv. 14-17)
- D. Scene Four: Ruth Reports (vv. 18-23)

III. Act Three: The Royal Line with Hope at Risk (3:1-18)

- A. Scene One: Remedy Proposed (vv. 1-5)
- B. Scene Two: Reception or Rejection (vv. 6-15)
- C. Scene Three: Resting in Providence (vv. 16-18)

IV. Act Four: The Royal Line with Hope Restored (4:1-17)

- A. Scene One: Resolving Legal Matters (vv. 1-12)
- B. Scene Two: Romance and Redemption (vv. 13-17)

Epilogue - Royal Rights and The Resultant Redeemer (4:18-22)

SERMON OUTLINE:

PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what's t/passage talking about):

PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what's t/passage saying about what it's talking about):

PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text):

CENTRAL PROPOSITION OF THE SERMON:

SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE:

2:1 EXEGESIS

HEBREW TEXT / INTERLINEAR:

וּלְנַעֲמִי מִיְדַע לְאִישָׁהּ אִישׁ גִּבּוֹר חַיִּל מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ
Elimelech from the clan of wealth mighty a man of her husband an acquaintance and for Naomi
וְשֵׁמוֹ בְּעֹז:
Boaz and his name

מִיְדַע (from the root יָדַע - “to know”). Pual. “acquaintance” referring to a relative, fellow tribesman, kinsman, but not a brother. This word is used here and in Proverbs 7:4. Cf. related word מִדְּעָת kindred, kinship, only in Ruth 3:2.

4530 מִיְדַע (mō·dā'): n.masc.; ≡ Str 4129; TWOT 848e—LN 10.1–10.13 kinsman, i.e., a distant relative (Ru 2:1 Q; Pr 7:4+), note: in one context relative by marriage, and the other possibly by blood¹

חַיִּל גִּבּוֹר cf. Judges 6:12; 11:1; 1 Sam. 9:1; 1 Kings 11:28; 2 Kings 15:24 where this same phrase is used.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB]:

Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband . . . of the family of Elimelech . . .

וּלְנַעֲמִי מִיְדַע לְאִישָׁהּ . . . מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ

Interesting development as the story now moves away from the female-dominated scenes of chapter one.

Who is this man? A kinsman? It says “of the family of Elimelech” and beyond that we don't know. Some Jewish writers (weakly attested rabbinic tradition) thought him to be Elimelech's nephew. See word study on מִיְדַע above.

¹ Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament) (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Also note that 2:20 refers to Boaz as קָרוֹב (qārôb) near, kinsman; and גְּאוּלָּים close relative(s). In 3:2 the term מַדְעָת is used. It is then גֹּאֵל thereafter.

... a man of great wealth ...

אִישׁ גִּבּוֹר חַיִּל

"Worthy man" - ESV

"Man of great wealth" - NASB

"Rich relative" - NCV

"Wealthy, prominent man" - NET

"Man of standing" - NIV

"Mighty man of wealth" - KJV

"Prominent man of noble character" - HCSB

The word can refer to someone mighty in strength or in wealth. Cf. Jephthah in Judges 9:1. Many of those of whom this is used have no known military reputation. May be translated "man of high standing / good reputation." This may be setting up the demonstration of his noble character later in chapter 2 when he does not take advantage of Ruth. Same word here (חַיִּל) is used of Ruth in 3:11. Cf. Judges 6:12; 1 Sam. 9:1.

... whose name was Boaz.

וּשְׁמוֹ בְּעוֹז:

Boaz which may mean "in Him is strength." (the way the Massorettes interpreted it).

In 2:1 the narrator introduces a new character. The circumstantial clause by which he is presented provides four important details about him.⁵ First, he is a "relative" of Naomi's husband. The meaning of the word *môda* is clarified by its only occurrence elsewhere, Prov 7:4, where it appears opposite *'āḥôt*, "sister." The familial interpretation of the expression is confirmed by the way in which Boaz's relationship to Naomi is described elsewhere. In 2:20 he is *qārôb lānû*, "our relative." Three times he is referred to as a *gō'el*, "kinsman redeemer," to Naomi and Ruth (2:20; 3:9, 12). The NIV rightly recognizes that the narrator's point is not that he is an acquaintance of Naomi but a relative of her husband. This small detail raises the interest and hopes of the readers, especially those who are familiar with Israelite family law and custom.

Second, this character is an *'iš gibbôr ḥayil*. This expression is quite ambiguous and capable of a wide range of interpretations. By using this phrase, the author invites the reader to compare Boaz with Gideon, who is characterized similarly in Judg 6:12. In that context it means "mighty man of valor, noble warrior, military hero." But the reader will discover that Boaz is nothing like Gideon. He never fights in a battle or leads an army; he never performs any heroic feats. In this context the phrase may bear two other meanings. In its simplest sense the expression means "man of substance, wealth," hence a man of standing in the community. Boaz is no ordinary, run-of-the-mill Israelite.⁹ This will be confirmed in the following episode, where he is presented as a man with land and servants. On the other hand, as in Prov 31:10, which employs the feminine equivalent, the name can also mean "noble with respect to character," a genuine *Mensch*. In this respect in the end his actions must be deemed heroic, for he rescues a family

and a name from the curse of oblivion. By this interpretation the narrator offers a proleptic impression of the man.

Third, he was from the clan of Elimelech. This phrase clarifies the first, “a relative on her husband’s side.” The word for “clan,” *mišpāhâ*, denotes a subdivision of a tribe.

Fourth, his name was Boaz. The root *b'z* occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament. Some have proposed a link with Arabic *bağz*, “to be vigorous, strong of spirit,” but this has been largely rejected. The Septuagint’s transliteration of the name as *Booz* may suggest a hypocoristic (abbreviated) version of *bē'ōz yhw̄h*, “in the strength of Yahweh [I will rejoice/trust].” The meaning of the name remains obscure, and since it plays no part in the narrative, we may drop the matter.²

An even more interesting question relates to the correspondence between Boaz' name and that of the pillar at the left of the entry to the Solomonic temple (I Kings 7:21; 11 Chron 3:17). R.B.Y. Scott has plausibly proposed that the pillar Boaz was designated by the first word of a dynastic formula inscribed on it, and suggests that the formula read "In the strength of (*b'ōz*) Yahweh shall the king rejoice," or the like (JBL 58 [1939], 148-49, accepted by Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, p. 135). This assumes, as most everyone would agree, that the Solomonic temple was a royal chapel closely tied to the Davidic dynasty. It would also mean that the dynastic formula was itself closely tied to the Davidic dynasty and its ideology, and does not antedate the establishment of the Israelite united monarchy. Consequently, Boaz the man could hardly carry a name derived from the formula, if he indeed was the great-grandfather of David.

But what about the reverse possibility? In 1959, S. Yeivin put forward the stimulating hypothesis that the pillars at the dynastic chapel were named after Solomon's ancestors (*Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 91 [1959], 21-22). Few have felt this hypothesis to be strong, although Randolph notes it and rejects it primarily because Yeivin could not point out a known Solomonic ancestor with a name corresponding to the other pillar at the temple doorway, Jachin (*yākīn*). But Yeivin does note that this name, and sentence names compounded with the verb it represents, are attested in Israel. Indeed, one turns up in the Davidic line in the form *y^ehōyākīn* (Jehoiachin), also known as *y^ekōnyāh*, the name of the king deposed and exiled in 597 B.C.E. Yeivin's hypothesis deserves to be kept alive—and I am glad to acknowledge that D.N. Freedman, who also thinks so, is the one who pointed out to me its continued viability. [Campbell, 91]

² Block, D. I. (1999). *Vol. 6: Judges, Ruth*. The New American Commentary (651–652). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

2:2 EXEGESIS

HEBREW TEXT / INTERLINEAR:

תֹּאמֶר רוּת הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּה אֶל־נָעֲמִי אֲלֶכֶה־נָּא הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֶלְקָטָה
and let me glean to the field let me go please to Naomi the Moabite Ruth and she said
בְּשִׁבְלִים אַחַר אֲשֶׁר אֶמְצָא־חַן בְּעֵינָיו וְתֹאמֶר לָהּ לְכִי בְתִי׃
my daughter go to her and she said in his eyes find favor who after among the ears of grain

רוּת הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּה This is continuously before the reader (cf. 1:22; 2:2,21; 4:5,10).

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB]:

And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.” And she said to her, “Go, my daughter.”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.” . . .

תֹּאמֶר רוּת הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּה אֶל־נָעֲמִי אֲלֶכֶה־נָּא הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֶלְקָטָה בְּשִׁבְלִים אַחַר אֲשֶׁר אֶמְצָא־חַן בְּעֵינָיו

Ruth is proactive, not reactive. She is going to provide for Naomi and herself. This was a provision for the poor according to the Law (Deut. 24:19; Lev. 19:9ff.; 23:22). But it wasn't going to be mailed to you in an envelope; you had to work for it.

This solution to a social problem required that the recipients work hard for their provision, and it therefore preserved the dignity that is sometimes forfeited by those who are entirely dependent on the generosity of others. [BBC]

Lesson here on being passive or active when you are in need. Cf. Example of my father when we moved to AZ – he didn't have a job waiting for him. And she's a foreigner!

Ruth also asks permission to her elder. Respect and assertiveness.

“The field” is singular marking out what was common – a single large field being farmed by many different families. There would be markers, but not fences. Cf. 2:3 and 4:3. This is still done in some parts of Europe. Cf. Barber's quote of Taylor (Footnote 9 on page 145).

“in whose sight I may find favor”

. . . And she said to her, “Go, my daughter.”

תֹּאמֶר לָהּ לְכִי בְתִי׃

2:3 EXEGESIS

HEBREW TEXT / INTERLINEAR:

וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתָּבוֹא וַתִּלְקֹט בַּשָּׂדֶה אַחֲרֵי הַקְצָרִים וַיִּקַּר מִקְרָהּ

her chance and it happened the reapers behind in the field and she gleaned and she came so she went

חֵלְקַת הַשָּׂדֶה לְבִעֹז אֲשֶׁר מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ:

Elimelek was from the clan of who for Boaz the field the tract of land of

מִקְרָהּ - both the verb and the noun are based on the קָרָה stem ("to befall, to happen"). The LXX uses a word that usually means "calamity" but can be stretched to mean chance (such as our term "accident").

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB]:

So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers . . .

וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתָּבוֹא וַתִּלְקֹט בַּשָּׂדֶה אַחֲרֵי הַקְצָרִים

Verse 7 gives us the details. She didn't simply walk onto the field and begin gleaning, even though she had the right to do so under the law, even as a foreigner (see texts cited above). She didn't presume anything.

. . . and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

יִקַּר מִקְרָהּ חֵלְקַת הַשָּׂדֶה לְבִעֹז אֲשֶׁר מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ:

The “chance” seems to be a humanistic link in a chain that is bookended by God's providence in the beginning and end of the Ruth narrative. This is no inconsistency, but an affirmation that Ruth's coming into the portion of the field owned by Boaz was not a humanly contrived event. It's another way of affirming that God is sovereign over things that may seem “coincidental.” Also a commentary on how man plans his way, but his steps are ordained by the Lord.

So Ruth was unaware of God's working behind the scenes.

God's decree, precept, permission. Decree and permission are hard to unwind. "Nothing happens except by God's decree" but what do we mean by that? Did God decree the unjust treatment of His Son? Yes. Did God "force" Judas, for example, to do anything that wasn't in his own heart? No.

2:4 EXEGESIS

HEBREW TEXT / INTERLINEAR:

וְהִנֵּה־בָּעַז בָּא מִבֵּית לְחָם וַיֹּאמֶר לְקוֹצְרִים יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם

be with you YHWH to the reapers and he said from Bethlehem he came and look Boaz

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה:

YHWH may he bless you to him and they said

וְהִנֵּה־בָּעַז – a string of imperfects with the way consecutive. Look! This makes it "graphic and vivid, and enable[s] the reader to enter in the surprise or satisfaction of the speaker or actor concerned." [BDB Lexicon]. This serves to bring a sense of wonder. Similar structure is found in 4:1 and in Gen. 24:15 where the servant of Abraham, after he prays, finds Rebekah entering the scene. This also corresponds to the "chance happening" of v. 3.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB]:

Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the LORD be with you." And they said to him, "May the LORD bless you."

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem . . .

וְהִנֵּה־בָּעַז בָּא מִבֵּית לְחָם

Immediately your attention is brought from Ruth to Boaz (who was introduced in v. 1).

. . . and said to the reapers, "May the LORD be with you." . . .

וַיֹּאמֶר לְקוֹצְרִים יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם

Cf. Psa. 129:8; Judges 6:12. Note the use of YHWH. Does he say YHWH? Wasn't this forbidden by the Jews? Yes, the later Jews. But note that God told Moses to relay to the Israelites "His Name" so it was spoken.

. . . And they said to him, "May the LORD bless you."

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה:

Not an affirmation of their piety, as they would later be warned against putting a hand on Ruth. Rather this was an affirmation of their respect for Boaz, their employer. Much like a Christian today saying to someone who is not a Christian "God bless you" and getting the same in return.

Note the picture of the scene given by Cox as cited in Barber, p. 71.

2:5 EXEGESIS

HEBREW TEXT / INTERLINEAR:

וַיֹּאמֶר בְּעֹז לְנַעֲרוֹ הַנֹּצֵב עַל־הַקּוֹצְרִים לְמִי הַנְּעִרָה הַזֹּאת:

the this the young women to whom over the reapers the standing to his servant Boaz and he said

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB]:

Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?”

וַיֹּאמֶר בְּעֹז לְנַעֲרוֹ הַנֹּצֵב עַל־הַקּוֹצְרִים לְמִי הַנְּעִרָה הַזֹּאת:

The servant in charge = the foreman.

Obviously, Boaz knew the workers which would have included many women working in the fields as only Ruth stood out as a stranger. He also would have known all the families in Bethlehem. He didn't recognize her and assumed that she had come into Bethlehem with her husband. So he asks about her.

2:6 EXEGESIS

HEBREW TEXT / INTERLINEAR:

וַיַּעַן הַנַּעֲר הַנֹּצֵב עַל־הַקּוֹצְרִים וַיֹּאמֶר נַעֲרָה מוֹאֲבִיָּה הִיא
she Moabite a girl and he said over the reapers the standing the servant and he answered
הַשֹּׁבָה עִם־נָעֳמִי מִשְׂדֵּה מוֹאֵב:
Moab from the countryside of with Naomi the returning

נַעֲרָה מוֹאֲבִיָּה = indefinite: “a Moabite girl.”

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB]:

And the servant in charge of the reapers answered and said, “She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

And the servant in charge of the reapers answered and said, “She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab.

וַיַּעַן הַנַּעֲר הַנֹּצֵב עַל־הַקּוֹצְרִים וַיֹּאמֶר נַעֲרָה מוֹאֲבִיָּה הִיא הַשֹּׁבָה עִם־נָעֳמִי מִשְׂדֵּה מוֹאֵב:

Indefinite (a Moabite woman). He also does not give her name, something socially significant in that culture. Not something he is particularly concerned about. “Just a young Moabite woman, the one who came with Naomi from Moab.”

For someone who was rather insignificant, the foreman knew much about her!

2:7 EXEGESIS

HEBREW TEXT / INTERLINEAR:

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶלְקָטָה-נָא וְאֶסְפְּתִי בְעַמְרִים אַחֲרֵי הַקּוֹצְרִים וַתְּבוֹא
and so she came the reapers behind among the sheaves and and let me gather let me glean please and she said
וַתַּעֲמֹד מֵאִזְ הַבֹּקֶר וְעַד-עַתָּה זֶה שֹׁבֶתָהּ הַבַּיִת מְעַט:
little the house sit her this and up to now the morning from then and stood

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB]:

“And she said, ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.’ Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while.”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

This is the one v. in the entire book that has difficulties as far as the Hebrew witness is concerned. Otherwise, Ruth is very well attested. Cf. Bush pp. 113 ff.

“And she said, ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.’ . . .

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶלְקָטָה-נָא וְאֶסְפְּתִי בְעַמְרִים אַחֲרֵי הַקּוֹצְרִים

There's a larger interpretational matter here.

2:15 When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her.

To glean among the sheaves was not permitted, or was viewed as a special favor (cf. 2:15). Was the foreman misquoting her? Or was she not familiar with the provisions of the Law? Or did he not understand her because of her dialect?

It seems inconsistent to have Boaz give her permission later for something she was already doing.

In OT times, grain was reaped as follows The reaper . . . grasped a handful of standing grain . . . with one hand (Ps 129:7a) and cut it with a sickle (Jer 50:16) held in the other (Isa 17:5; see the illustration in Borowski, Agriculture, 59). This handful of cut grain (. . . the ears with attached stubs of stalk) was laid on the ground behind him. These "handfuls" were in turn gathered into "bundles" . . . by the "bundler" . . . who fills his arms" (Ps 129:7b; see esp. plate 5

in Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte*, vol. 3). These "bundles" were probably then bound into sheaves . . . although it is also possible that [the words] . . . "bundles," and . . . "sheaves," are synonymous. The ordinary privilege of gleaning required that the gleaners work only in that part of the field which the work of harvesting described above had been completed and the sheaves removed to the threshing floor Most probably, this is what is implied by the expression "to glean behind (someone)," used by Ruth in v 2 and by the narrator in the summary statement of v 3, and by the expression "follow behind the women workers," used by Boaz in his instructions to Ruth in v 9. Ruth was a stranger and a foreigner. It would be almost unthinkable for her to have requested the right to glean "among these sheaves," a right of gleanage that far exceeded anything accorded by custom to native Bethlehemites. It could have caused her only the ill will and enmity of all the other women whom circumstances (cf. Deut. 24:19) had also driven to the exigencies of the poverty stricken. Indeed, if the above interpretation is correct, then the rendering of v 7 by "may I glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers" is simply a contradiction in terms. In this light, it is not insignificant to note that the expression "behind the reapers" or its equivalent is missing in v 15, where Boaz does command his workers to let Ruth "glean between the sheaves." And finally, it is incongruous for Ruth to request this privilege here in v 7 and for Boaz not to grant it until v 15 after the break for the noon meal (v 14). Consequently, most commentators have sought a meaning for the expression other than "glean among the sheaves." [Bush, 114]

See also Campbell (94-96) for a range of views and options.

Campbell summarizes his solution:

Looking at the context preceding this verse, there may be another clue. Ruth has said she will go to glean after someone in whose eyes she finds favor. The story-teller will, of course, see to it that this motif is picked up. It is, in verses 10 and 13. Favor is found in Boaz' eyes. The question can be asked, then, whether it is necessarily certain that Ruth had received permission to glean from the overseer and had begun working before Boaz arrived. Perhaps, in fact, we should take the beginning of the verse to mean that she had asked but had not received her answer, because the owner of the crop had not yet arrived, and in the overseer's view the owner alone was the one to grant it. We can then take *w^attā'amōd* in its literal and regular sense: "she arrived and has stood" waiting for permission before she begins and not leaving until she has tried to secure it. This proposal requires the understanding of the beginning of verse 3 given at the first NOTE there: "she set out and came and gleaned" is a summary of the action which the whole episode spells out. Her luck had brought her to the "right" field, but she had not as yet secured permission. If this proposal has merit, it may explain the distinctly languid pace of the first seven verses of chapter 2, with its attention to the greetings between owner and workmen, and the drawn-out exchange between Boaz and his overseer. [96]

Bush gives an updated version of Campbell's solution above, including a proposal by Sasson (cf. Bush, 115 ff.). Sasson proposes a translation (as cited by Bush): "She requested permission to glean, and to gather grain among the sheaves behind the reapers. She arrived and has been waiting from daybreak until now." (ibid.)

Bush goes on to see the matter resolved in how one handles לִקְטַף (from אָלְקָטָה-אָ). The verb is used elsewhere 10x and the object of the "gleaning" is always stated (i.e. Lev. 19:9). Here in Ruth 2 the verb occurs 12x and the object "ears of grain" is only 1x explicitly stated (v. 2). In every other instance in

Ruth the object isn't stated (i.e. vv 3,7,8,15,16,17,18,19,23) but implied ("ears of grain"). Perhaps one can understand this implied object ("ears of grain) as the understood object of וְאָסְפוּ "and gather," and the phrase בְּעִמְרָיִם as an adverbial expression of manner, "in bundles." This would render the verse: "let me gather ears of grain into bundles" (behind the reapers).

This would change the outline point from "Ruth Reaping" to "Ruth Requesting".

Further comments include:

Gather grain translates what is literally in the Hebrew text “glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.” This is the form employed by a majority of modern versions, but it represents a serious textual difficulty. Perhaps “among the sheaves” was mistakenly introduced into this verse from verse 15. According to verse 2, Ruth did not ask permission to gather among the sheaves; that would have been contrary to customary practice. Anyone who was gleaning was required to stay behind the reapers; that is to say, they could only gather after the harvesters had completed their work and in areas where the sheaves had been taken away. Furthermore, it was only afterward (verse 15) that Ruth got permission to glean among the sheaves, which was an unusual favor. For these reasons the translator is encouraged to omit the prepositional phrase “among the sheaves” and to translate as in TEV: *follow the workers and gather grain*. This type of translation has considerable support from ancient versions, but one cannot decide whether the early translations represented an older Hebrew original or whether they corrected the Hebrew text in a similar manner. There are a number of other suggestions for change which have been proposed, but none of these is fully acceptable. Where necessary one can add a footnote introducing the literal form of the Hebrew text.

There are a number of other textual problems in verse 7, but they have little bearing upon the problems of interpretation.

If one does not take into account the Masoretic accentuation of the Hebrew text, it is possible to relate the temporal markers, “since early morning and . . . just now,” to what follows. The meaning would then be “[Thus/Therefore, she came and stayed here.] Since dawn and until now she hardly rested a minute.” The emphasis of this information is not on “stayed here” but rather on the fact that Ruth never stopped working, that she didn’t take a rest from dawn until the time of the conversation between Boaz and his servant.

But recently two other very old interpretations have been taken up and defended. They both suggest that the idea is that Ruth, as an inexperienced gleaner, was only able to gather a little bit (*me`at*), and that the leader of the harvesters took pity on her. The first interpretation corresponds to the literal translation, which can be paraphrased as follows: “And-she-came-and-remained-standing since this-morning until now; [and] [the fact] that, [now that] she [is] sitting [before returning] home, [is a] small [matter].” The second interpretation is a variant on the first but divides the text differently: “And-she-came-and-remained-standing since this-morning. Now, until now, [time when] sat down-for-her to-the-house, [is] a small [matter].”³

3 Waard, J. d., & Nida, E. A. (1991). *A translator's handbook on the book of Ruth* (2nd ed.). UBS Handbook Series (28–29). New York: United Bible Societies.

As the NIV and most other versions translate the text, the question is extraordinary if not a contradiction in terms. If *liqqēṭ* means “to glean,” why would Ruth request permission to glean behind the harvesters among the *’ōmārîm*, which some interpret as “small heaps of grain.” Normally a “gleaner” gathered the “gleanings” (*leqet*), that is, the remnants of harvest, either uncut corners of the field or stalks of grain inadvertently dropped by the harvesters (Lev 19:9; 23:22). By the NIV’s interpretation she is brashly asking either to pick up grain among the harvesters in the midst of the field, perhaps even taking ears of grain from the heaps of cut grain, or to take her place among them as a harvester. On the other hand, if the preposition before *’ōmārîm* is interpreted as “in” or “into” instead of “among,” and noun is understood as “bundles,” the request makes perfect sense. Then the clause *wē’āsaptî bo ’ōmārîm* serves to define *liqqēṭ*: “to glean” means “to gather in bundles” behind the harvesters the *leqet* they have missed.⁴

... Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; ...

וַתָּבוֹא וַתִּשְׁמָד מֵאִזְ הַבֹּקֶר וְעַד-עֶתָּה

A better solution is to recognize that this verb, which normally means “to stand,” is capable of meaning “to remain, stay.” In Exod 9:28 it means the opposite of *šālah*, “to send away”; in Deut 5:31 and 2 Kgs 15:20 it serves as the opposite of *šûb*, “to return.” Accordingly in this context the supervisor means to tell Boaz that he did not send Ruth away; nor did she “turn back” to find another field or to return to Naomi. “She came and she has remained here” is his way of indicating that he gave her permission to glean and she accepted his invitation.³² In fact she has been working from the moment he approved (*mē’āz*, “from then” or more loosely “since”), that is, early morning (*habbōqer*) until now, that is the arrival of Boaz.⁵

... she has been sitting in the house for a little while.”

זֶה שְׁבִיבָהּ בַּבַּיִת מְעֻט:

Some think this is a latrine. Preferable to see this as a temporary shelter with a straw roof on poles for shade and rest.

Bush’s “she has stopped only a moment” follows the LXX in reading *šābētā* for *šibtāh* and dropping *habbayit*, “the house.” In our estimation the text defies explanation, and we are left with admitting that any explanation, including the NIV’s reading, is a guess.⁶

Cf. Barber's concluding thoughts, pp. 72-74 ==>

The young foreman's description of the way Ruth approached him, as veil as her conduct in the field, enlarges our understanding and appreciation of her. Her "Please let me glean" was phrased delicately and anticipated an affirmative answer. She was gracious and positive in her attitude. She had suffered much, but she was not depressed (2:11b). The setbacks of the past few weeks had not left her in despair. She may have been beaten down by the sheer weight of her trials, but she still had confidence in herself and in the One under whose wings she had taken refuge (2:12b). And because of her love for her mother-in-law she was determined to persevere.

4 Block, D. I. (1999). *Vol. 6: Judges, Ruth*. The New American Commentary (656). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

5 Ibid., 657.

6 Ibid., 658.

Under such circumstances one's insecurities, apprehension over the future, and concern over where the next meal will come from might lead to frenetic activity. Was this true of Ruth? Let us read between the lines. Boaz's servant described her activity (2:7b). She had started early, worked diligently, and when she was tired, She had rested. Ruth was evidently sufficiently secure in herself and confident enough in the Lord not to allow her anxieties to goad her into unwarranted activity. There is no evidence in the story that fear of impoverishment drove her to the border of panic. She worked hard, and when she felt the need, she relaxed.

All of this points to Ruth's well-rounded personality. It also provides a good model for our own efforts. . . .

Cf. Paul in 2 Cor. 4:8; the example of the fine woman in Proverbs 31.