

The Megilloth

Within the corpus of Hebrew canonical literature there is a group of relatively brief books or scrolls located in the third division of the Hebrew canon. The Hebrew canon was divided into three basic sections: The Torah; The Prophets and The Writings. The grouping of brief books known as the Megilloth is found among The Writings. Each came, over the years to be designated to be read for a specific celebration: a feast or a fast in recognition of some major event in Hebrew history.

As a result, within Synagogue worship as well as personal and family celebration (or recognition) of these important events these brief books were to be read in their entirety. In the instance, for example, of the Feast of Purim, among followers of Judaism, it becomes a part of the worship to virtually act out the events described in The Book of Esther.

Other readings of the books of the Megilloth are more restrained. This use of the Megilloth in Synagogue worship as a special group of books within the Hebrew canon came into being during the 6th to the 9th centuries.

Why and when these books were actually selected for their special use has not always been known or understood by scholars. The choice of several of these books is obvious because of the nature of the festival/feast and the contents of the book. In other cases the reason for the selection is shrouded in mystery. Possibly the reason for reading is that the reader/hearers learn by contrast rather than by direct rehearsal of the pertinent historical events.

The Feast of Weeks

This Feast of Weeks was one of three great festivals. Another name for the Feast of Weeks, was The Feast of the Harvest. This was held 50 days after Passover, i.e. the 6th of Sivan (May/June).

Basically this was a harvest festival which was carried out throughout Biblical history in much the same way. Exodus 23:16 designated it as The Feast of the Harvest.

Grain was presented to the Lord as the first fruits. The very first fruit of the harvest was given to the Lord, i.e. the first cutting. Barley was ripe first and the harvesting season went on for about seven weeks until the wheat had been harvested. The entire period was one of special recognition to God for having provided rain and agricultural fertility. The actual feast in Palestine only lasted one day since it recognized that God was the one providing the harvest to come. It called for special recognition of God's goodness over the seven week harvest period.

Once the Synagogues were established a special service of worship was celebrated in the Synagogue and the Book of Ruth was read in its entirety during the Synagogue worship. The custom began some time prior to 20 B.C.E.

The Feast of Passover

Another of the three great Festivals was the Feast of the Passover. This feast had its beginnings in Egypt at the time of the beginning of the Exodus. It was also called the feast of the Unleavened Bread, based on Exodus 12:1 - 13:16. It was held on the 14th to the 21st days of Nisan (March/April).

Prior to the destruction of the Temple Passover was a pilgrim festival. The population, in so far as possible made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate this festival. With the destruction of the Temple Passover became a sacrificial rite, as a sacred commemoration of God's redemption, and has continued as such across the centuries.

The festival, over the years since the destruction of the Temple has become carefully organized with reading and conversation concerning Exodus 12-13:16. Later adaptations of the festive ritual have included the reading of The Song of Solomon in Synagogue worship. For the other books of the Megilloth the relationship to the event celebrated is obvious, but not so with The Song of Solomon. Possibly there is a reflection of the common Hebrew idea of teaching by contrast.

9th of Ab

The 9th of Ab commemorates the destruction of the Temple. Lamentations is read on this fast day in remembrance of the destruction of the Temple and the fall of Jerusalem. The month of Ab is in June/July.

Possibly in early times the laments were sung. The book has been read in the Synagogue since 70 C.E. to commemorate the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans and the dispersion of Israel. It is a non canonical fast day, based on the destruction by Titus in the year 70 C.E..

Succoth or Tabernacle Booths

One of the great annual festivals is celebrated in Autumn. The celebration is one of great joy for the agricultural year has been completed. The feast went by several names: Tabernacles: Exodus 23:16; Feast of the Lord II Chronicles 8:13; Feast of Ingathering Leviticus 23:34; The Feast I Kings 8:2. This was held from the 15th to the 20th day of Tishri (September/October).

Booths were used to commemorate the wandering of the Israelites. With Synagogue worship Ecclesiastes was read. Since this is one of the pieces of Wisdom Literature it was no doubt deemed proper to give emphasis on the book along with the feast.

The activities and preparations for the feast were carefully outlined in great detail in the Mishnah.

Purim

This feast was not prescribed in the Law. It no doubt developed among Diaspora Jews. The name possibly comes from an Aramaic word **995** meaning "to destroy." The Book of Esther is read. During the feast which has some New Year's Eve qualities about it. Mourning is forbidden. The festal meal lasts late into the night on the 14th day of the month of Adar. The dramatization of the Purim events has a long history giving the impression of an Italian carnival.

The feast celebrates the Jews deliverance from Haman by Esther and Mordecai. The feast was held on the 14th or 15th of Adar (February/March).

Observations

This brief summary will hopefully clarify the basis for the selection of these five books to be read during the special feast/fast days that are important in Hebrew history. These books not only give us insights into Hebrew history but provide a rich source of understandings and directions for living our daily lives. There is a beauty in these books that the casual reader might not discover. For example, the careful presentation by the story teller of the story of Ruth, working toward the climax in which an ancestor of David is born. Or: the poetry with it's acrostics in Lamentations. There surely is more in these brief books than many of us, as readers, anticipate.

In examining the order of the books in the Hebrew canon a rather late grouping is evidenced the following order for the books that comprise the Megilloth. The Babylonian Talmud has the order as follows: Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Daniel, Ester, Ezra, Nehimiah and Chronicles. The Codex Leningradensus, 1008 C.E. has the order as: Chronicles, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra/Nehimiah. In this codex the Megilloth are grouped together.

Ruth

The German writer Goethe called the story of Ruth "the loveliest complete work on a small scale." This brief story is told in a simple and direct way. It is one of a number of stories from the time of the Judges. The other stories were included in the compilation of The Book of Judges, while Ruth, being a "complete work" stands alone and in our Old Testament canon is found to follow Judges.

Rabbinic tradition says that Samuel composed the book but scholars generally are not in agreement, dating the book at a much later time. In Hebrew Bibles the book is found in the Kethuvim, the Writings, which is the third division of the Hebrew canon. It is among the five Megilloth or scrolls, thus giving rise to the thought that it possibly was written later than the Prophets. In the LXX, the Vulgate and English Bibles it is found after Judges. This is perhaps because of subject matter since Ruth refers to the time of the Judges just as Lamentations became attached to Jeremiah.

The language of the book stems from that of later Hebrew. The book surely is later than the events it describes.

Scholars have attempted to determine the purpose for its writing. Several suggestions are:

1. Universalism. God is interested and cares for the people of nations beyond Judaism.
2. Friendship. The devotion and friendship shown by Ruth toward Naomi is clearly evident.
3. The genealogy of David. The book supplies information about the genealogy that might otherwise have been missing.
4. A reminder of the Levirate Marriage Law, dealing with the plight of a childless widow.
5. The sovereignty of God. The key verse being 2:12. God is watching over his people.
6. Approval of marriage to those outside Israel. A message by those who oppose the prohibition of mixed marriages in Nehemiah 13.
7. Proselytes. To oppose the objection to making proselytes.
8. A pleasant story. This is one of the tales from 'the good old days' that should be remembered.

The language of the original, while good classical Hebrew has a number of dialectic peculiarities. Boaz, for example, seems to speak in a dialect. This has caused some scholars to feel the work is post-exilic, i.e. after 538 B.C.E. Those who hold to a pre-exilic date believe that it was written in about the 12th Century B.C.E.

Was the Book of Ruth originally an appendage to some other writing? The opening word of the book is unusual in that it begins with a Hebrew 'waw' which is a connective particle, often translated as for, since or because.

The Dead Sea Scrolls include some fragments of the book of Ruth. 2QRutha; 2QRuthb; and 4QRutha. They stem from about the first Century B.C.E. The LXX is a very slavish translation, being very literal. The Peshitta (Syriac) is a much freer translation, thus causing its textual value to be disrespected.

Ruth

<CHAPTER 1>

1. Moab 1:1 - 18

A. An Israelite Family in Moab 1:1 - 5

¹ In the days when the judges judged ¹ there was a famine in the land and a certain man from Bethlehem-Judah ² along with his wife and two sons who went to live as resident aliens in the territory of Moab. ³ ² The man's name was Elimelech ⁴ and his wife's name was Naomi. ⁵ Their two sons were named Mahlon and Chilion ⁶ of the clan of Ephrath from Bethlehem. ⁷ Elimelech, Naomi's husband died and she remained with her two sons. ⁴ The sons married Moabitesses. One was named Orpah and the other Ruth. ⁸The lived in Moab about ten years. ⁹ ⁵ Then Mahlon and Chilion both died so that the women were left without their husbands and Ruth without her sons.

B The return to Judah 1:6 - 22

1 Events along the way 1:6 - 18

⁶ Naomi had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had considered his people and given them good crops. ¹⁰ Therefore Naomi started to return from the country of Moab along with her two daughters-in-law. ⁷ She prepared to leave the place where she had been living along with her two daughters-in-law and they went along the road that leads back to the land of Judah. ⁸ But along the way Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you to your mother's house (*or, the women's quarters of your parental home*).

May the Lord show kindness toward you
just as you have dealt kindly
with those who have died, ¹¹ and with me.

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- 1 Judges at this point in Hebrew history were not legal functionaries but those who delivered people when in trouble. The Targums describe the judges as "when the chiefs ruled."
 - 2 The name Bethlehem means "house of bread," or "house of grain." Judah means "Let God be praised." It was the territory in which the city of Bethlehem was located. It is mentioned in the Amarna letters and in Ancient Near East Texts p. 489, Col. 2, Par. 2. Some scholars feel the name originally was Beth Lahamut. The house of the god Lahamut whose temple was located there prior to the occupation under Joshua.
 - 3 The Talmud and Midrash discuss the lawfulness of such emigration. Moab is in the area east of Jordan, a plateau region south of the river Arnon. Literally the Hebrew says: "the fields of Moab."
 - 4 The name means "God is king" or "My God is king."
 - 5 The name means "my pleasantness," "delight" or "lovely."
 - 6 Mahlon means "sickly" or "illness." Chilion means "wasting away" or "consumption." These names have been found in Ugarit, thus being 'good old Canaanite names.'
 - 7 Ephrath means "fruitfulness" and apparently refers to a region near Bethlehem. The Midrash indicates that they were local aristocrats.
 - 8 Orpah means "stiff-necked" possibly "firmness" or "rebellious." Ruth means "friend" or "female companion" and possibly "refreshing."
 - 9 The Talmud adds: "and they transgressed the decree of the word of the Lord." Cf. Deuteronomy 7:3; 23:3.
 - 10 Literally: "bread."
 - 11 Knox translates: "You have shown kindness to the memory of the dead." The point is that they have had a kind relationship with their husbands when they were alive.

9 May the Lord enable you to find security¹²
each of you with another marriage."¹³

Then she kissed them, and they sobbed loudly. 10 They said to her, "No,¹⁴ we will return to your people with you."¹⁵ 11 Naomi, however, said, "Go back, my daughters! why should you go with me? Do you think I could give birth to sons who might become your husbands (*or, I couldn't still have sons for you to marry, could I?*)¹² Go back home, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to be married. even if I would think I had hope, even if I were to get married tonight¹⁶ and would become pregnant,¹³ would you wait for them until they were grown? Would you deprive yourselves of possibly marrying? No, my daughters, for it grieves me on your behalf,¹⁷ for the hand of the Lord has turned against me."¹⁸ 14 Then they again sobbed loudly and continued weeping. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law¹⁹ farewell and Ruth embraced her.

15 Naomi then said, "See, your sister-in-law has returned to her nation and to her gods.²⁰ Follow your sister-in-law." However, Ruth replied:

"Do not urge me to leave you
or to turn back and not follow you!
Wherever you go, I will go,
and wherever you lodge²¹ I will lodge;
your people will be my people,
and your God²² my God,
¹⁷ where you die I will die,
and I will be buried there.
May the Lord's harsh judgment²³
come upon me as well,
if anything but death separates me from you!"

¹⁸ When Naomi saw Ruth's determination to go with her, she said no more.

2 Bethlehem 1:19 - 22

¹⁹ Then both kept going until they reached Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the entire town was stirred²⁴ over them and the women said, "Can that really be Naomi?"²⁰ She replied,
"Do not call me Naomi (*Lovely*),

12 Literally: "rest." A hapax legomenon. The thought is to find a place of rest, meaning no doubt security and the blessing of the Lord.

13 Literally: "in the house of her husband."

14 Literally: "but we will." Cf. BDB.

15 As Moabite women they would be less likely to marry in Israel.

16 LXX and Syriac omit "tonight." No doubt the feeling was that it was not sufficiently euphemistic for those translators.

17 Grammatically the line could read: "I am worse off than you," having lost both sons and her husband.

18 To understand verses 11 - 13 consult the Levirate Marriage Law: Deuteronomy 25:5 - 6. Similar laws were found among the Hittite and Assyrian legal codes.

19 Some early translations add "and went back home." LXX: και επεσρεφεν εις τουλαον αυτης. Syriac: "she returned and went her way."

20 The Moabite god was Chemosh, the name meaning: "father of Mesha" and astral deity.

21 The Hebrew word does not imply being settled for a long stay, though in poetry this might be meant.

22 Ruth uses the word Yahweh. Foreigners usually used the word Elohim. She was in a sense perhaps declaring her faith and faithfulness to Yahweh.

23 TEV: "May the Lord's worst punishment come upon me." TAN in a footnote calls it a formula of imprecation. Possibly when read a motion is in order to indicate the direst of consequences.

24 The Hebrew word is an onomatopoeic word 'rwws' pronounced similarly to the English word 'hum'. TAN translates "buzzed with excitement."

call me Mara (*Bitterness*),²⁵
for the Almighty (*Shaddai*) has dealt
very bitterly with me
(*or, caused my life to be bitter*).

²¹ I went away full,
and the Lord has brought me back empty.
How can you call me Naomi (*Lovely*),
when the Lord has afflicted²⁶ me
(*or, dealt harshly with me;*
has caused me to return destitute).

The Almighty has brought calamity upon me!"²⁷

²² Naomi returned along with her daughter-in-law, from the country of Moab, arriving in Bethlehem just as the barley harvest began.²⁸

<CHAPTER 2>

III The Harvest Field 2:1 - 23

A The field of Boaz 2:1 - 3

¹ Now Naomi had a relative²⁹ on her husband Elimelech's side, a prominent and wealthy³⁰ man whose name was Boaz.³¹ ² Ruth, the Moabitess³² said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the fields of someone who might be kind to me, to glean³³ the heads of grain behind the reapers." Naomi replied, "Go ahead, my daughter." ³ So, off she went³⁴ and gleaned in the field behind the reapers. As it happened³⁵ she came to the piece of land belonging to Boaz, who was of Elimelech's family.

B Boaz provision for Ruth 2:4 - 17

⁴ At about that time Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you."³⁶ They responded, "The Lord bless you." ⁵ Then Boaz said to the foreman of the reapers, "Whose girl is that?" ⁶ The foreman³⁷ of the reapers replied, "She is the Moabite girl who came from the land of Moab with Naomi. ⁷ She had said, "Please, let me glean and gather among the sheaves³⁸ behind the reapers.'" So she came and has been waiting since early morning until now,

25 The word Mara is Aramaic. In Hebrew it would have final "h". Marah. Note the wordplay. Mara (bitter) and "caused my life to be bitter." MFT translates: "call me Mara for the Almighty has cruelly marred me."

26 So: LXX, Syriac & Vulgate. Hebrew: "testified against."

27 Literally: "but empty brought me back Yahweh."

28 The Hebrew of verse 22 is awkward. Possibly there is an addition or gloss as noted in the repetition in the verse in Hebrew. Several scholars feel verse 22 is a gloss from 2:6 and therefore delete it. In a calendar from 1000 B.C.E. found in Gezer, the year was divided into four parts. 1. grain planting, 2. hoeing plants, 3. barley harvest, 4. vine tending.

29 The Hebrew word is a hapax legomenon שֶׁשֶׁר "relative" "acquaintance" possibly "distant relative." Some scholars emend the word to simply read "friend" by changing the vowels. The consonants in Hebrew are the same.

30 The Hebrew word is יָוֵד -#% can mean "honorable" or "distinguished" in later Hebrew. In older Hebrew it might mean "strong."

31 The name means "strength."

32 Omitted by Syriac, LXX & Vulgate.

33 The Hebrew word קָטַף would translate as "gather up" or "pick up." It is used more often in Hebrew Scriptures with stones or money.

34 Omitted by LXX, Vulgate and Syriac.

35 Literally: "Her chance chanced." וַיִּבֶן could be translated "to happen, to befall, chance."

36 The Syriac reads, "Peace be with you."

37 Omitted by Vulgate & Syriac.

38 Some scholars revocalize the word to read "stalks." The MT vowels vocalize it as "sheaves." "gather among the sheaves" is

without even resting for a moment." ³⁹

⁸ Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen to me, ⁴⁰ (*or, Let me give you some advice*), daughter, do not go to glean in any other field. Stay here and keep close to my girls. ⁹ Keep watching them. See which field they are reaping and follow them. I have ordered the young men ⁴¹ not to molest you! When you are thirsty, go to the water jars ⁴² and drink some of the water my young men have drawn."

¹⁰ Then Ruth prostrated herself with her face touching the ground ⁴³ and said to Boaz, "Why have I found favor ⁴⁴ in your eyes (*or, why are you so kind*) that you should single me out despite my being a foreigner?" ⁴⁵ ¹¹ Boaz replied, "I have been fully informed ⁴⁶ about what you have done for your mother-in-law and the death of your husband and how ⁴⁷ you left your father and mother and the land of your birth and came to a people about whom you had no previous knowledge. ⁴⁸ ¹² May the Lord reward you for what you have done and may a rich reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel under whose protection ⁴⁹ you have come to take refuge."

¹³ Then she answered, "You are most gracious ⁵⁰ to me, Sir, for you have been kind to me and spoken kindly to me even though I am not ⁵¹ one of your servants;"

¹⁴ At mealtime Boaz said to Ruth, "Come here, ⁵² and eat some bread and dip your piece of bread into the sour wine (*or, vinegar*)." ⁵³ So she sat down beside the reapers and he passed ⁵⁴ her the toasted grain; ⁵⁵ and she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. ⁵⁶

¹⁵ When she again rose to glean Boaz instructed his young men, saying, "Even let her glean among the bundles, and do not reprimand her. ¹⁶ Also pull out some handfuls ⁵⁷ of grain from the bundles for her and leave these for her to glean. Do not scold her." ⁵⁸

¹⁷ So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out ⁵⁹ what she had gleaned and it

omitted by Syriac and Vulgate.

39 Hebrew unclear. *wata e mod* Possibly the most difficult verse in Ruth. Literally: "from that time till now." The line can read "She has been on her feet all morning.." The translation above implies that she has been waiting for Boaz permission to glean close to the sheaves, not simply along the outside of the field This would only be allowed by special permission from the owner LXX: "from morning to evening and she did not rest in the field a little." Vulgate: "and she did not return home." Syriac omits some of the line. Targum adds "from before dawn."

40 Literally: "Have you not heard daughter?" Syriac: "haven't you heard what the proverb says, 'Do not glean in a field which isn't your own.'"

41 Literally: "Have I not commanded the young men..."

42 Hebrew: /b-, could mean earthenware jars or a water bag.

43 The expression is more commonly used for a person in the presence of God but Ruth has recognized that Boaz was doing more than was in the structures required of a landowner.

44 The Hebrew words ב19ב% and ב19,% give the thought of looking in a friendly manner toward a stranger.

45 In Hebrew there is a play on words.

46 The Hebrew words \$#% \$#% signal emphasis. "Indeed it has been told."

47 So: LXX. Omitted in Hebrew.

48 Boaz kindness reciprocated Ruth's kindness toward Naomi.

49 Hebrew: *mp* "wings (of a bird)" or "skirt or robe" thus: protection.

50 Some scholars translate: "may I continue to have favor in your sight" It can also be translated as "Please be kind."

51 "not" is omitted by LXX, thus apparently missing the point. LXX: "I'll be as one of your servants." Some scholars translate this as "Treat me as one of your slave girls, even though I am not one of your slave girls."

52 Many LXX manuscripts have "It is now time to eat."

53 The Hebrew word *homes* can also mean a refreshing sour drink. Here it is either a vinegar based sour drink or a vinegar based sauce.

54 A hapax legomenon. In secular Hebrew it usually means "tongs" or "handles. LXX: βουεζω "to pick up."

55 I.e. ripe grain that has been roasted over a small fire.

56 The Hebrew of verse 14 is ambiguous.

57 A hapax legomenon. &-U

58 This verse is omitted in Syriac manuscripts.

59 LXX: ραβιζω "beat with a rod."

was almost an ephah⁶⁰ of barley.

C Naomi's reaction 2:18 - 23

18 She gathered up her grain⁶¹ and went into the city. Ruth showed⁶² her mother-in-law what she had gleaned. Then she gave her the food she had left over after having eaten her fill.⁶³ 19 Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today? In whose field have you worked? May God bless the man who took notice of you (*or, who had an interest in you*)." So Ruth told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz."

20 Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May the Lord whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead also bless him (*i.e. Boaz*)." ⁶⁴ Naomi explained to her, "The man is a relative of ours, our redeeming relative." ⁶⁵ 21 Ruth the Moabitess said ⁶⁶ "He even told me, 'Stay close to my workers,⁶⁷ till they have finished all my harvest.'" 22 Naomi responded to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, "It is best, my daughter, that you go with his girls, so that you will not be molested in someone else's field." 23 So she kept close to the maidens of Boaz, gleaned until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. She continued living with her mother-in-law.⁶⁸

<CHAPTER 3>

IV The threshing floor 3:1 - 18

A Naomi's plan 3:1 - 5

1 Then ⁶⁹ her mother-in-law, Naomi, said to her, "My daughter you must have security⁷⁰ that it may be pleasant for you (*or, which will be good for you*)."⁷¹ 2 Now there is Boaz, our redeeming relative,⁷² the one with whose girls you worked. He is winnowing barley tonight⁷³ at the threshing floor. 3 Therefore bathe and anoint yourself with perfumed oil. Wear the best clothes you have and go down to the threshing floor, but do not disclose to the man who you are until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 When he lies down, take note of the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down.⁷⁴ 5 He will tell you what to do." Ruth replied, "I will do everything you say."

60 An Ephah was about two thirds of a bushel or 25 pounds (4 gallons).

61 Literally: "lifted up, or carried." (*!7b*)&

62 So: LXX & 2 Hebrew manuscripts. Other Hebrew manuscripts say: "her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned."

63 BDB consider this as "bringing the food out of the cupboard."

64 Grammatically acceptable: "who has not left off his kindness."

65 Hebrew: *-!#* one who acts as or does the part of a redeeming relative. Cf. Leviticus 25:25; Deuteronomy 25:5-6. This gives the right of a relative to 'buy' family land. The fact that Boaz was a redeeming relative opened up the possibility of providing an heir.

66 Moabitess is omitted by Syriac & Vulgate. LXX adds: "said to her mother-in-law."

67 LXX, Ethiopic, Old Latin and Armenian versions specify, "women workers."

68 Some Hebrew manuscripts say, "she returned to live..." as does the Vulgate. Chapter 3 in the Vulgate and Syriac begins with this last sentence.

69 The Hebrew word *-)##&* is a time that is longer than we usually think of as being 'then.' Possibly several weeks since the threshing had not been completed.

70 Hebrew " (&1/ MFT translates: "I want you settled in life." The word implies security in marriage.

71 The fear was that an unprotected widow would have a problem with how she would survive.

72 Since Ruth had been married to Mahlon, Boaz was also a relative to Ruth, not simply Naomi.

73 The Targums add: "when the wind blows." The Hebrew word is usually translated as "night." Some scholars feel it means "afternoon." Normally the wind would blow in the late afternoon or evening, beginning between 4 & 5 P.M. Literally the line says: "he will be winnowing the threshing floor of barley."

74 Syriac has: "lie down at his feet. This is a symbolic request for protection and for marriage. Gerlenian translates: "sich als bittstellerin in seinen Schutz begeben." This was not to be an undelicate act on Ruth's part. It was the manner in which a woman was able to propose marriage to a man.

B Ruth at the threshing floor 3:6 - 13

6 Ruth went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed. 7 When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and was in a cheerful mood, ⁷⁵ he went to lie down at the end of the pile of grain. Then she came stealthily and uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁷⁶ 8 In the middle of the night the man was startled, ⁷⁷ and turned over, ⁷⁸ and there was a woman lying at his feet. 9 "Who are you?" he said, and she replied, "I am your maidservant Ruth. Spread your skirt over your maidservant, for you are the nearest relative (*or, the redeeming relative*). ⁷⁹ 10 He said, "May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first, in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. ⁸⁰ 11 And now my daughter, have no fear. I will do all that you ask on your behalf, for my fellow townsmen ⁸¹ know that you are a woman of worth. ⁸² 12 While it is true that I am a redeeming relative, there is a relative who is more closely related than I. ⁸³ 13 Stay for the night, and in the morning-- if he will act as your redeeming relative-- fine, let him redeem, but if he is not willing to do the part of the redeeming relative for you, then, as the Lord lives, I will do so myself on your behalf. Lie down until morning."

C Ruth's return home 3:14 - 18

14 So, Ruth lay at his feet until morning. She rose before the light was such that one could distinguish her ⁸⁴ He mused, "Don't tell anyone ⁸⁵ that the woman came to me at the threshing floor." ⁸⁶ 15 He said, "Hold out the cloak (*or, mantle*) ⁸⁷ you are wearing." So, she did so and he measured out six measures of barley, ⁸⁸ and helped lift it on her shoulder. Then she went into the city. 16 When she returned her mother-in-law asked, "How did it go? (*or, Who are you?*)" ⁸⁹ She then told her all that the man had done for her, 17 adding, "He gave me six measures of barley, for he said, 'You must not go back to your mother-in-law empty handed.'" ⁹⁰ 18 Naomi replied, "Just wait (*or, Sit tight*) my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest today until the matter is settled."

75 Literally: "his heart was merry." Meek translates: "sense of well-being."

76 Syriac: "she fell at his feet.: LXX omits the phrase.

77 Originally the Hebrew word meant "to tremble." LXX adds: καὶ ἐταραχθῆ. Targums, Vulgate and Syriac: "and he saw."

78 Possibly the Hebrew word can be translated "he bent himself" or "twisted himself." Targums add "his flesh became weak like a turnip."

79 This is a request for protection. To say, "spread your skirt" §51, ;U95& would be tantamount to saying, "Marry me." The comment about the redeeming relative could be translated, "you have the right to redeem." The understanding of what these words meant in ancient times is difficult to understand clearly. Meek translates: "Take your maidservant in marriage for you are the next-of-kin."

80 I. e. She followed the procedure that was acceptable in the area. Syriac reverses the order.

81 Literally: "all those at the gate." i.e. the influential people.

82 The Targums have Boaz say that Ruth is "a pious woman." The word translated as "worth" could be translated as "virtue."

83 The nearest relative had a prior right and duty to marry Ruth.

84 Literally: "before a man recognizes his fellow."

85 Literally: "it shall not be known."

86 There is an interesting note in the Mishna that if a man was suspected of having had sexual intercourse with a gentile woman he could not carry out the levirate marriage with her. Possibly this was written centuries later than the book of Ruth.

87 A rare Hebrew word. ;8)//% Targum translation is "turban" or "long scarf."

88 The Hebrew is not clear. It simply says 6 measures. The size of the measure is in question. Targum adds: "there came on her strength from the Lord to carry them." Presumably because of the next phrase implies that it was a rather large amount.

89 Literally: "Who are you my daughter?" Some scholars want to emend this line to say, "Are you married or not?" Syriac provides a reply: "I am Ruth." The line is omitted by B in the LXX. "My Daughter" is inserted in Hebrew at this point.

90 The word is the same used by Naomi in 1:21.

<CHAPTER 4>

V The Gate 4:1 - 12

(Boaz redeems Ruth the Moabitess)

1 Meanwhile ⁹¹ Boaz went up to the gate ⁹² and sat down there. When the nearest redeeming relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by Boaz hailed him, "Come over, friend, ⁹³ have a seat," and he did so. 2 Then Boaz took ten men of the elders ⁹⁴ of the city and said, "Be seated." They sat down.

3 Then he said to the nearest redeeming relative, "Naomi, who has recently returned from the country of Moab has put up the parcel of land for sale that belonged to our relative Elimelech. 4 I thought I would acquaint you with that fact, ⁹⁵ and inform you and those who are sitting here, in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so! But if you will not redeem it, tell me, that I may know. There is no one other than you to redeem it. I am next in line." ⁹⁶ And he said, "I, myself, will redeem it." ⁹⁷ 5 Then Boaz added, "Now on the day you acquire the property from Naomi you are also acquiring Ruth ⁹⁸ the Moabitess, the widow of the dead, in order to restore the name of the dead as his inheritance. ⁹⁹ 6 Then the nearest redeeming relative said, "I am unable to redeem it for myself, lest I lose my own patrimony." ¹⁰⁰ You take over my right of redemption yourself, since I am unable to redeem it." ¹⁰¹

7 (In those days there was an ancient custom ¹⁰² in Israel concerning redemption and exchanging to validate a transaction; he removed his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the practice for legally attesting [*a sale of property*] in Israel.)¹⁰³ 8 So, when the nearest redeeming relative said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself," he drew off his sandal. ¹⁰⁴ 9 Then Boaz said to the elders and all the other people who were present, "You are witnesses today that I have bought all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon from Naomi's hand. 10 More importantly ¹⁰⁵ I am acquiring Ruth, the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, as my wife, ¹⁰⁶ so that the name of the deceased may be perpetuated in his inheritance; that the name of the deceased may not disappear from among his relatives and from the gate of his home town. You are witnesses today!"

11 Then all the people who were at the gate, and the elders responded, "We are witnesses.

91 The Hebrew & does not indicate how quickly Boaz met with the Elders but one assumes he was anxious to do so.

92 The approximation of the Forum or a Greek Agora where people met and where justice was meted out. The area of the city gate was usually the only open place in a town.

93 The Hebrew word // -1 / -5 would be the equivalent of "Mr. So an So." LXX: κρυφτε. Vulgate: vocans eum nomine suo.

94 The elders exercised judicial functions.

95 Literally: "uncover your ear." LXX: αποκαλατω το ους σου.

96 Berkley: "There is nobody to redeem it except you, with myself next."

97 The Hebrew is emphatic. Thus the translation, "I, myself."

98 So: Old Latin & Vulgate. Hebrew: "Naomi and from Ruth." LXX: "Naomi and Ruth."

99 Cf. the Levirate Marriage law. Deuteronomy 25:5 - 6. The first male son resulting from the marriage would be the grandson of Elimelech, son of Mahlon and he would inherit Elimelech's property. This would be a double financial burden. The verse seems to be filled with legal terminology.

100 He probably felt this would make his inheritance to his existing family too complicated.

101 The Targums interpret the remark as being fearful that two wives would quarrel.

102 LXX: "Now this was the custom" thus misreading the Hebrew as ; -1 ! -! # %

103 LXX: "And this was in former times the ordinance in Israel for redemption and for a bargain, to confirm every word: a man loosed his shoe, and gave it to his neighbor that redeemed his right: and this was a testimony in Israel." This custom was somewhat different from Deuteronomy 25:6. In the passage the Hebrew word is "foot gear" not "sandal."

104 Some Greek versions & Aquila add "and he gave it to him." Literally: "buy it yourself." The LXX and Arabic add "and gave it to him" to this verse is no doubt due to haplography: the scribe skipping a line when making a copy of a manuscript which then was copied by other scribes.

105 Hebrew: / # b

106 Literally: "I bought for myself for a wife."

May the Lord grant this woman who is coming into your house to be like Rachel and Leah ¹⁰⁷ who together built up the house of Israel.

May you prosper in Ephratha
and enjoy fame ¹⁰⁸ in Bethlehem.
¹² May your house be
like the house of Perez
whom Tamar bore to Judah
because of the descendants
the Lord will give you
by this young woman." ¹⁰⁹

Conclusion 4:13 - 22

A Marriage and the birth of a son 4:13 - 17

¹³ Boaz married Ruth and she became his wife and they consummated the marriage. The Lord enabled her to conceive and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without an heir; and may his name be perpetuated in Israel! ¹⁵ He will revive (*or, renew*) your spirits and sustain you in your old age for he has been born to your daughter-in-law who loves you (*or, has provided for you*) more than seven sons." ¹¹⁰

¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and held it to her bosom, ¹¹¹ and became his foster mother. ¹¹² ¹⁷ The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." ¹¹³ They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. ¹¹⁴

B A genealogy of David 4:18 - 22

¹⁸ These are the descendants of Perez:
Perez was the father of Hezron.
¹⁹ Hezron was the father of Ram,
Ram was the father of Amminadab.
²⁰ Amminadab was the father of Nashon,
Nashon was the father of Salmon.
²¹ Salmon was the father of Boaz,
Boaz was the father of Obed,
²² Obed was the father of Jesse,
and Jesse was the father of David. ¹¹⁵

107 The name Rachel means "live." Leah means "a wild cow."

108 Literally: "call a name." LXX: There will be a name. Possibly the intent is 'to perpetuate your name.'

109 Perez means "a breach." Tamar means "palm tree." Judah means "Let God be praised."

110 Cf. I Samuel 2:5. An expression of the time describing a perfect family.

111 Omitted by Syriac. This is usually interpreted as a formal adoption. Cf. Psalm. 2:7 which may be an adoptive formula.

112 Hebrew: ;1/!

113 According to the Levirate marriage law the child was considered to be a son of Mahlon, Naomi's son.

114 The name Obed means "worshiper" or "servant of the Lord. Jesse means "the Lord exists." David means "well beloved."

115 Hezron mean "vision." Ram means "highly exalted." Amminidab means "my kinsman is noble." Nashon means "little" or "serpent." Salmon means "clothing." Through the entire book God is supreme and watches.