**Part 6: The Conversation with Boaz**

**Ruth 2:10-18** [New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised](https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-Revised-Standard-Version-Anglicised-NRSVA-Bible/) **(NRSVA)**

10Then she fell prostrate, with her face to the ground, and said to him, ‘Why have I found favor in your sight, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner?’ 11But Boaz answered her, ‘All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before.

12May the Lord reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward from the Lord, the G-d of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!’ 13Then she said, ‘May I continue to find favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, even though I am not one of your servants.’

14At mealtime Boaz said to her, ‘Come here, and eat some of this bread, and dip your morsel in the sour wine.’ So, she sat beside the reapers, and he heaped up for her some parched grain. She ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over.

15When she got up to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, ‘Let her glean even among the standing sheaves, and do not reproach her. 16You must also pull out some handfuls for her from the bundles, and leave them for her to glean, and do not rebuke her.’

17So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.18She picked it up and came into the town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gleaned. Then she took out and gave her what was left over after she herself had been satisfied.

We will focus on the most important parts of the conversation between Ruth and Boaz.

***I have been told of all that you did…***[v. 11]:

Remember Ruth’s pledge and covenant with Naomi? Boaz praises Ruth, mirroring each part of her pledge. This seems to place emphasis on the value of a covenant between two people being honored by others.

Ruth’s pledge was not only to Naomi (where you go, I will go) but to her people too (your people will be my people). And your G-d will be my G-d.

Boaz praised her devotion to Naomi and her willingness to cut herself off from her own family to be with strangers, a people she did not know. For a person in the ancient world to do this was very unusual. It is her devotion to Naomi, not to the men of her household – she is not seeking to compensate for her dead husband’s or father-in-law’s loss of life.

Then Boaz asked G-d to bless her. It becomes clear that Boaz, out of his respect for what Ruth has done, will become the human agency that G-d used to bring the women into safety and security.

In rabbinic literature, the words used ‘to tell,’ *huggeid huggad li*, is a double telling which is confirmation that Boaz received two prophetic revelations:

First, the sages will reverse the prohibition against marrying Moabites, and it only applies to men, so Boaz could welcome Ruth into the community.

It was revealed to Boaz that kings and prophets will descend from Ruth.

***…how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth and came to a people you had not known before…***

Ruth’s action is being paralleled with Abraham, making a break with her past. Remember how G-d called Abraham to leave his country and his family’s home to go to an unknown land? [Genesis 12:1].

The land of your birth and your own people was based on two Hebrew words, *moledet* and *‘am*, which were used to designate the cultural identity and basic identity of people in the ancient world and how they were viewed by outsiders. In contrast to Ruth, Esther hid her true identity, keeping secret her *moledet* and *‘am* [Esther 2:10, 20].

***May the Lord reward your deeds. May you have a full recompense from the Lord, the G-d of Israel, under whose wings you have sought refuge*** [verse 12]….

So Boaz welcomes her, blesses her, and praises her loyalty to Naomi (not based on loyalty to her husband or father-in-law). The image of G-d’s wings (*kenafaim*) can be found often in the Bible. It is seen often in the Psalms. Later, Ruth uses the same word when she is at the threshing floor and urging Boaz to take action for her.

The *Targum* says this is the “wings of the *Shekhinah*” which means G-d’s presence among the people of Israel. Abraham and Sarah were said to have converted men and women, bringing them under the wings of the *Shekhinah* according to Rashi [Genesis 12:5]. Rashi was among the most influential medieval Rabbinic commentators [1040-1105 CE].

***Come over here and partake of the meal***…***she ate her fill and had some left over…***[verse 14]…

Now Boaz initiates the contact, inviting her to come closer, and to be filled. He hands her food. She is eating from the master’s table! The Hebrew for “she ate her fill” is *vatokhal va-tisba.* There are other biblical images of G-d filling us until we are fully satisfied. We can think of the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 where again the crowd was fed and there were twelve basketfuls left over. So Boaz is G-d’s agent to bring comfort and fulfillment to Ruth.

***You are not only to let her glean among the sheaves, without interference, but you must also pull some stalks out of the heaps and leave them for her to glean and not scold her*** [verse 16].

The phrase “without interference,” the Hebrew *takhlimusha* means humiliate or embarrass. G-d promised Zion she would not ever be humiliated again because G-d now protects her [Isaiah 54:4]. So, we can see that Boaz, representing the bountifulness of the Lord, paves the way for Ruth to do her work and to reap generous benefits. Work is honorable and the Lord honors the most lowly form of work.

Some writers see the story of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz as an analogy to being converted into a new religious path. At such time we choose to take a risk and leave the known and surrender to the unknown. We have to trust that G-d’s provision and his best for us will come when we surrender ourselves. The wings of G-d is one image of protection that occurs frequently in scripture.

For Jews, the Passover meal serves as a means of reliving and sharing with one’s family and faith community the story of the Exile, passing from slavery to freedom, from death into life. For Christians, coming to the Communion table can be considered a symbolic reenactment of our Covenant with G-d where we can come and be forgiven where we have failed to love, and be fed for our journey.

**Food for Thought:**

1. As you look back on your own journey, what were (or are) your fears in making a deeper faith commitment? When you enter into this spiritual space, this point in your life, what was (or is) going on for you?

Had you lost something you had counted on? Or what do you fear that you will lose? Have your hopes or expectations been dashed to the ground? What were (are) your fears as to what would happen next?

1. Have you, or has someone you know made a commitment in a relationship which cost loss of security or giving up certainty or predictability in life?
2. Have you or someone close to you changed your/their path and entered a different faith expression or a completely different formal religion? Or chose to leave structured or organized religion all together? What was lost and what was gained? Did you (or another) experience a greater acceptance or sense of belonging, a greater freedom, or a relief of some kind?
3. Thus far in your spiritual journey, what have you experienced when you have been able to surrender to an uncertain and unknown future?
4. Some people say that what they want and desire changes as they continue on their spiritual path. What is important becomes redefined. Has what you find fulfilling changed as you’ve traveled on your spiritual path?
5. What do you see as your next important spiritual crossroad?

**Personal Notes:**

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