

Exegetical Notes for Ruth 3:16-18

KEY

Barber = *Ruth: An Exegetical 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.

Leggett = *The Levirate And Goel Institutions In The Old Testament With Special Attention to the Book of Ruth* (Donald A. Leggett) Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack Publishing Company, 1974. PDF digitized with permission by Ted Hildebrandt, Gordon College, 2006.

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

¹⁶ And

when she came

to her mother-in-law,

she said,

“How did it go, my daughter?”

And she told her

all that the man had done for her.

¹⁷ And she said,

“These six *measures* of barley he gave to me,

for he said,

‘Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”

¹⁸ Then

==>

she said,

“Wait, my daughter,

until you know how the matter turns out;

for

the man will not rest

until he has settled it today.”

TRANSLATION, OUTLINE AND CENTRAL PROPOSITION

HEBREW TEXT (BHS):

וַתְּבוֹא אֶל-חַמּוֹתָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר מִי-אַתְּ בִּתִּי וַתִּגְדַּלְהָ אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר¹⁶
עָשָׂה-לָּהּ הָאִישׁ:

וַתֹּאמֶר שֵׁשׁ-הַשְּׁעָרִים הָאֵלֶּה נָתַן לִי בִּי אָמַר אֶל-תְּבוֹאִי רִיקָם¹⁷
אֶל-חַמּוֹתָךְ:

וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁבִי בִּתִּי עַד אֲשֶׁר תִּדְעֶינן אִיךָ יִפְּלֶה דְבַר כִּי לֹא יִשְׁקֹט הָאִישׁ¹⁸
כִּי-אִם-כֹּלָה הַדְּבַר הַיּוֹם:

ENGLISH TRANSLATION (NASB):

¹⁶ And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done for her.¹⁷ And she said, "These six *measures* of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'" ¹⁸ Then she said, "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today."

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:

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

A. Scene One: Remedy Proposed (vv. 1-5) or *Naomi Proposes: A Husband for Ruth*

B. Scene Two: Reception or Rejection (vv. 6-15)

C. Scene Three: Resting in Providence (vv. 16-18)

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

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

PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text):

CENTRAL PROPOSITION OF THE SERMON:

SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE:

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL/GRAMMATICAL CONTEXT

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)

Before moving on to the next episode, we may reflect further on the nature of the marriage envisioned by Boaz and Ruth. It is important to note that nowhere in the dialogue between Naomi and Ruth or between Boaz and Ruth is there a hint of concern for progeny, that is, the preservation of the family as in the prescriptions regarding levirate marriages in Deut 25:5–10. If Ruth asks for “redemption” and if Boaz is determined to “redeem” her, the aim is not primarily the preservation of Mahlon’s family name. Naomi’s aim in devising the scheme was to end the destitution and disgrace of Ruth’s widowhood and to provide greater security than she can offer to her in the house of her own husband. Since the Torah contains no specific prescription concerning situations like this, Naomi’s scheme rests not on a legal obligation but on confidence in Boaz’s sense of moral obligation to the family. In this matter she will not be disappointed. The lives of genuinely good people are not governed by laws but character and a moral sense of right and wrong. For Boaz Yahweh’s covenant with Israel provides sufficient guidance for him to know what to do in this case.

As for vv. 16-18 - this is the concluding scene. It's a brief dialogue between Ruth and Naomi. Ruth reports to her mother-in-law how the night's encounter had turned out.

3:16 EXEGESIS

HEBREW TEXT / INTERLINEAR:

וּתְבוֹא אֶל-חַמּוֹתָהּ וּתֹאמֶר מִי-אַתְּ בְּתוּרִי וּתְגַדְלֶהָ אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר
all that [obj.] and she told her my daughter who are you and she said to her mother-in-law and she came
עָשָׂה-לָּהּ הָאִישׁ:
the man (he) did to her

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB]:

And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, “How did it go, my daughter?” And she told her all that the man had done for her.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, “How did it go, my daughter?” And she told her all that the man had done for her.

וּתְבוֹא אֶל-חַמּוֹתָהּ וּתֹאמֶר מִי-אַתְּ בְּתוּרִי וּתְגַדְלֶהָ אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה-לָּהּ הָאִישׁ:

The KJV confuses the meaning of the verse by over-literalizing the translation to: "she said, Who art thou, my daughter?" This was the only major translation that renders this part of the text this way.

The context indicates that this is a question related to the event, not the person. Cf. ESV "How did you fare, my daughter?" As before, she calls Ruth my daughter (v. 1; 2:2; cf. 1:11–13; 3:18).

Note again the textual issue in v. 15 ("he went into the city" is preferred) as well as the overall context of what the 'man had done for her.'

One may wonder if Ruth and Boaz got much sleep that evening, which also begs the question as to how much sleep Naomi got! After all, she was the one who set the plan in motion and she must have wondered how it was all going to go (risky righteousness).

What had he done for her?

3:17 EXEGESIS

HEBREW TEXT / INTERLINEAR:

וַתֹּאמֶר שֵׁשׁ־הַשְּׁעָרִים הָאֵלֶּה נָתַן לִי כִּי אָמַר אֶל־תְּבוֹאִי רֵיקָם
empty handed you shall not go he said for to me he gave these the six measures of barley and she said
אֶל־חַמּוֹתָי:
to your mother-in-law

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB]:

And she said, “These six *measures* of barley he gave to me, for he said, ‘Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

And she said, “These six *measures* of barley he gave to me, for he said, ‘Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”

וַתֹּאמֶר שֵׁשׁ־הַשְּׁעָרִים הָאֵלֶּה נָתַן לִי כִּי אָמַר אֶל־תְּבוֹאִי רֵיקָם אֶל־חַמּוֹתָי:

While the words attributed to Boaz are not recorded in v. 15 there's no reason to think that Ruth was making them up. Cf. Sasson, as cited by Bush, "who sees merit in the suggestion that Ruth made up the statement" in order to make Boaz look good in light of the possibility that Naomi may be losing her daughter-in-law to him. [Bush, 185]

It's fitting that the reader see this aspect first revealed directly to Naomi.

Prior to this one may wonder why Boaz was being so generous? Was it simply his nature? Was it a measure of his good will? Or was it a cover for Ruth's having been there all night? He was being generous, but he was also (primarily) looking out for Naomi.

Daniel Block asks:

But why should Boaz be interested in Ruth's mother-in-law at this point? Several answers may be proposed.

First, his interest in Naomi may derive from his understanding of the custom of the *gō'el*. Boaz's kinship obligations are based on his relationship with Naomi rather than Ruth. Not only is Ruth a Moabite woman; in 2:1 the narrator had specifically noted that Boaz was related to Elimelech, who is Naomi's deceased husband, rather than Mahlon, Ruth's husband. This interpretation will be reinforced in chap. 4, where the issue before

the court is primarily the disposition of land that belongs “to our brother Elimelech” (4:3). Only at the end does Boaz bring Mahlon into the picture (4:9–10). Furthermore, from a literary point of view, this scene will be the last in which Ruth is portrayed as a primary character. Once she has gotten Boaz to agree to fulfill his kinship-redeemer obligations, her role in the plot is finished.

Second, Boaz may have sent this gift as an expression of appreciation for Naomi’s initiative in proposing the scheme that has gotten them to this point. She was the one who had encouraged Ruth to end her mourning and put on normal garments as a signal of her readiness to resume normal life, including making herself available for marriage. She was the one who had devised the scheme to bring Boaz and Ruth together and to have Ruth put the issue of his kinship obligations directly before Boaz. In short she was the mastermind behind the entire plot.

Third, Boaz may have sent this gift to Naomi as a sign of good faith, his determination to carry through with his promise to try to gain the right to Ruth, and if he could not, to see that the primary kinsman-redeemer would marry her. In fact, since Naomi was Ruth’s legal guardian (2:1), he may even have intended the grain as a down payment of the *mōhar*, the bride price paid at the time of betrothal. The *mōhar* was often given by the groom at the time of betrothal, not as a purchase price (women were not commodities to be bought and sold) but as a promise to prepare for the wedding in good faith and a pledge for the good behavior of the groom toward the bride in the meantime.

Naomi’s response in v. 18 indicates that this is how she accepted it. . . . [TAB: see notes there/below] [Block, D. I. (1999). Vol. 6: Judges, Ruth. The New American Commentary (700–701). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.]

Note also, that the gift was consideration to Naomi, that she would be taken care of. Naomi was the one who "went away full and came back empty" (as she says in 1:21). God uses others to encourage us during our times of despair. No one likes someone who pours gas on your discouragement. We are to build one another up, not tear one another down. We are to defer to one another, not stand in judgment over one another. Cf. the lepers who Jesus healed and the one who gave thanks.

3:18 EXEGESIS

HEBREW TEXT / INTERLINEAR:

וְתֹאמֶר שְׁבִי בְתִי עַד אֲשֶׁר תִּדְעִין אֵיךְ יִפֹּל דָּבָר כִּי לֹא יִשְׁקֹט הָאִישׁ
the man he will rest not for the matter it shall turn out how you know that until my daughter stay and he said
כִּי־אִם־כָּלָה הַדָּבָר הַיּוֹם:
the day the matter but if he has finished

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB]:

Then she said, “Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today.”

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Then she said, “Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today.”

וְתֹאמֶר שְׁבִי בְתִי עַד אֲשֶׁר תִּדְעִין אֵיךְ יִפֹּל דָּבָר כִּי לֹא יִשְׁקֹט הָאִישׁ כִּי־אִם־כָּלָה הַדָּבָר הַיּוֹם:

This verse serves as a hinge to chapter 4. "Be patient" or "wait" translates what is literally in Hebrew "sit down," with emphasis upon being quiet and unworried. [so Waard, J. d., & Nida, E. A. (1991). A translator's handbook on the book of Ruth (2nd ed.). UBS Handbook Series (59). New York: United Bible Societies]

She advises Ruth to relax and wait to see how the matter will turn out. The verb that the NIV renders "Wait" is *yāšab*, which normally means "to sit, to dwell," but in this context in our idiom it means "to sit tight." Naomi's advice here is the opposite of what she had said at the beginning of the chapter. There she had called Ruth to action: to wash, anoint herself with perfume, put on her clothes, go down to the threshing floor, watch where Boaz lies down, approach him and uncover his legs, and then listen to what he tells her to do. Now that Ruth has done her part, she may sit down and wait to see what will happen next. The expression *'ēk yippōl dābār*, literally "how the matter will fall," is an idiomatic expression for "how things will turn out." Again this is not a resignation to chance or fate in the abstract. In the statement we recognize a note of confidence in the hidden hand of God, who will direct affairs to the proper conclusion. But Naomi hereby also expresses great confidence in Boaz. Ruth may sit back and relax, but she knows Boaz will not. Indeed he will not rest (*šāqat*) unless the matter is brought to a conclusion, today!

With this statement the curtain falls on Act 3. All the characters have played their roles perfectly. Naomi has taken the initiative and gotten the ball rolling, Ruth has carried out her delicate and daring scheme, and Boaz has responded right on cue. The reader as witness to the

drama waits with Ruth to see “how the matter will fall.” [Block]

Risky righteousness is patient? Cf. Wiersbe's comment below:

It is “through faith and patience” that we inherit the promises (Heb. 6:12; 10:36). Since Naomi and Ruth believed that Boaz would accomplish what he said he would do, they waited patiently until they received the good news that Ruth would be a bride. “Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it” (Ps. 37:5).

I confess that waiting is one of the most difficult things for me to do, whether it’s waiting for a table at a restaurant or waiting for a delayed flight to take off. I’m an activist by nature, and I like to see things happen on time. Perhaps that’s why the Lord has often arranged for me to wait. During those times, three phrases from Scripture have encouraged me: “Sit still” (Ruth 3:18, KJV), “Stand still” (Ex. 14:13, KJV), and “Be still” (Ps. 46:10, KJV).

“Sit still” was Naomi’s counsel to Ruth, and wise counsel it was. Ruth would have accomplished nothing by following Boaz around Bethlehem, trying to help him keep his promises. “Their strength is to sit still” (Isa. 30:7, dW.). Our human nature gets nervous and wants to help God out; and when we try, we only make matters worse.

“Stand still” was the command of Moses to the people of Israel when the Egyptian army was pursuing them. There was no need to panic, for God had the situation well in hand. Then the Lord commanded the people to “go forward” (Ex. 14:15), and He led them safely through the sea. There is a time to stand and a time to march, and we must be alert to know which one God wants us to do.

“Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10, KJV) is a wonderful antidote for a restless spirit. The Hebrew word translated “be still” means “take your hands off, relax.” It’s so easy for us to get impatient with the Lord and start meddling in matters that we ought to leave alone. He is God, and His hands can accomplish the impossible. Our hands may get in the way and make matters worse.

Boaz was busy working for Ruth, and Naomi was confident that he wouldn’t rest until he had settled the matter. “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform [complete] it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6, KJV). It encourages my heart to know that Jesus Christ is working unceasingly for His people as He intercedes in heaven (Heb. 8:34), and that He is working in us, seeking to conform us to His perfect will (13:20–21; Phil. 2:12–13).

Have you put yourself at the feet of the Lord of the Harvest, and are you trusting Him to work? One evidence of your trust will be your willingness to sit still and let Him have His way. [Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Be Committed*. “Be” Commentary Series (48–49). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.]

Matthew Henry:

Much more reason have good Christians to be careful for nothing, but cast their care on God, because he has promised to care for them: and what need have we to care if he do? Sit still, and see how the matter will fall, for the Lord will perfect that which concerns thee, and will make it

to work for good to thee, Ps. 37:4, 5; 138:8. Your strength is to sit still, Isa. 30:7. [Henry, M. (1994). Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: Complete and unabridged in one volume (Ru 3:14–18). Peabody: Hendrickson.]

And . . . if you like Ruth and you like Naomi and the things they say, I have to sadly inform you that these words are the last that they speak in the entire book. They step aside as we see how things conclude in chapter 4.

Boaz clearly now takes center stage and the imminence of his action is indicated both by Naomi's assertion and by the fact that this act ends differently from the two preceding ones. Our narrator concluded the first act with a pointed allusion to the barley harvest (1:22b), subtly suggesting the end of famine and emptiness. At the end of the second act, he brought all progress in the story to a halt by noting that, when the harvest was over, Ruth still lived with her mother-in-law (2:23b) signaling the return of famine and emptiness. But this act concludes with no such narrative statement (Trible, 187). Our narrator leaves ringing in our ears only Naomi's supremely confident words that Boaz will not rest this day unless the matter is settled. Boaz's symbolic gift of grain indicated to Naomi that he would act and, by centering all attention on this gift and the reason for it in Ruth's report of the night's events, the narrator signals to us that his story now rushes irrevocably toward resolution. [Bush, 187]