

Ruth 1:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

Analysis

The chapter concludes with summary and transition: **"So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest."** The narrator carefully identifies Ruth as "the Moabitess" (ha-Moaviyah, מוֹאָבִיָּה), emphasizing her foreign origin. This ethnic marker appears throughout Ruth, reminding readers of the extraordinary nature of her inclusion despite Deuteronomy 23:3-6's prohibition.

The phrase "her daughter in law" (kallatah, כַּלָּתָהּ) establishes Ruth's relationship to Naomi while "with her" emphasizes their partnership. The narrator refuses to let Ruth disappear into Naomi's shadow—she is consistently identified and honored despite her foreign status. The repetition "returned... which returned" underscores the journey's completion and Ruth's commitment—she has fully left Moab for Israel.

The chronological notation "in the beginning of barley harvest" provides crucial temporal context. Barley harvest in Judah occurred in late April/early May, the first grain harvest of the season. This timing is providentially significant—they arrive when food is available and the gleaning laws (Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19-22) provide means for poor widows to gather food. The narrative will immediately move to Ruth's gleaning in Boaz's field, demonstrating

how God's law and providence work together to provide for vulnerable members of society.

Historical Context

Barley harvest marked the beginning of agricultural season in ancient Israel, preceding wheat harvest by about two weeks. The grain harvest period lasted approximately seven weeks from Passover to Pentecost (Feast of Weeks). This was a time of community celebration and religious festivals, as Israel thanked God for His provision. The harvest season also created high labor demand, making it socially acceptable for poor women like Ruth to glean in fields.

The gleaning laws were part of Israel's social safety net, commanded by God to provide for widows, orphans, sojourners, and the poor. Farmers were forbidden to harvest corners of fields or gather grain that fell during harvesting—these remained for vulnerable people to collect. This system balanced private property rights with communal responsibility, demonstrating covenant community's care for its weakest members. Ruth's gleaning in chapter 2 isn't charity but her exercising legal rights God established.

The narrative's careful chronological marking suggests historical precision and theological significance. Ruth and Naomi arrive at precisely the right time for provision—too early and there would be no food, too late and harvest would be finished. This "coincidental" timing reveals divine providence orchestrating circumstances. The same sovereignty governing international affairs (raising up Cyrus, preserving Israel through exile) attends to two widows' practical needs.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does the repeated identification of Ruth as "the Moabitess" teach about how God works through unlikely people whom others might dismiss or exclude?
2. How does the providential timing of their arrival at harvest season demonstrate God's care for practical needs even when we can't perceive His provision?
3. In what ways does this verse's emphasis on Ruth's presence challenge Naomi's claim to have returned "empty"?

Interlinear Text

הָשָׁבָה	נָעֻמַּי	וְרוּת	הַמֹּאבִּית	כַּלְתָּהּ	עִמָּה
returned	So Naomi	and Ruth	the Moabitess	her daughter in law	H5973
H7725	H5281	H7327	H4125	H3618	
הָשָׁבָה	מִמֶּשֶׁד־י	מוֹאָב	וְהֵמָּה	בָּאוּ	בְּיָתָהּ
returned	out of the country	of Moab	H1992	and they came	H0
H7725	H7704	H4124		H935	
לְחֵם	בְּתֵחֶלֶת	קֹצֵץ יֵר	שְׁעָרִים:		
to Bethlehem	in the beginning	harvest	of barley		
H1035	H8462	H7105	H8184		

Additional Cross-References

Ruth 2:23 (Word): So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law.