

# Zera Shimshon

by Rabbi Shimshon Chaim Nachmani zt"l

Published Mantua 1778\*

## Chapter LVI: Ruth

### Essay 9. Observing laws against seclusion

“Ruth the Moabite said, ‘He even told me, “Stay close by my servants until all my harvest is finished.”’” And Naomi answered her daughter-in-law Ruth, “It is best, my daughter, that you go out with his maidservants, and not be annoyed in some other field.”

- Ruth 2:21–22

**פסוק** "טוב בתי כי תצאי עם-נערוֹתיו ולא יפגעוֹ-בך בשדה אחר". הקשה האלשיך כי מאמרה "כי תצאי" יראה שנועמי חוששת על היציאה לשדה או משדה אל שדה, ומאמרה "ולא יפגעוֹ-בך בשדה אחר" יראה כי על מקום השדה היה החשש. ועוד יש לדקדק על מאי דאמרה "טוב בתי" וכו', שאם נאמר שכלפי מה שאמרה רות "גם כִּי-אמר אלי עם-הנערים אֲשֶׁר-לי תדבקין", חוץ ממה שפירשנו לעיל בסמוך היא השיבה שיותר טוב הוא ללכת עם הנערות ולא עם הנערים, אם כן קשה על בעז למה אמר "הנערים" ולא אמר "הנערות".

There is a verse: **“It is best, my daughter, that you go out with his maidservants, and not be annoyed in some other field.”** The Alshich<sup>1</sup> questions that by saying **“that you go out with the maidservants”** shows fear that Naomi is worried about Ruth going out to the field, or from field to field. By saying, **“and not be annoyed in some other field,”** shows fear of worry about the place of the field.

We should also check why she said, **“It is best, my daughter.”** If this was said in response to what Ruth said, **“He even told me, ‘Stay close by my servants,’”** aside from what we explained above in the adjoining essay 8, she answered that it would be better to go with the maidservants than the servants. If so, it is difficult to understand why Boaz said **“servants”** and he didn’t say **“maidservants.”**

ויש לומר דבאבו העזר (סימן כ"ב) כתבו השלחן ערוך ונהגה דבית שפתחו פתוח לרשות הרבים אין חשש להתייחד שם [עם] ערוה. ועוד שם דאשה אחת לא תת[ני] חד אפילו עם אנשים הרבה עד שתהיה אשתו של אחד מהם שם, ויש אומרים דאשה אחת מתנייחדת עם שני אנשים פשרים, אבל אם הם פרוצים אפילו עם עשרה אסור, וכל זה בעיר, אבל בשדה, או בלילה אפילו בעיר בעיניו שלוש אפילו בפשרים, נשים הרבה עם אנשים הרבה אין חוששין כלל ליחוד עכ"ל.

It can be said that in Even haEzer (siman 22, se'if 9), the Shulchan Aruch and the Rema’s gloss write that for **“A house whose door is open to the public domain, there is no concern for seclusion there with an *ervah* [someone with whom sexual relations are forbidden].”**

\* English translation: Copyright © 2023 by Charles S. Stein. Additional essays at <https://www.zstorah.com>

<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Moshe Alshich (1508–1593), prominent rabbi, preacher, and Biblical commentator. Born in 1508 in the Ottoman Empire, he later moved to Safed where he became a student of Rabbi Joseph Caro.

Also there, we read:

**One woman may not be in seclusion even with many men, unless the wife of one of the men is present.** And similarly, one man may not be in seclusion even with many women. [Gloss:] **And there are those who say that a woman may seclude herself with two “kosher” men** [i.e., of fit morals] when in-town. And men are to be considered as good men, generally. **But if they are immoral, it’s forbidden to be secluded even with ten of them. And all this [applies] when in-town. However, in the field, or during the night even in-town, three men are required to be there, even if they are “kosher.”** And there are those who permit one man with many women, if his business is not [primarily] involved with women.

**If there were many women with many men, we’re not concerned about seclusion.** If the men were outside and the women inside, or the men inside and the women outside, and a woman separated to be among the men, or one man to be among the women, they are forbidden due to seclusion.

- Shulchan Aruch, Even haEzer, siman 22, se’if 5 and 6

ובנה יובנו הפסוקים, בעז אמר לרות "עם־הנערים אשר־לי תדבקין", ודניק לומר "אשר־לי" לפי שהם פשרים, פנהש אומרים דסבירא להו דאשה מתניחדת עם שנים או שלושה אנשים פשרים. אבל נעמי אמרה לה יותר טוב להחמיר פסבירא הראשונה דאשה לא תתיחד אפילו עם אנשים הרבה עד שתהיה אשתו וכו'.

**By this, the verses will be understood. Boaz said to Ruth, “stay close by my servants,” and he was precise to say “my,” because they were kosher, as there are those who said that they held that a woman could be secluded with two or three kosher men. But Naomi said to [Ruth] that it’s better to be strict, as with the first opinion that a woman should not be secluded, even with many men, unless the wife of one of the men is present.**

ולכן אמרה לה "טוב בתי כי תצאי עם־נערו־תיו", ואפילו בעת היציאה שהיא מקום מעבר לרבים שהיא רשות הרבים ששם בנדאי אין יחוד. יותר טוב לצאת עם נערו־תיו, כדי שלא תבואי לישראל עם הנערים בשדה, שאפילו שהם שלושה יותר ואפילו שהם פשרים יש לחוש פן ילכו כלם למקום אחר ותשארי את עם אינה נער לבדו, או שתלכי את להשתין ולהפנות ויבא שם אחד מהם ויפגעו בך. אבל כשתהיה תמיד עם הנערו־ת אז אין שום חשש, לפי שנשים הרבה עם אנשים הרבה אין לחוש כלל.

**Therefore, [Naomi] said to [Ruth], “It is best, my daughter, that you go out with his maidservants,” and even at the time of going out, which is through a public thoroughfare, which is the public domain, where there certainly will not be seclusion. It is better to go out with his maidservants, so that you won’t come to remain with the servants in the field. Even if they are three or more, and even if they are kosher, there is a fear lest all but one of them leave for another place and you remain alone with some young man. Or another concern is that you’ll go to turn away from the group to relieve yourself and one of the men will come there to you and harm you. But when you’ll always be with maidservants, then there is no worry, because when many women are with many men, there is no reason to worry at all.**

\* \* \*