

# Ruth 3

New Living Translation Charles Dailey © 2017 CPS  
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## Introduction:

1. The key characters in chapters one and two are Naomi who moved to Moab and Ruth, her daughter-in-law who returned to Bethlehem with Naomi.
2. Naomi is convinced that the Lord is punishing her for moving because of the death of her husband and two sons. However, she still serves the Lord and is training Ruth to worship and obey God, too.
3. The time was about 1322 B.C.
4. While the *book* is not mentioned directly in the New Testament, the *person* of Ruth is, indicating that the story has a place in the canon of Scripture.
5. The two widows are taking advantage of the provision in the Law of Moses that allows the poor to pick up grain in the fields that is left by the reapers as they gather the crop.
6. Ruth has “happened” to select the field of wealthy Boaz to glean. Boaz has noticed her and smoothed the way for her to take home a large quantity of grain.
7. Ruth shared this with her mother-in-law and Naomi has urged her to remain in the same field for the duration of the harvest.

**(3:1) One day Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, it's time that I found a permanent home for you, so that you will be provided for.**

- *The Complete Jewish Bible* reads here in 3:1:

**My daughter, I should be seeking security for you; so that things will go well with you.**

The contract of marriage included social and financial security.

- It is interesting that **Naomi** took the role of securing the future of **Ruth**. She may have realized that **Ruth** would not know how to secure a husband using local practices.
- Naomi had earlier prayed for a husband for **Ruth** and Orpah:

**But on the way, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back to your mothers' homes. And may the LORD reward you for your kindness to your husbands and to me. May the LORD bless you with the security of another marriage." Then she kissed them good-bye, and they all broke down and wept.** Ruth 1:8-9

- It was God's intention that the property ownership in Israel always remain within whatever family it had been assigned to. But when the land owner dies without children, what then? His brother is to marry and have a child with the widow of the deceased and that child will inherit the family land and that child will be considered to be the child of the deceased, not of the brother-in-law. This preserves the family line of the deceased land owner. The penalty for a man refusing the levirate responsibilities included public disgrace. Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

But there were times when the levirate requirement did not fit the need, as in the case of Ruth. She had no

brother-in-law. So the nation Israel had devised a broader system, but without penalties attached.

It was, in a sense, voluntary. And it comes into use in the story of Ruth. Some clan members were designated as *redeemers* and Boaz was among them. Their task was to keep the property within the respective families.

**(2) Boaz is a close relative of ours, and he's been very kind by letting you gather grain with his young women. Tonight he will be winnowing barley at the threshing floor.**

- Naomi thinks about a marriage between **Boaz** and Ruth. A plan is emerging in her brain. Her matchmaker mentality has shifted into full speed.
- Boaz will be **winnowing** grain tonight while the wind is blowing. So he will stay **at the threshing floor**. The desert winds were always quite strong during the afternoon at that time of year. But as the sun moved downward toward the horizon, the breeze became gentle. By dark it became calm. Thus it wasn't truly nighttime that Naomi was speaking of but rather dusk when Boaz was **winnowing**. The grain was thrown into the air with winnowing fans. **Threshing floors** were level places in the field which had been trodden smooth. The surface was hard. Grain was thrown onto the ground and animals walked over it and crushed out the grains from the head of the stalks. A wooden fork was used to throw this mixture of chaff and grain into the air. The wind blew away the chaff and the grain settled to the ground.



**(3) Now do as I tell you -- take a bath and put on perfume and dress in your nicest clothes. Then go to the threshing floor, but don't let Boaz see you until he has finished eating and drinking.**

- Ruth was to **bathe**, put on **perfume** and some good clothes and go to **the threshing floor**. This way, **Boaz** would not observe Ruth as a stinky foreign woman.
- She was to keep out of sight until the evening meal was over. Being from another culture, these procedures were new to Ruth.

**(4) Be sure to notice where he lies down; then go and uncover his feet and lie down there. He will tell you what to do."**

- Little is known about a suitor uncovering the feet of another, but the text shows that it was a request for marriage. If Boaz accepted, he would explain the next legal steps to marriage.
- Sadly, this custom has been explained by some commentators as asking for sex, but that has no basis in the story. This Hebrew word for feet (*margeloth*) is used only one other time in Daniel 10. There is another word for feet (*regel*) used elsewhere, perhaps it can be used figuratively, but not this one. *Feet* is not a proxy word for *genitals*.
- To accuse Ruth and Boaz of engaging in sexual activities that are strictly forbidden by the Laws of Moses would be completely inconsistent with all we have learned about them, and counter to the entire purpose and nature of the story.

(5) "I will do everything you say," Ruth replied. (6) So she went down to the threshing floor that night and followed the instructions of her mother-in-law.

- **Ruth** had listened carefully and agreed to follow Naomi's instructions.

(7) After Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he lay down at the far end of the pile of grain and went to sleep. Then Ruth came quietly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

- Tired and relaxed, **Boaz** located himself at the **end of the pile** of grain undoubtedly to make sure no one came to help themselves to the product of his day's work; there he fell **asleep**. Consider this point from 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel:

**One day news came to David that the Philistines were at Keilah stealing grain from the threshing floors.** 1 Samuel 23:1

This Scripture shows that stealing grain happened at a later date in Israel's history.

- But those **uncovered** and cold **feet** would have caused **Boaz** to **sleep** more lightly. **Ruth** was following the instructions of Naomi.
- **David Guzik** writes:

Ruth came to claim a right. Boaz was her *goel*, her kinsman-redeemer, and she had the right to expect him to marry her and raise up a family to perpetuate the name of Elimelech. But Naomi wisely counseled Ruth to not come as a victim demanding her rights, but as a humble servant, trusting in the goodness of

her kinsman-redeemer. She said to Boaz, "I respect you, I trust you, and I put my fate in your hands."

- **Willard W. Winter** sums up Naomi's involvement:

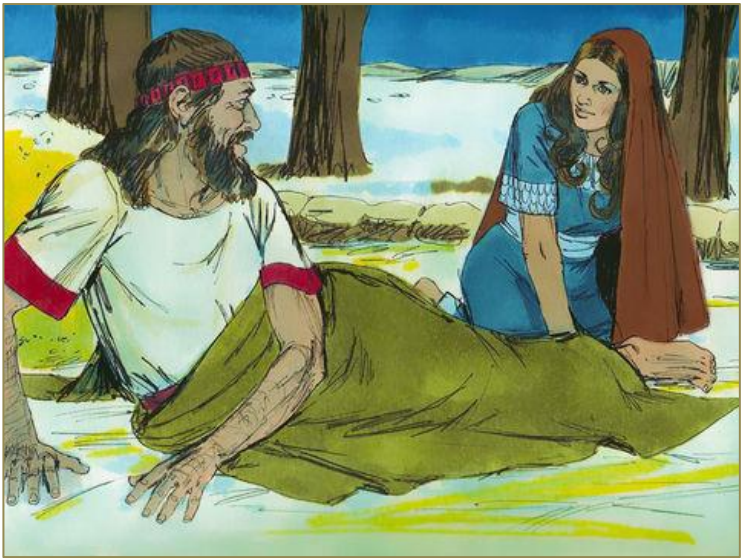
Naomi did everything she could to guide her daughter-in-law in finding a happy life among God's chosen people. By Naomi's good grace, Ruth not only found a place to glean, but eventually was enabled to find an honorable husband. Every young woman needs a mother-in-law like Naomi.

**(8) Around midnight Boaz suddenly woke up and turned over. He was surprised to find a woman lying at his feet! (9) "Who are you?" he asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she replied. "Spread the corner of your covering over me, for you are my family redeemer."**

- When he **woke up**, he wanted to know **who** was there. He was positioned to thwart thieves and he was trying to determine the identity of the person who was disturbing him. It was a **woman!**
- She was **Ruth**, his **servant**, and she asked **Boaz** to marry her (**spread your robe over your handmaid** in the *Complete Jewish Bible*) because he was a **redeemer** in the clan of Elimelech. She was saying, "I am a widow, take me as your wife."
- **Tom Bradford** says,

... what man would go to bed alone, only to be startled awake by a lovely young woman lying next to him, and not be a little excited by the situation? If you're an older man like Boaz and this young thing sneaks into your bed, crawls under your blanket and

essentially proposes marriage, well, that'll get your attention for sure. But it seems that the author of this story intends it to be this way; after all, Ruth is trying to entice Boaz to marry her and by all accounts she is quite beautiful not only in character but in appearance. So what could be more normal than for her to make use of these natural gifts in a way that interests men?



**(10) "The LORD bless you, my daughter!" Boaz exclaimed. "You are showing even more family loyalty now than you did before, for you have not gone after a younger man, whether rich or poor.**

- **Boaz**, in the middle of the night, speaks a **blessing** on Ruth because she could have married someone **younger**, but that would not have solved the problems for Naomi. This choice has the potential of caring for Naomi the rest of her days.

- **Boaz** viewed Ruth as a very young person. Here are notes from Chapter 2, verse 5:

The Hebrew word points more to a *very young lady*, not a *married* lady. More like a girl as in the *Complete Jewish Bible*. She appeared very young to him. He wondered that her parents had let her come out to work!

- Note also that all the men in the family of Naomi have died. There is no one to carry on the family name and consequently to inherit the family property. A son was needed.

**(11) Now don't worry about a thing, my daughter. I will do what is necessary, for everyone in town knows you are a virtuous woman.**

- Ruth was to have no **fear**. What she did was bold, but successful. Boaz didn't chide or threaten her. He is still calling her **daughter**.
- The people of town knew that she was a **virtuous woman**. He would not encounter opposition from the community of Bethlehem for marrying a young Moabite lady.
- Ruth had a reputation as a **woman** of excellence. Proverbs 31:10 begins the description of the excellent woman. Ruth's reputation was raising her from a poor homeless widow to a secure wife and, eventually, to a mother in Israel.

**(12) But while it's true that I am one of your family redeemers, there is another man who is more closely related to you than I am.**



- Boaz was *second in line* to marry Ruth. There was a relative closer who could be a **redeemer**. Boaz was well acquainted with both the Scriptures and his greater family structure. Family was very important to God-fearing people.
- It was possible that Boaz could have claimed Ruth and insisted that she marry him, but he had kept his distance, giving her room to approach him. This way he could keep the national practice perfectly by allowing the nearer kin the right of refusal.

**(13) Stay here tonight, and in the morning I will talk to him. If he is willing to redeem you, very well. Let him marry you. But if he is not willing, then as surely as the LORD lives, I will redeem you myself! Now lie down here until morning."**

- Boaz didn't send her away in the unsafe darkness but invited her to remain until the light when travel was safer. Then he would get right on to this request for **marriage**. Another man had the right before Boaz and that had to be check out.

**(14) So Ruth lay at Boaz's feet until the morning, but she got up before it was light enough for people to recognize each other. For Boaz had said, "No one must know that a woman was here at the threshing floor."**

- **Boaz** made it clear no one was to **know** she had been at the **threshing floor**.
- **Ruth** had made a wise choice for herself. She chose a man of rare kindness. He was a man with a keen sense of duty, determined purity, and had a proper fear and respect for His God. He treated Ruth with tenderness and respect.

**(15) Then Boaz said to her, "Bring your cloak and spread it out." He measured six scoops of barley into the cloak and placed it on her back. Then he returned to the town.**

- **Boaz** then rewarded Ruth with six measures of **barley**, so the **barley** harvest was still on. She didn't have to work that day!
- **Placed it on her back.** It is possible that he placed the load on her head. It was, and still is, common for ladies in that part of the world to carry heavy loads on their heads, thus using the strength of their skeleton. I recall a lady in Africa carrying three suitcases on her head. Someone else had probably loaded them for her.
- Who went to **town**? The *New Living* translators believe that it was Boaz, but many others believe that Ruth went to **town**. *Amplified, English Standard Version, King James Version, New American Standard Bible* and *New King James Version*, among others, believe that **Ruth** went to **town**.

**(16) When Ruth went back to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, "What happened, my daughter?" Ruth told Naomi everything Boaz had done for her, (17) and she added, "He gave me these six scoops of barley and said, 'Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"**

- **Naomi** probably didn't sleep that night wondering and praying for **Ruth**. It was so natural to **ask** how her plan was going.
- **Ruth** gave a complete rehearsal. The evidence for her story was in the **barley** that she carried.

**(18) Then Naomi said to her, "Just be patient, my daughter, until we hear what happens. The man won't rest until he has settled things today."**

- The barley was a sign of good faith from Boaz so **Naomi** told Ruth to just **be patient** and stay at home, because Boaz wouldn't rest until this whole matter was solved. Ruth would be redeemed by the senior redeemer, or if he didn't exercise his option, Boaz would marry her. Either way, Ruth was about to have a new husband and **Naomi** would have a desperately needed heir for her deceased husband, Elimelech.

**Notice that Boaz was like Christ:**

1. He had the will to redeem.
2. He had the right to redeem.
3. He had the power to redeem.