
Ruth 3

Ruth 3:1–18

Ruth Makes the First Move on Boaz

Outline of Chapter 3:

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Introduction: In Ruth 3, Naomi begins to think long term with respect to Ruth and suggests that she offer herself to Boaz, as his wife, and for him to redeem her, and the land of her husband. The barley harvest has been completed and Boaz has threshed and sifted his grain. Because of that—because of all the work that he has done—Boaz sleeps outside next to the finished product prior to securing it in containers. Naomi sends Ruth to sleep at his feet, trusting his integrity at this point (which was apparently well-known in Bethlehem). We will see that Boaz certainly had that interest in Ruth as well; however, Boaz was aware of another man who was a closer relative to Naomi, and who was thus qualified to be a redeemer. Because of this, and because of his personal integrity, Boaz will not pursue this relationship until the closer relative is given a chance to marry Ruth and redeem her property by marriage.

One of the interesting implications of this chapter is that Boaz is significantly older than Ruth. We may also infer that she is quite attractive and that, although Boaz saw that Ruth was taken care of and protected, he pursued their relationship no further, probably due to the disparity in their ages. That night, when Boaz is awoken to find Ruth sleeping at his feet, his great integrity also comes into play. He does not take advantage of the situation and he sends Ruth back home before it is light, so that her reputation is not damaged. In the midst of the period of time when Israel was at a low point, here we have two people with great personal integrity. And note that God brings them together.

Naomi's Instructions to Ruth

Slavishly literal:

And so said to her, Naomi, her mother-in-law, "My daughter, should I not seek for you a rest which would be well for you?"

Ruth
3:1

Moderately literal:

Later, Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek a place of rest for you, where it would be good for you?"

Later, Naomi, the mother-in-law, said to Ruth, "My daughter, should I not seek a place of rest for you where it would be good for you?"

There is no indication as to the time period which has passed since the previous chapter, whether it was simply a season or a couple of years. It would be reasonable to suppose that the barley harvest is over, and it is simply a month or so later.

What Naomi asks is *should I not* and then we have the Piel imperfect of *bâqash* (בָּקַשׁ) [pronounced *baw-KAHSH*], which means *to seek, to search, to desire*. This verb is not found in the Qal. Strong's #1245 BDB #134. What Naomi asks that she should seek after on behalf of Ruth is the masculine singular of *mânôwach* (מְנוּחָה) [pronounced *maw-NOH-wahkh*], which means *rest, a condition or state of rest, a place of rest*. Strong's #4494 BDB #629. The Bible speaks a great deal of *rest*, and it is all interrelated. When God had created and then restored the earth, he rested, not because He was tired, but because He had accomplished everything (Gen. 2:1–2). God then set this seventh day aside from all the others for man to rest as a memorial to God's

accomplished work (Gen. 2:3). Jesus Himself calls to us to enter into His rest, which is a rest from our works: **“Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”** (Matt. 11:28). The writer of Hebrews also calls upon the readers of his letter to rest from their works and come to God through Christ: **There remains, therefore, a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from his. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one fall through a similar act of disobedience** (Heb. 4:9–11). In a similar way, Naomi is suggesting that she will find Ruth rest in Boaz.

This is followed by the relative pronoun and the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *yāṭaʿ* (יָטַע) [pronounced *yaw-TAʹV*], which means *to be good, well, to be pleasing, to do good, to deal well, to make glad, to make a thing good*. Strong’s #3190 BDB #405.

The structure of this question is what is known as a negative affirmation. It is a question stated in the negative which elicits a strong positive response. It is hypothetical, meaning that Naomi is not actually expecting Ruth to verbally respond to her question. What Ruth is doing is very hard work in order to survive and Naomi is thinking of their future as a mother and daughter-in-law. There is no stability or future in the lives of Ruth and Naomi. As has been in times before, women, in general, depended upon the protection and the provision of men. Although Naomi does not come out and say this directly, she is suggesting that she find a man for Ruth so that Ruth does not spend the rest of her life continually scrounging to make ends meet by doing such things as gleaning a field after the harvesters. There is nothing more in their futures but that.

Back in Ruth 1:11, we studied the concept of a Levirate marriage, which was an unusual law, partially based upon custom, and added into Law by Moses. Moses taught that if a young man died, having not yet impregnated his wife, that a near relative, usually his brother, would be called upon to marry and impregnate his widow, and that the first-born would be raised up as if he were the son of the deceased husband (Deut. 25:5–9). Although Moses uses the term *brother*, in the Hebrew, *brother* referred to any relative. If the brother did not want to marry this woman, he had to allow himself to be publically humiliated by her, as he publically humiliated her by not marrying her.¹ A further requirement of Scripture was for the *brother* (the near relative) to live with widow and the husband who dies (Deut. 25:5). That’s not exactly what we have here; but what we will have is the spirit of the Law fulfilled.

McGee: *So you can see, here is an unusual law which put a childless widow in a most unique position. It changes her position altogether. She now can claim one of the brothers. In fact, that’s her duty to her dead husband. Well, frankly, I can well understand that this is something that tied the families together in that day. It made every member of the family interested in who brother Isaac was going out to see since the other brothers were always involved in a situation like that. This law was God’s provision. And there were two objectives He had in mind that are obvious here, and there may be others. The first is that He wanted to protect womanhood. You can understand that if her husband died and left her with a farm and a vineyard and a flock of sheep, she would have difficulty. So she could claim immediately a brother or the nearest kinsman, and he’d have to make this decision. The law was to protect womanhood. Now I’ve heard the criticism made that the Bible is a man’s book. Well, my friend, when anybody makes that statement, it is evident he hasn’t read the Book very carefully.*²

Naomi is aware of this law and suggests that Ruth press the issue with Boaz. Now, certainly she is not making this suggestion to Ruth from out of left field; Naomi realizes, along with quite a number of other people, that Boaz is quite smitten with Ruth. His respectable and almost aloof behavior was due to the disparity of their ages, as well as his own personal integrity, wherein he would not look to take advantage of Ruth’s poverty and needs. It was clear to Naomi how Ruth and Boaz felt about one another, even though they did not fully realize it.

The ownership of the land was a very personal thing. Some people try to point out that the Bible supports socialism and even communism, and they point to the Apostles and early disciples as *having everything in common*. Wrong. That was a particular time and a particular set of circumstances. In the Law, private ownership was extremely important. Not only did each family receive their own portion of land, but this was one of the provisions in the Law

¹ As McGee points out in *Ruth*, Thru the Bible Radio, ©1976 in La Verne, California, pp. 47–49, the entire family took a very close look at the woman that any of the sons considered for marriage, as such a choice had long term, familial repercussions.

² J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth*, Thru the Bible Radio, ©1976 in La Verne, California, p. 49.

to insure that that particular piece of land remained in the family forever. The Year of Jubilee, covered during the next verse, is another provision which kept the ownership of the land in individual hands (in fact, God was so particular about this, that, under the Law, even large corporations could not own great chunks of land in perpetuity—it eventually reverted back to the individual owners.

“And now, is not Boaz our kinsman [with] whom you were [with] his young women? Behold him scattering a threshing floor the barley the night.

Ruth
3:2

“And now, isn’t Boaz our relative, [with] whose maidservants you were? Observe [that] he will be winnowing barley [on the] threshing floor tonight.

“Now, isn’t Boaz our near relative, with whose maidservants you were? He will be winnowing his barley on the threshing floor this evening.

What Boaz is called here is *môda ʿath* (מֹדַא־אֶת) [pronounced *moh-DAH-gath*], which probably means *relative* and is often rendered *kinsman*. It is found only here and is the feminine version of the noun found only in Ruth 2:1 and Prov. 7:4. Strong’s #4130 BDB #396. What Naomi has in mind is a marriage between Boaz and Ruth in order to redeem the land which belongs to Ruth by marriage. When the family of Naomi left Bethlehem, it is Elimelech did not sell his inherited land, but retained it in his name. The father and his two sons obviously had a stake in the new land of Canaan. What we would have expected is for Elimelech, Naomi’s late husband, to have sold this land prior to leaving for Moab with his family. Had this land been sold to someone else, it could be redeemed by a near relative or it would have reverted back to the original family in the Year of Jubilee, which took place every 50 years (Lev. 25:8–15, 23–28). Essentially, when a person became poor, they sold their land, with the understanding that it was being sold for some portion of 50 years (it was really an extended lease). Now, let’s say this is a young man who, at age 20, sells off his inheritance of land and parties down with the cash. If he does not have enough money, that land stayed out of his hands for a portion of 50 years. He might be 40, 50 or even 70 before he gets his land back. If a person was middle-aged and sold his land, he may not ever get it back. However, the children of such a one was no so penalized. In the Year of Jubilee, this land reverted back to the original owner or to his children. By that time, his children might be in their 30’s or 40’s and they would get back their land without penalty.

Another option is either they or a relative could later, prior to the 50 years, come back and purchase the property back. They would not pay what they sold it for—it would be prorated over the period of time that it was used (Lev. 25:27); therefore, when the land was purchased back, it was purchased for less than what it was sold for originally. In any case, a relative could either purchase the land back or take over the land (in the Year of Jubilee) in the name of the deceased husband. In other words, we have two things going on here: we have the land which originally belonged to Elimelech, could have been sold prior to the family moving to Moab. Elimelech could have sold his land at a deep discount for traveling money. Then we would have had the problem of *to whom does this land revert?* Mahlon died, as did his brother, as did his father. The only person who can redeem, or purchase, the land is a relative. Furthermore, the Law requires that the relative raise up a child by Ruth in the name of Mahlon. Surprisingly enough, Elimelech maintained ownership of his property, even having moved to Moab. However, when his wife Naomi, and Ruth, his daughter-in-law, returned to Israel, they had no money and no way to cultivate this land which was theirs. In today’s world, there are many businesses which actually have great potential, but the people who own the business do not have the financial wherewithal to realize its potential. Therefore, they often must sell their business to another company which has the funds to move forward with the product and/or company. This was the position that Naomi was in—she owned some excellent land outside of Bethlehem through her husband, but did not have the funds to cause this land to realize its potential. She could not even afford to farm it and would have to sell it just to get by. I know exactly what this is like—I have owned very expensive comic books, hundreds of them, which today, would have been worth \$100–1000 each. It would have almost been enough to retire on. I sold some of them one month many years ago for enough money to get through that month and the next.³

³ I had sold the bulk of them in my youth for what appeared to be a great deal of money. Probably the least shrewd financial move of my life.

Let me add just one more thing: interestingly enough, we have no record of Israel ever celebrating the Year of Jubilee. This was a once in a lifetime celebration in which the God of Israel restored all things—it looks ahead to when God will restore Israel to their land forever and it appears as though Israel never celebrated this day.

What Boaz will be doing is the Qal active participle of *zârâh* (זָרָה) [pronounced *zaw-RAW*], which means *to scatter, to winnow*. Strong's #2219 BDB #279. Boaz will be taking the harvested grain and throwing it up into the air so that the breeze will catch the chaff and blow that away, leaving only the grain behind. Often, there is a breeze which comes in with the evening, and that is what Boaz would have been waiting for. Once he finished, he would go eat and drink with his workmen.

Now, almost all of the work has been done with regards to the harvest. Boaz is not just going to let the grain sit there overnight. He will sleep next to the harvested, threshed and sifted grain to protect his investment. Barnes: *This "mighty man of wealth" assists personally in the winnowing of his barley, which lies in a great heap on the floor...and sleeps in the open threshing-floor to protect his grain from depredation.*⁴

It is obvious that Naomi has been pondering these things for awhile. There is the unstated premise that she did have some reasonable understanding of the Law. A person who did not grasp the Law would not have realized that there were options available to her as a poor widow.

“And you have washed and you have anointed [yourself] and you have put on your clothes upon yourself and you have gone down [to] the threshing floor, [but] you will not be known to the man until a finishing of him to eat and to drink.

Ruth
3:3

“And you will wash and anoint [yourself], and you will put on yourself [a nice set of] clothes and you will go down to the threshing floor. You will not let yourself be discovered until he has finished eating and drinking.

“You will first wash and anoint yourself, and put on an exquisite outfit, and then you will go down to the threshing floor. You will remain hidden from him until after he has finished his evening meal.

Keep in mind that Ruth was recently widowed (it has been several months) and that she has been working out in the field all day for much of that day—whether in her mourning clothes or whatever she wore—it would not have been that attractive—particularly, not after a several months. While being symbolic, what Naomi is offering is simple common sense. Ruth has a tremendous inner beauty. However, there is nothing wrong with making the outside attractive as well. It will be clear, later on, that Boaz will not actually see what Ruth is wearing. However, they will be close enough so that he will be able to smell her.

Naomi uses a series of Qal perfect verbs, indicating completed action. Naomi states these things as if it is assumed that Ruth will do them. The perfect tense of completed action also indicates in which order things are done. The verbs in the perfect tense are done first, and then she goes down to the threshing floor. Also, these actions all relate to the salvation experience.

What she tells Ruth to do is the 2nd person feminine singular, Qal perfect of *râchats* (רָחַצְתְּ) [pronounced *raw-KAHTS*], which means *to wash, to bathe, to wash off*. Strong's #7364 BDB #934. Now, I am not an expert on bathing in the ancient world, but my guess is that once a week might have been the maximum that they bathed? A freshly washed woman in any dispensation is a plus. Ruth washing herself is analogous to the believer who has believed in Christ and his sins have been washed away. It is called **the washing of regeneration** in Titus 3:5.

The second verb has the same morphology and it is *çûwk*^e (çûwk) [pronounced *sook*], which means *to anoint, to pour when anointing*. My guess is that this would be the application of ancient world perfume/deodorant and possibly oils for the woman. Strong's #5480 BDB #691. At salvation, we are anointed by the Holy Spirit, which gives us our power. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are able to understand and apply God's Word. **And as for**

⁴ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 476; okay, I admit—I had to look it up too.

you, the anointing which you receive from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him (I John 2:27; see also Titus 3:5–6). Also, when filled with the Spirit, we are generally less offensive to others.

The third verb is *put on* which is followed by the feminine plural of *sîm^êlâh* (שִׁמְלֵהָ) [pronounced *sim^ê-LAW*], which means *mantle, outer garment*; in the plural (as it is found here), it means *clothes*. The implication may mean that this is a really nice set of clothes. Strong's #8071 BDB #971. In salvation, we *put on Christ*. This occurs in three ways. First of all, His righteousness is imputed to us (Rom. 4:5, 22). We wear His righteousness (Jer. 23:6 Eph. 6:14). Secondly, He indwells us (John 14:20). Lastly, in our lives, we, in the power of the Spirit and by taking in God's Word, become closer in character to Him—we emulate Him (John 15:1–5). We put on Christ (Rom. 13:14). So Ruth has put aside her widow's clothing and her work clothing (it may be one and the same) and she has cleansed herself. **Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; observe, all things have become new** (II Cor. 5:17).

The final verb of this series of four is *yârad* (יָרַד) [pronounced *yaw-RAHD*], which means *to descend, to go down*. It is often used of going from a higher elevation to a lower elevation. Strong's #3381 BDB #432. Now, it is unusual to go *down* to the threshing floor. The way grain is dealt with is it is taken atop a hill and thrown in the air, and the natural wind blows away the lighter straw and chaff. However, in this book, which takes place during the time of the judges, and in Judges 6, we have two cases of winnowing occurring at a lower elevation than we would expect. This would suggest that Israel is under some oppression at this point in time. One of my sources places the book of Ruth during the time of Gideon, probably for this reason. Good exegetes do not generally make such statements without having some reason. Gideon did his threshing down in a valley rather than on top of a hill to protect his harvest from being stolen by Midian. Since we have this verb *go down* when we would expect *go up*, some have therefore concluded that Ruth and Gideon are contemporaries. However, this could have taken place during any period of time when Israel was oppressed. Since the time frame is not mentioned, it is not relevant to the story.

In any case, Ruth going to Boaz is a picture of our coming to Christ—we must believe in Him for our salvation (Matt. 11:38 John 3:16, 36). She claims her kinsman-redeemer, as we must claim out Kinsman-Redeemer; she places her faith and future upon Boaz, just as we place our faith and future upon the Lord Christ Jesus. Ruth is not only entitled to claim Boaz as her kinsman-redeemer; she must claim him under the Law. Furthermore, it is obvious that Boaz *wants* to act as her kinsman-redeemer. Similarly, God wishes for all of us to be saved. **This is noble and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth** (I Tim. 2:3–4). **The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to a change of mind** (II Peter 3:9).

Then Naomi suddenly changes the pace with the Niphal imperfect of *to know* which is *yâda^ʿ* (יָדָעַ) [pronounced *yaw-DAHG*]. In the Niphal, it means *to be revealed, to be discovered, to be known, to make yourself known*. Strong's #3045 BDB # 393. The fact that this is a Niphal as well as an imperfect verb makes it jump right out at you.

There are some who have made too big of a deal over Ruth waiting until Boaz had finished eating and drinking, supposing that his judgement might be somehow compromised when she came to him. This is not the case at all. Ruth is approaching Boaz in private in a semi-public place. She does not approach him in the midst of his meal, as she is not making a public demand of him, but a private request. What follows in vv. 10–17 indicates that Boaz was completely sober and that his decisions were those of a man with a lucid mind, aware of his own preferences, but cognizant of the requirements of the Law as well.

Now personally, after a superficial reading, I thought that maybe Naomi's plan was not completely thought through, and that perhaps her plan may not of have been the best. However, in view of the Law and the character of Boaz, and given the feelings that Boaz and Ruth had for one another, what Naomi was suggesting was actually quite reasonable and well thought out.

“And he is in a lying down in him and you have known the place where he lies there, and go and uncover his feet and lie down and he will make known what you will do.”

Ruth
3:4

“And it will be when he lies down—and you know the place where he lies down—then you will go and uncover his feet and you will lie down. Then he will make known what you will do.”

“And it will come to pass when he lies down that you will take note of where he is sleeping and you will go and uncover his feet and there you will lie down. Then he will make it known to you what you will do.”

We begin this verse with the Qal imperfect of *to be*, which is followed by the bēyth preposition and the Qal infinitive construct of *to lie down* with a 3rd person masculine singular suffix. Literally, that is: *And he will be in a lying down of him [or, in his lying down]*. However, what we likely have here is: *And it will be when he lies down...* The Qal infinitive construct when used with the bēyth preposition often sets up a temporal clause.

What she will do at his feet is the Piel perfect of *gâlâh* (גָּלָה) [pronounced *gaw-LAW*], which means, in the Qal, *to uncover, to remove*. In the Piel, it means *to uncover, to disclose, to discover, to lay bare* [secret plans or secret places]. Strong's #1540 BDB #162. I mention this verb primarily because Barnes presents it as meaning something else.

It is at this point, as I gave this book a superficial reading, that I had my questions about Naomi's plan. It is obvious by this approach that Ruth is making her desire to be married to Boaz clear (some men do have to be beat over the head to get a clue). At this point, a great deal depends upon his own personal integrity, as a lot of men, when faced with this, would have taken advantage of the situation. And, in case there is any confusion, Ruth will be lying down at the feet of Boaz, symbolically placing herself under his authority, and, as such, appealing to him to act in accordance with the Levirate law. While examining the next few verses, keep in mind that the character and integrity of Boaz is well-known to both Ruth and Naomi and that Ruth's character is well-known to Boaz (as we will see in v. 11). Furthermore, this is more of a public place than we might imagine. Many get the idea that there is this wimpy stack of grain that Boaz is sleeping next to. We have the culmination of the harvest which involved an owner (Boaz) and a foreman (his young man). The implication is that there are at least a half dozen men and women working for Boaz, and my guess is that there are more than that. All of these people, including their families, are camped out next to several huge stacks of grain, altogether in the same place.

McGee comments on Naomi's plan: *Now let me say that there is nothing questionable about the thing that Naomi is asking her to do. To begin with, Naomi would never have asked her to do it had it been improper. There have been those, however, who have criticized this, not understanding the threshing floor or this peculiar law. You see, she must claim him as a kinsman redeemer. That's one thing. But this threshing floor was a public place. The harvesters were there with their families. Naomi is saying to Ruth, "Once they're finished the threshing for the evening and have had their dinner, and a time for praise to God, a religious service, then he will lie down. He'll put his head toward the grain and his feet out...All of it would be out in the public. The idea that something immoral is to take place is due to our ignorance of the threshing floor during the harvest season."*⁵

There is the mistaken impression that Naomi sent Ruth to Boaz while he was drunk, and that Ruth and Boaz had sexual intercourse. Apparently some commentators (none which I read) have suggested that, in a time of harvest, there is some celebration of fertility and that moral restrictions are relaxed somewhat. Others apparently have suggested that Ruth was being sent to pressure Boaz into marriage, something that he might agree to while drunk. So that we are clear on this: nothing in the text states or implies any of this and, if that is what you have thought over these years, keep in mind that you do not get to judge others on the basis of your own moral values. The Bible does not gloss over the shortcomings of others. Throughout Scripture, we see great problems in the characters of Abraham, Jacob, and David. These are not covered up nor are they ever rationalized. They are simply presented. The nation Israel was involved in deplorable activity during the time of the judges, and none of this is sanitized for public consumption. Therefore, there is no reason to suppose that there is more going on here than meets the eye.

⁵ J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth*, Thru the Bible Radio, ©1976 in La Verne, California, p. 58.

Because of the time and the darkness, Ruth and Boaz would have a modicum of privacy in a semi-public place. If you can imagine a sleep out under the stars, that is essentially what is occurring. Ruth approach Boaz in semi-privacy, apart from any sort of public forum, so that he would not be under any pressure to fulfill his duties as a redeemer to her. What he agreed to do or not to do was simply between Ruth and Boaz. There would be no public humiliation or public pressure involved. Boaz is under no obligation in this sort of meeting to do the right thing. However, what Naomi recognizes, which Ruth and Boaz may not, is how they feel about each other. In the past couple decades, I have been in a generation which is hard-pressed to understand anything of human relationships apart from passion and physical attraction. If you are so influenced by this, then you may not *get* how Ruth and Boaz could be in love and not know it, or, you may not *get* how they could have some feelings and yet not act upon them. Boaz is certainly attracted to Ruth, which we have discussed. However, his behavior around her has been nothing but exemplary. Naomi knows that there is more to his feelings than has been revealed, and engineering a private meeting like this, apart from any public scrutiny, will show each of them how the other feels.

And so she said unto her, “All that you say, I will do.” Ruth 3:5 **Then she replied to her, “All that you said [to me], I will do.”**

Then she answered her, “All that you have told me to do, that I will do.”

We have a difference in verbs in this verse and the next. In this verse, we simply have “*All that you **said**, I will do.*” This is the simple verb for *to say*.⁶ In the next verse we will have Piel perfect of *tsāwāh* (הִצַּו) [pronounced *tsaw-WAW*], which means *to commission, to mandate, to lay charge upon, to give charge to, charge, command, order*. Strong's #6680 BDB #845. Obviously, this is a much stronger verb. Ruth accepts the advice of her mother-in-law, and that advice becomes her mandate.

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Ruth Goes to Boaz at Night

And so she went down [to] the threshing floor and so she did all that she charged her, her mother-in-law. Ruth 3:6 **So she went down [to] the threshing floor and then she did all that her mother-in-law told her.**

So she went down to the threshing floor and then she did what her mother-in-law told her to do.

Ruth proceeded directly to the threshing floor and did exactly as her mother-in-law had commanded. Her mother-in-law simply *said* something in the previous verse, which became a *mandate* to Ruth in this verse. Now, you can question Naomi's motives, if you would like; however, what is likely the case is that: (1) Naomi knows the facts and the character of Boaz and Ruth. (2) Ruth very likely talks about Boaz when she comes in. (3) Naomi recognizes that Boaz looks out for Ruth. (4) She knows that Boaz is single and related to her late husband. (5) Finally, Naomi is aware of the Levirate law and she knows the right of redemption of a relative. (6) At the very worst, Naomi is playing matchmaker—she is simply moving things along, knowing that Boaz, because of his personal character, would not.

Now, why does Naomi choose this time and place? What will be proposed to Boaz is life-changing. I don't know that he could be compared to the Norwegian bachelor farmers from the News from Lake Wobegon, but it is apparent that Boaz has been a bachelor for a long time. His life is his work. Naomi knows that there is no way that Ruth should approach him in the middle of a harvest. Boaz would be too focused on his work and his employees. There would be a right time to approach Boaz, and that would be at the end of the harvest. Next, why at night? Bethlehem is a small town and everyone knows everything about everyone else. If Ruth approach Boaz in public,

⁶ Actually, there are several differences in the early manuscripts and codices at this point. However, in examining several translations, the differences are not apparent. Rotherham discusses these briefly on p. 286, and apparently, Dr. Ginsburg goes into greater detail in his *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical edition of the Hebrew Bible* (pp. 308, 312).

even if she said, “May I speak to you privately?” the town would be all abuzz with rumors. There will be nothing for the town to talk about as no one will be aware of the meeting in the first place. It will not be public knowledge what Ruth asks of Boaz. His response will not be public. Ruth’s approach and Boaz’s response are private matters with respect to the town of Bethlehem, and therefore, what Ruth requests and what Boaz proposes to do will come from their own, uncoerced volitions. The request of Ruth for marriage will not be held up to public scrutiny; the response of Boaz, whether he chooses to honor the Levirate law or not, will not be a matter of public discussion either. When one reads this book superficially, one might question just what the heck Naomi has in mind here. However, when you dig a little deeper, it becomes apparent that Naomi has actually thought this through fairly carefully. She has taken into account several factors and variables that we ourselves might not have considered.

And so Boaz ate and so he drank and so was merry his heart. And so he went to lie down in an end of the heap. And so she came in the surreptitiousness and so she uncovers his feet and so she lies down.

Ruth
3:7

And so Boaz ate and drank and his heart was made merry. When he lay down at the end of a heap [of barley], she came in quietly and uncovered his feet and lay down.

At the same time, Boaz ate and drank in celebration of the finishing of the barley harvest. Then, while he lay at the end of the grain pile, she came in quietly, uncovered his feet, and lay down at his feet.

Boaz and his workmen have worked long and hard days, and they have gotten to the point where the grain could be put into containers the next day and they would be through with that harvest for that year. It was a time of great celebration (Isa. 9:3 16:9–10). Dinner for Boaz is going to be particularly festive, as he has completed his barley harvest and it was apparently a successful harvest. Recall that there had been a time in Israel, recently, when Israel had been faced with famine, which is what prompted Naomi’s family to go to Moab in the first place. We don’t know if he has a couple of days off, but it is likely, in any case, that he won’t have to work as hard for a short while and that God has provided for his own in this harvest. Therefore, Boaz, for several reasons, should be happy. He is not drunk—not all blue collar workers have a need to get totally tanked after a hard day’s work. He had a marvelous dinner with his crew, drank a little wine, finished the harvest, and will sleep contentedly as does anyone who puts in a day’s worth of hard physical labor.

Where Boaz decides to lie down is *in* the masculine singular construct of qâṭseh (קֶטֶשׁ) [pronounced *kaw-TSEH*], which means *end, extremity*. Strong’s #7097 BDB #892. The bēyth preposition denotes locality, so we could render it *at* just as well as *in*. Where he lies down is at the end of the feminine noun ʿārēmâh (אֶרְמָה) [pronounced *uh-ray-MAW*], which means *heap, pile*. This is the first time this verb occurs. Strong’s #6194 BDB #790. The heap is the heap of barley which Boaz has harvested, threshed and sifted. As has been discussed before—all of the work with regards to this barley has been done. Boaz now sleeps next to the heap of barley in order to guard it.

When she comes in , this is followed by the bēyth preposition, the definite article and the masculine noun lâʾî (לַאִי) [pronounced *lawf*], which means *surreptitiousness, quietness, secrecy*. Although this is not an adverb, *surreptitiously* is probably the most accurate rendering. There is no aleph (א) when the word is used in this passage. [Strong’s #3814 &] Strong’s #3909 BDB #532.

So Ruth made note of where Boaz went to sleep, which was at the end of a heap of grain, and she quietly approached him, uncovered his feet, and then she lay down at his feet. It is not clear if there are several threshing floors spaced fairly far apart or whether Boaz had one (which appears to be the case). Knowing the tradition of the owner to sleep next to the finished product, it was easy for Ruth to determine where Boaz would sleep that night.

It is important to note that Ruth does not lay down beside Boaz, but at his feet. This indicates several things, subservience among them. However, be very clear on this: she is not using sex or the promise of sex to gain Boaz as a husband. Had she done that, she would have lain beside him, and not at his feet. What she does, however, is hog the covers. This will wake Boaz up.

It is not clear with the words used or by tradition what Boaz is wearing or what he is covered up with. However, we can assume that it is cool, if not cold, as we are at the end of the barley season, and the winds have been blowing, allowing for the winnowing of the wheat. Given this verse and the next, Boaz is probably covered with a couple of pieces of clothing, besides that which he is wearing, and one is covering his feet. It is this which Ruth takes to cover herself while lying at his feet. Therefore, he is asleep, and the covers which were over his feet are now over Ruth. It will not take long for him to wake up from the cold.

And so he was in a half of the night and so was trembling the man and so he twisted, and, behold, a woman laying [at] his feet.

Ruth
3:8

And so it was at midnight that the man was trembling [from the cold], so he twisted [himself], and [he] observed a woman laying [at] his feet.

When it was midnight, the man became cold and he looked for his covers. He twisted around to find a woman laying at his feet.

The time period is given by the masculine singular construct of *chätsîy* (חַצִּי) [pronounced *khuh-TSEE*], which means *half*. When affixed to the word *night*, it means the half-way point of night, and the two words can be then rendered as *midnight* (Owen, NASB, Rotherham). Strong's #2677 BDB #345. Ruth has taken the blanket off the feet of Boaz and is using it herself. The cold has awoken Boaz.

We then have the Qal imperfect of *chârad* (חָרַד) [pronounced *chaw-rahd*], and it means *to tremble, to be terrified, to be frightened*. My original thinking was that this verb might allow for someone to simply shake, as if cold. However, all the other uses of this verb indicate fear of some sort. Strong's #2729 BDB #353. It is unclear as to how this verb is applied here. It means that Boaz was trembling, but it does not tell us whether this is from the cold or whether from fear. I had two thoughts at this point. First, I thought that Boaz is trembling because he is afraid because he thought there was an animal at his feet. With his feet, Boaz realized that there was something very substantial and very alive laying at his feet. His first thought is not *I must have a babe laying at my feet*. What would have been reasonable to expect is a wild animal—even a lion—had decided to bed down at his feet. However, had something warm been sleeping at his feet, keeping his feet warm, he would not have awoken. In other words, Boaz was trembling, but not from fear, but from the cold. That is what the next verb indicates. What the man did was the Niphal imperfect of *lâphath* (לָפַח) [pronounced *law-FAHTH*], which means *to twist, to turn, to grasp with a twisting motion*. The Niphal can be the passive, but it can also refer to an action which is in motion or development. Here, he twisted himself. Strong's #3943 BDB #542. He has twisted himself, sitting up, to find the covering for his feet. If there was a wild beast at his feet, Boaz would not have twisted himself and started to feel around to figure out what kind of a beast that it was.

So what happened, in chronological order, is that the man wakes up, shivering, because his feet are cold. Boaz then twists himself to see where his cover is, and, behold, it is a woman lying at his feet, which is what he would least suspect.

And so he said, "Who you?"

Ruth
3:9a

Then he said, "Who [are] you?"

Then he said, "Who are you?"

As we have seen several times, when the personal pronoun is used, often the verb *to be* is understood, as it is here. Properly, we would render this: *"Who are you?"* Boaz recognizes that there is a person at his feet; however, it is too dark to make out Ruth's face or figure.

Because Naomi sent Ruth out at night to where Boaz was sleeping, there are those who say, in so many words, that Naomi was pimping out her daughter-in-law. Bethlehem is a small town, and everyone knows everything about everyone else. In the previous chapter, recall the Boaz found out all about Ruth during the early afternoon. Naomi certainly would have inquired about Boaz and determined that he was successful, single, a believer, and a man

of integrity. Just because you would have succumbed to your passions in the same situation and blamed the fact that you were simply made that way, Boaz does not react in the same way. That is where his character and integrity come into play. His knowing about his closeness by relation to Naomi and the other near relative means that Boaz has certainly thought about Ruth, which is what Naomi was counting on (she probably also knew about the other relative).

And so she said, “I Ruth, your maidservant. And you have spread [the extremity of] your garment over your maidservant for a redeemer you.”

Ruth
3:9b

So she answered, “I [am] Ruth, your maidservant. You have spread [the extremity of] your garment over your maidservant, for you are a redeemer.”

So she answered him, “I am Ruth, your maidservant, over whom you have spread your garment, because you are my redeemer.”

What she says that he has done is the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *pâras* (פָּרַס) [pronounced *paw-RAHS*], which means *to spread out, to spread, to display*; it is used *to spread out a garment*. Strong’s #6566 BDB #831. The perfect refers to a completed action. What he has spread over her is the feminine singular noun *kânâph* (קַנָּפִי) [pronounced *kaw-NAWF*] which usually refers to the wings of birds (Gen. 1:21 Ex. 19:4 Deut. 32:11); however, it can also refer to the *extremity of a garment* (Deut. 22:12, 30 Ruth 3:9). Strong’s #3671 BDB #489. Due in part to the double-meaning, some manuscripts have this in the singular (most of the Massoretic manuscripts, the Vulgate and the Septuagint) and others in the plural (two early printed editions). What we have here is probably the singular, but used specifically for the double meaning. Ruth is under the extremity of his garment for warmth; however, in his protection of Ruth in the field, that is a metaphorical use of spreading his garment over her. We know we have a metaphorical use because of what Ruth says next: “*For you [are] a redeemer.*” As a redeemer, he protects the rights of Ruth and Naomi with regards to the land which belonged to their late husbands. We also find this more metaphorical use in Ezek. 16:8: “*Then I [Jehovah] have passed by you and I saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love, so I spread [the end of] My cloak over you and I covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine,*” declares Jehovah God.

What Ruth uses is the Qal active participle of *gâ'al* (גָּאֵל) [pronounced *gaw-AHL*], the verb for *redeem, purchase*. In the Qal participle, it is translated *redeemer, avenger, kinsman, kinsman-redeemer*; however, it means *redeemer, purchaser*. Strong’s #1350 BDB #145. Scofield: *This action of Ruth should be interpreted in the light of the customs of that day. It was clearly a way of letting a near kinsman (goel) know that he had, not only the right but also the request to proceed with the legal steps necessary to the exercise of his responsibility. That Ruth’s conduct was above reproach is indicated in Boaz’s reception, protection, and tacit agreement with the general evaluation of her character (vv. 10–11).*⁷ Ruth is clearly making a request of Boaz to step in as the near relative of her husband, to redeem his property which he no doubt sold upon leaving for Moab; and, further, Ruth is requesting that Boaz take her in marriage and raise up at least one child who would inherit this land. There is nothing sordid about what is occurring.⁸ Now, you may ask why Ruth has to make the first move here—Ruth is much younger than Boaz, as we will see in the next verse. Boaz would not think to suggest marriage due to the disparity of their ages. As a real estate agent, I have come across property that a person wanted to sell, and, had I known how little they would take for their property, I would have offered it myself rather than list the property for sale. Boaz inadvertently revealed to Naomi, through his actions toward Ruth, that he would be so inclined to marry Ruth and provide for her, although he would never, himself, suggest such a thing.

McGee: *Boaz...is now free to move because Ruth has claimed him as her kinsman redeemer. And I say this reverently to you, my friend: Christ, like Boaz, is not free to move in your behalf until you claim Him as your*

⁷ *The New Scofield Reference Bible*; Dr. C.I. Scofield; ©1967 New York-Oxford University Press; p. 319.

⁸ And, if you studied the book of Judges with me, you noted that I did not puppy out with regards to sordidness.

*Kinsman Redeemer. Christ died on the cross for you; He went through hell for you...God offers the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus, but you have to reach out your hand and take it by faith. By faith you receive Christ.*⁹

Now, one of the things that we have mentioned is that **“No Ammonite or Moabite will enter into the assembly of Jehovah—none, even to the tenth generation, will ever enter into the assembly of Jehovah.”** (Deut. 23:3). She had to be redeemed. She had to have a cloak of someone else’s righteousness spread over her. She will enter into the assembly of Jehovah by marriage to Boaz, who is righteous. We have no right to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. We must be redeemed. We must have someone’s cloak of righteousness spread over us. We can only enter in by marriage to Christ Jesus.

Now, Ruth has pulled the covers from the feet of Boaz and covered herself with them. By this, she is asserting her right that he act as her kinsman redeemer and that Boaz marry her. By Boaz agreeing that she remain there, covered by his blanket, he is agreeing to do so. I have already quoted Ezek. 16:8 in support of this: **“Then I passed by you and saw you, and, behold, you were at the time for love. Therefore, I spread My skirt over you and I covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine,”** declared Jehovah Elohim.

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Boaz Promises Ruth That He Will Take Care of Things

And so he said, “Blessing [to] you, to Y^howah, my daughter. You have caused to make good your grace the later from the first to not go after the young men if poor and rich.

Ruth
3:10

Then he said, “You [are] blessed, my daughter, with regards to Y^howah. You have caused to make good your latter grace more than the first, to not go after the young men whether poor or rich.

Then he said, “You are blessed, my daughter, from Jehovah. You have caused your latter grace to be greater than your former grace when you chose not to go after the young men, whether rich or poor.

In his second statement, Boaz uses the Hiphil perfect of *yâṭa^bv* (יָטַב) [pronounced *yaw-TA^BV*], which means *to be good, well, to be pleasing, to do good, to deal well, to make glad, to make a thing good*. In the Hiphil, it means *to do well, to cause to do well, to do rightly, to do good, to make merry, to make fit, to adjust*. Strong’s #3190 BDB #405. What she caused to make good is the masculine singular noun *cheṣed* (חֶסֶד) [pronounced *KHEH-sed*], which means *grace, benevolence, mercy, kindness*. Strong’s #2617 BDB #338. This noun is further modified by the adjective *’achărôn* (אַחֲרֹן) [pronounced *ah-kha-ROHN*] and it means *coming after, behind, later*. Strong’s #314 BDB #30. The *mîn* preposition which follows is used in its comparative state. Her latter grace is more good than the masculine singular noun *rîshôwn* (רִשׁוֹן) [pronounced *ree-SHOWN*], and it can be rendered *first, chief, former, beginning*. Strong’s #7223 BDB #911. Just what is Boaz saying here? Ruth’s first grace was toward her mother-in-law, to return with her to the Land of Promise, to look out for her. Her second grace was to offer herself in marriage to Boaz.

Let me again point out their surroundings. They are in a public place where, within 20 yards of them, are more people sleeping. There are workmen and families who have fallen asleep, just like Boaz, after a long day’s work and a meal and some wine. Ruth could have approached Boaz in a completely public place and forced his hand there. She chose not to do that, following the instructions of Naomi. Their plan involved the utmost discretion and consideration of the volition of Boaz.¹⁰

It is this verse, it is clear that Boaz is a good deal older than Ruth, and that Ruth chose him over the younger men when asking to be redeemed. Now, McGee points out that Boaz is not some guy heading toward senility, but that

⁹ J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth*, Thru the Bible Radio, ©1976 in La Verne, California, p. 65.

¹⁰ J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth, the Romance of Redemption*; Thru the Bible Books, ©Pasadena, California, p. 83.

he is probably middle-aged.¹¹ Ruth did not have to place herself under the Law. It is likely that she was very attractive and could have been married to a number of other men and just enjoyed their inheritance. However, the Law provided both for the redemption of her late husband's property and for the raising up of his name to that property. That is what she chose.

“And now, my daughter, you will not fear. All that you say, I will do for you, for keep knowing all of a gate of my people that a woman of wealth you [are].

Ruth
3:11

“And now, my daughter, you will not be afraid. All that you say, I will do for you, because all of [those within the] gate of my people know that you [are] a woman of great value.

“And now, my daughter, do not be afraid. All that you have said, I will do for you, because all of those in my periphery recognize that you are a woman of great value.

The odd word in here falls between *all of* and *my people*; that word is sha'ar (שַׁעַר) [pronounced *SHAH-ahr* or *SHAH-gahr*], which means *gate*. Strong's #8179 BDB #1044. My thinking is that Boaz is reasonably wealthy, and he is referring to the people who live within the gate of his home; or he could be referring to those who live within the gate of his community. In any case, *all of the gate of my people* is a metonymy for those who live within the gate. Among those with whom Boaz has a relationship, they all continue to know that Ruth is a woman of...; and then we have the masculine singular noun chayil (חַיִל) [pronounced *CHAH-yil*] and it means *efficiency, army, strength, valour, power, might*; as well as that which is gotten through strength—i.e., *wealth, substance*. Here, Rotherham and the KJV and the NKJV render this *virtuous*. In a footnote, Rotherham suggests *strong, worthy, capable*, citing Prov. 12:4 31:10, where the chayil is also used. Strong's #2428 BDB #298. What we have here is a play on words, but one which is done with complete respect to Ruth. Most people would picture Boaz as the person of great wealth and substance; however, all of those who know him see her as a woman of great value and worth as well. Boaz is recognizing her as being on his social level, even though she is, for all intents and purposes, a beggar in his field. It is a great compliment for an honorable woman which may lose something in the translation.

“And now, for [it is] true, for a redeemer I [am]; and there lives a redeemer nearer from I.

Ruth
3:12

“And now, because [it is] true that I am a redeemer; yet there lives a redeemer closer than I.

“It is certainly true that I am a kinsman-redeemer; however, there is a man who is closer than I who is also a kinsman-redeemer.

The translation of this verse is a little tricky, inasmuch as we find the conjunction kîy (כִּי) [pronounced *kee*], used twice in this verse. It means *when, that, for, because*; and is better translated in two different ways in this verse. Strong's #3588 BDB #471. Boaz realizes that he is a kinsman-redeemer for Ruth; but that there is another relative closer than he, who would also be a kinsman-redeemer for her. Now, how would he know this? Boaz had apparently already been thinking along the same lines as Naomi. He apparently did a lot of checking up on Ruth. He knew who she was, who her mother-in-law was, what their relationship was, as well as her dedication to her mother-in-law (Ruth 2:11). Boaz was obviously attracted to her and did what he could to assure her safety (Ruth 2:15–16). Therefore, he obviously checked into her background, knew which person was her husband, and he knew how close he was to Boaz as a relative (obviously, they were not brothers, but second cousins or something like that). Boaz was also aware of a relative who was closer in relation to Ruth's late husband than he. That person rightfully would have the first choice with regards to Ruth and the land which would be redeemed. Boaz would not circumvent the Law in order to act on his own desires. We as believers have a set of moral standards to which we should adhere, and when we choose to circumvent those standards, not only do we set ourselves up for discipline, but we choose that which is God's second best for us. Any male believer would do well to follow the example of Boaz; and female believers would do well to similarly emulate Ruth. As a personal note, I have sometimes been faced with choosing between that which is clearly right and that which is clearly wrong, and I have done something which was more toward the middle. It was wrong as well and I paid for it—at the time, I

¹¹ J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth, the Romance of Redemption*; Thru the Bible Books, ©Pasadena, California, p. 67.

convinced myself, *it's not as bad as doing this or that*—but it was. Boaz could have easily said, “This is what you want and this is what I want, so it is settled; we’ll get married.” He can’t do that. There is another relative who is closer to Ruth by marriage than Boaz and that person must be consulted first. Boaz is not going to do things half-right.

Bertheau commented: *This modest man even in the middle of the night did not hesitate for a moment [to do] what it was his duty to do with regard to the young maiden (or rather woman) towards whom he felt already so strongly attached; he made his own personal inclinations subordinate to the traditional custom, and only when this permitted him to marry Ruth was he ready to do so. And not knowing whether she might not have to become the wife of the nearer goel, he was careful for her and her reputation, in order that he might hand her over unblemished to the man who had the undoubted right to claim her as his wife.*¹² Do you know how you can, as a woman, see a measure of the integrity (or the lack thereof) of a man in whom you are interested? He has been faithful to you prior to meeting you. A lessor man could have taken advantage of Ruth in this situation and a lessor man could have taken her as a wife from that night on. Boaz acts with complete integrity toward Ruth.

“Remain the night and he will be in the morning, if he redeems you, good; [then] he will redeem; and if he is not willing to redeem you, and I will redeem you—even you—a living Y^ehowah. Lie down until the morning.”

Ruth
3:13

“Remain the night and it will be in the morning, if he redeems you, good; he will redeem. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then I will redeem you—even you, as Y^ehowah lives. Lie down until the morning.”

“Remain the night here and it will come to pass in the morning, if he chooses to redeem you, good—then he will be your redeemer. However, if he does not redeem you, then I will redeem you, by the eternal life of Jehovah. Now, lie down until the morning.”

What we have in this verse is probably a world’s record for the number of English words used to render a single Hebrew word. In this verse, we have the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect (with a 2nd person feminine singular suffix) of *gâ`al* (גָּאַל) [pronounced *gaw-AHL*], which we know means *to redeem, to purchase*. Strong’s #1350 BDB #145. Owen renders this one verb as *he will do the part of the next of kin for you*; the KJV renders it *he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman*. We actually find this verb repeated four times with four different morphologies in this one verse.

Boaz completes the options with a vow to be her kinsman-redeemer if the closer relative of her late husband does not come through. What you should note is that there is no impropriety here. Boaz does not take advantage of the situation; he does that which is honorable. Furthermore, he will follow through on his vow. One of the distinguishing marks of a person with virtue and integrity is that they will do what they say they will do. They don’t simply tell you what you want to hear.

And so she lay [at] his [two] feet until the morning. And so she arose in before could recognize a man his other. And so he said, “He will not know that came the woman [to] the threshing floor.”

Ruth
3:14

Then she lay [at] his feet until morning, and then arose before one could recognize his acquaintance. And he said, “No one will discover that the woman came [to] the threshing floor.”

She lay at his feet until morning came, then she arose before one could recognize another. And he commented, “No one will know that a woman came to the threshing floor.”

She arose before one man could—and then we have the Hiphil imperfect of *nâkar* (נָכַר) [pronounced *naw-KAHR*], and it means *to regard, to recognize, to acknowledge, to discern, to distinguish*. Strong’s #5234 BDB #647. What they would not be able to recognize is the masculine singular noun *rêa`* (רָעָה) [pronounced *RAY-ahg*], which

¹² J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth, the Romance of Redemption*; Thru the Bible Books, ©Pasadena, California, p. 87.

means *associate, neighbor, colleague, fellow, acquaintance*. It is a person with whom you come into contact. Strong's #7453 BDB #945. Some render this *before one could recognize another*.

What Boaz says, literally, is, “*It will not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.*” What Boaz uses is the negative and then the 3rd person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect of *yâda* (יָדָא) [pronounced *yaw-DAHĠ*], which means *to know*. In the Niphal, it means *to be revealed, to be discovered, to be known, to make yourself known*. Strong's #3045 BDB #393. Although it appears as though he said this directly to the woman, he does not use the 2nd person feminine singular. Now, it is possible that he said this to anyone who knew that she came. However, what seems likely, is that his intent was to maintain her anonymity, and that he is simply saying that *no one would discover that the woman came to the threshing floor*. Keil and Delitzsch render this as *It must not be known that the woman came to the threshing-floor*.¹³ His primary intention, in any case, was to protect Ruth's reputation.

Ruth was certainly attractive, and she may have had other personality quirks which were alluring. However, what was most important was her virtue, which is the only thing which Boaz had, thus far, commented on (see Ruth 2:11 3:10). Physical beauty is the first thing to fade—its enchantment often fades long before it does. However, virtue is something which lasts a lifetime. You may be attracted to someone for their beauty, but in any sort of a relationship, it is their virtue on which you will depend. It's been said that if every person was faithful to his or her husband (before as well as during marriage), then sexually transmitted diseases would be wiped out in one generation. If people behaved with virtue, not only would STD's disappear in one generation, but so would these goofy television talk shows, whose entire format depends upon people's lack of virtue for subject matter.

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Ruth Returns to Her Mother-in-law

And so he said, “Give the cloak which [is] on you and hold in her [the cloak].” And so she held her and he measured out six [measures] of grain and so he laid [the grain] upon her [the cloak]. And so he went into the city.

Ruth
3:15

He also said, “Present the cloak which [is] upon you and hold onto it.” So she held onto it and he measured out six [measures] of grain and laid [the grain] on it. Then she went into the city.

He also said, “Hold out your coat.” Then he poured out six measures of grain into the coat. Afterwards, she went into the city.

What he tells her to do is the Qal imperative of *yâha*^{bv} (יָהָא) [pronounced *yaw-HAWB^v*], which means *to give*. Strong's #3051 BDB #396. What he wants her to give him is the feminine singular noun for *cloak, covering* or *mantle*. It is found only in Ruth 3:15 Isa. 3:22.* Strong's #4304 BDB #381. Actually, she is to hold it out as though she is to give this to him. The next verb is the Qal imperative of *âchaz* (אָחַז) [pronounced *aw-KHAHZ*]; and it means *to grasp, to take hold of, to take possession of*. Strong's #270 BDB #28. This is followed by *in her; her* referring to the coat. Boaz is telling her to hold the coat out, but to hold onto it.

According to Barnes, Boaz gives Ruth a terrifically large amount of grain—twice as much as she had gleaned on her first day. The Good News translation suggests that Boaz gave Ruth 50 lbs. of grain to carry home. Puh-leeze! This is way wrong! So much grain would have been difficult, if not impossible, for Ruth to carry any distance, and, furthermore, it would have seemed excessive. I am thinking that he probably gave her six double-handfuls, which would be a goodly amount, yet one would carry it in one's coat or outer cloak.

Then Ruth went home and he went into the city to find the one who was more closely related to her (the Syriac and Vulgate codices read *And she went into the city*). The Massoretic text (Hebrew) reads *he*.¹⁴ The Greek is

¹³ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 355.

¹⁴ According to the NKJV footnote, several Hebrew manuscripts also read *he*.

inconclusive. Owen and Young follow the Hebrew (and, surprisingly, the NIV); most of the other translations render this *she* (including the KJV). They both left and went somewhere—probably both into different parts of the city. Since the narrative follows her for a couple verses, it is natural for us to want to go with the feminine pronoun. However, it is clear that Boaz did go into the city by Ruth 4:1. He wanted to be there at the crack of dawn to talk to the other kinsman who could redeem Naomi's land.

And so she came unto her mother-in-law and so she said, "Who [are] you—my daughter?" And so she made known to her all that he did for her, the man.

Ruth
3:16

So she came to her mother-in-law and she [her mother-in-law] said, "How [are] you, my daughter?" Then she made known to her all that the man did for her.

Then she returned to her mother-in-law, and her mother-in-law asked her, "How well did things fair for you, my daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done on her behalf.

The first word that Naomi uses is the interrogative *mîy* (מִי) [pronounced *mee*], which is generally translated *who*. Some think that this could be translated occasionally *how* or *in what way*. If so, this is the exception and not the rule. Strong's #4310 BDB #566. The strictest rendering would be "*Who [are] you—my daughter?*" Bearing in mind that Ruth has returned while it was still dark, such a question would make sense. However, what Naomi probably said was, "*How [are] you, my daughter?*" It was simply a way to ask how things went with Boaz. Ruth explained all that Boaz said and was prepared to do on her behalf. By her answer—Ruth told Naomi all that had happened—the latter interpretation makes the most sense. The difference in the meanings could simply be the inflection in Naomi's voice.

McGee gives this a slightly different interpretation, but one which is equally reasonable. *Other commentators, after whom I have read, seem to misinterpret her question. When Naomi asked, "Who art thou, my daughter?" they say since it was dark when she came up to the door, Naomi wasn't sure who is was. Well, she at least knew that she was "my daughter." Of course she knew it was Ruth. We need to understand the context here. When Naomi sent her, I think Ruth was reluctant to go. I imagine she had said, "Oh, I don't want to claim him. You told me that if I came back here, no one would be interested in me. I'm a Moabite, an outcast. I don't want to go down and claim Boaz." And Naomi said, "Look, I know he's interested in you, and I know he's in love with you, and I know he wants to marry you. Therefore, you do what I say." I think she almost had to push Ruth out of the house. So when Ruth returns the next morning, Naomi says, "Who are thou, my daughter?" Now let me put it in good ol' Americana: "Are you Mrs. Boaz or not?" In other words, "Was I right?" And, of course, she was right.¹⁵*

And so she was saying, "Six [measures] the grain the this he gave to me because he had said unto me, 'You will not go empty unto your mother-in-law.' "

Ruth
3:17

And she said, "He gave six [measures] of this grain to me because he said to me, 'You will not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.' "

And she said to Naomi, "He gave six measures of this grain to me, saying, 'You will not return empty-handed to your mother-in-law.' "

To describe how she was not to go to her mother-in-law, Boaz had used the adverb *rêyqâm* (רַיְקָאִם) [pronounced *ray-KAWM*], which means *empty, empty-handed*. Strong's #7387 BDB #938. It would be reasonable to suppose that he gave her six double-handfuls of grain. In no way would her relationship to Boaz be unfruitful.

And so she said, "Sit, my daughter, until what you know how falls a word for will not be quiet the man, that if he will complete the word the day."

Ruth
3:18

Then she said, "Remain, my daughter, until you know how the matter is settled, for the man [Boaz] will not become inactive except he complete the matter today."

¹⁵ J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth*, Thru the Bible Radio, ©1976 in La Verne, California, p. 62.

Then she said, “Stay here, my daughter, until you know just how the matter has been settled; for the man will not rest today until he has completed this matter.”

Let’s first see how others translated what Naomi said:

NASB	“Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out [lit., falls]; for the man will not rest until he has settled [lit., finish the matter] it today.”
Owen's Translation	“Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today.”
Young's Lit. Translation	‘Sit still, my daughter, till thou dost know how the matter falleth, for the man doth not rest except he hath completed the matter to-day.’

What Naomi tells Ruth to do is the Qal imperative of *yâsha*^{bv} (יָשָׁא) [pronounced *yaw-SHAH^{bv}*] and it means *to remain, to inhabit, to sit*. Strong's #3427 BDB #442. The author appears to enjoy language, and this word is employed to set us up for the next scene, where Boaz *sits* near the town gate—the author, by his use of language, foreshadows the next verse, which is a change of place. After *until*, we have the relative pronoun, which is generally not translated in this verse.

Then you have *you know* and the adverb *ʿêyk* (אֵיךְ) [pronounced *ayche*], which means *how*. Strong's #349 BDB #32. Then we have the Qal imperfect of *nâphal* (נָפַל) [pronounced *naw-FAHL*], which means *to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply*. The meaning of this verb depends a great deal upon the subject and the context. Strong's #5307 BDB #656. The subject of the verb is *dâ^bvâr* (דָּבָר) [pronounced *daw^b-VAWR*], which means *word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter*. It is something which proceeds from the mouth and the context determines its exact parameters. Strong's #1697 (or #1696) BDB #182. This gives us, “*Sit [or, remain], my daughter, until you know how the matter [or, word] falls...*”

What Boaz would not do is the Qal imperfect of *shâqaṭ* (שָׁקַט) [pronounced *shaw-KAWT*] and it means *to be quiet, to be undisturbed, inactive*. Strong's #8252 BDB #1052. This is followed by *kîy ʿîm* (כִּי אִם) [pronounced *kee-eem*] which literally is *because if*; however, together they act as a limitation on the preceding thought, and therefore should be rendered *but, except, unless*. Strong's #3588 & 518 BDB #471 & 49.

What Boaz will do is the Piel perfect of *kâlâh* (כָּלָה) [pronounced *kaw-LAWH*], which means *to complete, to bring an end to, to finish*. Strong's #3615 BDB #477. There was obviously more to their conversation than what is revealed here. Naomi was aware that there was a closer kinsman who could redeem Ruth (she probably knew this all along); however, she knows the other relative and she knows Boaz—the first is an opportunist and Boaz is a man of honor and integrity. Therefore, from the standpoint of Naomi, this is a no-brainer. If you are a young person and you don't care for the fact that your parents carefully examine your prospects, then you are wrong. Your parents have a much better idea than you do about how your marriage will turn out. They see a lot of character flaws that you do not, because *love* (or *lust*) has glossed them over. They often recognize what is important (personal character and integrity) whereas you dwell upon the trivial (*I just love the sound of his [or her] voice!*). In fact, some young people in their teens and twenties are not even aware that there is such a thing as personal integrity and personal honor.

Anyway, Naomi knows Boaz well enough to know that he will do exactly what he says he will do. She finally sees some light at the end of her tunnel of despair and is willing to wait on God.

Let me conclude this chapter with a quote from Psalm 37:3–5: **Trust in Jehovah, and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in Jehovah, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to Jehovah, trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass. Furthermore, He will bring forth your righteousness as the dawn and your justice as the noonday.**

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