

RUTH 3: 1 Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?"

Naomi's advice to Ruth, how to procure herself a marriage with Boaz, Rut 3:1-5. She acts according to her mother-in-law's direction, and is kindly received by Boaz, who promises to marry her, should her nearer kinsman refuse, Rut 3:6-13. He gives her six measures of barley, and sends her away privately to her mother-in-law, who augurs favorably of the issue of the plan she had laid, Rut 3:14-18.

Verse 1

Shall I not seek rest for thee - That is, Shall I not endeavor to procure thee a proper husband? See Rut 1:9, and the observations at the end of that chapter.

RUTH 3: 2 Now isn't Boaz our kinsman, with whose maidens you were? Behold, he winnows barley tonight in the threshing floor.

Verse 2

He winnoweth barley tonight - It is very likely that the winnowing of grain was effected by taking up, in a broad thin vessel or sieve, a portion of the corn, and letting it down slowly in the wind; thus the grain would, by its own weight, fall in one place, while the chaff, etc., would be carried to a distance by the wind. It is said here that this was done at night; probably what was threshed out in the day was winnowed in the evening, when the sea breeze set in, which was common in Palestine; and as this took place in the evening only, that was the time in which they would naturally winnow their corn.

RUTH 3: 3 Therefore wash yourself, anoint yourself, get dressed, and go down to the threshing floor, but don't make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

Verse 3

Wash thyself, therefore - She made Ruth put on her best dress, that Boaz might, in the course of the day, be the more attracted by her person, and be the better disposed to receive her as Naomi wished.

RUTH 3: 4 It shall be, when he lies down, that you shall mark the place where he shall lie, and you shall go in, and uncover his feet, and lay down; then he will tell you what you shall do."

Verse 4

Uncover his feet, and lay thee down - It is said that women in the East, when going to the bed of their lawful husbands, through modesty, and in token of subjection, go to the bed's foot, and gently raising the clothes, creep under them up to their place. See Calmet.

On the whole, we must say, had not Boaz been a person of extraordinary piety, prudence, and continence, this experiment might have been fatal to Ruth. We cannot easily account for this transaction, probably Naomi knew more than she revealed to her daughter-in-law. The experiment however was dangerous, and should in no sense be imitated.

He will tell thee what thou shalt do - The Targum reads the clause thus: Thou shalt ask counsel from him, "and he shall tell thee what thou shouldst do."

RUTH 3: 5 She said to her, "All that you say I will do."

RUTH 3: 6 She went down to the threshing floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law told her.

RUTH 3: 7 When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. She came softly, uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

Verse 7

When Boaz had eaten and drunk - The Targum adds, "He blessed the name of the Lord, who had heard his prayer, and removed famine from the land of Israel."

Went to lie down - As the threshing-floors of the Eastern nations are in general in the open air, it is very likely that the owner or some confidential person continued in the fields till the grain was secured, having a tent in the place where the corn was threshed and winnowed. Boaz seems to have acted thus.

RUTH 3: 8 At midnight, the man was startled and turned himself; and behold, a woman lay at his feet.

Verse 8

The man was afraid, and turned himself - The verb ילפת yillapheth, which we render he turned himself, has puzzled even the Targumist, who translates the clause thus: "The man trembled, and his flesh became like a (boiled) turnip through fear." It is fully evident Boaz had no intimation of the present proceedings. To this verse the Targumist adds much; he says, "Boaz subdued his concupiscence, and acted towards her as Joseph did to the Egyptian wife of his master, and as Pelatiel, the son of Laish the pious, did to Michal, the daughter of Saul, the wife of David, who put a sword between Michal and himself, because he would not approach to her."

RUTH 3: 9 He said, "Who are you?" She answered, "I am Ruth your handmaid. Therefore spread your skirt over your handmaid; for you are a near kinsman."

 Verse 9

Spread therefore thy skirt over thine hand maid - Hebrew, Spread thy wing. The wing is the emblem of protection, and is a metaphor taken from the young of fowls, which run under the wings of their mothers, that they may be saved from birds of prey. The meaning here is, Take me to thee for wife; and so the Targum has translated it, Let thy name be called on thy handmaid to take me for wife, because thou art the redeemer; i.e., thou art the לגל goel, the kinsman, to whom the right of redemption belongs. See on Rut 2:20 (note). Even to the present day, when a Jew marries a woman, he throws the skirt or end of his talith over her, to signify that he has taken her under his protection.

RUTH 3: 10 He said, "Blessed are you by the LORD, my daughter. You have shown more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, because you didn't follow young men, whether poor or rich.

Verse 10

In the latter end than at the beginning - It is not easy to find out what Boaz means. Perhaps τοη chesed, which we translate kindness, means piety; as if he had said: Thou hast given great proof of thy piety in this latter instance, when thou hast avoided the young, and those of thy own age, to associate thyself with an elderly man, merely for the purpose of having the Divine injunction fulfilled, viz., that the brother, or next akin, might take the wife of the deceased, and raise a family to him who had died childless, that his name might not become extinct in Israel: this latter act is a greater proof of thy piety and sincerity than any thing that could be inferred from thy becoming a proselyte.

Whether poor or rich - So it appears from this that it was not to mend her condition in life that Ruth endeavored to get Boaz for her husband, for she might have had a rich young man, but she preferred the building up the house of her deceased husband. See above.

RUTH 3: 11 Now, my daughter, don't be afraid; I will do to you all that you say; for all the city of my people does know that you are a worthy woman.

RUTH 3: 12 Now it is true that I am a near kinsman; however there is a kinsman nearer than I.

Verse 12

There is a kinsman nearer than I - It is very likely that Naomi was not acquainted with this circumstance. Some have supposed that there was a brother of Elimelech remaining, who was nearer than Boaz, who is supposed to have been only a nephew; the former, therefore, must have a prior right.

RUTH 3: 13 Stay this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform for you the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part. But if he will not do the part of a kinsman for you, then I will do the part of a kinsman for you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until the morning."

 Verse 13

As the Lord liveth - Thus he bound himself by an oath to take her to wife if the other should refuse.

RUTH 3: 14 She lay at his feet until the morning. She rose up before one could discern another. For he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."

RUTH 3: 15 He said, "Bring the mantle that is on you, and hold it." She held it; and he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her; and he went into the city.

Verse 15

Bring the veil - *המט פחת* *hammit pachath*; this seems to have been a cloak, plaid, or what the Arabs call hayk, which has been largely explained elsewhere. See Jdg 14:12.

Six measures of barley - We supply the word measures, for the Hebrew mentions no quantity. The Targum renders six seahs, *שית סאין* *shith sein*, which, as a seah was about two gallons and a half, must have been a very heavy load for a woman; and so the Targumist thought, for he adds, And she received strength from the Lord to carry it. If the omer be meant, which is about six pints, the load would not be so great, as this would amount to but about four gallons and a half; a very goodly present. The Targum says, that on receiving these six measures "it was said in the spirit of prophecy, that from her should proceed the six righteous persons of the world, viz., David, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and the King Messiah; each of whom should be blessed with six benedictions." It is, however, remarkable, that the Targum makes the Messiah to spring from her through the line of David, and goes down to Daniel and his companions; which Daniel prophesied so clearly, not only of the advent of Messiah the prince, but also of the very time in which he was to come, and the sacrificial death he was to die.

RUTH 3: 16 When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?" She told her all that the man had done to her.

RUTH 3: 17 She said, "He gave me these six measures of barley; for he said, 'Don't go empty to your mother-in-law.'"

RUTH 3: 18 Then she said, "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will fall; for the man will not rest, until he has finished the thing this day."

Verse 18

Until thou know how the matter will fall - That is, whether he who is nearer of kin than Boaz will take thee to wife; do not return again till this thing is determined. Boaz lost no time to bring this to an issue, as we shall see in the following chapter, Ruth 4 (note).