

The Book of Ruth 4 Chapter 3: Events on the threshing floor

Read Ruth, chapter 3:- Notice that the whole of this chapter is based on Boaz and his relationship to Naomi and Ruth: verses 2; 9 and 12 – 13. Boaz might have known that the question of kinship would arise. In a small community, relationships are of prime importance. Even now in some villages it is wise to avoid making comments about neighbours! You may be speaking to one of their relatives!!

Naomi's advice to Ruth; Chapter 3, verses 1 – 5:- “*seek a home for you*” - in the old versions this reads “*should I not seek rest for thee*”. “*A home*” and “*rest*” are equivalent to “*marriage*” - see chapter 1, verse 9. Naomi felt that Ruth should not remain a poor gleaner in the fields. Since she had no mother in Judah, Naomi takes the initiative to arrange a marriage. “*Is not Boaz our kinsman*” - Naomi determines to use the levirate (named from the Latin *levir* meaning “*husbands brother*”) marriage custom to approach Boaz: again a reminder to look at Deuteronomy chapter 25, verses 5 – 6. note that the practice continued into New Testament times – see Matthew chapter 22, verses 23 – 28. The advice given by Naomi and followed by Ruth does read as though they were risking Ruth's reputation, if not putting her in danger from the workers who would have been around the threshing floor. The two women showed great faith in the integrity and sincerity of Boaz, and in his influence on his workers and young men. The “*eating and drinking*” (verse 3), along with “*when Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry,*” (verse 7), does suggest some kind of a celebration! Ruth carefully dressed in her best clothes and remained in the background until everyone had left or settled down for the night.

On the threshing floor; verses 6 – 13:- Maybe Boaz remained on the threshing floor to guard against thieves. He settled down and fell asleep until midnight when he was disturbed and found that Ruth “*lay at his feet*” (verse 8). This phrase has a double meaning. Firstly as a simple statement of fact, secondly as implying that Ruth “*uncovered his nakedness*”. Whichever reading we take, there is no implication of any wrongdoing in their relationship! On the contrary, Ruth asks Boaz to act as “*kinsman – redeemer*” and take her as his wife (verse 9). “*spread the corner of your garment over me*” was a symbol of taking in marriage. In Jewish tradition Boaz was 80 years old when he met Ruth. This may have been an exaggeration to make a point in Rabbinical teaching. Ruth is commended for thoughtfulness in not seeking a young husband but remaining true to traditional teaching on family relationships. Boaz makes it clear that he will see that she is cared for within the kinship. If the nearest “*kinsman – redeemer*” will not take responsibility, he will do so himself.

Ruth returns to Naomi; verses 14 – 18:- Ruth was to leave the threshing floor before daylight to avoid scandalmongering. Boaz again ensures that the women have enough to eat, providing Ruth with a generous amount of grain. If he had to help her to lift it, it was a fair weight! Naomi would be waiting anxiously for Ruth's return and wants to know what has happened. The generosity of Boaz meant that he would take rapid action to sort things out and Naomi has confidence that he will want a quick resolution of the matter.

That resolution comes in the final chapter – however as in all good serials we will have to wait!
The final study will be on 26th May as there will be no study next week!

Some homework for next week! :-

There are over 100 references to the words “*redeem*” and “*redeemer*” in the Bible.

You may be familiar with some of them. Here are a few references for you to look up, you may like to find others for yourself.

Exodus 6, verse 6; Psalm 25, verse 22 (it is worth reading the whole psalm!); Psalm 69, verses 16 – 18; Isaiah 50, verse 2; Micah 4, verse 10 (prophecy about the exile in Babylon); Galatians 4, verses 4 – 5 and 1 Peter 1, verses 18 – 21.