

## The Book of Ruth

### LESSON 9

Chapter 3:01-09

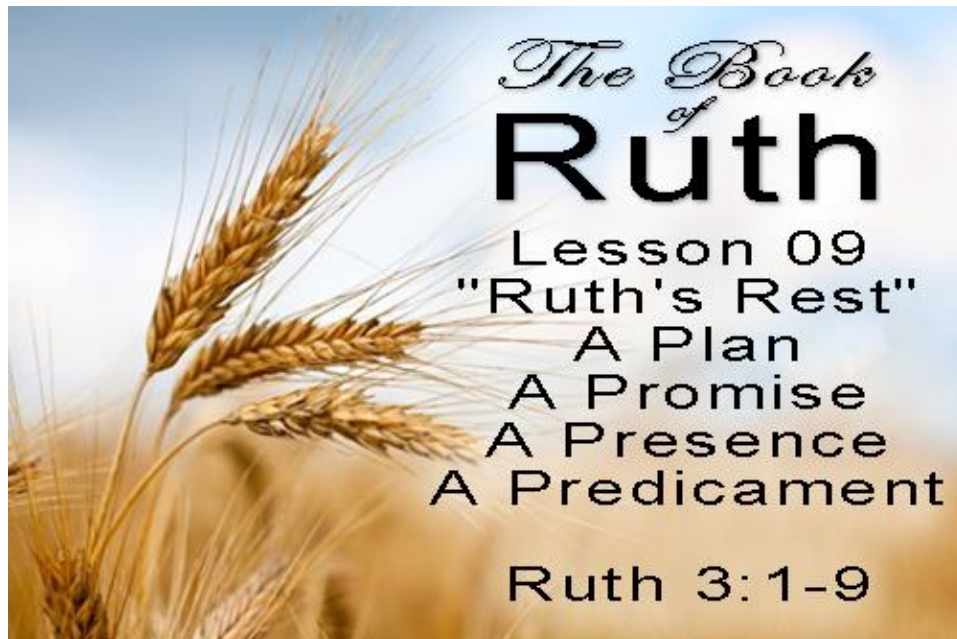
"Ruth's Rest"

A Plan

A Promise

A Presence

A Predicament



#### **LAST WEEK:**

We introduced the major characters of the Book of Ruth and their journey from Israel to Moab. Here's our outline and text for what we covered.

#### **I. Ruth's Reaping Ruth 2:1-23**

- A. **Guidance to Boaz's Field: 2:1-3**
- B. **Gleaners in Boaz's Field 2:4-7**

- C. **Grace from Boaz 2:8-14**
- D. **Gleaning from Boaz's field: 2:15-18**
1. **Don't embarrass Her: 2:15** When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her."
  2. **Provide For Her: 2:16** "And also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."
  3. **Ruth's Abundance: 2:17-18** So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. 18 And she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took it out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied.
- E. **Glad for Blessing: 2:19-23**
1. **I Gleaned With Boaz: 2:19** Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed." So, she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz."
  2. **The Kinsman-Redeemer: 2:20** And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead." Again, Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives."
- F. **Safety in Boaz's Field: 2:21-23** Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "Furthermore, he said to me, 'You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.'" 22 And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, lest others fall upon you in another field." 23 So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley

harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

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## **INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:**

Chapter 2 introduced us to the central theme of the book, which is Redemption through a Kinsman-Redeemer.

We want to keep stressing our three applications of this book.

1. The Story itself.
2. Parallel 1 Israel at that time
3. Parallel 2 believers now

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Ruth 3:1-4 Ruth's Rest, 3:1-8

- A. The Plan, 3:1-4
- B. The Promise, 3:5
- C. The Promptness, 3:6
- D. The Presence, 3:7
- E. The Predicament, 3:8-9

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**THE VISUALIZED TEXT** (NASB) (conjunctions & prepositions (and other important words) underlined, *words not in original text in italics*) (alternate text in purple)

**(3:1)**

**Then**

**Naomi**

**her** [Ruth's] **mother-in-law**

**said to her** [Ruth],

**"My daughter,**

**shall I not seek security for you,**

**that it may be well with you?**

### **Brief Commentary on Ruth 3:1**

This paragraph begins with the word "Then," a clear indication from the author that something "new" is going to happen now.

About three months have passed between chapter 2:23 and 3:1. The harvest is now complete. Living together now in Ruth's care has had such an impact on her that she now refers to Ruth as "my daughter" instead of "my daughter-in-law". Naomi sees that Ruth's everyday experience of being under the care of Boaz is rapidly coming to an end. Naomi has had time to develop a plan that should result in Ruth and Boaz being married. Naomi's heart is in the right place: this plan should bring about security for her as well as Ruth.

As you can see by the titles in the "Brief Outline" above (The Plan), this paragraph is mostly about the plan of Naomi for Ruth. In these four verses Naomi explains to Ruth her plan to bring security back into Ruth's life and her own as a byproduct. Naomi's security is closely tied to Ruth's in this plan and Naomi already knows of Ruth's faithfulness to her.

Ruth may be in the dark about much of Naomi's plan, but Naomi is not being deceitful. Ruth would have little cultural experience in Judaism. She would not have knowledge of Jewish law, traditions, culture and rituals, but Naomi does.

Naomi knows of Boaz's heart towards Ruth. She has seen all the evidence of Boaz's love for Ruth during the past three months of the harvest season. He wants Ruth to keep coming to the fields. He wants Ruth to be well cared for while she is in the fields. He makes sure that Ruth has much to take home for both her and Naomi.

Naomi also knows that Boaz is a family kinsman-redeemer. But, she also knows that Boaz is not the closest male member of her late husband's family – so her plan must be made with much craft in order to work.

Ruth must go to Boaz in such a way that **if** he will not, or cannot, accept Ruth's request for him to fulfill the Levirate Marriage law with her, that he will not suffer any embarrassment or disgrace to himself or family from them.

Three things you should look for: **1** – Ruth's humble willing submission at the feet of Boaz while seeking her redeemer. **2** – The nation of Israel's humble willing submission to her God upon her seeking to be redeemed back into His fellowship. **3** – The individual believer's (as members of the Church) humble willing submission placing themselves approaching Christ as "The Bride of Christ" in preparation for the "Marriage Feast of The Lamb."

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**(3:2)**

***"And***

***now***

***is not Boaz***

***our kinsman,***

***with whose maids you were?***

***Behold,***

***he winnows barley***

***at the threshing floor***

***tonight.***

### **Brief Commentary on Ruth 3:2**

"And now..." Again, the leading words are meant to intrigue us as to the immediate future. This is the resolve of the story. First the was the move away from Judah and God, then there was the inference of idolatry in the family, then there was chastisement and death, then there was the long hard return, then the not so welcome reception, then the hard months of working for provisions in the fields.

In the "way back past" I remember "Johnny Carson and the Tonight Show." The Announcer, Ed McMahon would announce,

"And Now, The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson," and the band would play the show theme – it always caused a great amount of applause and cheering.

"And Now," Naomi knows that Boaz, the master of the fields that Ruth has been working in for these months will be having his dinner at the threshing floor and sleeping there. How, you ask? Tradition is the answer. The owners of each field spend the late afternoon winnowing and taking stock of their harvest grain. They then sleep in the enclosure where the grain is kept (keeping it dry and safe) every night until the grain is either permanently stored or sold for profit. Nobody protects their property better than the owner. Research indicates that this has been the custom for thousands of years in Palestine and it is probably still practiced on smaller farms.

"And Now" comes the awaited answer to the plot of the story. "And Now – The Redeemer!" "And Behold" ... Behold is a word that is closely connected with "looking." Just like in English when you wish to get someone to understand a major point – "Look, **tonight is the night!**"

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**(3:3)**  
*"Wash  
 yourself therefore, and  
 anoint  
 yourself and  
 put on your best clothes, and  
 go down to the threshing floor;  
 but  
 do not make yourself known to the man  
 until  
 he has finished  
 eating and  
 drinking."*

### **Brief Commentary on Ruth 3:3**

What seems like a suggestion to Ruth to get cleaned up is more accurately the readying of Ruth to make her proposal of Levirate marriage to Boaz. She must present herself as his possible bride "without spot."

Naomi's instructions to Ruth would allow Ruth to make her bid for kinsman-redeemer in a private manner. If Boaz needed to reject his responsibilities as kinsman-redeemer both he and his family would suffer disgrace (under the law). So, Naomi tells Ruth to go after Boaz has settled himself, after dinner, and gone to bed.

Privacy, privacy, privacy. Naomi does not want Ruth (who may be somewhat ignorant to the understanding of the Jewish traditions) to embarrass Boaz in any way by being seen.

The question often comes up, "Does the term "eating and drinking" indicate that this is an inappropriate act? Unfortunately, that is often taught, but there is absolutely nothing in the text that indicates any impropriety whatsoever. Even the word for "merry" (KJV) in verse 7 only means that a full meal at the end of the day tends to make one happy and relaxed. While the KJV translation was without bias in its day about the word "Merry" it has become a word associated with drunkenness in our day and culture.

### **(3:4)**

**"And**

***it shall be when he lies down,***

***that***

***you shall notice the place where he lies, and***

***you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down;***

***then***

***he will tell you what you shall do."***

### **Brief Commentary on Ruth 3:4**

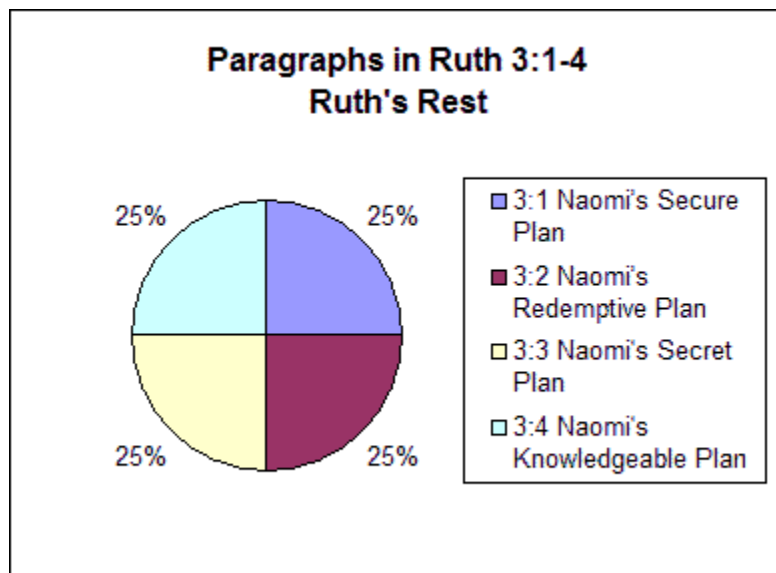
Ruth is to take note where Boaz beds himself. Certainly, sleeping in the grain room, in the open field, in the late spring would be a chilly affair and Boaz would have covered himself to stay warm, perhaps even more so at his feet. Ruth is told to go and uncover his feet and place herself there at his feet. While many desire to see much more in these words (climbing into bed with Boaz) the text is pretty clear: "Uncover his feet and lie down." I don't know of a better way to wake a man up without touching him or calling his name than to expose his feet to the cold air of the night, and then place a warm body against their bottoms. The strongest reason for doing this is to fulfill the traditional and cultural demands of the Levirate Marriage rite. Ruth must place herself at his feet in order to present herself and her proposal of marriage under this law. Don't look for immorality here – remember that the story is about honor, devotion, and love. The story typifies Christ as the "Kinsman-Redeemer," and Ruth as the submitting "Bride of Christ."

We need to make a note about Naomi telling Ruth "Then, he will tell you what you shall do." Ruth had been Mahlon's wife for several years. There is no doubt that she knows how to please a husband and she certainly wouldn't need to be "told what to do." But instead, see Ruth as coming to her Kinsman-Redeemer, under the law – She is a Moabite, completely unfamiliar with the law – needing the knowledge of what is next in this proposal – "Under the Law?"

And Boaz...

Boaz had befriended Ruth over the past three months and has treated her very special during this time. The possibility of a Levirate marriage has, of course, crossed his mind. He has probably hoped against hope that Ruth would reciprocate his desires because of his advanced age (probably about Naomi's husband's age). But hope springs eternal and if in fact Ruth did ever approach him in the prescribed way of the ritual, then he would be ready).

## Verse Percentage Chart for Ruth 3:1-4



Equal attention to each of the four verses in this paragraph.

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### The Promise, Ruth 3:05

**And**

***She [Ruth] said  
to her [Naomi],  
"All that you say  
I will do."***

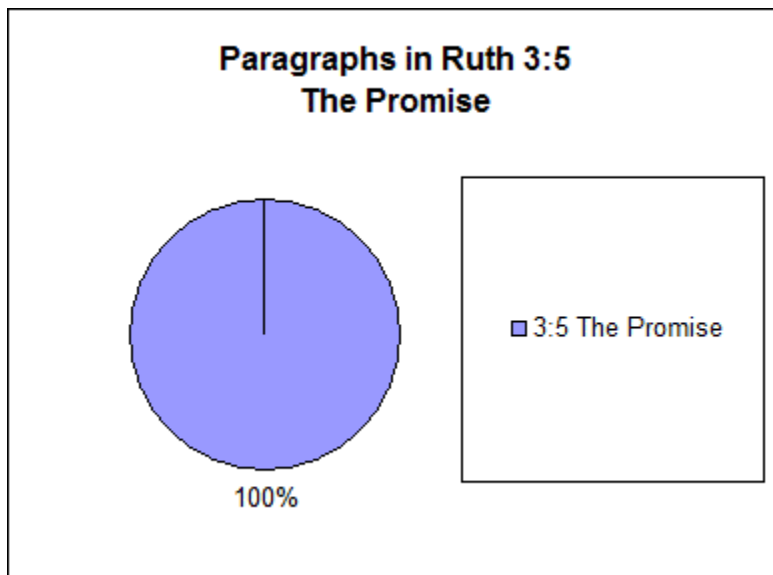
### Brief Commentary on Ruth 3:5

Specifically, Ruth hands over her fate to Naomi's wisdom completely. Ruth has put her trust in the directions of Naomi, her Mother-in-law, and she will follow whatever directions Naomi gives to her in this matter. This is the culmination of several years of relationship between Naomi and Ruth. Ruth has left her country, her people, and her gods to pursue the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Ruth had not heard or seen anything along the way that she had made a mistake – even though things had been tough. Naomi was too old to work the hard labor of the fields and

Ruth did it. Ruth provided the sustenance, Ruth provided the food, and Ruth provided the opportunity for the future. Naomi has provided the courage, the knowledge, and the insight. A redeemer waits, and Ruth is on the way.

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### Verse Percentage Chart for Ruth 3:5




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### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS: Ruth 3:6

Isn't it wonderful when you find someone who has heard good advice and then acts upon it. The removal of the self will in important matters. Naomi represents the loyal portion of the Nation of Israel, encouraging, recommending, advising, and nurturing the recently back-sliding portion of the nation towards their redeemer (remembering that they are not coming for salvation but to restoration of their former position).

In quite another way Naomi also represents the loyal members of the Body of Christ (inside or outside of the local church) who give

their lives and their energy to restoring back-sliding believers into fellowship with Christ, and back into fellowship with other believers. God bless the Naomi's of this world. They stand alongside troubled believers and give their full support, showing them the way, making straight their paths, that they might be restored into full fellowship. Like in the story, Ruth has already (perhaps years ago) turned from idols to God. As a "believer" she has found herself outside the circle of fellowship in the nation, she was coming from "another country." She needs a "Kinsman-Redeemer" to bring her back, to buy her back, someone who will pay for her heart.

Although not directly, the point of the story of Ruth is the easy application of her situation to parallels in repentance. Whether it is amongst individuals in the ancient nation of Israel or since the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the process of "turning around to Him" has been always the same. Finding Him, being introduced to Him, and then making Him the only thing anywhere of any value to you.

In the area of Salvation, the true believer says "You, dear LORD, only You, and nothing else, I must have You." Even if you fall on your knees in sorrow for your sin, even if you turn away from sin and other gods, if you do not find Him as your "One and only," it is all for naught. God is looking for those who only desire Him, and when that happens, we find ourselves face to face with Jesus the Savior and the recipients of His saving Grace. Hear His promise, listen to His plan, and then act with "Promptness." Tomorrow may be too late.

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**THE VISUALIZED TEXT (NASB) (conjunctions & prepositions (and other important words) underlined, words not in original text in italics) (alternate text in purple)**

**(3:6)**

**So**

**She**

**went down to the threshing floor and did according to all**

**that her mother-in-law had commanded**

**her.**

### **Brief Commentary on Ruth 3:6**

The word "so" indicates to us that what happens in this verse (and others that follow) is the result of actions taken in the previous verse or verses.

First, we'll take a moment and talk about just why Ruth had to go DOWN to the threshing floor. You have probably heard the expression "I must go UP to Jerusalem." In Israel, Jerusalem is always "up" to get there, both symbolically and physically. It's then pretty normal to refer to anywhere that's not Jerusalem, or any direction, as "Down" from where you are at that moment.

Naomi has given instructions to Ruth on how to approach this delicate matter. Now it is up to Ruth. Her response is immediate. What trust Ruth has in Naomi, what a wonderful relationship these two women have with each other. Naomi is the mature nurturer and Ruth is the young willing learner. Ruth now has Naomi's plan and begins to put it into action. The intention of both women is to acquire the attention of Boaz. We know that he has interest in her and that he is a generous caring man.

Everyone in the story knows that he is family and a possible kinsman-redeemer for either Naomi or Ruth. Naomi and Ruth know that Naomi is not a good candidate to put forward for acceptance by a kinsman-redeemer. The point of such a law is

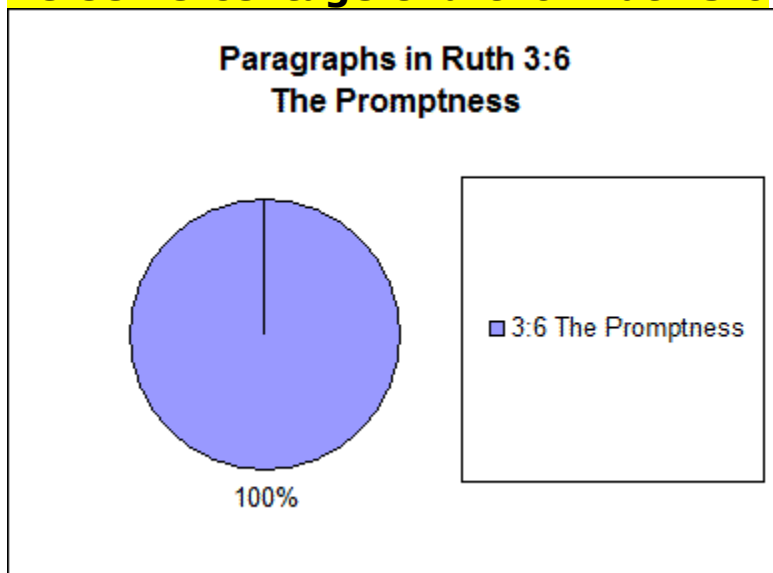
that the bride will be able to bear children in order to continue the family line and the property that goes with it. God had purposefully put this into the law in order to continue Abraham's covenanted people, forever. Under Jewish law the land and its harvest belong to God. The people of Israel are only caretakers. The land has been divided between the tribes of Israel and the law states that it should never be sold or divided up – it is His!

Once every fifty years all land transactions are cancelled out and everything returns to its original land granted families who have been chosen as official **caretakers** of those portions, but it is not theirs, it is His.

Ruth is the best candidate. She is young, and thanks to Naomi, she has caught the eye of a possible kinsman-redeemer, Boaz. Now in verse 6 Ruth has taken action.

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### Verse Percentage Chart for Ruth 3:6



## **INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS Ruth 3:7**

The scene shifts now to Boaz. There are times in a man's life when he considers himself to be happy. Here he is at the end of a very successful harvest. The grain is in, and Boaz is not only master of the field, but of the harvest. He has done a years work in preparation for this time. Sowing the seed, plowing, watering, that is all done now. The worry over too little or too much rain, the ever-present threat of fire – it is all behind him now.

He sits quietly now and enjoys a meal before bedtime as he watches over his grain. Now the worry has shifted to robbers coming to the field at night and taking the grain. As master of the harvest, it falls to him to sleep there with the grain, watching over it. Can you see him there? Can you see him crawling up on top of a sun warmed pile of grain, pulling a covering over him and settling down for a good uninterrupted sleep? He closes his eyes ... and he's asleep quickly.

His sleep will be interrupted, however. A young lady, dressed in marriage clothes, has entered the grain room. She has come to make the traditional proposal for marriage – a very special kind of marriage – the Levirate marriage.

She crouches down and uncovers his feet, as she has been instructed to, and places herself there in the place of submission awaiting his attention and response to this traditional request to the Kinsman-Redeemer.

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**THE VISUALIZED TEXT (NASB) (conjunctions & prepositions (and other important words) underlined, words not in original text in italics) (alternate text in purple)**

**(3:7)**

**When**

**Boaz**

*had eaten and*

*drunk and*

*his heart was merry* (Heb. *yatab*, be glad, joyful)

*he went to lie down*

*at the end of the heap of grain; and*

**she**

*came secretly, and*

*uncovered his feet and*

*lay down.*

The word **When** introduces to yet another change of scene. We are now introduced to **Boaz** and his situation. Then we are introduced to "**She**" that we know as Ruth. Many scholars over the centuries have commented on the skilled storytelling that makes for the Book of Ruth. Placements of characters, thoughts, and special moments make the book so delightful.

Specifically, the text tells us that Ruth does what Naomi has requested. Ruth waited in secrecy for the moment when Boaz had finished his dinner and fallen asleep for the night upon his warm grain. She has come under the cover of darkness and willingly placed herself into the position of submission. Now comes the waiting – will he awake? Will he wake up and find the love of his life there, or will he find just a deluded servant girl? What will he do? Will he be happy or angry? Will he embrace her as his wife, or will he rape her and discard her? The risks are many.

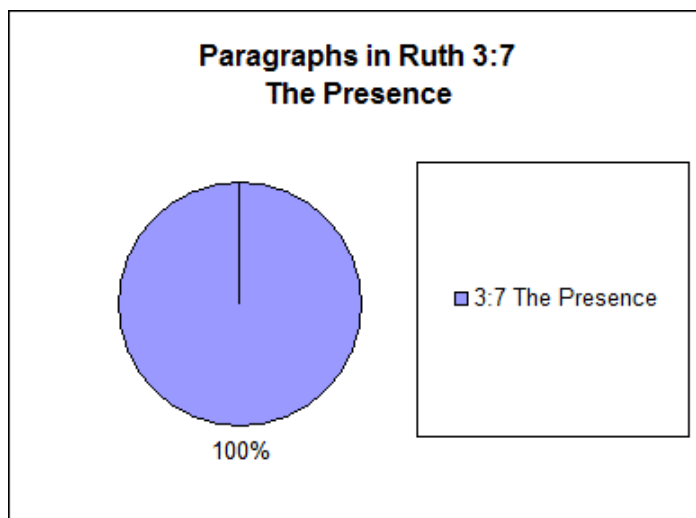
This was an errand that if Boaz refused the responsibility of becoming her husband (via Levirate law) then he and his family would suffer dishonor in the community. God made it quite clear

that this was an important responsibility to Him and the community would feel that way as well. Ruth would be in a place of public shame if she was an "unwanted" woman as well.

Ruth uncovers Boaz's feet... for feet play a large role in Jewish traditional and symbolic life. One who places themselves at another's feet voluntarily is a "Bond Servant." A free slave who chooses servanthood based on the character of the one who is served. Becoming one's footstool is one who has become subservient. One who washes another's feet is the lowest servant (the position of a priest). The feet are where there should be no barrier to touching the ground where holiness is. If Boaz, once he becomes the rightful Kinsman-Redeemer, refuses to take that responsibility he must put on a special shoe, made of Kosher animal skin, that is sewn together in two pieces (His and Hers, the stitch binding the two together), proclaim his unwillingness to fulfill the law, and then remove the shoe, cast it away. The woman requesting this opportunity then spits in his face. Then he spits on the ground (spitting upon the holy ground of God and His law). With the uncovering of Boaz's feet, she willingly asks the question "will you marry me?")

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### Verse Percentage Chart for Ruth 3:7



## INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS RUTH 3:8-9

The Predicament! Just as the text says, "It happened in the middle of the night." Ruth has successfully arrived at the threshing floor (the storage barn at the threshing floor) and secretly made her way to the feet of Boaz. Boaz is sleeping peacefully and probably dreaming of the great wealth of grain or that pretty young thing that keeps coming to the fields to glean, perhaps even dreaming that he might one day be asked to marry her.

A touch, to his feet, a feeling that someone is there. He is alarmed and quickly reaches forward for the intruder – someone has come to steal his grain! Behold, it is a young woman – in a wedding gown! ... I'm dreaming!

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## THE VISUALIZED TEXT (NASB) (conjunctions & prepositions (and other important words) underlined, words not in original text in italics) (**alternate text in purple**)

**(3:8)**

**And**

*it happened*

*in the middle of the night*

**that**

*the man*

*was startled and*

*bent forward;*

*and behold,*

*a woman was lying at his feet.*

## Brief Commentary on Ruth 3:8

If we've paid attention to the story, we know that Boaz has a strong attraction to Ruth. He has been taking very special care of her when she comes to glean. He knows that she is gleaning

because she has no husband, is the daughter-in-law of Naomi, and Naomi is his "close relative's" late wife. He also knows that Ruth is available (wife of the late Mahlon, son of the late Elimelech, for the Levirate marriage arrangement, but he is not the closest relative – and he's much older than she. "Hope against hope."

We know that Naomi has encouraged Ruth to continue to encourage Boaz because she knows that, even though he may not be the first one in line, he is wealthy, owns much property, and has already taken an interest in Ruth – but not immediately available. "Hope against hope."

We also know that Ruth, even though she has been more or less a silent partner in all this plotting, has taken so much of a liking to Boaz that she is quite willing to follow Naomi's plan to capture Boaz as her family's kinsman-redeemer. "Hope against hope."

**(3:9)**

**And**

*he said,  
"Who are you?"*

**And**

*she answered,  
"I am Ruth your maid.  
So spread your covering over your maid,  
for you are a close relative."*

### **Brief Commentary on Ruth 3:9**

"Who are you?" he cries out thinking someone may be there to steal his grain. "It's me, Ruth, asking for your hand in marriage under the Levirate Ritual law! Spread your protection over me and my family by taking me as part of your family (spread your covering over your maid). "Please accept my plea." (Please excuse my rough translation).

Herein lies the "predicament." Naomi wants them together. Boaz wants them together. Ruth wants them together. He does not qualify under the law to do this righteously. If you were a Jew reading this story you would see this coming. At this point in the story, you would clearly see the predicament even though it has not yet been announced in the text. You would say to yourself, "Ah, Ha, what are they going to do about it?"

If Boaz and Ruth make love there on the pile of grain and He does not marry her then they are both guilty under the law.

If Boaz uses Ruth's desire for Levirate marriage to his advantage, sleeps with her, and then does not marry her, they are both guilty under the law.

If Boaz and Ruth consummate the Levirate marriage now, he and she become transgressors of the law. He and she would be committing fornication and immorality under the law. He does not qualify for the position of Levirate. He is not the qualified kinsman-redeemer.

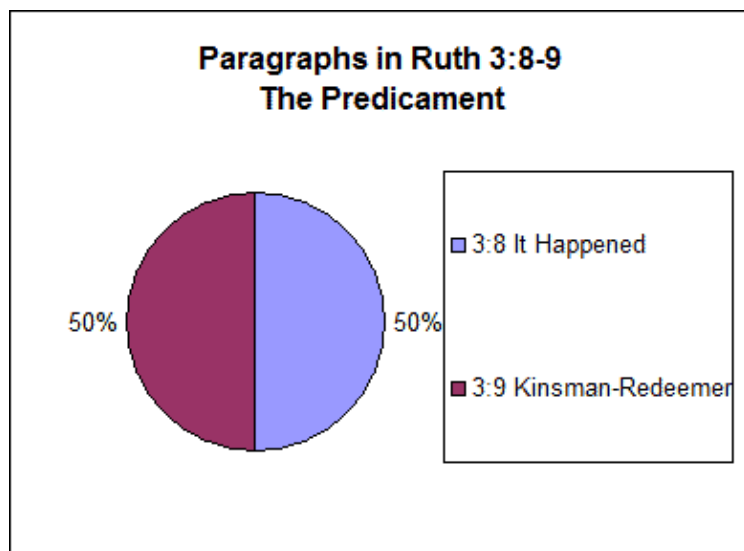
If someone should see them together, at night, alone, on the grain pile, they both will be shamed and thought to be breakers of the law. – The Predicament! Is Boaz a Righteous man? What will he do?

"Why did she ask Boaz to "spread your cover over me"?" Conservative scholars, both Jewish and Christian, remark that the request was for Boaz to place her under the protection of His faith in God. *"Ruth said, "Take me under your wing (kanaph)." Cover me, is a term of intimacy. Boaz was an honorable man and did the honorable thing. They were married, and she became his bride. Here she was a Moabite woman from a foreign country, grafted into the nation of Israel, like believers of all time are grafted into the Vine which is The Lord Jesus. Boaz and Ruth are listed in the genealogy of King David and therefore of Y'shua ben Yosef (Jesus, son of Joseph). She had the right to be covered by her spouse's Tallit. This is a symbolic expression of marriage. (In*

some Mid Eastern cultures, they cast a garment over one being claimed for marriage.)" "In Ezk.16: 8 YHVH speaks to Jerusalem and likewise says, "so I spread my wing (kanaph) over you and covered your nakedness," and in Psalm 91 we are able to "abide under the shadow of the Almighty" and "under His wings (kanaph)."" \*2 It needs to be pointed out here that Boaz (3:9) did not cover her with his garment (kanaph – wing, tallit). Instead, as we will soon learn, he explained why he could NOT declare her as his wife (by covering her in the ritual) at this time – there was another who had the "right of first refusal" upon her request for Levirate marriage. He goes on to further state that if Redeemer #1 will not fulfill his duties as Kinsman-Redeemer with Ruth, then he, Boaz, certainly will."

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### Verse Percentage Chart for Ruth 3:8-9



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Jeremiah 18:15

"Don't stumble from the Ancient Path."

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