

A scenic landscape featuring a winding asphalt road that curves through a field. To the right of the road is a wire fence, and beyond that, rolling hills under a sky with soft, golden light from a low sun. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

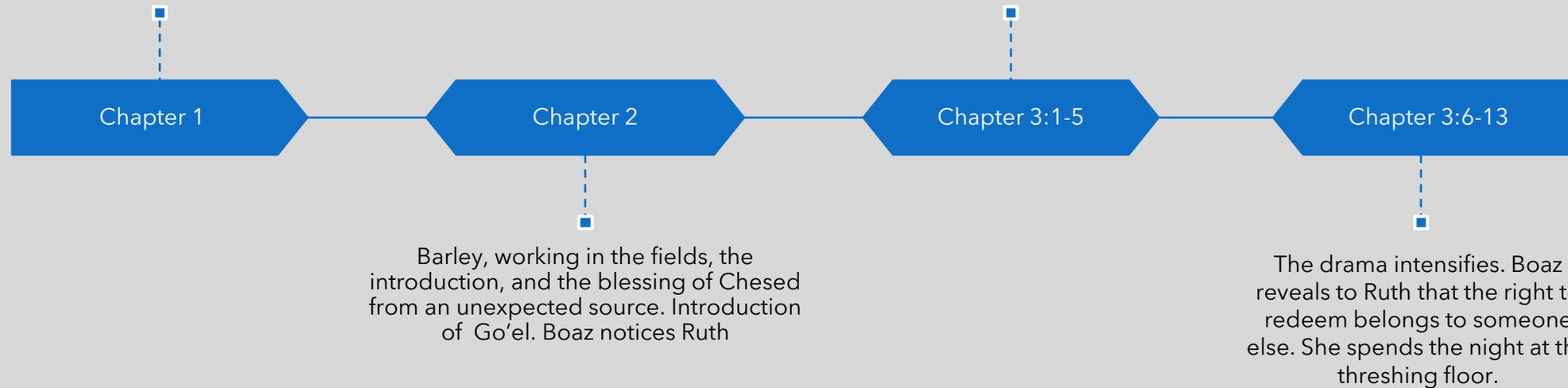
Ruth 3:6-14

Midnight at the Threshing Floor

Timeline of Ruth So far

From Bethlehem to Moab (Famine to Respite) And from Moab to Bethlehem (From death to hope)... "The arrived at the beginning o the barley harvest."

The plan to uncover is presented to Ruth who accepts Naomi's request



*Come Thou
Fount*





6 So she went down to the threshing-floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her.



“Go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do.”

Summary statement: “Did just as...” Which means she: Washed, perfumed herself, put on her best outfit, snuck into the threshing floor unseen, waited for Boaz to get happy, watched him closely as he laid down, waited until he was asleep, uncovered his “feet,” and waited for him to tell her what to do.

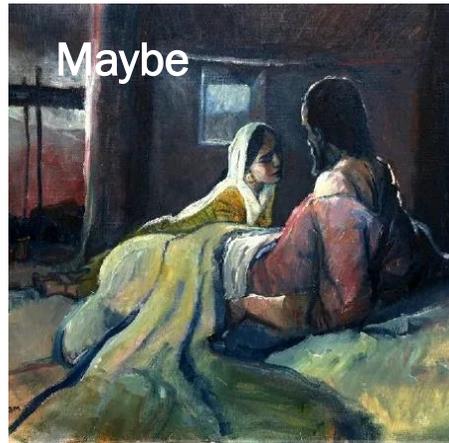
But then, she put her own twist on the affair. Now the narrator will unpack what “Did just as...” truly means.

What **REALLY HAPPENED**

Midnight in the threshing floor



Evidence unseen



Bible Odyssey



Boston University, Huffington Post

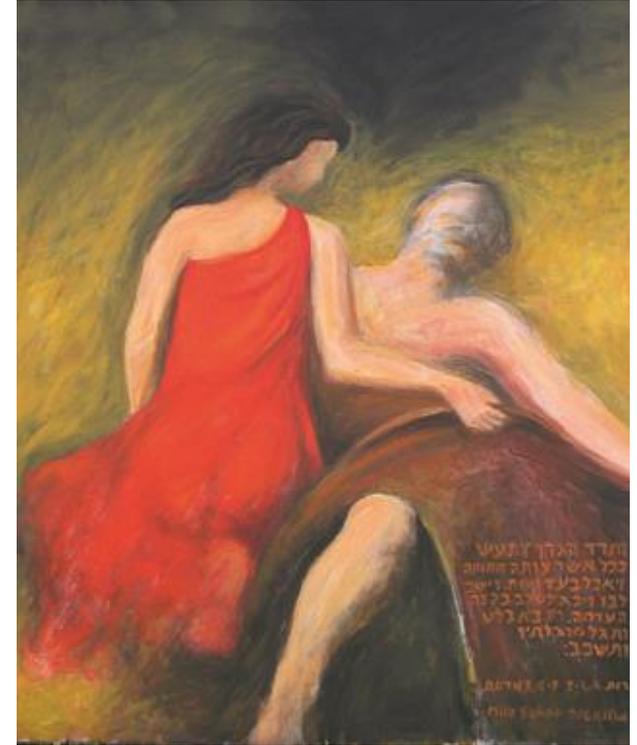


The Times of Israel



7 When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and he was in a contented mood, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came quietly and uncovered his feet, and lay down.



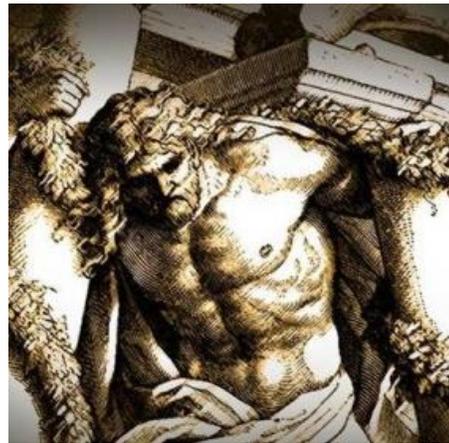


No reason to believe there was anything special to this meal, only that drinking of wine and beer was definitely involved. The expectation is that Boaz would have been inebriated



What **A SURPRISE!**

8 At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and there, lying at his feet, was a woman!



It is quite possible that when he is startled awake (hugged into wakefulness?) and finds himself lying half naked next to a Moabite woman, Boaz imagines that Ruth has done what her ancestress, Lot's daughter, did before her." Phillips, 'The Book of Ruth – Deception and Shame,' 14.



Total Surrender

“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.”
(Clarke)

Enduring Word Commentary



“Let none be encouraged hereby to enter into God’s ordinance through the devil’s portal, lest they smart and smoke for it.” (Trapp)



It wasn’t unusual for gangs of thieves to come and steal all the hard-earned grain a farmer had grown. Boaz slept at the threshing floor to guard his crop against the kind of attacks described in 1 Samuel 23:1.



Since Boaz had been there to protect against thieves, it must have given him quite a shock to wake up and know someone was there. But his shock quickly turned to wondering when he found out the visitor was a woman.



9 He said, 'Who are you?' And she answered, 'I am Ruth, your servant; spread your cloak over your servant, for you are next-of-kin.'





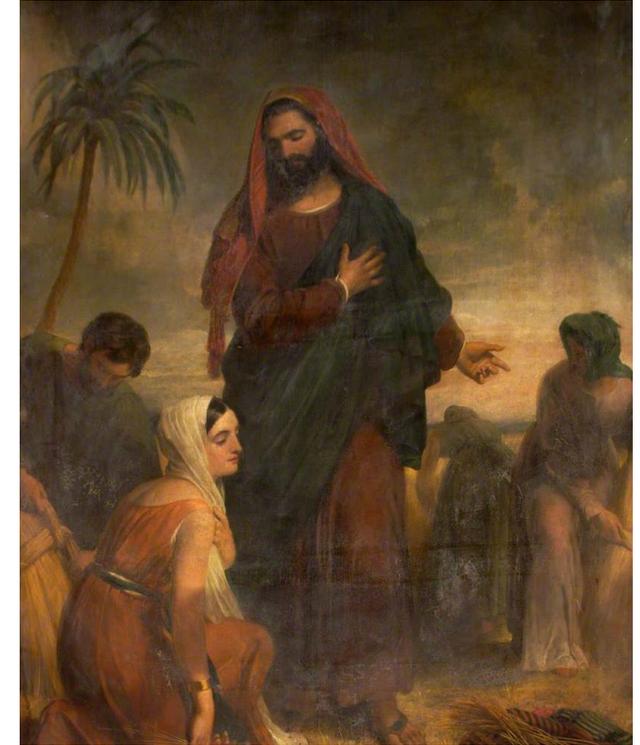
Your Servant Ruth, cover me
with your wings

The word go'el is used six times in verses 6-13 and dominates this midnight scenario. The expression means both the action of recovering what is lost, and the family member required to perform the action. (NIB.)

Ruth veers from Naomi's script. Naomi says, "He will tell you what to do," but Ruth does not wait, rather she acts and tells Boaz what to do.

Ruth uses 'ama for servant, rather than sipha. Ama has a higher social status than sipha. Then she says, "spread your 'cloak' over me." Boaz had used the same word in plural to mean wings (2:12.) In a way, Ruth is challenging Boaz to take action to make his prayer a reality.

"Spread your cloak" Is this a marriage proposal, a request for sexual relations, or both? 1 request or 2? Is marriage required for redemption?



You are my next of kin



Both marriage and redemption are concerned with keeping family property under family control. (NIB)



Ruth identified herself and made a simple request. In beginning with the words “take your maidservant,” Ruth again showed great humility and submission. She presented herself as Boaz’s servant.

More from EWC



Here, she boldly asked Boaz to take her in marriage. The phrase can also be translated as “spread the corner of your garment over me.” This was a culturally relevant way to say, “I am a widow, take me as your wife.”



For you are a close relative: This shows that this was not an inappropriate thing for Ruth to do towards Boaz. It was bold, but not inappropriate. Ruth understood this as she identified Boaz as her close relative (literally, you are a goel, a kinsman-redeemer).



Though deceased, Elimelech had the right to have his family name carried on and as goel, Boaz had the responsibility to do this for Elimelech. This could only happen through Boaz marrying Ruth and providing children to carry on the name of Elimelech. Ruth boldly, yet humbly and properly, sought her rights.

the **OLD WIN!**

10 He said, 'May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter; this last instance of your loyalty is better than the first; you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich.'



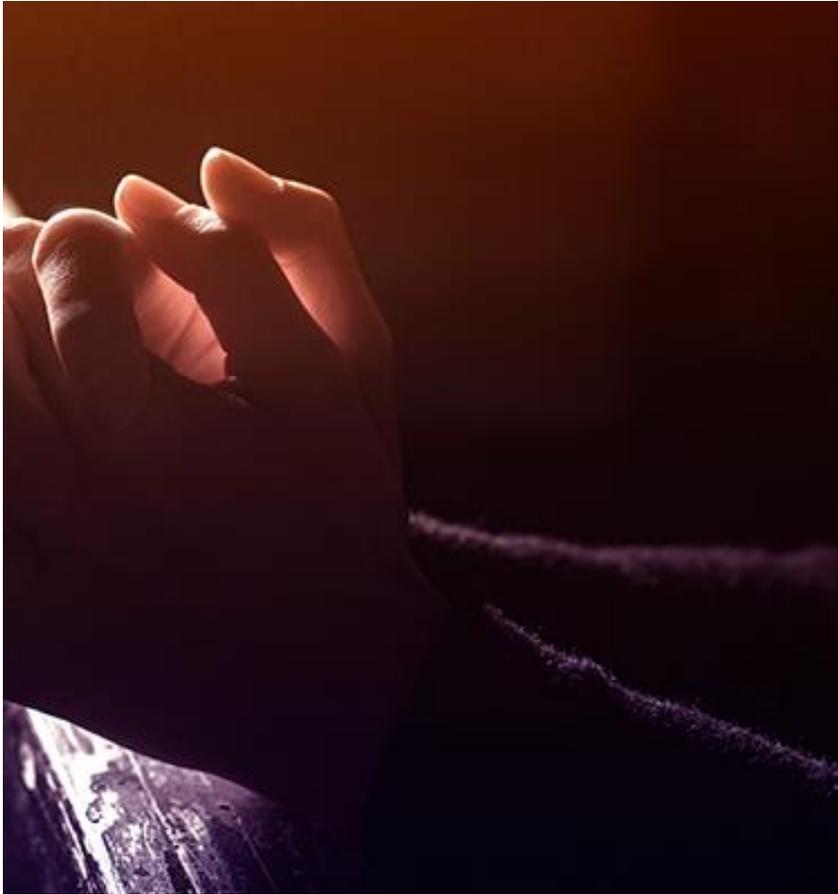
It can be argued that Boaz's words in these verses provide adequate clues for deciding between the interpretive possibilities presented to us in vv 9-10.

Marry me
Be a Kinsman Redeemer



Loyalties compared: Loyalty towards an elderly Mother-in-Law (1:16) vs. loyalty towards an elderly kinsman redeemer, or an elder Jewish man (cover me with your wings.)

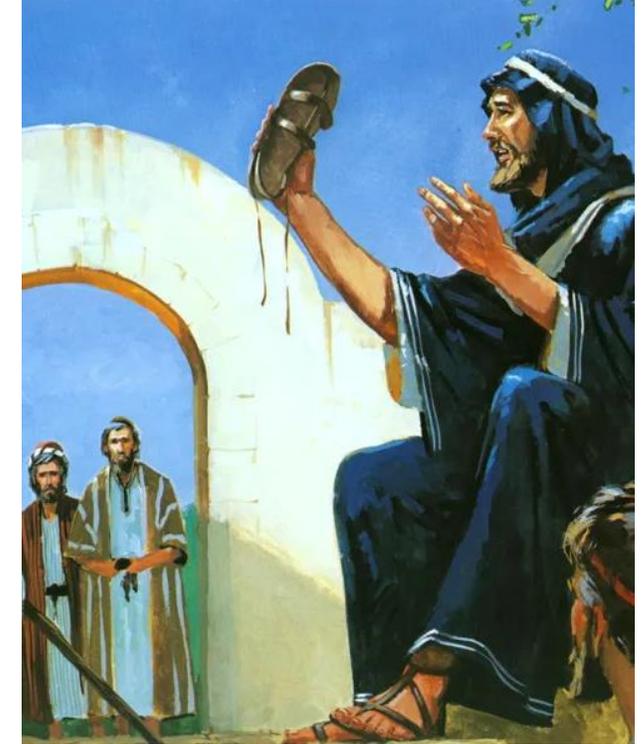
Ruth is the prototypical loyal person



11 And now, my daughter, do not be afraid; I will do for you all that you ask, for all the assembly of my people know that you are a worthy woman.



Since Boaz says, “I will do for you all that you ask,” and then proceeds to arrange his marriage with Ruth, we should be able to assume that he understood Ruth’s request as a proposal for marriage, rather than a request for sexual relations per se... In verse 11 Boaz responds to Ruth’s request for marriage, and in v. 12 he responds to her reminder that he is a go’el and must therefore redeem the land... The first he can promise to do; the second depends on a factor outside his control.” (NIB)



The Answer: I will marry you, but...

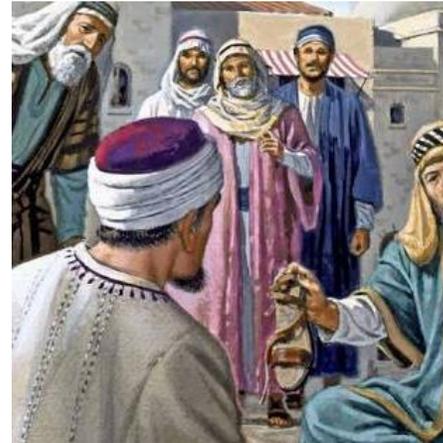


the **TWO ANSWERS**

12But now, though it is true that I am a near kinsman, there is another kinsman more closely related than I.



The two petitions can be separated, but Boaz must still follow tradition. The first in line must be given the option to redeem, which can be separated from taking on Ruth, which has been Naomi's fear all along. The promise "I will do for you" implies that Boaz will do all in his power to marry Ruth, but he can't promise redemption yet!



Ruth could have chosen a different man, but out of obedience to Naomi, she opts for a redeemer. She could marry Boaz, even if another will redeem the land.

In fact, dealing with the widow might make it easier to have someone redeem the land. Boaz, however, will follow the customs to the end, as we will see.



13 Remain this night, and in the morning, if he will act as next-of-kin for you, good; let him do so. If he is not willing to act as next-of-kin for you, then, as the Lord lives, I will act as next-of-kin for you. Lie down until the morning.'



A promise has been made, but the passage ends in great suspense.

Will the first in line redeem the land? Will Boaz be able to negotiate a suitable price for Ruth, should the first in line attach her to the land to be redeemed. Will the first in line be willing to negotiate at all? Boaz is a pillar of the community, a worthy man, a man of means, making a request to a cousin. Chances are he will be able to get Ruth, but the land?



Whatever the outcome of the negotiation, Ruth's visit to the threshing floor was very successful. At the very least, she got a marriage proposal out of the deal. She is described as a *gibbor hayil*, the same expression used to describe Boaz in 2:1. Boaz states that the whole village believes her to be a worthy woman. This is an indication that they are suitably matched.



Ruth takes matters into her own hands and secures a promise of marriage, which will change her life and Naomi's for ever. Now, on to the land!



CLOSING PRAYER

