

Scene Three:

Na'omi's Wonderful Plan for Ruth's Life

3: 1-28

Ruth lived outside the covenant family of YHVH, bankrupt, with no claim to the mercy of God. Therefore, she foreshadowed the Church (see Ah - The Book of Ruth and Shavu'ot) in five ways as the rest of the story is told.

Na'omi saw it as her duty as mother-in-law to seek long-term security for her faithful Moabite daughter-in-law who had so graciously proven her loyalty, generosity, diligence and strength of character throughout the hot and difficult harvest season. In a culture where arranged marriages were the norm, this meant doing what she could to orchestrate a marriage between Ruth and Bo'az.

There were several things involved. Elimelek had possessed a portion of land in Beit-Lechem that Na'omi was being forced to sell due to her poverty (4:3). Now Bo'az, a relative of Elimelek, was her kinsman-redeemer. She hoped that Bo'az would redeem, or restore, her land, and redeem, or marry, Ruth, thus preserving the family name of Elimelek. On the basis of this hope, Na'omi encouraged Ruth to visit Bo'az who had shown himself to be kind.

Because she was a woman, protocol forbade Na'omi from approaching Bo'az to arrange a marriage for Ruth. In fact, there was no suggestion that Na'omi had spoken to Bo'az about anything since her return from Mo'av. Yet from the very beginning, Na'omi clearly had an intuition about Bo'az's interest in Ruth. Having watched and waited through the long harvest season, Na'omi apparently decided Bo'az needed some subtle help to get the ball rolling. The way things finally played out suggests that Na'omi's instincts were right on target.

If Bo'az had ever been married, the Bible doesn't mention it. According to Jewish tradition, he was a lifelong bachelor. Although he obviously took a keen interest in Ruth from the moment he first saw her, it does not seem to have entered his mind to pursue the kinsman-redeemer role on her behalf. He even said himself that he was surprised that Ruth didn't deem him unsuitable for marriage (3:10). He obviously needed some prodding.

Na'omi had sized up the situation correctly though, and **she** instructed **Ruth** on what to do. **Na'omi's** plan was bold and utterly unconventional. It was very dangerous (see **Af - The Concept of Chesed**), but there was nothing unrighteous or indecent about **her** plan. **Na'omi** certainly would not have asked **Ruth** to compromise **her** virtue or relinquish godly modesty. Nevertheless, what **Na'omi** advised **Ruth** to do was shockingly forward. **The essence of Na'omi's plan was for Ruth to propose marriage to Bo'az!**⁶⁹