

# Na'omi Discloses Her Plan For Ruth and Bo'az

## 3: 1-5

**DIG:** In what three ways does Ruth foreshadow the Church? Why do you think Na'omi approached Ruth with her plan? What instructions does Na'omi give to Ruth? What is her goal? In their male-dominated world, how do you account for such boldness? How did Ruth prepare herself to meet Bo'az? Was Na'omi's plan a sure thing? What risks were involved?

**REFLECT:** How do you meet people? How did you meet your spouse? When has human planning and divine will met in your life? Have you had your record washed clean? Are you a pleasing aroma to YHVH? Have you exchanged your filthy rags for a white robe? What are some tangible proofs that you are being conformed into the image of Christ?

A good man is hard to find. It has always been that way. How could a woman of character, especially an outsider like Ruth, go about the task of finding a husband to support her and take care of her? Today she might try to find someone through JDate: "Widowed Moabitess seeks hard working man of character for long walks in the barley fields and quiet evenings by the fire. Must like children." Na'omi's plan would be risky (see Af - The Concept of Chesed); however, Na'omi decided that for Ruth's sake . . . it would be worth it.

Ruth foreshadows the Church in that she prepared to meet Bo'az in three ways. The culture of the day believed that a woman could only find true happiness in the house of her husband. Therefore, one day Ruth's mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, I must find security (Hebrew: *manoach*) for you" (3:1a). In this context security would be obtained through marriage as already implied earlier. This is what Na'omi prayed would happen in 1:8-9, and now she was about to answer her own prayer. Here, again, is an example of the divine will and the human will working together to carry out the purpose of ADONAI.

The purpose is: Where you will be well provided for (3:1b). Na'omi had three issues. First, how could the name Elimelek be maintained among the tribes of Isra'el since both of her sons were dead. Second, what steps should be taken to protect her inheritance that Elimelek had left in Na'omi's trust. Third, how could she provide rest and security for her faithful daughter-in-law? A marriage to Bo'az would solve all three problems. This also meant that Na'omi would renounce her own claim to Bo'az as the kinsman-redeemer and give it to Ruth the younger widow.

But who in Beit-Lechem could provide the **security** for an outsider, especially a Moabite (see Ac - **Introduction to the Book of Ruth from a Jewish Perspective: the historical background**)? At the very least such a marriage would have been socially awkward . . . if not worse. The man might end up as a social outcast. Who would be willing to undertake such a risk? Na'omi thought **she** had the answer: **Now Bo'az, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor (3:2). The threshing floor** was a flat, hard area, usually the bedrock on a slightly raised hill or platform, but always downwind of the village. The grain was beaten out of the stalks by having an animal like an ox or donkey drag a wooden threshing sledge (with stones inserted into it) over it continually on the threshing floor. **Winnowing** followed this, which involved throwing the grain into the air with a fork or shovel, allowing the wind to carry the light husks of chaff would be blown away. In Isra'el the westerly winds would come in the late afternoon and continue until sunset. The grain was then removed from the threshing floor and either stored in granaries or sold (**Song of Songs 7:3; Amos 2:13**). The straw became fodder for the animals and the chaff was used for fuel.<sup>70</sup>

Humanly speaking, **Ruth's** marriage to **Bo'az** would solve all three of **Na'omi's** issues (see above). But just how would a woman make such a delicate proposal? **Ruth** could hardly walk up to **Bo'az** in the middle of the field, drop to one knee and say, "Marry me!" Therefore, **Na'omi** said to **Ruth**, "Wash yourself, put perfume on, and put on your best clothes" (3:3). **This was an extremely dangerous road along which Na'omi was urging Ruth to travel. However, she knew no other.**

**First, Ruth washed herself (3:3a):** Torah required ceremonial washings, taking a bath and changing clothes usually preceded a special event (**Genesis 35:1-3**). Actually, **Na'omi** was telling **Ruth** to act like a bride preparing for **her** wedding (**Ezeki'el 16:9-12**). If we want to enter into a deeper relationship with **Yeshua**, we must **purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God (Second Corinthians 7:1)**. Because of our sin nature, we must pray: **Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin, and I will be whiter than snow (Psalm 51:2 and 7)**. But sometimes **YHVH** say to us: **Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of My sight, stop doing wrong (Isaiah 1:16)**. When we seek forgiveness, **ADONAI** washes our record clean: **If we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive our sins, and purify us from all unrighteousness (First John 1:9)**.

**Second, Ruth anointed herself (3:3b):** People in the Near East used fragrant oils to protect and heal their bodies, and to make themselves smell good. A bride would especially take care to wear fragrant perfume that would make **her** nice to be near (**Song of Songs 1:3, 12-14, 4:11-16**). **Anointing** oil speaks of the presence and working of the **Ruach** in our lives. All believers have received the baptism of the **Spirit** at conversion (see the

commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw - What God Does For Us at the Moment of Faith**). Thus, we ought to be a **pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing (Second Corinthians 2:15)**. The more we are **conformed into the image of Messiah (Romans 8:29)** in character and conduct, the more we please our heavenly **Father**, and the more **He** can bless us and use us for **His** glory.

**Third, Ruth changed her clothes (3:3c):** She was asked to put away her widow's clothes and put on a wedding dress (**Isaiah 61:10**). As modest as it might have been, **Ruth** probably had one special dress for festive occasions. Clothing carries a spiritual meaning in the Bible. After they had sinned Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves, but they did it improperly. It was only by the shedding of blood that they could approach **YHVH (Genesis 3:1-8 and 21)**. The Jewish High Priests wore special **clothes** that no one else could wear (**Exodus 28**). Salvation is pictured as a change of **clothes (Luke 15:22; Isaiah 61:10)**. Salvation is pictured as **taking off** the "grave-clothes" of your old self, and **putting on** the "grace-clothes" of your new self (**Colossians 3:1-17; also see John 11:44**). **Jesus** calls those who have exchanged their filthy rags (**Isaiah 64:6**) **for white robes** as being **victorious (Revelation 3:4)**. If you want to enter into a deeper fellowship with **Jesus**, then **be clothed in white, and anoint your head with oil (Ecclesiastes 9:8)**.

**Na'omi** knew that **Bo'az** would be sleeping on the threshing floor in order to guard his harvest from thieves. But **Ruth** was not to rush up to **Bo'az** and initiate the discussion. Instead, she was neither to be seen nor heard by him. **Na'omi** instructed her daughter-in-law, "Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking" (3:3d). Then he would fall asleep.

**Ruth prepared herself by learning how to present herself to Bo'az:** When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. He had covered himself with his robe protect himself against the cool of the night. She was to go and uncover his feet and lie down. This was a legal appeal for **Bo'az** to fulfill his duty as her kinsman-redeemer and marry her. In the ancient world, a position at the feet signified *submission*. When **Joshua** defeated the five kings of the Amorites in his southern campaign he invited the commanders of his army to put their feet on the necks of the kings. Then **Joshua** charged his men to be courageous because **God** would give them the victory over their enemies (**Josh 10:24-25**). **Psalm 110:1** uses the same imagery when **God** says to **Messiah**, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." There was nothing improper about this procedure, for it was the only way **Ruth** could offer herself to her kinsman-redeemer. Lying down at the feet of **Bo'az** was an act of *submission*. **Ruth** was placing herself under his authority.<sup>71</sup>

All **she** had to do was to put **herself** at the feet of the lord of the harvest, and **he** would do the rest. **Na'omi** told **her**, "**He will tell you what to do (3:4)**. Like the Prodigal Son (**Luke 15:11-24**), we come to **Jesus** just as we are, and **He** will receive us and change us. However, we have a part in the process, for it is **God's will that you be sanctified, be conformed into the image of Christ** so that we might be glorified (**First Thessalonians 4:3; Romans 8:29a**).

In short, **Na'omi** left nothing to chance. Instead, **she** calculated as carefully as **she** could to set up a favorable environment: **Bo'az** would be in a good mood and the two could talk alone - away from gossipy ears. In doing so, **she** modeled the proper use of human ingenuity in the pursuit of one goal (or *go'el*, if you please). **Her** actions fulfilled **YHVH's** plans.

**Finally, Ruth promised to obey:** **She** was not only a hearer of the word, but also a doer of it. A willingness to obey **the Lord** is the secret to having a relationship with **Him**: **Anyone who loves me will obey My teaching (John 14:23a)**. **God's** will isn't like a cafeteria where we can pick and choose what we want. We have been born with a sin nature and are broken vessels; however, to the best of our ability, **ADONAI** expects us to obey **Him** completely.

The simple promise of **Ruth**, "**I will do whatever you say**" (**3:5**), draws the scene to a close and demonstrates **her** willingness to engage in this risky endeavor. **Ruth's conduct must not be judged by modern standards, but by those of the times in which she lived. She was fulfilling a duty of love and piety towards the dead by approaching Bo'az and reminding him of his obligation as a kinsman.** Thus, **she** took **Na'omi's** words to be a command to be obeyed, not a suggestion to be weighed. **Her** answer pushes the story forward. Once again **Ruth** showed **herself** to be devoted to **Na'omi**. The narrator uses the utmost delicacy, but it is clear that **Na'omi's** plan was not without its dangers.<sup>72</sup> How would **Bo'az** react? We learn that next.