

RUTH 3

Ruth 3:1–7

Naomi worried about Ruth’s future. The Hebrew word translated in Ruth 3:1 as “rest” means “a condition of safety.”

Naomi acknowledged that as a near relative, Boaz should fulfill his role as *go’el*, and so she proposed a plan to make that happen to secure Ruth’s future.

During the harvest the landowner and sometimes some of the men servants slept in the threshing barns to protect the grain from thieves. (Throughout the Old Testament, grain is called “corn.”) Naomi instructed Ruth to prepare herself like a bride (see Ezekiel 16:9–12) and told her that when Boaz was done celebrating the day’s harvest with food and wine and had gone to sleep on the threshing floor, she should enter, uncover his feet, and lay down at his feet. Lying at his feet suggests the position of a humble supplicant.

Ruth 3:8–10

At midnight Boaz was startled awake and found Ruth lying at his feet. Ruth identified herself and said, “Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman,” requesting that Boaz marry her and become her protector according to the levirate law. Similar symbolism is found in 1 Samuel 18:3–4 when Jonathan demonstrated his desire to protect David by taking off his cloak and giving it to David.

The word translated as “skirt” in verse 9 is translated in most other places in the Old Testament as “wing.” The word translated as “kinsman” is *go’el*. Using the metaphor of a wing covering Ruth brings a symbol of the

Atonement into the story. The Hebrew word for *atonement* is *kawfar*, which means “to cover.” Thus Ruth is calling on the *go’el* to cover and protect her just as the Atonement of Jesus Christ covers and protect us.

Ruth 3:11–13

Boaz acknowledged that Ruth was a virtuous woman and was known as such throughout the city. The Hebrew word used here for “virtuous” is *chayil* and refers to traits of “strength, ability, and wealth.”

Boaz also acknowledged that he was a relative in line to be the *go’el* but said there was another man who was a closer relative and should be consulted first. He told Ruth to wait until the morning, when he would approach the other relative. If that man would not perform the redeemer role, Boaz would be Ruth’s redeemer, or *go’el*.

Ruth 3:14–18

To protect Ruth’s reputation, Boaz told Ruth to leave before anyone saw her.

Before she left, Boaz filled her shawl with barley to take home to Naomi, which further emphasized his intent to fulfill the promises he had made to her.

When Ruth returned to Naomi, she explained everything that had happened, and Naomi, knowing the character of Boaz, told her that he would indeed do that very day what he had promised.

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