

# Happy Feet

Long Beach Alliance Church • December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down. 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. 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.”**

**~Ruth 3:7-9 (NASB)**

## 1) Matchmaking Naomi-Style

- A) Boaz and Ruth are exemplary of God’s compassion (note Ruth 2:2-18), called “KHESED” (חֶסֶד) in the Old Testament. Khesed is God’s mercy, His compassion, His lovingkindness. Chapter 2 of Ruth ends with great hope, but also with Ruth still living with her mother-in-law, Naomi.
  
- B) As the next chapter unfolds (3:1), we find Naomi seeking “security” (or “rest,” ESV; literally means to “find a place of safety and refuge” HALOT, מְנוּחָה) for Ruth. Like any good Jewish mother, Naomi is a matchmaker...

C) Note that Naomi's intention is for Ruth to find a husband (cf. 1:11-13). While she views Boaz as one of her "kinsman redeemers,"\* (2:20, 3:2) she does not appear to be focused on anything other than Ruth's well-being.

D) Naomi proposes that Ruth take a more pronounced approach in getting Boaz' attention (3:2-4), sending her back to his threshing floor, where he is going to be winnowing barley.



E) But Naomi has more than just a visit in mind, instructing Ruth to get cleaned up, put on some nice perfume, and wear her best clothing (3:3).

F) Further, Naomi tells Ruth to wait until Boaz has had all of his "time with the boys," and has gone to bed, to then go and expose his feet and lie down next to him while he sleeps (3:3-4)! Ruth is basically supposed to make Boaz cold, but be at the ready to warm him up, and Ruth is 100% in (3:5-6).

## 2) Ruth's Proposal To Boaz

A) After a hard day of winnowing and collecting the good barley, Boaz and his men eat some dinner and bed down near the grain in order to protect the harvest from both robbers and foraging wild animals (3:7).



B) Doing as she has been instructed, Ruth uncovers Boaz' feet as he sleeps, and she lies down next to him (3:7). Later, when his feet become uncomfortably cold, Boaz awakens and is surprised to find a woman laying next to him (3:8).

C) Of course, it is pitch black and Boaz and Ruth can't see one another, so Boaz asks, "Who are you?!" Ruth's response is immediate and it is direct! She has come to Israel to seek God's refuge, and she has found it in Boaz (3:9).

D) Ruth invitation to Boaz is not just for covering, but it is also for marriage (3:9). He is her "redeemer," and she is proposing that their lives "lay together" forever!

\* קָרֹב לְנֵי תַאֲשִׁיב כְּנֹחֵי הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, lit. "The man is a relative of ours; he is among our redeemers." Naomi explains her blessing of Boaz by observing not only that he is a relative, but also that he is among their "redeemers" (note the plural, in other words, "there are others"). The context here makes it clear that Naomi is not using גֹּאֲלִים ("redeemer," in any of its technical legal senses. When used in this legal sense, it refers to that family member upon whom was incumbent the following: (1) the responsibility to receive the payment of restitution that accompanies a guilt-offering (שֹׁמֵר, a-shaw-m), cf. Lev 5:20-26[Eng 6:1-7]) in the event of the death of the relative to whom this restitution was due (Num 5:5-8); (2) the "redemption of blood," i.e., blood vengeance (Num 35:9-28; Deut 19:6-13); (3) the "redemption of persons," i.e., the responsibility to purchase the manumission of a relative who has been forced by poverty to enter into slavery to a non-Israelite (Lev 25:47-55); (4) "the redemption of land," i.e., the responsibility to purchase family property that, because of poverty, must be or has been sold outside the family. The first three legal obligations of the גֹּאֲלִים have no bearing on the events and social situations of the book of Ruth at all. And, although the fourth, the redemption of land, does figure importantly in the legal scene at the gate in chap. 4, that Naomi at this point in time had as a viable option the legal right to the redemption of land to which she then would have rights as the widow of the deceased owner, or in any other capacity, makes nonsense of the story. For if she had such rights, it is incredible that neither she nor Boaz has made any move in the matter, and instead Ruth has been forced to glean in the fields, the vocation of the destitute. No, Naomi is using גֹּאֲלִים in a more general sense, that sense with which it is frequently used in reference to God's actions on behalf of his people. In this nontechnical sense, the idea of payment, prominent in the legal meaning, is not involved. David Daube (Studies in Biblical Law, 40) has put it well: "To buy back" is not a perfectly accurate translation of גֹּאֲלִים. It would be safer to translate "to take back," seeing that the word is as often as not employed where he who recovers makes no payment. The word simply denotes the rightful getting back of a person or object that had once belonged to one but had been lost. In such usage it means "to deliver a member of one's kinship group (family, clan, tribe, or people) from evil of any kind." The evil involved may be general (e.g., all harm, Gen 48:16; distress of various kinds, Ps 107:2; even death and Sheol, Lam 3:53-58; see TDOT גֹּאֲלִים III.1, 2, 2:352-53), or it may be specific. Several such passages are pertinent to the usage in Ruth. In Ps 72:14 the king is said to redeem the poor and needy from oppression and violence, and in Isa 54:4-8 Yahweh is the lag who removes the reproach of widowhood from Israel and becomes her husband (cf. Prov 23:11). As Beattie cogently observes (in connection with Ruth's use of גֹּאֲלִים in 3:9, JSOT 5 [1978] 44): "Ruth used the word as descriptive of Boaz in the part he has already played in the story. In welcoming Ruth to his fields, feeding her at meal-times and making sure that she gleaned ample grain to sustain herself and her mother-in-law, Boaz could be said to have redeemed Ruth and Naomi from their destitution." In my opinion, this is just the sense that Naomi uses here in 2:20. It is also in this sense that we must understand the use of גֹּאֲלִים in 4:14 to refer to the child born to Ruth and Boaz: he will restore Naomi to life and sustain her old age (v 15a). (collected from various sources, esp. Ruth & Esther, Word Biblical Commentary (WBC), by Frederic W. Bush, ©1996, pgs. 136-137).

### 3) Boaz' Delighted Response

- A) Boaz is delighted with Ruth's proposal, and pronounces a blessing on Ruth, highlighting that her last KHESED/kindness (her desire for Naomi) surpasses her first KHESED/kindness (her initial treatment of Naomi). Boaz finds Ruth's proposal to be revealing of her purity (3:10).
- B) In some capacity, Ruth's request for Boaz to respond to being a "kinsman redeemer" is a statement of her loyalty to Naomi and to God. This request was beyond Naomi's desire that she find a husband in Boaz, and reveals Ruth's desire to see Naomi's life full of joy again with children.
- C) In the midst of Boaz' delight at the prospects of both preserving the name of his clan (Ephrathites, cf. 1:2) and in receiving a superior wife in Ruth, Boaz tells Ruth there is a closer "redeemer" (3:12) who has "the first right of refusal" (3:13) to redeem Ruth on Naomi's behalf.
- D) Boaz invites Ruth to stay the rest of the evening (3:13), but sends Ruth away with a generous gift of barley (3:15) in the earliest part of the morning, preserving her purity and reputation, despite the opportunity to do otherwise (3:14).
- E) The text is full of romantic tension and sexual euphemism, but clearly emphasizes the purity and restraint of both Boaz and Ruth. Despite Ruth's status as a foreigner, Boaz prizes her and treats her with respect and honor!
- F) Sending Ruth back to Naomi with a plentiful amount of food (probably around 60-100 pounds of grain) was a statement to Naomi of things to come. Her life, which had come back empty, would be redeemed, and become full!
- G) Ruth, who has been gone all night long, comes back to Naomi, who wants to know how things went (3:16-17). Ruth recounts the whole story, which must have made Naomi deeply satisfied in Ruth & Boaz' purity and loyalty.
- H) The chapter ends with the cliff-hanger of Naomi assuring Ruth that she will know how "things fall" today (3:18)!