

Dear Friends,

RUTH 3: 10-13

Ruth is carrying out Naomi's very risky plan. While Boaz was asleep, she lay down with him. When he woke up, surprised to find a woman in his bed, she pretty much asked him to marry and take care of her. Everything now depends upon his response. Lots of things could happen, many of which would be really bad for Ruth. We hold our breath waiting to see what Boaz will do or to hear what he will say.

He says, "Blessed are you to the Lord, my daughter." Being his daughter wasn't exactly what Ruth was suggesting, but it holds out the hope that he's taking responsibility for her. She can breathe easily again. It looks as though it is going to be okay.

He has clearly been watching the way she acts. He says that this act of faithful love she has shown by choosing him is better than her first act of kindness. That first act could be her choice to stick by Naomi. But it's more likely that he's referring to the way that she has chosen not to go after the young men, either the poor or the rich. She could have done. It would not have been difficult for her. But she chose not to. For his part, he had told the young men not to bother her. And he had advised her to cling to his young women, perhaps a round about way of keeping her away from the young men. He clearly feels that by choosing him instead she's made a good choice. He's an older man and, by the way, one of the richest, but most importantly he is one of her nearest relatives and choosing him is in line with custom. It would be seen as the right choice to make.

He tells her not to be afraid. He says "Whatever you say I will do for you." To Ruth, Naomi said that Boaz would tell her what to do. In reply, Ruth said, "Whatever you say to me I will do." In the end it was Ruth that told Boaz what to do and he agreed to whatever she said.

Boaz has not only been watching Ruth. He has also been comparing notes about her with others in the town. He says that all the people of the town recognise her as a woman of worth. Boaz was introduced to us as a man of worth. They are clearly seen as being compatible. A good match for each other.

I find the word "worth" used to describe Ruth interesting. My Hebrew dictionary says that that it means "a force." Often, it's used to describe someone who is "able." They are competent, good at what they do. Curiously my dictionary, which is very old, says that for men it can focus on their ability to conduct themselves well in battle. So, it's about being valiant. In contrast, for women it can focus on their domestic skills. So, it's about being good at cooking, cleaning and sweeping. Hum! I wonder. I like the word we started with "a force." Today we describe some people as being "a force of nature." They are enthusiastic and full of life. Perhaps that's what Ruth was like.

However, we have a problem. While Boaz is a relative with responsibility for Ruth. There is an even closer relative. That person must be given the opportunity to do his duty. Boaz will give him that chance in the morning. If that closer relative accepts his responsibility, he must be allowed to carry it out. If he refuses then Boaz will willingly do it.

He tells her to lie down and spend the night where she is. He is concerned for her safety. Travelling through the town in the dark of the night would be dangerous. A part of Ruth wanted to get home to Naomi. She had said "Where you lodge, I will lodge." On this night that will not be so. She is concerned for Naomi. But Boaz is being wise. So, they settle and wait to see what tomorrow will bring. I doubt if either got much sleep. They were both very aware of each other's closeness. I like to think that they lay side by side. His arm around her. She, resting her head upon him. His chest, her pillow as she listened to the sound of his heart beat. He, breathing in her perfume, mysterious and relaxing. The minds of both racing through memories of the past and anticipations of the future; fearful and anxious; hopeful and excited.

God bless you,

Tony