

Ruth

NAOMI HAS A PLAN

Review

- According to Israelite law any loose stalks that reapers dropped in the fields were to be left for the gleaners.
- The poor and those who were helpless such as widows did gleaning.
- During the harvest season, at the end of each day, gleaners would walk the fields and gather the loose stalks left behind.
- Ruth was gleaning a field when she met Boaz.

Introduction

Naomi's husband, Elimelech, must have been desperate when he took his family out of Bethlehem into the alien land of Moab. The final chapters of Judges are not an enjoyable read as they speak of the evil that presided in Moab. There was nothing to respect or admire in the people who lived there. Judges is a sobering reminder to each of us what can happen to a nation, which forgets God. As a devoted wife and mother, Naomi left her home and kindred in Bethlehem and followed her husband to Moab. In spite of the sadness and the evil that surrounded her, Naomi stood out as an unselfish woman. She was full of grace, thoughtfulness, sweetness, and kindness. We see these qualities revealed in this lesson. Naomi was concerned about Ruth, a Gentile woman finding rest. A proper marriage would give Ruth a place of rest and protection and Naomi would not rest until Ruth was taken care of.

Progression of Events

- When Naomi heard about Boaz, there was hope for a future. Naomi began to act as a matchmaker. She encouraged Ruth to see if Boaz would become the kinsman-redeemer to her.

- A kinsman-redeemer was a relative who willingly would take care of the extended family. In the case of a widow, the Law (Deuteronomy 25:5-10) said the woman could marry a brother of her

Look It Up...

The role of a kinsman-redeemer:

- Leviticus 25:23-25, 47-49
- Deuteronomy 25:5-10 and Job 19:25

dead husband. The nearest relative did not have to marry the widow. If he did not, the next nearest relative could take his place. If no one chose to marry her, she would probably live in poverty.

- Naomi knew Boaz would be winnowing barley that night on the threshing floor. He would be there to prevent his harvest from being stolen and wait for his turn to thresh the grain.

- Naomi advised Ruth on how to act toward Boaz. She told Ruth to wash and put on her best dress. Boaz might, in the course of the day, be more attracted to her. She also told her to let Boaz eat and drink and when he goes to lie down uncover his feet and lay down next to him.

Did You Know...

Threshing separates ripe grains from their stems and husks. Threshing was done at night because harvesting would be done during the daylight hours.

Winnowing means separating the grain from the chaff. Throwing it into the air so the wind would blow away the lighter chaff and the heavier grain fell back to the floor would winnow grain.

- While Naomi's advice may seem strange, it was in accordance with Israelite custom and law. The ceremonial act of lying at the uncovered feet of Boaz and sharing a part of his covering was considered proper. Ruth's actions were an appeal to Boaz to assume his obligation under the law for her. In other words, it was a marriage proposal.

- Boaz said, "The Lord bless you, my daughter. This act of kindness is greater than the kindness you showed to Naomi in the beginning. You didn't look for a young man to marry, either rich or poor" (Ruth 3:10).

- Boaz agreed to Ruth's proposal, "It is true that I am a near kinsman, but you have a closer kinsman than me" (Ruth 3:12). Apparently Ruth and Naomi were not aware of the closer relative. Boaz's answer shows he must have been thinking about marrying Ruth.

- Boaz said to Ruth, "Stay here tonight, and in the morning we will see if the closer kinsman will take care of you. If he decides to take care of you, that is fine. But if he refuses, I will take care of you myself, as surely as the Lord lives" (Ruth 3:13). Boaz did everything right. He did not send Ruth home in the middle of the night, but rather protected her till morning. He protected the rights of the nearest kinsman and he made a vow to take care of Ruth.

- Boaz did not want the people in town to know Ruth had been there with him at the threshing floor. He was concerned about her reputation. So Boaz said to Ruth, "Bring me your shawl and hold it open" (Ruth 3:14). Boaz poured six portions of barley into it and sent Ruth on her way back to Naomi.

- When Ruth returned back home she gave Naomi a full report of the events. Naomi had done her job of matchmaking well. Now it was up to Boaz to settle the matter with the nearest kinsman.

Discussion and Questions

1. What did Naomi desire to do for Ruth?
2. What were the things Ruth was instructed to do before going to Boaz?
3. What was Ruth requesting of Boaz by what she did at the threshing floor?
4. Why was Boaz impressed with Ruth?
5. What did Boaz have to find out first before he was free to act as the near kinsman?
6. What did Boaz do to protect Ruth's reputation?
7. Why wasn't it improper to do what Ruth did?
8. What did Ruth bring home to Naomi in her shawl?

Memory Verse

"Ruth, my daughter, wait here until you see what happens. Boaz will not rest until he has finished doing what he should do today."

Ruth 3:18

Craft: Family Tree

Materials

- White construction paper
- Green construction paper
- Brown crayons
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Glue

Directions

1. Have children draw a tree trunk and branches on a piece of white construction paper with a brown crayon.
2. Have children cut leaves out of the green construction paper.
3. On each leaf they will write the name of a family member and how they help and care for that family member.
4. Once all family members leaves have been made, the children will glue them on their trees.

Discuss with the children that families take care of each other, just like Ruth was taken care of by Boaz.