

In God's Care -The Book of Ruth

#3 God's hand in our choices

Ruth 3

Intro

It was Sunday morning and Harry was off. He pulled out of his driveway in his 2-seater convertible, with the roof closed because of typical Melbourne driving rain, and headed for church. But as he turned into the main road he saw ahead of him three bedraggled figures huddled under a single umbrella at the next tram stop. One was old Mrs Fletcher. She still insisted on getting to church by herself, despite her arthritis which was always worse in wet weather. The second waterlogged figure was Dr Jones, the local GP. A year earlier Dr Jones had helped Harry by diagnosing a rare and dangerous disease Harry had contracted on an overseas holiday. Harry virtually owed him his life. And the third person at the tram stop was Judith. Ah, Judith! Harry had had a crush on Judith for the past 6 months since she joined the church. But he had never had the courage or the opportunity to ask her out on a date.

Harry had about 3 seconds to decide what to do. There was only one spare seat in his sporter. Who should he offer a lift to? What would you have done?

3 seconds was enough for Harry. He pulled to a halt outside the tram stop, jumped out, passed the keys to Dr Jones, helped Mrs Fletcher into the passenger seat, then modestly waved them good-bye as he huddled close to Judith under the umbrella.

In matters of romance, **opportunity and ingenuity** often go together.

Do you think Chapter 3 of The Book of Ruth introduces us to the ancient equivalent of romance- a kind of dating or courtship from the Hebrew World?

The merciful provision of God

We learned last week in chapter 2 that God had provided a **safeguard** for women like Ruth and other poor people in the Jewish community by making laws that allowed the poor to gather grain from the leftovers of the harvest. When Ruth went to do this, we learned that God was in the coincidences that determined Ruth's future.

In chapter 2, we see Ruth just happened to begin to glean in a field owned by one of Naomi's family members (Elimilech's family); a kinsman called **Boaz**. Boaz happened to be wealthy, generous, protective and single!

He also seems to have done his homework. When he noticed Ruth among the servant girls on his farm he asked around about her and learned about her conversion to become a member of Naomi's family and her people of faith.

When we come to chapter 3, we learn that God had offered yet another protection in the Laws of Moses to people like Ruth. A young widow wouldn't be left destitute and without heirs in the case of her husband dying. The law of the **Levir** required that the brother of a man who was killed would marry the

childless widow to carry on the family name and continue his estate and wealth and offer protection to the women and children.

The first son born of that union would bear his brother's name and inherit his brother's property (Deut. 25:5-10; Lev. 25:23-28). It was called the law of the "levirate" marriage, from the Hebrew word for "brother." If no brother was available, a more distant relative might be asked to fulfill this duty. But the widow would have to let him know that he was acceptable to be her "Goel," as they called it; her **kinsman-redeemer and provider**.

The *Go-el* acts to prevent **property** being lost to the family. The kinsman-redeemer could redeem **people as well as property** (Leviticus 25.) He was also responsible to act as the "avenger of blood" if his kinsman was killed. The kinsman-redeemer could act as trustee in such payments as were due in order to make restitution for a wrong caused by the sin of a kinsman.

The word Goel also carries the sense of the **payment of a price**. Sometimes it means the payment of a **ransom**, a redemption price, as a result of the kinship relationship. Forms of the word Goel are also used of God in Exodus 6:6-8. In Isaiah 40-55 we learn that the Lord **is our kinsman-redeemer**.

The Levir and the Goel were important institutions among the ancient Hebrews that ensured the family name of the deceased could continue and the dignity and well-being of a family struck by tragedy could be maintained. **These provisions were a sign of God's mercy and grace.**

Reading Chapter 3

At the end of Chapter 2 Ruth hurried home at the end of another wonderful day in Boaz's field to tell Naomi all about this wonderful man who'd been so kind to her. And Naomi again saw the hand of the Lord at work, but this time for their good. She says of Boaz

"Blessed be he by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!"

Naomi's faith had been tested on her return from Moab, but now it springs back to life. The sky has been dark, but now she can see a patch of blue, a sign perhaps that the storm clouds are going and the sun will shine again after all.

As on tongue in cheek comment from a commentator points out, that day when Boaz first set eyes on Ruth in the fields at work there might have been sparks flying. But after their first date, Ruth received not so much as a phone call from Boaz.

Between chapters 2 and 3 we can imagine week after week, Ruth went to work in the fields among the other servant girls of Boaz's company and she most likely returned home to Naomi each night to chat about the day's events. "Did Boaz ask you out today?" Naomi might have asked. "No, I think we're just friends," Ruth might have replied, with some doubts about where things stood after the one and only date with the mature gentleman, Boaz. Perhaps in today's story-telling, Naomi might have said, "Perhaps he's just not into you."

The politics of hermeneutics

It's important to ask, before we proceed, what sort of filter affects our reading of this text. In times past, many women of the Old Testament stories have been viewed as "Jezebels"; manipulators and schemers. For example, the 20th Century Parisian artist Marc Chagall viewed Ruth as a seductress.

By contrast, Rembrandt's 17th century painting of Ruth depicts the whole affair through much more conservative eyes.

Just as the artist is affected by his or her own culture and politics, we must ask what is it that prejudices our view of Ruth's actions in this encounter on the threshing floor?

We are a society over-exposed to romance, erotic entertainment and sexual politics. The entertainment media plays on and exaggerates our suspicion about women in desperate circumstances. Is Ruth simply another Bachelorette?

In an article in *The Age* entitled, *God has finally come to US reality television* we are introduced to a TV program called *God or the Girl*. This show pits four aspiring young Catholic priests against their libidos during the final four weeks before their decisions to take the church's Holy Orders, with the vow of chastity.

TV and Cinema can set the feminist movement back 50 years in a heartbeat it seems. It's imperative that we don't come to this text with a contemporary construction of female seduction and deception and impose it upon Ruth.

It is important to regard the actions in the story in relation to the society of the time. **There was nothing immoral in this episode.** In verse 11 Boaz remarks that Ruth is a woman of **excellence, or noble character, or virtue**. In that ancient, patriarchal, agrarian culture with the a Jewish legal and moral framework, this procedure was the **custom of the day**, and the record emphasizes the **purity** of it.

Romance Realized

Well, as we look to chapter 3 we see, in a sense that God put Boaz by the bus stop, but Ruth had to find a way to get herself under the umbrella. God was in the choices that Naomi and Ruth were making and coincidence and risk had a part to play in them receiving God's favour through their circumstances; through God's **providence**.

Naomi told Ruth exactly how to proceed. In Ruth 3:1-5 we read:

- 1 ... "My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for?"
- 2 Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor.
- 3 Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking.
- 4 When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."
- 5 "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered.

Ruth listened carefully and carried out her instructions precisely. Boaz would be sleeping on the threshing floor that night to protect his grain from thieves. After he went to sleep; Ruth tiptoed in, uncovered his feet, and lay down. There are important actions and word associations in the text that the original audience would have picked up on. Her actions indicate that by this act she was requesting that Boaz might become her Goel; her kinsman-redeemer.

Needless to say, Boaz was somewhat startled when he rolled over in the middle of the night and realized there was a woman lying at his feet. "Who are you?" he asked. She answered, "I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative" (Ruth 3:9).

Spreading his cloak over her would signify his willingness to become her protector and provider. His response was immediate:

"May you be blessed of the Lord, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence" (Ruth 3:10, 11).

Ruth is not a pawn, or a puppet, in this story. It is not as though Ruth has no choice. She could have chosen to pursue another suitor. But she doesn't. Why? Because she has already become a part of Naomi's family. She trusts Naomi. She has met Boaz and likes him. What's not to like? The same thing can happen with us in the romance of faith, when we become part of God's family, the Church, and get introduced to his Son, Jesus Christ. What's not to like? The choice is ours, but Jesus is irresistible.

Just as Ruth found Naomi's plan irresistible, so the person in whom the Holy Spirit is working will find God's plan of salvation irresistible. Jesus said in John 6:37, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away." And in John 6:44 he says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day."

I love the way C. S. Lewis describes the paradox of our free response and God's sovereign tug on our hearts. The following is an excerpt from Lewis' last official interview, with Sherwood Eliot Wirt of Decision magazine:

Mr Wirt: In your book *Surprised by Joy* you remark that you were brought into the Faith kicking and struggling and resentful, with eyes darting in every direction looking for an escape. You suggest that you were compelled, as it were, to become a Christian. Do you feel that you made a decision at the time of your conversion?

Lewis: I would not put it that way. What I wrote in *Surprised by Joy* was that 'before God closed in on me, I was in fact offered what now appears a moment of wholly free choice.' But I feel my decision was not so important. I was the object rather than the subject in this affair. I was decided upon. I was glad afterwards at the way it came out, but at the moment what I heard was God saying 'Put down your gun and we'll talk.'

Mr. Wirt: That sounds to me as if you came to a very definite point of decision.

Lewis: Well, I would say that the most deeply compelled action is also the freest action. By that I mean, no part of you is outside the action. It is a paradox. I expressed it in *Surprised by Joy* by saying that I chose, yet it really did not seem possible to do the opposite. (*God in the Dock*, p. 261)

That's what we see happening in Ruth's life. She chose, but how could she choose the opposite? Boaz was a perfect fit for her, like a key in a lock. And so when Naomi suggests marriage, Ruth jumps at the chance. In the same way, the one who is chosen by God before the foundation of the world, and who is enlivened by the Holy Spirit, upon meeting Jesus, the ultimate Kinsman-Redeemer, jumps at the chance for marriage. The invitation is irresistible, don't you think?

The actions of Boaz too show us something about God in our choices. His choices are righteous in that he goes beyond the Torah Law. He did not have to marry Ruth, he could easily have had her as a concubine and got around the Laws as many of his mates would have done. Righteousness is different to Law in that the actions are not necessarily decreed, but in light of God's love are right for the situation.

As Jesus himself taught,

“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt 5:20 NIV)

Conclusion

How might we see God with us in our choices? How will God's providence in life encourage you to step out and make decisions of faith and believe that God will be at work in the world around you and in his special provisions to those who are believers?

Ruth and Naomi can testify to God as one **who is their provider**. This too was Jesus encouragement to his disciples – a fundamental of who God is and what God is like (e.g. Matthew 6:25-34).

Commentary

A. Naomi's instructions to Ruth.

1. (1-2a) Security for Ruth through a kinsman.

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, *is he* not our relative?”

a. **Then Naomi her mother-in-law said:** The time of the harvest was over, and certainly Ruth and Boaz had been around each other much in the weeks covering the barley and the wheat harvest (Ruth 2:23). They had much opportunity to get to know each other.

i. However, according to the customs of the day, we can’t say that Ruth and Boaz were “dating” in the way we think of “dating” in our modern culture. They were not paired off as a couple with one-on-one time with each other; rather, they spent their time together in the context of a group - the men and women who worked for Boaz in the harvest.

ii. From God’s perspective, there is much in the “dating game” that works against forming healthy, lasting relationships. For many people, dating means the continual making and breaking of casual romantic relationships - patterns that teach us more how to end relationships than how to make them last.

iii. Additionally, “dating” is usually a relatively superficial way to get to know someone. Each person in a dating relationship tends to put on a mask for the other. For example, many women have been deceived into thinking a man is a good, nice man because he is nice to them in a dating relationship. Of course he is! Often, he’s nice because he wants something in that dating relationship. A better gauge to measure the man or the woman is to see how they act towards others in a group setting - because sooner or later, that is how they are going to treat you.

iv. So over the period of the harvests, Ruth and Boaz got to know each other pretty well - by seeing what kind of people the other was around a larger group, not by dating in the way it is traditionally thought of today.

b. **Shall I not seek security for you:** Naomi knew that Ruth could best be taken care of if she was married, so she suggested that she appeal to Boaz for marriage.

i. The Hebrew word for **security** in verse one is the same word for *rest* in Ruth 1:9, where Naomi hoped that her daughters-in-law would find rest and security in the home of a new husband. This Hebrew word (*manowach*) speaks of what a home should be – a place of rest and security.

c. **Now Boaz . . . Is he not our relative?** One might easily think that this was inappropriately forward of Naomi to suggest this to Ruth. It is possible to think that Naomi plotted with Ruth to make her a man-trap, to go out and hunt down a reluctant Boaz for marriage. Not at all; Naomi’s suggestion to Ruth was rooted in a peculiar custom in ancient Israel - the meaning behind the Hebrew word *goel*.

i. This was the point in Naomi’s question about Boaz: **Is he not our relative?** She reminded Ruth that Boaz was their family *goel*.

ii. The *goel* - sometimes translated *kinsman-redeemer* - had a specifically defined role in Israel’s family life.

- The kinsman-redeemer was responsible to buy a fellow Israelite out of slavery (Leviticus 25:48).
- He was responsible to be the “avenger of blood” to make sure the murderer of a family member answered to the crime (Numbers 35:19).
- He was responsible to buy back family land that had been forfeited (Leviticus 25:25).
- He was responsible to carry on the family name by marrying a childless widow (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

iii. In this, we see that the *goel*, the kinsman-redeemer, was responsible to safeguard the *persons*, the *property*, and the *posterity* of the family. “Words from the root *g’l* are used with a variety of meanings in the Old Testament, but the fundamental idea is that of fulfilling one’s obligations as a kinsman.” (Morris)

d. **Is he not our relative?** Since Boaz was a recognized *goel* for the family of Elimelech - the deceased husband of Naomi and father-in-law of Ruth - Ruth could appeal to him to safeguard the posterity of Elimelech’s family, and take her in marriage. It may seem forward to us, but it was regarded as proper in that day.

i. If Boaz did not fulfill this duty towards Elimelech (though he was now deceased), then the direct family and name of Elimelech would perish. Perpetuating the family name of Elimelech (and every man in Israel) was thought to be an important duty. These protections showed how important it was to God to preserve the institution of the family in Israel - and that it is also important to Him today.

2. (2b-5) Naomi instructs Ruth as to how to petition Boaz to exercise his responsibilities as her *goel*.

“In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your *best* garment and go down to the threshing floor; *but* do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do.” And she said to her, “All that you say to me I will do.”

a. **Therefore wash yourself:** Naomi, in her advice to Ruth, showed a keen knowledge of male behavior. She instructed Ruth to make herself pretty and smelling good (**anoint yourself, put on your best garment**), and to leave Boaz alone while he ate (**do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking**).

b. **Uncover his feet, and lie down:** At the appropriate time, Naomi instructs Ruth to **go in, uncover his feet, and lie down**. Some might think this was a provocative gesture, as if Ruth was told to provocatively offer herself sexually to Boaz. This was not how this gesture was understood in that day. In the culture of that day, this was understood as an act of *total submission*.

i. In that day, this was understood to be the role of a servant - to lay at their master’s feet and be ready for any command of the master. So, when Naomi told Ruth to **lie down** at Boaz’s feet, she told her to come to him in a totally humble, submissive way.

ii. Don’t lose sight of the larger picture: Ruth came to claim a right. Boaz was her *goel*, her kinsman-redeemer, and she had the *right* to expect him to marry her and raise up a family to perpetuate the

name of Elimelech. But Naomi wisely counseled Ruth to not come as a victim demanding her rights, but as a humble servant, trusting in the goodness of her kinsman-redeemer. She said to Boaz, "I respect you, I trust you, and I put my fate in your hands."

c. **He will tell you what you should do:** Of course, this was a situation that had the potential for disaster, if Boaz should mistreat Ruth in some way. But Naomi and Ruth had the chance to get to know Boaz, and they knew what kind of man he was - a good man, a godly man, one to whom Ruth could confidently submit.

i. In the marriage relationship, many husbands wish they had a wife who submitted to them the way Ruth is being told to here. But do they provide the kind of godly leadership, care, and concern that Boaz showed towards Ruth and others?

ii. In the marriage relationship, many wives wish they had a husband who loved, cared, and treated them the way Boaz did towards Ruth. But do they show the same kind of humble submission and respect Ruth showed to Boaz?

d. **All that you say to me I will do:** Ruth humbly and wisely received the counsel of her mother-in-law Naomi.

i. "On the whole, we must say, had not Boaz been a person of extraordinary piety, prudence, and continence, this experiment might have been fatal to Ruth. We cannot easily account for this transaction; probably Naomi knew more than she revealed to her daughter-in-law. The experiment however was dangerous, and should in no sense be imitated." (Clarke)

ii. "Let none be encouraged hereby to enter into God's ordinance through the devil's portal, lest they smart and smoke for it." (Trapp)

B. Ruth and Boaz at the threshing floor.

1. (6-7) Ruth lays down at Boaz's feet.

So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

a. **He went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain:** There was a good reason why Boaz slept at the **threshing floor**. These were the days of the Judges, when there was much political and social instability in Israel. It wasn't unusual for gangs of thieves to come and steal all the hard-earned grain a farmer had grown. Boaz slept at the threshing floor to guard his crop against the kind of attacks described in 1 Samuel 23:1.

b. **She came softly:** Ruth did just as her mother-in-law Naomi had recommended. She heard the advice, she said she would do it, and she did it.

2. (8-9) Ruth's request.

Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet. And he said, “Who *are* you?” So she answered, “I *am* Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative.”

a. **It happened at midnight that the man was startled:** This was an amazing scene. We can well imagine that Boaz was indeed **startled**, waking up in the night as he turned in his sleep, knowing that someone was out there but not being able to see clearly because of the darkness and the sleep in his eyes.

i. Since Boaz had been there to protect against thieves, it must have given him quite a shock to wake up and know someone was there. But his shock quickly turned to wondering when he found out the visitor was a woman.

b. **Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative:** Ruth identified herself and made a simple request. In beginning with the words “**take your maidservant**,” Ruth again showed great humility and submission. She presented herself as Boaz’s servant.

c. **Under your wing:** Here, she boldly asked Boaz to take her in marriage. The phrase can also be translated as “**spread the corner of your garment over me.**” This was a culturally relevant way to say, “I am a widow, take me as your wife.”

i. “The spreading of a skirt over a widow as a way of claiming her as a wife is attested among Arabs of early days, and Jouon says it still exists among some modern Arabs.” (Morris)

ii. “Even to the present day, when a Jew marries a woman, *he throws the skirt or end of his talith over her*, to signify that he has taken her under his protection.” (Clarke)

iii. In Ezekiel 16:8, God uses the same terminology in relation to Israel: *I spread my wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you and you became Mine, says the Lord God.*

d. **For you are a close relative:** This shows that this was not an inappropriate thing for Ruth to do towards Boaz. It was bold, but not inappropriate. Ruth understood this as she identified Boaz as her **close relative** (literally, *you are a goel*, a kinsman-redeemer).

i. Though deceased, Elimelech had the right to have his family name carried on and as *goel*, Boaz had the responsibility to do this for Elimelech. This could only happen through Boaz marrying Ruth, and providing children to carry on the name of Elimelech. Ruth boldly, yet humbly and properly, sought her rights.

3. (10-11) Boaz’s response.

Then he said, “Blessed *are* you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you *are* a virtuous woman.”

a. **Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! . . . you did not go after young men:** Apparently, there was a considerable age difference between Ruth and Boaz. It also seems that because of this, Boaz

considered himself unattractive to Ruth and had therefore ruled out any idea of a romance between them.

i. This shows something else wonderful about Boaz. He had the right to force himself upon Ruth as her *goel*, but he did not. He wasn't going to just say, "There's a woman I want, and I have her by right." He was kind enough to not act as *goel* towards Ruth unless *she* desired it.

ii. It also shows something else wonderful about Ruth: She based her attraction to Boaz more on *respect* than on image or appearance. Tragically, many people fall in love with an image or an appearance, rather than with a person we can really respect.

b. I will do for you all that you request: Boaz made Naomi look brilliant in her advice to Ruth. The plan worked perfectly.

c. All the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman: Boaz was also attracted to Ruth because of her character. We don't really know how Ruth looked, but we do know that she was a woman of godly character.

i. Literally, Boaz called Ruth a *hah-yil* woman. The basic meaning behind this Hebrew word is "strength; moral strength, good quality, integrity, virtue." This same word is used in a term for heroes in the Bible: *A mighty man of valor*. Just a courage and strength make a man a hero, so Ruth's courage and strength, shown in her virtue - make her a hero, on the Proverbs 31 kind of definition of a woman of virtue.

4. (12-13) A potential problem: A nearer kinsman.

"Now it is true that I *am* a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be *that* if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you; good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, *as* the Lord lives! Lie down until morning."

a. There is a relative closer than I: Apparently, though Boaz was a recognized *goel* towards Ruth, there was another *goel* closer in relation to her deceased father-in-law Elimelech. So, Boaz could not exercise his right as kinsman-redeemer unless this closer kinsman-redeemer relinquished his rights towards Ruth.

b. If he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you: Wonderfully, Boaz wasn't willing to cut corners. He would do God's will God's way. He knew that if it was really of the Lord, then it could be done orderly and in a proper way.

C. Ruth goes home.

1. (14-15) Boaz sends Ruth home.

So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, "Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." Also he said, "Bring the shawl that *is* on you and hold it." And when she held it, he measured six *ephahs* of barley, and laid *it* on her. Then she went into the city.

a. **Do not let it be known:** Boaz and Ruth were not trying to hide anything scandalous; it was just that Boaz didn't want this nearer kinsman to learn that Ruth was now demanding her right to marriage to a *goel* before Boaz could tell him personally.

b. **He measured six ephahs of barley:** As a proper gentleman, Boaz did not send Ruth home empty-handed. Not having any chocolates, he gave her six handfuls of grain. The added word *ephahs* is almost certainly incorrect; that would be more than thirty-three gallons (120 liters) of grain, more than Ruth could carry home in her shawl.

i. Jewish traditions say that the six measures of barley given as a gift to Ruth were a sign of six pious men who would descend from her, endowed with six spiritual gifts: David, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, and the Messiah.

2. (16-18) Ruth tells her mother-in-law Naomi all that happened.

So when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "Is that you, my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her. And she said, "These six *ephahs* of barley he gave me; for he said to me, 'Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.' " Then she said, "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day."

a. **Sit still, my daughter . . . the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day:** This was a time of considerable anxiety for Ruth. She had claimed her right to marriage, and would be married. The only question was to *whom* would she be married? Would it be to Boaz, or to the nearer *goel*? The issue would be decided that very day.