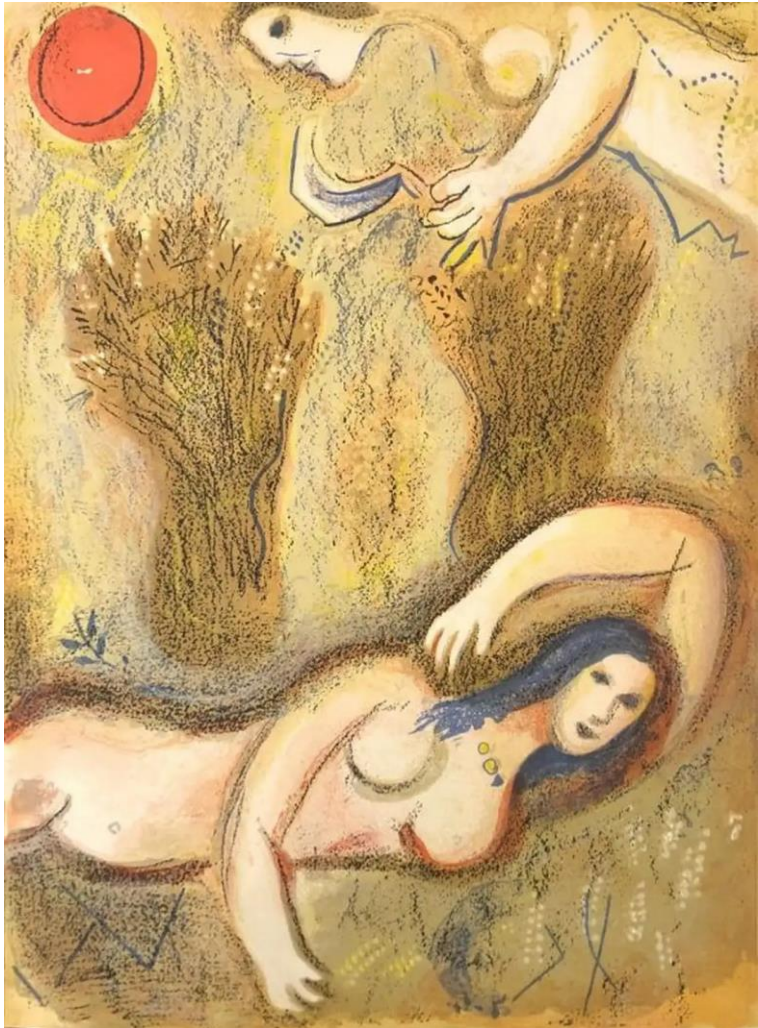


THE WEXNER FOUNDATION

THE BOOK OF RUTH

Chapter Three: Ruth's Search for a Redeemer
Dr. Erica Brown | May 25, 2022



Marc Chagall, "Boaz Wakes Up and Sees Ruth at his Feet" (1960)

Ruth 3:1-18

1

ותאמר לה נעמי עמותה בתי הלא אבקשילך מנוח אשר ייטב־לך:

Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her, "Daughter, I must seek a home for you, where you may be happy.

2

ועתה הלא בעז מדע־תנו אשר הנית את־נערותינו הנה־הוא זכה את־צִרְוֹן השְׁעָרִים הקְלִילָה:

Now there is our kinsman Boaz, whose girls you were close to. He will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor tonight.

3

וְרַחֲצֵתָּ וְסָכַתָּ וְשָׁמַתָּ (שְׁמַלְתִּיךָ) [עֲלִיךָ] (וַיְרַדְתָּ) [הַגֶּרֶן אֶל-תְּנוּדְעֵי לְאִישׁ עַד כִּלְתּוֹ לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת: So bathe, anoint yourself, dress up, and go down to the threshing floor. But do not disclose yourself to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

4

וַיְהִי בְשָׁכְבוֹ וַיִּדְעֵתָ אֶת-הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב-שָׁם וּבָאת וּגְלִית מְרָגְלְתּוֹ (וְשָׁכַבְתָּ) [וְהוּא יִגִּיד לְךָ אֵת אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂינ: When he lies down, note the place where he lies down, and go over and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what you are to do.”

5

וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיָהּ כָּל אֲשֶׁר-תֹּאמְרֵי אֵלַי [אֲעָשֶׂה: She replied, “I will do everything you tell me.”

6

וַתֵּרַד הַגֶּרֶן וַתַּעַשׂ כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-צִוְתָהּ תְּמוֹתָהּ: She went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her.

7

וַיֹּאכַל בָּעֵז וַיִּשְׁתַּ וַיִּיטֵב לְבָבוֹ וַיָּבֵא לִשְׁכַב בְּקֶצֶה הָעֵרְמָה וַתָּבֵא בִלְט וַתִּגַּל מְרָגְלְתּוֹ וַתִּשְׁכַּב: Boaz ate and drank, and in a cheerful mood went to lie down beside the grain pile. Then she went over stealthily and uncovered his feet and lay down.

8

וַיְהִי בְחֻצֵי הַלַּיְלָה וַיִּתְרַד הָאִישׁ וַיִּלְפַת וַהֲגָה אִשָּׁה שֹׁכַבַת מְרָגְלְתּוֹ: In the middle of the night, the man gave a start and pulled back—there was a woman lying at his feet!

9

וַיֹּאמֶר מִי-אַתָּה וַתֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי רוּת אֲמָתְךָ וּפְרִשְׁתָּ כְּנַפְךָ עַל-אֲמָתְךָ כִּי גֹאֵל אַתָּה: “Who are you?” he asked. And she replied, “I am your handmaid Ruth. Spread your robe over your handmaid, for you are a redeeming kinsman.”

10

וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּכָה אַתָּה לַיהוָה בְּתוּמֵי הַיְטֵבָה שִׁסְדָּה הָאֲחֵרוֹן מִן-הָרִאשׁוֹן לְבִלְתִּי-לָכֵת אַחֲרֵי הַבְּחוּרִים אִם-דָּל וְאִם-עָשִׁיר: He exclaimed, “Be blessed of the LORD, daughter! Your latest deed of loyalty is greater than the first, in that you have not turned to younger men, whether poor or rich.

11

וַעֲתָה בְתִי אֶל-תִּירְאֵי כָּל אֲשֶׁר-תֹּאמְרֵי אֲעָשֶׂה-לְךָ כִּי יוֹדַע כָּל-שָׂעַר עָמִי כִּי אֲשֶׁת חַיִּל אַתָּה: And now, daughter, have no fear. I will do in your behalf whatever you ask, for all the elders of my town know what a fine woman you are.

12

וַעֲתָה כִּי אֲמַנֶּם כִּי אִם גֹּאֵל אֲנִי וְגַם יֵשׁ גֹּאֵל קְרוֹב מִמֶּנִּי: But while it is true I am a redeeming kinsman, there is another redeemer closer than I.

13

לִינִי וְהָיָה בְּבִקְרָא אִם-יִגְאָלָה טוֹב יִגְאָל וְאִם-לֹא יִתְפָּז לְגֹאֲלָהּ וּגְאֻלְתֶּיהָ אֲנִי חַי-יְהוָה שִׁכְבִּי עַד-הַבֹּקֶר: Stay for the night. Then in the morning, if he will act as a redeemer, good! let him redeem. But if he does not want to act as redeemer for you, I will do so myself, as the LORD lives! Lie down until morning.”

14

ותשקב מרגלותו עד-הבקר ותקם (בטרם) יפיר איש את-רעהו ויאמר אל-ינדע כייבאה האשה הגרן:
So she lay at his feet until dawn. She rose before one person could distinguish another, for he thought, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."

15

וַיֹּאמֶר הָבִי הַמַּטְפַּחַת אֲשֶׁר-עָלֶיךָ וְאָחֲזִי-בָהּ וַתֹּאחֲזוּ בָּהּ וַיִּמַּד בָּהּ שֵׁשׁ-שְׁעָרִים וַיִּשֶׁת עָלֶיהָ וַיָּבֵא הָעִיר:
And he said, "Hold out the shawl you are wearing." She held it while he measured out six measures of barley, and he put it on her back. When she got back to the town,

16

וַתָּבוֹא אֶל-חַמּוֹתָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר מִי-אַתְּ בַּתִּי וַתִּגְדַּלְהָ אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה-לָּהּ הָאִישׁ:
she came to her mother-in-law, who asked, "How is it with you, daughter?" She told her all that the man had done for her;

17

וַתֹּאמֶר שֵׁשׁ-הַשְּׁעָרִים הָאֵלֶּה נָתַן לִי בִּי אָמַר [אֵלַי] אֶל-תָּבוֹאִי רִיקָם אֶל-חַמּוֹתָךְ:
and she added, "He gave me these six measures of barley, saying to me, 'Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

18

וַתֹּאמֶר שְׂבִי בְתִי עַד אֲשֶׁר תִּדְעִין אִיךָ יִפְּל דְבַר כִּי לֹא יִשְׁקֹט הָאִישׁ כִּי-אִם-כֻּלָּהּ הַדְּבַר הַיּוֹם:
And Naomi said, "Stay here, daughter, till you learn how the matter turns out. For the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today."

Leon Kass and Hannah Mandelbaum, Reading Ruth (Paul Dry Books, 2021)

...the description of Ruth's arrival, as usually translated, seems innocent enough. She comes softly, in secret, uncovers his feet, and lays herself down in that place. Still, there are small echoes of less innocent episodes. The word translated softly, *lat*, is used only five more times in the Bible, none of them innocent. Moreover, the verbs, "she came...she laid down (*vatavo...vatishkav*)" are identical to the verbs used for Lot's elder daughter: "and she came (*vatavo*), the first-born, and she laid down (*vatishkav*) with her father" (Genesis 19:33). One might even suspect a near pun, of "*lat*" and Lot (*lot*). (67)

We readers – and no doubt Boaz – are astonished by the courage and clarity of Ruth's speech, which springs forth from the depths of her soul, uninstructed and unrehearsed. A mere ten words, it is every bit as impressive as her great friendship speech to Naomi. Although at risk of rejection and loss of reputation, Ruth has read Boaz's character perfectly. Her speech, seizing on his own words to exhort him to fulfill his role as a redeemer in Israel, makes its mark. (69)