

That Night on The Threshing Floor

Bible subtitles... I just don't like them. They were added by some well-intending, presumably righteous and devout men over time. I imagine they wrestled through this one. In their piety, they just could not bring themselves to use the appropriate article of speech with the subtitle. It's not about what happened *at* the threshing floor.

It's about what happened *on* the threshing floor...

Sorry. Shouldn't have said that. My apologies. Let me start over.

Let's talk about the book of Ruth. Wait, what does that book have to do with the book of Judges or Jephthah or his daughter? Everything, and a whole lot more.

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab.

*In the days when judges ruled...*The story of Ruth occurs during the time of the judges. Who would've thought it? Remember that the book of Judges starts with such promise there with man (Caleb and Othniel) and woman (Aksah) only to unravel over time to complete darkness and degradation of man and woman by the end of the book. The book of Ruth seems to be stuck in that same darkness as the promised land itself sits in famine, and we witness Elimilek and Naomi and their family heading east, toward the foreign country of Moab. Well, at least it's not Egypt... Anyway, that dark trend gets darker, with the tragic deaths of Naomi's husband and her two sons. So here we are in a foreign country where neither God nor man is anywhere to be found, and women are alone and hopeless, plotting their next move in the midst of their grief. What will happen with these poor women? After reading the book of Judges, the reader can only presume it will not go well with them. Thus far, the book of Ruth should have been dropped into all those terrible stories in the last half of Judges. Or maybe it should have been named 2nd Judges.

But Naomi's amazing story of takes a turn when news comes that God is actually in the promised land after all, and Naomi begins her journey back west, bringing with her a foreigner, orphan and widow all in one, a young woman named Ruth. From there, the reader gets to experience a story like no other in the Bible—an anti-Judges story of hope, love, and redemption.

Oh, and a night of intrigue on threshing floor. But alas, I am getting ahead of myself again. So sorry about that.

We Should Talk About Boaz (yeah, yeah, yeah)

Aside from winning the Coolest Name in the Bible award, Boaz seems to be quite the character. And having just read about many broken men in Judges, we now come across a man's man, one worthy of emulation in every way. The very first thing the writer of Ruth wants us to know about Boaz:

Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz.

(Ruth 2:1)

Boaz was a “man of standing.” Okay. Yawn. So was my grandpa. I don’t know about you, but that description just doesn’t do much for me, nor do most of the other translations, which use the phrase “man of wealth.” The narrator of book of Ruth uses the Hebrew phrase *gibor hayil* to describe Boaz. In the Hebrew Scriptures, *hayil* often refers to a warrior, or even armies, and is most often used to describe a man of valor, strength and character. *Gibor* generally means strong or mighty, and is first used to describe the Nephilim, the violent giant heroes of old. In the book of Judges, Gideon was described as a *hayil gibor* and, well whaddya know our good buddy Jephthah is also a *hayil gibor* as well.

So we approach this *gibor hayil* Boaz character with a little trepidation. Despite somehow making the Hebrews 11 Hall of Fame, things didn’t go so well in the end for Gideon. Or Jephthah. Or many of the armies in Judges, who were also described with the same word *hayil*. How will Boaz use his *gibor hayil* character? What will he bring to the story? How will it end?

Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, “The Lord be with you!”

(Ruth 2:4)

Boaz brings blessing—he is the first *gibor hayil* to use his gifts and character to bring something other than violence. Boaz is not simply a “man of standing” – he is a mighty warrior who has chosen stay at home and be a farmer—a manly man who uses his courage, strength, and character to provide security, peace, and redemption vs. bringing on yet another round of violence into the story of man. The very first words Boaz brings to this story? “Yahweh God be with you.” A change is in the air, as Boaz uses his *gibor hayil* to bring blessing.

So Boaz said to Ruth, “My daughter, listen to me. Don’t go and glean in another field and don’t go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. 9 Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled.”

“*My daughter...*” The very first words Boaz uses when he meets Ruth are endearing words, safe words—words that instill security and trust. “*I have told the men not to lay a hand on you.*” All this talk we’ve had about man and their authority and headship... who wouldn’t want to fall in line behind a man like Boaz? He uses his strength to protect. And Ruth, do you know who fills the water jars in this field? My men do that. Boaz uses his character to create a safe space—a healthy culture and space where someone like this young, widowed foreigner can thrive and flourish.

And when Ruth asks why he is doing this, what does Boaz say?

Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

Because, Ruth, I see you. I see a woman, young and vulnerable, so my inclination is... to call you my daughter. I see your kind heart, not your foreign nationality. I see your pain and baggage that you bring with you on your weary journey, but I am strong, Ruth, and I will use my strength to take care of you. Stay with me, my daughter. You are safe here. The God I know is one who spreads his wings over us all, including the alien, the orphan, and the widow. I know the story, Ruth, and I want to know yours. You are safe with me. (Random Thoughts on the Matter – JRIV)

Wait! Are we sure this is the time of Judges? It doesn't feel like the book of Judges, where we witnessed the unraveling of Eden and deterioration and utter dysfunction of man and woman, mostly at the hands of man. Seems that Boaz is intent to ravel things back up as he brings a bit of Eden back into the time of the Judges.

Yeah but what happened on the threshing floor?

Part of me is tempted to instruct you to wait, because waiting is a big part of Ruth and Boaz's story. People are not much into waiting these days, so it wouldn't be very nice if I wrote a lot of extra words like I am doing write now, just to make you wait a little longer... Had enough? Okay, I suppose we can go to the threshing floor now, but we can't barge in. We must follow Ruth softly, quietly. It's kinda like we find ourselves in the Song of Songs, playing the role of the friends, hoping to witness and even encourage something different in the story of man and woman... something more, something better, something beautiful.

Quietly, Softly, with Enchantment on Her Mind

*One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for."
(Ruth 3:1)*

As we are prone to do, we Westerners gloss right over this sentence about Naomi desiring to find a home for Ruth. We assume Naomi simply wants to get Ruth a husband, and that is not wrong. But remember, we are reading Hebrew here, and the Hebrew reader or hearer of this story would not hear the word "home" or "husband," but rather *mānôah*, which means "rest." And you don't need to be Hebrew to recognize part of that word, Noah, whose name also means rest. So Naomi doesn't just want a husband for Ruth, but she wants to ensure she finds a husband will bring some Sabbath rest to Ruth's difficult life.

And it would appear that the narrator is trying to make us think that Naomi woke up “one day” and realized that she ought to get Ruth a husband. Well, that might be true, since after all Naomi hasn’t been herself lately. It’s easy to forget that Naomi is a griever, with a grief so strong that Naomi gives it the name Mara and assumes that identity for more than a minute. Grievers have a difficult time with decisions and normal everyday life.¹ So let’s go easy on her.

But you also need to be careful with that Naomi. She is a shrewd one, she is. And I would guess that while Mara is still a part of her, that part of her identity has faded a bit, and maybe Naomi is starting to see some things more clearly... maybe she is seeing how God is still with her on her bitter journey, and maybe Mara has faded a bit and doesn’t come by to visit as often as she used to.

Remember that Naomi knows the story. She has heard about those almost inconceivable stories of marriages from long ago. Maybe you remember hearing them too. Like the one about a man who seemingly out of nowhere decides that his son needs a wife. And so he sends his obedient and loyal servant on a mission, bringing gifts of camels and gold and clothing to woo the woman away to a new family in a new land. This servant is unusually loyal and obedient, a shrewd fellow himself, a man of faith despite being a foreigner. I can see Naomi thinking through that story of Abraham and Eliezer... and realizing, “Wait a second... I have my own loyal and obedient servant, a foreigner who has come to faith... and she needs a spouse... and she is young and beautiful and available, so who needs camels or gold? I wonder how I can pull this off...”

Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. 3 Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in 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. 6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.

To say the least, the reader should be a bit nervous right about now. We’ve witnessed many dark stories of man and woman in the Hebrew Scriptures thus far, and especially in the book of Judges, and this discussion between Naomi and Ruth should be causing alarm bells to go off all over the place, as we hear one woman advising another to put on perfume and her best dress and go down to meet an unsuspecting man while he is sleeping on his own threshing floor, alone, in the dark, in the middle of the night...

Uh okay, Naomi. And what should I do after that?

Ruth, the next thing you need to do is... uncover his, uh, feet... and then lay down and wait for further instructions...

¹ Sigh...Go ahead. Ask me how I know this.

To which Ruth replies simply: "I will do whatever you say." Of course she does. I mean, wouldn't every woman reply the same way? Uh... Sometimes the Bible doesn't make sense to me. After those strange but intriguing instructions, all Ruth has to say is a Forrest Gump, "Okay!" I sometimes feel like I am reading the Bible as a foreigner, as if it were written during another time and in another language or style or something of that nature. Surely Naomi's advice merits some questions. Surely it warrants some clarifying conversation from Ruth to discuss her options and what ifs and all that.

But alas, we are left to our imagination, as if the Bible were written this way on purpose... I guess now I am going to go off to someone and have a conversation about Ruth's reply. A western writer would have at least given us a little more emotional background, like "And Ruth rolled her eyes and smiled and thought to herself 'Woman, are you for real? You want me to do what?'" I'm telling you, Ruth's reply is off. It is not natural. Maybe instead of "I will do whatever you say" it should have read something like "Whatever you say, Naomi," she replied, blushing slightly and smiling, though not having the foggiest idea of why she was doing any of this." Or something like that.

Ruth's unusually submissive approach sounds vaguely familiar. Kinda like Rebekah's reply, given to that shrewd fellow, that obedient and loyal servant, a foreigner who has found faith along the way, there in Genesis 24:

*57 Then they said, "Let's call the young woman and ask her about it." 58 So they called Rebekah and asked her, "Will you go with this man?"
"I will go," she said.*

"Let call the young woman." Uh, this young woman has a name, ya know. What is it with the Bible and names? Anyway, how did the young woman answer? "I will go," she said. Sure she did. No questions. No conditions. No emotions. Some dude with gold and a story and a pack of camels comes marching into town, and poof, Rebekah is up and gone like a puff of smoke.

What Happens on the Threshing Floor

What will happen to this man and woman tonight on the threshing floor? Will this man and woman pass the test that Naomi has set up for them? Will Ruth see him on the threshing floor and take advantage of him? Will Boaz see her lying at his feet, alone in the dark, and take her? Will desire rule the day, or will the man and the woman, both of them, will they be patient? Will they both wait on God to see where he takes this story? Will they remember the stories they have heard and see God in their story right now, within this enchanting moment on the threshing floor? How will this story end?

7 When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly...

Sometimes I wish I grew up Jewish. I hope that statement does not come across as disrespectful because I have grown to have such respect for their story and the richness of their language. And if I grew up Jewish then I could read a word like this uncommon Hebrew word *lāṭ* and understand its richness. Ruth didn't just approach "quietly" or "softly," she approached with *lāṭ*. Ruth slowly sauntered up to ol' Boaz with a secret purpose, maybe we'll call it a sort of "enchanting intent." You see, this word *lāṭ* is used to

describe the amazing magicians of Pharaoh (oh dear). Seems maybe that Ruth took Naomi's advice with a nervous but excited smile, as she realized what that godly woman had in mind.

So we, as the Song of Songs friends, we witness the young and beautiful Ruth approach Boaz in the dark, as he lies there on the threshing floor in his Adam-like deep sleep... as she walks ever so slowly, softly... with enchantment on her mind, knowing exactly what she must do, hoping that Naomi's advice will work as planned.

Does it feel warm in here to you? Can someone turn on the air?

Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. 8 In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet!
(Ruth 3:8)

The story simply states that Ruth uncovers (Hebrew *gālâ*) the feet of Boaz. While we might not understand all what is going on, we might be experiencing a bit of biblical de ja vu, like maybe we have seen this movie before. You know when the first time in the Bible that word *gālâ* is used? It is used Genesis 9 with a resting Noah (in a passed out drunk sort of way), a man who lay in the dark of his tent, uncovered (*gālâ*) and exposed. Oh dear. Seems that Noah has also had too much to drink from his own vineyard and is passed out drunk in his tent. Something goes horribly wrong that night, sexually speaking, in that dark tent right there.

And then Ruth lies down at the feet of Boaz, so maybe we should focus on the Hebrew word *šākab*, which means to lie down. Simple enough and no worries... except when you are *šākab'ing* with someone you shouldn't be, like in that story of how Ruth's Moabites got started. Remember Lot? We find him in Genesis 19, also in a dark place, also passed out after too much wine, in yet another sexual story gone horribly wrong, this time involving his own daughters taking turns lying down with him.²

Or maybe there's one more story you thought of later in Genesis. About a foreign woman. One who is also a widow. A woman waiting to get remarried, who takes it upon herself to change from her widow's clothes and get dressed up... as a prostitute, in order to enchant a certain unsuspecting and older man into getting her pregnant—a man who is admittedly easy prey by the way. She would be Tamar, who is somehow "more righteous" than her father-in-law/now-husband-ish Judah...³

Oh, and wasn't it the Moabite women who enticed the Israelite men into sexual immorality in Numbers 25?

Yeah, I'm worried.

Seriously. I don't know about you, but I'm really worried right about now.

² Incidentally, the enemy that Jephthah defeated were the Ammonites, a people group also born out of this same terrible event.

³ Yes, *the* Judah, who happens to be the 4th great-grandfather of the man, Boaz.

Why? Because the Hebrew Scriptures have given us very little reason to hope that this evening will turn out well given all those dark stories we have read. Surely we, the Song of Songs friends who are witnessing this event, surely we now grasp the significance of what is taking place this night on the threshing floor. Looks like this story is more than just a love story—more than just a lineage bridge to the monarchy. This story of what happens on the threshing floor is a crossroads of humanity, with one path leading down the well-worn path headed east toward chaos, and another path headed west, a redemptive path back toward a garden. Which path will this story take?

I imagine (since the Hebrew Scriptures often force me to do so) that Ruth is quite nervous as she hides, waiting on Boaz to finish eating and drinking that evening. And her heart is likely racing as she walks quietly, softly, and with enchantment, toward this man sleeping in his deep Adam sleep, and as she kneels down and removes Boaz's sandals and gently uncovers (*gālâ*) the feet of this *gibor hayil* Boaz, and lays down on the threshing floor, and waits.

Then, as the story goes, something “startled the man.” And what does “the man” do? He turns and sees “a woman” lying at his feet. There the Hebrew Scriptures go again. These people have a name ya know, but somehow this author of this story drops their names and makes a subtle but important shift to using the terms “the man” and “a woman.” Why? Because we are being taken back to the first man and woman in Genesis, taking us specifically to Genesis 3:6, and here... right here... the story going to go one of two directions. It will either proceed as we have come to expect in the Hebrew Scriptures, right into the shame and fear and separation of man and woman and an exodus out of God's garden, or it will proceed backward from Genesis 3, back toward Genesis 2 and Genesis 1, where man and woman are one, image bearers of their God and corulers of his creation, totally dependent on one another, living intimately with each other and their God in a garden.

Still not sure we are back in Genesis, in the garden, standing at a crossroads? Well remember that there is a third character in this story, one who is shrewd as a snake yet innocent as a dove, someone who seems to know a thing or two about this man and this woman... And yes, this shrewd character has fallen in life... she is a griever, one who is Mara-level bitter but at the same time appears to know a thing or two about their Yawheh God... Yes, this crafty character knows the woman quite well, and is now advising her to do something questionable, something manipulative, something sensual, with a goal of stirring desire in the man and open the man's eyes to see. Oh my goodness gracious.

Yes, this shrewd yet innocent woman is a tester, offering up a young woman to be the fruit in this story, an object of desire tendered up to the man to see if he will follow his desires and eat this fruit... oh dear... Or maybe... maybe this man is different from the others... maybe this man isn't ruled by desire, maybe he will wait patiently for it... for this shrewd character also knows the man quite well, down to where he will be and what he will be doing that night. Oh yeah, we're at Genesis 3:6 alright—the characters, the setting, the plot... it's all there.

So yes, I'm still worried. And we Song of Songs friends should all be worried, as we see Ruth do something unexpected.

9 *“Who are you?” he asked.*

"I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer[b] of our family."

Oh my, Ruth, what have you done? It would appear that someone has gone off script in this scene. Ruth, you were supposed to simply lie down and wait on the man to tell you what to do. That's the way it was supposed to go. Naomi said so. That's how it has always worked. Don't you know that quietness and full submission are the foundation of womanhood? Ruth, all you had to do was lie down and be quiet for goodness sake, for that is the role of women in every conceivable way. But now you are telling the man what to do! Seriously, woman? Inconceivable!

We Song of Songs friends have been silently observing this event unfold, holding our breath as we hear this multiple entendre Ruth sends toward this exposed-at-some-level man, just the two of them, lying near each other, there in the dark... And now we wait in awkward silence at this crossroad of humanity, watching the man try to pull together what he has just heard in Ruth's two brief sentences, there in the dark, on the threshing floor. Yet remember that this story is written in Hebrew, and two sentences goes a long way...

Who am I? I am Ruth, your 'āmâ, your servant. I lie at your feet tonight, but I am not here to be taken, I am here to be redeemed. Nor I am not her to take, I am here to fulfill. You call me a daughter, Boaz, and that is who I am, but I do not come as Lot's daughter, nor am I here as Noah's son. For you are not Lot, nor are you Noah. And yes, I am a foreigner, a widowed daughter-in-law here tonight, but I am not Tamar, and you are not Judah. So don't be afraid of me, for I am your safe place. I am Ruth, and I bring you something more... something better... something beautiful... So spread your cloak over me for a lifetime, Boaz, not just for one night. I do not seek the pleasure a younger man, nor do I simply seek the comfort of a man of wealth. I seek menoa rest, Boaz, and I believe I will find that in you and in your Yahweh God. You told when we first met that your God will spread his wings over me. Your God is now my God Boaz. And I would like for him to be our God, together, if you are willing, Boaz, if you are willing to spread your wings over me... to spread that corner of your garment over me... if you are willing to redeem me, if you are willing to provide me menoa rest...

I know what you are thinking. There's no way Ruth said all that. Well, maybe not, but surely that's what Boaz heard... Let me explain. No, let me sum up... The bottom line here is that we weren't there... in the room... where it happened...

For I am Ruth, your foreign 'āmâ servant, seeking redemption in you Boaz, while somehow bringing you and your people some redemption of my own.

Here I am, Boaz, lying down here in the dark, just the two of us. I am totally at your mercy, waiting patiently for your answer.

Your move.

No!

...one else was in the room where it happened

The room where it happened

The room where it happened...

Does it feel humid in here to you? I am absolutely perspiring.

I sense that there is likely an awkward silence as Boaz wakes up from his deep sleep on the threshing floor, and, well let's say his eyes were opened and he realizes he is at some level exposed, as he senses another presence, lying down there in dark in his exposedness. "Who are you?" he asks. Boaz does not have a clear vision of who is there with him in the dark. Should he have fear, should he protect himself at all costs? Is this person a threat? And then it hits him, something awakening his senses... a beautiful and pleasing aroma, as a wonderful perfume begins to break down his senses. So he asks "Who are you..." and then sits in awkward silence as he ponders the implications of her actions and her demanding request, together with a beautiful aroma that fills his senses... Boaz finally puts it all together and replies...

10 "The Lord bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. 11 And now, my daughter, don't be afraid.

The gibor hayil man in the book of Ruth does what he always does. Boaz brings blessing, he brings Jehovah blessing into this story. His interpretation of Ruth lying at his feet and the demand she has just placed on him is viewed as an extraordinary act of kindness. A hesed kindness akin to the one that Rebekah fulfilled in that well, in answer to a prayer from another nameless foreign servant, so long ago. Seems like that story of Rebekah weaves itself into this Ruth story time and again. And how does this "daughter" get what she wants? She doesn't take it. She asks for it. And then waits for it. Seems that Ruth is like another daughter, Aksah, asking her father for something inconceivable there in Judges 1.

The beautifully sad story of Genesis 3, with all its fear and shame and hierarchy, all that seems to fade into the mist here in the book of Ruth, as the man and the woman decide to wait on each other and on God to work things out. Waiting. Imagine that these days. It's almost like this story does a complete 180 and heads back into Genesis 2. Instead of an exposed man and a woman hiding from God in fear and shame, now we have two vulnerable people telling each other not to be afraid... both of exposed in their own way, yet there is no sense of shame here on the threshing floor. Instead of man ruling over the woman, we are headed back toward corulers and co-image-bearers of God, where man and woman have both created a safe place, where they are both secure and wise enough to listen to each other and their God. There is no culture of hierarchy, no fight for control, no fear or insecurity—there is only a culture and foundation of intimacy, surrender, patience, security, and trust between the man and the woman.

Imagine that.

The two are becoming one, not on their own terms, nor in their own timing, but in the manner God intended, both bringing their own type of redemption to each other and to their story.

And we Song of Songs friends are blessed to be witnesses to this beautiful story, even though we weren't in the room where it happened.

The Other Hayil

I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character.

Ruth, you are a woman of noble character, and everybody knows it. Hmm... A woman of noble character... now that sounds familiar. Part of the reason it sounds familiar is it is kinda similar to when we first met Boaz, the "man of standing" which, as you recall, is a lame interpretation (sorry). Boaz is a hayil, a gibor hayil, a giant warrior of a man, full of strength and character. And who is Ruth? She is a woman of noble character... well so's my mama... I just feel like with Ruth is something more...

There is something more as it turns out. Ruth is also a hayil, an issa hayil.

Ruth is a woman who brings her own strength and character into her relationship with Boaz, who acknowledges this and welcomes it instead of feeling insecure about it.

Golly now, I am sure I have heard that issa hayil woman of noble character bit somewhere before. Why yes Wally you have. That would be in the book of Proverbs, where a issa hayil is worth far more than rubies or gold or a pack of camels. Yes, we have found that Proverb 31 woman right here in the book of Ruth! She is an issa hayil woman of strength and character. And how did this man and the entire town of Bethlehem come to this conclusion? I don't know but if I had to guess (because the Hebrew Bible often forces me to do that very thing), it's because Boaz had told them so. Maybe Boaz is the forgotten husband of Proverbs 31. You know, the one there at the city gate, hangin' with his elder bros...

*Her husband is respected at the city gate,
where he takes his seat among the elders of the land...
28 Her children arise and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:
29 "Many women do noble things,
but you surpass them all."
30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.
31 Honor her for all that her hands have done,
and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.*

Oh yeah, Boaz has been talkin' her up at the city gate alright. I feel sure of it as I follow the book of Ruth to its monarchial conclusion. Imagine, this entire Israelite town welcoming this foreign woman, a Moabite nonetheless, and taking care of her and concluding that she too is very good, that she is

welcome here, that she is an issa hayil... and all this occurring during the time of the Judges where Eden is falling apart around them...

I'm telling you we are smack dab back Genesis 2, with another man waking up from a deep sleep to find the woman that God had brought forth, causing him to stop and drop some lines right on the spot:

*"This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called 'woman,'
for she was taken out of man."*

Yes, we've found Eve again. We've also found the Proverbs 31 woman. And she shall be called Ruth. An issa hayil, proclaimed by both man and community to be as such. Yes, she earned this title, but the fact that the Judges culture and society around Ruth accepted her and deemed her worthy, sending her off with a blessing that she may be like Rachel and Leah, well that is just plain shocking. We all need to think through that for a minute. God takes a woman who has been separated in every way, and together with a Bethlehem community and with a gibor hayil man, brings her back into God's people, back into a relationship with man, with every part playing their role, including us, the Song of Songs friends who have witnessed this amazing story.