

Week 49, Lecture 155.¹ Ruth, 4:1-11a, Boaz Settles the Matter.

Prayer (The volunteer cameraman had the camera on. I decided to keep the prayer instead of editing it out.)
You graciously grant to Adam knowledge, and you teach Enosh understanding.
Graciously grant us from yourself knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.
Blessed are you, O Lord, who graciously grants knowledge through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Robertson Farmer's Outline of Ruth -- Condensed²

I gave the full outline last week. This week I give the details only for chapter 4.

- I. Ruth 1:1-22, Turn, Turn, Turn
- II. Ruth 2:1-33, Known and Unknown
- III. Ruth 3:1-18, Uncovering and Recovering
- IV. Ruth 4:1-22, The Roots of Israel's Redemption
 - A. 4:1-11a, Boaz Settles the Matter
 - 4:1-4 The Trap is Baited & Set
 - 4:5-6 The Trap is Sprung
 - 4:7-11a Legal Formalities
 - B. 4:11b-17 Naming the Mothers of the Messiah
 - 4:11b-12 Blessing the Union
 - 4:13-17 Redemption Incarnate
 - C. 4:18-22 David's Family Tree

4:1-4, My Over-Literal Translation. ¹ And Boaz went-up-to the gate and sat-down there. And behold! The *go'el* (kinsman, redeemer) [was] passing-by, whom Boaz addressed. And he said, "Turn aside and sit-down here, **so-and-so.**" And he turned aside, and sat-down. ² And he [*i.e.*, Boaz] took ten men from the elders of the gate, and he said, "Sit-down here," and they sat down.

³ And he said to the *go'el*, "The section of the field which [belonged] to our brother Elimelech Naomi has decided to sell -- the woman who returned from the field of Moab. ⁴ And I said [to myself], I will put a word in your ear [*literally, I will uncover your ear*] and say, **Acquire** [it] in the presence of those seated and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you-want-to-redeem, redeem!"

But if **he** does not wish to redeem [it],

"Tell me, so that I will know. Indeed there is nobody except you to redeem, and I [am] after you."

And he said, "I myself will redeem [it]."

1. **So-and-so.** *Pelonî 'almonî.*

RSV, NRSV render the expression "friend." NAB & NABRE say that Boaz "called him by name."

Robertson Farmer translates as I do (I had this written down before I read her work).

4 Acquire. I could have translated the word as "buy" or "purchase."

But in verse 5 the same word is going to be used of "acquiring" a wife -- and so I chose this more delicate expression.

I will put a word in your ear. Literally, I will "**uncover**" your ear.

Robertson Farmer sees a literary connection between this "uncovering," and Ruth's "uncovering" in chapter 3.

Ruth uncovered the "feet" of Boaz. Now Boaz will uncover this man's ear.

¹ Lectures numbered consecutively. This is this week's 1st lecture, but its number reflects its place in the **total** sequence.

² Kathleen A. Robertson Farmer, "The Book of Ruth: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," *New Interpreter's Bible, vol. 2* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998) 897.

Verse 4. NET Bible note. “If he does not wish to redeem . . .”

³ **tn** *Heb* "but if he will not redeem, tell me." Most English versions emend the third person verb form (he) to the second person form (you) because Boaz is addressing the closer relative. But it is possible that he briefly addresses the witnesses and refers to the closer relative in the third person. See J. M. Sasson, *Ruth*, 118.

4:5-6, Translation. ⁵ And Boaz said, “On the day you acquire the field from the hand of Naomi, you [I] acquire also Ruth, the Moabite-woman, the wife of the dead-man, to raise up the name of the dead-man upon his inheritance.

⁶ And the *go'el* said, “I am not able to redeem [it] for myself, lest I damage my [own] inheritance. You redeem what-is-mine-to-redeem, for I am not able to redeem [it].

V. 5. Who acquires Ruth? We have another *qere-ketiv*.

What is written in the consonantal text is “I will acquire” *qnyty, qānîṭî*. קניתי

What the Masoretes want us to read is “you will acquire,” *qnyth, qānîṭâ* קניתה

Robertson-Farmer thinks “I will acquire” is the correct reading. She argues that Boaz is, in effect, telling the *go'el* “I feel it is only fair to tell you, before you redeem [or acquire] this piece of property, that I plan to marry Ruth in order to raise up a future claimant to the title of that land.”³

The Jubilee Year. According to Leviticus, property could not be permanently alienated. An Israelite could sell his property for a while, but every 50 years was a Jubilee Year. All property would then go back to the family that originally owned it. This was to keep poor people from losing their land forever.

Almost all modern translations read “you will acquire,” variously translated.

KJV, RSV, NRSV, NAB, NABRE, NET, JPS Tanakh,

Anchor Bible (Campbell), Word Biblical Commentary (Frederick Bush).

Bush has an extensive 14-page discussion of the topic, and concludes that the *qere* must be correct.⁴

Ancient Translations also Support the Masoretes

Septuagint. And Boos said, "The day you acquire the field from the hand of Noemin and from Routh the Moabite, the wife of the deceased, it is necessary for you to acquire her also in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance." (NETS) LXX, from about 200 B.C.

Vulgate. And Booz said to him: When thou shalt buy the field at the woman's hand, thou must take also Ruth the Moabite, who was the wife of the deceased: to raise up the name of thy kinsman in his inheritance. (Douay) Vulgate: Late 4th century A.D., ca. 382-405 A.D.

Syriac Peshitta. My Tentative Translation. And Boaz said, “On the day which you acquire the field from Naomi and from Ruth⁵ the Moabite-woman, acquire⁶ the woman / wife of him who died, so that you may raise up the name of the deceased upon his inheritance. 4th century A.D., -- or 2nd century?”

³ Kathleen A. Robertson Farmer, “Ruth,” 937. André LaCocque (*A Continental Commentary: Ruth* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 130] agrees with Robertson Farmer.

⁴ Fredric W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther*, vol. 9, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 215- 229.

⁵ Double-check the spelling with hard copy.. There appears to be a typo in the electronic text from *Logos*, as well as in *BibleWorks*.

⁶ This looks like an imperative form from Dalman’s Aramaic grammar. Double-check with Syriac grammars at home. G. Lamsa (*Holy Bible from the Ancient Eastern Text*, HarperSanFrancisco republication of 1933 work) translates “. . . you must buy it . . .”

⁷ To my surprise, the *Wiki* article dates the OT of the Peshitta to about 200 A.D. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peshitta>

Bottom Line: The ancient translations support “**You will marry** Ruth,” not “**I will marry** Ruth.”

6. You redeem what-is-mine-to-redeem.

NET has the best translation: “You may exercise my redemption option.”

The **You** is emphatic. The pronoun is expressed in the Hebrew. This is unusual.

4:7-11a, The Transaction Takes Place. ⁷ And this, previously in Israel, [was the custom] concerning rights-and-duties-of-redemption and concerning making-exchanges: to confirm every transaction a man removed his sandal and gave [it] to his neighbor. And this was manner-of-attesting in Israel.

⁸ And the *go'el* (kinsman, redeemer) said to Boaz, “Acquire it for yourself.” And he removed his sandal.

⁹ And Boaz said, to the elders and to all the people, “Today I have indeed acquired everything that [belonged] to Elimelech, and everything that [belonged] to Chilion and Mahlon, from the hand of Naomi. ¹⁰ And also Ruth, the Moabite-woman, the woman [wife] of Mahlon, I have acquired for myself as a woman [wife] to raise up the name of the dead-man upon his inheritance so-that [literally “and”] the name of the dead-man will not be cut-off from among his brothers, and his place [will not be cut-off] from [the city-] gate. You are witnesses today.

11a And all the people who [were] at the gate and the elders said, “[We are] Witnesses.”

Remarks on my translation. I am not good at legalities even in English.

I am trying to catch some of the nuances of the root-meaning of the words.

However, I have no detailed legal knowledge of inheritance and exchanges in modern America.

My knowledge of ancient Israelite practice is even foggier.

For nuance, this paragraph requires someone who is an expert in both ancient and modern law.

I think F. W. Bush, whose Word commentary I cited above, is the one to consult for the details here.

Verse 7 -- Explanation of ancient custom. Another argument that Ruth is a **late** writing.

If this had been written close to the time of the action, no explanation would have been necessary.

The author is explaining an ancient custom that no longer exists at the time he is writing.

Week 49, Lecture 156. Ruth, 4:11b-17, Naming the Mothers of the Messiah.

There is a **Sudden Change** in the middle of verse 11.

The legal business ends, and the people pronounce a blessing.

This is especially abrupt, in that it does not begin with the customary “and.”

In modern translations that **don't** begin every Hebrew sentence with “and” readers cannot notice this.

In my over-literal translation, they can.

My translation. As the passage begins, the people are [abruptly] beginning their blessing.

^{11b} “May YHWH make the woman coming into your house like **Rachel** and like **Leah**, the two of whom built up the house of Israel. And may-you-be “**mighty**” in Ephrathah. May you **bestow-a-name** in Beth-Lehem. ¹² And may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah from the seed [=offspring] which YHWH will provide to you from this young-woman. ¹³ And Boaz took Ruth, and she became to him “as a woman” [= wife], and he went in to her, and YHWH granted conception to her, and she bore a son.

¹⁴ And the women said to Naomi, “Blessed [be / is] YHWH who did not leave-leave-you-forsaken of a *go'el* today. And may his name be called [= “may he be famous] in Israel. ¹⁵ He will be for you one who restores your **nephesh** (“soul”), and to support your old-age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you has given birth -- [your daughter-in-law] who is better for you than seven sons.”

¹⁶ And Naomi took the child, and placed him against her breast, and she became his **foster-mother**. ¹⁷ And the neighboring women gave a name to him, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi!” And they called his name **Obed**. He [became] the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Verse 11. Rachel & Leah. Bilhah and Zilpah are not mentioned.

Perhaps because the children of these second-class-wives legally belonged to the first-class-wives.

Leah was the mother of Judah (the main tribe of the south)

Rachel was the mother of Joseph, whose sons Ephraim and Manasseh were the main tribes of the north.

Tricksters and Tricksteresses

The story of Jacob tricking his brother Esau. Jacob -- with the help of Mom, Rebecca -- tricks his father Isaac.

Jacob got some of his own medicine from his Uncle **Laban** and his two daughters, **Rachel and Leah**.

Jacob worked 7 hard years to marry the beautiful Rachel.

On the wedding night the less beautiful Leah was substituted!

Are we to imagine Laban did this all by himself?

Or was some sisterly loyalty also at work in this deal? Was Rachel looking out for the interests of Leah?

Story of Rachel and the Idols. Rachel tricks her father Laban.

V. 11, Be “mighty” (*ḥayil, chayil*). Boaz, “mighty man.” Ruth is a “strong woman.”

In Hebrew *chayil* also has “overtones” of reproductive fertility.

V. 11., Bestow a name in Beth Lehem. Some translations modify the text to make the verb **passive**.

“May he **be** named,” i.e., “May he be famous.” Jerome did this in the Vulgate.

“and may he have a famous name in Bethlehem (Douay). So also: RSV, NAB [not NABRE!] NET.

Ephrathah is a woman’s name. A shortened version is “Ephrath.”

She is mentioned in genealogies of the family of Judah in 1 Chronicles 2:24,50; 4:4.

The district Ephrathah was apparently named after her. We have no details about her life.

If this is a personal reference, like the reference to Rachel & Leah, [so Robertson Farmer] it is not obvious.

Verse 12. Perez, son of Judah and Tamar

Er, Judah’s oldest son was Tamar’s first husband. He was slain for unspecified wickedness (Gen 38:6)

Judah then gave Tamar to his next son, Onan. He was also slain -- NOT for “birth control!”

Judah promised to give his third son Shelah to Tamar when Shelah was old enough.

But Judah was dragging his feet.

Tamar takes matters into her own hands. She **tricks Judah**. (Gen 38:13-23)

Judah’s Ring: Tamar’s “Ace in the Hole.” (Gen 38:24-26). [She eventually bears Perez & Zerah \(Gen 38:27-30\)](#)

Why would anyone mention this sordid story in a blessing????!! **Similarities between Tamar and Ruth**

Both childless widows. Both faced male indecisiveness. Both took decisive actions themselves.

Verse 12, Young-woman, *na’ârâ, na’arah*. This word can also mean “girl” in the sense of “servant.”

Ruth had been working in the fields during the harvest with the *na’arôt* of Boaz

When we see all capitals L O R D, the underlying Hebrew is “Yahweh.”

Verse 13, YHWH granted conception to her.

In 4:13 the narrator tells us that the **LORD** made Ruth conceive. This assertion stands out as **the only place in the book in which the narrator makes a statement about God’s actions**. All of the other

references to God in the story are found in the mouths of the characters, who express a variety of beliefs about the nature and purposes of God.⁸

Verse 14, The women bless Naomi. Is this where the scene changes from the city gate?

Or has the scene already changed in the “abrupt transition” in the middle of verse 11?

Is the *go'el* here Boaz? He is the one who has redeemed her at the city gate?

But was that “a long time ago” by the time we are at verse 14?

Robertson Farmer interprets the *go'el* of verse 14 as the son who has been conceived.

This is definitely the implication of the next verse, v. 15.

So “today” is not the day at the gate. It is some day after Ruth has conceived and given birth.

And of course “the night on the threshing floor” is not public knowledge.

Verse 15. *Nephesh*, “Soul?” Not the Greek idea of an *immortal* soul.

For Jews the *nephesh* was fragile. When the heart stopped, it ceased to exist.

V. 15. Better for you than seven sons.

Is this a female “slap” at men who are slow to fulfill their obligations?

It is definitely praise for women who don't sit on their hands waiting for men to act!

V. 16. “Foster Mother,” *'omenet*.

I got this suggestion from the JPS Tanakh translation

The Hebrew literally says “nurse” (KJV, RSV, NRSV). Since Naomi is so old, she is not lactating.

NABRE renders the word as “caregiver.” NAB, “she cared for him;”

NET Bible note on Obed

. . . "Obed" means "one who serves," perhaps anticipating how he would help Naomi (see v. 15).

Normally there is some kind of etymology -- often a bad pun -- associated with naming.

My favorite is “I will call him Moses (*Moseh*) because I drew (*mashah*) him out of the water.

OR I will call him **Drew** because I **drew** him out of the water.

No such bad pun is obvious in verse 17. So NET thinks the allusion is to the “help / service” prophesied in v. 15.

Week 49, Lecture 157. Ruth, 4:18-22, David's Family Tree.

Appendix. Most Scholars regard these verses as an addition.

They are written in a “priestly” style, very different from the rest of the book.

When were these verses added?

Some suggest this was done by those who placed Ruth between Judges and 1 Samuel

Recall structure of Hebrew Bible: **1)** Law; **2)** Prophets (Former & Later); **3)** Writings.

This would probably be about the time the LXX was translated, ca. 200 B.C.

Many argue that this fits the present “canonical context” of Christian Bibles.

Others think the addition was earlier.

4:18-22, My Translation. ¹⁸ And these are the descendants of Perez. Perez begot Hezron. ¹⁹ And Hezron begot Ram. And Ram begot Amminadab. ²⁰ And Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salma. ²¹ And Salmon begot Boaz. And Boaz begot Obed. ²² And Obed begot Jesse. And Jesse begot David.

⁸ Robertson Farmer, “Ruth,” 945.

General observations (Robertson Farmer)

Since the narrative puts so much emphasis on maintaining the name of the dead on his inheritance, the failure to mention either Elimelech or Mahlon in the genealogy is striking. Boaz is counted as the father of Obed, and Obed “builds up the house” of Boaz, not the house of Mahlon. Whatever legal fiction was maintained in order to make Obed the heir to Elimelech’s property, the narrator clearly thinks that the line leading to the birth of David runs through Boaz.⁹

Comment on Matthew’s Genealogy (Robertson Farmer)

Matthew’s list of ancestors from Abraham to Jesus **names Rahab as** the wife of Salmon and **the mother of Boaz** (a detail that is not found in the Hebrew Bible). . . . Like Ruth, Rahab was a non-Israelite woman who chose to align herself with Israel and with Israel’s God. If Rahab, the Canaanite prostitute from Jericho, was the mother of Boaz, then Obed, the “root” of David’s family tree, had both a **Moabite mother** and a **Canaanite grandmother**..¹⁰

Post-Exilic Context? In a post-exilic context these stories would be “push back” against Ezra & Nehemiah. Archaeology has shown there was probably a **great deal of mixing** of Canaanites & Israelites. Recall the 2-hour Nova video **The Bible’s Buried Secrets**.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/ancient/bibles-buried-secrets.html>

Note: “Naming the Mothers of the Messiah” -- my title for the previous lecture.

I borrowed this title for the previous lecture from Robertson Farmer’s outline.

If Ruth was written in Davidic times,

from the perspective of the Jewish author would have been the great Anointed (*Meshiach*) King David.

Post-Exilic Hopes. After the Exile (ca. 500 B.C.), Israelites were no longer allowed to have an anointed king. Eventually they began to hope for a great leader, like David.

This hope for a future Messiah was **one of the last hopes** of the OT to develop.

[Note to self: Get the date from Boadt’s *Introduction to the OT*]

If Ruth were written after the Exile, it could bear witness to this **future hope**.

Christians take over the Jewish expectations and **modify them** to fit the “job description” as fulfilled by Jesus.

Catechetical Oversimplification: Adam and Eve sinned, but God promised that he would send a Messiah

Douay Translation of Gen 3:15. (A literal translation of Jerome’s **mis**-translation in the Vulgate).¹¹

I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed:

she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for **her** heel. (Gen. 3:15 DRA)

Compare the NAB & NABRE

He will strike at your head, while you strike at **his** heel." (NAB)

They will strike at your head, while you strike at **their** heel.(NABRE)

⁹ Robertson Farmer, “Ruth,” 943.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ E. F. Sutcliff (“Genesis,” *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* [Thomas Nelson, 1953] 183) argues that the mistake was not Jerome’s but that of a later scribe, who incorrectly copied Jerome’s translation.