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THE BOOK OF RUTH

William E. Cohen

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
in Hebrew Letters and Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

June 1971

Referee, Professor Sheldon H. Blank

DIGEST

The starting point of this study, in my mind, was to see if it were possible to translate the Biblical Book of Ruth into understandable and current English. No sooner was this project started when I encountered the fact that even if I were to translate Ruth into good, spoken English, so much of what it says, or the ideas which underlie it are foreign to the general English reader. Even in this very short Book of Ruth this problem is multiplied many times over. A change of approach was therefore necessitated.

Reading everything available in scholarly English journals and commentaries, as well as consulting some French, German and Hebrew ones, I continued. With these by my side I returned to the translation of Ruth, adding after each of the Book's four chapters commentary wherever necessary, relating to any aspect of the Book, or to the translation itself.

Then, after the translation and explanatory commentary, Supplementary Notes were added. These Supplementary Notes deal with the three questions which seemed paramount to me: (1) the date and (2) the legalities involved in the Book, and (3) the Book of Ruth as literature.

Introduction

On undertaking this work my first aim was to translate the Hebrew text of the Book of Ruth into readable, understandable twentieth century English. This has remained a paramount intention throughout, although it did not prove to be a simple task to transpose the language of an agricultural society, living in Judea approximately twenty-five hundred years ago, into the English of a contemporary, sophisticated, urban society.

I have consistently abandoned the archaic pronominal forms "thou," "thee," "thine," etc., in favor of "you" or "your," etc., using, where necessary, "you both." Archaic inflectional forms such as "doeth," "goeth" or even the famous "whithersoever" of Ruth's pledge of loyalty to Naomi (1:16) have not been used. Even where the NEB chooses to use "Thou" when speaking of God, this translation simply uses "you."

I have also avoided the polysyndeton of the original Hebrew and have not translated every vav conjunctive with "and." Depending on the required meaning I have rendered the vav with "and," "when," "then" or otherwise, as the context

demands, or have not translated it at all, understanding it only as a guide to the tense of a verbal form. What I sought was a readable and understandable translation of the Book, I did not feel required to find an English equivalent for every vay.

Similarly, I probed and researched such a clause, as והשכב מרגלותיו, usually translated "she slept at his feet," which translation has little meaning, until I might achieve a real, meaningful understanding. This same drive for understanding has been my motivation throughout; naturally I have always discussed and explained in the notes to the text the way to such understanding. Throughout this translation and the notes, I have used as a guide the critical apparatus of T.H. Robinson on the margin of Rudolph Kittel's Biblia Hebrica. I have checked Robinson's notes in all versions cited except the Syriac (Peshitta), for which version I have relied on his notes.

Explanatory notes dealing with any variety of historic, religious, legal, linguistic, etc. matters, involved in or related to the parts of the Book of Ruth, follow the English translation of each of the four chapters.

After the translation and notes there are three Supplementary sections dealing specifically with the three questions of (1) the literary aspects of the Book of Ruth, (2) the legalities

which are part of the Book, and (3) the date of the composition of the Book.

To my wife Gail, for all of her help and encouragement, and to the time which she allowed to this other woman;

To my son Jeffrey, who gave of his time with daddy to this study;

To my advisor Sheldon Blank, who has taught, listened and re-explained in the manner of a true teacher and scholar;

my very special thanks are due.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	ii
Table of Abbreviations	vii
Chapter I, Translation and Notes	1
Chapter II, Translation and Notes	25
Chapter III, Translation and Notes	42
Chapter IV, Translation and Notes	51
Supplementary Note A: Literary Aspects of the Book of Ruth	65
Supplementary Note B: Legalities of the Book of Ruth	82
Supplementary Note C: The Date of the Book of Ruth	89
Footnotes	95
Bibliography	113

ABBREVIATIONS

B.D.B.	Francis Brown, S.R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, <u>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.</u>
Chicago	University of Chicago Press, <u>The Bible: An American Translation</u> , 1931.
IDB	<u>Interpreter's Dictionary of The Bible</u>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society of America: <u>The Holy Scriptures</u> , 1917.
KJV	King James Version of the Bible, 1611.
Leeser	<u>The Twenty-Four Book of the Holy Scriptures</u> , translated by Isaac Leeser, 1853.
LXX	The Septuagint
MS(S)	Manuscript(s)
MT	Masoretic Text
NEB	<u>New English Bible</u> , 1969.
RSV	Revised Standard Version of the Bible, 1946.

Chapter I

(1) It happened during the rule of the Judges. There was a famine in the land of Judah, so a man from Bethlehem, Judah, with his wife and two sons, went to live as temporary residents in the territory of Moab. (2) The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and his two sons' names were Machlon and Kilyon. They were Ephratites from Bethlehem, Judah. So they came to Moab and settled there. (3) And Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she, with her two sons, was left a widow. (4) Now they both married Moabite women--one's name was Orpah and the other's name was Ruth. They stayed there for about ten years, (5) but then both Machlon and Kilyon also died, and Naomi was left without either of her two sons or her husband. (6) After a period of mourning with her two daughters-in-law, she got up in order to return (to Judah) from Moab, because while in Moab she had heard that the Lord had paid attention to his people in Judah, giving them food. (7) With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had lived, and they travelled the road back

to Judah. (8) But then Naomi said to both her daughters-in-law: "Go on! Each of you go back to your mother's house. May the Lord show as much respect to you as you both have shown to the dead, and to me! (9) May the Lord let each of you find the security of marriage." She then kissed them good-by. But they wept aloud (10) and said to her: "No! We will go back with you to your people." (11) Again Naomi said: "Go back, my daughters. Why would you go with me? Could I still have sons in my womb that might become your husbands? (12) Go back, my daughters, go! I'm too old to be remarried. Even supposing that I thought I had hope that I should be remarried tonight and also that I should give birth to sons, (13) would you therefore wait until they grew up? And finally, would you have yourselves live in seclusion without being married? No, my daughters! And, it's even worse for me than it is for you, because the Lord's power has embittered me." (14) Then again they wept aloud...and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-by, but Ruth remained by her side. (15) Then Naomi said to her: "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her own people and to her own God; follow her." (16) But Ruth retorted: "Don't try to persuade me to abandon you. Wherever you go I will go. Wherever you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God

will be my God. (17) Wherever you die I will die, and there I will be buried! I swear to God: only death will separate us!" (18) When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her she stopped berating her. (19) The two of them walked on until they came to Bethlehem...and as they approached Bethlehem the whole town was in a frenzy over them. And the women of the town asked: "Could this be sweet-Naomi?" (20) But she said to them "Don't call me sweet-Naomi, call me bitter-Naomi, because the Almighty has made me very bitter. (21) I went away with a full family, but the Lord has returned me empty-handed. Why would you call me sweet-Naomi, when (by taking my sons and husband) the Lord has presumed me guilty--when the Almighty has treated me unjustly?" (22) So Naomi returned, and her daughter-in-law, Ruth the Moabite, with her.* They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

* The Masoretic Text here includes: "the one who returned from the territory of Moab."

Notes

1:1 the rule of the Judges: Literally: "in the days when the Judges ruled;" i.e. the 12th to 11th century B.C. This beginning of The Book of Ruth is not so much to give an historic date as it is simply the way to begin a story. It is comparable to "Once upon a time..." See Supplementary Note C.

The term "judges" in the Hebrew Bible (שופטים) denotes more than one who hears cases. The judges were the leaders and rulers of the Israelite people from the time of Joshua until the Davidic Monarchy, among them Deborah (Judges 4:4) and Samson (Judges 16:31).

1:1 famine: Famine was a somewhat usual occurrence in Biblical times. The partial or total lack of food would be reason to move to another location. The Bible contains many other references to famine: Job 5:20; Genesis 12:10; II Samuel 21:1; I Kings 18:2; II Kings 6:25; Lamentations 4:8; Isaiah 51:19, etc. See Supplementary Note A for the relevance of this famine in Ruth 1:1 to the story itself.

1:1 land of Judah: "Judah" is not specified here, but the context as well as the next part of the verse dictate that this is the land of Judah.

1:1 Bethlehem, Judah: "Judah" is here appended to Bethlehem to differentiate it from the city of Bethlehem located in the territory of Zebulon,¹ as when we give city and state: Springfield, Massachusetts--not Illinois, Ohio, Missouri or Kentucky.

1:1 he with his wife and his two sons: The construction of this verse in the MT leaves this phrase dangling at the end of the sentence. However, since this phrase is in apposition to the phrase "a man from Bethlehem," the two phrases are translated together. Although the man from Bethlehem is the main one spoken of here, his wife and sons are also included, permitting לְבָנָיו, a singular verb, to carry the other three persons with it. Reading and translating this way gives a smoother and clearer rendering in English. For other examples of this construction and understanding of the text, see Genesis 13:1 and 14:15.

1:1 with his wife: The translation here of וְ as "with" makes Emimelech's wife and sons belong to him. He is taking them along with him just as Abraham is doing in Genesis 13:1. As well, see Genesis 11:4: וְהָיָה is "with its top in heaven," and not "and its top in heaven."

1:1 to live as temporary residents: The term מְגֹרָשׁ used here

literally means to dwell. As well, it is related to the term גַּר , a stranger, someone not of the same nationality. The use of the term can be seen very well in Genesis 31:4. Abraham, speaking to the people of Hebron, trying to purchase a burial site for Sarah, calls himself a גַּר . He feels the necessity of buying the cave and field rather than just using it; he feels the need to purchase the land itself as his own possession because he only lives among these people rather than being one of them. He is an outsider, an alien, who resides there by the permission of the local people, but without all of the rights of a full citizen. So, too, with Elimelech and his family.²

1:1 the territory of Moab: Literally the text here reads "the fields of." Logically they would not actually be living in the fields. Thatcher,³ Kennedy,⁴ and Cooke⁵ would read these two words, שׂוּמַת מוֹאָב , as "the country of Moab." And both Thatcher and Cooke would send us to other Scriptural passages to see this same meaning. As well, this rendering in the singular construct is backed up by the Syriac, LXX, and Vulgate translations. Rather than leaving the text as שׂוּמַת , this would be emended to read שׂוּמַת , in the singular construct, rather than שׂוּמַת , the plural.

The translation of the corrected form שׂוּמַת as "territory of" is done to leave a rustic vagueness about the place because

we are told nothing about the daily life there. The importance of the text's mention of Moab here is (1) that it raises the question of the status of the Moabites in the Old Testament and, (2) that the plight of Naomi and Ruth is all the more dim because Naomi is away from her home, and Ruth is about to leave hers. Throughout the remainder of this translation

is simply translated as Moab.

1:1 Moab: Moab was located east of the Dead Sea and south of the River Arnon. In that the Dead Sea lies between Moab and the city of Bethel, this distance must be travelled by an L-shaped route. The journey would thus be approximately 100 miles.

In regard to the importance here of Ruth as a Moabite, see Supplementary Notes A, B, and C.

1:2 names: Literally "name". However, this must be understood in the plural to agree with the word "sons".

On the possibilities of the importance and interpretation of the names here given and those which follow in the Book of Ruth, see Supplementary Note A.

1:2 Ephratites: This is the gentilic form of Ephratah. Ephratah, mentioned in Ruth 4:11, was closely identified with

Bethlehem, possibly like a modern suburb, and later became part of Bethlehem. However, Ephratah was older than Bethlehem.⁸

1:2 settled there: Literally ויהיו may be translated "there were". Two Hebrew manuscripts cited in Ginsburg have וישבו in place of ויהיו. To adopt this reading seems unnecessary; all that is necessary is that ויהיו be understood in the present context as though it actually were וישבו.

1:3 with her two sons: This is almost an afterthought. Naomi is spoken of here as the main character. Almost as an aside, we again have mention of the two sons. This translation of ו as "with" occurs very often as in Genesis 11:4.

1:3 left a widow: Here I must agree with both B.D.B.⁶ and Kennedy.⁷ The term חסאר here must mean more than "she was left", as it is usually translated. It here signifies that Naomi was left a widow.

1:4 other's: Literally: "the second one's".

1:4 they: Here, as well as in other places, I have used the vav consecutive of וישבו as a determiner of tense, but have not translated the vav as a word. Again, this is a

change which is made in order to go from the Biblical Hebrew to modern English.

I have specifically changed the usual translation and phrasing, joining 4b to verse 5. The text seems to flow much more freely this way, and with a minimum of change.

1:5 Naomi: Naomi is not written here in the text. Rather, the Hebrew text states האשה, "the woman". I change "woman" to "Naomi" only for the sake of clarity.

1:6 got up: The word קם here has a meaning more specific than just getting up. She got up after having sat through the period of mourning. For another example of this meaning see Genesis 23:3.

1:6 paid attention to: This translation of נקד seems to give more fully the intention of the verb usually translated as "remembered".⁹

1:7 where she had lived: שמה here is idiomatically to be connected with אשר. היתה is usually translated as "she was". But just as in 1:2b, it here denotes the same as ישב and is therefore translated as "had lived".

1:8 Each: The translation here of אִשָּׁה as "each" is based on the context of the word. Transferring from one idiom to the other, it is necessary to translate אִשָּׁה here as "each," as is done with אִישׁ in Genesis 10:5, אִישׁ ללשונו , "each according to its language," or in Exodus 12:3, קָחוּ , להם אִישׁ , "each of them shall take."

1:8 mother's house: Women may have had their own quarters, or an area as their own separate from men. Rebecca's mother (Genesis 24:28), Leah and Rachel (Genesis 31:33), and Heber's wife (Judges 4:17) all had their own private quarters away from the men.¹⁰

Naomi's sending Ruth and Orpah to their respective mothers' houses is not as important for saying the mother's house, as it is for saying: "Go home!" The reason for including this phrase here (and in 2:11) may be to show that Ruth does have parents to whose home she could return, but that she chooses life with Naomi, and its slim possibilities, over her parents' home. This, of course, makes her more of a heroine.

1:8 show as much respect: Rather than the usual translation of "deal graciously" for טָבַח , this translation not only seems to fit the mood, but it also meshes with the meaning of

טון as "...conduct in accord with familial obligations,"¹¹
as seen in 2:11-12.

1:8 May the Lord let each of you find: Literally translated, the text here says "May the Lord give you...and may you find..." T.H. Robinson in the Biblia Hebraica here notes that some MSS of the LXX and the Syriac versions add טון to the text, rendering it: "May the Lord show you respect, and may you each find..." However, the repetition of טון here in verse 9 after its occurrence in verse 8 seems wordy and clumsy. If we construe the terms ין' and יאמם as an hendiadys we derive this proposed meaning. Translating these four words in this way, there is no need to emend the text and we also gain clarity. We here have an addition to Naomi's wish for her daughters-in-law started in the previous verse.

1:9 the security of marriage: The KJV and JPS translate this phrase as "...ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband". But if this were the sense of the passage, would Ruth and Orpah not be going back with Naomi to her home in Bethlehem, which was also their husbands' former home? If Naomi is saying good-bye to them, then the above mentioned translation cannot make sense. Naomi is wishing that they each remarry, not that they come with her. The translation of

this phrase as "the security of marriage" is taken directly from B.D.B.¹² This meaning for מְנוּחָה may be seen in II Samuel 14:17.

1:9 good-by: Kissing is the "usual custom in bidding farewell," as C.H.H. Wright would say it.¹³ The term "good-by" itself may not be present in the text but the meaning is. As in I Kings 19:20, the specific meaning is kiss good-by, not just kiss.

Along with Naomi's kissing her daughters-in-law, we have crying in the next phrase which shows more clearly that this kiss is one of parting.¹⁴

1:9 they wept aloud: Literally the text here reads "...they lifted up their voice and they cried..." which is how the KJV, RSV, JPS and Leeser translations translate the phrase.

וַתִּשָּׂא וַתִּבְכֶּינָה and וַתִּשְׁמַע קוֹלָן make up an hendiadys and are therefore translated as one phrase instead of two verbs.

1:10 For changing the sentence structure in this way, the Sof Pasuk of וַתִּבְכֶּינָה of verse 9 is understood as a pause, but not the end of a sentence. See Genesis 1:14-15, for one of many similar examples.

The RSV translates this כִּי as "Nay", and the JPS as "Surely," the corroborative כִּי. Isaac Leeser translates this as "No, for truly." Kennedy¹⁵ suggests and B.D.B.¹⁶ says that this כִּי is not to be translated at all. כִּי here implies and therefore may be translated as "No!" as both Leeser and RSV do. Naomi's daughters-in-law are saying no to going back to their parents' homes. They are saying: No. We won't go back to our parents; we are coming with you! The negation is implicit in the use of כִּי.

1:11 womb: The term מִעֵי, here translated "womb" is the Hebrew term for the general area of the belly. The specific English term "womb" is arrived at by means of the context.¹⁷ Naomi's question of having sons in her womb may reflect the scientific, anatomical thought of the times (as compared to our present knowledge of procreation and menopause). However, the point here is clearly that Naomi can have no more sons and cannot help Ruth and Orpah find the security of marriage.

1:12 I'm too old: כִּי is used for emphasis in the first phrase, but is not itself separately translated here as B.D.B.¹⁸ and Kennedy¹⁹ suggest. As well, they both point out the possibility of translating this, as do the JPS, RSV, and Leeser translations, with "for:" "for I am too old..." However, the NEB also

leaves this untranslated as I do.

1:12 be remarried: "Be remarried" is purposefully used here to show that Naomi's husband is dead, and that a legal marriage would be necessary if these theoretical sons of Naomi were to be bound by levirate marriage customs, which Naomi seems to be implying in 12b and 13a. Most straightforwardly, she points to the fact that levirate marriage customs²⁰ cannot be of help to Ruth and Orpah because it would be years until yet unborn sons would be marriageable. As E. Robinson points out, if levirate marriage were to "provide a way out for Naomi, the story would collapse at this point."²¹

1:12 be remarried: I here translate almost as if הייתי לאיש were a passive verb. This short phrase does not, as almost all translations have it, mean "If I were to marry a man." Conversely, it means: "If I were to be married to a man." Naomi is not the agent in this theoretical clause, but rather is the object being acted upon. Literally, instead of the term married, we might say "possessed," or "owned." The concept of the time was probably more closely related to the ideas of purchase and bride-price than it was to any idea of mutual bliss. The term "to be remarried" is used for the express purpose of showing the act of acquisition

involved in the marriage.²² The legal fiction says that the husband possessed the wife; the wife was possessed by or belonged to her husband. B.D.B. shows this by translating

היו לאיש as "belong to a man."²³ It is here especially interesting to note the diversity among other translations for the phrases מהיות לאיש and הייתי

לאיש :

NEB--"If I were to marry"

R.S.V. and J.P.S.--"I should have a husband"

Chicago--"getting married"

Leeser--"obtain a husband."

1:13 supposing that I thought...would you wait: The translation of this sentence relies heavily on the suggestions of A.R.S. Kennedy.²⁴ See Genesis 20:11 and Judges 15:2 for good examples of אמרתי translated as "thought," a shortened form of אמר בלבו. Similarly, the NEB translates this as: "If I were to say;" and Leeser translates as "If I were to think."

1:13 therefore...and finally: The LXX here has "for them," referring to Naomi's theoretical sons, in both of the instances where the Masoretic text has הלהן. This would give us the meaning "would you wait for them?...would you close yourselves

off for them?" However, the term הלה as "therefore...and finally" seems to make better sense in this context and does retain the Masoretic Reading. To change to הלהם, would be to substitute a Hebrew term for the Aramaic הלה, which may not have come into the Hebrew language until a relatively late date. It should be noted that the use of this Aramaic word is one of the grounds on which some scholars assign a late date to the Book of Ruth. See Supplementary Note C.

1:13 until they grew up: Unlike later rabbinic halachah, biblical law gives no specific age at which children may marry. However, the point is here made that if Naomi were to have more sons, and they were to marry Ruth and Orpah, this would not be before they reached puberty. Ruth and Orpah would have to wait out these years in "seclusion."

If rabbinic tradition could help us make a guess as to the marriage age which these sons would have to attain, we do have one rabbinic dictum stating that a man should marry by the age of 18.²⁵ However, according to Yebamot 24a-b, a son born later and not contemporaneous with the deceased brother would not be bound by levirate marriage laws.

Complicating the question of whether or not Naomi's sons of a later marriage would even be bound by levirate laws to marry Ruth and Orpah, is the question of a mother, rather

than father, arranging for her sons' marriages. However, at least in the case of Ishmael, Hagar, his mother, does arrange his marriage (Genesis 21:21). See Supplementary Note B.

1:13 have yourselves live in seclusion: As C.H.H. Wright points out, the verb root נָסַח , which does not appear elsewhere in the Old Testament, has the connotation of "being shut off," as one in prison, and here, in the niphal form, it "ought to be taken reflexively."²⁶ The KJV here gives us "stay for them from having husbands," which quite misses the point that if the two younger widows were to wait for Naomi's theoretical sons, they would not be allowed with other men for the duration, and would have to remain as recluses. What would make this decision even harder is that they would be doing this to themselves. Even one of the most recent of translations, the NEB, misses the reflexive meaning of the verb נָסַח by saying "would you refrain from..." I translate this phrase in this way to show that they would be secluded and would be so by their own doing.

1:13 it's even worse for me: Although admitting the possibility of translating $\text{כִּי-מַר-לִי מְאֹד מְכַח}$ in this way, many say this is incorrect because someone of Naomi's calibre and character would not complain about what has befallen her.²⁷

However, to translate as do Cooke, the New Century Bible, JPS, and KJV, seems to be translating with a preconceived notion that Naomi was valiant, rather than human. Naomi has been trying to have her daughters-in-law return to their parents' homes, but they keep refusing to listen to reason. Finally, here she really implies: Listen, I'm worse off than either of you. You can go and be remarried; you can have children. As for me, my husband and sons are all dead, and I'm too old to try starting over again. כִּי in the phrase כִּי-מֵר-לִי is used for emphasis and as such is not to be translated. See the first note on verse 12.

1:13 even worse: The מ of מִכֶּם here is the מ of comparison. The use of "even" is an attempt to translate the intensity of Naomi's feelings of bitterness conveyed by both מֵאֵד and מִכֶּם.

1:14 wept aloud: Although Naomi tries to part from her daughters-in-law in verse 8, they argue with her; neither Ruth nor Orpah would consent to leave until this point, when Orpah agrees to return to her parents' home. See note on verse 9 of this chapter regarding the same two terms.

1:14 remained by her side: Ruth's tenacity is here a show of her loyalty to her mother-in-law. Similarly, the term נִשְׁמָר

is used in Genesis 2:24 for a man "clinging to his wife," in II Samuel 20:2 for a people showing loyalty to their king, and in Deuteronomy 11:22 for describing how Israel should be loyal to God.

In the text, a comparison is here drawn between Orpah, who succumbs to reason, and Ruth, who is unreasonably loyal to Naomi.

1:15 Naomi: Literally the text reads "she." See note to "Naomi" in 1:5.

1:15 her own God: אלהיה can be translated as either singular or plural. The argument for the use of the plural would be that the Moabites were polytheists. I choose to translate in the singular because we do find that they had one main God, Chemosh, along with other minor deities.²⁸ As well, to speak of one as a polytheist in the 20th century often has a negative connotation, and it would not seem that Naomi is here intending to slight the Moabite religion.

1:16 try to persuade me: The term translated here as "persuade," פליג, is a term with varying meanings.²⁹ To show how various are its meanings, we need look only as far as Ruth 2:22, where the word's intention is quite different.

Since verse 8, Naomi has been trying to persuade Ruth

and Orpah to return to their parents' homes, to leave her. Ruth's answer is interpreted as saying, I'm sticking with you; you can't rid yourself of me no matter how hard you try to persuade me.

1:16 abandon you: The text literally reads: "to leave you, to return from following after you." The two forms of saying one thing here, in this hendiadys, have been translated as one. See the last note to verse 1:9 and also the note on ׁ in verse 12.

1:17 I swear to God: This same formula for an oath is also found in I Samuel 14:44 and in I Kings 2:23, where it is followed by ׁ. Similar, but not the same as this, are I Samuel 3:17 and 20:3 and II Samuel 3:35. The literal translation would be: "May the Lord so do to me and may he so add, for only death will separate me and you." It is clear that this was a formula for swearing an oath in the Hebrew vernacular of the time, and therefore the specific words cannot make clear sense to us; rather only the idea conveyed in these words can make sense to us today.³⁰ From the context, we know the point which Ruth is trying to make, and here only an approximate translation of the idea is possible.

1:17 only death: Ruth, in making her vow to remain constant

to Naomi, goes to the extent of saying: The only thing that could separate us is death. This emphasis, the word "only," is gleaned from the syntax of the Hebrew. If Ruth were simply stating that they will be separated by the eventuality of death the Hebrew would be כי יפריד המוות. However, in that the noun here precedes the verb we are shown the emphasis of her statement. Modern English shows this emphasis by the use of "only," Biblical Hebrew does so by the order of the words.

1:17 God: The text here has יהוה, Lord, but the term "God" is used because in our modern idiom we say "I swear to God," and not "I swear to the Lord."

1:18 Ruth was determined to go with her: Rather than understanding this as supreme gesture of Ruth's love for her mother-in-law, Margaret Crook states that "...Ruth goes with Naomi for the purpose of marrying a kinsman of her dead husband to secure a son for the family of Elimelech."³¹ However, it could more plausibly be interpreted that Ruth is here accompanying Naomi seemingly without knowledge of Boaz' or the closer relative's existence. We are not told of Boaz until 2:1 or the closer relative until 3:12. Beyond this, Ruth is not told that Boaz is related to her deceased husband's family until 2:20b.

1:19 until they came to Bethlehem...and as they approached:

Both the terms **בואנה** and **כבאנה** are infinitive constructs with lengthened third person feminine possessive suffixes, **כבאנה** also having a prefix. Literally these would translate as "their coming" and "as their coming." These then are translated into spoken English.

1:19 frenzy: **והם** is used also in I Kings 1:45 as a description of the frenzied reaction (of the people) of a city.

1:19 women: This word is added here in the English. The Hebrew has a feminine plural showing that it is women who are speaking.

1:19 sweet-Naomi: Both sweet and Naomi are here used together to cross the language barrier; in the Hebrew there is a play on words. Naomi means sweet or pleasant in Hebrew. The name is played off against **מר**, bitter, in the next verse.

1:20 If the term Naomi means pleasant, and is representative of Naomi's former state, then **מר**, bitter is a summation of her feelings after having lost her home and her family. She comes, in verses 21 and 22, to express these feelings even more, and to place God at the root of them. As well, see the last note on verse 19.

1:20 Almighty: שדי , as another Biblical term for God, is generally from the patriarchal age. The back and forth usages of the terms "Lord" and "Almighty" in verses 20 and 21 are poetic ways for repeating the same idea. In these two verses each name is used twice for an ab/ba or chiastic, arrangement.

Similar to this usage in modern English would be the employment of the terms "Lord and "God."³²

1:21 presumed me guilty...treated me unjustly: The literal sense of the term ענה בי is "he testified against me," and the literal sense of הרע לי is "he treated me wrongly." However, neither of these translations is expressive or precise enough; their contexts must lead us to their precise juridical meanings. The fact that the LXX, Syriac, Vulgate, and one MSS text here read עָנָה בִּי rather than עָנָה בִּי seem to add very little to an understanding of the text. The result is the same, whether the Lord has "testified against" or "afflicted" her.

Naomi has gone through a famine, has emigrated from and immigrated back to Judah, has lost her husband and two sons, has the responsibility of one of her daughters-in-law, and is in poverty. She sums up all of this in verses 20-21 by saying that God has embittered her; he has brought her home empty-handed and has treated her wrongly.

Having seen what Naomi is complaining about, and the evidence which she seems to be adducing, we are shown Naomi as a plaintiff in a court of law. We can now go on to be more precise about these two terms, and from their context see that ענה בי here means "he has presumed me guilty," and that הרע לי is to be understood as "he has treated me unjustly."³³

1:22 השבה מסדה מואב: This is included in the Masoretic text between עמה and והמה. Even changing the accentuation to make השבה a participle seems of little help. This phrase may have been misplaced from 2:6, where it also occurs. For the sake of clarity this phrase is omitted here.³⁴

This verse, with or without the above emendation, serves as a bridge from the introductory chapter to the rest of the story and is a resume of Naomi's return.

1:22 barley harvest: Barley is what Ruth gleaned in the field (2:17, 23), what Boaz winnowed (3:2), and what Boaz gave to Ruth (3:15, 17). The barley harvest occurs in April or May. Here it is a symbol that the famine spoken of in 1:1 is now ended. Barley ripens two to three weeks earlier than wheat and really is the beginning of the harvest season.³⁵ Note that this amount of time has probably elapsed from Naomi's return to Bethlehem with Ruth 1:22 until Ruth's nighttime encounter with Boaz at the threshing floor in 3:7.

Chapter II

(1) There was a wealthy man from Elimelech's family whose name was Boaz. He was a relative of Naomi's through marriage.

(2) Now Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go out and glean whatever the harvesters leave in the grainfield, behind anyone who will let me." And she said, "You may go, my

daughter." (3) So she went and gleaned behind the harvesters in the field. And, it so happened that this particular part of the field belonged to Boaz, Elimelech's relative.

(4) Now Boaz himself had just come from Bethlehem. He greeted the harvesters: "The Lord be with you" and they replied to him "May the Lord bless you." (5) And Boaz asked

the attendant who was supervising the harvesters: "Whose girl is this?" (6) The man supervising the harvesters replied "She's a Moabite girl, the one who came back from Moab with Naomi. (7) She said 'please let me gather gleanings among the rows of fallen grain behind the harvesters.' She came and has been standing up gleaning here all day long; she's only been sitting in the house this short while."

(8) Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen to me, my daughter! Don't

go gleaning in any other field. Don't leave here at all, but stay close to my girls. (9) Keep your eyes on where my workers harvest in the field and follow them. I have ordered the men not to bother you. If you get thirsty, go to the water vessels and drink the water which the men have drawn." (10)

She respectfully bowed down before him and asked him: "Why are you so compassionately paying attention to me, when I'm just a stranger?" (11) Then Boaz answered her: "Everything which you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband's death, that you left your father and your mother and your homeland, how you came to a people which you didn't even know before this--all of this has been thoroughly told to me.

(12) May the Lord repay your kind effort. May the Lord, God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, fully reward you." (13) She replied: "I do find compassion in you, sir, for you have consoled me and spoken sincerely to me, your humble servant. If only I could be one of your servant-girls!" (14) Then Boaz said to her: "At mealtime come back here and eat some food and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar-relish." So she (came back later and) sat down next to the harvesters, and one of them held out some of the roasted grain for her, and she ate until she was full--and she had more than enough. (15) After eating she got up to glean, and Boaz ordered his men: "Let her glean even among the

bundles of grain, and don't reprimand her! (16) You may even pull out and leave some grain from the bundles and let her pick it up, and not scold her." (17) She gleaned until evening in the field and then pounded out the barley she had gleaned. She had about half a bushel of barley! (18) She came to town carrying the barley and showed her mother-in-law how much she had gleaned. Ruth took out what she had left after eating her fill and gave it to her mother-in-law. (19) Her mother-in-law asked her: "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? May whoever took note of you be blessed!" When she told her mother-in-law: "Boaz is the name of the man with whom I worked today," (20) Naomi replied to her daughter-in-law: "May he who hasn't lost respect for the living or the dead (members of his family) be blessed by the Lord!" Naomi continued, "The man is a close relative of ours---he's one of our family guardians." (21) Ruth the Moabite continued, "He also said to me: 'stay close to my girls until they finish my whole harvest.'" (22) Naomi said to her daughter-in-law Ruth, "It is best, my daughter, that you go out with his girls; that way, no one will bother you in some other field." (23) So she stayed close to Boaz' girls, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests, but she lived with her mother-in-law.

2:1 This long involved sentence may have a reason for being wordy. If the story of Ruth is meant to tell of the extension of family ties and responsibilities, we might have the reason for its repetitiveness. The narrator might have said either that Boaz was from "Elimelech's family" or that he was a relative of Naomi's "through marriage," but both phrases are not needed unless the author is stressing the point.

The narrator here suggests that the family line of Naomi, Ruth, and Elimelech now has a chance of surviving, possibly through the institution of levirate-or agnate-marriage. Possibly related to this is Numbers 27:6-11, regarding the inheritance of a relative's property. See Supplementary Note B.

2:1 מִידַע : Here the קָרִי, מוֹדַע, rather than the כְּחֵיב, is followed, meaning "one who is known," making it possible to translate this as "relative" or "kinsman."

2:1 Boaz: Possibly means "in him is strength." See Supplementary Note A regarding the meaning of the names in the Book of Ruth.

The term here translated as "wealthy" may connote more than wealth in other Biblical passages, but does not seem to here.¹

2:2 Ruth the Moabite: The Hebrew text here gives the feminine of Moabite, but to translate the specification of gender into English would be the same as calling someone an Americaness.

2:2 glean: Biblical laws in Leviticus 19:9, 23:22, and in Deuteronomy 24:19 permit the poor, the resident alien, the orphan and the widow to freely pick up in the field the grains which are either forgotten or dropped by the harvesters. These customs, or others closely related, must be what Ruth here refers to.

However, Burrows² notes that in 4:3 we learn that Elimelech owned a field and that Naomi had control of it. If this is so, if Naomi did have this land, why did Ruth have to go to the level of gleaning? Was there not enough income from Naomi's land, or was there some other complication?

2:2 Whatever the harvesters leave: This phrase is inserted to clarify the technical term "glean."

2:2 grainfield: Literally the text here reads "the field... among the ears of grain." The idea, rather than the words have here been translated.

2:2 behind: As a gleaner, she would walk after the harvesters, picking up what is left or dropped.

2:2 anyone who will let me: The comments of Rashi, Cooke,³ Slotki,⁴ and Louise Smith⁵ point out that Ruth would need permission and protection from the owner or harvester of the field in order to glean. This may be seen in 2:10 below.

2:3 So she went and gleaned: Literally these words translate: "and she went and she came and she gleaned in the field." However, in English, all these words are not necessary to put the idea across.⁶

2:3 the field: The definite article in "the field-- בַּשָּׂדֶה," rather than pointing to Boaz' field, suggests a non-definite field in which Ruth happened to glean, and is not referring to a previously mentioned field. The reader is not told until the next sentence that this is the specific field which Boaz owns.

2:3 Elimelech's relative: Literally: "from the family of Elimelech." Margaret Crook's point of view is that Ruth returned to Bethlehem with Naomi only in order to marry one of Elimelech's relatives.⁷

2:4 Now Boaz himself had just come: "Himself" is here used to bring across the emphasis that it is Boaz of whom the text says הנה . Since the subject precedes the verb, this may be

construed as a pluperfect form.

2:4 the Lord be with you...the Lord bless you: Similar greetings are found only in I Samuel 15:13, Judges 6:12, and Psalm 129:8. However unusual these greetings may be, the Mishnah (Berachot 9 end) does attribute the custom of greeting with God's name to Boaz and speaks most positively of it.

2:5 asked: Literally, "said," but what he says is a question.

2:5 attendant: For other instances of נָעַר as "attendant," see Genesis 22:3; Numbers 22:22; I Samuel 9:3 and 5. This term does not denote a slave.⁸

2:5 who was supervising: This is a niphal form, literally "the one who was placed over the harvesters."

2:5 Whose girl is this: Boaz notices Ruth and asks to whom she belongs, because she is not one of "his girls" who are usually in his field. See verse 8.

2:6 She's...the one who: This first phrase would seem to be an answer given without much thought. Then, with the phrase "the one who....," we have an afterthought, giving some specific

information as to the girl's (Ruth's) identity.⁹

2:6 Moab: Although both שׂדֵי of 1:1 and שׂדֵה of this verse have the same meaning, they are spelled differently in the Hebrew text. See note on verse 1:1 regarding "the territory of Moab."

2:7 standing up gleaning: Literally: "she has stood."

2:7 all day long: Literally מאז הבקר ועד עתה means "from the time of this morning until now." There are variants in other versions. The LXX has the equivalent of "from morning until night;" the Syriac "from morning until sitting down," relating this phrase to the next one; the Vulgate renders this "from morning until now." T.H. Robinson proposes either "from then until now" or "from morning until evening".

Regardless of the specifics of any of the above versions or proposals, the idea which is to be conveyed is clear: Ruth has been in the field all day long.

2:7 she's only been sitting in the house this short while:

Literally זה שבתה הבית מעט translates as "this her sitting the house a little." The Syriac does not have this phrase; the LXX has "she has not rested in the field;" and the

Vulgate reads "she has not returned to the house." With the LXX it is possible to read שבתה as 3rd person feminine singular of שבת --she rested. However, the same idea comes across by understanding שבתה in the Masoretic text as the infinitive construct of ישב with the ה as the 3rd person feminine ending, thus translating "her sitting" as "she has been sitting."¹⁰

2:7 only: This word is implied in the text, but not stated. The point which the overseer is here making is that she has been working hard all day long.

2:7 house: The question of the house, what it is, what it is used for, and where it is are discussed by Cooke,¹¹ Thatcher,¹² and Slotki.¹³ However, almost regardless of how we may interpret this phrase, there does not seem to be an explanation which is acceptable from all points of view. We may well be able to interpret the central idea, but not the exact meaning of the words.

2:8 Listen to me: The Hebrew here and in verse 9 have a negative with an interrogative sign. Being faithful to the Hebrew text, but also translating into spoken English, we have a positive command.

2:8 my daughter: Many commentators point to this form of address to show that Boaz was much older than Ruth, which does seem likely. See Supplementary Note A.

2:8 Don't leave: The form העבורי is unusual and would normally be העברי. However, similar forms are found in Exodus 18:26 and Proverbs 14:3.

2:8 stay close: The use of הדבקין rather than הדבקי here, and in 2:21, and in similar constructions in 3:4 and 18, are cited as instances of older usage, specifically used to make the text seem archaic and place it in the time of Judges. See note on 1:1 and Supplementary Note C dealing with the date of the Book of Ruth.

2:9 Keep your eyes: The verb is implied, but not present in the Hebrew text.

2:9 I have: See note on verse 8, "Listen to me."

2:9 water: Water is not specified as such in either instance; it is implied. However, the latter instance literally says "drink from that which they have drawn." The term שאב is used only for drawing water from a well. This also is how the

Syriac,¹⁴ Vulgate, and Targum interpret the phrase.

2:10 respectfully bowed down: Literally: "and she fell on her face and she bowed down to the ground." The idea is that Ruth is showing her respect to Boaz. In English the exact translation is too wordy.

2:10 asked him: Literally: "she said to him."

2:10 compassionately paying attention to me: Literally "...I found favor in your eyes?" However, the verb which follows in Hebrew is an infinitive, yet a finite verb or gerund is needed in English. Readable English necessitates a translation of the ideas involved, rather than just the words.

2:10 a stranger: Note that elsewhere (in 1:22; 2:2; 2:21; 4:5 and 4:10) Ruth is called a Moabite. Here she calls herself "a stranger."

2:11 before this: חמול שלשום literally translated is "the day before yesterday," but idiomatically it has a broader meaning. For similar usage, see Genesis 31:2, I Samuel 4:7, and 14:21.

2:13 if only: The Hebrew here reads "אֵל --no," and is usually translated "though I be not one of your hand-maids." However, it seems best to emend אֵל to אִלּוּ --"if only," which fits quite well into the context.

2:13 servant-girls: The term שפחה here does not denote a concubine or one who performs menial tasks. Rather, it is a term showing humility on the part of the speaker, Ruth, toward Boaz.

2:14 here: The term "הֵלֵם --here" is a little used term, occurring only 11 times in the Old Testament.

2:14 vinegar-relish: Vinegar, we know, was used as a condiment. It was more like a strong, sour wine than what we today think of as vinegar. However, it was a common part of the meal in Biblical times.¹⁵

2:14 one of them held out: Although the Hebrew יָצַט is in the singular, the KJV, RSV, and JPS all translate this as plural. Here it means that Boaz, or someone, held it out to her. This verb does not occur elsewhere in the Bible.

2:14 roasted grain: This noun occurs only five times in the Bible, denoting a grain which is thoroughly dried and heated over a fire. It is usually translated as corn by British translators because in British English "corn" means grain. II Samuel 17:28 shows this to be one of the usual foods.¹⁶

2:15 After eating: This is not in the text, but is implied.¹⁷

2:15 לאמר : This is used to introduce a direct quotation. As such it is sufficiently suggested by the use of quotation marks.

2:15 even...among: Boaz is here stating that Ruth need not even abide by the custom that she glean whatever is missed or dropped. Rather, she may gather her gleanings anywhere she wants. This idea is expanded even further in the following verse. As well, see note to 2:1.

2:15 reprimand: Literally תכלימה means "humiliate her," but as B.D.B.¹⁸ points out, in this instance it means "humiliate by rebuke" or reprimand.

2:15 bundles: The term צבטים denotes things which are tied together, and occurs only here in the Old Testament.

However, It is used in post-Biblical Hebrew.¹⁹

2:17 pounded out the barley: This is done in order to remove the barley grains from the chaff. Judges 6:11 shows Gideon pounding out wheat, and not only uses the same verb, but makes it explicit that he is pounding wheat. Here, in verse 17, the barley is not explicitly mentioned. The text has "pounded out that which she had gleaned," i.e.: the barley.

2:17 She had about: The text does not have "she," but it is to be understood as " וְיָהִי לָהּ --she had," rather than the vague "there was about one half bushel."

2:17 half a bushel: אֵיפָה is a Biblical measure for dry quantities and is approximately equal to one half bushel.²⁰

2:18 barley: As in verse 17, barley is not here specified, but from the context we know that barley is what Ruth must be carrying.

2:18 showed her: Two Hebrew MSS, the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Vulgate²¹ read וַתֵּרָא, making the verb 3rd person feminine hiphil imperfect, rather than Qal. As Wright points out, this emendation makes Ruth the subject of all of the

verbs in this verse. If this emendation were not made, it would then perhaps be best to rearrange this verse, placing the second clause at the end.

2:18 gave it: G.W. Thatcher²² thinks that Ruth is here giving Naomi roasted grain from the meal which she ate with Boaz' workers. However, it seems much more likely that Ruth is giving gleaned barley to Naomi after having eaten her fill. This phrase is placed at the end of the sentence because it sounds better in English, rather than as the Hebrew text has it: "She took out and gave her..."

2:18 Ruth...Naomi: The names are here supplied for the sake of clarification. Some LXX MSS here add "mother-in-law" for clarity.

2:19 asked her: Literally "she said to her," but what she said was a question.

2:19 work: עָמַל is usually translated as "do" rather than "work." But the context here, like I Samuel 12:6 and 14:45, demands that we translate עָמַל as "work."

The text here literally reads: "And she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked. And she said: 'Boaz is

the name of the man with whom I worked today.'" The entire first sentence is repetitious and superfluous, and for clarity has been omitted from the translation.

2:20 who hasn't lost respect: See note on 1:8 for this translation and connotation of **תָּמָר**. This refers to Boaz and his actions toward Ruth, which reflect his feelings for her dead husband, brother-in-law, and father-in-law, as well as for Naomi and Ruth herself. This does not refer to God.

2:20 members of his family: This is added to clarify that it is Boaz for whom a blessing is being asked.

2:20 one of our family guardians: The plural is here used because as we later see in 3:12, there is an even closer relative than Boaz. This necessitates only the small correction of

גִּבּוֹרֵינוּ to **גִּבּוֹרֵינוּ**.²³ See Supplementary Note B.

2:21 girls: C.H.H. Wright²⁴ thinks that **נָעֳרִים** can be understood as male or female, noting Job 1:19. However, it seems better to change this to agree with 2:8 and 22: **נָעֳרוֹתַי** --my girls."²⁵

2:22 bother you: For other instances of **יָגַע** used in this

way, see I Samuel 22:17 and 18.

2:23 harvests: See note on 1:22.

2:23 she lived with: The Masoretic text is followed here, and agrees with the Targum. However, it should be noted that T.H. Robinson points out two varying manuscripts which read "she then returned to her mother-in-law."²⁶

Chapter III

(1) Her mother-in-law, Naomi, said to her: "My daughter, shouldn't I look out for your security so that all may be well with you? (2) Now, isn't Boaz, our relative, the one whose girls you were with? Now tonight he'll be winnowing barley at the threshing-floor. (3) So, bathe, put on perfume and a dress and go down to the threshing-floor. But, don't make yourself known to him until he's finished eating and drinking. (4) When he is about to go to bed, make note of where he lies and go and make love to him. He'll tell you what you should do." (5) Ruth answered her: "I'll do everything you've told me." (6) So she went down to the threshing-floor and did just as her mother-in-law had directed. (7) Boaz ate, drank and was feeling merry...and he went to lie down at the edge of a heap of grain. Then Ruth sneaked over and made love to him and went to sleep. (8) Around midnight Boaz was alarmed, and he turned himself around, and lo and behold, Ruth was lying with him. (9) "Who are you?" he said. She replied: "I'm Ruth, your humble servant. So spread your wings over me---make me your wife---for you are

our family's guardian!" (10) "May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter," he said. "By not pursuing the younger men--- whether rich or poor---your last show of respect is even greater than the first. (11) Now, my daughter, have no fear. I'll do everything you've asked. My entire community knows that you are a respectable woman. (12) Now, it is true that I am the family guardian. However, there is a family guardian closer than I. (13) Spend the night---lie there until morning. In the morning, if he will be your guardian, all right, let him be your guardian. If he doesn't want to be your family guardian, as God lives, I will be your family guardian." (14) So she lay with him until morning, and then got up so early that a man couldn't even recognize his own friend. And, he thought, it shouldn't be known that she came to the threshing-floor. (15) And he continued, "bring your scarf and hold it out." She held it out while he measured and gave her six measures of barley, and she went to the city. (16) She went back to her mother-in-law, who asked her: "What's happened, my daughter?" So she told her everything Boaz did for her. (17) And, she said, "He gave me these six measures of barley, because, he told me, 'you shouldn't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'" (18) "My daughter," Naomi answered, "sit tight until you know how things turn out. Today Boaz himself won't rest until he's cleared up the whole matter of your marriage."

3:1 security: See the note on this same term in 1:9.

3:2 threshing-floor: This is where the grain is separated from the unwanted chaff or straw. This is usually done at night so that the wind can be used for the separation process, as the Targum implies.¹

3:3 put on perfume: Usually 𐤒𐤓 is used to mean anoint with oil. However, from such passages as Deuteronomy 28:40 we can see that the use of oil as a cosmetic perfume was common. Here, as in Psalm 45:8, the occasion for perfume is simply an ordinary one, not a sacred one.

Here we see what must be the second stage of Naomi's plans for Ruth and Boaz. Her first attempt was having Ruth remain with Boaz' group of girls, but he made no advances toward Ruth then. Now we see her setting up the situation so that Boaz will be caught unaware and the first move will have been made for him.

3:4 make love: Literally: "uncover his feet." With the exception of the four occurrences of 𐤎𐤓𐤕𐤓 in Ruth (3:4, 7, 8, 14), it is found only in Daniel 10:6. Its literal meaning is either "his feet," "the place of his feet," or "the bottom of his bed." However, the term 𐤒𐤓, the root of

this form, is used as a euphemism for the genitals. It is used euphemistically for penis in the קרי of II Kings 18:27 and for vagina in Deuteronomy 28:57. As well, the term is used more generally in Judges 3:24, I Samuel 24:4, Isaiah 6:2, and Ezekiel 16:25. The same verb, גלה --to reveal or uncover, is used in Leviticus 18:6-9, 20:11-21, Deuteronomy 23:1, 27:20, and Ezekiel 22:10, in connection with other terms to mean the act of intercourse; literally to "uncover the nakedness" of someone. So, instead of having a meaning of the literal translation of "uncover his feet," we have the true to life instruction for Ruth to have intercourse with Boaz, (possibly fulfilling the levirate obligation, as seen with Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38), with the maximum possibility that he will marry her. This is translated as "make love" instead of "have intercourse," (as in 4:13) so that an English euphemism is used to translate a Hebrew one. Whatever the exact original meaning of this idiom may have been, it is Ruth's proposal to Boaz.²

3:5 Ruth answered her: Literally: "she said to her."

3:5 me: The Masoretic text here includes only the vowels for אלי , but the קרי gives us the letters. Even without this Masoretic note the meaning would be clear.

3:8 lying with him: The term שכב --lie down, is at times used to denote the act of intercourse. In such cases it is then used with either אה , (as in Genesis 26:10 or 34:7) or עם , (as in Genesis 30:15 or Exodus 22:15,) or at times with אצל , (as in Genesis 39:10). However, only here and in 3:14 is שכב מרגלותיו used. As seen in the note on 3:4, the term רגל is also used generally to mean "privacy" in Judges 3:24, I Samuel 24:4, Isaiah 6:2, and Exekiel 16:25. From this verse and 3:14, it can be seen that there is an actual difference in meaning. Therefore, on the basis of the connotation of שכב and מרגלותיו , the present context, and Boaz' statement to Ruth, "lie here until morning" of 3:13, it seems appropriate to translate שכב מרגלותיו as "lying with him," connoting intimacy and warmth.

3:9 humble servant: The Hebrew term used here is equivalent to that in 2:13.

3:9 spread your wings over me: This is the literal translation of the Hebrew and is a very delicate phrase. From other Biblical sources we can find its implications. Numbers 15:38 and I Samuel 15:27 show the כנף to be a loose fitting part of the clothing. Beyond this literal meaning, in I Samuel 24:4-5 David comes so close to his enemy Saul that he could kill him, but instead

he simply cuts off part of the כנף of his cloak. Saul's insulted reaction shows an instance of כנף as a symbol for much more than a piece of clothing. In Ruth 2:12 Boaz says that Ruth has come to take shelter under God's כנפיים. So, in I Samuel 24:4-5 we see כנף as a symbol of Saul's strength, and in Ruth 2:12 it is a symbol of God's protective strength. Finally the context of ואפרש כנפיי in Ezekiel 16:8 shows these same terms as symbolizing the contracting and consummation of marriage. As well, the Targum to Ruth 3:9 translates this as "your humble servant may be called by your name," i.e.; be married to you. Boaz' covering Ruth with his clothing "implied both protection and union."³ Because the Hebrew words this so delicately (cleverly referring one back to Boaz' statement in 2:12-13, where the wording is strikingly similar), and yet has the straightforward meaning of "marry me," both the overt and covert meanings have been translated.

3:9 guardian: For examples of the function of a go'el (redeemer or guardian) see: Leviticus 25:25ff; 27:13, 15, 19, 20, 31 and Numbers 35:19, 21, 24-27, etc. Simply, a go'el seems to be the relative who takes care of a loss to the family. See Supplementary Note B regarding levirate marriage and its relation to the Book of Ruth.

3:10 younger men: More strictly, this is "young men."

From this statement, as well as the fact that he is Naomi's relative and that he is a man of wealth, we get the idea that Boaz is a good deal older than Ruth. However, this is not explicit.

3:10 show of respect: See the note on this same phrase in 1:8.⁴

3:10 the first: Boaz refers to Ruth's leaving home and family to accompany Naomi. See Boaz' statement in 1:11 to Ruth.

3:11 community: In this context, the term שער denotes more than the gate of a city.⁵ It is seen as a place for business transactions in Genesis 34:24, and Job 29:7-10, a place for justice in Deuteronomy 21:19, and, as Boaz intimates here in 3:11, it is the place where a person's reputation is known. See Proverbs 31:23.⁶ From its use here in Ruth, and in Genesis 23:8, 10, and 34:24, and also from the above, it can be seen that שער actually means the entire "community."⁷

3:12 As the plot becomes more intense, we have the first hint of someone who might stand in the way of Boaz' and Ruth's

clearing up the main problem of the story. It is here interesting to note that Boaz only divulges the other relative's existence after listening to Ruth and telling her of his own feelings.

Rashi here suggests that Elimelech was Boaz' uncle and that the closer relative was Elimelech's brother.

3:14 it shouldn't be known: At first glance it is difficult to understand why Boaz, in this intimate situation, should speak so decidedly impersonally to Ruth. J.B. Curtis understands this as the verbalized feeling of "...the trapped male, who, after the seduction, has second thoughts and feels more comfortable to keep it all a secret and to speak quite impersonally to the seductress."⁸ As can be seen in this and the next verse, Ruth departed as she had come--secretly.

Boaz' fumbling caution here may well be because there is a go'el with rights prior to his own. Were Boaz and Ruth to be found out, Boaz might be considered an adulterer or Ruth's bride-price might well be diminished. It is also possible that Boaz simply did not want the nearer go'el to know of his own interest and therefore make Boaz' acquisition of Ruth more difficult. For, as H.H. Rowley points out, the gratis acquisition of Ruth and Elimelech's property could well have enhanced the go'el's patrimony.⁹

3:15 six measures of barley: The specific measurement here is not given. Most commentators try to deduce this to be six seahs. This may be a round number, simply meaning "some barley." W.E. Staples¹⁰ would go to the extreme of seeing this as payment for cult-prostitution.

3:16 What's happened: Rather than the standard translation of this phrase as "Who are you?" asked because it was too dark to see or because Ruth's face was veiled,¹¹ Naomi is asking "What's happened? How did things go?" which does fit the present context. Naomi knew where Ruth had been, and that she would have to return. For other examples of this usage of 'נ, see Amos 7:2, 5 and Psalm 73:25.¹²

3:18 of your marriage: This is added in translation for the sake of clarity.

Chapter IV

(1) So Boaz went up to the city gate and sat down there. And Naomi's closer guardian relative, of whom he had spoken, came by. Boaz said to him: "Come back here and sit down, fellow." So he came back and sat down. (2) Boaz then took ten of the city elders and said "Come, sit here," which they did. (3) Then he said to the closer guardian relative: "Naomi, who came back from Moab, has mortgaged part of the field which belonged to our brother Elimelech, (4) and I thought that I should disclose this to you...in the presence of the citizens and the town council. If you want to redeem it, do so. But if you're not going to redeem it, please tell me, because I know that you are the first one who can legally redeem it. Then I come after you "(in guardianship line)." So the closer relative said, "I'll redeem it." (5) Boaz then added, "When you take over the mortgage of Naomi's field you also acquire Ruth the Moabite in order to reestablish the dead man's line of inheritance." (6) The closer relative replied: "I can't redeem it for myself, or else I would be damaging my own estate. Take my right of redemption for yourself, because

I can't redeem it." (7) In ancient Israel, to validate any kind of acquisition, a man would take off his shoe and give it to his fellow-citizen, which served as ratification under Israelite law. (8) "Buy it for yourself," the closer family guardian told Boaz; and he took off his shoe... (9) To the councilmen and all the citizens Boaz said: "Are you all witnesses today to the fact that I have acquired everything that belonged to Elimelech and everything that belonged to Kilyon and Machlon from Naomi? (10) And, in order to re-establish the dead man's line of inheritance, so that his line won't be cut off from his family or his community, I have also acquired Machlon's wife, Ruth the Moabite, as my wife. Today, are you all my witnesses?" (11) All the citizens of the community and the elders said, "We are your witnesses! May the Lord make your new wife like both Rachel and Leah who built up the house of Israel. Be worthy in Ephrata and may your name be famous in Bethlehem. (12) Through the offspring which the Lord will give you by this girl may your house be like Peretz', whom Tamar bore to Judah." (13) So Ruth became Boaz' wife. He had intercourse with her, and the Lord let her conceive and give birth to a son. (14) The women said to Naomi, "May the Lord be praised. He hasn't left you without a family guardian today. May his name be respected in Israel. (15) He is a source of new life

for you and a provider for your old age, because your daughter-in-law, whom you love, who is better than seven sons, has given birth to a son!" (16) And Naomi held the little boy close to her and became his governess. (17) The neighborhood women gave him the nickname "Naomison," but called him Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, David's father.

(18) These are the descendants of Peretz. Peretz fathered Hetzron, (19) Hetzron fathered Ram, and he fathered Aminadab.

(20) Aminadab fathered Nachshon who fathered Salma. (21)

Salmon fathered Boaz, and Boaz fathered Obed. And, Obed fathered Jesse, who in turn fathered David!

4:1 city gate: (See note above on 3:11, community.)

Generally speaking the city gate was to the ancient city what the town square was for western cities. It was the place for the city's market (II Kings 7:1), a center for the city's news (see II Samuel 18-19), and even more, it was the area for the city's legal proceedings. The elders or judges of the city met at the gate (Lamentations 5:14) for legal discussions, or any matter pertaining to the community (Genesis 23:10; Proverbs 24:7, 31:23). It was the place of justice (Amos 5:10, 12, 15) and the place of adjudication (Deuteronomy 22:18-19). One of the prime examples of the function of the city gate is here afforded us in Ruth 4:1-12.¹

4:1 closer: This is inserted for the sake of clarity.

4:1 fellow: The Hebrew term here means "so and so," indefinitely referring to a definite person.

4:2 ten of the city elders: The fact that these men are elders, are older than the average person of the community, no doubt gives them their authority, as a parent has authority over children. And, it would seem, one would have to attain a certain age in order to become one of the elders. Parallels to this institution are seen in Egypt (Genesis 50:7) and Moab

(Numbers 22:7). It is not known why their number is here ten. Exodus 24:1, 9; Numbers 11:16, 25 and Ezekiel 8:11 mention seventy elders; Joshua 8:14 mentions seventy-seven elders. G.H. Davies says that the size of the body of elders depends on the size of the community.²

4:3 has mortgaged: The verb, here מכרה , is in the perfect tense, and is usually translated "she has sold." But, in this context, מכר is the direct opposite of גאל--redeem, and not קנה --buy. Bewer³ argues that Naomi is presently selling the property. Morgenstern⁴ here thinks that Naomi may only offer the land for redemption. Naomi's exact dealings are unknown. Whether she has actually sold this property or is planning to, or if this is only a trick of Boaz and Naomi, as Edward Robertson⁵ would have us believe, is unknown. All we have is this one statement by Boaz in 4:3. However, Leviticus 25, especially vv. 25-28 may prove helpful here. Leviticus 25:25 states that a brother or relative should redeem property which has been mortgaged by a member of the family because of poverty. And, this would seem to be what we have in the present case. However, much the question of levirate may become intertwined with mortgage--redemption in Ruth, at this point it is land redemption which is at hand. A measure of the poverty in which Naomi and Ruth are living

can well be seen in the fact that Ruth had to go to the level of gleaning in the field.

Adding to the complications is the fact that inheritance by the wife is found nowhere else in the Old Testament, although this must be conjectured in the present context. Here Naomi's right to inherit and dispose of property is a fact. Within the system of Hebrew law, this property probably could not have been sold; rather, it was mortgaged until the owner or a member of his family could redeem or buy it back, thus returning the land to the original clan and family holdings (see Jeremiah 32:7-16, for example). This, then is the role of the

לְקַיֵּם --redeemer spoken of in Leviticus 25:25.⁶

4:4 redeem: See above note.

4:4 I come after you: Although it is nowhere specified in the Old Testament, redemption of mortgaged land seems to follow lineage (as suggested by Leviticus 27:8-11), and Boaz is the more distant relative, as was stated in Ruth 3:12-13 and seen in 4:6b.

4:5 you also acquire Ruth: As reflected in many versions, the construction of לְקַיֵּם in this phrase offers a difficulty. Translated literally this says that the property must be

acquired from Naomi and from Ruth. This should probably be emended to read גַּם אֶת רֹחַל as in 4:10, as T.H. Robinson recommends on the grounds of the Syriac, Vulgate and Old Latin versions. Anderson would suggest that the ׀ of וְרֹחַל is the enclitic ׀ and therefore shows that both Ruth and the field are to be acquired simultaneously.⁷

4:5 reestablish...inheritance: Literally: "to raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance." The main reason for levirate-marriage laws seems to be to produce a male heir for the deceased. See Supplementary Note B.

4:6 damaging: What exactly this phrase means is not certain. It is known that the child born of the levirate marriage inherits the property of his mother's first husband. His own biological father would thereby lose any financial benefit for having accepted the duty and assets of the levir. However, in this case, the one who accepts the levirate duty also has to redeem the family property. He therefore would have to redeem the land, marry and support Ruth and a child, and later give the property to the child as a levirate inheritance. This, then, may be the reasoning of the closer guardian relative when he declines. See Supplementary Note B.

4:7 any kind of acquisition: The text here literally says

"through redemption or purchase." "Acquisition" is their common denominator.

4:7 take off his shoe: This seems similar to the action prescribed in Deuteronomy for the deceased's wife to do to her brother-in-law if he does not want to marry her;⁸ it is here related to property transferral. The Nuzi Documents show that for the transfer of property a man would remove his foot from the property and place the other's foot on it, symbolizing legal ownership. This then developed into a symbolic lifting of the foot, and from this the ritual developed into pulling off the shoe, seen in 4:8.⁹ Speiser suggests that shoes symbolize "...token payments to validate special transactions by lending them the appearance of normal business practice;" they are used to "circumvent the law through a technicality."¹⁰ According to Rowley, this signifies that the closer relative is abandoning any obligation to either Ruth or the family property.¹¹

4:7 fellow-citizen: This specific meaning of רעה is used here (and in Exodus 2:13, I Samuel 15:28, etc.) because it is probable that Boaz and the closer redeeming relative had to be members of the same clan---citizens of the same town--- in order to transact any kind of business related to real property. See Genesis 23:3-20 where the purchase of land is greatly

complicated because Abraham is not a citizen or member of the
 city. Also see the note on "citizens" in 4:9.

4:7 under Israelite law: Literally: "In Israel."

4:9 citizens: From such passages as Genesis 19:4, where
 "men of the city" is made equivalent to city, it can be seen
 that the specific connotation of city is citizen. As
 above in 4:7, Boaz must be dealing with a fellow-citizen,
 and he must have the permission or certification from the
 citizenry to make a transaction dealing with real property.
 This is necessary, because in theory real property belongs
 to the entire community, as seen in Genesis 23.

4:9 Are you all witnesses today: The use of this phrase
 here and at the end of verse 10---at the beginning and end
 of the transaction--show this to be an oral legal formula.
 Boaz asks the citizens and elders if they have witnessed the
 transaction both before and after describing what he has done,
 and then in verse 11 they answer affirmatively. That they
 have witnessed this contract, although oral, makes it legally
 binding. So too, at the beginning and end, Boaz uses "today--
 היום " to date the contract. As Tucker¹² points out,
 this use of a date formula in oral and written agreements is

also seen in Genesis 31:48; 47:23, I Samuel 12:5 and Jeremiah 40:4.

4:9 acquired: Although it is questionable to what extent marriage by purchase (מכר) was practiced in Biblical times, this does not seem to be a case of it. The term used here is קנה and not מכר . The payment here discussed seems to be for Elimelech's estate, not Ruth. Possibly, although improbably, Boaz' gift to Naomi (or Ruth) in 3:15, 17 might be construed as a hint of marriage by purchase.¹³

4:10 his line: Literally: "the dead man's line," as in 4:5. This is left untranslated because it is repetitious.

4:10 community: See note on this same term in 3:11.

4:11 your new wife: Literally: "the woman who comes to your house."

4:11 Rachel and Leah: They were both wives of Jacob (later called Israel), and are also accounted as greats in Jewish history. This phrase may, then, be a play on words in that "Israel" is also used to signify the people Israel. Either way, this is meant as most complimentary to Boaz and Ruth.

4:11 built up: Rachel and Leah who were Israel's wives, along with his two concubines, mothered twelve sons from whom Biblical tradition traces the twelve tribes of (the people) Israel.

4:11 Ephrata: See note on Ephratites in 1:2.

4:12 Peretz...Tamar...Judah: To see the relationship and meaning of these three people for the Book of Ruth, see Supplementary Note B and Genesis 38. As well, note that Peretz is given as one of Boaz' ancestors in 4:18-21. For the sake of readability, 12a and b are reversed.

4:13 Ruth became Boaz' wife: Literally: "Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife."

4:16 This verse literally reads: "Naomi took the child and held him close to her and she became his governess." The term here translated "governess" is used in the masculine to mean foster-father in Esther 2:7 and Numbers 11:12 and foster-parents in II Kings 10:1, 5 and Isaiah 49:23. In the feminine it is also used in II Samuel 4:4 as a governess.

4:17 neighborhood women: The usual Biblical custom is, of

course, for the mother or father to name a baby. However, aside from this passage, Exodus 2:10, II Samuel 12:25, and possibly Genesis 25:25, are instances of a name given by someone other than the child's parents.¹⁴

4:17 nickname: Literally: "name." This term is used to show clearly that the child is given two names here in verse 17.

4:17 Naomison: This is a contraction of "Naomi's" and "son" which is what the text of 17a seems to show the child's name to be. Here, the child is seemingly credited to Naomi or at least is to legally take over the role of her two deceased sons. The second phrase of 17a, "called him Obed," seems contradictory in that the child is named for none of Elimelech's family and totally excludes the deceased's line or name¹⁵ in spite of 4:5 and 10. It seems to exclude the theoretical reasons for levirate—or agnate marriage. As well, rather than showing the continuation of Elimelech's family line, 4:18-21 would seem to have Ruth as the central feature of the genealogy; this may be so if its point is to show that Ruth, a Moabite convert, figured strongly in David's background.

4:17 Obed: The name means "servant" or "worker." According to this genealogy, he is David's grandfather.

4:18 This genealogy (vv. 18-21) seems not only to be showing that Ruth's and Boaz' son was the grandfather of David, but also that Peretz, who was also the product of a levirate--agnate-marriage, was a remote ancestor of David. With the exception of Nachshon, all of the people mentioned in this genealogy are found as relatives in I Chronicles 2, although with variations as to their sequence.

The terms אלה חולדות and חוליד which are here used are the usual formulae used in the P documents of the Bible, generally dated in the 5th Century B.C. This, therefore is a clue to the dating of the Book of Ruth.

4:18 Peretz: See Genesis 38:29 and 46:12, as well as I Chronicles 2:5.

4:18 Hetzron: Genesis 46:12, Numbers 26:21, and I Chronicles 2:5 show Hetzron to be a son of Peretz. Contradicting this, I Chronicles 4:1 shows him as a brother of Peretz.

4:19 Ram: I Chronicles 2:9-10 shows Ram to be Hetzron's son and Aminadab to be his son. However, I Chronicles 2:25 shows Ram to be Hetzron's grandson.

4:19 Aminadab: For references to him, which place him in a

time much too distant from David, see Exodus 6:23 where he is Aaron's father-in-law. As well, see Numbers 1:7; 2:3 and I Chronicles 2:10.

4:20 Nachshon: See Numbers 1:7; 2:3; 10:14, all of which show him to be Aminadab's son.

4:20 Salma--Salmon: These seem to be the same; see I Chronicles 2:11 where Salma is put in the same genealogical order as here in Ruth 4:20-21. As well, see I Chronicles 2:54.

Supplementary Note A

Literary Aspects of the Book of Ruth

As literature, as a specific piece of ancient Middle-Eastern literature, how would we characterize and/or label the Book of Ruth in modern literary terms? The Book of Ruth, including the genealogy of 4:17b-22, which must be a late addition, fits easily into the category of an epic.¹ It is a narrative dealing with a figure whose descendant, David, came to be one of the greatest kings of the Jewish people. Supposedly, as the Biblical story is told in the Book of Ruth, without either Ruth or Naomi's actions on her behalf, David, and therefore one the heights of Jewish history, would never have been. And, as pointed out by so many,² the language and style of the Story are of the highest calibre.

Beyond this, J.M. Myers³ shows the Book of Ruth to have been an epic poem. Myers tries to show that Ruth was originally in poetic form,⁴ and that over the years of oral transmission it came to be put more and more in a prose form. When this original poem was finally written down and then copied and

re-copied, it came to have its present prose form, he says.

Before continuing, it is necessary to understand that Biblical Hebrew poetry does not rhyme in our conventional sense, such as "rose" and "nose" or "love and "dove." Instead, Biblical Hebrew poetry has a rhythm of sense, not sound;⁵ its "rhyme" lies in its parallelism of thought.

Parts of the Book of Ruth still retain the specific poetic elements of Biblical Hebrew poetry, as seen in 1:11-12a and 1:20-21:

(11a) ותאמר נעמי
שבנה בנתי למה תלכנה עמי

(11b) העוד-לי בנים במעי והיו לכם לאנשים

(12a) שבנה בנתי לכן כי זקנתי מהיות לאיש

(11a) Naomi said:
Go back, my daughters Why would you go
with me?

(11b) Can I still have sons in my womb that
might become your husbands?

(12a) Go back my daughters, go! I'm too old
to be remarried.

(20) ותאמר אליהן
אל-תקראנה לי נעמי קראן לי מרא
כי המר שדי לי מאד

(21a) אני מלאה הלכתי וריקם השיבני יהוה
למה תקראנה לי נעמי

(21b) ויהוה ענה בי ושדי הרע לי

(20) But she said to them:
Don't call me sweet-Naomi, call me
bitter-Naomi because the Almighty
has made me very bitter.

(21a) I went away with a full family, but the
Lord has returned me empty-handed.

(21b) Why would you call me sweet-Naomi when
the Lord has presumed me guilty
when the Almighty has treated me unjustly?

The thought-rhythm and parallelism are evident in these two examples. Synonymous parallelism, the thought of the first part of the line being repeated in the second part of the line, is clear in 1:11a and 1:21b. 1:11b and 1:12a parallel synthetically in that the second elements carry through the thought of the first. Verses 1:20 and 21a are examples of antithetic parallelism, the first and second elements being opposed to each other. The rhythm of clear balance is found in all of these lines. The meter, dependent upon the number of words per line, is a clear balance of three words on each side of the line, 3 plus 3, in all of the above except 11a and 12a. In 11a the balance is 2 plus 3, and 12a may be considered 3 plus 4, if "ו" is to be counted separately.⁶

Included in whatever may have been the original form of Ruth is a device similar to the chorus of the Classical Greek Drama. The women speaking in 1:19 not only sound like the familiar chorus, but also give Naomi a chance to recapitulate all that has thus far happened to her, in one complaint. Also the women in 4:14, 15, and 17 give us a recapitulation of the story's events and provide an ending, or an introduction, to the conclusion of the Book. Even the townspeople seem to

serve this same function in 4:11 and 12.

The present author's opinion would place the Book of Ruth as we now have it in the category of the short story.⁷ However, this is only with these reservations--with the recognition that parts of the Book as we now possess it are poetic and with the recognition that the Book of Ruth in its original form probably was that of the epic poem.

That the Book of Ruth is and was thought of as literature may possibly be seen in the fact that it was placed in the

כתובים --Hagiographa by the rabbis, although the LXX and translations which follow the Septuagintal order place it immediately after Judges, in keeping with the open lines:
 "It happened during the rule of the Judges."

In this short story there are very well worked out literary parallels and contrasts.⁸ Chapter I develops the emptiness--fullness theme. With a husband and two sons Naomi leaves her home; she loses both of her sons and her husband. The family left Bethlehem because of a famine; as foreshadowed in 1:6b, the barley harvest at the end of Chapter I signals the end of the famine. The despair which Naomi has felt in Chapter I may then be contrasted with her fullness in Chapter IV when she is able to sell her property, have her daughter-in-law married off, become a grandmother, see her son's and husband's line carried on through Ruth's child, and also become the child's

governess. Again, under this same rubric of emptiness--fullness, Ruth starts out gleaning with no food at all and then returns to Naomi with abundant food (2:17-18). In 1:5 Naomi is without any family or relatives, but then in 2:1 she does still have a living relative, and then in 2:20b there is a still closer relative. Here again, an emptiness--fullness theme operates around Naomi.⁹

The first mention of emptiness in Ruth is that of the famine in Judah (1:1). But this is more than the opposite of fullness. The famine gives the reason for all that ensues in the story. This famine was the cause behind the entire story. As Edward Robinson points out, "It was famine that led to Abram going down to Egypt, as it was the cause of the eventual settlement there of Jacob and his sons. Thus, famine could be an effective means...for moving the character of this tale from one place to another."¹⁰

The literary forms and themes of the Book do not exist in a vacuum; they are devices used to transport the characters and their meaning through the story. W.E. Staples would interpret the names of the characters in the Book of Ruth as fertility-cult related, reflecting the cult ideas of Tammuz--Adonis--Osiris. For him, each of the characters is only a player of one of these roles.¹¹

The names of the characters in the Book of Ruth may have

significance in their root meanings which may shed light on what the authors of the Book were trying to point out in the story.

Naomi (נָעֻמִּי) may mean "the pleasant one," or "my pleasant one."¹² If this meaning for Naomi does have significance for the story itself, it may be that she does emerge from the events which take place with a pleasant attitude. Or, it may be just the opposite, that Naomi has this name, but that everything which happens to her in the first four-fifths of the story goes to make her anything but pleasant. "Call me bitter-Naomi" is her answer to the women when she returns to Bethlehem (1:21).

The name Ruth (רוּת) may be a contraction of the term (רַעוּת) meaning "friendship" or "friendliness."¹³ However, this significance is guesswork because it is only a possible reconstruction. Boaz (בֹּאֵז) may mean "in him is strength" or "potency" from בָּא and עָז ; he is the one virtuous man in the story.¹⁴ Thus, for the three main members of the cast---Naomi, Ruth and Boaz---we may possibly have Pleasantness, Friendship and Strength.

Supporting the above three there are five more characters, four of whom are named in the Book, and one who goes nameless. Elimelech (אֱלִימֶלֶךְ), Naomi's husband can easily be translated as "my God is King."¹⁵ However, what this may signify

for the meaning of the story is indeed hard to determine.¹⁶ Possibly this name is to be a reflection on his own character or on the type of woman Naomi is to have been married to such a devoutly named man. Naomi and Elimelech's two sons, who also die in Moab, are Machlon and Kilyon. There is not a truly clear understanding of what underlies these two names; here, even more than with the other names in the Book of Ruth, a translation of the meaning is guesswork. According to some, Machlon (מחלון) may come from מחלה , meaning sickness, and would therefore mean "sick" or "ill."¹⁷ However, this root does not occur elsewhere in the Old Testament. It seems that the name Kilyon (כליון) comes from the root כלה and thus signifies "extinction" or "annihilation."¹⁸ Kilyon's wife Orpah (ערפה) is the other named character in the story. Orpah, possibly, means "the back of the neck" from ערף.¹⁹ Thus, in context, she would be the one who turned away from her mother-in-law. In addition to the above, there is the other guardian relative, closer to Naomi than Boaz, whose name is not given. He is first mentioned in 3:13.

Now the cast of players in the Book of Ruth is completed; My God is King, Sickness, Annihilation, The One Who Turned Away and Nameless have now joined Pleasantness, Friendship and Strength to round out the list of players. Somewhat like the ancient Chinese opera players with their stereotypical

good and bad faces painted on masks, there are at least three who seem to be labeled not good---Machlon-Sickness, Kilyon-Annihilation and Orpah-The One Who Turned Away, while there are three who are labelled good---Naomi-Pleasantness, Ruth-Friendship and Boaz-Strength. As well, in the realm of supporting players, there are Elimelech-My God is King and Nameless, the closer relative.

It might be noted in passing that the good-bad conflict does not really materialize into an exaggerated stereotype, for Machlon, Kilyon and Orpah are given bad names but not bad attributes in the story. They are simply ordinary and have done nothing either good or bad. Rather than being judged as bad, they seem to be the norm with whom the three good people may be compared.

Although possible, the above meanings for the characters of the Story are very uncertain. Even if the meanings of the names were certain, the one who first used these names in this story did not necessarily have to be aware of these meanings. More important than theorizing about the meanings of the names in their root forms is seeing the characters as people and understanding them from the information given in the story itself.

The first four characters appear in verses one through five of Chapter I: Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two

sons Machlon and Kilyon. As a family they moved from Bethelhem to Moab and there the two sons married Moabite women--Ruth and Orpah. Thus far six people, three male and three female, have been mentioned. Then, abruptly, the three men are removed from the story leaving Naomi, Ruth and Orpah. Only nine verses later (1:14) Orpah also departs.

Now there remain only Naomi and Ruth as principle characters in the story to move the plot along largely by themselves. The information about them as human personalities is little; they would appear to fit Abrams' description of type or flat characters, who are "presented only in outline without much individualizing detail."²⁰ They do not seem to possess motivation for their actions that is clear or consistent enough to allow accurate character analysis.

For instance, some indication of Naomi's character may be seen when she first decides to take her daughters-in-law with her to Judah, but then tries to persuade them to return to their families. Yet even these actions permit several different interpretations. It may be that since Naomi can no longer offer them any hope of security she nobly and benevolently urges her daughters-in-law to return for all of their sakes, feeling that they will have a better chance at happiness, or security, with their own people. At the same time, it is also possible that she very selfishly feels that she will be better off if she does not have

anyone but herself to worry about. This somewhat self-centered aspect of Naomi's personality is shown more clearly upon her return to Bethlehem when she bids the women call her bitter, not sweet. She seems totally absorbed with her own losses and takes no cognizance of the fact that a loyal daughter-in-law has returned with her.

Similarly, when Naomi advises Ruth and tries to help her do whatever will help ingratiate herself to Boaz (2:22 and 3:11), she probably does so both altruistically, to help Ruth, and also in her own interest, to rid herself of responsibility for Ruth via a marriage to Boaz. Starting in 3:1, Naomi actually verbalizes her hopes for this marriage (3:1-5). Again, in 3:16b-18, is seen Naomi's concern for Ruth after Ruth's nighttime encounter with Boaz; Naomi tries to calm Ruth's jitteriness over whether Boaz will have her. Here once again, although Naomi may be genuinely concerned about Ruth, she personally has much to gain if Boaz does marry Ruth. From such a marriage, she probably could hand over the responsibilities for Ruth, for the family property, and for an heir for Elimelech, to Boaz.

The sharpness and cunningness of Naomi's mind and just how much she, regardless of her motivation, has thought out her plan to bring Ruth and Boaz together is brought into focus

in 3:2-5. As Edward Robinson²¹ suggests, Naomi must have spoken with Boaz the morning after Ruth met him on the threshing-floor. They must have parleyed together to figure out a plan to cause the nearer relative, who had first choice for Ruth, to give up his chance. As well, they must have spoken in order for Boaz to have the right to dispose of Naomi's real estate. And, they must have met and spoken in order for Naomi to know that Boaz would try to settle these entangled questions that very day.

Naomi's theological thinking can be seen to be as ambivalent as her attitudes toward Ruth. She bitterly blames the Lord for bringing her the misfortune of losing her family (1:20) and for her consequent state of overwhelming self pity. Just as emphatically as Naomi previously (1:21) has blamed the Lord for her misfortune, she then turns a full circle to praise him for Ruth's luck in gleaning (2:19) and for the birth of Ruth's son (4:14). As well, in 2:20 she gratefully asks the Lord's blessing on Boaz.

As noted in introducing Naomi, there is only a fluctuating, unclear picture of Naomi's character presented in the story. However, it is Naomi who carries the story from start to finish. It is she who is the main player in the story, the one who creates and keeps the action of the story moving.

The movement and events which Naomi guides are centered

almost entirely around Ruth. At the same time, Ruth's actions lead up to caring for Naomi's needs and create a balance of complementary action between the two women. Naomi is the manipulator and Ruth is the main person manipulated.

Aside from the beautiful passage showing Ruth's active loyalty to her husband's family, and occasional references to her industriousness, Ruth is passive in the story. Rather than acting, she is acted upon or directed. When Ruth and Naomi return to Bethlehem, it is only Naomi who receives all the attention of the townspeople; Ruth is not even mentioned. In 2:22, Naomi tells Ruth to continue gleaning; it is not Ruth who says that she thinks it a good idea to continue. Ruth only follows Naomi's instructions. Ruth is like a puppet being delicately maneuvered from above by Naomi when she goes down to the threshing-floor to inveigle Boaz into taking her as his own (3:1-15).

In addition, when Ruth goes out to glean, she merely acts as the device which gets us into the stream of events with Boaz (2:2). When speaking with Boaz, Ruth takes a very subservient role and almost allows Boaz to act for her.

Once more, in the scene at the city-gate, Ruth is delicately maneuvered by Boaz (probably with some assistance from Naomi). At the end of the story Ruth is taken by Boaz as his wife, but it is Naomi, not Ruth who is given the praise for the child

born and for carrying on the family line.

Although Ruth's dominant passivity throughout the story has been noted, Ruth is also shown, in certain instances, to have active, positive qualities. For instance, the second chapter (3:19) tells of Ruth's industriousness in gleaning, and how she impresses the foreman and Boaz himself with her efficiency.

It is also apparent that Ruth is actively loyal. She could have returned to her parents, but instead chooses to accompany Naomi (1:16-17), and 2:7 and 11-12 tell how others are impressed by Ruth's loyalty to Naomi. As well, Ruth is shown to be loyal to her deceased husband's family (4:9-10) and loyal to Boaz himself (3:10-11). She is praised by the elders of the community and said to be capable of doing for Israel what Leah and Rachel themselves did (4:11). And at the end of the story she is said to have been better to Naomi than seven sons could have been (4:15).

It is Ruth who shines in that one very impressive scene, when in contrast to Orpah she pledges herself and her eternal loyalty to her mother-in-law. It is Ruth who speaks the words which are by far the most famous and moving in the entire story, and it is probably this pledge of loyalty which she speaks that has let tradition dictate that the Book will bear her name.

Yet, throughout the story, there is the puzzling matter of Ruth's being continually labelled "the Moabite" (1:22; 2:2, 6, 21; 4:5, and 10), and thus kept apart in spite of her loyalty to all of her husband's family. Biblically, the Moabites were a hated people not permitted to become Jews (Deuteronomy 23:4-7). With this as a background, it may have been thought all the more marvellous that Ruth, a Moabite, against all odds became not only a Jew, but Ruth the Moabite was an ancestor of the great King David. As the story goes, had it not been for Ruth, Elimelech's family line would not have continued, and so King David would never have been.

Orpah is a very minor character in the story compared with Ruth. Very little is told about her personality. She seems to exist mainly for purposes of comparison with Ruth. As the only other Moabite in the story, Orpah's desertion of Naomi is compared to Ruth's noble and self-sacrificing loyalty. When Ruth stays with Naomi, Orpah goes, and Orpah's leaving seems mainly designed to highlight Ruth's staying, rather than reflecting negatively on her own character. Just as Orpah is mostly a yardstick against which Ruth can be measured, the closer relative, who has first choice when bidding on Elimelech's estate, seems to act as a foil for Boaz. The closer relative follows a reasonable outlook; because of concern for his own estate, he declines the family property

and Ruth. Boaz then jumps in and offers to take the responsibility for Elimelech's estate, Ruth, and an heir for Machlon. Although this unnamed relative has first choice for the land and Ruth, while Boaz has only second choice, Boaz is the author's choice for greater fame and a fuller character in the story.

The story tells more facts about Boaz than about either Naomi or Ruth, yet we seem to know less of his personal desires than we do of theirs. He is called a close relative of Naomi's deceased husband, and is labelled from the first as wealthy (2:1). Later on, in 3:10, there is the hint that he is an older man; he thanks Ruth for not having followed younger men, but for choosing him, thus, implying that he is older. However, no figure for his age is given.

From all of the facts given about him in the story, it would appear that Boaz is a wealthy land owner (2:3), but not an unconcerned one. He does come out on at least one occasion to chat solicitously with his workers (2:4,5), he does at least watch the processing of the barley (3:3) to see how the workers are doing, and he does take part in their party thereafter (3:7).

It is also seen that Boaz' concern does not stop with his workers. He shows warm thoughtfulness for Ruth when he issues orders to his men to let her glean as much as possible

and not to harm her in any way (2:9, 15, 16). He generously offers to Ruth the chance to continue to glean in his field all through the harvest (2:8), offers her food and water while gleaning (2:9), and praises her constancy with her mother-in-law (2:11). Later Boaz is seen as not only caringly appreciating Ruth's implied offer of herself for marriage, but he also considerately tells her to leave before anyone could possibly know that she had spent the night with him (3:14).

At the same time, in this instance, one sees Boaz' shrewdness for business. If the closer relative were to know that she had been with him for the night, her value would be lowered and she and Naomi might not receive all that they need from her marriage. Showing his shrewdness even more than the last incident, note Boaz maneuvering at the city-gate. When he offers Naomi's land to the nearer kinsman, who would naturally profit from an increase in his own holdings, Boaz does not at first state that Ruth might be a part of a package deal. He mentions that to purchase the property means also to purchase Ruth as a wife and to have the responsibility to raise an inheritor for Elimelech's properties (4:5). When the closer relative hears the clause which includes Ruth and the raising of an inheritor, he immediately backs off (4:6). Boaz can then be very gallant in offering to take upon himself the responsibility for fathering a child to be Elimelech's.

inheritor, through marriage to Ruth (4:19). Then, as a round of applause, the city elders praise Boaz for his action and praise the future offspring of his marriage with Ruth (4:12). So, Boaz not only outsmarts the other relative, but he also "gets the girl."

It might be noted in passing that Boaz also has the added characteristic of having a positive, faithful attitude toward God as shown in three separate instances. When he greets his workers he does so with one of the most devout greetings used in the entire Bible (2:4). In two places in the story he asks and seems to expect God to reward Ruth for her commendable loyalties (2:11 and 3:10).

Boaz, then, is shown in a gradual character progression. He goes from being a rather anonymous close relative, to being a generally kind, gentle man, to being one who outrightly puts himself out to help Ruth. He is a man who praises God and expects Ruth to be rewarded by God. Through his maneuverings, Boaz is shown as a clever and keen businessman, but it is clear that his motivation is not only for a good deal; he goes far beyond business concerns in his thoughtfulness toward Ruth, her reputation, and the perpetuation of the family name.

Supplementary Note B

The Legalities of the Book of Ruth

The culture which created the Story of Ruth was different from our own in at least one way. In the Ancient Near East, family or blood ties were of paramount importance. Because of strong blood ties, one finds no Biblical examples of child adoption by anyone outside of the family.¹ Real property was likewise felt to be family-owned. For this reason, the law of Leviticus 25:25f shows what one should do for another member of the family who becomes so poor that he must sell his own property.

So, too, these strong ties held true if a woman were widowed. Especially if the widow were childless, then not only did she need the family's assistance, but she also needed an heir to carry on her husband's name. (See Genesis 38:8, Deuteronomy 25:6, 7, 9 and Ruth 4:5, 10.) From such a background the institution of levirate marriage developed. Levirate marriage² is a custom by which a man marries his deceased brother's widow. This is done (a) in order to give security to the widow, (b) so that the deceased brother can

be assured of having an heir to carry on his name,³ and also (c) to insure that family property will stay within the family group. For, if the widow were to marry someone outside of the family it might be possible for her to keep her first husband's property. However, it is questionable whether the widow had any inheritance rights.⁴

In addition to the possible levirate-marriage in Ruth, Genesis 38 contains the only other story in the Old Testament of a woman's remarriage to a member of her husband's family after the husband has died. Throughout the episode related about Tamar in Genesis 38, it is accepted implicitly that one of her deceased husband's brothers is bound to marry her,⁵ provide for her, and raise an heir for her deceased husband. The question at hand in Genesis 38 is that the first brother does not want to impregnate Tamar when he recalls that the child will be considered the son of her first husband through this legal fiction, and afterward Tamar's father-in-law does not want to enforce her levirate rights.

Beyond this practical example in Genesis 38, Deuteronomy 25:5-10 states the law of levirate as it should in theory be practiced. Although it may well be questioned whether Ruth's marriage, the story of Tamar, and the law(s) of Deuteronomy 25:5-10 are representatives of the same time, they are the only potential references to levirate-marriage in the Old Test-

ament⁶ and therefore, must all be probed.

Although Genesis 38, as we have seen, leaves no room for the brother-in-law wanting or not wanting to perform the duty of the levir; Deuteronomy 25:5-10 leaves the choice to the brother-in-law. The text states:

(5) When brothers dwell together and one of them dies, and leaves no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married to a stranger, outside the family. Her husband's brother shall unite with her and perform the brother-in-law's duty. (6) The first son that she bears shall be accounted to the dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out in Israel. (7) But if the man does not want to marry his brother's widow, his brother's widow shall appear before the elders in the gate and declare, "My husband's brother refuses to establish a name in Israel for his brother; he will not perform the duty of a levir." (8) The elders of his town shall then summon him and talk to him. If he insists, saying, "I do not want to marry her," (9) his brother's widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, pull the sandal off his foot, spit in his face, and make this declaration: Thus shall be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house! (10) And he shall go in Israel by the name of "the family of the unsandaled one."

Julian Morgenstern distinguishes six different stages in the development of levirate marriage. In historical order they are:

1. As seen in Genesis 38, the deceased's brothers are obligated to marry their sister-in-law and, if there is no brother, the father-in-law is then compelled to marry the widow. At this stage there is no option or choice involved.
2. In Deuteronomy 25:5-6, the deceased man's brother, but not father, is obliged to marry the widow, providing that the brothers lived together as one household.

3. Stage three of this development is seen in Deuteronomy 25:7-9a, where the brother-in-law may or may not marry the woman, dependent only upon his own wishes. However, Morgenstern notes, social pressure would still say the he ought to marry his sister-in-law.
4. According to Morgenstern, the next stage of development is seen in Ruth itself; separate the early parts of Ruth (4:11a, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17a) from the later, and not only does inheritance become more important in the early part, but all male members of a family become subject to the rules of the levirate. The male relative now inherits the widow, and as well has the use of the deceased's property until the necessary son comes of age. This first son inherits from and is considered the perpetuator of the dead man. However, the duty of marriage (and property redemption) is not obligatory.
5. Ruth 4:11b, 12, 17b, 18-22 show a later development. Here the child of the new union is not even fictionally considered the deceased's son, although at maturity he will inherit from his mother's first husband.
6. As a possible last stage in this development Morgenstern adds Leviticus 18:16 and 20:20 which forbid sexual relations between brother-in-law and sister-in-law.⁷

These stages pointed out by Morgenstern can be quite helpful in delineating differences and variations of the levirate law or custom at different stages. However, it must be admitted that his scheme could make as much sense backward as forward.⁸ Millar Burrows⁹ and H.H. Rowley¹⁰ argue the opposite of Morgenstern. In both of their opinions, Ruth's marriage--and the inheritance and redemption of property which accompany it--represents a stage of development of folk-custom law earlier than that of Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

Here in Ruth, property redemption and inheritance complicate the question of what Belkin rightly calls agnate-marriage.¹¹ Boaz completes not only the duty of marrying the deceased's wife, but he also inherits the right to redeem Elimelech's property, which must have had some sort of mortgage on it. Beyond this complication, it can also be seen that Ruth's son is not named for her first husband (4:17), as should be the case if this were a levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:6). Burrows notes that unlike the laws in Deuteronomy 25:6, Boaz does not inherit Ruth as his wife, but "he acquires her along with the field, which he purchases as redeemer."¹² H.H. Rowley disagrees with Burrows' opinion above about Ruth's acquisition and as well explains the problems of marriage, inheritance, and redemption in Ruth. He states:

...there is no reference to property in the law of levirate marriage in Deuteronomy. But that is because the law did not contemplate the complication of a widowed mother-in-law as well. Where a man left property and a widow, the brother-in-law would not need to buy the property and marry the widow. He would marry the widow and the property would support her, until her child in due course became its heir, as the legal son of the deceased man... But when the kinsman was confronted at once with the problem of redeeming Naomi's land and marrying a penniless Ruth, he was unable to face it. These were two separate and distinct responsibilities which fell upon him, either of which he could have contemplated separately, but not both together. Yet he could not choose one and reject the other.¹³

Thus Boaz was enabled to marry Ruth and redeem the family property.

Ruth 3:10b would seem to show that no family go'el was actually obligated to marry Ruth and that she herself was free to marry anyone else. There may have been group pressure on both Boaz and the other go'el to marry Ruth, but they were not strictly bound to do so. In this agnate-marriage both Boaz and the closer go'el felt obliged to take care of their duties to the family property,¹⁴ and Ruth, but were not strictly bound to do so. Ruth had the choice of returning to her parents' home and not bothering with her husband's family, yet she felt some sort of obligation to accompany her mother-in-law. So, too, both the closer go'el and Boaz felt a moral obligation to marry Ruth and redeem the family property. But, they too had a choice: by the removal of his shoe, the closer go'el chose not to accept the obligations,¹⁵ and then Boaz chose to take on both responsibilities.¹⁶ Boaz may have been dealing cleverly when he told the closer go'el that both property redemption and an agnate-marriage were involved in marrying Ruth. He may have been merely complicating the problem so that the other go'el would be happy not to take Ruth.

With so little actual information available about the various types of marriage found in the Bible, it does not

seem possible to say that Ruth's type of agnate-marriage to Boaz can be neatly fitted into a particular slot in the history of levirate marriage. Ruth's marriage was of the agnate type, and as such should be considered similar to a levirate marriage, but it should not technically be considered as an actual levirate marriage.

Supplementary Note C

The Date of the Book of Ruth

As far back as Talmudic times, scholars were questioning the origin of the Book of Ruth.¹ The LXX places Ruth after the Book of Judges, in accord with the opening verse "It happened during the rule of the Judges."

Because the Book of Ruth, in verses 4:17-22, supposedly deals with King David's ancestry, C.H.H. Wright,² S.R. Driver³ and Louis Wolfenson⁴ date the composition of Ruth around the time of David and cite the Book of Ruth as a partial explanation of David's Bethlehemite background.⁵ This would date the composition of Ruth circa 1000-900 B.C.

There are many who would date the composition of Ruth after (or during) the exile. For W.E. Staples, the Book of Ruth was "...a midrash written...for the purpose of bringing comfort and encouragement to the people who have passed through a distressing period."⁶ He therefore dates it immediately after the exile. On the basis of the "internal evidence"--- that the universalistic Book of Ruth was a protest against the exclusivistic reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah---Bettan, too,

would date the writing of Ruth either during or immediately after the exile.⁷ Bettan would argue that the author was so far removed from the period of the Judges that he could look back upon that period as one of peace and calm, which, he says, is unlike the turmoil of the times depicted in the Book of Judges.⁸

In agreement with the above dating, there is Otto Eissfeldt's view that Ruth was written after 444 B.C. However, he would base this on the "broadened outlook of the author toward other peoples,"⁹ and on the "Aramaisms"¹⁰ found in the text. On the same bases, Cooke, who calls the Book of Ruth "so serene in its outlook and tone of gracious piety,"¹¹ would date the composition of the Book around 330 B.C. He restrainedly lauds this as proving that in "an age which was becoming more and more absorbed in the ideals of legalism, the spirit of Hebrew literature was not extinct."¹²

Julius Beyer begins widening the perspective. He would agree that the present purpose of the Book of Ruth was to counteract the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah, and he therefore places its final writing sometime after 444 B.C. However, he does see that this was not the Book's original purpose.¹³ Jacob Myers very persuasively argues that the Book of Ruth was originally a folk tale in poetic form. As a folk tale it was handed down orally for years and was then put into

written form.¹⁴ However, he is not specific as to either the date when it may have originated as a folk tale, or when it was put into writing.

In a more detailed way, J.B. Curtis and G.S. Glanzman find three main stages of creative literary activity which produced the Book of Ruth in its present form. However, they do not agree exactly on the three stages.

According to Curtis,¹⁵ the oldest stage of the story was a fertility myth concerned mainly with the themes of bread, sex, and death. The second stage is a folk tale, like that of Jacob and Tamar, a story of how the girl got the man. This was a story told for enjoyment, not edification. The final stage of development in the Ruth story is seen in the story as we presently have it. Through it run the themes of piety, loyalty and God. In this present form it was universalistic, used against Ezra and Nehemiah.

In Glanzman's delineation¹⁶ the story of Ruth was originally of Canaanite origin and was borrowed by the Israelites. At this stage it was a poetic tale which circulated in oral form. In the 9th or 8th century B.C., the story went through a second stage. At this time the Book of Ruth was put into prose and additions of locale, religion, law, and custom were included. And, Glanzman notes, the laws and customs encountered in the Book were peculiar to the Bethlehem region of that time.¹⁷

As the last stage of development, the Book of Ruth was redacted into its present form.¹⁸

Curtis, Glanzman, and Myers seem to come much closer to what seems realistic in dating Ruth. The language and succinctness of the Story, the poetic flow of the words in many places, and the blatant breaking of this pattern seen in 4:7, for example, would lead to a more broadly based conclusion than those spoken of above. On the whole, the Book of Ruth seems to be a very polished piece of literature. It seems precipitous to permit a few Aramaic words, or a certain few verses, or prejudices against supposed "narrow legalism" to determine the date of the Book, as compared with other parts of the Old Testament, by saying that Ruth represents an older, pristine stage of Judaism; one needs to look at the Story of Ruth as a folk tale of living, dynamic people. To make the Book of Ruth into a polemic against the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah, and to say that the whole story leads up to the punch line in 4:17 and 4:18-22, is to say that the whole Book of Ruth is to be reduced to a long joke!

The basic story of Ruth seems to have had a very long history. Its origins may well be Canaanite. It may have started out as a tale about a woman and her daughter-in-law and familial piety. It may have started out as a story to explain the root beginnings of the later well-defined customs

of levirate marriage, or a means of perpetuating the family name. Or, as Myers notes, this may have started out as a nursery tale.¹⁹ Conceivably, the possibilities can even include Staples' idea that Ruth is the story of the transfer of power within an ancient fertility cult.

To say that the Book of Ruth started as any particular one of these, or as some other story, I am unwilling to do. To say and know that would entail knowing for certain exactly what the later accretions were, which cannot be known. There may well have been only a few words added or deleted from the tale as it passed through the generations. Very plausibly the first phrase of Chapter I, relating the story to the time of the Judges, may have been tacked on as a way of beginning the story. The phrase in 1:22b, "the one who returned from Maob," may be the result of an error by a copyist who accidentally inserted it here rather than only in 2:6b. The explanation of the shoe ceremony in 4:7 is most probably a later addition which was made for the sake of clarity. It is easily seen that the last four verses of Ruth (4:18-21), so similar to the P Document of the Pentateuch, probably were added by a later redactor to show David's ancestry; the story (or one of the stages of the story) probably ended with the triumphant note of the child's name as Naomison (4:17a). Perhaps at some different stage the

adjective of "Moabite" was attached to Ruth's name in order to make the Book into the polemic which so many wish to see it as.

By means of the visible redactions of P found in the last verses of Chapter IV, it is probably safe to date the end of the creative writing stage of the Book of Ruth circa 400 B.C. when a look back to the preservation of David's family could also be a look ahead to the hoped for eschatological end of the present world order.

Footnotes, Chapter I

1. Charles H.H. Wright, The Book of Ruth in Hebrew (London: Williams and Norgate, 1864), p. 2.
2. Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel, Volume I (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), pp. 74-75.
3. G.W. Thatcher, Judges and Ruth (New York: Oxford University Press, no date), p. 181.
4. A.R.S. Kennedy, The Book of Ruth (London: Billing and Sons, 1951), p. 8.
5. G.A. Cooke, The Book of Ruth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), p. 2.
6. Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 984a.
7. Kennedy, p. 10.
8. S. Cohen, "Ephrathah," IDB, Volume II (1962), p. 122.
9. See Exodus 3:16; 4:31 and BDB, p. 823a.
10. For an in depth discussion of this point and its implications, see O.J. Baab, "Marriage," IDB, Volume III, p. 279.
11. Nelson Glueck, Hesed in The Bible (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967), p. 41.
12. BDB, p. 630a.
13. Wright, p. 9.
14. See S.H. Blank, "Kiss," IDB, Volume III, pp. 39-40.

15. Kennedy, p. 16.
16. BDB, pp. 471b-472a.
17. See Genesis 15:4; 25:23, Isaiah 16:11 and II Samuel 20:10 for various other uses of this term.
18. BDB, pp. 471b-472a.
19. Kennedy, p. 16.
20. For a digest of what the law might be toward these theoretical sons if they were to be fathered by a man other than Elimelech, see C.H.H. Wright, p. 10, and Millar Burrows' discussion of the possible implications in his "The Marriage of Boaz and Ruth," JBL, Volume LIX, (1940), pp. 445-454.
21. Edward Robertson, "The Plot of the Book of Ruth," The John Rylands Library Bulletin, Volume XXXII: Number 2 (1949-1950), p. 211.
22. See Ruth 4:10, for example.
23. BDB, p. 723a.
24. Kennedy, p. 18.
25. Rabbi Ishmael, Kiddushin 29b.
26. Wright, p. 12.
27. For example, see Cooke, p. 4.
28. See E.D. Grohman, "Moab," IDB, Volume III, pp. 418-419.
29. Of all of its occurrences in the Bible, S.H. Blank states that it "occurs in the sense of 'intercede' only ten times..." S.H. Blank, Jeremiah: Man and Prophet (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1961), p. 234. See his whole discussion on pp. 234-239 for a further understanding.
30. For a discussion of this and other Biblical oaths, and the technicalities involved, see S.H. Blank, "The Curse, Blasphemy, The Spell and The Oath," HUCA, Volume XXIII,

part I, pp. 73-95, especially pp. 89-90, note 45. As well, see M.H. Pope, "Oath" IDB, Volume III, pp. 575-577.

31. Margaret B. Crook, "The Book of Ruth---A New Solution," The Journal of Bible and Religion, Volume XVI: Number 3 (July, 1948), p. 155.
32. For a discussion of the other uses of the term, see, B.W. Anderson, "God, Names of," IDB, Volume II, p. 42.
33. See the discussion of S.H. Blank, Prophetic Faith in Isaiah (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967), pp. 187-193, on which this is based. Also see Ronald M. Hals, The Theology of The Book of Ruth (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969).
34. For a fuller discussion of this point, see Kennedy, p. 26 and Wright, pp. 19-20.
35. See Alma L. and Harold N. Moldenke, Plants of the Bible (Waltham: Chronica Botanica Company, 1952), pp. 111-113.

Footnotes, Chapter II

1. See Roland de Vaux, p. 70.
2. Millar Burrows, "The Marriage of Boaz and Ruth," p. 447.
3. Cooke, p. 7.
4. A. Cohen, Editor, Ruth: Judah J. Slotki, The Five Megilloth (London: The Soncino Press, 1952), p. 49.
5. Louise P. Smith, "The Book of Ruth," The Interpreter's Bible, Volume II (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 839.
6. See Kennedy's comment on this phrase, p. 28.
7. Crook, "The Book of Ruth---A New Solution."
8. See Roland de Vaux's discussion of the point, p. 125.
9. For a discussion of this point, see my note on 1:22 and that of Wright on pp. 19-20.
10. See Kennedy, p. 30 and Wright, p. 25 for a fuller discussion of this point.
11. Cooke, p. 7.
12. Thatcher, p. 186.
13. Slotki, p. 51.
14. According to the critical apparatus of Biblia Hebraica.
15. See W.S. McCullough, "Vinegar," IDB, Volume IV, pp. 786-787.
16. See J.C. Trever, "Grain," IDB, Volume II, pp. 468-469.

17. See Wright, p. 32 and my note on 1:6.
18. BDB, p. 484a.
19. See Marcus Jastrow, A Dictionary of The Targumim, The Talmud Babli and Jerusalemi, and The Midrashic Literature (New York: Pardes, 1950), p. 1260.
20. O.R. Sellers, "Weights and Measures," IDB, Volume IV, p. 834. However, both G.F. Hill "Weights and Measures," Encyclopedia Biblica, Volume IV, pp. 5292-5299, and Hastings, Dictionary of The Bible, "Weights and Measures," Volume IV, p. 912, understand an ephah to be approximately one bushel.
21. These are cited by Wright, p. 34.
22. Thatcher, p. 188.
23. As well, T.H. Robinson, in Biblia Hebraica cites seven other manuscripts which read גואליני , p. 1198.
- 24.. Wright, p. 38.
25. As well, some Arabic, Theodotion, Old Latin, Ethiopic and LXX MSS have the feminine plural, according to T.H. Robinson.
26. Biblia Hebraica, p. 1198. T.H. Robinson also states, incorrectly, that the Targum agrees with these two variants, and not with the Masoretic text.

Footnotes, Chapter III

1. See H.N. Richardson, "Winnowing," IDB, Volume IV, p. 852.
2. For two very vague references, see R.C. Dentan, "Foot," IDB, Volume II, p. 308 and H.L.E. Luering, "Foot," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume II, pp. 1125-1126.

In a very different vein, W.E. Staples, "The Book of Ruth" AJSL, Volume LIII: Number 3 (April 1937) would understand this entire situation as an example of sacred prostitution, to be tied in with the cult ideas of Tammuz, Adonis, and Osiris.

3. H.H. Rowley, The Servant of the Lord (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), p. 180. As well, he points out that Arabic parallels show this as a symbolic way to claim a widow.
4. Also see Glueck, pp. 40-42.
5. For the usual meaning of γw see 4:1ff and the discussion thereon.
6. See G.R. Driver and John C. Miles, The Babylonian Laws, Volume I, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 244.
7. E.A. Speiser, "'Coming' and 'Going' at The City Gate," BASOR, Number 144 (December, 1956), p. 20-23.
8. Susan Lee Shearman and John Briggs Curtis, "Divine-Human Conflicts in The Old Testament," JNES, Volume XXVIII: Number 4 (October 1969), p. 237.
9. Rowley, pp. 181-182.
10. Staples, pp. 145-157.

11. R.H. Kennett, Ancient Hebrew Social Life and Custom as Indicated in Law, Narrative and Metaphor (London: Humphrey Milford, 1933), p. 50.
12. See the comment of Mitchell Dahood on Psalm 73:25, Psalms II (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1968), p. 195.

Footnotes, Chapter IV

1. See Roland de Vaux, pp. 152-153.
2. G.H. Davies, "Elder in The Old Testament," IDB, Volume II, pp. 72-73.
3. Julias A. Bewer, "The Geullah in The Book of Ruth," AJSL, Volume XIX: Number 2 (January, 1903). So too A.R.S. Kennedy, p. 54, Cooke, p. 154 and Millar Burrows, "Marriage of Ruth," p. 447.
4. Julian Morgenstern, "The Book of the Covenant, Part III," HUCA, Volume 7, (1930), p. 174.
5. Robertson, "The Plot of The Book of Ruth."
6. See Driver and Miles, p. 317.
7. Francis I. Anderson, The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch (New York: Abingdon Press, 1970), pp. 48 and 124, note 13.
8. See Deuteronomy 25:5-10, L.B. Wolfenson, AJSL, Volume 27: Number 4, p. 294, and Julian Morgenstern, pp. 165-167.
9. Ernest R. Lacheman, "Note on Ruth 4:7-8," JBL, Volume LVI: Number 56 (1937), pp. 53-56
10. E.A. Speiser, "Of Shoes and Shekels," BASOR, Number 77 (February 1940), pp. 17-18.
11. H.H. Rowley, p. 174.
12. Gene M. Tucker, "Witnesses and 'Dates' in Israelite Contracts," CBQ, Volume XXVIII: Number 1 (January, 1966), pp. 44-45.
13. See O.J. Baab, "Marriage," IDB, Volume III, pp. 282-284, and for a contrasting opinion, see Z.W. Falk, "Hebrew

Legal Terms II," Journal of Semitic Studies, Volume XII:
Number 2 (Autumn 1967), pp. 241-243.

14. See R. Abba, "Name," IDB, Volume III, p. 504.
15. An example of this may be seen in Genesis 48:16.

Footnotes

Supplementary Note A

1. See the definition of epic given by M.H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), pp. 29-30.
2. For example, see S.R. Driver, p. 426, R.G. Moulton, The Literary Study of The Bible (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1899), pp. 241-244, and G.A. Cooke, p. xvi.
3. Jacob M. Myers, The Linguistic and Literary Form of The Book of Ruth (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1955).
4. T. Henshaw, The Writings (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963), on the contrary, holds that Ruth was "written entirely in prose," (p. 203) as does N.K. Gottwald, "Poetry, Hebrew," IDB, Volume III, p. 829.
5. W.O.E. Oesterley, The Psalms (London: SPCK, 1962), pp. 24-25, more fully says that "...the rhythm of Hebrew poetry is essentially a rhythm of sense, and not sound... the phonetic element is always secondary and the logical element primary."
6. See N.K. Gottwald, "Poetry, Hebrew," IDB, Volume III, pp. 829-836.
7. In defining a short story, M.H. Abrams (pp. 88-89) basically states that it must (1) be short, (2) have a plot, (3) have a beginning a middle, and an end, (4) use a limited number of characters, and (5) the focus may well be on the exhibition of character. Speaking of one of Hemingways's short stories, but applicable to Ruth, Abrams states that "...the action is in every detail contrived to test and reveal, with a suprising reversal, the moral quality of all...protagonists."

8. For a very detailed analysis of these patterns, see Stephen Bertman, "Symmetrical Design in The Book of Ruth," JBL, Volume LXXXIV: Part II (June, 1965), pp. 165-168.
9. For a more detailed discussion of this emptiness-fullness theme in Ruth see D.R. Rauber, "Literary Values in the Bible: The Book of Ruth," JBL, Volume LXXXIX: Part I (March, 1970), pp. 29-35.
10. Edward Robertson, p. 208.
11. W.E. Staples, pp. 145-157.
12. See D. Harvey, "Naomi," IDB, Volume III, p. 508.
13. This is the opinion of BDB, p. 946.
14. According to BDB, p. 127, Öttl's opinion of the meaning of **יָצַח**, as found in I Kings 7:21 (and II Chronicles 3:17) is that it was an exclamatory statement of the architect of the Temple, "in strength!"
15. BDB, p. 45.
16. As a gauge of how many names may have had **לֵא** as their base, and that this does not necessarily indicate anything about the person, see BDB pp. 44-46, where some thirty-eight names are listed as having **לֵא** as part of their linguistic source.
17. Slotki, p. 42, and Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, p. 612.
18. See BDB, p. 478-479.
19. See BDB, p. 791.
20. M.H. Abrams, p. 70.
21. Edward Robertson, p. 219-220.

Footnotes

Supplementary Note B

1. Bilhah's children are considered as Rachel's (Genesis 30:3-8), Joseph's sons are considered as Jacob's (Genesis 48:5), and Ruth's son is called Naomi's son. See Roland de Vaux, pp. 51-52.
2. For detailed studies of the levirate in all its aspects see Millar Burrows, "Levirate Marriage in Israel," JBL, Volume LIX, (1940), pp. 22-23, and Millar Burrows "The Ancient Oriental Background of Levirate Marriage," BASOR, Number 77 (February, 1940), pp. 2-14.
3. This may be the point of Lot's daughters' actions in Genesis 29:31-38. Morgenstern points out that this one aspect is found only in Hebrew levirate-marriage and not in other near-eastern cultures, p. 164.
4. Leviticus 27:8-11 states the order of inheritance to be the deceased's sons, daughters, brothers, paternal uncles, and lastly, other male relatives. The only examples of inheritance by women found in the whole of the Old Testament are Job's (Job 42:13-15) and Zelophehad's daughters (Numbers 36:1-9). Even this is further narrowed in Numbers 38:2-10 to permit inheritance by daughters only if they marry within their father's tribe. Nowhere in the Old Testament is it stated that a widow inherits from her deceased husband, but Ruth 4:3 and 9 show Naomi selling her husband's property. It is possible that she may only have had the right to dispose of property and not to actually inherit it herself. However, there still remains one other possibility. The Biblical laws may leave this unstated simply because it was taken for granted at that time that the widow inherited at least enough to sustain herself. It may have been unstated, just as it is not stated that a man

may be polygamous, or that there was a wedding ceremony; it may have been taken for granted.

5. Samuel Belkin's opinion does not coincide here. According to him Tamar's brother-in-law did not have to marry her. His only duty was to impregnate her in order for his dead brother to have a descendant. Samuel Belkin, "Levirate and Agnate Marriage in Rabbinic and Cognate Literature," JQR, Volume LX: Number 4 (April 1970), pp. 278-9.
 6. Matthew 22:24-27 shows Jesus being faced with questions related to levirate marriage.
 7. Morgenstern, pp. 176-183. Beyer, "Geullah in The Book of Ruth," gives a similar delineation.
 8. Excluding the laws of Leviticus 18:16 and 20:30, which Morgenstern questionably includes, the development could be reversed. That is to say: (1) Any male relative marries the widow, the children of the union being considered theirs, with the first son also inheriting from his mother's first husband. (2) In addition to the above, the first son is considered the son of the deceased husband and perpetuates his name. (3) In the third stage one of the deceased's brothers is expected to marry the widow. (4) In order to insure that the widow is cared for, one of the deceased's brothers is obliged to marry her. (5) And, in the last stage, not only is one of the brothers obliged to marry the widow, but if there is no available brother, even the widow's father-in-law comes under the obligation.
- The value of Morgenstern's delineation of the stages of levirate marriage is that he does differentiate these stages from each other. But he does not make it possible to date The Book of Ruth by means of his delineation.
9. Burrows, "The Marriage of Boaz and Ruth," p. 454.
 10. Rowley, p. 171.
 11. Belkin (pp. 278-9) clearly points out that Ruth's marriage to Boaz is not a levirate marriage; Boaz is not Ruth's brother-in-law. Agnate-marriage, however, is marriage to a male whose relationship is traced only through the male members of a family. We are told only that Boaz was related to Elimelech (2:1). He is called a go'el (2:20: 3:9-13 and 4:3-17), but not a levir. To clear up this problem, P. Paul Jouon, Ruth (Rome: Institute Biblique Pontifical,

- 1953), p. 10, suggests that Ruth becomes Boaz' wife only because Naomi is too old. But if this were so, there would still be the problem that Boaz' is spoken of as a relative of Naomi, but not her brother-in-law. For a condensation of various other opinions see Rowley, p. 175-6, notes.
12. Burrows, "The Marriage of Boaz and Ruth," p. 449 and Morgenstern, p. 175.
 13. Rowley, pp. 176-177. For Bewer, "The Goel in Ruth 4:14, 15," AJSL, Volume XX: Number 3 (April, 1903) pp. 143-148, however, the obligation of levirate was not originally part of the duties of ge'ullah. That is, the go'el was obliged to redeem the deceased's property and wife, but he was not obligated to levirate marriage. Z.W. Falk (pp. 241-244) is of the opinion that the field was to be purchased, and that Ruth, too, is acquired as property which also belonged to the deceased.
 14. Regarding the obligation and importance of redeeming family property, see Leviticus 25:25-31 and the example of Jeremiah 32:6ff. As well, see Roland de Vaux's discussion of redemption, pp. 21-22. If the laws of Leviticus 25:23-28 were being followed, and if it were still many years until the Jubilee year, the sum of money for redemption of the property might well have been high. On the other hand, if Elimelech (the supposed owner of the land) had been in financial straits years earlier, why did neither Boaz nor the closer relative redeem the land then? Was this merely a play on Boaz' part? And, if Naomi had a piece of land which could actually be sold, why did Ruth have to go out and glean in someone else's field? Or, did Naomi even have the legal right to inherit from her husband? Nowhere else in the Old Testament does a wife inherit from her husband!
 15. For the relation of the shoe ceremony of Ruth 4:7 and 8 to Deuteronomy 5:9 see the note on Ruth 4:7.
 16. Boaz' choice to marry Ruth and redeem Elimelech's property may also be seen in another light. As the genealogy of 4:21 shows, Boaz was considered Obed's father. If Boaz was himself heirless, then marrying Ruth, fathering Obed, raising an heir for Elimelech, (Machlon) and redeeming the family property would not have been a burden for him. To the contrary, this would permit all involved to obtain the maximum from Ruth and

Boaz' marriage: Naomi's supposed property would no longer be mortgaged, her husband and son would have an heir, Ruth would at last have the security of marriage and a child, and Boaz himself would not only have a wife, but also a son to be his heir. See Rowley, pp. 184-186.

Bewer sees an intended confusion in 4:14, 15. He claims that originally the levirate duty was not part of the story; only redemption was. Originally, then, Boaz chose to marry Ruth. Bewer says, however, that an interpolator at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah's reform (partly against intermarriage) rearranged 4:13-17 and added two words to show that Boaz was obligated by levirate laws to marry Ruth. Originally it was clear that Boaz was Naomi's go'el, but the later interpolator's rearrangement showed Obed to be the go'el. That is, originally ge'ullah was a part of the story, but levirate marriage obligations were not.

Bewer would rearrange these verses as follows to show the original intent: 14, 15a, 13, 17a (omitting 15 and 17b), 15b, 16, 17b to read:

(14) The women said to Naomi, "May the Lord be praised. He hasn't left you without a family guardian today. May his name be respected in Israel. (15a) He is a source of new life for you and a provider for your old age."

(13) So Ruth became Boaz' wife. He had intercourse with her, and the Lord let her conceive and give birth to a son. (17a) The neighborhood women said, "There is a son born to Naomi. (15b) Because, your daughter-in-law whom you love, who is better than seven sons, has given birth to a son." (16) And Naomi took the little boy close to her and became his governess. (17b) (the women) called him Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, David's father.

Bewer, "The Goel in Ruth," pp. 202-208.

Footnotes

Supplementary Note C

1. In Baba Batra 14b the authorship of Ruth is credited to Samuel.
2. Wright, p. xliv.
3. S.R. Driver, pp. 425-427.
4. Louis B. Wolfenson, "The Character, Content, and Date of Ruth," *AJSL*, Volume XXVII: Number 4 (April 1912), pp. 291-298. Wolfenson points to a number of facts for an early date: (1) the language is early, as are the (2) graphic peculiarities, and more importantly, (3) there is the internal evidence that (a) Passover is not mentioned at the time of the barley harvest, (b) Shavuot is not mentioned at the end of the harvest, (c) both Ruth's gleanings and her acquisition are earlier than the laws of Deuteronomy 24:19 and 25:5-10, and (d) there is no objection to the marriage of an Israelite to a Moabite. These facts show the Book to be "conclusively early." For Wolfenson the early date is also automatically shown, when it is seen that the Book of Ruth is meant only as a story about King David's family background in Bethlehem.

For a review and short critique of many other views, see Louis B. Wolfenson, "The Purpose of the Book of Ruth," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Volume LXIX (April, 1912), pp. 331-341 and Rowley, p. 164, note 4.

5. See I Samuel, 22:3ff.
6. Staples, p. 148.
7. Israel Bettan, The Five Scrolls (Cincinnati: UAHC, 1950) pp. 50-52. Also see Henshaw, pp. 194-203.

8. Bettan, p. 55.
9. Otto Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: An Introduction (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 482-484.
10. The expressions להן , העונה , השברנה , in 1:13, מרא and שדי of 1:20, קים of 4:20, מרגלות of 3:4, 7, 8, 14 and נשא of 1:4, etc., for marrying a woman, as well as הי- of 3:3 and י- for the second person feminine singular perfect and י- for the second person feminine singular imperfect in 2:8 and 21, are cited as examples of late or Aramaic expressions by both Eissfeldt (p. 484) and Cooke (p. 15). If they were conclusively late, exclusively from Aramaic, then a point might be proven. However, almost all of these expressions can be shown to be old Hebrew or else are probably later glosses. (See Driver, pp. 426-7). The one term which attracts so much attention in this area is להן of 1:13. S.R. Driver (p. 426) offers the possibility that this is inculded by way of a Northern (Israelite) influence. Whether or not any of these terms is Aramaic is almost pointless to discuss as far as pointing us to a date for the Book. If the story took form over a period of five hundred years or more, there was surely the possibility of various linguistic accretions, and it need not be looked at so narrowly. See S.R. Driver, pp. 426-427.
11. Cooke, p. xvi.
12. Cooke, p. xvi.
13. J.A. Bewer, The Literature of The Old Testament (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), pp. 282-283 and, J.A. Bewer, "The Goel in Ruth," pp. 202-208.
14. Jacob Myers, pp. 16, 32, 42, 64.
15. Shearman and Curtis, pp. 235-239.
16. George S. Glanzman, "The Origin and Date of The Book of Ruth," CBQ, Volume XXI: Number 2 (April, 1959), pp. 203-204.
17. This is also the opinion of W.F. Albright, JBL, Volume LXI, 1942, p. 124. As well, both Rowley, p. 171, and Burrows, "The Marriage of Boaz and Ruth," p. 454, suggest that Boaz' marriage to Ruth and the customs surrounding it are from a time earlier than the levirate laws of Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

18. Crook, p. 155, too, would assign three stages of development to Ruth, seeing the first during the rule of the Judges, per 1:1.
19. Myers, pp. 42-43.

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