

Purpose Of The Of Ruth

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The Purpose of the Book of Ruth

Abstract: Numerous scholars argue that the book of Ruth, with its story concerning mixed marriages of Judahites with Moabite women, consciously opposes the exclusivist rhetoric of the books of Ezra–Nehemiah. However, a detailed analysis of the narrative rhetoric of the book of Ruth, especially compared to the supersessive rhetoric of the roughly contemporary books of Samuel–Kings, reveals that the main purpose of the book of Ruth was to delegitimize the claims of the tribe of Ephraim to domination in Israel, and against this background to promote the tribe of Judah with its Davidic dynasty. Therefore, the book of Ruth most probably served as a rhetorical-ideological model for the much more elaborate, likewise consciously Judean narrative of the books of Samuel–Kings.

Keywords: book of Ruth, books of Samuel–Kings, Israel, Samaria, Ephraim, Judea

The book of Ruth is one of the shortest books of the Hebrew Bible. Its length is comparable with that of the books of Joel, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, or Malachi. Whereas the latter books contain prophetic oracles and should therefore be interpreted in terms of prophecy, the book of Ruth contains a short story and should therefore be interpreted as a narrative.¹ In this respect, it resembles the book of Jonah, which has a relatively clear message: Yahweh does not care for the Israelites only, he is also interested in the fate of other people.² Should the book of Ruth be interpreted in similar terms? Does it consciously broaden the horizon of interest of the Judeans, to include other nations, like the Moabites, in their particular,

¹ Cf. Hubbard, *Ruth*, 47–48; Bush, *Ruth / Esther*, 46; Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 602–603.

² Cf. Briks, “Społeczne i prawne,” 624.

PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF RUTH IS A PROFOUND EXPLORATION OF THEMES SUCH AS LOYALTY, LOVE, REDEMPTION, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY. THIS SHORT YET IMPACTFUL NARRATIVE FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT NOT ONLY HOLDS THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE BUT ALSO OFFERS VALUABLE LESSONS FOR PERSONAL CONDUCT AND RELATIONSHIPS. IN THIS ARTICLE, WE WILL DELVE INTO THE VARIOUS PURPOSES OF THE BOOK OF RUTH, EXAMINING ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT, KEY CHARACTERS, AND THE MORAL LESSONS IT IMPARTS.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE BOOK OF RUTH

THE BOOK OF RUTH IS SET DURING THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES, A TIME MARKED BY SOCIAL AND MORAL CHAOS IN ISRAEL. UNDERSTANDING THIS HISTORICAL BACKDROP IS CRUCIAL FOR GRASPING THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK. THE ISRAELITES FACED

NUMEROUS CHALLENGES, INCLUDING FOREIGN OPPRESSION AND INTERNAL CONFLICT. AMIDST THIS TURMOIL, THE STORY OF RUTH STANDS AS A BEACON OF HOPE AND FAITHFULNESS.

AUTHORSHIP AND TIMELINE

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE BOOK OF RUTH IS TRADITIONALLY ATTRIBUTED TO THE PROPHET SAMUEL, ALTHOUGH SOME SCHOLARS BELIEVE IT MAY HAVE BEEN WRITTEN LATER. THE TIMELINE OF THE NARRATIVE PLACES IT AROUND 1100-1000 BCE, SHORTLY BEFORE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MONARCHY IN ISRAEL. THIS CONTEXT ENHANCES THE STORY'S IMPORTANCE, AS IT REFLECTS THE VALUES THAT WOULD BE FOUNDATIONAL FOR THE ISRAELITE NATION.

KEY CHARACTERS IN THE BOOK OF RUTH

TO FULLY GRASP THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF RUTH, IT'S ESSENTIAL TO ANALYZE ITS KEY CHARACTERS:

- **RUTH:** A MOABITE WOMAN WHO DEMONSTRATES UNWAVERING LOYALTY AND LOVE FOR HER MOTHER-IN-LAW, NAOMI. HER JOURNEY FROM MOAB TO BETHLEHEM SYMBOLIZES A COMMITMENT TO FAMILY AND FAITH.
- **NAOMI:** A JEWISH WIDOW WHO EXPERIENCES PROFOUND LOSS YET FINDS STRENGTH IN HER DAUGHTER-IN-LAW. NAOMI'S TRANSFORMATION FROM BITTERNESS TO JOY ENCAPSULATES THE REDEPTIVE NATURE OF THE NARRATIVE.
- **BOAZ:** A WEALTHY RELATIVE OF NAOMI WHO EMBODIES KINDNESS AND INTEGRITY. HIS ROLE AS A KINSMAN-REDEEMER HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE.

THEMATIC PURPOSES OF THE BOOK OF RUTH

THE BOOK OF RUTH SERVES MULTIPLE THEMATIC PURPOSES THAT RESONATE WITH READERS ACROSS GENERATIONS.

LOYALTY AND COMMITMENT

ONE OF THE CENTRAL THEMES OF THE BOOK OF RUTH IS LOYALTY. RUTH'S FAMOUS DECLARATION TO NAOMI—"WHERE YOU GO, I WILL GO; WHERE YOU STAY, I WILL STAY"—EXEMPLIFIES HER DEEP COMMITMENT. THIS THEME UNDERSCORES THE IMPORTANCE OF STEADFAST RELATIONSHIPS, WHETHER IN FAMILY OR FRIENDSHIP.

REDEMPTION

THE CONCEPT OF REDEMPTION IS INTRICATELY WOVEN INTO THE NARRATIVE. BOAZ'S ROLE AS A KINSMAN-REDEEMER ILLUSTRATES HOW INDIVIDUALS CAN RESTORE AND HEAL THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED LOSS. THIS THEME OF REDEMPTION NOT ONLY APPLIES TO PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS BUT ALSO EXTENDS TO THE BROADER COMMUNITY, EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR MUTUAL SUPPORT.

FAITH AND PROVIDENCE

THROUGHOUT THE STORY, THE CHARACTERS EXHIBIT PROFOUND FAITH IN GOD'S PROVIDENCE. RUTH'S DECISION TO FOLLOW

NAOMI TO BETHLEHEM, DESPITE THE UNCERTAINTIES THAT LAY AHEAD, REFLECTS A DEEP TRUST IN DIVINE GUIDANCE. THE UNFOLDING EVENTS, INCLUDING HER MEETING WITH BOAZ, ILLUSTRATE HOW FAITH CAN LEAD TO UNFORESEEN BLESSINGS.

INCLUSIVITY AND ACCEPTANCE

RUTH, AS A MOABITE, REPRESENTS A FOREIGNER IN ISRAEL, AND HER ACCEPTANCE INTO THE COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS THE THEME OF INCLUSIVITY. THIS ASPECT OF THE NARRATIVE CHALLENGES SOCIETAL NORMS AND PREJUDICES, PROMOTING A MESSAGE OF LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE ACROSS CULTURAL BOUNDARIES. THE BOOK OF RUTH ENCOURAGES READERS TO EMBRACE DIVERSITY AND FOSTER UNITY.

MORAL LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH

THE BOOK OF RUTH OFFERS SEVERAL MORAL LESSONS THAT ARE RELEVANT TO CONTEMPORARY LIFE:

1. **EMBRACE LOYALTY:** THE STORY ENCOURAGES INDIVIDUALS TO PRIORITIZE LOYALTY IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS, ILLUSTRATING HOW STEADFASTNESS FOSTERS DEEP CONNECTIONS.
2. **PRACTICE KINDNESS:** BOAZ'S ACTIONS EXEMPLIFY THE IMPORTANCE OF KINDNESS AND GENEROSITY TOWARDS OTHERS, REMINDING READERS THAT SMALL ACTS CAN HAVE TRANSFORMATIVE EFFECTS.
3. **SEEK REDEMPTION:** THE THEME OF REDEMPTION ENCOURAGES INDIVIDUALS TO SEEK HEALING AND RESTORATION IN THEIR LIVES, WHETHER THROUGH FORGIVENESS OR RECONCILIATION.
4. **TRUST IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE:** THE NARRATIVE ENCOURAGES FAITH IN GOD'S PLAN, REASSURING READERS THAT EVEN IN DIFFICULT TIMES, THERE IS A GREATER PURPOSE AT WORK.
5. **WELCOME DIVERSITY:** RUTH'S INCLUSION IN THE ISRAELITE COMMUNITY ADVOCATES FOR ACCEPTANCE AND LOVE ACROSS CULTURAL DIVIDES, URGING INDIVIDUALS TO EMBRACE AND CELEBRATE DIFFERENCES.

THE BOOK OF RUTH IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

FOR CHRISTIANS, THE BOOK OF RUTH HOLDS SIGNIFICANT THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS. RUTH'S STORY IS OFTEN VIEWED AS A FORESHADOWING OF CHRIST'S REDEPTIVE WORK. JUST AS BOAZ REDEEMED RUTH AND NAOMI, JESUS IS SEEN AS THE ULTIMATE REDEEMER WHO BRINGS SALVATION TO ALL HUMANITY. THIS CONNECTION ENRICHES THE NARRATIVE, EMPHASIZING THEMES OF GRACE AND REDEMPTION THAT ARE CENTRAL TO CHRISTIAN BELIEFS.

CONCLUSION

THE **PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF RUTH** EXTENDS FAR BEYOND ITS HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT. IT SERVES AS A TIMELESS REMINDER OF THE VALUES OF LOYALTY, REDEMPTION, AND FAITH. THROUGH THE LENS OF RUTH, NAOMI, AND BOAZ, READERS ARE INVITED TO REFLECT ON THEIR OWN LIVES AND RELATIONSHIPS, EMPHASIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF KINDNESS, COMMUNITY, AND THE FAITH THAT SUSTAINS US THROUGH LIFE'S CHALLENGES. WHETHER APPROACHED AS A HISTORICAL NARRATIVE OR A SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL INSIGHT, THE BOOK OF RUTH CONTINUES TO INSPIRE AND TEACH VALUABLE LESSONS FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF RUTH IN THE BIBLE?

THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF RUTH IS TO HIGHLIGHT GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND FAITHFULNESS THROUGH THE STORY OF RUTH, A MOABITE WOMAN, WHO BECOMES AN ANCESTOR OF KING DAVID AND ULTIMATELY JESUS CHRIST.

HOW DOES THE BOOK OF RUTH ILLUSTRATE THEMES OF LOYALTY AND COMMITMENT?

THE BOOK OF RUTH ILLUSTRATES THEMES OF LOYALTY AND COMMITMENT THROUGH RUTH'S STEADFAST DEDICATION TO HER MOTHER-IN-LAW NAOMI, CHOOSING TO STAY WITH HER AND SUPPORT HER DESPITE THE CHALLENGES THEY FACED.

WHAT ROLE DOES REDEMPTION PLAY IN THE NARRATIVE OF RUTH?

REDEMPTION PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE NARRATIVE OF RUTH, AS BOAZ ACTS AS THE KINSMAN-REDEEMER, RESTORING RUTH AND NAOMI'S FAMILY LINE AND ENSURING THEIR PROTECTION AND PROVISION.

HOW DOES THE BOOK OF RUTH CHALLENGE SOCIETAL NORMS OF ITS TIME?

THE BOOK OF RUTH CHALLENGES SOCIETAL NORMS BY PRESENTING A STRONG FEMALE PROTAGONIST WHO TAKES INITIATIVE, DEFIES CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS, AND SECURES HER OWN FUTURE AND THAT OF HER FAMILY.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RUTH'S INCLUSION IN THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS?

RUTH'S INCLUSION IN THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS SIGNIFIES THE BREAKING OF ETHNIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS, DEMONSTRATING THAT GOD'S GRACE EXTENDS BEYOND ISRAEL TO ALL PEOPLE, EMPHASIZING THE UNIVERSAL NATURE OF SALVATION.

IN WHAT WAYS DOES THE BOOK OF RUTH EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY?

THE BOOK OF RUTH EMPHASIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY THROUGH THE SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RUTH, NAOMI, AND THE PEOPLE OF BETHLEHEM, SHOWCASING HOW COMMUNAL BONDS PROVIDE STRENGTH AND ASSISTANCE IN TIMES OF NEED.

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