Ruth as Revelation

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Introduction: Literary Features

• Expressions of Artistic Sophistication:
  – Wordplays, especially on names
  – Creative representation of dialect and register
  – Concise economy of verbiage
  – High proportion of dialogue to narrative
Introduction: Literary Features

Chiastic Structure:

A  Past family history (1:1–5)
   B  Naomi returns with Ruth (1:6–22)
      C  Ruth & Boaz in the fields (2:1–23)
      C’ Ruth & Boaz at the threshing floor (3:1–18)
      B’ Boaz redeems the land & marries Ruth (4:1–17)
   A’ Future family history (4:18–22)
Introduction: Literary Features

Chiastic Structure:

• **A//A’ (1:1–5; 4:18–22):** an inclusive envelope for the story that provides the historical and genealogical context both before the story (stressing death) and after the story (stressing birth).

• **B//B’ (1:6–22; 4:1–17):** share narrator’s remarks about God’s provision (1:6; 4:13); feature three-way dialogues (1:8–18; 4:1–12) and the speeches of the women to Naomi (1:19; 4:14–15, 17).

• **C//C’ (2:1–23; 3:1–18):** employ the term *hayil* to describe the noble character of Boaz and Ruth respectively (2:1 and 3:11); feature “series episodes” so that the sequence of events in chapter 2 is repeated in chapter 3, as follows:
## Introduction: Canonical Reflections

- **Hebrew Canon**: *liturgical and wisdom contexts?*
- **Greek Canon**: *historical and “second Pentateuch” contexts?*

### Table 1: The Canonical Position of Ruth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEBREW CANON</th>
<th>JPS</th>
<th>Song of Songs</th>
<th>Ruth</th>
<th>Lamentations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BHS</td>
<td>Proverbs</td>
<td>Ruth</td>
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<td>Song of Songs</td>
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<td>GREEK CANON</td>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>1–2 Samuel</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Hebrew Canon: *liturgical and wisdom contexts?*
- Greek Canon: *historical and “second Pentateuch” contexts?*
Introduction: Methodology

• Maintain a theocentric focus
  – Scripture is God’s self-revelation
  – Avoid role modeling the human characters

• Ask:
  – What is God doing in/through the human characters?
  – How can God’s presence, actions or plans serve as the foundation for applying and teaching the story?
Introduction: Historical Setting

• Genre: historical narrative (not idyll, novella, folktale, etc.)
  – Historicity is essential (1:1; 4:18-22)
  – Composed to provide theological perspective on the real, but potentially problematic, family history of David, which would have been preserved through oral tradition

• Setting in the Judges period (1:1)
  – From the death of Joshua to the coronation of King Saul
  – Early 14th – late 11th centuries BC (= Late Bronze II – Iron Age I)

• Possibly 1-2 generations after Joshua
  – But genealogies are selective and schematic, rather than comprehensive
Introduction: Composition

- Anonymous composer(s)
- Perhaps Samuel (Talmudic tradition)
- Time(s) of composition are definitely later than the setting (see 1:1; 4:7, 17-22)
- Window of possible compositional activity: 10th-5th centuries BC