

Dr. David Howard, Joshua - Ruth, Session 31, Introduction to Ruth Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 31, Introduction to Ruth, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt introduces the Book of Ruth, highlighting its literary beauty and unique placement within both the Protestant and Hebrew canons. **Dr. Howard discusses the book's anonymous authorship and its likely post-1010 BC date**, suggesting possible connections to the reigns of David and the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah. He **analyzes its narrative structure and themes**, including loyalty, God's sovereignty, and the foreshadowing of King David's lineage. Furthermore, **he clarifies the misconception of a "Levirate marriage"** in the text, explaining the nuances of the relevant biblical passages. Finally, **he emphasizes the book's theological significance within the broader context of Israelite kingship.**

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 31 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Joshua-Ruth).



**Howard_Josh_Ruth
_Session31.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 31, Introduction to Ruth

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided source, "Howard_Josh_Ruth_EN_Session31_IntroRuth.pdf":

Briefing Document: Introduction to the Book of Ruth

Overview: This session provides an introduction to the Book of Ruth, covering its literary aspects, historical context, place within the biblical canon, and key theological themes. Dr. Howard emphasizes the book's significance as a beautiful story with deeper connections to God's plan for a monarchy in Israel, particularly the lineage of King David.

I. Literary and Structural Analysis:

- **A Delightful Story:** The Book of Ruth is described as "one of the most delightful stories" in the Bible, characterized by sympathetic characters and a "happily-ever-after" outcome.
- **Quote:** "This book contains one of the most delightful stories that we ever find in the Bible. Here we see everything sort of working out right for the characters. It's almost a happily-ever-after story."
- **Literary Structure:** The book has a well-constructed narrative arc: introduction, crisis, climax, resolution, and wrap-up. It's recognized as a beautiful example of a short story, even within secular literary collections.
- **Quote:** "It's well constructed as a literary piece and it's often found even in compendiums or collections of world literature as a beautiful example of a short story. With the introduction to things, a crisis is introduced, the climax where the denouement, the working out of things, and then sort of the wrap-up."
- **Historical Short Story:** While some scholars view it as fiction, Dr. Howard leans towards considering it a "historical short story" due to the careful attention to names, genealogies, and lack of explicit fictional elements. The specific naming of individuals and the inclusion of genealogies argue against it being purely fictional.
- **Quote:** "There's nothing in this book that suggests that it's fictional. As a matter of fact, there's more evidence that suggests that it's not, because of the careful attention to names at the beginning of the book... and at the end, the genealogy... so it's hard to see this is just fictional construction."

- **Genealogy:** The inclusion of the genealogy (Ruth 4:18-22) is debated among scholars. Some see it as a later addition that clumsily disrupts the narrative. However, Dr. Howard argues that it should be viewed as part of the final form of the book, noting its parallel to the lists of names in the opening of the book.
- **Quote:** "My own view is, that we don't really know if this was written at the time of the rest of the book, or later, and in some senses, it doesn't really matter, because it is part of the final form of the book." He emphasizes interpreting the text as it is, not as one wishes it to be.
- **Quote:** "...our job as exegetes... my job is to interpret the text that's there, not the text that I wish were there, or that I think should have been there, or should not have been there."

II. Authorship and Date:

- **Anonymous Authorship:** Like other historical books from Joshua to Esther, the author of Ruth is unknown.
- **Quote:** "In terms of the authorship of the book, as with all the historical books, Joshua through Esther, the book is anonymous. We have no record and no statement in the book itself about authorship."
- **Possible Authorship:** Jewish tradition suggests Samuel, and some propose a female author due to the prominence of Naomi and Ruth, but there's no definitive evidence. Dr. Howard notes that speculating on this is not necessary for interpretation of the book.
- **Date of Writing:** The book was written after David's reign (c. 1010-970 BC), as David is the last figure mentioned in the book. Some suggest it was written during David's time as legitimization of his reign, while others propose a later date during Ezra and Nehemiah's era, as a counterpoint to their strict policies on foreign wives.
- **Quote:** "The final word in the book is David, referring to King David... So clearly the book would have been written after that. How long after that, we have no idea."

III. Purpose and Themes:

- **Loyalty and Family Ties:** The book emphasizes themes of loyalty, family relationships, and God's providence in working through ordinary lives.

- **Quote:** "Certainly, it's a beautiful book that talks about loyalty and family ties, and things work out well, and we would certainly do well to look at it through that lens."
- **God's Low-key Involvement:** The book demonstrates God's steady and sure, but subtle involvement in the lives of individuals. It's a story that shines "a little ray of hope and a little light" in the darkness of the period of the Judges.
- **Quote:** "Showing God's low-key but certainly sure and steady involvement in the lives of these people and blessing them."
- **Not Just a Pleasing Story:** Beyond a simple narrative, the book connects to the larger narrative of God's plan for a monarchy, emphasizing the lineage of King David and God's providence leading up to his reign.
- **Quote:** "I think that clearly the idea of loyalty is there, and I think that it does show a very beautiful story about a family, and God's working in a low-key way in the life of a family. But I think we have to take seriously the references to David at the end of the book..."
- **Legitimation of David's Kingship:** The book serves as a legitimation of David's kingship, highlighting his ancestry and showcasing how God was at work in his lineage.
- **Quote:** "It's part of a legitimation of the kingship of David, but also to show that God's providence is working."

IV. Canonical Placement and Connections:

- **Protestant Canon:** In most Protestant Bibles, Ruth follows the Book of Judges, which provides a thematic fit as Ruth is set "in the days when the judges ruled."
- **Quote:** "It fits there because the book begins by saying, that in the days when the Judges judged, in the days when the Judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and it goes on."
- **Hebrew Canon:** In the Hebrew Bible, Ruth is placed after Proverbs as the first of the Megillot (scrolls), a collection of five books read at different Jewish festivals.
- **Connection to Proverbs 31:** Dr. Howard highlights a specific connection between the end of Proverbs (the description of a godly woman) and Ruth. He notes the identical Hebrew phrase "eshet hayel" (worthy woman) used in both Proverbs 31:10 and Ruth 3:11, positioning Ruth as an embodiment of that ideal.

- **Quote:** "...Proverbs ends with talking about the ideal woman... And then we have an example of that in the very next book in the Hebrew canon, a short story showing Ruth as a paragon of that kind of excellence, that kind of worthiness."
- **Connection to Judges 20:** Dr. Howard also shows the connection of "hayel" at the end of Judges (valiant warriors) to show the contrast of male and female worthiness.

V. Historical and Cultural Context:

- **Time of the Judges:** Ruth is set during the period of the Judges, a time of chaos and moral decline in Israel.
- **Quote:** "Essentially, it's the same as we've talked about in the book of Judges. There's a time of chaos here. There's a time of moral decline."
- **Moabite Background:** Ruth's Moabite origins highlight the inclusion of non-Israelites into God's people through faith. The relationship of the Moabites and Israelites is discussed, including their familial connection through Lot and their later conflicts.
- **Quote:** "She's a Moabite woman... So, it's a story of someone who has come into the fold in a sense, become part of the family of God, not through her bloodlines, not through birth, but essentially by her embracing the faith of her mother-in-law and her husband's family."

VI. Leveret Marriage and Kinsman Redeemer:

- **Distinction:** Dr. Howard emphasizes that the situation in Ruth is not a direct enactment of the Leveret marriage law in Deuteronomy 25, which involves a brother marrying his deceased brother's wife to perpetuate the family line.
- **Quote:** "And so many discussions in the book of Ruth claim that this, the law of leverage, which is actually told about in the Pentateuch, actually is what's going on here in the book of Ruth. And I would say, no, there are some close analogies, but not exactly."
- **Kinsman Redeemer:** Instead, the book uses the concept of a *goel* (kinsman-redeemer), outlined in Leviticus 25. This involves redeeming land or people that have fallen into hardship.
- **Unique Custom:** The specific custom described in Ruth, where the purchase of land is tied to marrying the widow, is not explicitly mentioned in either

Deuteronomy or Leviticus, suggesting it may be a development of existing laws and customs.

- **Quote:** "So this redemption of property with a wife, a woman to go along with it, is not found in Leviticus. It's not found in Deuteronomy... it's its own little new kind of thing that we find in the Book of Ruth."

VII. Theological Themes:

- **God's Sovereignty and Steadfastness:** God's sovereignty is evident throughout the book, with numerous mentions of God by the characters (21 out of 23 mentions).
- **Quote:** "We could say this about almost every book in the Bible, but certainly, we see it here, and that is the idea of God's sovereignty and God's steadfastness in the book...it's interesting that in 21 of those cases, the mention of God comes from the mouths of the characters."
- **God's Hiddenness:** God's presence is subtle, not explicitly directing every event, which reflects real-life experiences where God's hand may not always be obvious. Events appear to be coincidences or simply things working out, aligning with the theme of God's providence.
- **Quote:** "His role is a steady, quiet one...the narrator, the author of the book, doesn't really tell us, this happened because God directed the events that way."
- **Theology of Monarchy:** The book is linked to the broader theme of a divinely appointed king in Israel, specifically the lineage of David. The inclusion of David in the genealogy is not a late appendage but is part of the book's original intent. The book prepares the reader for the coming of David, a godly king who will bring order.
- **Quote:** "...along with many commentators, that it really does fit into this larger, broader, what I would call, the theology of the monarchy."
- **Connections to Judah and David:** Dr. Howard traces multiple threads connecting David with Judah, including his lineage through Perez (Judah's son by Tamar), references to the city of Bethlehem, and the blessings pronounced by the elders that echo Jacob's family. This strengthens the link between David and the promises made to Judah in Genesis.

VIII. Conclusion:

The Book of Ruth is more than just a charming story; it is a critical piece in the overarching narrative of God's plan of redemption, highlighting His steadfast love, His sovereignty, and His plan for a monarchy through the line of David. It serves as a bridge between the period of the Judges and the era of the kings, demonstrating that even during dark times, God is working behind the scenes, shaping history through ordinary lives. The themes of loyalty, redemption, and God's hidden yet powerful presence make it a relevant text for believers to study.

4. Study Guide: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 31, Introduction to Ruth

Ruth: A Detailed Study Guide

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What is unique about the book of Ruth compared to the book of Judges?
2. Why does the book of Ruth get its name?
3. What are the two differing views regarding the time the book of Ruth was written?
4. How is Ruth characterized as a literary document?
5. What is the significance of the genealogy at the end of the book of Ruth?
6. What is the primary purpose of the book of Ruth?
7. Where does the book of Ruth appear in the Protestant canon, and how does it relate to the surrounding books?
8. Where does the book of Ruth appear in the Hebrew canon and why?
9. What is the significance of the phrase "eshet hayel" in the book of Ruth and the end of Proverbs?
10. What is the "goel" and how does it relate to the book of Ruth?

Answer Key

1. Unlike Judges, which depicts a time of chaos and moral decline, Ruth is a story of hope and redemption. It portrays a time when things worked out well for the main characters, almost a "happily-ever-after" story in a dark time.
2. The book of Ruth is named after its main character, Ruth, a Moabite woman. She comes into the family of God by embracing the faith of her mother-in-law, not through bloodlines.
3. Some believe it was written during David's time to legitimize his reign, while others argue it was written centuries later during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, possibly as a polemic against their reforms which forced the divorce of foreign wives.

4. The book is considered a historical short story, rather than a fictional piece, due to its detailed attention to names and genealogy. The book has literary praise for its well-constructed plot with an introduction, crisis, climax, and denouement.
5. The genealogy at the end of Ruth is significant because it connects David to his lineage, tracing his ancestry back through Obed, Jesse, and ultimately to Perez, the son of Judah through Tamar. It highlights his connection with the promises of the line of Judah in Genesis 49.
6. The primary purpose of the book of Ruth is to present a beautiful story of family loyalty, redemption, and God's providence. The book also highlights the Davidic lineage, legitimatizing David's kingship and showing God's presence during a difficult period in Israel.
7. In the Protestant canon, Ruth comes directly after Judges, with its setting in the period of the judges, thereby serving as a ray of hope and connecting the negative experience of the book of Judges to the coming kingship seen in the following books.
8. In the Hebrew canon, Ruth is the first book of the Megillot (scrolls) and follows after Proverbs. It is included in this grouping due to its small size, and its association with the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost).
9. The phrase "eshet hayel," meaning "worthy woman" or "excellent wife," is significant because it connects the ideal woman described at the end of Proverbs to the character of Ruth, who embodies similar virtues of worthiness and excellence.
10. The "goel" is the kinsman redeemer who has the right and responsibility to redeem a relative's property or person. In Ruth, the goel's role relates to the redemption of Naomi's property and the possibility of marrying Ruth, and is tied to the Law of Redemption in Leviticus.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the literary structure of the book of Ruth. Include a consideration of whether or not the genealogy is an integral part of the story.
2. Analyze the role of God in the book of Ruth. How is God's presence made known and what are the implications of this portrayal for understanding his involvement in human affairs?

3. Compare and contrast the concept of Leveret marriage in Deuteronomy 25 with the events in Ruth. What are the similarities and differences and why are these distinctions important for interpretation?
4. Explore the significance of the book of Ruth in relation to the monarchy of Israel. What evidence in the book points toward the Davidic kingship?
5. Discuss the cultural and historical context of the book of Ruth. How do the time of the Judges and the relationship between Israelites and Moabites affect the narrative?

Glossary of Key Terms

Canon: A collection of sacred books recognized as the inspired word of God.

Denouement: The final part of a story in which the strands of the plot are drawn together and matters are explained or resolved.

Ephrathites: People from Ephrathah, the old name for Bethlehem, where the story of Ruth takes place.

Eshet Hayel: Hebrew for "woman of valor" or "worthy woman," describing both the ideal woman in Proverbs 31 and Ruth.

Exegete: A person who engages in the critical interpretation and explanation of a text, especially religious scripture.

Goel: A Hebrew word that means "redeemer" or "kinsman-redeemer," a relative with the responsibility to redeem a family member, property, or person.

Hayel: A Hebrew word for valor, worth, strength, or power used in both the descriptions of men of Benjamin in Judges and of Ruth in the book of Ruth.

Hebrew Canon: The authoritative list of books in the Jewish Bible.

Judges: Leaders during a period of ancient Israel, also the name of a book in the Old Testament describing this period of leaders.

Kinsman Redeemer: A male relative with the responsibility to redeem property or a person in need. Also known as Goel.

Leveret Marriage: A custom in ancient Israel where a man was obligated to marry his brother's widow to continue his brother's lineage.

Megillot: The Hebrew word for "scrolls," referring to five books of the Hebrew Bible (Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther) that are read at specific Jewish festivals.

Moabite: A person from Moab, a land east of the Dead Sea.

Polemic: A strong verbal or written attack on someone or something.

Protestant Canon: The authoritative list of books in the Protestant Christian Bible.

Providence: The protective care of God; the divine guidance or direction.

Torah: The first five books of the Hebrew Bible, also called the Pentateuch.

Yabam: A Hebrew term used in Deuteronomy to describe the duty of a brother-in-law to his brother's widow.

5. FAQs on Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 31, Introduction to Ruth, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about the Book of Ruth

1. **What is the book of Ruth about and what makes it unique among the historical books of the Old Testament?** The book of Ruth tells a beautiful story of family loyalty, redemption, and God's providence during the tumultuous period of the Judges. It stands out because, in contrast to the often grim and chaotic accounts in the book of Judges, Ruth portrays a positive narrative where characters, including a foreign woman, Ruth, experience God's blessing. It's a well-crafted literary work with a clear structure: an introduction, a crisis, a climax, and resolution, often praised for its storytelling even outside religious contexts. While it is set in a period of darkness, the book serves as a "ray of light" where we see God's steady and sure involvement in the lives of ordinary people, particularly through the line of Abraham.
2. **Who wrote the book of Ruth, and when was it likely written?** The author of the book of Ruth is unknown. Like other historical books from Joshua to Esther, the book is anonymous, and there is no conclusive statement about authorship within the text or other parts of the scripture. Although Jewish tradition suggests Samuel, there is no real evidence to support that. In terms of dating, the book mentions King David, whose reign ended around 970 B.C., making it clear the book was written after his reign. Some speculate it was written during David's time to legitimize his reign, while others propose a later date, possibly during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, as a counter-narrative to their reforms that forced the divorce of foreign wives. Ultimately, the exact time of authorship is not stated, and the purpose of the author is best derived from the canonical version of the text rather than speculation.

3. **What is the significance of Ruth being a Moabite woman?** Ruth's Moabite heritage is significant because it highlights the inclusion of foreigners into the family of God, not through birth or lineage, but through embracing faith. Ruth becomes part of God's people through her loyalty to her mother-in-law, Naomi, and by adopting Naomi's faith. This act fulfills the Abrahamic Covenant where God blesses those who bless his descendants. Ruth's story contrasts with instances in the Old Testament where foreign wives were removed from the community, highlighting the complexity of God's plan, including the inclusion of those previously excluded.
4. **What is a "kinsman-redeemer" and how does it relate to the book of Ruth?** A kinsman-redeemer, or *goel*, is a near relative who has the responsibility and right to redeem property or a family member who has fallen into difficult circumstances. The *goel* was responsible for preserving the family name and land within a family line. The concept stems from the book of Leviticus. In Ruth, the near kinsman was first in line to redeem Naomi's land and, following custom, take Ruth as his wife. The book does not employ the term *yabam*, which is only used in Deuteronomy with respect to the obligation of a brother-in-law. This is not a typical instance of levirate marriage, but it does include the concept of a redeemer, as described in Leviticus, who can restore what has been lost. Boaz ultimately fulfills the role of kinsman-redeemer for both the land and Ruth. This shows God working through ordinary means, and within the law to redeem both Ruth and Naomi.
5. **How does the book of Ruth connect to the lineage and kingship of David?** The book of Ruth culminates in a genealogy that establishes David as the great-grandson of Ruth and Boaz. By explicitly connecting Ruth with the ancestral line of King David, the book acts as a bridge to the narratives of the kingship that follow. Ruth's inclusion in the lineage of the Davidic line suggests that the promise of a godly king, as prophesied from the line of Judah, begins with the inclusion of both Israelites and foreigners. This was an important message given the frequent times of exile or foreign rule in the books preceding and following Ruth. Additionally, it highlights the way in which God's providence works through unexpected situations and unexpected people. The last word of the narrative text of Ruth is David, which provides a clear pointer for the reader.

6. **What are some of the major themes and purposes of the book of Ruth?** Several themes intertwine throughout Ruth. These include loyalty, particularly between Ruth and Naomi; redemption, as illustrated by the kinsman-redeemer concept; and divine providence, where God works quietly behind the scenes to orchestrate events. It also showcases the inclusion of foreigners into God's people. Some suggest it was written as a polemic against the stricter policies of Ezra and Nehemiah regarding foreign wives. However, the professor argues its primary purpose is more about highlighting God's role, not just in the daily lives of the people, but also the coming of a godly king through David. It showcases a family line that leads up to the very king Israel was longing for. This king will bring order to the chaos Israel has experienced for generations.
7. **How is the literary structure of Ruth constructed?** The book of Ruth has a well-defined structure. It often begins with the names of people and a setting, introduces a problem, follows it with its resolution, and ends with a conclusion. At the beginning, the book mentions the family of Elimelech, and at the end it mentions the family of David. This is an example of bracketing using names. The core narrative is concise, focusing on Ruth's arrival in Bethlehem, her meeting Boaz, and their marriage. It is also constructed with an emphasis on a crisis, the near-famine, and a resolution, Boaz's role as kinsman-redeemer. Additionally, the book is carefully bracketed, opening with a list of names and concluding with a genealogy, emphasizing its narrative completeness and connection to the future Davidic line. Some scholars consider the genealogy to be a later appendix. However, the professor argues that it is best to read the text as is, without slicing or dissecting its final form.

8. **What is the significance of the connections to the book of Proverbs and the book of Judges in the way the Hebrew Bible is organized?** In the Hebrew canon, Ruth is placed after Proverbs, which concludes with a poem about the "worthy woman" (eshet hayel) and Ruth is also described as a "worthy woman" using the exact same words. Ruth is shown as an example of this worthy woman. She serves as the ideal woman as described in Proverbs, acting with valor and wisdom. This suggests a deliberate connection, pairing a description of an ideal with a real-life example. Additionally, it may be worth noting that Judges also employs the word hayel to describe the men of Benjamin. This is seen as a kind of wordplay, where Ruth is a woman of valor and great worth, and the men of Judges are men of fighting valor. Additionally, the book of Ruth is placed after Judges in most Christian Bibles to showcase the dire need of a righteous leader that will be fulfilled in the life of David.