



The Writings

May 27, 2020

Megillat Ruth

Ruth, an excerpted summary

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land; and a man of Bethlehem in Judah, with his wife and two sons, went to reside in the country of Moab.

The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and his two sons were named Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. They came to the country of Moab and remained there. Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth, and they lived there about ten years. Then those two—Mahlon and Chilion—also died; so the woman was left without her two sons and without her husband. ...

They broke into weeping again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law farewell. But Ruth clung to her. So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and her gods. Go follow your sister-in-law."

But Ruth replied, "Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus and more may the LORD do to me if anything but death parts me from you." ...

Thus Naomi returned from the country of Moab; she returned with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabite. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. ...

Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side, a man of substance, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "I would like to go to the fields and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone who may show me kindness." "Yes, daughter, go," ...

Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be he who took such generous notice of you!" So she told her mother-in-law whom she had worked with, saying, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz."



Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not failed in His kindness to the living or to the dead! For,” Naomi explained to her daughter-in-law, “the man is related to us; he is one of our redeeming kinsmen.” ...

Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her, “Daughter, I must seek a home for you, where you may be happy. Now there is our kinsman Boaz, whose girls you were close to. He will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor tonight. So bathe, anoint yourself, dress up, and go down to the threshing floor. But do not disclose yourself to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, note the place where he lies down, and go over and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what you are to do.” ...

In the middle of the night, the man gave a start and pulled back—there was a woman lying at his feet!

“Who are you?” he asked. And she replied, “I am your handmaid Ruth. Spread your robe over your handmaid, for you are a redeeming kinsman.”

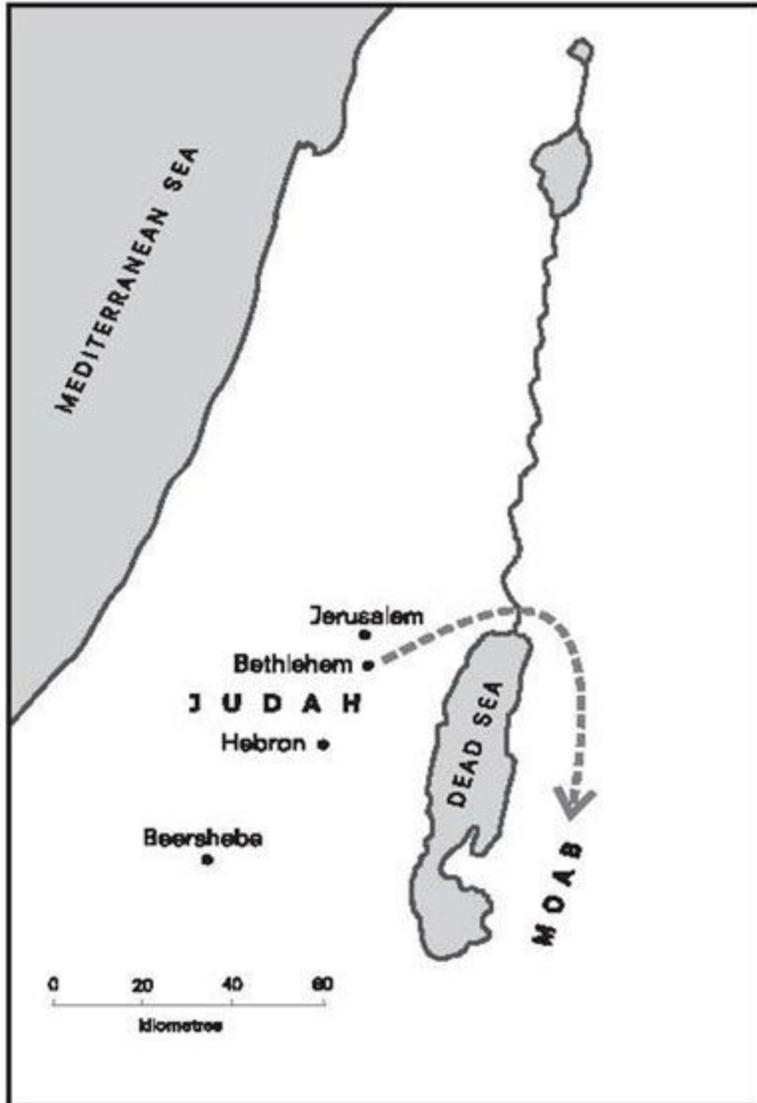
He exclaimed, “Be blessed of the LORD, daughter! Your latest deed of loyalty is greater than the first, in that you have not turned to younger men, whether poor or rich. And now, daughter, have no fear. I will do in your behalf whatever you ask, for all the elders of my town know what a fine woman you are. But while it is true I am a redeeming kinsman, there is another redeemer closer than I. Stay for the night. Then in the morning, if he will act as a redeemer, good! let him redeem. But if he does not want to act as redeemer for you, I will do so myself, as the LORD lives! Lie down until morning.” ...

And Boaz said to the elders and to the rest of the people, “You are witnesses today that I am acquiring from Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. I am also acquiring Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, as my wife, so as to perpetuate the name of the deceased upon his estate, that the name of the deceased may not disappear from among his kinsmen and from the gate of his home town. You are witnesses today.” ...

This is the line of Perez: Perez begot Hezron, Hezron begot Ram, Ram begot Ammi-nadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, Nahshon begot Salmon, Salmon begot Boaz, Boaz begot Obed, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.



THE JEWISH
MOVEMENT FOR
SOCIAL CHANGE



1) Agricultural / Seasonal

Spring			Summer		
<i>Nisan</i> 1	<i>Iyyar</i> 2	<i>Sivan</i> 3	<i>Tammuz</i> 4	<i>Av</i> 5	<i>Elul</i> 6
ניסן	אייר	סיון	תמוז	אב	אלול
Mar/Apr	Apr/May	May/Jun	Jun/Jul	Jul/Aug	Aug/Sept
Pesach (15) Matzah (16-22) Bikurim (18) HaShoah (27)	Ha'atsmaut (5) HaZikaron (14) Lag B'Omer (18) Yerushalyim (28)	Shavu'ot (6)	Fast of Tammuz (17)	Three weeks of Sorrow Tish'a B'Av (9) Tu B'Av (15)	Selichot repentance
Fall			Winter		
<i>Tishri</i> 7	<i>Cheshvan</i> 8	<i>Kislev</i> 9	<i>Tevet</i> 10	<i>Shevat</i> 11	<i>Adar</i> 12/13
תשרי	חשוון	כסלו	טבת	שבט	אדר
Sept/Oct	Oct/Nov	Nov/Dec	Dec/Jan	Jan/Feb	Feb/Mar
Rosh Hashanah (1) Fast Gedaliah (3) Yom Kippur (10) Sukkot (15-22) Simchat Torah (22)		Chanukah (25) to Tevet (4)	Asarah B'Tevet (10)	Tu B'Shevat (15)	Fast Ester (13) Purim (14) Adar II leap year

Leviticus 23

15 And from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering—the day after the sabbath—you shall count off seven weeks. They must be complete: 16 you must count until the day after the seventh week—fifty days; then you shall bring an offering of new grain to the LORD. 17 You shall bring from your settlements two loaves of bread as an elevation offering; each shall be made of two-tenths of a measure of choice flour, baked after leavening, as first fruits to the LORD. ... 21 On that same day you shall hold a celebration; it shall be a sacred occasion for you; you shall not work at your occupations. This is a law for all time in all your settlements, throughout the ages. 22 And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the LORD am your God.

Ruth 1:22

Thus Naomi returned from the country of Moab; she returned with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabite. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.



2) Theological / Legal

Why do we read Megillat Ruth on Chag HaShavuot? - Rabbi Alex Israel

Some have suggested that it is Ruth's "conversion" to Judaism that establishes a connection with Shavuot, the festival of Torah. Ruth actively adopts a life as a Jew and accepts the mitzvot, and so too, on the national level, at Mount Sinai the entire Israelite nation adopted a life of mitzvot, thereby undergoing a national conversion of sorts.

Ruth 1:14-19

They broke into weeping again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law farewell. But Ruth clung to her. So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and her gods. Go follow your sister-in-law." But Ruth replied, "Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus and more may the LORD do to me if anything but death parts me from you." When Naomi saw how determined she was to go with her, she ceased to argue with her; and the two went on until they reached Bethlehem.

Yevamot 47b:8-10

The Gemara reconstructs the original dialogue in which Naomi attempted to dissuade Ruth from converting: Naomi said to her: On Shabbat, it is prohibited for us to go beyond the Shabbat limit. Ruth responded: "Where you go, I shall go" (Ruth 1:16), and no further.

Naomi said to her: It is forbidden for us to be alone together with a man with whom it is forbidden to engage in relations. Ruth responded: "Where you lodge, I shall lodge" (Ruth 1:16), and in the same manner. Naomi said to her: We are commanded to observe six hundred and thirteen mitzvot. Ruth responded: "Your people are my people" (Ruth 1:16). Naomi said to her: Idolatrous worship is forbidden to us. Ruth responded: "Your God is my God" (Ruth 1:16).

Naomi said to her: Four types of capital punishment were handed over to a court with which to punish those who transgress the mitzvot. Ruth responded: "Where you die, I shall die" (Ruth 1:17). Naomi said to her: Two burial grounds were handed over to the court, one for those executed for more severe crimes and another for those executed for less severe crimes. Ruth responded: "And there I shall be buried" (Ruth 1:17).

Immediately following this dialogue, the verse states: "And when she saw that she was steadfastly minded she left off speaking with her" (Ruth 1:18). Once Naomi saw Ruth's resolve to convert, she desisted from her attempts to dissuade her.



3) Subversive

Deuteronomy 23: 4-7

No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted into the congregation of the LORD; none of their descendants, even in the tenth generation, shall ever be admitted into the congregation of the LORD, because they did not meet you with food and water on your journey after you left Egypt, and because they hired Balaam son of Beor, from Pethor of Aram-naharaim, to curse you.— But the LORD your God refused to heed Balaam; instead, the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, for the LORD your God loves you.— You shall never concern yourself with their welfare or benefit as long as you live.

B.Yevamot 76b

Upon seeing that his clothes fit David, Saul began to fear that it might be David who was destined for the throne, and he therefore inquired into his background. At that point, Doeg the Edomite said to Saul: Before you inquire as to whether or not he is fit for kingship, inquire as to whether or not he is even fit to enter into the congregation. What is the reason for such doubts? It is that he descends from Ruth the Moabite, and Moabites are permanently barred from entering the congregation. Abner said to him: We already learned that there is no room for such concern. As the verse states: “An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 23:4), teaching that an Ammonite man is barred from entering into the congregation, but not an Ammonite woman; and similarly, a Moabite man is barred from entering into the congregation, but not a Moabite woman.



Achieving Justice Through Narrative

- Professor Rabbi Pamela Barmash

The book of Ruth presents a different model of justice from that afforded by statute, custom, and precedent. Ruth is one that seeks restorative justice, as opposed to retributive justice.

Narratives, like that of the book of Ruth, unveil the disorderly and unpredictable side of life. They shed light on the emotional texture and moral dimensions that law strains to recognize and handle. And although biblical narrative utilizes conventions, like type-scenes and typical characters, it seeks to transcend them in order to open vistas into human nature.

By contrast, law fashioned by statute and custom tries to fit the multiplicity of human actions into a limited set of categories. It attempts to organize human behavior and tries to provide predictable results. It reduces the complexity of human actions and makes them fit patterns, principles, and remedies. Law aspires to the predictable, to expected results and outcomes, to known cases and expected penalties.

By its very nature, narrative can offer that a different model of justice emerge. One that is distinct from the paradigm of justice afforded by the formal law of statutes and legal institutions. It can overcome the gap between what is prescribed by statute and custom and what is just. It can go beyond the accepted pathways of the law to find a better remedy to a legal problem. The narrative is a portrayal of justice as it should be.

Ruth 4:16-22

Naomi took the child and held it to her bosom. She became its foster mother, and the women neighbors gave him a name, saying, "A son is born to Naomi!" They named him Obed; he was the father of Jesse, father of David.

This is the line of Perez: Perez begot Hezron, Hezron begot Ram, Ram begot Ammi-nadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, Nahshon begot Salmon, Salmon begot Boaz, Boaz begot Obed, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.