

# Exegetical Notes for Ruth 4:13-17

## KEY

**Barber** = *Ruth: An Exegetical Commentary* (Cyril J. Barber). Chicago: Moody Press, 1983.

**BBC** = *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*. Edited by John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

**BKC** = *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985.

**Block** = Block, Daniel I., *Judges, Ruth in the New American Commentary, Vol 6*. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1999.

**Bush** = Bush, Frederick. *Ruth/Esther in the Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 9*. Edited by David H. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker. Dallas: Word Books, 1996.

**Campbell** = Campbell, Edward F., *Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary in The Anchor Bible, Vol 7*. Edited by William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1975.

**Harrison** = *Introduction to the Old Testament* (R.K. Harrison). Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969.

**K&D** = Keil, C.F. and Delitzsch, F. in the *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol 2*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989.

**Leggett** = *The Levirate And Goel Institutions In The Old Testament With Special Attention to the Book of Ruth* (Donald A. Leggett) Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack Publishing Company, 1974. PDF digitized with permission by Ted Hildebrandt, Gordon College, 2006.

**MBC** = MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005.

**PC** = *The Pulpit Commentary: Ruth*. (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909.

**Piper** = *A Sweet and Bitter Providence* (John Piper). Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.

**TWOT** = *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (R. Laird Harris; Gleason L. Archer, Jr.; Bruce Waltke). Chicago: Moody Press, 1980. Two Volumes.

**UBS** = *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Ruth* (2nd ed.) (Waard, J. d., & Nida, E. A.). New York: United Bible Societies, 1991.

**Wood** = *Distressing Days of the Judges* (Leon Wood). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975.

**Wiersbe** = *Be Committed. "Be" Commentary Series* (Wiersbe, W. W. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993).

### Three Steps of Exegesis

1. **Translation.** Work through a transliteration of the text and translate the passage directly, if possible.
2. **Exegesis.** Detailed exegesis of the passage by way of a "shot-gun" approach, using various exegetical tools.
  - Work from critical commentaries to practical.
  - Word studies and cross-references (analogy of the faith).
  - Applicational analysis - applicational issues arising from the text.
  - Theological analysis - theological issues arising from the text.
  
  - Smooth away all of the wrinkles.
  - The process is to yield an accurate "statue" as I chisel away the debris.
3. **Structural Analysis.** Diagram the passage developing a detailed outline and central proposition.

## Basic English Diagram

- 13 So Boaz took Ruth,  
and she became his wife,  
and he went in to her,  
And the LORD enabled her to conceive,  
and she gave birth to a son.
- 14 Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed is the LORD  
who has not left you without a redeemer today,  
and may his name become famous in Israel.
- 15 “May he also be to you  
a restorer of life  
and a sustainer of your old age;  
for  
your daughter-in-law,  
who loves you  
and is better to you than seven sons,  
has given birth to him.
- 16 Then Naomi  
took the child  
and laid him in her lap,  
and became his nurse.
- 17 The neighbor women  
gave him a name,  
saying, “A son has been born to Naomi!”  
So they named him Obed.  
He is the father of Jesse,  
the father of David.

## TRANSLATION, OUTLINE AND CENTRAL PROPOSITION

### HEBREW TEXT (BHS):

וַיִּקַּח בְּעֵז אֶת־רוּת וַתְּהִי־לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַיָּבֵא אֶלֶיהָ וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה לָּהּ הַרְיוֹן <sup>13</sup>  
וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן: <sup>14</sup> וַתֹּאמְרֶנָּה הַנָּשִׁים אֶל־נַעֲמִי בְרוּךְ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִשְׁבִּית לָךְ  
גֹּאֵל הַיּוֹם וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>15</sup> וְהָיָה לָךְ לְמַשִּׁיב נְפֶשׁ וּלְכֹלֵל  
אֶת־שִׁיבֹתֶךָ כִּי כָלִיתָ אֲשֶׁר־אֶהְבֶּתְךָ יְלֻדָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר־הִיא טוֹבָה לָךְ מִשְׁבָּעָה  
בְּנִים: <sup>16</sup> וַתִּקַּח נַעֲמִי אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּשְׁתָּהוּ בְּחִיקָהּ וַתְּהִי־לוֹ לְאִמָּנֶת: <sup>17</sup>  
וַתִּקְרָאנָה לוֹ הַשְּׂכֵנּוֹת שֵׁם לְאִמֹר יְלֻד־בֵּן לְנַעֲמִי וַתִּקְרָאנָה שְׁמוֹ עוֹבֵד  
הוּא אָבִי־יִשִׁי אָבִי דָּוִד: פ

### ENGLISH TRANSLATION (NASB):

<sup>13</sup> So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. <sup>14</sup> Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. <sup>15</sup> "May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." <sup>16</sup> Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse. <sup>17</sup> And the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

## **PASSAGE / BOOK OUTLINE:**

### I. Act One: The Royal Line with Hope in Ruin (1:1-22)

- A. Scene One: Retreat from Bethlehem (vv. 1-2)
- B. Scene Two: Ruin in Moab (vv. 3-5)
- C. Scene Three: Returning to Bethlehem (vv. 6-22)

### II. Act Two: The Royal Line with Hope Renewed (2:1-23)

- A. Scene One: Ruth Reaping (vv. 1-7)
- B. Scene Two: Ruth Rewarded - Part 1 (vv. 8-13)
- C. Scene Three: Ruth Rewarded - Part 2 (vv. 14-17)
- D. Scene Four: Ruth Reports (vv. 18-23)

### III. Act Three: The Royal Line with Hope at Risk (3:1-18)

- A. Scene One: Remedy Proposed (vv. 1-5)
- B. Scene Two: Reception or Rejection (vv. 6-15)
- C. Scene Three: Resting in Providence (vv. 16-18)

### IV. Act Four: The Royal Line with Hope Restored (4:1-17)

- A. Scene One: Resolving Legal Matters (vv. 1-12)
- B. Scene Two: Romance and Redemption (vv. 13-17)

### Epilogue - Royal Rights and The Resultant Redeemer (4:18-22)

## **SERMON OUTLINE:**

### IV. Act Four: The Royal Line with Hope Restored (4:1-17)

#### A. Scene One: Resolving Legal Matters (vv. 1-12) (Trusting God in Doing Right)

##### 1. Trusting in a Sovereign Loving God Who Controls the Hearts of Men

- a. God is Glorified When We Follow Through and Follow the Rules (1-2)
- b. God is Glorified When We Are People of Integrity (3-4)
- c. God is Glorified When We Are People of Wisdom (5)
- d. God is Glorified When We Trust Him Regardless of the Consequences (6-8)
- e. God is Glorified When We Say What We Mean and Mean What We Say (9-10)
- f. God is Glorified When Others See and Praise Him (11-12)

B. Scene Two: Romance and Redemption (vv. 13-17)

1. Romance (13)
2. Redemption (14)
3. Restoration (15-17)

Lessons to be learned from this passage:

- a.
- b.
- c.

**PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what's t/passage talking about):**

**PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what's t/passage saying about what it's talking about):**

**PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text):**

**CENTRAL PROPOSITION OF THE SERMON:** The Picture of Life is Bigger Than a Postage Stamp!

**SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE:** The Picture of Life is Bigger Than a Postage Stamp!

## HISTORICAL/CULTURAL/GRAMMATICAL CONTEXT

Act 4 consists of three sections: 2 scenes (vv. 1-12; 13-17) and an epilogue (4:18-22). The second scene is notably parallel to 1:19-22.

<p><b>Ruth 1:19–22</b></p> <p>19 So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came about when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was stirred because of them, <u>and the women said</u>, “<u>Is this Naomi?</u>”<sup>20</sup> <u>And she said to them</u>, “<u>Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.</u>”<sup>21</sup> “<u>I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?</u>”<sup>22</sup> So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.</p>	<p><b>Ruth 4:13–17</b></p> <p>13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.<sup>14</sup> <u>Then the women said to Naomi</u>, “<u>Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel.</u>”<sup>15</sup> “<u>May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.</u>”<sup>16</sup> Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse.<sup>17</sup> And the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, “<u>A son has been born to Naomi!</u>” So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.</p>
<p><b>Ruth 1:1a</b></p> <p>Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. . . .</p>	<p><b>Ruth 4:17b</b></p> <p>. . . He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.</p>

The section of vv. 13-17 is climactic to the entire book. There is an inclusio marked by a son's birth in vv. 13 and 17:

13 and she gave birth to a son  
17 a son has been born

In verse 17 the townswomen declare that a son has been born to Naomi which gives rise to several ideas. 1) Naomi is vindicated and has a redeemer – someone who can carry on the family name and care for her in her old age; 2) Beyond the physical matter of a physical redeemer, the child would be a forefather of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of all mankind; 3) The matter of adoption (extending to spiritual adoption); 4) The child wasn't naturally born to Naomi even as Jesus Christ wasn't naturally born to Mary.

One could argue that the central figure in the book or Ruth isn't Ruth, it's Naomi. Naomi whose suffering is introduced in chapter 1 finds vindication here in the last scene of the book.



## 4:13 EXEGESIS

HEBREW TEXT / INTERLINEAR:

וַיִּקַּח בִּעְזוֹ אֶת־רוּת וַתְּהִי־לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַיָּבֵא אֵלֶיהָ וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה לָּהּ הַרְיוֹן וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן׃  
a son and she bore conception to her YHWH and he gave to her and he went as wife and she became for him Ruth Boaz and so he took

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ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB]:

**So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.**

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

**So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.**

Nine months in this one verse.

This is the correct order of business . . . Process of at least 9 months.

**So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her.**

וַיִּקַּח בִּעְזוֹ אֶת־רוּת וַתְּהִי־לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַיָּבֵא אֵלֶיהָ

“Took” = cultural expression reflecting the Jewish procession to the bridegroom's home (cf. v. 11; Deut. 20:7; Gen. 24:67).

Deuteronomy 20:7 ‘And who is the man that is engaged to a woman and has not married her? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would marry her.’

Genesis 24:67 67 Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.

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### marriage, customs concerning

Marriage between two individuals united their families and involved the whole community. Parents, particularly fathers, took an active part in selecting partners for their children. There was often a long period of betrothal; wedding celebrations were usually elaborate and might last a week or more.

### The choice of a marriage partner

**Parents usually chose a suitable partner Ge 38:6** *See also Ge 24:2-4; 21:21 Occasionally mothers made the wedding arrangements.*

**The wishes of the couple Ge 24:57-58** *Rebekah is consulted about her proposed marriage to Isaac. See also Ge 34:4,8-9; Jdg 14:2; 1Sa 18:20*

#### **The bride-price**

**Daughters were “given” by their fathers Ge 29:28; Ex 2:21; 1Sa 18:21**

**Fathers often received payment Ge 29:18; 34:12** *See also Ge 29:30; Ex 22:16-17; Dt 22:28-29; 1Sa 18:17,27*

**Daughters were given as a reward Jdg 1:12-13** pp Jos 15:16-17 *See also 1Sa 18:25*

#### **The exchange of wedding gifts**

**Gifts from the bridegroom’s family Ge 24:53**

#### **Gifts from the bride’s father**

*Servants given to the bride as a dowry: Ge 24:59; 29:24,29*

*Cities and land given as a dowry: Jdg 1:14-15 pp Jos 15:18-19; 1Ki 9:16*

#### **The period of betrothal**

**Betrothal followed payment of the bride-price 2Sa 3:14** *See also Ge 29:19-20 Jacob worked for Laban during his period of betrothal to Rachel.*

**A betrothed couple were regarded as husband and wife Ge 19:14; Dt 22:23-24** *Unfaithfulness during the period of betrothal is treated as adultery; Mt 1:18-20 Divorce is required to break a betrothal.*

#### **Sexual relationships took place only after the wedding Ge 29:21**

*Betrothed women were referred to as virgins: Joel 1:8; Lk 1:27*

**Mt 1:25; 1Co 7:36-38<sup>1</sup>**

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“He went into her” is a euphemism, not the physical act but the action of entering the room of his wife (cf. Gen. 39:14; Judge 15:1-2; 2 Sam. 12:24; Prov. 2:19; Gen. 19:34; 2 Sam. 11:4).

Genesis 39:14 she called to the men of her household and said to them, “See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed.

Judges 15:1–2 1 But after a while, in the time of wheat harvest, Samson visited his wife with a young goat, and said, “I will go in to my wife in her room.” But her father did not let him enter.

2 Her father said, “I really thought that you hated her intensely; so I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please let her be yours instead.”

2 Samuel 12:24 Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her; and she gave birth to a son, and he named him Solomon. Now the LORD loved him

Proverbs 2:19 None who go to her return again, Nor do they reach the paths of life.

Genesis 19:34 On the following day, the firstborn said to the younger, “Behold, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, that

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<sup>1</sup> Manser, M. H. (2009). *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies*. London: Martin Manser.

we may preserve our family through our father.”

2 Samuel 11:4 David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house.

**And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.**

וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה לָהּ הַרְיוֹן וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן:

Literally, “YHWH gave her pregnancy.” See Gen 29:31; 30:2 and parallels.

GEN 16:2 So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the \Lord\ has prevented me from bearing {children.} Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

GEN 25:21 And Isaac prayed to the \Lord\ on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the \Lord\ answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Genesis 29:31 Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

GEN 30:2 Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

DEU 7:13 "And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you.

1SA 1:5 but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but the \Lord\ had closed her womb.

1SA 2:6 "The \Lord\ kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up.

PSA 127:3 Behold, children are a gift of the \Lord;\ The fruit of the womb is a reward.

Two gifts: Conception and Birth.

God's sovereignty in conception. What about today? Fertility drugs, etc? Available secondary causation. In the OT demonstrated by God's use of other nations (Babylon / Assyria) to punish Israel. God could have simply caused all the disobedient Israelites to die – to drop dead in their tracks. But God normally uses secondary causes. He used the Assyrians who drove chariots and used archers and swords. They didn't drive tanks or fly F-16s. God used t/means that were in use at the time. People died of diseases in the past that we have cures and treatments for today. Does that mean God isn't sovereign? Of course not. You could say, “I can take this pill and be cured but I won't because if God wants to heal me, He will do so.” That's foolishness. There were actually churchmen in the middle ages that believed one shouldn't try to find cures or remedies for plagues because that was trifling with God's judgment. There were no fertility drugs, per se back then. If a woman was barren, God was the primary cause. If a woman today is barren, God is the primary cause. If a woman today conceives by means of fertility treatments, God is still the primary cause, He just chose to use secondary means.

The reader marvels at the narrator’s skill in portraying his characters and in his theological perception. Ultimately the royal line is preserved because two pious human beings and Yahweh

act in consort for the achievement of his purpose.<sup>2</sup>

Cf. passages that affirm God's sovereignty over deaf, dumb ==>

Exodus 4:11 The LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"

Hebrew verbs come in staccato fashion. This likely wasn't a long process . . . . Marriage – honeymoon – conception – birth (not unlike some we know ").

The expression *hērāyôn*, "conception, pregnancy," occurs in only two other Old Testament texts: Gen 3:16 and Hos 9:11. But the present idiom, "to grant/give conception," is unique. This statement must be interpreted against the backdrop of Ruth's apparently ten-year marriage with Mahlon, for whom she seems to have been unable to conceive. Now, in fulfillment of the prayer of the witnesses in the gate (vv. 11–12), Yahweh graciously grants Ruth pregnancy as a gift. This is the narrator's modest way of identifying a miracle; she who had been unable to bear a child for Mahlon has conceived for Boaz.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Block, D. I. (1999). *Judges, Ruth*. The New American Commentary (Vol. 6, p. 726). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>3</sup> Block, D. I. (1999). *Judges, Ruth*. The New American Commentary (Vol. 6, pp. 725–726). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

## 4:14 EXEGESIS

HEBREW TEXT / INTERLINEAR:

וְהַאֲמֵרְנָה הַנְּשִׂימִים אֶל-נַעֲמִי בְרוּךְ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִשְׁבִּית לָךְ גֹּאֵל הַיּוֹם וַיִּקְרָא  
and may he be renowned the day a redeemer for you allowed to be missing not who YHWH be blessed to Naomi the women and they said  
שְׁמוֹ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:  
in Israel his name

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB]:

**Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel.”**

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

**Then the women said to Naomi,**

וְהַאֲמֵרְנָה הַנְּשִׂימִים אֶל-נַעֲמִי

The women of chapter 1. Note the problem of pronominal antecedents that follow in this verse.

The blessing contained in verses 14 and 15 has a poetic structure. Verse 14 consists of three lines with the meter 2, 3 + 2, 3, which may be rendered literally as // Blessed be the LORD // who has not left you / without next of kin this day. // May his name be renowned in Israel.// Verse 15 consists of two lines of poetry with the following meter: 3 + 3, 3 + 2 + 2, and may be rendered literally as //May he be to you a restorer of life / and a nourisher of your old age.// Your daughter-in-law who loves you has borne him,/ she who is more to you / than seven sons. // It would be excellent if this passage could be reproduced in a parallel poetic form in a receptor language. However, as has been noted in other instances of embedded poetry, it is only rarely that such small sections can be satisfactorily reproduced as poetry, both because of their limitation in length and because of their content.<sup>4</sup>

**“Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today,**

בְרוּךְ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִשְׁבִּית לָךְ גֹּאֵל הַיּוֹם

The “redeemer” being the child or Boaz. Better to understand the antecedent as “Obed” and continue the natural connection found t/o the passage.

As is preferable to see Obed as the goel, for in so doing we do justice to Mvyh, which refers to the birth of the child just mentioned in 4:13. It allows us to take Inv (his name) as thegoel's, which is the most normal and immediate antecedent. It is also most natural to relate the goel to

<sup>4</sup> Waard, J. de, & Nida, E. A. (1991). *A translator's handbook on the book of Ruth*. UBS Handbook Series (2nd ed., pp. 74–75). New York: United Bible Societies.

the phrase "who hath born him" in verse 15. [Leggett]

The description in 4:15 of what the goel will do for Naomi gives us the clearest indication of how the child may be referred to as goel. "He shall be to you a restorer of life, and a nourisher of your old age." We can say that in a very general way the child is viewed as the protector of the widow, Naomi. [Leggett]

It is evident from the following invocation on behalf of the child, however, that they are not using the term *gō'ēl* in the technical legal sense employed earlier in the chapter. On the contrary, the birth of the child is not viewed as a solution to a longstanding legal problem but from a practical women's perspective as the solution to Naomi's insecurity. Although they do not use the word, they envision this lad providing for her the "rest/security" (*mānôah/mēnûhâ*) that she had tried to procure for her daughter-in-law (cf. 1:9; 3:1). The women are not concerned about the restoration of hereditary land to the clan of Elimelech or raising up a name for Mahlon. They are interested only in the well-being of this widow.<sup>5</sup>

**and may his name become famous in Israel."**

וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:

וַיִּקְרָא (praise, renowned, famous) ==> YHWH or the child or Boaz? YHWH was the recipient of the blessing in the previous clause. So it seems that the antecedent of this statement be the same as the person of the redeemer in the previous clause.

On the other hand, since the *gō'ēl* is the nearer antecedent, it is preferable to interpret this utterance as applying to the boy, in which case this declaration represents a passive version of the very same construction in v. 11. As we noted there, to call/mention a person's name in a place means "to keep the name/fame alive," even after his death, and to perceive the person as living on in his descendants in the place named. In the previous context the men at the gate had applied the prayer to Boaz, with the desire that his name would live on in Bethlehem. But these women expand the scope of the *gō'ēl's* fame beyond the walls of their town to the nation of Israel as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

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5 Block, D. I. (1999). *Judges, Ruth*. The New American Commentary (Vol. 6, p. 727). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

6 Block, D. I. (1999). *Judges, Ruth*. The New American Commentary (Vol. 6, p. 728). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

## 4:15 EXEGESIS

HEBREW TEXT / INTERLINEAR:

וְהָיָה לָךְ לְמַשִּׁיב נֶפֶשׁ וְלִכְלִיף אֶת־שִׂיבְתֶךָ כִּי כָלִיתְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אֶהְבֶּתְךָ יִלְדֶתוּ  
she h as borne him who lives you your daughter in law for your old age and as a sustaining of life as a restorer of for you and may he be  
אֲשֶׁר־הִיא טוֹבָה לָךְ מִשֶּׁבַע בָּנִים:  
sons than seven for you is better who

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB]:

**“May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”**

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

**“May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age;**

וְהָיָה לָךְ לְמַשִּׁיב נֶפֶשׁ וְלִכְלִיף אֶת־שִׂיבְתֶךָ

Restorer of life – fig. sense as in Lam. 1:11,16,19; Prov. 25:13.

Lamentations 1:11,16,19 11 All her people groan seeking bread; They have given their precious things for food To restore their lives themselves. “See, O LORD, and look, For I am despised.”

16 “For these things I weep; My eyes run down with water; Because far from me is a comforter, One who restores my soul. My children are desolate Because the enemy has prevailed.” 19 “I called to my lovers, but they deceived me; My priests and my elders perished in the city While they sought food to restore their strength themselves.

Proverbs 25:13 Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest Is a faithful messenger to those who send him, For he refreshes the soul of his masters.

Here the word *šēbā*, “grey hair,” is a euphemism for old age. The perceptiveness of the women to recognize in the birth of this child the guarantee of Naomi’s future well-being is remarkable! She who had been so concerned about the security of her daughter-in-law is now rewarded in kind.<sup>7</sup>

**for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”**

כִּי כָלִיתְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אֶהְבֶּתְךָ יִלְדֶתוּ אֲשֶׁר־הִיא טוֹבָה לָךְ מִשֶּׁבַע בָּנִים:

<sup>7</sup> Block, D. I. (1999). *Judges, Ruth*. The New American Commentary (Vol. 6, p. 728). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

7 is ideal no. of sons / proverbial for family blessing – male heirs (cf. 1 Sam. 2:5; Job 1:2; 42:13; Acts 19:14-17). Cf. similar expression in 1 Sam. 1:8. “has done more for you than many sons.”

1 Samuel 2:5 “Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, But those who were hungry cease to hunger. Even the barren gives birth to seven, But she who has many children languishes.

Job 1:2 Seven sons and three daughters were born to him.

Job 42:13 He had seven sons and three daughters.

1SA 2:5 "Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, But those who were hungry cease {to hunger.} Even the barren gives birth to seven, But she who has many children languishes.

Whereas modern definitions of love tend to view the word as an emotional term, in the Old Testament love is fundamentally an expression of covenant commitment, the kind of devotion to which Ruth had given such eloquent verbal expression in 1:16–17. But “love” is not demonstrated primarily in words; it is expressed in acts of *hesed*, placing the welfare of the other ahead of oneself. In fact, more than anyone else in the history of Israel, Ruth embodies the fundamental principle of the nation’s ethic: “You shall love your God with all your heart” (Deut 6:5) “and your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18).<sup>8</sup>

All Bethlehem knew Ruth was a woman of excellence (3:11). But here these women place her value above seven sons - “Extraordinary compensation for the two sons Naomi had lost.” [Block]

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<sup>8</sup> Block, D. I. (1999). *Judges, Ruth*. The New American Commentary (Vol. 6, p. 729). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.



## 4:16 EXEGESIS

HEBREW TEXT / INTERLINEAR:

וַתִּקַּח נָעֻמִי אֶת־הַיָּלֵד וַתִּשְׁתָּהוּ בְּחִיקָהּ וַתְּהִי־לוֹ לְאֹמֶנֶת:  
as nurse and she was for him on her lap and she put him the child Naomi and she took

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB]:

**Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse.**

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

**Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap,**

וַתִּקַּח נָעֻמִי אֶת־הַיָּלֵד וַתִּשְׁתָּהוּ בְּחִיקָהּ

בְּחִיקָהּ refers to the part of the body where one holds and carries infants (Num. 11:12). Here the virtual equiv. of one's 'lap' (Prov. 16:33) but in other contexts may refer to breast or chest (but never the female breast as in nursing). Isa. 40:11.

Numbers 11:12 “Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who brought them forth, that You should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing infant, to the land which You swore to their fathers’?”

Proverbs 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.

Isaiah 40:11 Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

Naomi’s response to the birth of Boaz’s son and to the blessing of the women is described in three simple verbs: She took (*lāqah*) the child, placed (*šît*) him in her bosom (*hêq*), and became his nanny (*hāyâ lô lē’ōmenet*).<sup>9</sup>

Likely not adoption of the baby by Naomi, as some scholars contend. Adoption as such wasn't practiced in Israel and there was no need for her to do so anyway. The child, as first born, was to carry on the family line of Elimelech (through Ruth, Mahlon's widow and Boaz, a near relative of Elimelech) and inherit the property of Elimelech.

By placing the child on her bosom, Naomi was recognizing the child as in some way belonging to her (cf. Num. 11:12). This is in fact what the neighbour women affirm when they say, "A son has been born to Naomi" (4:17a). There is therefore no need of any adoption where the levirate situation was in effect. [Leggett]

<sup>9</sup> Block, D. I. (1999). *Judges, Ruth*. The New American Commentary (Vol. 6, pp. 729–730). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

{{And she ran off to Moab and the child's picture is on milk cartons t/o Israel to this day}}

**and became his nurse.**

וַתְּהִי-לוֹ לְאִמָּתוֹ:

Nurse as in 'nanny', not a 'wet-nurse'. Note the usage in 2 Sam. 4:4 and Gen. 24:59; 35:8.

2 Samuel 4:4 Now Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the report of Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened that in her hurry to flee, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.

Genesis 24:59 Thus they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse with Abraham's servant and his men.

Genesis 35:8 Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; it was named Allon-bacuth.

But the words *hêq* and *'ōmenet* are the keys to determining the significance of Naomi's actions. *hêq* denotes the bosom, the front of one's body where one holds a child (Num 11:12) or embraces a loved one. The word is applied to both males (Deut 13:7; 28:54; 1 Kgs 1:2; Jer 32:18; Mic 7:5; Eccl 7:9; etc.) and females (Deut 28:56; Prov 5:2; Lam 2:12) and is never used of the breast at which a child nurses; it should not be interpreted more precisely here. The word *'ōmenet* derives from a root *'mn*, "to be firm." Here the expression denotes a guardian, "nanny" in the true sense. The present action obviously has nothing to do with wet-nursing; nor should it be viewed as some sort of adoption ritual.<sup>86</sup> Not only would there be no need for a grandmother to adopt a child legally, but it is not clear that women in the ancient world were in a position to adopt children. Within this family context these are not legal actions but the loving, natural actions of a grandmother, gratefully accepting her new status and tenderly receiving the baby. Within the context of the book, however, the action is much more significant. The image of this woman taking the child in her arms must also be seen against the backdrop of her previous experience. She had not only had her bread basket emptied by famine; in the deaths of her husband and sons her bosom had also been emptied of her men.<sup>10</sup>

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10 Block, D. I. (1999). *Judges, Ruth*. The New American Commentary (Vol. 6, p. 730). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

## 4:17 EXEGESIS

HEBREW TEXT / INTERLINEAR:

וּתְקַרְאָנָהּ לוֹ הַשְּׂכֵנֹת שֵׁם לֵאמֹר יֵלֶד־בֶּן לְנַעֲמִי וּתְקַרְאָנָהּ שְׁמוֹ עוֹבֵד הוּא  
he Obed his name and they called to Naomi a son has been born to say a name the women of the neighborhood to him and they called  
אָבִי־יֵשׁוּ אָבִי דָּוִד: פ  
David the father of was the father of Jesse

ENGLISH TRANSLATION [NASB]:

**And the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi!” So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.**

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

**And the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi!”**

וּתְקַרְאָנָהּ לוֹ הַשְּׂכֵנֹת שֵׁם לֵאמֹר יֵלֶד־בֶּן לְנַעֲמִי

Grandson but “son” in Heb. often means “descendant”. Cf. v. 15c.

The significance to Naomi is evident in the women recognizing that the son was 'hers' in the sense of a go'el. Ruth had Boaz to care for her (sense of family name and inheritance); Naomi had no one but this child who was the firstborn of Boaz to be sure, but the cultural significance for Naomi is important. “Son born to Naomi” = grandmother - but with special significance.

Seems that, for the most part, marriage in antiquity (bible) focused on childbirth. I don't know that it was the norm for older women (post menopausal) to marry. Cf. Paul's admonition for younger widows to marry. Part of the reason why it used to be common for older men to marry much younger women (mentioned John Knox several weeks back). Marriage for companionship (I mean two people who get married with no intent or ability of having children) I don't think was the norm. See Westermarck, *The Future of Marriage in Western Civilization*, pp. 21ff. Obed is significant to Naomi.

**So they named him Obed.**

וּתְקַרְאָנָהּ שְׁמוֹ עוֹבֵד

The statement “a son has been born to Naomi” has no lexical connection to the name “Obed” which means “”. The connection of Obed to the previous clause has confused many. Some have thought this redacted and Obed added (which doesn't make sense). There are no other examples of someone other than the mother/father naming a child in the OT.

Bush suggests there is no problem if the statement is an example of 'etiological name-giving' (260) or a “generic statement of name-giving” (he cites Gen. 2:20; 26:18; Isa. 65:15 as examples).

Genesis 2:20 The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.

Genesis 26:18 Then Isaac dug again the wells of water which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the same names which his father had given them.

Further, the answer may be in a semantic wordplay from the previous context. A son has been born to Naomi (identified as a “a restorer of life and a sustainer [in] old age” in v. 15) and Obed means “server.”

When this is seen and when the literary character and meaning of the scene are taken into account, the other problems of content usually alleged against the passage as it stands can be given a coherent interpretation that fits the context. The fact that it is the women-neighbors who name the child is "literally appropriate" (so Hubbard, VT38 [1988] 294). As the analysis of the structure of the scene has revealed (see Form/Structure/Setting), the author has used this "female chorus" in vv 14-15 as the fitting vehicle to express with a sense of wonder and joy what the birth of this child means in restoring Naomi to life and fullness. Hence in v 17 he has them continue that same theme in their joyful exclamation "A son has been born to Naomi!" Here our narrator uses his "poetic license." He does not expect us to take him literally and to believe that it was these neighbor-women who actually formally named the child. What he means by his blatant statement "they[fem pl] named him," so utterly in conflict with the fact known to all that the parents (usually the mother) named the child, is that these women named him by providing the explanation for his name with their glad cry "A son is born to Naomi." An analogous situation is provided by the naming of Perez in Gen 38:27-29. There, as the infant is born, the midwife exclaims, "What a breach you have made!" (v 27c), and the narrator then relates that the child was named Perez, "breach" (v 27d). If it had been literally appropriate in this setting, the narrator could just as well have said, "The midwife gave him a name, saying 'what a breach you have made,'" for it is this statement that provides the explanation for the name. [Bush, 261]

Any reader of Hebrew knows the name is a participle form of *‘abad*, “to serve.” Obed, “one who serves,” is a hypocoristic (abbreviated version) of “Obadiah,” servant of Yahweh,” a name held by no fewer than a dozen men in the Old Testament<sup>11</sup>

### **He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.**

הוא אֲבִי־יֵשׁוּ אֲבִי דָוִד:

This child in the lap of Naomi would become the grandfather of King David – of Bethlehem (cf. 1 Sam. 17:12).

1 Samuel 17:12 Now David was the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, whose name was Jesse, and he had eight sons. And Jesse was old in the days of Saul, advanced in years among men.

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11 Block, D. I. (1999). *Judges, Ruth*. The New American Commentary (Vol. 6, p. 732). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

No one who was trying to 'clean up a story' would have a Moabitess as David's great-grandmother. This is one reason why the quality of person that is Ruth is so well established in the narrative.

The story of Ruth ends on a surprising but climactic interpretive note. In the mind of the narrator, the historical significance of the birth of Obed does not lie in the resolution he brings to the personal crises of the characters in this book. Nor does he derive his significance from valorous deeds either of mercy or power. Neither the present narrator nor any other Old Testament author writes any stories about him. On the contrary, the birth of Obed has historical significance because he lives on and achieves his significance through the lives of his son Jesse and particularly his grandson David. Through David the blessing of the male witnesses to the court proceedings (4:11) is fulfilled; Boaz's name is "called out" in Bethlehem. And through David the prayer of the female witnesses to the birth of Obed is fulfilled; Obed's name is "called out" in Israel. Indeed, to this day their names and the names of Naomi and Ruth are "called out" all over the world as their story is read. In the providence of God the genuine piety of all the major characters is rewarded, and the divine plan for Israel and her kings is fulfilled.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Block, D. I. (1999). *Judges, Ruth*. The New American Commentary (Vol. 6, p. 732). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.