



## Introduction

- Why was Ruth recorded in Tanach?
  - To validate the Davidic monarchy
    - By legitimizing the marriage between Boaz and Ruth and
    - By demonstrating the selflessness of Boaz and Ruth – a selflessness which is necessary for virtuous monarchy.
  - To demonstrate Divine reward for acts of chesed, as seen with the fates of Boaz and Ruth, and to demonstrate Divine reward for emunah like that of Naomi
  - To condemn betrayal like that of Elimelech and Ploni Almoni, and praise loyalty like that of Ruth and Orpah and Boaz
- Why is the Book of Ruth not recorded in Neviim (“The Prophets”)?
  - It was not produced as fulfillment of a Divine prophetic instruction
  - In order to put it before Tehillim (which is its place according to the Talmud), providing the pedigree of King David
  - It is a pedagogic story without a direct prophetic message for the people in the story, or for the reader
- Why is the Book of Ruth not recorded as part of the book of Shoftim (Judges)?
  - It is a story about one family, not the nation as a whole
  - Shemuel recorded it after concluding writing the book of Shoftim
  - The message of Shoftim is the failure of the Jewish People before the monarchy; the message of Ruth is that people can achieve greatness.
- What is the meaning of calling the Book of Ruth a “Megillah”?
  - The title “megillah” means that the book is viewed as a standalone story

## Chapter 1

- What were the sins of Elimelech’s family?
  - Leaving Israel, when they had the means to survive the famine
  - Abandoning the Jews they could have helped via their wealth (as evidenced by moving to selfish Moav), and via prayer as noted in the Talmud
  - Marrying Ruth and Orpah, who were not Jews
  - Marrying Moabite women – which Boaz teaches was legal, but Machlon and Kilyon did not know that
- How do we view Orpah?
  - From the text, Orpah is righteous, and the Talmud states that she was rewarded for her loyalty to Naomi
  - Midrashim surrounding Goliath paint him as Orpah’s descendant and a product of immorality, but this is more about presenting Goliath as David’s opposite than about Orpah’s virtue
- Why does Naomi refuse Ruth/Orpah?
  - Naomi does not want to be responsible for them
  - Naomi does not want them, because she blames them for the death of Machlon and Kilyon and because they would be a source of embarrassment for her
  - Naomi is concerned about their material future in Israel as single Moabites
  - Naomi is concerned about their spiritual future if they would convert insincerely

## Chapter 2

- What were Naomi and Ruth doing for support before Ruth decided to glean?
  - Naomi was supporting them, or
  - Nothing, due to Naomi's shame at her poverty
- Was Boaz a hero or a villain?
  - The dominant view in the text and Jewish literature is that Boaz is a hero
  - The Talmud presents the possibility that Boaz started the book as self-interested, but redeemed himself by helping Ruth and Naomi
- Why doesn't Naomi accompany Ruth to glean?
  - Shame, or
  - It's a dangerous place for an older woman
- Why were the fields such a dangerous place for the needy, as appears from the language of Ruth and Boaz in Chapter 2?
  - It was not dangerous, but some field workers were more virtuous than others
  - It was dangerous for Moabites, who were stigmatized for their earlier refusal to help the Jews
  - It was indeed a dangerous place, and Boaz needed to keep close watch on his workers to prevent bad behaviour and to provide extra help for Ruth
- Is Ruth similar to Avraham and Rivkah, or opposite?
  - Ruth is similar to them in that she leaves her land and family and becomes a Jew
  - Ruth is different from Avraham in that she has no Divine message
  - Ruth is different from Rivkah in that her chesed is what marks her as special, without any positive lineage