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AN ADJUSTED SYMMETRICAL STRUCTURING OF RUTH

A. BOYD LUTER AND RICHARD O. RIGSBY*

Many recent significant studies of Ruth, emerging from quite diverse backgrounds, have referred to the book's overarching literary structure as "symmetrical."¹ There are some relatively minor differences in arriving at that general viewpoint, but the overall understandings are still strikingly similar. Thus it is possible that a point of consensus around a beautifully crafted symmetrical structure of Ruth is close at hand.

A foundational shaping influence of that perspective, if not its fountain-head, is a brief treatment by Stephen Bertman.² Recently Phyllis Tribble, with (muted) acknowledgment to Bertman, has adopted virtually the same structural layout.³

Though Tribble does give some additional explanation for the book's content seen through the grid of this inverted structure beyond the bare framework and rationale provided by Bertman,⁴ it is still far from the kind of rigorous treatment needed to solidly support a clear exegetical-literary consensus on the structure of Ruth.⁵ Toward that end the following study seeking to fine-tune the structural understanding of Ruth is offered.

In general, helpful aspects of existing studies have been retained, though more evidence is provided for their validity. Several notable adjustments in the overall structure have been made, though, and the exegetical and literary reasons for such changes will be argued.

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¹ E. g. R. A. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic, 1981) 58–60; A. Berlin, "Ruth," *HBC* 262; R. K. Harrison, "Ruth," *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* (ed. W. A. Elwell; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989) 181; F. B. Huey, Jr., "Ruth," *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (ed. F. E. Gaebelin; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 3.512. Significantly E. F. Campbell, Jr., *Ruth* (AB 7; Garden City: Doubleday, 1975) 13, concurs that there is parallelism between Ruth 2 and 3, following S. Bertman, "The Symmetrical Structure of Ruth," *JBL* 84 (1965) 166–168. But Campbell concludes about the structure of the overall book: "Inclusios are to my mind the chief building blocks of the Ruth story" (*Ruth* 14). To a certain degree, we share Campbell's reticence to follow Bertman's approach to Ruth 1 and 4, but we also appreciate the ground-breaking nature of Bertman's work.

² Bertman, "Structure" 165–168.

³ P. Tribble, "Ruth, Book of," *ABD* 5.843.

⁴ Bertman, "Structure" 165–168. The modest length and limited overview nature of Bertman's presentation clearly indicate its seminal nature.

⁵ Tribble, after briefly laying out the symmetrical structure hypothesis ("Ruth" 843), occasionally remarks as to how a section relates in the overall structure of Ruth (pp. 844–845). This is helpful as far as it goes. But it is more tantalizing than substantial in validating whether Ruth is symmetrically structured and, if so, what the precise configuration of that structure is.

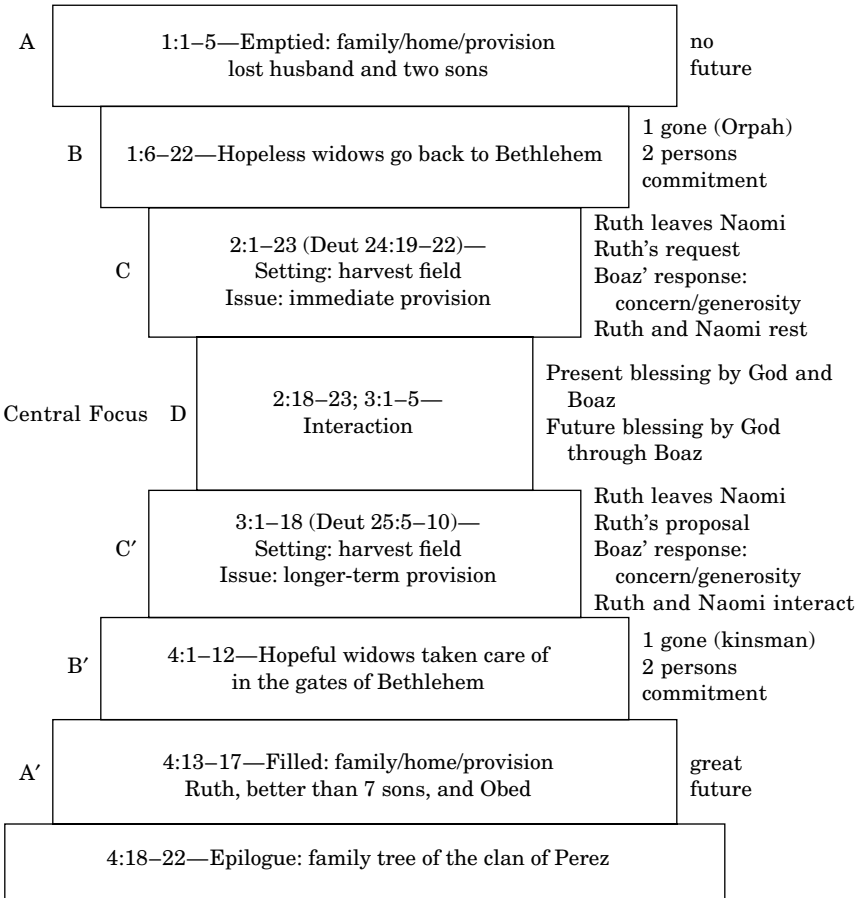


CHART 1: An Alternate Overall Chiastic Structure for Ruth

As to procedure, the initial section of this study will preview the alternative overall symmetrical structuring of Ruth, commenting only on noteworthy differences between the new viewpoint and the Bertman-Trible thesis. The next three sections will present the extensive mirroring effect of the layers of the overarching inverted structure of the narrative of Ruth (1:1–4:17) and the internal chiasms in the two inner pairs of corresponding scenes. Following that will be a brief discussion of the relationship of the crowning genealogy (4:18–22) to the reconfigured structure of

the rest of the book. Finally, several important conclusions will be drawn from the study.

I. VISUALIZING RUTH'S ADJUSTED INVERTED STRUCTURE⁶

The chart on p. 16 divides Ruth into seven segments (1:1–5; 1:6–22; chap. 2; chap. 3; 4:1–12; 4:13–17; 4:18–22) instead of the six in the Bertman-Trible proposal.⁷ The most significant differences between the two approaches are: (1) Ruth 4:13–17 is separated from 4:1–12 as the climactic sixth scene in the narrative (1:1–4:17), (2) 4:13–17 occupies the role of counterpart to the opening paragraph (1:1–5) in the overarching mirroring structure of the book instead of 4:18–22,⁸ and (3) the crowning genealogy (4:18–22) is found outside the grand chiasm of the narrative's six scenes (1:1–4:17).⁹ Yet, as implied in chart 1, the family tree is still inextricably linked to the chiasmic macrostructure of Ruth (see section V).

To the right of the boxes that visualize each segment of Ruth are found such key additional factors as the complementary emotional tone of the scenes, characters prominent in the scenes, parallel sequence or linking thematic development. Each of these is also important evidence in recognizing the validity of the adjusted structure being proposed here.

Two further points are also noteworthy: (1) The flow of the narrative (1:6–4:12) that is sandwiched between the devastating losses of the introductory scene (1:1–5) and the joyful fulfillment of the concluding scene (4:13–17) reflects implicitly on the application of relevant stipulations in Deuteronomy 23–25: the prohibition of Moabites (23:3); the right for widows and aliens to glean (24:19); and the responsibility of levirate marriage (25:5–10),¹⁰ and (2) the spotlighted character at the precise midpoint of the narrative (i.e. the back-to-back paragraphs, Ruth 2:18–23; 3:1–5) is Boaz, the human vehicle of blessing for the conversants Naomi and Ruth (2:19, 20, 21, 22, 23; 3:2, 3, 4).

⁶ The overview representation of the structure of Ruth in this section, as well as the other charts in this essay, form the basis for the homiletically sensitive treatment of Ruth in A. B. Luter and B. C. Davis, *God Behind the Seen: Expositions of Ruth and Esther* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).

⁷ Bertman, "Structure" 166–167; Tribble, "Ruth" 843.

⁸ *Ibid.* The sketchy interplay between Ruth 1:1–5 and 4:18–22 as "family history" by Bertman and Tribble is plausible on the surface. But considerably more parallelism can be demonstrated between 1:1–5 and 4:13–17, as will be seen in the next section.

⁹ In attempting to prove the unity of the present canonical form of Ruth, the Bertman-Trible approach clearly integrates 4:18–22 into an overarching inverted structuring of the book. There is, however, a way that is more sensitive to the exegetical and literary phenomena in Ruth that also supports the book's unity, as will be argued in section V.

¹⁰ Unless this is pure coincidence (Ruth 2:3), it would seem that the writer of Ruth is attempting to demonstrate that everything that happens is done in a "Law-abiding" manner.

1:1–5	Comparisons/Contrasts	4:13–17
71 words	LENGTH IN HEBREW	71 words
Famine in Bethlehem (v. 1)	CIRCUMSTANCES	Wedding in Bethlehem (v. 13)
Leaving land and endangered	FAMILY STATUS	Back in land and reestablished
Marriage, then death	OVERALL MOOD	Marriage, then life
Withheld: barrenness (vv. 4–5)	GOD'S HAND/ BLESSING	Bestowed: conception/birth (v. 14)
No hope in sight (v. 5)	POSSIBILITY OF HELP	Redeemers: Boaz and Obed (vv. 14–15)
Widow of deceased son (Mahlon) (v. 5)	STATUS OF RUTH/ SIGNIFICANCE TO NAOMI	Better than seven sons (v. 15)
Holds Ruth/Orpah close in grief/emptiness	NAOMI'S EMOTIONS	Holds Obed close in joyfulness
Introductory bookend	LITERARY FUNCTION	Concluding bookend

CHART 2: First Chiastic Layer of the Book of Ruth: Naomi Emptied and Filled

II. THE OUTER CHIASTIC LAYER (1:1–5; 4:13–17):
EMPTIED, THEN REFILLED

Having considered the overall structure of the book of Ruth, we now want to observe the individual chiastic layers comprising the whole. Ironically Tribble senses that, in certain important respects, “structural symmetry yields semantic dissonance” in paralleling chaps. 1 and 4. But she believes that “semantic harmony”¹¹ finally occurs in 4:14–16, after the transition of 4:13. It does not seem to occur to her that 4:1–12 and 4:13–17 are clearly distinct scenes timewise, separated by at least the length of Ruth’s pregnancy (4:13). A smoother understanding of the first chiastic layer is graphically represented in chart 2. These members appropriately function as introductory and concluding bookends to this magnificent literary structure.

¹¹ Tribble, “Ruth” 843.

1:6–22	Comparisons/Contrasts	4:1–12
From Moab to Bethlehem	INITIAL TRAVEL	From field to Bethlehem
3 (Naomi, Orpah, Ruth)	OPENING CHARACTERS	3 (Ruth, unknown kinsman, Boaz)
Death of husbands (1:8, 11–13); no kinsman (available)	IMMEDIATE PROBLEM	Unknown kinsman blocking way
1 recedes; 1 emerges/commits	DYNAMICS OF INTERACTION	1 recedes; 1 emerges/commits
Naomi's words Orpah leaves Ruth commits	SEQUENCE OF EVENTS	Boaz' words Unknown kinsman leaves Boaz commits
Taking first steps	HINGE ACTION(S)	Taking decisive steps
Beginning of harvest (1:20)	TIME OF ACTIVITY	End of harvest (chap. 3)
Stirred upon arrival (1:19)	IMPACT ON CITY	Excited about marriage (4:11–12)
Sarah (too old)	ALLUSION TO/ MENTION OF EARLIER LUMINARIES	Rachel and Leah, Tamar
Hope (1:8), faith (1:16–17), anger (1:13, 20–21)	FOCUS ON GOD	The Lord, who gives offspring (4:11–12)
Women in Bethlehem (1:19)	ADDITIONAL VOICES	Witnesses in court (4:11–12)
Bitterness from emptiness (1:20–21)	CLOSING ATTITUDE	Joy from fulfillment
Death of husbands (1:8, 11–13)	BACKGROUND PROBLEM	Death of family name (4:5, 10)
*The Moabitess (1:22)	PRECISE DESCRIPTION OF RUTH *only mentions of "Moabitess" in book of Ruth	*The Moabitess (4:5, 10)

CHART 3: Second Chiastic Layer of the Book of Ruth:
The Mirroring Effect in 1:6–22/4:1–12

III. THE SECOND CHIASTIC LAYER (1:6–22; 4:1–12):
HOPELESS, THEN HOPEFUL

Turning to the second chiasmic layer, the reader is struck by the undeniable comparisons and contrasts offered by B and B'. Chart 3 demonstrates this artistic mirroring effect. In these dramatic scenes the initial steps of Naomi and Ruth described in B provide the hinge action for the happenings. In B' the decisive steps of Boaz provide the hinge action of that scene. Ruth 1:20 indicates that the second member takes place at the

beginning of harvest; the parallel member takes place at the end of the harvest ("Then," 4:1; cf. "today," 3:18, and "Then," 3:1; cf. "until the end of the . . . harvest," 2:23).

In addition to the superb architecture of this second level of the grand chiasm, the two members each demonstrate an intricate internal chiasm. These internal chiasms are depicted in charts 4 and 5. We interpret the

6-7 First step back to Judah, where God has called, Ruth and Boaz	Comparisons/Contrasts	22 Last step into Bethlehem, at time of harvest, Ruth and Boaz
MAIN CHARACTERS		
Start of harvest persuades her daughters-in-law to leave Boaz fields of God's hard harvesting grain	TIME/SEASON PRIMARY SETTING/ACTIVITY	18-20 End of harvest, but anger/bitterness (1:18) about loss of floor/protecting grain
God guides Ruth's "luck" parted by "death" (1:1-5, etc.)	FRONT-END PERSPECTIVE	14b-17 Ruth recommends "till death do us part" (see Gen 2:24)
Ruth present, Boaz arrives	INITIAL INTERPLAY	Boaz present, Ruth arrives
Asking to glean (Deut 24:19)	RUTH'S QUESTION You either back out in hard times or recommit to the Lord and his unseen providence	Asking to marry (Deut 25:5-10)
He agrees	BOAZ' ANSWER	He agrees
Fully reported to him	CHART 4: Internal Chiasm in 1:6 BOAZ' KNOWLEDGE OF RUTH	22 From all his people in the town
No apparent kinsman/provider	LOOMING QUESTION	Closer kinsman/redeemer
1-2 Elders as witnesses Her physical need	BOAZ' PROTECTION TOWARD RUTH	11-12 Elders and other witnesses
3-4 Offer to redeem by buying Working all day and by unknown kinsman	SCENE DURATION	9-10 Choice to redeem by buying, etc., by Boaz
Boaz: man of excellence (2:1) litics 5-6 Reality of wider responsibility	DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTER	Ruth: woman of excellence (3:11) Legally bind
An ephah of barley	WHAT RUTH TAKES HOME TO NAOMI	Six measures of barley
Naomi's question	HINGE TO FINAL MINI-SCENE	Naomi's question
Naomi's wisdom	PARTING THOUGHT	Naomi's wisdom

CHART 5: Internal Chiasm in 4:1-12

chiastic structures as important means of emphasizing the central point, the point at the hinge.

- A (2:1–3) Introducing Boaz, the channel of grace; the situation needing to find grace; the action, “chancing into Boaz’ field,” setting up the opportunity for grace
- B (2:4) Gracious, kind greeting by Boaz: “Yahweh be with you”
 - C (2:5–7) Ruth identified by the head worker and her extraordinary request for grace
 - D (2:8–10) Boaz begins to grant favor; RUTH’S QUESTION: “Why have I found grace?”
 - D’ (2:11–13) BOAZ’ ANSWER: God is repaying your faithfulness and your faith; Ruth requesting continued favor
 - C’ (2:14–16) Boaz’ extraordinary invitation and Ruth’s protection from the other workers
- B’ (2:17) Ruth, recipient of Boaz’ generosity: Yahweh was with her
- A’ (2:18–23) Recounting to Naomi her “luck” in Boaz’ field, having found favor with Boaz and God

CHART 7: Outlining the Ruth 2 Chiasm

IV. THE CENTRAL CHIASTIC LAYER (CHAPS. 2–3):

- A (3:1–2) Naomi’s objective of Boaz serving as Ruth’s kinsman-redeemer
- B (3:3–5) Naomi’s plan for Ruth secretly to lie at Boaz’ feet
 - C (3:6–9) Ruth carries out Naomi’s plan, lies down, then proposes levirate marriage to a startled Boaz
 - D (3:10) Boaz admiringly notes Ruth’s previous restraint concerning marital security
 - D’ (3:11) Boaz admiringly notes Ruth’s earned reputation as a woman of excellence
 - C’ (3:12–13) Boaz agrees to Naomi’s objective, startles Ruth with the existence of a closer kinsman, then tells her to lie down
- B’ (3:14–16) Naomi’s inquiry about Boaz has chosen to keep Ruth’s presence at his feet a secret
- A’ (3:17–18) Ruth’s report and Naomi’s response about Boaz’ choice to be kinsman-redeemer

CHART 8: Protecting Ruth’s Good Name: Outlining the Ruth 3 Chiasm

DIVINE PROVIDENCE UNDERGIRDING HUMAN PLANNING¹²

CHART 6: The Interface of Ruth 2 and 3

The interpretative focus of a chiasm is found in the central members. The structure forces the reader's attention in that direction. Chart 6 provides a graphic view of this emphasized portion of the grand chiasm of the book of Ruth. It is intriguing to notice the amazingly extensive interplay between chaps. 2 and 3.

¹² A. B. Luter and R. O. Rigsby, "The Chiastic Structure of Ruth 2," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 3 (1993); "Protecting Ruth's Good Name: The Significance of the Inverted Structure of Ruth 3," *BSac* (forthcoming).

<i>From the Promise of Royalty to Judah's Descendants (Gen 49:10) until Leadership in the Exodus</i>	<i>From Entry into the Promised Land until the Anointed King (1 Sam 16:1–13) and Founder of the Judahite Royal Line</i>
1. Perez	6. Salmon (or Salma) ²²
2. Hezron	7. Boaz
3. Ram	8. Obed
4. Amminadab	9. Jesse
5. Nahshon: "Leader of the sons of Judah" (Num 2:3) militarily in the exodus period under Moses	10. David: Leader of Israel's armies under Saul (1 Sam 18:5) after being anointed next king by Samuel
Assumed span of first half of genealogy: 430 years (Exod 12:40) plus part of the wilderness generation (40 years; Num 14:27)	Assumed span of second half of genealogy: 476 years to end of David's reign (1 Kgs 6:1) minus 40 years to its start (2 Sam 5:4)

In **Ruth 20** the reader's attention is inexorably drawn toward Ruth's question between the central sections of the chiasm: "Why have I found grace?" In the first and last members of this chiasm, Boaz is introduced as "kin" (2:1), then as "kinsman-redeemer" (2:20), the Lord's chosen channel of grace.

A crisp outline of the Ruth 3 chiasm is offered in chart 8. Attention is riveted upon the central section, where Ruth is heralded as a "woman of excellence" (*ʿēšet ḥayil*, 3:11), a worthy match for the excellent Boaz (*ʿiṣ gibbôr ḥayil*, 2:1).

V. THE SYMMETRY OF 4:18–22 AND ITS ROLE IN THE ADJUSTED STRUCTURE OF RUTH

As recently as 1975 E. F. Campbell, Jr., confidently stated: "There is all but universal agreement that verses 18–22 form a genealogical appendix to the Ruth story and are not an original part of it."¹³ To his credit, Campbell was also wise enough to quickly admit that "the addition of a genealogical appendix to Ruth is unique; we are therefore hard put to assess its precise significance."¹⁴

Since Campbell's midstream assessment of the relationship between 4:18–22 and the narrative of Ruth, a chorus of voices from different parts of the scholarly community have argued that the genealogy is in fact an integral part of Ruth.¹⁵ Things have changed to the extent that Tribble could recently cautiously affirm: "Most exegetes affirm the unity of the book, though the genealogy at the end (4:18–22) remains a problem."¹⁶

¹³ Campbell, *Ruth* 172.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

The present study will not seek to argue comprehensively for the unity of the Ruth narrative and genealogy. Rather, if it makes a contribution to this issue it will be in displaying some of the additional literary touches (e.g. overarching inclusios¹⁷ [1:1; 4:18–22]) beyond the grand chiasmic structure laid out above and the chiasmic emphasis technique (spoken of in the introduction) that the writer of Ruth utilized in previewing the climactic genealogy throughout the narrative. Chart 9 highlights the more important of these.

¹⁵ A chronological short list of such significant works includes J. M. Sasson, *Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1979) 178–187; R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *The Book of Ruth* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 33–38; Tribble, “Ruth”; Huey, “Ruth” 548–549. Berlin (“Ruth” 262) is of the opinion that there is currently no consensus on the unity of the book of Ruth. See also C. McCarthy, “The Davidic Genealogy in the Book of Ruth,” *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 9 (1985) 53–62.

¹⁶ Tribble, “Ruth” 843.

¹⁷ Note here the perspective of Campbell (“Ruth” 13) that inclusios are “chief building blocks” of Ruth.

Preview in the Narrative	Parallel in the Genealogy
1. Days of the judges (1:1)	Salmon to Jesse (4:20–22)
2. Famine (1:1)	Reason to go to Egypt: Perez, Hezron (4:18)
3. Bethlehem in Judah (1:1)	Boaz to David (home of family; 4:21–22)
4. Leaving the land (1:1)	Perez, Hezron (4:18)
5. Returning to the land (1:6–22)	Exodus and conquest: Nahshon, Salmon (4:20–21)
6. Emphasis on Boaz in central chiasmic layer (chaps. 2–3)	Boaz in honored seventh position in family tree (4:21)
7. Child by levirate relationship after kinsman's reneging (4:6, 13)	Birth of Perez (4:18) after Judah's reneging (see Genesis 38)
8. Become famous in Bethlehem (4:11)	Boaz and David (4:21–22)
9. Fame in Israel (4:14)	Obed and David (4:21–22)
10. Obed, Jesse, David (4:17)	Obed, Jesse, David (4:21–22)

CHART 9: Plausible Literary Links Between Ruth's Narrative (1:1–4:17) and Genealogy (4:18–22)

The key observation to be drawn here is that every part of the narrative of Ruth, in its own elegant literary fashion, points ahead to the genealogy, whether obviously or with exquisite subtlety.

As far as the role of the concluding family tree in Ruth is concerned (4:18–22), commentators from at least as early as Keil and Delitzsch have spoken of “the limitation of the whole genealogy to ten members, for the purpose of stamping upon it through the number ten as the seal of completeness the character of a perfect, concluded, and symmetrical whole.”¹⁸

It is also common for 4:18–22 to be viewed as a royal genealogy¹⁹ designed to “legitimate David and his monarchy.”²⁰ This aspect also seems clearly present because of the positioning of the name David in 4:17, 22.

But there may well be more. After all, Campbell is correct in calling the location of this genealogy “unique,”²¹ and that combined with its literary

¹⁸ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, “Ruth,” *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprint 1973) 2.493.

¹⁹ Hubbard, *Ruth* 39.

²⁰ Tribble, “Ruth” 846.

²¹ Campbell, *Ruth* 172.

crafting (see below) may bespeak a role even more intriguing than has been previously thought.

CHART 10: The Lives and Time $\frac{2}{3}$ of the Perezite Clan (4:18a):
The Leading Family of Judah (4:20, 22)

Two other proposals that merit consideration here are suggested by M. D. Johnson: “to bridge the time gap between the conquest and the onset of the Davidic monarchy” and to “provide an individual of rank with connections to a worthy family or individual of the past.”²⁴

It is better, though, to view the bridging from the time when Perez, to whose clan Naomi’s deceased husband Elimelech and Boaz belonged (2:1; 4:18), became the heir (Gen 46:12) to the promise of the “scepter” and “ru-

²² See Hubbard, *Ruth* 283, for a thorough, evenhanded discussion of the variant spellings of this name.

²³ P. R. Gilchrist, “*tōlēdōt*,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (ed. R. L. Harris *et al.*; Chicago: Moody) 1.380, affirms that the important term “generations” (e.g. Ruth 4:18) refers to “the events” as well as “what is produced or brought into being by someone” (here the Perezites).

²⁴ M. D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies with Special Reference to the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus* (SNTSMS 8; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1969) 78–79.

ler's staff" to Judah's descendants (Gen 49:10), in spite of the odd levirate-like circumstances of his birth (Genesis 38).²⁵ It is also necessary to realize that Boaz is not only eminently "worthy," as exemplified by unexpectedly being included in the genealogy (Ruth 4:21; see chart above), but is also the figure that in a very real sense kept this historic (4:18–21) "royal" family name alive (4:10, 13). And of course all this happened through an intricate levirate marriage to Ruth, a proselytized (1:16–17) Moabite (4:10; Deut 23:3).

Chart 10 not only summarizes this discussion but also serves to clarify the crucial and striking comparison between David and Nahshon (Ruth 4:20). Both emerged from this clan of expectant royalty (Gen 49:10) to highly responsible positions of military command in Israel at the conclusion of extremely difficult periods in Israelite history: for Nahshon, the Egyptian captivity; for David, the era of the judges and the uneven beginning of a united monarchy in Israel under Saul. They represented not only hope for the future through this strong leadership but also a reminder of the ongoing royal promise (49:10) to the emerging family line.

Suffice it to say that the family tree that crowns the narrative of Ruth plays a multifaceted and indispensable role. It is only there that what is riding on the events found in the book of Ruth becomes clear. Whether you choose to call it the big picture, the historical context, or seeing the forest and not just the trees, the point is still the same: The events of the book of Ruth chronicle the prevention of a missing link in the royal line from Perez to the anointed family member, David.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Six important related conclusions emerge from the preceding study, which has had as its aim the fine-tuning of the literary structure of the book of Ruth:

(1) There is ample evidence that the "short story"²⁶ of Ruth 1:1–4:17 is indeed a grand chiasmic structure, though it is organized differently at key points from the currently popular Bertman-Trible approach.

(2) Each of the three layers of the broader inverted structure contains an extensive number of interactive parallels, clearly indicating the mirroring effect in each layer.

(3) The two inner layers each contain internal chiasms in each mirroring section, which are also generally parallel to their counterpart sections. Thus since the two middle scenes are also the longest segments in Ruth, it

²⁵ C. F. Mariottini, "Perez," *ABD* 5.226, concludes that Genesis 38 is designed to explain "the preeminence of the younger clan Perez over the older clans of Judah."

²⁶ E. F. Campbell, Jr., "The Hebrew Short Story: Its Form, Style and Provenance," *A Light unto My Path* (ed. H. N. Bream, R. D. Heim and C. A. Moore; Philadelphia: Temple University, 1974) 83–101. In spite of structuring Ruth in a significantly different way from Campbell's approach, we do not conclude that there is sufficient reason to call into question Campbell's strong case for viewing Ruth as a short story.

is fair to say that the symmetrical nature of the narrative becomes even more intricate in moving toward its center point.

(4) Because the literary interplay between the concluding family tree and the narrative of the book is apparently even more extensive than previously recognized, the case for the original unity of Ruth is further strengthened.

(5) As an extension of the elegant symmetrical crafting of the narrative, the final genealogy of ten names is also symmetrical: five names (Perez to Nahshon) bridging from Israel's entry into Egypt until the exodus period, and five (Salmon to David) bridging from the conquest of the land to the first king of the Judahite (through the Perezites) royal line (Gen 49:10).

(6) The parallelism of the family tree works at two levels.²⁷ First, and most direct (because of the preceding narrative), the general flow of the story of Elimelech's family is quite similar to broader events in Israel's history during the "generations" (Ruth 4:18–22) in the genealogy, with the two virtually merging at the seventh position: Boaz, whose name and descent would become "famous" in Israel (4:11, 14). Second, the leadership of Nahshon of Judah (Num 2:3)—the figure in the emphasized fifth position in the symmetrical genealogy (Ruth 4:20)—during the emergence of Israel from slavery in Egypt is mirrored by the role of the occupant of the parallel tenth position in the family tree: David's leadership in finally decisively putting the era of the judges (1:1) behind Israel.

Important implications arise from the last two conclusions. First, the combination of the widespread recognition of the form of Ruth 4:18–22 as a royal genealogy, its duration (i.e. bridging from Perez to David), and its paralleling of Nahshon and David—which would have to be limited to leadership and military exploits (Num 2:3–4)—would seem to fit best in the time frame between David's anointing as king (1 Sam 16:12–13) and his actual recognition as king, first by Judah (2 Sam 2:1–4) and seven years later by "all the tribes of Israel" (5:1–5). This could mean that at least an initial draft²⁸ of Ruth dates from sometime before ca. 1000 BC (when David became king).²⁹

Second, if there is validity to this reasoning regarding dating, the purpose of Ruth can be further clarified. Tribble is not overstating the difficulty involved in seeking a uniting purpose for Ruth when she observes that "attempts to specify a single purpose falter in light of the book's richness and complexity."³⁰ Yet Robert Hubbard represents a growing number of

²⁷ Berlin ("Ruth" 262) believes that in general the book of Ruth communicates at several levels. Tribble declares: "Many levels of meaning intertwine" ("Ruth" 846).

²⁸ Huey speculates that Ruth might have existed as a poetic story during the period of the judges before being published in its present form at a later date ("Ruth" 511). Such an early point of origin could even mean that it is remotely possible that the traditional Jewish viewpoint that Samuel authored Ruth (*b. B. Bat.* 14b–15a) sometime before his death in 1 Sam 25:1 is worth reconsidering.

²⁹ This implication assumes that at least three (given the selective nature of the family tree) generations (i.e. Boaz to David) is a sufficiently long time span for an old custom to require explanation (Ruth 4:7).

scholars who have painstakingly discerned a “political” purpose³¹ for Ruth: “to win popular acceptance of David’s rule by appeal to the continuity of Yahweh’s guidance in the lives of Israel’s ancestors and David.”³² Dating Ruth before David’s ascension to the throne of united Israel (2 Sam 5:1–3) actually strengthens the force of that purpose. It is not unrealistic to view the book of Ruth as a primary credential for David, first to Judah (2 Sam 2:1–4), then in Israel’s bewildering choice between the existing royal family of Saul (2:8–4:12) and the long-promised Judahite line (Gen 49:10).

Campbell concludes his own important and innovative discussion of the literary design of the book of Ruth with what he takes to be an echoed invitation (and a considerable challenge): “I invite the modern audience to participate in, and improve upon, my own sense of the story-teller’s craft [in Ruth]. To do that is to accept his own implied invitation and to find new dimensions of appreciation for his art.”³³

The present writers accepted the invitation and have attempted to build upon the earlier foundational studies of Bertman, Campbell, Hubbard, Tribble and others. The new dimensions that have been noted in this treatment represent awe-inspiring literary artistry. Yet there may be much more that deserves appreciation that remains to be recognized. Thus there seems to be no more appropriate way to close than to second Campbell’s motion and, so to speak, put in the mail the next batch of invitations to savor the “story-teller’s craft” in Ruth.

³⁰ Tribble, “Ruth” 846.

³¹ Hubbard (*Ruth* 39–42) provides an extended thematic interweaving that converges on this unitive purpose.

³² *Ibid.* 42.

³³ Campbell, *Ruth* 18.