

THE ROLE OF REPORTED SPEECH
IN ENRICHING THE NARRATIVE IN THE BOOK OF RUTH:
“HE SAID, SHE SAID,” AND “SHE SAID, HE SAID”

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ABSTRACT

In the last 30 years or so, more and more scholars are taking a literary approach to Scripture. This has yielded fascinating discoveries with regard to the artistic quality of biblical narrative. Sadly, a disregard for the doctrine of verbal inspiration continues to taint the results of this scholarship. The purpose of this thesis is to address questions concerning the role of verbal inspiration in the interpretation of biblical narrative, and then to examine how a particular literary feature, referred to here as *reported speech*, is used by the inspired author of the book of Ruth in the development of the plot and characters in this beautiful example of biblical narrative.

After surveying the views and findings of prominent authors in the area of biblical narrative, and reviewing the importance of the biblical doctrine of verbal inspiration, especially in relation to *reported speech*, six instances (Ruth 1:6; 2:7,11,13,21; 3:17) of this literary feature are identified. By looking closely at the grammar, content, characters, and plot considerations involved in these six instances, it is concluded that *reported speech* is a tool that the Holy Spirit uses in Ruth to keep readers engaged, deepen understanding of characters, and move the story forward efficiently.

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Introduction

Narrative studies of Scripture seem to be on the rise in recent decades. Some scholars have grown tired of the practice of tearing Scripture into little pieces in an effort to determine the source of each piece. Instead, they have decided that it is more productive to look at the text, which we have available for study right now, as a whole.¹ Their focus is on connections and patterns which occur both in individual books and throughout Scripture. This trend in scholarship toward looking at the books of the Bible as unified compositions is refreshing for confessional Lutherans.

I will address questions about what bearing the doctrine of verbal inspiration has on how we are to understand biblical narrative. Most scholars in this field usually dismiss this scriptural doctrine entirely as they describe the nuts and bolts of biblical narratives and the overall themes of these accounts. Their false presuppositions affect their conclusions in a negative way with regard to scholarship and their personal relationship to God.

In the portions of Scripture written in the narrative style, dialogue often carries the story forward, shapes our understanding of characters, and fills in important details. More than half of the relatively short Book of Ruth is dialogue.² It is an artfully crafted and readable narrative. One literary device used by the verbally inspired author is reported speech.³ This happens when a character reports what another character said, whether using direct or indirect discourse. I was unable to find a published analysis of how reported speech is used in the book of Ruth.

By working through the book of Ruth in Hebrew, I will seek to identify and classify all the possible instances of reported speech in Ruth. Those who have studied biblical narratives in detail classify instances of reported speech using many various categories. I will present many of these categories and then apply them to the instances of reported speech found in Ruth. This will involve making judgments on whether a particular quote is direct or indirect discourse, identifying what is being spoken about, who originally said it, who is reporting it, examining the possible motives for reporting, and exploring whatever else might be useful for classifying instances of reported speech.

¹ Shimeon Bar-Efrat. "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," *Vetus Testamentum* 30, no. 2, (1980): 154-155.

² See Appendix for a visual representation of this feature of the book.

³ The name of this literary device is not universally agreed upon, but I have chosen to use this term throughout the paper.

Finally, I will examine how the Holy Spirit used each instance of reported speech to enrich the story in the Book of Ruth. Each instance of reported speech plays at least some role in advancing the plot and/or deepening a character. Every word and phrase in God's Word has been written for a very good reason: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Literature Review

Before the 1980s not much critical literary scholarship had been spent on the Scriptures, instead focusing on works by secular authors such as Shakespeare, Virgil, and Homer. Those who thought the Bible was merely another piece of ancient literature were the same ones who attacked its unity. Those were the days of source, form, and redaction criticism. On the other hand, those who believed the Scriptures were divine truth paid more attention to the truths, "neglecting phenomena like character, motive, and narrative design as unbecoming for the study of an essentially religious document."⁴ The study of the content of the Scriptures was set in opposition to the study of the literary form of the Scriptures.⁵

To a certain extent, the debate above continues to rage. Nevertheless, scholars such as Robert Alter have done the work to uncover interesting literary features within biblical narrative. Thematic patterns and the skillful usage of vocabulary found in Scripture lead him to reason that we must assume that the text is "an intricately interconnected unity."⁶ It is more profitable to study the Scriptures we have before us, than to make guesses about their original form, as Alter contends: "Since all these features are linked to discernible details in the Hebrew text, the literary approach is actually a good deal less conjectural than the historical scholarship that asks of a verse whether it contains possible Akkadian loanwords, whether it reflects Sumerian kinship practices, whether it may have been corrupted by a scribal error."⁷ Although one might expect

⁴ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 16-17.

⁵ Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 35.

⁶ Alter, 11

⁷ *Ibid.*, 21

that argument to be regarded as something of a cop-out among modern scholars, the idea has actually gained some traction in the post-modern intellectual climate of today.

Another author who has taken this approach to biblical scholarship is Meir Sternberg. Without hesitation, he labels biblical narrative as a work of literature and analyzes it as such. However, taking this literary approach is not a superficial or easy task. Also, a literary approach toward Scripture is not the same as form criticism:

“Since a sense of coherence entails a sense of purpose, it is not enough to trace a pattern; it must also be validated and justified in terms of communicative design. After all, the very question of whether that pattern exists in the text - whether it has any relevance and any claim to perceptibility - turns on the question of what it does in the text. Unless firmly anchored in the relations between narrator and audience, therefore, formalism degenerates into a new mode of atomism.”⁸

Sternberg sees three major issues which face those who take this literary approach:⁹ First, he acknowledges the tension created by treating the discourse of Scripture (the way it tells the story) as more important than the source of Scripture. Second, he perceives a significant difficulty in determining where to place the Bible on the spectrum of literature between fiction and history. Finally, he realizes that focusing on literary features can lead to a neglect of what Scripture actually says. After wrestling with these issues, Sternberg concludes: “Biblical narrative emerges as a complex, because multifunctional, discourse. Functionally speaking, it is regulated by a set of three principles: ideological, historiographic, and aesthetic. How they cooperate is a tricky question.”¹⁰ When Sternberg comes across something in the Bible that seems like something the biblical author could not have known, he treats it as fiction. He suggests that the authors often included these fictional elements for aesthetic reasons. It is clear from this approach that Sternberg does not believe in the doctrine of verbal inspiration.

Alter’s similar literary approach has led him to declare that the Bible is “fictionalized history.”¹¹ According to him, many Bible characters are fictional.¹² Adele Berlin reasons that biblical narrative has features in common with all other literature, and should be treated as literature. Literature is essentially representation. So this author compares Bible characters to

⁸ Sternberg, 2.

⁹ Ibid., 35.

¹⁰ Ibid., 41.

¹¹ Alter, 25.

¹² Ibid., 12.

paintings of real apples: “Representations of reality do not always correspond in every detail to reality.”¹³

From those statements, it is clear that many who study biblical narrative do not hold to the doctrine of verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. Still, we pray the Holy Spirit works through his Word to bring them to a firm faith in their Redeemer. Only then will it be possible for them to start regarding the Scriptures as they ought to be regarded: the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God. As a book is held in higher regard when the reader has a relationship with the author of that book, so also scholars of the Bible first need a relationship with the author of the Bible. Holding to the doctrine of verbal inspiration is a fruit of faith; faith in Jesus as Savior must come first.

Even though these scholars err severely with regard to what the Bible says about itself as God’s inspired truth, this does not totally undermine their work. Interpretation is not the primary goal of their area of study. “Poetics, the science of literature, is not an interpretive effort - it does not aim to elicit meaning from a text. Rather, it aims to find the building blocks of literature and the rules by which they are assembled... If literature is likened to a cake, then poetics gives us the recipe and interpretation tells us how it tastes.”¹⁴ Even though that statement places interpretation in purely subjective light, the point is that poetics are not even meant to go there. So the study of biblical poetics can still be valuable to confessional Lutherans, as long as it does not lead to a violation of the Scriptural principles of interpretation. “Poetics makes us aware of how texts achieve their meaning. Poetics aids interpretation. If we know *how* texts mean, we are in a better position to discover *what* a particular text means.”¹⁵

Those who study biblical narrative have found that dialogue is a huge part of telling the story. Alter has noticed this general trait of biblical narrative: “The primacy of dialogue is so pronounced that many pieces of third-person narration prove on inspection to be dialogue-bound, verbally mirroring elements of dialogue which precede them or which they introduce. Narration is thus often relegated to the role of confirming assertions made in dialogue - occasionally, as here [1 Samuel 21:7], with an explanatory gloss.”¹⁶ Therefore, what the characters say is more

¹³ Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 14.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁶ Alter, 65.

often the means by which the reader is informed of the reasons behind their actions, rather than the author simply explaining what is going on.¹⁷ However, Bar-Efrat would still generally place the narrator's interpretation as the most important part of a narrative, since this occurs in what he calls the slowest speed of narrated time, followed by scenic representations, summary accounts, bridgings, and time gaps.¹⁸

Repetition is also a key element of narratives and used often in Scripture. As Sternberg analyzes this literary device, he recognizes that its use can raise questions: "With the structure of repetition... the same material (event or utterance) recurs in a straightforward rather than thematic sense. And since its recurrence therefore incurs redundancy, the question it poses is primarily *selectional*. As the "second" occurrence seems to add nothing to the "first," what is it doing in the text and why have they been collocated by way of analogy?"¹⁹ Still, true to form for one taking the literary approach toward Scripture, he argues that we should not try to emend the text to create exact repetition, nor to create purposeful variances.²⁰ Instead he encourages the study of the text that has been passed down, in order to discover significant features in the structure of repetition.

In his studies, Sternberg has determined that "the biblical structure of repetition exhibits five more or less constant features:"²¹ First, repetition has referential bearing. In other words, repetition plays a role in the story and is especially necessary for enabling the characters in the story to know what is going on. That may seem obvious at first, but when taking other forms of literature into consideration, this feature of repetition really does set narratives apart. In poetry, repetition can be used without any sort of plot in mind. The refrains found in the Psalms are a good example of repetition used for emphasis, rather than advancing a plot. Secondly, Sternberg notices three different categories of members that constitute an instance of repetition: forecast, enactment, and report (about a forecast or enactment). Biblical repetition is composed of at least two of these three members. Also, biblical repetition requires two different types of these members, whereas repetition in other types of literature may utilize two of the same type of

¹⁷ Ibid., 66.

¹⁸ Shimeon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*. (London, New York: T & T Clark International, 2000), 159.

¹⁹ Sternberg, 368.

²⁰ Ibid., 368.

²¹ Ibid., 375-382.

member in repetition. Thirdly, there is the order of presentation. "The order in which the members appear usually reflects their chronological sequence."²² Fourthly, the members that make up repetition come from different sources of information and various points of view. Finally, "this structure of repetition tends to concentrate its members within the unit of the episode."²³

Sternberg also outlines four variable factors in the structure of biblical repetition:²⁴ Combinatory latitude (there are many possible combinations and frequencies for the different members); representational ratios (corresponding members may differ greatly in size or extent of description); generic modulation (corresponding members may be in different genres); and semantic correspondence (Scripture preserves meanings but not always the exact words in repetition). These variations are what make the study of biblical repetition interesting and meaningful. And because of the changes in context between members, even "verbatim repetition is not precise repetition."²⁵

Alter agrees with Sternberg when he maintains that these variations within biblical repetition are not just scribal errors.²⁶ Alter suggests that much of the repetition in biblical narratives is not due to an accidental duplication by "the scrambling of oral transmission," but due to the intentional following of a "type-scene."²⁷ These "type-scenes" revolve around critical and revealing points in a biblical character's life, such as betrothal. Alter sees many similarities and reversals of the "betrothal type-scene" in the book of Ruth.²⁸ To summarize, there are so many different types of repetition in biblical narrative that this argues against any formulaic approach. "We have here not a single normative (let alone binding or mechanical) scheme but rather a set of equipollent options - large yet delimited - so that the choice of each stands out and calls for explanation against the background of the rejected alternatives."²⁹

²² Ibid., 378.

²³ Ibid., 382.

²⁴ Ibid., 383ff.

²⁵ Ibid., 390.

²⁶ Alter, 103.

²⁷ Ibid., 50.

²⁸ Ibid., 58.

²⁹ Sternberg, 437.

Repetition is often combined with the prominent story-telling tool of dialogue. George Savran did an in depth study on a very specific literary feature which involves both repetition and dialogue, which he calls quoted direct speech: “A character actually or purportedly speaks certain words in the course of a story; at a later point in the narrative, those words are quoted aloud by the same character or by another, with specific reference to the original locution and the original speaker.”³⁰ Savran’s *quoted direct* speech is narrower than the literary feature of *reported* speech, which is the subject of this paper. Reported speech may include messages that are quoted directly, along with messages that are referred to indirectly.

Savran’s study focuses much attention on the difference between instances of quoted direct speech that are verifiable (both the original speech and the quotation are presented in the text) and those that are unverifiable (the original speech is not recorded apart from its reporting.)³¹ When a verifiable quotation is not recorded verbatim, the differences in wording from the original speech may indicate something about the motive of the quoting character.³² “In his encounter with verifiable quotations, the reader has become accustomed to being in a privileged position, knowing at least as much as, and probably more than, the quoting character. This situation is reversed with unverifiable quotations, and the character has the upper hand.”³³ In most cases involving unverifiable quotations, the narrator gives clues about whether the quotation is genuine or a fabrication. When the narrator provides no clues about whether the quoting character is lying or not, this creates ambiguity,³⁴ which is useful for the narrative purpose of keeping the reader engaged. Savran notes other uses for unverifiable quotations: “Unverifiable quotations may fill in a gap in the story at a later point in the narrative... or a quotation may raise the question of whether or not a particular speech-act event took place.”³⁵

³⁰ George Savran, *Telling and Retelling: Quotation in Biblical Narrative*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

³² The first and probably most discussed example of this in Scripture is the difference between God’s command in Genesis 2:16-17 and Eve’s report of that command to the Serpent in Genesis 3:3. (Berlin, 97.)

³³ Savran, 106.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 94. Genesis 37:17 is an example of the former and 1 Kings 1:13 is an example of the latter.

Berlin, preferring the term “non-verifiable,” divides this type of quotation into the following three categories:³⁶ (1) We lack the original speech because there never was one; the 'repeated' speech is a fabrication. (2) We lack the original speech because the scene in which it occurred is not narrated (although it is believable). (3) We lack the original speech even though the scene in which it should have occurred is narrated, and the speech is believable.

Berlin suggests that scenes are selected for inclusion based on what is important to the plot, so that scenes which are not included will not distract from the main point.³⁷ This poetic technique, used in biblical narrative both inside and outside of discourse, is called a *blank*: “an inconsequential omission,” made because the information is irrelevant to the story.³⁸ There may also be intentional omissions, called *gaps*, in which the “silence shouts its message.”³⁹ Berlin believes that this is something the Bible does very well: “The suggestion of a thing may be more convincing than a detailed portrayal of it.”⁴⁰ However, we must be careful not to base doctrines on arguments from silence, as even Waltke admits.⁴¹

The importance of acknowledging the Bible as verbally inspired

“Biblical narrative succeeds in projecting figures in space. Through its use of multiple points of view it conveys depth and perspective, and through its use of gaps and minimal outlines it suggests that which it does not show. To show everything, as Auerbach finds that Homer does, is to diminish the illusion of reality.”⁴² With those statements, Berlin simultaneously praises the Bible’s literary quality and undercuts its own claim of veracity. This illustrates the danger of treating the Bible like any other piece of ancient literature. But does referring to the Scriptures as stories or literature unavoidably make them seem like something less than real history?

Those who believe that the Bible is God’s inspired truth also recognize that the Bible contains many artful uses of language and literary devices. Real life can be very artful, so why

³⁶ Berlin, 97.

³⁷ Ibid., 97.

³⁸ Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 122.

³⁹ Ibid., 122.

⁴⁰ Berlin, 136.

⁴¹ Waltke, 122.

⁴² Berlin, 138-139.

would not God give us his Scriptures, which are real, in a way that is not artful? It is accurate to talk about the Bible as literature or art, as long as we remember that it is God's literature and his art, which he has given us for the purpose of making known the truth of salvation through Christ. Only the proper application of the doctrine of verbal inspiration will yield a proper interpretation of Scripture, and it actually makes understanding Biblical narratives much simpler.

What exactly does verbal inspiration mean? Although the term, "inspiration" only occurs once in the Scriptures,⁴³ the concept is found throughout. One of the primary passages which teach this truth is 2 Peter 1:20-21: "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Here, Peter establishes that the words of Scripture⁴⁴ come from God. He is the source of and the driving force behind what these men recorded. "It is clear from these words [1 Peter 1:21] that the men who spoke the prophecies did not by their own free choice decide what they would say. Rather, what they said was according to the will of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁵

Those passages and many others⁴⁶ explain the "inspiration" part of verbal inspiration. The "verbal" part requires further explanation. This means that "even the words of the holy writers were inspired by the Holy Spirit,"⁴⁷ not merely the general sense or motivation to write something. Paul called attention to the words themselves when he wrote: "This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in *words taught by the Spirit*, expressing spiritual

⁴³ Lyle Lange, ed., *Our Great Heritage, Volume 1*. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991), 138. That passage reads: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

⁴⁴ Peter in this passage is of course referring to the Old Testament Scriptures which were well-known to his original audience. However, in the same letter, we see that the New Testament is to be regarded as Scripture: "Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and *the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles*[...] Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. *His letters* contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do *the other Scriptures*, to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:1-2,15-16).

⁴⁵ Lange, ed., 150.

⁴⁶ Matthew 1:22, Acts 4:25, Hebrews 1:1, and as Becker points out: "Every prophetic utterance that begins with the introductory formula, "This is what the Lord says," every passage that speaks of the words of God, every passage that tells us that a certain message was spoken by the Lord, speaks to us of the verbal inspiration of the Bible." (Lange, ed., 139)

⁴⁷ Adolf Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics, Volume 1*. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2009), 417.

truths in spiritual words.” Jesus even spoke of the importance of each letter of each word when he said: “I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.” Verbal inspiration means that every detail of the Scriptures is in exact accordance with what the Holy Spirit wanted to convey.

However, verbal inspiration does not mean that the Holy Spirit produced the Scriptures through human writers in a mechanical way, as if they were simply churning out uniform pages of Scripture, like Spirit-powered wireless printers. Instead, “God simply took all their mental faculties into his service. It is a distortion when men term the orthodox doctrine of inspiration a dictation theory.”⁴⁸ Although even holy writers such as David would not object to being used this way,⁴⁹ dictation is simply not how the Scriptures themselves describe the process. Verbal inspiration as a whole is a miracle, but some of the ways in which the holy writers received their writing material often seem less miraculous and more mundane. After citing examples from the Scriptures, Becker categorizes the holy writers’ sources of information: “from their own experience, from the oral reports they heard from other witnesses, from written records, and finally, by direct revelation from God.”⁵⁰ This accounts for the variety of styles, perspectives, and languages which are found in Scripture.

The prophetic of books Scripture constitute the genre in which direct revelation from God is the main source of the content. This is not the case with biblical narratives. Most often, it is reasonable to imagine scenarios in which the author was present for the action of the story, knew someone who was present, or had access to a written account.⁵¹ Although the material source of the information may be human, this does not mean that the Scriptures contain errors or even a single word that the Holy Spirit did not intend to be written.⁵² Ultimately, by his powerful and miraculous ways, he determined which words would be recorded.

⁴⁸ Lange, ed., 144-145.

⁴⁹ Becker notes Psalm 45:1, “My tongue is the pen of a skillful writer.” (Lange, ed., 144.)

⁵⁰ Lange, ed., 142.

⁵¹ Moses, as the author of Genesis, would be a possible exception. Most certainly the information contained in the first two chapters had to be conveyed by special revelation from God at some point, since no human being was present at the world’s creation.

⁵² Lange, ed., 142.

The result of this process is that God's truths are communicated in very human words, which is exactly what humans need in order to understand anything. Before anything else, human language is required for any transfer of information to take place. God is the one who gave humans the ability to communicate this way, so he is not above using human language. God certainly knows that carefully crafted stories are very useful for communicating, so he uses them. This includes a vast array of story-telling techniques. This means that the human authors of the Bible sometimes employ figures of speech from their culture, paraphrased quotations, or even hyperbole.

Those with false presuppositions regarding the Scriptures will undoubtedly stumble on this point. When they find similarities between the style of biblical narratives and other ancient writings, they conclude that the Scriptures are to be critically analyzed just like any other piece of ancient literature. But in the end, rather than answering questions, this approach always creates more questions, raising the level of uncertainty about what the Bible actually means. For example, if a reader cannot trust the narrators in biblical narratives to speak the truth, all the verifiable quotations actually become unverifiable to the reader.⁵³

But those who believe that the Bible is inspired by God do trust that the narrator is telling the truth, since the narrator is put there by God to tell the truth, and enabled by God to speak the truth. In fact, all three of Sternberg's big issues facing the literary approach to the Bible⁵⁴ actually disappear with a proper view of Scripture as the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God. There is no question of source, so we are free to focus on the discourse. The speculation on where a portion of Scripture falls on the spectrum ranging between fiction and history is eliminated, since we can trust the context to make the parables and visions clearly distinguishable from the factual accounts. We enjoy the richness of the Bible's literary forms, and yet unashamedly hold to its doctrines as its most valuable feature. When what the Bible says equals what the Bible means,⁵⁵ the number of questions that need to be asked of the text are greatly reduced. Also, the interpreter is content to let Scriptural statements stand as they are, even when they violate human reason.

⁵³ Savran, 15.

⁵⁴ Sternberg, 35.

⁵⁵ David Kuske, *Biblical Interpretation: The Only Right Way*. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1995), 13.

That is perhaps the foremost reason why many scholars choose the road which leads to a rejection of verbal inspiration. They are unwilling to submit to the Almighty on the intellectual battlefield and vainly claim to have a superior, more reasonable perspective than God's inspired writers. This is truly a dreadful offense, as Professor Becker pointed out by means of this memorable understatement: "Those who find themselves uncomfortable in the presence of the doctrine of verbal inspiration might do well to remember that the Lord said that on the day of judgment he will be ashamed of those who are ashamed of his words (Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26)."⁵⁶

The doctrine of verbal inspiration is a great blessing for us as we study the Scriptures. Yet, as we start looking closer at specific literary devices, some legitimate questions may still arise. First of all, we might question the very purpose of studying phenomena like reported speech. If we already know and believe the Bible is true, why do we still need to analyze it in such great detail? Analysis of literary devices such as reported speech is no easy task. Instances of reported speech can be hard to identify, since we are dealing with a language and a culture that is not our own. Any venture into the universe of narrative studies requires a large commitment of time and scholarship, which might be well spent in other ways that bring glory to God.

Also, are we in danger of dissecting the Bible to death as we attempt to peer into its smallest levels of structure? And how far is too far? Do we risk offending less mature Christians with our treatment of the text? Even statements like this can be jarring to some: "Was Jonah's message to the people of Nineveh just these eight words (only five in Hebrew) and no more? We are not told, but in view of the results it is reasonable to assume that what we have here is only a summary of everything he said. But even this summary contains the truths of God's Word necessary for conversion, namely the law and the gospel."⁵⁷ The concern might sound like this: "If we allow for the possibility that some quotations are only summaries of actual speech, does that affect the rather exact discipline of exegesis we perform on many important passages? Do individual words, and forms of words, become less significant?"

First of all, when we remember that every word and its placement in Scripture are inspired, we can open our eyes to all the possibilities for reasons why God used certain words in

⁵⁶ Lange, ed., 153.

⁵⁷ Cyril Spaude, *The People's Bible: Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1987), 68.

certain ways. This is his way of speaking to us. He has given us every word for a good reason, and we are only blessed by studying these words of life. No time spent on his Word is wasted.

Also, we do have to be careful about how we speak about the quotations we analyze in Scripture. We do not ever want to give the impression that the vocabulary and grammar of a passage are not inspired by the Holy Spirit. “Thoughts cannot be conveyed except by certain linguistic forms and expressions. Therefore the original forms are of utmost importance.”⁵⁸ The words chosen by the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from the truths which they convey. Yet, “in and of themselves, the sounds or syllables are not the Word in the strict sense. These external vehicles of thought may be destroyed, while the Word is enduring... If the sounds, letters, or syllables were the essence of God’s Word, translations of the Word would be impossible.”⁵⁹ So it cannot be denied that “even the purely grammatical construction (*materia Scripturae*) is in the last analysis no more than a vehicle for the divine truth (*forma Scripturae*).”⁶⁰ The *materia Scripturae* are the gloves, visor, and full-body radiation suit that enable us to handle, look at, and stand in the presence of the awesomely powerful Word of God. The Christian dare not discard them as unnecessary, but the more one knows about how they work, the more proficient one will become as “a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Brief Background to the Book of Ruth

The Book of Ruth contains a story which takes place during a time in salvation history that seemed dark and uncertain: the period of the Judges. However, it appears to come at the end of this period, and the message of the book is one of hope. One clue for dating the book is the genealogy with which it concludes (Ruth 4:18-22). This shows Ruth to be in the line of the Savior through David, who was only three generations removed from Ruth. It seems probable that Samuel was the author, since he would have been aware of this genealogical connection. Jewish tradition gives him credit for writing Ruth and the two books which bear his name.⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Dogmatics Notes*. <http://www.wls.wels.net/resources/dogmaticsnotes>, 66.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 65-66.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁶¹ John Lawrenz, *The People’s Bible: Judges, Ruth*. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997), 217.

The purpose of the story is to show how God preserves his people, his promise of the Savior, and even brings foreigners into the benefits of that promise. God wants us to not only learn from the good examples of faithful people in this true story, but also to acknowledge and praise him for working these out better than we could have ever imagined – even out of situations that are worse than we could have ever imagined. It is a fairly complex plot for such a short book of the Bible. Dr. Ernst Wendland actually sees both linear and concentric structures working together throughout the book to develop the story and establish themes.⁶² The inspired author showed a great deal of skill in weaving the interactions of characters together.

Instances of Reported Speech in the Form of Indirect Discourse

Although the reporting of speech may not be very clear cut in the following instances, each passage does contain information that has been passed from one party to another, and then on to one more party. The author conveys these transfers of information using the very efficient grammatical tool of indirect discourse. The result is a large amount of interpersonal communication packed into relatively few words. Readers might not even fully realize all the speaking that has been implied, unless they pause to think about all that was necessary to make the communication possible.

For each passage below I will provide the Hebrew text⁶³ along with my own translation.⁶⁴ Grammatical notes pertinent to the instance of reported speech will follow. Then I will give an analysis of the content of the reported speech, pointing out all the different parties involved. I will call attention to any character development that took place based on that analysis, and finally lay out the implications each instance of reported speech has on the narrative as a whole.

Ruth 1:6

וַתִּקַּם הָיָא וְכַלְתִּיהָ וַתֵּשֶׁב מִשְׁדֵּי מוֹאָב כִּי שָׁמְעָה בְּשׂוּדָה מוֹאָב כִּי־פָקַד יְהוָה אֶת־עַמּוּז לְתַת לָהֶם לָחֶם:

⁶² Ernst Wendland, “Structural Symmetry and Its Significance in the Book of Ruth.” *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, 1.

⁶³ All Hebrew text taken from *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: SESB Version*. 2003 (electronic ed.). Stuttgart: German Bible Society.

⁶⁴ My translations definitely lean toward the literal side in order to reflect as much of the Hebrew word order and style as possible.

And she arose, herself and her daughters-in-law, and she returned from the fields of Moab; for she had heard in the field of Moab that the LORD had visited his people to give to them bread.

The verse begins with *waw* consecutive imperfects, continuing the pattern of the first five verses, which set the scene by giving the matter-of-fact account of the travels and trials of Elimelech's family. But in this verse, Naomi's act of perceiving, and what she perceives, are in the perfect tense. This break in the pattern of tenses is significant. I believe it shows that the author is presenting a type of information that is gathered from outside of the flow of the narrative. Many translations treat these verbs as English pluperfects.⁶⁵

"She had heard." This means that someone had told Naomi something. A transfer of information had taken place. That important information was that "the LORD visited his people to give to them bread." Since this message of good news is the reason for Naomi's return to Bethlehem, she most likely reported it to Orpah and Ruth. We cannot assume that Naomi simply got up and left without a word, and that Orpah and Ruth followed her out of blind loyalty. That is not fitting with the tone of the story, and does not mesh with later details. The author will soon explicitly describe the terms of the devotion which these women show their mother-in-law (Ruth 1:8-18). The reader should assume normal behavior, rather than form improbable conclusions.

The second half of this passage could be called an instance of implied reported speech. A message originating from someone other than the speaker was reported, but we just aren't told exactly how, and we don't need to know.⁶⁶ The point of this passage is to get Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah on the road to Bethlehem.⁶⁷ It does so right away, by describing the action of setting out for the return to Bethlehem before offering the explanation for that return in the form of indirect discourse. In his commentary on Ruth, John Wilch notes that "the three events reported in this verse, 'she arose [that she might return] ... for she had heard ... that the LORD had graciously visited,' occurred at different times and must have taken place in chronologically reverse

⁶⁵ "she had heard... that the LORD had visited/paid attention..." (HCSB, NASB, ESV, KJV)

⁶⁶ It is fun to imagine how some instances of communication may have taken place when contrasted with modern means. For example: "Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater" (Acts 19:30-31). Today, this could be accomplished with a text message. But how did those officials send their message to Paul? The message was sent and received, but we cannot be sure how.

⁶⁷ Berlin, 96.

order.”⁶⁸ The reason for Naomi’s decision to return must also be related to all the characters involved in order to make the story work logically. Wilch summarizes well what is going on in this passage:

"This is the first of only three (also 1:18; 2:18) indirect narrator's texts in Ruth, that is, passages where the narrator employs an indirect statement to describe a character's perception ("had heard" in 1:6; "saw" in 1:18; 2:18) to give the readers insight into the mental process that took place in the character. Most often in Ruth such insight is provided by the characters' direct discourse recorded in the narrative."⁶⁹

The fact that Naomi heard about this news and acted on it suggests that she had an ear to the ground with regards to her homeland. Perhaps she had heard this information long before, but now the deaths of her sons gave her a reason to act on it. Another possibility is that her sons had been dead for a while now, and she just recently heard this news which gave her hope for a better future elsewhere. Because of her tone of hopelessness in the context (Ruth 1:13,20-21), and the break in the pattern of verb tenses which occurs at שָׁמְעָה, the first possibility suggested above seems most probable.

Naomi, however helpless, is somewhat independent at this point. She can go where she wants to go, as long as she is able. Her daughters-in-law are not bound to follow her decisions. Yet the author tells us right away that they get up with Naomi as she begins her return. The author has not yet told us that they intend to travel with her all the way to Bethlehem, or whether they even plan to stay there with her. Later on, the conversation between the women reveals that this is the case. This passage simply lets us know that the end of the famine among God’s people was a factor in their decision. If Naomi believed it was safe to return to Bethlehem, this information was good enough for these young ladies. That is the extent of the loyalty and devotion displayed equally by Ruth and Orpah at this point.

The stage was set for the narrative in the first five verses. Now the author wants to shift into the next part of the story: the return (1:6-22). This theme is easy to notice, since the verb שׁוּב occurs 12 times in this section and even brackets this scene.⁷⁰ But in order for the story to move smoothly into the return, there must be a reason for Naomi to return. At the same time, the

⁶⁸ John Wilch, *Ruth*. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 131.

⁶⁹ Wilch, 151.

⁷⁰ Wilch, 131-132.

reason for the return is not the main point of this part of the story – the fact of the return remains most important. Naomi, and Ruth with her, must get back to Bethlehem somehow. How else will the line of the Savior continue? The reason for return must be related to the reader quickly and efficiently. It only needs to contain the essentials, but must not raise too many pressing questions in the reader’s mind to distract from the flow of the story. The use of what I have called implied reported speech in indirect discourse accomplishes this very well. This passage actually gives the first piece of unquestionably good news⁷¹ in the story. But even this flicker of hope is brought up indirectly, because the mood of the story still has some distance to go before turning around.

Ruth 2:11

וַיַּעַן בֹּעַז וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הֲגַדְתְּ לִי כָּל אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתְ אֶת-חַמּוֹתַי אַחֲרֵי מוֹת אִישׁי וַתַּעֲזָבִי אָבִיךָ וְאִמְךָ וְאֶרֶץ מוֹלְדֹתַי וַתֵּלְכִי אֶל-עַם לֹא-יָדַעְתָּ תְּמוֹל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם:

And Boaz answered, and he said to her, “It surely has been told to me everything which you did with your husband’s mother after the death of your husband; and you left your father and your mother and the land of your kindred, and you went to a people which you did not know formerly.”

Having the redundant verbs for speaking, *עָנָה* and *אָמַר*, begin this verse is typical for Hebrew, and they do not mean anything unusual in combination.⁷² These two verbs do make it clear that the words which follow came out of Boaz’ mouth. Boaz uses a perfect tense along with the infinitive absolute of the same verb to report something that was told to him. The infinitive absolute stresses the certainty of the telling.⁷³

Since “everything which you did...” is the content of what was told to Boaz, it is classified as indirect discourse. In this reported speech in indirect discourse, Boaz uses a relative clause with the perfect tense, followed by two *waw* consecutive imperfects, and then another relative clause with the perfect tense. Thus Boaz is laying out the facts that form the reasons behind his kind treatment of Ruth. That, after all, is the question which Boaz is answering. So, Boaz is reporting to Ruth what others in Bethlehem have said about her. “Evidently, she had

⁷¹ Robert Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 100.

⁷² Wilch, 199

⁷³ Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1910), 342.

become the subject of conversation, though the storyteller left the precise circumstances unstated.”⁷⁴

Boaz’ brief retelling of Ruth’s story of coming to Bethlehem reinforces what we know about her character. She has tied herself to Naomi. She has given up the security of her own home and will be depending largely on herself for a livelihood. She has also left her homeland for the unknown. Moving somewhere new and unknown was more risky in ancient times. There was less chance of returning and more possibilities for danger than one would usually expect in today’s world. Boaz’ report emphasizes Ruth’s strength and courage.

As Boaz speaks, the picture of this successful and upright man is given a few more details. He is a man who is in touch with what is going on in his town. Because he trusts the people from whom he gets his information, he can act on that information in a bold way by going out of his way to show kindness to this foreigner. He is also an encourager, giving Ruth a major lift by letting her know that the people of Bethlehem are favorably disposed towards her, although they themselves might have been too shy to approach her or offer much help up to this point.

This passage informs the reader about what at least some of the people of Bethlehem thought about Ruth. Last time the people of Bethlehem were mentioned, the whole town was in a stir because of Naomi and Ruth’s arrival (Ruth 1:19). The cause of the stir seems mostly to do with Naomi’s condition of emptiness, and the suddenness of her return. If some were also troubled by a Moabitess in their midst, that is not directly stated in Ruth 1:19, nor is that notion supported in this passage. Still, the author does call attention to Ruth’s foreign status by frequently naming her as a Moabitess.⁷⁵ Despite her undeniable courage, Ruth herself seems at least slightly concerned about what her nationality will mean for her treatment in Bethlehem.⁷⁶ All these reminders of Ruth’s foreign status create some background tension, which the reader can definitely feel. But according to what Boaz was told, the people are more impressed with Ruth’s unselfishness and courage than they are bothered by her foreign heritage. In this way, a subtle piece of reported speech in indirect discourse helps to resolve the tension.

⁷⁴ Hubbard, 163.

⁷⁵ Seven times (Ruth 1:4,22; 2:2,6,21; 4:5,10).

⁷⁶ Ruth 2:10. However, this passage might reflect Ruth’s humility more than her concern, as is the case in Ruth 2:13.

What Boaz relates are all events that the reader already knows. And of course, Ruth knew about these things because she lived through them. However, neither Ruth nor the reader was aware that Boaz and those who told him about Ruth knew her story. So with this instance of reported speech, Boaz' surprisingly kind actions towards Ruth are explained apart from his noble character, which has been alluded to already in Ruth 2:1,4.

What the author does here with reported speech is notably efficient. If the author had recorded the scene of Boaz talking to people in Bethlehem, the story would have slowed earlier in the chapter. That would have also removed some of the uncertainty surrounding Ruth's first trip to the fields, and the type of reception that she would receive. The result of this use of reported speech in indirect discourse is a more compact story with more built in tension.

Ruth 2:13

וַתֹּאמֶר אִמְצֵא־חַן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲדֹנָי כִּי נִחַמְתָּנִי וְכִי דִבַּרְתָּ עַל־לֵב שִׁפְחָתֶךָ וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא אֶהְיֶה כְּאֶחָת שִׁפְחֹתֶיךָ׃

And she said, "I am finding favor in your eyes, my lord, for you comforted me and for you spoke upon the heart of your maidservant, although I myself am not like one of your maidservants."

After each explanatory *כִּי*, the perfect tense is used for both verbs, indicating that these are completed actions. These stand in contrast to the imperfect verbs that bracket Ruth's quotation and explain her present situation. The reported speech in this passage is found in those explanatory phrases. In the second of those phrases, Ruth uses the Hebrew idiom, "to speak upon the heart of." This idiom is used eight other times in the Old Testament,⁷⁷ and basically means "to speak kindly." It does not have a romantic shading in even half of those instances, but always includes an appeal to emotions.⁷⁸

This instance of reported speech is far from the norm. Ruth is reporting back to Boaz what he has communicated to her. Someone may repeat words back to the person who spoke them for a variety of reasons, but in this context Ruth seems to be showing comprehension and appreciation in a formal sounding way. Also, the content of what Boaz said is not repeated, but

⁷⁷ Genesis 34:3; 50:21, Judges 19:3, 1 Samuel 1:13, 2 Samuel 19:7, Isaiah 40:2, Hosea 2:14, 2 Chronicles 30:22.

⁷⁸ This is more evidence to the versatility of the Hebrew concept of "heart," which is probably best explained as the entire inner man. Professor John Brug offered that summary of this concept during a classroom lecture.

only Ruth's description of his manner of speaking, or the overall effect of what he said. This makes sense, since we are in the midst of a dialogue and Ruth is referring to words that have just been spoken in Ruth 2:11,12. The time between the original quotation and its reporting is very short in this case.

By politely acknowledging Boaz' words as comforting and kind, Ruth shows that she knows how to elegantly accept a gift. She draws the attention off of herself and puts it back on her benefactor. Despite her poverty, Ruth was unselfish with everything, even the compliments she received from others.

This hardly noticeable bit of reported speech serves to characterize the give-and-take between Ruth and Boaz. Their dialogue is all positive, but remains platonic. Boaz and Ruth know how to treat one another properly in their present situations. Yet might there be a restrained hint of future romantic interest between the characters, as Ruth publicly acknowledges the kindness of Boaz? Even if there was no attraction present between Boaz and Ruth at this point, the language might plant the seed of such an idea in the mind of the reader.

Foreshadowing like this builds the level of anticipation, and is a great tool for keeping attention and building excitement in a narrative.

Instances of Reported Speech in the Form of Direct Discourse

Although they do utilize direct discourse, none of the following passages provide examples of what Savran would call verifiable quoted direct speech,⁷⁹ since they do not contain portions of speech which are actually recorded earlier in the account. It does not seem like the author of Ruth had the space for this use of reported speech in the relatively short type of story he was writing. I will treat these passages with the same pattern of analysis utilized above.

Ruth 2:7

וְתֹאמֶר אֶלְקָטָהּ-נָא וְאֶסְפְּתִי בְּעֵמְרִים אֲחֵרֵי הַקּוֹצְרִים וְתָבוֹא וְתַעֲמֹד מֵאַזְ הַבֶּקֶר וְעַד-עֶתָּה זֶה שְׂבֵתָהּ הַבַּיִת

מֵעַט:

⁷⁹ Savran, 7.

“And she said, ‘Please, let me glean, and let me gather among the sheaves behind the ones harvesting.’ And she went and she remained from at that time in the morning and up to now, this place was her sitting at the house a little while.”

The normal verb form for introducing a quotation in a narrative is the *waw* consecutive imperfect. וַתֵּאמֶר fulfills that function in this verse. The quotation contains a cohortative, אֲלֶקְטָה, followed by a *waw* consecutive perfect, וְאָסַפְתִּי, which then takes the equivalent sense as the cohortative.⁸⁰ The last phrase of this passage is difficult to translate, and the Septuagint reads differently⁸¹ than the Masoretic text. However, this does not affect the part of the passage that is reported speech, so it does not need to be explored in this study.

The servant in charge of the harvesters is speaking in this verse. He is answering Boaz’ question in Ruth 2:5 by telling him just about everything he knows about this young woman. This includes the request that she made to him at the beginning of the day regarding gleaning in the field. The author did not record this exchange between Ruth and this servant, but simply told us the fact that Ruth happened to start gleaning in a field of Boaz.

Although one would assume that Ruth would have asked for permission to glean, this report of the servant confirms it. As a foreigner, Ruth faced this uncomfortable situation head on. She had to start finding food for Naomi and herself. This passage puts her desperate determination into words for the reader.

The servant may at first seem like a neutral character, but what he says here puts him in a positive light. First, he properly allowed Ruth to glean in the field. The practice of gleaning was established by God for the benefit of the poor and foreigners.⁸² The servant’s conduct may also reflect his master’s generosity and obedience to God’s laws. The servant knew it would be fine for Ruth to glean, because of what he could expect Boaz to say. Secondly, the servant also faithfully reports Ruth’s polite request. There is nothing that seems added by the servant to make Ruth look bad. This servant knows his job is to simply report the facts to his master.

⁸⁰ Gesenius, 333.

⁸¹ ἑσπέρας, οὐ κατέπαυσεν ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ μικρόν.

⁸² Leviticus 19:9,10; 23:22.

This instance of reported speech fills in the details about Ruth’s request that were previously skipped over.⁸³ Even if her request had been put in chronological sequence with the rest of the story, there would still be a good reason to repeat it here. The servant would naturally want Boaz to know that she had asked permission, rather than brazenly asserting her right to glean, or even just wandering into his fields. But by placing Ruth’s words in the mouth of the servant, the author helps keep the story a little shorter and a little faster paced, even though it causes the reader to jump backwards in time. Berlin’s term for this is “dischronologized information.”⁸⁴ The entire report of the servant is a recounting of past events anyway. Moving quickly and filling in the details as you go also keeps readers more in tune with and attached to the story. This style gives readers an almost subconscious feeling that something is missing. They keep reading or listening for more until this feeling is satisfied. So this reported speech in the book of Ruth both quiets questions and raises new ones, such as: How will Boaz react to this news about a Moabitess in his fields? Will Ruth continue to be welcome to gather food in this way? This passage demonstrates that an instance of reported speech can be not only efficient, but also artful.

Ruth 2:21

וְתֹאמַר רוּת הַמֹּאבִיטָה גַם | בִּי־אָמַר אֵלַי עַם־הַנְּעָרִים אֲשֶׁר־לִי תִדְבְּקִין עַד אִם־כִּלּוּ אֶת כָּל־הַקְצִיר אֲשֶׁר־לִי:

And Ruth the Moabitess said, “Indeed, he also said to me, ‘With the servants who are to me you will keep close until they finish all the harvest which is to me.’”

Ruth’s own speech is introduced with another *waw* consecutive imperfect, while the reported speech of Boaz is prefaced with a simple perfect. The **כִּי** which precedes **אָמַר** is probably asseverative,⁸⁵ which would indicate that what Ruth is about to tell Naomi is rather important. The quotation itself uses the imperfect tense and a temporal clause with a verb in the perfect tense. With his offer, Boaz was speaking about things to happen in the future. He made a type of commitment to Ruth.

⁸³ Savran, 94.

⁸⁴ Berlin, 96.

⁸⁵ Wilch, 236.

Ruth reports this speech of Boaz to Naomi directly, but she does not quote the exact words recorded earlier in the chapter. She brings up ideas similar to what Boaz said in verse 8 of this same chapter: “My daughter, listen to me. Don’t go and glean in another field and don’t go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls.” There he uses the exact same verb, תִּדְבְּקִין. However, since the other parts of the verse do not use the same vocabulary and have different emphases, Ruth is probably reporting something Boaz may have said later in their encounter. The main difference between these two quotations is that Ruth 2:8 gives prohibitions against leaving, while Ruth 2:21 invites her to stay for a somewhat specific time period.

The only similarity between these verses, other than the previously mentioned verb, is the prepositional phrase which explains with whom Ruth was to stay. Both verses use the preposition עִם. However, Ruth 2:8 uses the feminine, וְנִעְרֹתַי, for the object, while Ruth 2:21 uses the masculine, הַנְּעָרִים. This may be a case of moving from a specific to a general description of these fellow workers, since many masculine Hebrew nouns as the *prior gender* also include the feminine.⁸⁶

If Ruth was not quoting some other words of Boaz, which are not recorded by the author, what would be the reason for her paraphrasing the quotation in Ruth 2:8? Does she want to portray Boaz to Naomi with a slightly more positive tone? In Ruth 2:8 he spoke about her staying in negative terms: “Don’t go... don’t go away.” Either way, Boaz’ offer is very generous, so he is going to come off sounding very good. Perhaps Ruth was unaware that she was changing Boaz’ speech in this way. She was feeling so upbeat, and already had a high enough opinion of Boaz, that more positively worded statements would naturally come out of her mouth whenever she mentioned him. Or, does the slight shift in gender indicate that Ruth was thinking about young men already? Is the author delicately alluding to what Ruth might be thinking about: the male servants and her lack of a husband? Since at most only three words are shared between Boaz’ original quote, and Ruth’s report, it cannot be classified as a verifiable⁸⁷ quotation. In all likelihood, she is simply quoting some other words of Boaz, which he spoke in order to give her further details about the duration of his invitation: “until they finish harvesting all my grain” (Ruth 2:21).

⁸⁶ Gesenius, 391.

⁸⁷ Savran, 7.

As mentioned above, with the words reported in this passage, Boaz is making a commitment to Ruth by promising her a timeframe of gleaning. This strengthens our view of his character as generous and faithful. He is providing security and stability for one of the lowest people in society, this widowed foreigner, Ruth.

Ruth uses this quotation to give Naomi further testimony to Boaz' kindness. These words multiply the joy that the ladies are feeling. This was not a one-time deal. Naomi and Ruth would benefit from Boaz' generosity for many days to come. The readers also get to feel this happiness all the more as they hear Ruth pass it along to Naomi. The timeframe of the harvest reported in this quotation also sets up the situation that Naomi and Ruth will settle into in the next interlude of narrated information between larger portions of dialogue.⁸⁸

Ruth 3:17

וְתֹאמֶר שֵׁשֶׁה־שְׁעָרִים הָאֵלֶּה נָתַן לִי בִי אָמַר אֶל־תְּבוֹאִי רִיקָם אֶל־חֲמוֹתְךָ:

And she said, "These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said to me, 'Do not come empty to your husband's mother.'"

The typical Hebrew narrative pattern of *waw* consecutive imperfects continues with the first verb of this verse, which introduces another quotation from Ruth. Just like at the end of chapter 2, she is reporting to Naomi about her dealings with Boaz. Since those dealings have been completed in the past, they are reported in the perfect tense. That is how Ruth introduces a short command given to her by Boaz. לֹא plus an imperfect verb can be translated as a negative imperative.⁸⁹

This reported speech is not recorded earlier, but seems to have taken place in Ruth 3:15. That is where the same figure of "six measures of barley" is given to Ruth. The words of Boaz which Ruth reports to Naomi seem like a phrase which Boaz might have used to defuse the emotion as they parted ways early that morning. He put the shawl full of barley on her, which would have brought them into pretty close proximity. Making a remark about her mother-in-law would have helped to keep their minds on their next tasks. At the same time, he might have been

⁸⁸ See Appendix for the Hebrew text of the book of Ruth, color-coded to show dialogue and narration.

⁸⁹ Wilch, 279.

alluding to Naomi's childlessness⁹⁰ which could soon be remedied because of the new commitment Boaz had made to Ruth.⁹¹

Ruth wants Naomi to know that Boaz is very much concerned for her also. It may be that Boaz said more to Ruth before he left, but these are the words she reports to Naomi, since these words have to do with her mother-in-law. Berlin would contend that Boaz might actually not have spoken this at all, and Ruth is putting words in his mouth.⁹² Although this would not necessarily violate the doctrine of verbal inspiration, it is not the most natural way to read and understand the text.

In his concentric outline of the chapter 3, Wendland finds the corresponding thought for this verse in Ruth 3:3,4. These are Naomi's instructions to Ruth, while 3:17 contains Boaz' instructions to Ruth.⁹³ However, these instructions of Boaz are only reported by Ruth to Naomi, instead of quoted directly. If the author had placed these instructions in 3:15, coming directly from Boaz' mouth, the concentric structure would be less exact.

Once again, reported speech fills in details for past events. And here, the reader is placed in Naomi's perspective, hearing these tender words of Boaz second hand. This creates a little distance between the reader and Ruth's perspective. This verse is actually the last time Ruth speaks in this book, as the focus seems to shift to Boaz and then back to Naomi at the end.

Conclusion

One important effect of reported speech is that information is withheld from the reader until it is more essential for the flow of the story. Details about Ruth's start of her first day in the fields are withheld until the report of the servant in charge in Ruth 2:7. The positive disposition of the residents of Bethlehem towards Ruth is not revealed until Boaz indirectly reports it in Ruth

⁹⁰ Hubbard, 225-226.

⁹¹ "I will do for you all you ask" (Ruth 3:11).

⁹² "Not all direct discourse represents actual speech spoken aloud; some represents thought (or interior monologue). If, in addition, we regard direct speech as stylistically preferable but semantically equivalent to indirect speech (cf. Alter, 67), we can then transform the quoted direct discourse into indirect discourse. We would then render Ruth's speech as 'He gave me these six measures of barley because he thought that I should not come empty handed to me mother-in-law.' (Ruth 3:17) This is Ruth's perception, psychologically and ideologically, of Boaz's action, made more scenic through quoted direct discourse as she conveys it to Naomi. We don't know why Boaz gave Ruth the barley; we know only why Ruth thought Boaz gave it to her. The absence of the narrator's viewpoint here, which could either confirm or contradict Ruth's, is in keeping with the tendency in the Book of Ruth for the narrator to limit his own point of view and have the evaluations made by characters." (Berlin, p.98)

⁹³ Wendland, 7-8.

2:11. The reader is not entirely sure how permanent Ruth's gleaning arrangement is, until Ruth reports what Boaz said to her in Ruth 2:21. Ruth 3:17 fills in what are possibly Boaz' parting words to Ruth after their dramatic meeting, which had ended just two verses previous. This aspect of reported speech keeps readers engaged with a faster moving story and a slight amount of tension because of uncertainty.

As the dialogue becomes more complex with reported speech, so do the characters. The implied reported speech in Ruth 1:6 demonstrates that Naomi was to some degree aware of what was happening back in her homeland. In Ruth 2:11 Boaz is shown to be privy to Ruth and Naomi's situation, along with many others in Bethlehem. The politeness of the conversation between Ruth and Boaz is on display in Ruth 2:13, as Ruth takes the time to gracefully express Boaz's own words back to him to show her humble gratitude. Ruth's reports to Naomi about Boaz' instructions in Ruth 2:21 and Ruth 3:17 demonstrate that Naomi remains invested in the action of the story throughout the book. This feature of reported speech lets the reader know which characters know what and gets more characters involved in the unfolding drama.

Finally, the instances of reported speech in the book of Ruth can also be a very efficient way to move a story forward, while at the same time covering essential information. The reason for Naomi's decision to return to Bethlehem is relayed in the space of less than half a verse in Ruth 1:6, so that the important episode of her setting out on her journey can begin immediately in that very same sentence. Ruth 2:7 and Ruth 2:11 are both examples of a how a report can eliminate the need for an extra scene earlier on in the story.

Although this study of reported speech in Ruth has not uncovered any insights that will shake the world of biblical narrative scholarship, a few important conclusions can be noted. By holding to the doctrine of verbal inspiration, one will not stray into bizarre and complex theories of interpretation. This scriptural approach yields a straightforward analysis of the narratives of the Bible. At the same time, there is still a little room for enjoyable conjecture over the details. Considering all the options which the words of Scripture allow is a healthy exercise and leads to better understanding of the richness of the Word of God. This student now has a better handle on the progression of a story which shows God working behind the scenes to carry out his plan of salvation. Knowing that the book of Ruth presents real believers of the past certainly deepens the appreciation and sense of connection a modern reader feels toward these characters. For those of us who have now dipped our toes into the ocean of the study of biblical narrative, the prospect of

looking deeper into other portions of Scripture and at other literary features is certainly exciting. Our lifelong study of Scripture will yield more and more beneficial insights and personal growth in faith, as long as we continue to treat the words we study as what they are: God's Word. His Word is truth.

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Appendix

Below is the entire Hebrew text of the book of the Ruth, with **dialogue colored in red**.
“Formulaic introductions of speech,”⁹⁴ such as “he said,” or “she said,” are colored as dialogue.

רות

1 וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם שֶׁפֹּט הַשְּׂפֹטִים וַיְהִי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ וְיִלְדָּה אִישׁ מִבֵּית לַחֵם יְהוּדָה לְגוֹל בְּשָׂדֵי מוֹאָב
הוּא וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּשְׁנֵי בָנָיו: וְשֵׁם הָאִישׁ אֱלִימֶלֶךְ וְשֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ נַעֲמִי וְשֵׁם שְׁנֵי־בָנָיו מַחְלֹן וְכִלְיוֹן
אֶפְרָתִים מִבֵּית לַחֵם יְהוּדָה וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׂדֵי־מוֹאָב וַיְהִיו־שָׁם: וַיָּמָת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ אִישׁ נַעֲמִי וַתִּשָּׂא רְחֵל
וּשְׁנֵי בָנֶיהָ: וַיִּשְׂאוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים מֵאֲבוֹת שֵׁם הָאֶחָת עָרְפָּה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית רֹת וַיָּשְׁבוּ שָׁם כְּעֶשֶׂר
שָׁנִים: וַיָּמָתוּ גַם־שְׁנֵיהֶם מַחְלֹן וְכִלְיוֹן וַתִּשָּׂא רְחֵל מִשְׁנֵי יְלָדֶיהָ וּמֵאִשָּׁה: וַתִּקַּם הָיָה
וְכִלְתִּיהָ וַתִּשָּׁב מִשְׂדֵי מוֹאָב כִּי שָׁמְעָה בַשָּׂדֶה מוֹאָב כִּי־פָקַד יְהוָה אֶת־עַמּוֹ לְתֵת לָהֶם לַחֵם:
וַתֵּצֵא מִן־הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר הָיְתָה־שָׁמָּה וּשְׁתֵּי כִלְתֵיהָ עִמָּה וַתִּלְכְּנָה בְּדָרֶךְ לָשׁוּב אֶל־אֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה:
וַתֹּאמֶר נַעֲמִי לְשְׁתֵּי כִלְתֵיהָ לְכַנָּה שְׁבֹנָה אִשָּׁה לְבֵית אִמָּה יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם חֹסֵד כַּאֲשֶׁר
עֲשִׂיתֶם עִם־הַמֵּתִים וְעַמְדִי: יִתֵּן יְהוָה לָכֶם וּמִצָּאֵן מִנוֹחָה אִשָּׁה בֵּית אִשָּׁה וַתִּשָּׂק לָהֶן
וַתִּשְׂאָנָה קוֹלָן וַתִּבְכֶינָה: וַתֹּאמְרָנָה־לָּהּ כִּי־אֲתָךְ נָשׁוּב לְעַמְדָּךְ: וַתֹּאמֶר נַעֲמִי שְׁבֹנָה בְנֹתִי לָמָּה
תִּלְכְּנָה עִמִּי הַעוֹד־לִי בָנִים בְּמַעֲי וְהָיוּ לָכֶם לְאִנְשִׁים: שְׁבֹנָה בְנֹתִי לָכֵן כִּי זָקַנְתִּי מֵהַיּוֹת לְאִישׁ
כִּי אָמַרְתִּי יִשְׁלִי תִקְוָה גַם הָיִיתִי הַלֵּילָה לְאִישׁ וְגַם יְלָדְתִי בָנִים: הֲלֵהֶן תִּשְׁבְּרָנָה עַד אֲשֶׁר
יִגְדְּלוּ הֲלֵהֶן תַּעֲגֹנָה לְבִלְתִּי הַיּוֹת לְאִישׁ אֶל בְּנֹתִי כִי־מַרְלִי מֵאֵד מִכֶּם כִּי־יִצְאָה בִי יַד־יְהוָה:
וַתִּשְׁנָה קוֹלָן וַתִּבְכֶינָה עוֹד וַתִּשָּׂק עָרְפָּה לְחִמּוֹתָהּ וְרוֹת דָּבְקָה בָּהּ: וַתֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה שָׁבָה יְבַמְתָּךְ
אֶל־עַמָּה וְאֶל־אֱלֹהֶיהָ שׁוּבִי אַחֲרַי יְבַמְתָּךְ: וַתֹּאמֶר רֹת אֶל־תִּפְגְּעִי־בִי לְעֹזְבֶךָ לָשׁוּב מֵאַחֲרַי:
כִּי אֶל־אֲשֶׁר תִּלְכִּי אֵלַיךְ וּבְאֲשֶׁר תִּלְיְנִי אֵלָיו עִמָּךְ עִמִּי וְאֱלֹהֶיךָ אֱלֹהֵי: בְּאֲשֶׁר תָּמוּתִי אָמוּת וְשָׁם
אֶקְבֹּר כֹּה יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה לִי וְכֹה יִסִּיף כִּי הַמּוֹת יִפְרִיד בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ: וַתִּרְא כִּי־מִתְאַמְצָת הִיא לְלַכֵּת
אִתָּה וַתַּחְדֵּל לְדַבֵּר אֵלֶיהָ: וַתִּלְכְּנָה שְׁתֵּיהֶם עַד־בֹּאֲנָה בֵּית לַחֵם וַיְהִי כִּבְאֲנָה בֵּית לַחֵם וַתֵּהֶם
כָּל־הָעִיר עֲלֵיהֶן וַתֹּאמְרָנָה הַזֹּאת נַעֲמִי: וַתֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶן אֶל־תִּקְרָאנָה לִי נַעֲמִי קְרָאֵן לִי מְרָא
כִּי־הִמַּר שְׂדֵי לִי מְאֹד: אֲנִי מְלֵאָה הִלְכְּתִי וְרִיקָם הִשִּׁיבֵנִי יְהוָה לָמָּה תִּקְרָאנָה לִי נַעֲמִי וַיְהוּה
עָנָה בִּי וּשְׂדֵי הָרַע לִי: וַתִּשָּׁב נַעֲמִי וְרוֹת הַמוֹאָבִיָּה כִלְתָּהּ עִמָּה הַשָּׁבָה מִשְׂדֵי מוֹאָב וְהָמָּה בָּאוּ
בֵּית לַחֵם בַּתְּחִלָּת קָצִיר שְׁעָרִים:

⁹⁴ Alter, 65.

2 וְלִנְעָמִי מִידַע לְאִשָּׁה אִישׁ גָּבוֹר חֵיל מִמְשַׁפַּחַת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ וְשָׁמוּ בָעִז: וְתֹאמֶר רֹות הַמוֹאָבִיָּה
 אֶל־נְעָמִי אֲלֹכֶה־נָא הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֶלְקָטָהּ בְּשִׁבְלִים אַחֲרָי אֲשֶׁר אֲמַצָּא־חֵן בְּעֵינָיו וְתֹאמֶר לָהּ לְכִי
 בָּתִּי: וְתֵלֶךְ וּתְבוֹא וּתִלְקָט בַּשָּׂדֶה אַחֲרַי הַקְּצָרִים וַיִּקֶּר מִקֶּרֶה חִלְקַת הַשָּׂדֶה לְבָעִז אֲשֶׁר
 מִמְשַׁפַּחַת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ: וְהִנֵּה־בָעִז בָּא מִבַּיִת לָחֶם וַיֹּאמֶר לַקּוֹצְרִים יְהוֹה עִמָּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יְבָרְכֶךָ
 יְהוֹה: וַיֹּאמֶר בָּעִז לְנַעֲרֹו הַנֹּצֵב עַל־הַקּוֹצְרִים לְמִי הַנַּעֲרָה הַזֹּאת: וַיַּעַן הַנַּעֲרָה הַנֹּצֵב עַל־הַקּוֹצְרִים
 וַיֹּאמֶר נַעֲרָה מוֹאָבִיָּה הִיא הַשֹּׁבָה עִם־נְעָמִי מִשָּׂדֶה מוֹאָב: וְתֹאמֶר אֶלְקָטָה־נָא וְאֶסְפְּתִי
 בְּעַמְרִים אַחֲרַי הַקּוֹצְרִים וּתְבוֹא וּתַעֲמֹד מֵאֵז הַבָּקָר וְעַד־לְעֵתָה זֶה שְׁבִתָּה הַבַּיִת מְעַט: וַיֹּאמֶר
 בָּעִז אֶל־רֹות הַלֹּזָא שְׁמַעַת בָּתִּי אֶל־תִּלְכִּי לְלָקֵט בַּשָּׂדֶה אַחֲרָי וְגַם לֹא תַעֲבוּרִי מִזֶּה וְכֹה
 תִּדְבָּקִין עִם־נַעֲרָתִי: עֵינֶיךָ בַּשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר־יִקְצְרוּן וְהִלַּכְתָּ אַחֲרֵיהֶן הַלֹּזָא צְנִיתִי אֶת־הַנַּעֲרָים
 לְבִלְתִּי נִגְעָד וְצִמַּת וְהִלַּכְתָּ אֶל־הַכִּלְיִם וְשִׁתִּית מֵאֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאָבוּן הַנַּעֲרָים: וְתַפֵּל עַל־פְּנֵיהָ
 וְתִשְׁתַּחוּ אַרְצָה וְתֹאמֶר אֵלָיו מִדּוּעַ מֵצִאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְהַכִּירָנִי וְאַנְכִי נִכְרִיהָ: וַיַּעַן בָּעִז וַיֹּאמֶר
 לָהּ הֲגֵד הַגֵּד לִי כָל אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂית אֶת־חֲמוּתְךָ אַחֲרַי מוֹת אִישׁךָ וְתַעֲזֹבִי אָבִיךָ וְאֶמְךָ וְאַרְץ
 מוֹלַדְתְּךָ וְתִלְכִי אֶל־עַם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדַעַת תָּמוּל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם: יִשְׁלַם יְהוֹה פְּעֻלְךָ וְתִהְיֶי מְשַׁכְּרָתְךָ
 שְׁלָמָה מְעַם יְהוֹה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר־בָּאת לְחַסּוֹת תַּחַת־כַּנְּפָיו: וְתֹאמֶר אֲמַצָּא־חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ
 אֲדַנִּי כִי נַחֲמַתְנִי וְכִי דַבַּרְתָּ עַל־לֵב שְׁפָחְתְּךָ וְאַנְכִי לֹא אֶהְיֶה כְּאִחַת שְׁפָחְתֶּיךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ בָּעִז
 לְעַת הָאֵכֶל גְּשִׁי הַלֵּם וְאֶכְלָת מִז־הַלֶּחֶם וְסִבַּלְתָּ פֶתַךְ בַּחֲמֶץ וְתִשָּׁב מֵצֵד הַקּוֹצְרִים וַיִּצְבֹּט־לָהּ
 קָלִי וְתֹאכַל וְתִשָּׁבַע וְתִתֵּר: וְתִקֶּם לְלָקֵט וַיִּצֹו בָּעִז אֶת־נַעֲרָיו לֵאמֹר גַּם בֵּין הַעַמְרִים תִּלְקָט וְלֹא
 תִכְלִימוּהָ: וְגַם שַׁלְתֶּשְׁלוּ לָהּ מִז־הַצְּבָתִים וְעִזְבַּתֶּם וְלָקָטָהּ וְלֹא תִגְעְרוּ־בָּהּ: וּתִלְקָט בַּשָּׂדֶה
 עַד־הָעֶרֶב וְתַחבֹּט אֶת אֲשֶׁר־לָקָטָה וַיְהִי כֹאִיפָה שְׁעָרִים: וְתִשָּׂא וּתְבוֹא הָעִיר וְתִרָא חֲמוּתָהּ
 אֶת אֲשֶׁר־לָקָטָה וְתוֹצֵא וְתִתֵּן־לָהּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר־הוֹתֵרָה מִשְׁבָּעָה: וְתֹאמֶר לָהּ חֲמוּתָהּ אִיפָה
 לְקָטָת הַיּוֹם וְאַנָּה עָשִׂית יְהִי מִכִּירְךָ בְּרוּךְ וְתִגַּד לְחֲמוּתָהּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתָ עִמּוֹ וְתֹאמֶר שִׁם
 הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי עִמָּן הַיּוֹם בָּעִז: וְתֹאמֶר נְעָמִי לְכַלְתָּה בְּרוּךְ הוּא לִיהוֹה אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָזַב
 חֲסִדּוֹ אֶת־הַחַיִּים וְאֶת־הַמֵּתִים וְתֹאמֶר לָהּ נְעָמִי קְרוֹב לָנוּ הָאִישׁ מִגְּאֻלָּנוּ הוּא: וְתֹאמֶר רֹות
 הַמוֹאָבִיָּה גַם | כִּי־אָמַר אֵלֶי עִם־הַנַּעֲרִים אֲשֶׁר־לִי תִּדְבָּקִין עַד אִם־כָּלוּ אֶת כָּל־הַקְּצִיר אֲשֶׁר־לִי:
 וְתֹאמֶר נְעָמִי אֶל־רֹות כָּלְתָה טוֹב בָּתִּי כִּי תִצְאִי עִם־נַעֲרֹותָיו וְלֹא יִפְגְּעוּבְךָ בַּשָּׂדֶה אַחֲרָי:
 וְתִדְבֹּק בְּנַעֲרֹות בָּעִז לְלָקֵט עַד־כָּלוֹת קְצִיר־הַשְּׁעָרִים וְקָצִיר הַחֲטָיִם וְתִשָּׁב אֶת־חֲמוּתָהּ:

3 ותאמר לה נעמי חמותה בתי הלא אבקש-לך מנוח אשר ייטב-לך: ועתה הלא בעז
 מדעתנו אשר היית את-נערותי הנה-הוא זרה את-גרון השערים הלילה: ורחצת | וסכת
 ושמת שמלתך עליך וירדתי הגרן אל-תודעי לאיש עד בלתי לאכל ולשתות: והי בשכבו
 וידעת את-המקום אשר ישכב-שם ובאת וגלית מרגלתיו ושכבתי והוא יגיד לך את אשר
 תעשין: ותאמר אליה כל אשר-תאמרי אעשה: ותרד הגרן ותעש ככל אשר-צוהה חמותה:
 ויאכל בעז וישת וייטב לבו ויבא לשכב בקצה הערמה ותבא בלט ותגל מרגלתיו ותשכב:
 והי בחצי הלילה ויחרד האיש וילפת והנה אשה שכבת מרגלתיו: ויאמר מי-את ותאמר
 אנכי רות אמתך ופרשת כנפך על-אמתך כי גאל אתה: ויאמר ברוכה את ליהוה בתי
 היטבת חסדך האחרון מו-הראשון לבלתי-לכת אחר הבחורים אס-דל ואס-עשיר: ועתה
 בתי אל-תיראי כל אשר-תאמרי אעשה-לך כי יודע כל-שער עמי כי אשת חיל את: ועתה כי
 אמנם כי אם גאל אנכי וגם יש גאל קרוב ממני: ליני | הלילה והיה בבקר אס-יגאלך טוב
 יגאל ואס-לא יחפץ לגאלך וגאלתיך אנכי חיה-הוה שכבי עד-הבקר: ותשכב מרגלתו
 עד-הבקר ותקם בטרום יכיר איש את-דעהו ויאמר אל-יודע כי-באה האשה הגרן: ויאמר
 הבי המטפחת אשר-עליך ואחזי-בה ותאחז בה וימד שש-שערים וישת עליה ויבא העיר:
 ותבוא אל-חמותה ותאמר מי-את בתי ותגד-לה את כל-אשר עשה-לה האיש: ותאמר
 שש-השערים האלה נתן לי כי אמר אל-תבואי ריקם אל-חמותך: ותאמר שבי בתי עד אשר
 תדעין איך יפל דבר כי לא ישקט האיש כי-אם-כלה הדבר היום:

4 ובעז עַל־הַשַּׁעַר וַיֵּשֶׁב שֵׁם וְהָיָה הַגָּאֵל עִבְרָא אֲשֶׁר דְּבַר־בְּעֻז וַיֹּאמֶר סוּרָה שְׁבַה־פָּה פְּלִנִי אֶלְמַנְי וַיִּסַּר וַיֵּשֶׁב: וַיִּקָּח עֲשָׂרָה אַנְשִׁים מִזְקֵנֵי הָעִיר וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁבוּ־פָה וַיֵּשְׁבוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר לְגָאֵל חֲלֻקַּת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר לְאַחֵינוּ לְאַלְיִמְלָךְ מִכְרָה נַעֲמִי הַשְּׂבָה מִשְׂדֵּה מוֹאָב: וְאַנִּי אֲמַרְתִּי אֲגַלְהָ אֲזַנְךָ לְאִמֶּר קִנְיָה נִגְדַּד הַיִּשְׁבִּים וְנִגְדַּד זִקְנֵי עַמִּי אִם־תִּגְאָל גָּאֵל וְאִם־לֹא יִגָּאֵל הַגִּידָה לִּי וְאִדַּע כִּי אֵין זִוְלַתְךָ לְגָאֹל וְאַנְכִי אֲחַרְיָךְ וַיֹּאמֶר אָנְכִי אֲגָאֵל: וַיֹּאמֶר בְּעֻז בְּיוֹם־קִנּוּתְךָ הַשָּׂדֶה מִיַּד נַעֲמִי וְמֵאֵת רֹות הַמוֹאָבִיָּה אֲשֶׁת־הַמֵּת קִנִּיתִי לְהַקִּים שֵׁם־הַמֵּת עַל־נַחֲלָתוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַגָּאֵל לֹא אוּכַל לְגָאֹל לִי פֶן־אֲשַׁחִית אֶת־נַחֲלָתִי גָאֵל־לְךָ אַתָּה אֶת־גָּאֲלָתִי כִּי לֹא־אוּכַל לְגָאֵל: וְזֹאת לְפָנַיִם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־הַגָּאֹלָה וְעַל־הַתְּמוּרָה לְקַיִם כָּל־דְּבַר שְׁלֹף אִישׁ נַעֲלוֹ וְנָתַן לְרַעְהוּ וְזֹאת הַתְּעוּדָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיֹּאמֶר הַגָּאֵל לְבְעֻז קִנְיָה־לְךָ וַיִּשְׁלַף נַעֲלוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר בְּעֻז לְזִקְנָיִם וְכָל־הָעָם עֲדִים אַתֶּם הַיּוֹם כִּי קִנִּיתִי אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לְאַלְיִמְלָךְ וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לְכַלְיוֹן וּמַחֲלוֹן מִיַּד נַעֲמִי: וְגַם אֶת־רוֹת הַמֹּאָבִיָּה אֲשֶׁת מַחֲלוֹן קִנִּיתִי לִי לְאִשָּׁה לְהַקִּים שֵׁם־הַמֵּת עַל־נַחֲלָתוֹ וְלֹא־יִכְרַת שֵׁם־הַמֵּת מֵעַם אֲחִיו וּמִשְׁעַר מְקוֹמוֹ עֲדִים אַתֶּם הַיּוֹם: וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־בְּשַׁעַר וְהַזְקֵנִים עֲדִים יִתְּנוּ יְהוָה אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה הַבָּאָה אֶל־בֵּיתְךָ כְּרַחֵל וְכַלְאָה אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ שְׁתִּיָּהֵם אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעֲשֵׂה־חֵיל בְּאַפְרָתָה וּקְרָא־שֵׁם בְּבֵית לָחֶם: וַיְהִי בַּיּוֹם בְּבֵית פְּרָץ אֲשֶׁר־יִלְדָה תִּמְרָה לְיִהוּדָה מִן־הַזֶּרַע אֲשֶׁר יִתְּנוּ יְהוָה לְךָ מִן־הַנְּעֻרָה הַזֹּאת: וַיִּקָּח בְּעֻז אֶת־רוֹת וְתַהֲיִלֵן לְאִשָּׁה וַיָּבֵא אֵלֶיהָ וַיִּתְּנוּ יְהוָה לָהּ הַרְיוֹן וַתֵּלֶד בָּן: וַתֹּאמְרָנָה הַנָּשִׁים אֶל־נַעֲמִי בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִשְׁבִּית לְךָ גָּאֵל הַיּוֹם וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: וְהָיָה לְךָ לְמַשִּׁיב נְפֶשׁ וּלְכַלְכֵּל אֶת־שִׁיבְתְּךָ כִּי כָל־תֵּד אֲשֶׁר־אַהֲבַתְךָ יִלְדָתוּ אֲשֶׁר־הִיא טוֹבָה לְךָ מִשְׁבַּעַה בָּנִים: וַתִּקָּח נַעֲמִי אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּשְׁתָּהוּ בְּחִיקָה וְתַהֲיִלֵן לְאִמְנָת: וַתִּקְרָאנָהּ לוֹ שְׁכָנּוֹת שֵׁם לְאִמֶּר יִלְדָבֹן לְנַעֲמִי וַתִּקְרָאנָה שְׁמוֹ עוֹבָד הוּא אָבִי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אָבִי דוֹד: פ

וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת פְּרָץ הַפְּרָץ הוֹלִיד אֶת־חֲצָרוֹן: וְחֲצָרוֹן הוֹלִיד אֶת־רָם וְרָם הוֹלִיד אֶת־עַמְיָנָדָב: וְעַמְיָנָדָב הוֹלִיד אֶת־נַחֲשׁוֹן וְנַחֲשׁוֹן הוֹלִיד אֶת־שְׁלֹמֹה: וְשְׁלֹמֹן הוֹלִיד אֶת־בְּעֻז וּבְעֻז הוֹלִיד אֶת־עוֹבָד: וְעוֹבָד הוֹלִיד אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשִׁי הוֹלִיד אֶת־דָּוִד: