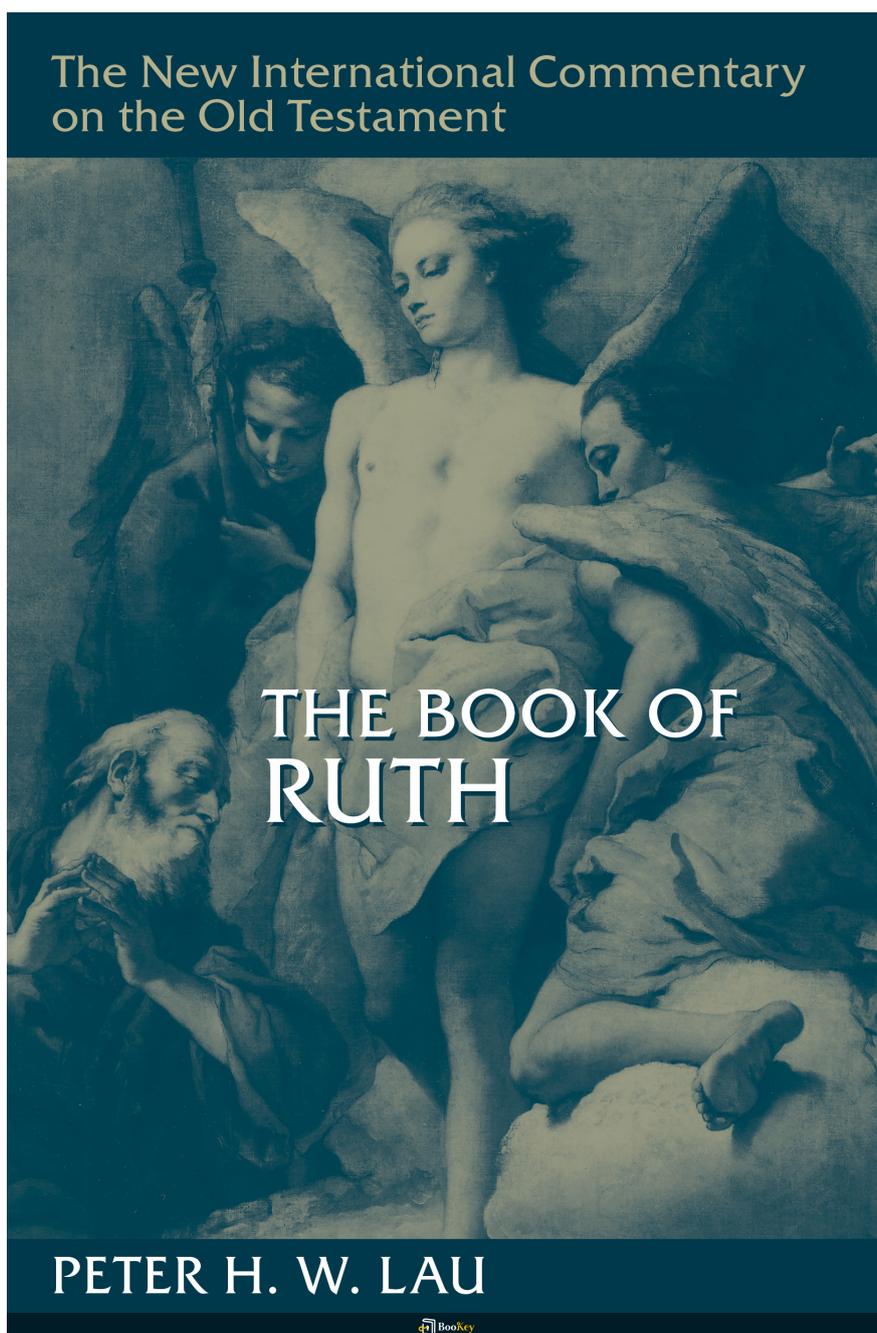


The Book Of Ruth (new International Commentary On The Old Testament PDF (Limited Copy)

Peter H. W. Lau



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The Book Of Ruth (new International Commentary On The Old Testament Summary

Faithfulness and Redemption in the Lineage of David

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About the book

In "The Book of Ruth" by Peter H. W. Lau, readers are invited into a profound exploration of loyalty, divine providence, and the redemptive power of personal relationships set against the backdrop of ancient Israel. Through the captivating narrative of Ruth, a Moabite widow who exemplifies unwavering devotion to her mother-in-law Naomi, Lau unveils the intricacies of faith and community in a time of desolation. This commentary not only delves into the literary beauty and theological depths of the text, but also connects its timeless themes to the contemporary believer's journey. Engagingly written and deeply insightful, Lau's work challenges us to reflect on the fabric of our own relationships and the ways in which we, too, can experience and embody God's grace amidst life's trials.

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About the author

Peter H. W. Lau is a distinguished scholar in biblical studies, particularly known for his expertise in the Old Testament and ancient Near Eastern literature. He serves as an academic voice in the field, engaging with complex theological themes and advancing the understanding of biblical texts through a rigorous historical-critical lens. With a strong emphasis on intertextuality and narrative analysis, Lau has contributed significantly to the New International Commentary on the Old Testament series, where his insights into texts like the Book of Ruth highlight not only their literary qualities but also their socio-political contexts. His scholarly work is characterized by a deep commitment to both academic rigor and accessibility, making him an influential figure in contemporary biblical scholarship.

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Chapter 1 Summary: I. Structure and Message

Chapter 1 of "The Book of Ruth" by Peter H. W. Lau sets the stage for a deeply moving narrative of loss, loyalty, and redemption woven throughout the lives of its central characters—Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. The story unfolds in a simple yet effective linear timeline, marking events chronologically and focusing on individual characters as they navigate through tragedy and hope.

The opening reveals a heart-wrenching situation: a famine in Bethlehem leads Naomi, a widow, to leave her homeland with her husband and two sons for Moab, hoping to find better prospects. Tragically, this quest for survival results in the deaths of all the men in Naomi's family, plunging her into despair and emptiness. Upon hearing that the famine in Bethlehem has ended, Naomi decides to return to her homeland. She is accompanied by her Moabite daughter-in-law, Ruth, who makes a stunning commitment of loyalty, famously declaring, "Where you go, I will go; where you stay, I will stay." This pivotal moment highlights Ruth's devotion, contrasting Naomi's bitterness as she feels the weight of her losses and perceives God's hand against her.

Their return to Bethlehem garners attention from the townspeople, who marvel at Naomi's return. In her grief, Naomi expresses a deep sense of loss, desiring to be called Mara, or "bitter," which reflects her current state as

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someone deprived of family and fortune. Yet, at this low point, a glimmer of hope begins to emerge.

The narrative shifts as the focus moves to Ruth, who takes the initiative to glean in the fields to secure food for them. This act of resilience places Ruth in the path of Boaz, a kind and respected landowner who happens to be related to Naomi's deceased husband. Their first encounter is filled with mutual respect and kindness; Boaz goes above and beyond to protect and provide for Ruth, further enhancing her role as a vital figure in this unfolding story.

At home, Naomi and Ruth share their experiences, and when Ruth mentions Boaz, Naomi's demeanor shifts. Hope flickers as she identifies Boaz as a potential "kinsman-redeemer," alluding to a practice in Israelite culture where a relative might marry a widow to preserve the family line. This recognition reinvigorates Naomi, transforming her from a state of bitterness to one of resourcefulness.

As events progress, the plot thickens around Naomi's plan to secure Ruth's future with Boaz during the harvest season. Naomi becomes a strategic figure who devises a daring plan for Ruth to approach Boaz at night, a risk filled with cultural implications. The transition invokes themes of courage, agency, and the intricate dance of social norms and expectations.

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Through its chiasmic structure, the chapter captures the journey from death to life, mirroring the broader themes of redemption within the community and for individuals faced with shame. It illustrates how honor and shame play crucial roles in shaping relationships and decisions, especially for women like Naomi and Ruth, who navigate deeply personal crises against a backdrop of societal expectations.

Ultimately, Ruth becomes the linchpin of hope that may restore Naomi's dignity and lineage, suggesting that amid hardship, loyalty and love can bring about profound transformations. As we conclude this chapter, we appreciate the delicate interplay of characters, the societal constructs of honor and shame, and the subtle hints of divine orchestration that may guide them through their struggles toward a remarkable future.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Loyalty and Commitment

Critical Interpretation: Imagine standing at a crossroads of life, much like Ruth, faced with uncertainty while carrying the weight of loved ones' struggles. In that moment, you may feel an undeniable pull, a calling to remain steadfast in loyalty to those you care for, even when the odds seem insurmountable. Ruth's bold commitment—'Where you go, I will go; where you stay, I will stay'—whispers to you that true love and support can ignite hope even in the depths of despair. This powerful leap of faith can inspire you to embrace your responsibilities toward others, reminding you that through unwavering loyalty, you can be a beacon of hope, catalyzing change and renewal in your own life and in the lives of those around you.

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Chapter 2 Summary: II. Genre

Chapter 2 of "The Book of Ruth" by Peter H. W. Lau dives into the significance of genre in understanding the narrative. The author begins by explaining that the genre helps set expectations for readers, guiding them on how to interpret the work. The Book of Ruth, primarily recognized as a narrative, poses intriguing questions about its classification. Influential thinkers like Gunkel have described it as a "novella" or "idyll," suggesting elements of innocence and fictionality, while others see it as a "folkloristic" tale rooted in oral traditions. However, Lau argues that genre should be understood through both form and content rather than its origins.

Lau categorizes Ruth as a short story, as it presents a single conflict—Naomi's emptiness and shame—and includes unexpected twists and a surprising outcome. Though there's some character development, particularly in Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi, the narrative mainly reveals their kindness rather than deeply evolving them. With its engaging yet straightforward structure, it doesn't delve into complex subplots, making it more aligned with a short story rather than a novella.

The author stresses that, while modern definitions offer insights, it's beneficial to look at ancient texts for comparison. Lau notes that other short narratives from the Old Testament, like the stories of Isaac and Rebekah or Judah and Tamar, share literary characteristics with Ruth. He introduces the

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concept of "Hebrew historical short stories," highlighting their unique style, focus on common people's lives, and an entertaining yet instructive purpose.

A standout feature of Ruth is its high proportion of dialogue, giving life to the characters and engaging the audience while creating a sense of immediacy and ambiguity. For example, when Naomi urges her daughters-in-law to return to Moab, readers are left questioning her true motivations. Additionally, the genealogy at the end of the narrative adds suspense and reflects its historical significance, tying it to the legacy of King David.

While the narrative holds historical implications and is rooted in reality, it does not rely solely on historical accuracy typical of other genres, allowing it the freedom to be interpretive and artistic. The book of Ruth begins and ends with clear historical markers—set in the time of the judges and the lineage of David—which asserts its status as a historical work. The depiction of customs, social dynamics, and cultural practices aligns with what is known about ancient Israeli life.

In conclusion, Lau positions the Book of Ruth as a historiographical narrative, blending artistic storytelling with ethical and theological inquiries. It invites readers not just to witness events from the past, but to engage with them, challenging their understanding and moral values. This layered narrative continues to resonate, providing insights into both the historical

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context and the deeper implications for contemporary audiences.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of kindness and loyalty in human relationships

Critical Interpretation: Imagine a world where your actions are not just responses to circumstances but intentional acts of kindness that shape your relationships. Inspired by the character of Ruth, who exemplifies unwavering loyalty to Naomi despite great personal sacrifice, you can reflect on your own life and the bonds you share. Every small gesture of kindness can build a foundation of trust and support that enhances your connections with others. By embodying this spirit of loyalty and compassion, you have the power to transform not only your relationships but also your community, creating a ripple effect of goodness that uplifts those around you.

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Chapter 3: III. Authorship and Date

Chapter 3 of “The Book of Ruth” delves into the intriguing questions surrounding the authorship and date of this beloved biblical narrative. This exploration reveals that the author of Ruth remains a mystery, as the text itself does not give any names. While some traditions attribute it to Samuel, others propose Nathan due to his connections to the royal court.

Interestingly, the female perspective woven throughout the story has led some to speculate that a woman, perhaps Tamar, daughter of David, could be the author. However, the reality is that female authorship was quite rare in those ancient times, and there’s no definitive evidence to confirm who penned this poignant tale.

The chapter further investigates when Ruth was likely composed. The story unfolds in the era of the judges, yet certain hints in the text suggest it was written — or at least edited — later on. For instance, the reference to sandals in Chapter 4 implies that customs surrounding them had evolved over time. The mention of David also indicates that the narrative must have been created after he had risen to prominence. Scholars propose differing

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Chapter 4 Summary: IV. Purpose

In Chapter 4 of "The Book of Ruth," Peter H. W. Lau dives into the purpose and themes of this profound biblical narrative. Though the author and date of the book are unknown, Lau considers the structure and literary elements of the story to derive its message. Scholars have proposed various purposes for Ruth, ranging from promoting kindness to providing a moral justification for David's right to rule.

One key theme is kindness, often highlighted through the characters of Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi, who embody selfless love and loyalty. This theme reinforces the idea that kindness not only benefits the giver and receiver but also has greater implications for community and legacy. Yet, Lau suggests that while kindness is important, it is not the sole purpose of the narrative.

Another significant aspect revolves around the observance of the law, particularly concerning levirate marriage and redemption. This speaks to the importance of traditional practices in preserving family lines, especially in a time marked by instability.

The chapter posits that the Ruth narrative serves as a polemic against the negative perceptions of inter-ethnic marriages, particularly noted during the time of Ezra-Nehemiah. Though Ruth is a Moabite, her acceptance into the Israelite community raises important questions about identity and belonging,

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challenging the exclusivity seen in some circles.

However, Lau argues for a deeper, unifying purpose: the narrative illustrates God's providence in preserving the family line that leads to King David. Through careful analysis, he identifies the connection between Ruth and David, pointing out that the story foreshadows David's heritage and reinforces the belief that God's hand was guiding the course of Israel's history even in tumultuous times.

He highlights how various literary and genealogical elements link Ruth to not just David, but to the patriarchs of Israel. The blessings and divine assurances present throughout the narrative signify that, despite struggles, God's kindness prevails.

Lau concludes that the overarching message of Ruth is that God's providence and kindness encourage His people to lead lives of kindness themselves. The narrative prompts readers to reflect on their actions and reminds them that living with loyalty, risk, and generosity can enable them to play a role in God's divine purposes. In essence, the richness of the Ruth narrative not only acts as a compelling ancestor story but also offers timeless lessons about kindness, identity, and destiny within the broader tapestry of Israel's history.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The significance of kindness in everyday life

Critical Interpretation: Imagine embracing kindness in your daily routines, allowing it to flow from your interactions with others. Just as Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi exemplified selfless love, you too have the power to impact not only individuals but the entire community around you. Every moment you choose to show kindness—be it through a simple act of support or a willingness to listen—echoes through the lives of others, fostering a spirit of connection and encouraging a legacy of compassion. This chapter reminds you that your actions, though seemingly small, can contribute to a larger narrative of hope and unity, reinforcing that in a world often filled with uncertainty, your kindness can be a beacon of light, guiding others through their struggles and enriching your journey together.

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Chapter 5 Summary: V. Canonicity

The discussion surrounding the book of Ruth's canonicity reveals its deep significance in both Jewish and Christian traditions. Dating back to the first century AD, historians like Josephus and writers of the New Testament engaged with Ruth's themes and narratives, affirming its importance.

Although there was some debate over its canonicity, especially compared to other writings such as Ecclesiastes, the Babylonian Talmud endorses Ruth, along with Esther and Song of Songs, as canonical, suggesting it held a secure place in the Jewish religious framework.

Ruth's placement within the biblical canon has varied, influenced by different Jewish communities' perceptions. In Hebrew Bibles, Ruth is categorized among the Writings but can appear in different locations. It often serves as a prelude to the Psalms, linking to King David through genealogical connections. Key themes arise from Ruth's experiences, such as "taking refuge" in God, paralleling David's reliance on divine protection highlighted in the Psalms. Ruth emerges as a model of devotion, embodying the virtues celebrated throughout the Psalter and setting the stage for the writings associated with Solomon.

The Masoretic manuscripts place Ruth with the Megilloth, suggesting connections to related themes in Proverbs. Ruth's character fits the ideal woman described there—diligent and God-fearing—illustrating how she

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exemplifies the virtues valued in Proverbs, while also emphasizing her unique narrative as someone not defined by conventional beauty. Additionally, Ruth's canonical position preceding Song of Songs accentuates romantic elements in her relationship with Boaz.

Other liturgical traditions associate Ruth with the Feast of Weeks due to its harvest setting, further emphasizing the themes of gleaning and divine provision. This link highlights how Ruth's story exemplifies the application of God's laws in everyday life and honors the tradition of the Torah.

In the Greek Septuagint, Ruth is positioned among the Former Prophets, functioning as a bridge between the chaotic events of Judges and the rise of the monarchy in 1 Samuel. This arrangement contrasts the selfishness and disarray of Judges with Ruth's commitment and generosity, reinforcing the idea that even in times of strife, loyal love and community can flourish. This backdrop sets the stage for the unfolding monarchy represented in 1 Samuel.

Understanding the various placements of Ruth enriches its narrative, revealing layers of meaning and connections to significant biblical characters and themes, especially concerning David's lineage. Each canon location sheds light on different aspects of Ruth's story, promoting a richer interpretation filled with complex motifs of love, loyalty, and divine kindness.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Ruth as a Model of Devotion and Generosity

Critical Interpretation: Ruth's unwavering devotion and active generosity remind us that true strength lies in our relationships with others and our willingness to serve. Her decisions to stand by Naomi in times of hardship challenge you to cultivate loyalty in your own life, urging you to be a source of support and kindness to those around you. This act of leaning into community, even when faced with adversity, inspires you to reflect on how you can embody these virtues, fostering connections that can uplift not only you but also those in need of refuge. It is a call to trust in God's provision and to navigate the complexities of life with grace and compassion.

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Chapter 6: VI. The Hebrew Text

Chapter 6 of "The Book of Ruth" by Peter H. W. Lau delves into the complexities of the Hebrew text of Ruth, which is primarily based on the Masoretic Text from the Leningrad Codex, dating back to AD 1008. This codex is notable for being the oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible and comes from the well-preserved Ben Asher Masoretic tradition. Lau notes that while the text of Ruth contains minor spelling errors, its overall integrity has stood the test of time. He mentions that his translation mainly follows the Masoretic Text (MTL), although he occasionally consults other ancient versions when the Hebrew proves challenging—a testament to his careful scholarship.

He touches upon various manuscripts from Qumran, which contain fragments of Ruth dating as far back as the first century BC to the first century AD. These fragments, while incomplete, align closely with the MTL, indicating that the core of the text has remained consistent through time. Lau also compares the Septuagint (LXX), an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew text, which is noted for its literal translation style. Although it

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Chapter 7 Summary: VII. Theological Messages

In Chapter 7 of "The Book of Ruth," Peter H. W. Lau delves into the profound theological messages that emerge from the story, centered around the names of God, divine providence, human action, kindness, and God's blessings. The narrative mentions God prominently, with differing names highlighting various aspects of His character. Naomi calls on "Shaddai," associating God with power and justice, while Ruth acknowledges "Yahweh," showcasing her acceptance of Israel's God. This shift hints at a deepening relationship with God, present within the community's faith despite His often hidden actions.

God's providence is a critical theme, subtly woven through the lives of the characters, often behind the scenes rather than through spectacular displays. The narrator mentions God's influence implicitly, like when Naomi learns of food returning to Bethlehem, suggesting God's helpful intervention without stating it outright. This tendency continues, culminating in a significant direct mention when Yahweh enables Ruth to conceive, demonstrating His overarching care.

The narrative emphasizes human initiative, illustrating how God works through the choices of people, highlighting the interplay between divine guidance and human action. Naomi's insightful adaptability and Ruth's loyalty and resourcefulness showcase that divine providence operates in

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harmony with human decisions. Their acts of kindness establish a cycle of giving that God ultimately blesses. For instance, Ruth's commitment to Naomi leads to her meeting Boaz, a kindred spirit who acts to ensure their wellbeing, exemplifying how individuals contribute to the unfolding of God's plans.

At the heart of the story is the concept of “% esed,” appears at pivotal moments to illustrate a virtuous cycle where acts of kindness invoke further blessings. Naomi's prayers for her daughters-in-law and Boaz's blessings for Ruth are not mere words; they encapsulate the desire for divine intervention in human affairs. This interconnectedness portrays a picture of faith where God rewards acts of kindness through His providence.

Moreover, God's blessings are intrinsically linked to the covenant relationship between Him and His people. Ruth's decision to abandon her Moabite roots for a life in Israel signifies her commitment to God and the resulting blessings they experience as a family. The narrative underscores that true blessing arises not from mere compliance or expectation but from genuine relationship and mutual kindness among individuals.

Ultimately, Lau suggests that the story, while set against the backdrop of the chaotic times of the judges, highlights how profound acts of kindness can lead to monumental blessings, spotlighting the influence of faithful

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individuals like Ruth and Boaz in God’s redemptive history. Ruth and Boaz's actions culminate in the birth of Obed, foreshadowing future blessings for Israel, emphasizing that noble decisions can have far-reaching effects. The chapter portrays a God who is actively involved in mundane lives and seeks to bless those who live in communion with Him through genuine acts of kindness, leading to a cycle of reciprocal kindness and divine favor. This rich narrative encapsulates the essence of faith, providence, and the power of human action in intertwining with God’s greater purpose.

Theme	Description
Names of God	Different names highlight various aspects of God's character: "Shaddai" for power and justice, and "Yahweh" shows Ruth's acceptance of Israel's God.
Divine Providence	God's providence is subtly woven into the narrative, often revealed through characters' lives, such as Naomi learning of food in Bethlehem.
Human Action	The interaction between divine guidance and human choices is central, illustrated by Naomi’s adaptability and Ruth’s loyalty.
Kindness (% e s e d)	Central to the narrative, where acts of kindness lead to further blessings, exemplified by prayers and blessings exchanged between characters.
God's Blessings	Linked to the covenant relationship; true blessings arise from genuine relationships and kindness rather than mere compliance.
Human Impact	Ruth and Boaz's actions lead to significant blessings, such as the birth of Obed, highlighting the effects of noble decisions.
Conclusion	The story demonstrates how profound kindness in chaotic times can lead to monumental blessings, portraying an actively involved God.



Chapter 8 Summary: VIII. Themes

In Chapter 8 of "The Book of Ruth," Peter H. W. Lau explores the significant themes woven through the narrative, particularly focusing on the application of Old Testament law and Ruth's ethnic identity. The chapter emphasizes how the laws of ancient Israel, though foundational, are not rigidly applied. Instead, the story of Ruth illustrates a more generous interpretation of the law's spirit, reflecting God's character of kindness and compassion.

The gleaning law, for instance, mandates that landowners leave parts of their harvest for the vulnerable—widows, orphans, and foreigners. Boaz goes beyond this requirement, not only allowing Ruth to glean but also providing her with extra food and protection, showcasing the essence of loving one's neighbor, a core value in God's law.

Additionally, the concept of the kinsman-redeemer comes into play. Boaz is initially constrained by the law to offer redemption first to a closer relative, who ultimately declines when he learns that marrying Ruth would complicate his inheritance. However, Boaz's actions—especially his willingness to marry Ruth to preserve her dead husband's lineage—exemplify a deeper understanding of redemption that goes beyond the legalistic to encompass familial love and commitment.

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Ruth's identity as a Moabite is significant throughout the narrative. The laws of Israel traditionally excluded Moabites, yet Ruth's devotion to her Israelite mother-in-law, Naomi, and her commitment to Yahweh reshape how the Israelites perceive her. Despite her foreign origins, Ruth is accepted into the community of Bethlehem, illustrating that true belonging transcends ethnicity. By the end of the story, she is no longer just "Ruth the Moabite" but is recognized as a valued member of Israel, marrying Boaz and becoming an ancestor of King David.

The chapter concludes that Ruth's story not only challenges stereotypes but also redefines what it means to be part of God's people. It suggests that authenticity, kindness, and faithfulness are more critical to identity and acceptance than ethnic lineage. Thus, the narrative of Ruth serves as a testament to the expansive nature of God's community, where love and devotion bind people together, making room for anyone who worships Yahweh—irrespective of their background.

Theme	Description
Application of Old Testament Law	The chapter emphasizes the flexible interpretation of ancient Israeli laws, showcasing God's character of kindness and compassion rather than rigid adherence to the rules.
Gleaning Law	This law allows the vulnerable to glean from the harvest. Boaz exemplifies this by allowing Ruth to glean and providing her with extra food and protection, highlighting love for one's neighbor.
Kinsman-Redeemer	Boaz respects the law by offering redemption to a closer relative

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Theme	Description
Concept	first, who declines. Boaz's willingness to marry Ruth reflects a deeper understanding of redemption beyond legal obligations.
Ruth's Ethnic Identity	As a Moabite, Ruth is traditionally excluded from Israel. However, her dedication to Naomi and Yahweh leads to her acceptance in Bethlehem, transcending ethnic barriers.
Redefining Identity	Ruth's story challenges ethnic stereotypes and highlights that authenticity, kindness, and faithfulness are vital for inclusion in God's people rather than mere ancestry.
Conclusion	The narrative of Ruth exemplifies the inclusivity of God's community, where love and devotion unite individuals regardless of their background.

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Chapter 9: IX. Ruth and the New Testament

In Chapter 9 of "The Book of Ruth" commentary by Peter H. W. Lau, we delve into the fascinating connections between the story of Ruth and the New Testament, particularly focusing on the genealogies found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. While Ruth is not directly quoted in the New Testament, her legacy lives on through the lineage of Jesus Christ. The genealogy in Matthew highlights key figures like Boaz and David and emphasizes the importance of kingship, bridging Ruth's narrative with the broader biblical history. Here, Perez symbolizes a lineage that moves from ancient patriarchs through to the establishment of the Davidic monarchy, culminating in Jesus, described as “the son of David, the son of Abraham.”

One striking element of this genealogy is the inclusion of foreign women, notably Ruth, who was a Moabite. This adds depth to the narrative, illustrating how outsiders can become integral to God’s people and serve vital roles in building a messianic legacy. Ruth's experience as a foreigner underlines her significant contribution, transcending cultural barriers to elevate her as a matriarch in the Davidic line. Similarly, other women

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Chapter 10 Summary: Act 1: Death and Emptiness (1:1–22)

In Chapter 10 of "The Book of Ruth," we delve into a poignant tale set during a time of famine, introducing us to Naomi, a widow from Bethlehem, and her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. The chapter details Naomi's initial departure from Bethlehem, prompted by hunger, with her husband Elimelech and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Unfortunately, rather than finding respite, tragedy strikes as Elimelech dies, followed by the deaths of both sons, leaving Naomi bereft and prompting her to return home, now accompanied by Ruth after Orpah chooses to stay in Moab.

As they journey back to Bethlehem, Naomi urges Ruth to return to her own family, highlighting her own bitterness and feeling of emptiness. Instead of finding solace in returning to her homeland, Naomi is haunted by loss and shame, feeling she has nothing left to offer. This sense of emptiness is compounded by her rejection of her name, which means "pleasant," opting instead for "Mara," meaning "bitter," to reflect her current state. Naomi's bitterness and her complaints about God's role in her suffering create a complex interplay between faith, doubt, and the harsh realities of her situation.

When Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem, their return does not spark the joyful reunion one might expect. The townspeople are abuzz with curiosity

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and disbelief, questioning whether this weary figure is indeed Naomi. Overwhelmed by memories of her past full life, Naomi expresses her anguish, lamenting the losses that have changed her identity.

The key themes of family loyalty and resilience shine through with Ruth's unwavering commitment to Naomi. Ruth's famous declaration—"Where you go, I will go; where you stay, I will stay; your people will be my people, and your God my God"—serves as a powerful testament to love and devotion that transcends nationality and circumstance. Despite Naomi's insistence to return to her old life in Moab, Ruth's resolve displays profound loyalty and the potential for new beginnings.

As the chapter concludes, we see a powerful contrast between Ruth's steadfastness and Naomi's despair. While Naomi is blind to the blessings that surround her, Ruth pledges unwavering support, suggesting a hint of hope amid bitterness. The chapter ends with an open question regarding Ruth's acceptance in Bethlehem and what future opportunities might arise from their reluctant return to the land of bread, at the dawn of the barley harvest—a symbol of potential renewal and plenty.

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Chapter 11 Summary: Act 2: Seeking Short-Term Security (2:1–23)

In Chapter 11 of "The Book of Ruth," the narrative shifts focus primarily to Ruth, highlighting her agency and determination as she seeks short-term security for herself and her mother-in-law, Naomi. The chapter is structured around key scenes that detail Ruth's encounter with Boaz, a relative of Naomi's late husband, which ultimately illuminates themes of kinship, generosity, and divine providence.

Ruth, a Moabite woman who returned to Bethlehem with Naomi, expresses her desire to glean in the fields to secure food for them both. Naomi, still recovering from the shock of her loss, allows Ruth to go, setting the stage for her entrance into Boaz's field. As Ruth gleans, she unexpectedly finds herself in the field of Boaz, who quickly becomes a pivotal figure in their story.

The chapter intricately unfolds as Boaz notices Ruth and inquires about her identity, reinforcing the social norms of the time, which emphasize kinship and belonging. The overseer's description of Ruth as a "Moabite" underlines the challenges she faces as a foreigner, eliciting both sympathy and tension in the narrative. Boaz, however, demonstrates a profound kindness by inviting Ruth not only to glean freely but also to join him and his harvesters for a meal, showing her respect and dignity.

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In a genuine display of generosity, Boaz ensures Ruth's safety by instructing his workers to allow her special privileges, and she leaves the field with an enormous amount of grain, far exceeding her expectations. This successful day marks a pivotal turn in the narrative as Ruth returns to Naomi, who is astonished by the bounty. Naomi's mood shifts from despair to hope, as she begins to see signs of redemption through Boaz, who is revealed as a "kinsman-redeemer."

Throughout this chapter, several themes emerge: the importance of loyalty and kindness, the fluidity of social roles, and God's provision through unexpected means. Naomi begins to recognize Boaz's role as a relative and protector, signaling the possibility of a future where both she and Ruth could find stability and security.

The chapter closes with Naomi advising Ruth to continue gleaning in Boaz's field, reinforcing the bond between them and hinting at the developing relationship with Boaz. As the harvest seasons progress, both women anticipate a brighter future, linking their past struggles with newfound hope for restoration and belonging within the Israelite community. This prepares the ground for deeper interactions and potential resolutions in the following acts of the narrative, where faith, identity, and divine providence intertwine in their journey.

Aspect	Details
Focus	Ruth's agency and determination for security for herself and Naomi
Key Scenes	Ruth's encounter with Boaz, highlighting kinship, generosity, and divine providence
Ruth's Action	Ruth gleans in the fields to provide food for Naomi
Boaz's Role	Pivotal figure showing respect and dignity towards Ruth
Social Context	Challenges faced by Ruth as a Moabite, underscored by overseer's remarks
Boaz's Kindness	Invites Ruth to eat and ensures her safety, allowing her special privileges
Outcome of the Day	Ruth returns with an abundance of grain, shifting Naomi's mood from despair to hope
Themes	Loyalty, kindness, fluid social roles, and God's unexpected provision
Naomi's Recognition	Realizes Boaz's role as a kinsman-redeemer, indicating future stability
Future Implications	Naomi advises Ruth to continue gleaning in Boaz's field, hinting at future relationship
Overall Message	Links past struggles to hope for restoration and belonging in the Israelite community

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Chapter 12: Act 3: Seeking Permanent Security (3:1–18)

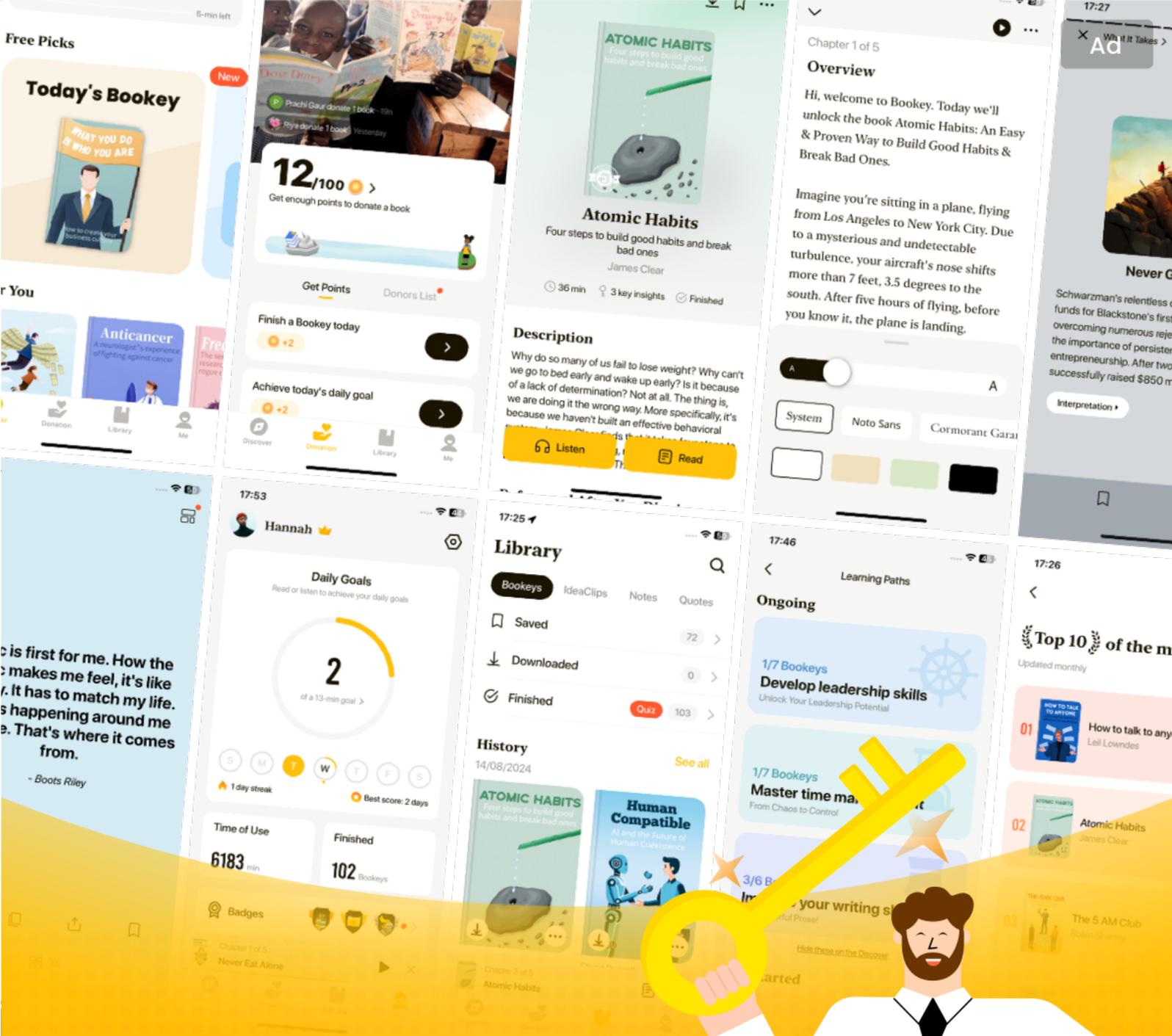
In this chapter, the story of Ruth shifts dramatically as the harvest season ends, marking a turning point for both Ruth and Naomi. With Ruth still living with her mother-in-law, Naomi, filled with renewed hope, decides to secure a permanent future for them both, especially through Ruth's potential marriage to Boaz, their relative. This act takes place over one night and the following morning, highlighting the risks and complexities surrounding their situation.

Naomi initiates a bold plan, instructing Ruth to present herself to Boaz at the threshing floor after he has finished eating and drinking. She advises Ruth to clean herself up, dress nicely, and wait for the right moment to approach Boaz. Ruth, trusting her mother-in-law's guidance, agrees to follow the plan without question, showing her dedication to both Naomi and their shared future. This moment emphasizes their deep bond—a bond that intertwines their fates.

Ruth arrives at the threshing floor and executes Naomi's instructions,

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Chapter 13 Summary: Act 4: Redemption and Fullness (4:1–22)

In Chapter 13 of "The Book of Ruth," we witness the culmination of the narrative themes of redemption and restoration as Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz navigate their social and spiritual journeys towards fulfillment. This act marks a radical reversal of Naomi's misfortunes; she transforms from a bitter, empty woman back to a place of dignity and honor. The chapter opens with Boaz taking decisive action at the town gate, seizing the opportunity to redeem the family's legacy by confronting a nearer kinsman, who initially agrees to redeem the land but recoils when he learns of the obligation to marry Ruth, potentially jeopardizing his own inheritance.

Boaz's legal acumen and genuine concern for Ruth and Naomi culminate in his successful acquisition of both the land and Ruth as his wife. This public transaction, witnessed by the town elders and townsfolk, symbolizes the intertwining of male and female perspectives in the narrative: while men focus on land and lineage, women express deep feelings for domestic security and community nurturing. The narrative structure intertwines these perspectives, conveying a broader message about the cooperative roles of men and women.

Following their marriage, Ruth conceives with God's blessing, bringing forth a son named Obed, which further signifies a restoration of Naomi's

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life. The women of Bethlehem celebrate this event, praising God for providing a redeemer and recognizing Ruth's love and commitment to Naomi as more valuable than seven sons. This phrase encapsulates the depth of Ruth's loyalty and the transforming power of love and kinship.

Naomi's role shifts as she embraces Obed, becoming a caregiver and finding renewed purpose. The neighborhood women bless her by proclaiming that a son has been born for her, further solidifying her social restoration and familial ties.

Ultimately, the chapter concludes with a genealogy tracing Obed to David, inherently linking this seemingly simple story to the larger narrative of Israel's history and God's providential plan. The transformative arcs of both Ruth and Naomi are underscored, with Ruth's status evolving from a foreign widow to a foundational matriarch revered in the lineage of Israel's greatest king. This rich tapestry of redemption demonstrates the intricate ways God works through human actions and relationships, fulfilling promises and reversing despair with hope.

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