

## **The Story of Ruth: A Chronological and Genealogical Perspective**

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In an earlier study, I have attempted a reconstruction of the chronology of the period of the Judges.<sup>1</sup> Here, I would like to extend that study by concentrating on the chronology of the Book of Ruth. Since the story of this ancestor of King David occurred during the days of the Judges (Ruth 1:1) it is necessary to try and locate it within that time frame.

The story has been assigned to various places within the period of the Judges. Josephus<sup>2</sup> located it at the time of Eli. The early Rabbis also made suggestions. According to Rab, Barak and Deborah were implied by the word judges in the first verse of the book. To Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, they were Shamgar and Ehud; and to Rabbi Huna, they were Deborah, Barak and Jael, since to him the word “judge” implied one, “judges” two, and “the judges” three.<sup>3</sup> Another tradition identifies Boaz with the judge Ibzan,<sup>4</sup> since both were from Bethlehem. Modern commentators usually make no attempt at a precise chronology since the opening phrase of the book rather loosely assigns the story to the period of the Judges.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Ray, “Another Look at the Period of the Judges,” in *Beyond the Jordan: Studies in Honor of W. Harold Mare*, ed. G. A. Carnagey, G. A. Carnagey, Jr. and K. N. Schoville (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 93-104.

<sup>2</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities* 5. 9.2. Probably on the basis of the position of the book in the LXX.

<sup>3</sup> *Ruth Rab.* 1.1.

<sup>4</sup> *b. B. Bat.* 91a.

<sup>5</sup> Leon Morris, *Ruth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968), 245.

### Time and Location of the Sojourn

The location of the sojourn is a factor which is sometimes seen as having chronological implications. The destruction of the crops during the Midianite oppression has been connected with the famine of Ruth.<sup>6</sup> However, since the Midianites were a nomadic people this crop destruction was most likely seasonal, i.e., a series of raids when the crops came to fruition at harvest time, rather than by their constant presence in the region.<sup>7</sup> The crop loss probably consisted of consumption of part of the harvest and destruction of what could not be carried away. The famine of Ruth suggests a drought<sup>8</sup> rather than one due to a politically adverse situation.

If the famine of Ruth was a local drought, something which was not uncommon in this part of the world (cf. Amos 4:7),<sup>9</sup> the tribal territory of Judah may have been affected, while neighboring areas, even east in Transjordan, received normal amounts of precipitation. The question remains as to why Moab was chosen as a place to sojourn (*lāgûr*; cf. Ruth 1:1). Given the fact that Moab is mentioned in the text, it would seem reasonable that the sojourn described here occurred during some ten year period (Ruth 1:4) during the 18-year Moabite oppression (Judg 3:14; ca. 1321-1303 B.C., according to our earlier reconstruction).<sup>10</sup> The Moabites, together with the Ammonites and the Amalekites (Judg 3:12-13) had taken over at least some of the land belonging to the Transjordan tribes of Reuben and Gad, and had also crossed the Jordan River into the central hill country areas inhabited by the tribes of Benjamin and Ephraim (Judg 3:15, 27). They had even taken possession of Jericho, the city of the palm trees (Judg 3:13; cf. Deut 34:3).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Carl Fredrick Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth and 1 & 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982) 2.466, 470-71.

<sup>7</sup> William H. Shea, *Famines in the Early History of Egypt and Syro-Palestine* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1976), 232.

<sup>8</sup> E. F. Campbell, *Ruth* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 59.

<sup>9</sup> Denis Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, rev. ed. (NY: Harper and Row, 1974), 71-76.

<sup>10</sup> cf. Ray, "Judges," 99, Table 1. There are no textual variants for the figure of 10 years in the ancient versions.

<sup>11</sup> Though some have argued that Eglon's actual residence may have been on the Transjordan side of the Jordan River; cf. G. F. Moore, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1895), 100-101.

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The location of the sojourn in this setting is literally “the fields” of Moab (Ruth 1:1). Although fields (*šēdē*), the noun used with Moab, is a synonym of land (*ʿeres*),<sup>12</sup> it is usually localized to a specific portion of land. If Moab was in control of Israelite territory in Transjordan at the time of this sojourn, the term *šēdē*, here (and in vv. 2, 6a, 22) could refer to Moab Proper (the land of Moab), which is relatively isolated and basically pastoral land;<sup>13</sup> the Mishor, the land north of the River Arnon, which is very fertile, and in terms of climate, similar to the area around Bethlehem,<sup>14</sup> or less likely, the Plains of Moab, which is part of the Jordan rift valley, across from Jericho, and rather arid<sup>15</sup> due to its location in the rain shadow.

Egypt was the normal place to go when widespread famine occurred in Palestine, but as mentioned above, this famine was probably local. Therefore, a location with a climate similar to their own land (*ʿeres*; cf. Ruth 1:1a) might seem preferable. If the above locations were indeed available, it seems unlikely that Elimelek and his family chose to sojourn in Moab Proper, which although it potentially receives 300-400 mm of rainfall annually, the amount is actually unpredictable<sup>16</sup> due to its more southern location. If this supposition is correct, it seems probable that they obtained permission from the Moabites to sojourn in a territory (*šēdē*, cf. 1:6b, 2:6, 4:3) of which they were now in control, just across the Jordan River, in the Mishor. This is indicative given the legal implications of the word “sojourner” as one who comes under the protection of those who are

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<sup>12</sup> Robert B. Girdlestine, *Synonyms of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1897), 261. Interestingly, the term land (*ʿeres*) is used only three times in the book, two times referring to the land of Judah (Ruth 1:1, 7), of which Naomi and her family were native, and one time in the abstract, referring to the “land” where Ruth was born; i.e., her homeland (Ruth 2:11). However, the term land (*ʿeres*) of Moab, or Moab Proper is not found in the book.

<sup>13</sup> Burton MacDonald, *East of the Jordan: Territories and Sites of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2000), 174.

<sup>14</sup> Bethlehem is located in a climatic zone that receives 300-500 mm of rain per year. However, since it is on the eastern edge of the zone, it probably averages 300-400 mm. Climatically, the Mishor is similar to Cisjordan hill country (Baly, 54, 60), also receiving 300-400 mm of rain per year (Baly, 55; fig. 24; MacDonald, 32; fig. 4).

<sup>15</sup> Yohanan Aharoni, *Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (trans. by A. F. Rainey), Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 34.

<sup>16</sup> Baly, 54.

not his blood relatives.<sup>17</sup> And this would have been the only time in which Moab was in control of this region during the period of the Judges (cf. Judg 3:12-30, Ruth 1:4, 8). It is also the only time during this period when Israel served or became vassals to Moab (Judg 3:14).<sup>18</sup>

### **Evidence from the Genealogy of Ruth 4:18-22**

It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the arguments for and against the genealogy at the end of the book as being part of the original text. It is usually considered a later appendix.<sup>19</sup> However, assuming it was part of the original text, it has possible chronological implications. Unfortunately, the genealogy seems to be incomplete, with several links missing in various places.<sup>20</sup> It will, therefore, be necessary to reconstruct the genealogy in order for it to have any chronological significance. This will be done by sifting through the biblical data on the period of time represented in the genealogy, as well as setting that data alongside recent research on genealogy and history.

The genealogy of Ruth 4:18-22 is linear. This type of genealogy traces one line of descent from a living individual to a single ancestor.<sup>21</sup> A later genealogy in 1 Chronicles 2:3-5, 9-15, to which there is close correspondence, though also linear, is part of a larger segmented genealogy, which traces more than one line of descent to a single ancestor.<sup>22</sup> Both types of genealogies exhibit fluidity,<sup>23</sup> omitting unimportant names, thus they seem incomplete to Westerners. In addition, as with modern oral

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<sup>17</sup> D. Kellermann, "gûr," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 2:443.

<sup>18</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, "ābad," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason J. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), 2:639.

<sup>19</sup> Campbell, Appendix, 3; C. J. Goslinga, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 513, 517.

<sup>20</sup> Goslinga, 556.

<sup>21</sup> Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 9.

<sup>22</sup> Wilson, "Genealogy and History," 9. On the literary structure of 1 Chronicles 2, cf. H. G. M. Williamson, "Sources and Redaction in the Chronicler's Genealogy of Judah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979): 351-359. On the correspondence between the genealogies of Ruth and 1 Chronicle 2, cf. Campbell, Appendix 4.

<sup>23</sup> Wilson, "Genealogy and History," 27-36; cf. also "Between 'Azal' and 'Azal': Interpreting the Biblical Genealogies," *Biblical Archaeologist* 42 (1979): 12.

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genealogies where the average depth is ten to fourteen generations,<sup>24</sup> Ruth 4:18-22 exhibits ten generations and 1 Chr 2:3-15 eleven.

**Judah**

The genealogy of Ruth 4:18-22 begins with Perez instead of the lineage founder, Judah. However, there is enough information in the biblical text about most of the other family members included here to make it obvious that the genealogy is that of the tribe of Judah. The abbreviated form used here may have been produced in order to keep the genealogy at a depth of ten, although it is admittedly unusual to omit the founder of a lineage, thus making it a most peculiar one. The reference to the house (*bêt*) of Perez in the narrative (Ruth 4:12), is the most likely reason.<sup>25</sup>

If 1450 B.C. is used as the date of the Exodus,<sup>26</sup> one arrives at 1933 B.C.<sup>27</sup> as the year that Jacob went to Haran. Seven years later (1926 B.C.)

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<sup>24</sup> Wilson, "Genealogy and History," 20-22.

<sup>25</sup> Goslinga, 517, 555.

<sup>26</sup> William H. Shea, "Exodus, Date of the," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* rev.ed., ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 2:230-238.

<sup>27</sup> This date, and others that follow, are based on the following texts, with the year 1450 B.C. as the date of the Exodus (see above n. 26), in years B.C.:

970 Solomon begins building the Temple, 480 years after the Exodus (1 Kgs 6:1)

1450 The Exodus, 430 years after Jacob comes to Egypt (Exod 12:40)

1880 Jacob 130 years old when he came to Egypt (Gen 47:9)

1882 Famine already two years in progress before Joseph revealed himself (Gen 45:6)

1889 Joseph becomes Vizier at age 30, followed by seven plentiful years (Gen 41:46, 53-54)

1890 Isaac dies at 180 years of age (Gen 35:28)

1902 Joseph sold into slavery at 17 years of age (Gen 37:2)

1913 Jacob leaves Laban after 20 years of labor (Gen 31:38)

1919 Joseph born after Jacob works 14 years for Laban (Gen 29:27; 30:25-28)

1926 Jacob marries after working for Laban 7 years (Gen 29:18, 27)

1933 Jacob flees Canaan, goes to work for Laban (Gen 27:1-28:10, 29:18)

1995 Abraham dies at 175 years of age (Gen 25:7)

2010 Jacob and Esau born when Isaac was 60 years old (Gen 25:20, 26)

2070 Isaac born when Abraham is 100 years old (Gen 21:5)

2095 Abraham comes to Canaan at 75 years old (Gen 12:4)

2170 Abraham born (Gen 11:26, 32)

These dates are based on the long chronology for the sojourn in Egypt, cf. Paul Ray "The Duration of the Israelite Sojourn in Egypt," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 24 (1986): 231-248.

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he married both Leah and Rachel. Leah had six sons in the following seven years (1925-1919 B.C.; cf. Gen 29:32-35; 30:17-21). Given the limitations of pregnancy, it was impossible for her to have more than one child per year per six different conceptions, with one childless year after the fourth son (Gen 29:35; 30:9). If that was the case, it is reasonable to assume that Judah, her fourth child, was born in ca. 1922 B.C.

**Perez**

Shortly after the sale of Joseph into slavery (Gen 37:2-38:2) in 1902 B.C., Judah was married. He had three sons, Er, Onan and Shelah (possibly born as early as ca. 1901-1899 B.C. respectively). If Er was given in marriage to Tamar around the age of 15,<sup>28</sup> then after dying, his brother Onan, perhaps as early as one year later, married her and then also died himself, the years of their marriages to her could have been roughly 1886 and 1885 B.C. At that point Judah asked Tamar to wait until Shelah was grown, probably meaning to reach a marriageable age, if the above is correct, around the same age as his older brothers. However, that age was reached (ca. 1884 B.C.) and past (ca. 1883 B.C.; Gen 38:14) when Tamar decided to take things into her own hands. The result was that Judah had a fourth son, Perez (a twin) by her, probably in ca. 1882 B.C., as the text (Gen 45:6) would seem to indicate that these events occurred before Judah and his brothers made their two journeys to Egypt to buy food (in ca. 1881 and 1880 B.C.), after which they moved to Egypt in 1880 B.C.

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<sup>28</sup> Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001): 37, 54; Pierre de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 29; Victor P. Hamilton, "Marriage," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. by David N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 562-563; Jon L. Berquist, "Marriage," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David N. Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 862; and Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 1:1:339, n. 1. Mosaic legislation declared a man of 20 years old able to go to war (Num 1:3). Marriage probably would have been desirable before taking on the responsibility of military affairs so that progeny would be guaranteed (Deut 20:7; 24:5); cf. J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1974), 245. It would seem that sixteen or seventeen was the expected age of marriage for a young man around the time of Jesus; cf. Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 147. The Mishna (*m. Ḳabot* 5.21.) suggests eighteen years of age.

### Hezron and Ram

If Perez was born in 1882 B.C. as reconstructed above, it would have been impossible for Hezron, his son, to go down to Egypt two years later as a cursory reading of Genesis 46:12 might seem to suggest.<sup>29</sup> It would seem that the 66 persons mentioned in this list (Gen 46:26) were founders of families (*mišpāhôt*; clans or lineage segments) according to Numbers 26.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, those born later were considered as coming down to Egypt in the loins of their forefathers (Exod 1:5) since they were ultimately the founders of lineage segments. Thus, Hezron must have been born sometime after Jacob and his family came to Egypt.

There are few, if any, indications for the time of birth for most of the remaining individuals. Therefore, it will be necessary to calculate an average length of time for a generation. In so doing, by no means is it suggested that the dates arrived at here are absolutely accurate, but that they are only within reasonable proximity. It must also be noted that the named individuals were not all firstborn sons. Judah and Perez, as already seen, were both the fourth sons of their respective fathers; Ram, it would seem, was the second (1 Chr 2:9), and David the eighth (1 Sam 17:12, 14). It is likely that some of the other individuals in this genealogy were also not firstborn sons.

It has been suggested that a generation is approximately 25 years<sup>31</sup> and this figure will be used here for the period after the Exodus, as it seems to fit well at a time when the average lifespan was about 70 years (Ps 90:10). However, it would seem that 140 years was closer to the average age at death from Abraham to the Exodus (Exod 6:16, 18, 20).<sup>32</sup> Therefore, we

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<sup>29</sup> Likewise, Benjamin, who was only about 23 years old at the time, as he could not have already had ten sons (Gen 46: 21), or alternatively eight sons and two grandsons (Num 26:38-40).

<sup>30</sup> There are a few differences in spelling or forms of names, and five missing names; cf. Kell and Delitzsch, "Pentateuch," 1:1:371-374.

<sup>31</sup> John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 121.

<sup>32</sup> Levi, Kohath and Amram reached 137, 133 and 137 years respectively; cf. also Sarah, 127; Abraham, 175; Ishmael, 137; Isaac thought he would die at 137 (Gen 27:1-10), but lived to 180; Jacob, 147; Joseph, 110; Aaron, 123; and Moses, 120. On the figure of 50 years for an average generation, even in medieval and modern times, cf. D. Henige *The Chronology of Oral Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), 136-144; and "Comparative Chronology and the Ancient Near East: A Case for Symbiosis," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 261 (1986): 62.

will use a figure of 50 years for a generation, or twice 25 for 70 years, for individuals listed in the early part of the genealogy. If this figure is a good approximation for an average pre-Exodus generation, then Hezron and Ram could have been born ca. 1832 B.C. and 1782 B.C. respectively.

### **Genealogical Fluidity and the Dating of Amminadab and Nahshon**

As indicated above, fluidity is a common feature in genealogies. Unimportant names were omitted, usually in the middle of the genealogy, between the names of the lineage founder (and his sons), and the then living individuals at the end.<sup>33</sup> The lineage founder in the genealogy of Ruth 4, though not mentioned, was Judah. His immediate descendants (Perez, Hezron and Ram) formed clans or lineage segments (Num 26:20-22; 1 Chr 2:9-15). The living members at the end of the genealogy (or at least those in living memory) without getting into the thorny issues of authorship and purpose of the book,<sup>34</sup> were David and Jesse. However, genealogical fluidity is also determined somewhat by the function of the genealogy, i.e., by the political, social and religious situations behind them.<sup>35</sup> Individuals who were associated with the important religious and political event of the Exodus and the birth of a nation appear in this genealogy. Since unimportant names have no doubt been omitted here as well, a logical place for this to occur would be between Ram (the last of the sons to have formed a lineage segment) and Amminadab (the first name in connection with the Exodus event, cf. Num 1:7, 7:12, 17).

If three missing links are postulated between these two groups of individuals, their approximate birthdates would be: 1) ca. 1732 B.C.; 2) ca. 1682 B.C.; and 3) ca. 1632 B.C. Amminadab, who follows, would then have been born ca. 1582 B.C. and Nahshon, who was the prince (*nāšîʾ*; Num 2:3) of Judah shortly after the Exodus, would have been born ca. 1532 B.C.

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<sup>33</sup> Wilson, "Genealogy and History," 33, and "Azel," 12.

<sup>34</sup> Goslinga, 516-519.

<sup>35</sup> Wilson, "Genealogy and History," 36-45.



**Comparison with the Genealogy of Levi (Pre-Exodus)**

As a check on our reconstruction so far, we will compare the genealogy of Judah with the genealogy of Levi in 1 Chronicles 6:1-8.<sup>36</sup> Since Levi, the third son of Jacob, was born one year before Judah (Gen 29:34-35) in 1923 B.C., it is reasonable to assume that the two genealogies might be roughly parallel. Levi lived 137 years (Exod 6:16). It follows from this that his death occurred in 1786 B.C. Next in the genealogy are Kohath and Amram who founded clans (*mišpāḥôt*) or lineage segments (Num 3:27; 26:57).

As in the genealogy of Ruth in chapter 4, several unimportant names seem to have been omitted prior to those individuals connected with the Exodus (cf. Table 1). They are followed by the father of Moses and Aaron.<sup>37</sup> Assuming 1450 B.C. as the date of the Exodus, then Aaron would have lived from 1534-1411 B.C. (Exod 7:7; Num 33:38-39) and Moses from 1531/30-1410 B.C. (Exod 7:7; Deut 34:7-8). Aaron was married to Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab, and sister of Nahshon (Exod 6:23). Hence, our reconstructed birth of Nahshon in 1532 B.C. is well within range of Aaron who was born in 1534 B.C. and married Nahshon's sister (cf. Table 1).

**Salmon**

We return now to the genealogy in Ruth 4. At this point, it is logical to assume the possibility of yet another missing name following the important religious and political event of the Exodus. If this is correct, a date of ca. 1482 B.C. would be expected for this unnamed son of Nahshon. Salmon then, would have been born ca. 1432 B.C., during the time when Israel was wandering in the wilderness. After a period of 40 years in Sinai, Israel entered Canaan and Jericho was destroyed, according to the chronology suggested here, in 1410 B.C. If as has been suggested elsewhere,<sup>38</sup> Salmon was one of the men who spied out Jericho, and was intimately involved with the conquest, which took about seven years to complete (1411-1404

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<sup>36</sup> We have previously dealt with both of these genealogies in an earlier study, but in less detail. cf. Ray "Sojourn," 237-239; 247-248, cf. Table 2.

<sup>37</sup> On the issues connected with the name of the father of Aaron and Moses cf. Ray, "Sojourn," 237-238, and n. 30.

<sup>38</sup> Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1953-1957), 2:429.

B.C.; cf. Num 21-25, 31; Josh 2-12; 14:6-15, 15:13-19), his marriage to Rahab (Matt 1:5) probably would not have taken place until after these events took place, i.e., ca. 1403 B.C. or so (Deut 20:7, 24:5).

### **Boaz and Obed**

Boaz, the son of the union between Salmon and Rahab, could have been born as early as ca. 1402 B.C. However, this date is probably too early, since Boaz is associated with the period of the Judges (Ruth 1:1; 2:1). According to the text (Judg 2:7, 10), there was a generation (as seen above, ca. 25 years) between the conquest of Canaan and the period of the Judges, reconstructed elsewhere as beginning about 1369 B.C.<sup>39</sup> At this point in the genealogy there remains only the names of Boaz and Obed to cover the entire period of the Judges, an era of over 300 years in length (Judg 11:26); Jesse and David who follow, associated with the beginning of the Monarchy. It would seem then that a number of names have been omitted from the genealogy at this point; with the two representatives from the period of the Judges also connected with the story of Ruth. On the basis of the tradition that Boaz was the son of Salmon and Rahab (Matt 1:5) and the above reconstruction of the time of the sojourn in the Book of Ruth as being connected with the Moabite oppression, it would seem that Boaz and Obed existed rather early during the period of the Judges.

If the famine in Judah began around the beginning of the Moabite oppression (ca. 1321 B.C.)<sup>40</sup> and the sojourn among the Moabites lasted *about* 10 years (Ruth 1:4), Naomi and Ruth would have returned to Bethlehem around 1311 B.C. The marriage of Ruth and Boaz apparently occurred not long after their return, with the birth of Obed probably the following year (ca. 1310 B.C.). The text would seem to indicate that Boaz was no longer a young man when he and Ruth married (Ruth 3:10). While we are not told his exact age, it can be approximated by a comparison with what is known about his kinsmen Elimelek. The latter was old enough to have sons of marriageable age (as seen above, about 15-20 years old), and was himself probably at least 45 years old (25 years for a post-Exodus generation, plus the approximate age of his sons who were married a short time later) when he and his family began their sojourn. If these figures are

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<sup>39</sup> Ray, "Period of the Judges," 99, Table 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 99, Table 1.

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roughly correct, Elimelek would have been born ca. 1366 B.C. (1321 B.C. + 45 years). His relative, Boaz, might have been a few years older than him. If so, this would place his birth at ca. 1370 B.C.<sup>41</sup>

#### **David and Jesse**

The years of David's life are well known. He became king at the age of 30 and reigned 40 years (1010-970 B.C.; cf. 2 Sam 5:4-5; 1 Kgs 2:11). It follows that he was born in 1040 B.C. He was the youngest of eight sons born to Jesse (1 Sam 17:12, 14), who may have been around 45 years old or so when David was born, as he was an old man at the time David fought Goliath (1 Sam 17:12), it would seem at about age 18 (ca. 1022 B.C.),<sup>42</sup> placing Jesse's birth about 1085 B.C. This would leave eight generations of 25 years a piece to represent the eight unimportant names which were left out between Obed and Jesse (ca. 1310-1085 B.C.).

#### **Comparison with the Genealogy of Levi (Post-Exodus)**

We will again check our reconstruction of this part of the genealogy of Judah with that of Levi, in 1 Chronicles 6:1-8. Comparisons have been made so far through the ninth generation, or that of Moses and Aaron with Nahshon. From here, the genealogy of Levi continues from Eleazar through Zadok who was a high priest in the time of David. Near the beginning of this section of the genealogies of Levi and Judah, Jonathan, the grandson of Moses (Judg 18:30), and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar (Num 25:10; Josh 24:33; and Judg 20:28) of the tribe of Levi, were contemporary with Salmon. However, as can be seen by our reconstruction of genealogy of Judah, there appears to be four names too few in the

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<sup>41</sup> If this were the case, Rahab would have been at least 55 years old when she bore Boas, assuming she was about 15 years old or so at the time when Jericho was destroyed. While 55+ is rather old for pregnancy, in biblical times there are examples of Sarah, the wife of Abraham, and Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, who became pregnant in their old age. Even in modern times, women occasionally give birth late in life; cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pregnancy\\_over\\_age\\_50](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pregnancy_over_age_50).

<sup>42</sup> Israelite males had to be at least 20 years of age for military service (Num 1:3). It appears that while at least three of David's older brothers were able to participate, David himself, although old enough to be an experienced fighter, was still too young to go into battle (1 Sam 17:13-15; 33-37).

genealogy of Levi for the same time period. Thus, it would seem that a number of unimportant names have been left out of this genealogy as well.

Though names are left out or omitted from the genealogies as a matter of course, some of them are sometimes preserved elsewhere in the narrative portions of the biblical text. According to Numbers 3:32, 20:25-28, 25:12-13 it was God's original intention that the high-priestly line go through Eleazar. Eli, however, was the first of five high priests (1 Sam 1:3, 14:3, 22:20) from the line of Ithamar (1 Chr 24:3), which for some reason, possibly because the corresponding high priest-to-be was too young,<sup>43</sup> interrupted the legitimate line. This family of high priests of the line of Ithamar is sometimes seen as being parallel to Zerariah through Zadok<sup>44</sup> due to a tradition in Josephus.<sup>45</sup> This might suggest that the four missing names lie between Uzzi and Zerariah.

Even though the high priestly line in 1 Chronicles 6 is incomplete in several places,<sup>46</sup> it would appear that most, if not all, of the missing individuals are known from the narrative sections in the historical books of the Old Testament. A parallel situation exists in the genealogy of Judah when it comes to the period of the Monarchy (1 Chr 3:9-17). There, two monarchs<sup>47</sup> were omitted who are also known from the historical books. The biblical writers seemed to have kept good track of the human rulers of the theocratic kingdom, even though for possible reasons of literary style, genealogical peculiarities such as depth and function, or theological reasons, they left out certain names in the genealogies. Likewise, they seem to have kept good track of those who had the leading role in the other major office of the Theocracy, the high priesthood.

Since both Zadok and Abithar were priests in the time of David (2 Sam 15:29, 35), it would seem logical that the missing names should be located at the end of the genealogy. If this is the case, then this part of the high-priestly genealogy consists of Aaron through Ahitub, followed by Eli, Phinehas, Ahitub and Ahimelech of the line of Ithamar. They are followed by Zadok of the line of Eleazar and Abiathar of the line of Ithamar in the

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<sup>43</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, Joshua, Judges, Ruth 1 & 2 Samuel, 2:2:39-40.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>45</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities* 5.11.5.

<sup>46</sup> Jehoiada (2 Kgs 11:15, 12:2), Zechariah (2 Chr 24:20) and Urijah (2 Kgs 16:11, 15-16) among others are known to have existed, but do not appear in this genealogy.

<sup>47</sup> Athaliah (2 Kgs 11:3-4; 2 Chr 22:12) and Jehoahaz (2 Kgs 23:31; 2 Chr 36:2).

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time of David. As with other names following omissions in the biblical genealogies, Zadok should be considered a descendant of Ahitub rather than his son, since the Hebrew word *hōlîd* “become the father of” is not restricted to the immediately following generation, but can refer to any later descendant.<sup>48</sup> It is known that Eli judged Israel 40 years (1 Sam 4:18). From our earlier reconstruction of the period of the Judges, it was seen that the years of his judgeship were ca. 1110-1070 B.C.<sup>49</sup> It is also known that he was 98 years old when he died (1 Sam 4:15), so his birth must have been in 1168 B.C. This is well within the range of ca. 1160 B.C. for the parallel member in the genealogy of Judah (cf. Table 1). Therefore, it would seem that our reconstruction of the last part of this genealogy, like that of the first part, is within reason.

#### **Summary and Conclusion**

In sum, the chronological implications in the Book of Ruth are dependent on two reference points in the story itself. The first of these is indicated by the fact that the sojourn took place in the fields or territory (*šê dê*) of Moab. While this Hebrew phrase could refer to Moab Proper, the Plains of Moab, or the Mishor, the first two regions were usually drier, or potentially more so, than the famine-stricken homeland of the family of Elimelek, which would suggest the Mishor as the more likely location of their sojourn. Ironically, this same region had recently been Israelite territory. They had earlier conquered the Amorites (Num 21:21-35; Deut 2:24-37), who had in turn, previously taken this area from the Moabites (Num 21:26-30). Moab was now occupying a region that had been under their control in the distant past, and this was the only time that it was again in their possession during the period of the Judges (Ruth 1:1).

The other reference point is the genealogy in chapter four. Like other genealogies, it does not function as history writing, but nevertheless, should still be considered historically accurate in that both political and religious

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<sup>48</sup> P.R. Gilchrist, “yālad,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason J. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke. (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), 1:379.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Ray, “Period of the Judges,” 99, Table 1.

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spheres of reference are represented.<sup>50</sup> The genealogy highlights relationships between the characters in the story to the religious event of the Exodus (through those individuals who were connected with it), as well as in the political realm (in association with King David). It also displays such features as depth and fluidity, and these have been used in its reconstruction. Enough biblical information exists to make definite points of contact with the beginning, mid-point (dealing with those associated with the Exodus event) and end of the genealogy. Where information is lacking, average lengths for a generation have been used, along with the genealogy of Levi, which although temporally parallel, had a different function in that it deals with the religious sphere, i.e., the priestly office in the post-Exodus section. In terms of the period of the Judges, the genealogy lists only Boaz and Obed for a space of over 300 years, and they could conceivably fit anywhere within the period. We have suggested, however, that they lived early in the period, and that the birth of Obed occurred during the latter part of the Moabite oppression. This, as it turns out, seems to fit rather well within the parameters suggested by the biblical text and the features of genealogical analysis. Though speculative in many ways, it would seem that these two reference points provide enough data to make a reasonable case for the events described in the Book of Ruth as having occurred during the Moabite oppression within the period of Judges.

Finally, from our modern perspective the suggested time frame of this event might seem unlikely since the Moabites were oppressing God's people in terms of territorial expansion and occupation (Judg 3:13), thus supposedly necessitating an arbitrary favoring of some Israelites while subjecting others to tyranny. However, unlike modern geopolitical borders, ancient boundaries were actually quite fluid, making movement relatively easy. Local permission would have been all that was necessary for the family of Elimelek to sojourn among individual Moabites such as the families of Ruth and Orpah. Also, while there were exceptions such as the deportation of large segments of a population during the late 8th through much of the 6th centuries B.C., most of the time the change of an overlord due to conquest had an effect mainly on the elite whose tribute or duty, in

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<sup>50</sup> R. R. Wilson, "The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94 (1975):189.

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kind, went in a different direction. However, for the average individual, life went on more or less as it had under the previous authority. Placed in its proper Late Bronze Age context, a sojourn during the Moabite oppression should not be so out of place as it might seem when read through the lens of post-9/11 glasses.

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**Table 1**

**Summary of Genealogical Data**

Generation	1 Chr 6:1-8	1 Sam 1:3; 14:3; 22:20	Ruth 4:18-22; 1Chr 2:3-5; 9-15
1	<i>Levi*</i> (1923-1786) <sup>+</sup>		<i>Judah*</i> (1922)
2	<i>Kohath</i>		<i>Perez</i> (ca. 1882)
3	<i>Amran</i>		<i>Hezron</i> (ca. 1832)
4	?		<i>Ram</i> (ca.1782)
5	?		? (ca.1732)
6	?		? (ca. 1682)
7	?		? (ca. 1632)
8	<i>Amran</i> (?)		<i>Amminadab</i> (ca. 1582)
9 Moses (1531/30-1410)	<i>Aaron</i> (1534-1411)		<i>Nahshon</i> (ca. 1532)
10 Gershom	<i>Eleazar</i>	<i>Ithamar</i>	? (ca. 1482)
11 Jonathan	<i>Phinehas</i>		<i>Salmon</i> (ca. 1432)
12	<i>Abishua</i>		<i>Boaz</i> (ca. 1370)
13	<i>Bukki</i>		<i>Obed</i> (ca. 1310)
14	<i>Uzzi</i>		? (ca. 1285)
15	<i>Zerahiah</i>		? (ca. 1260)
16	<i>Meraioth</i>		? (ca. 1235)
17	<i>Amariah</i>		? (ca. 1210)
18	<i>Ahitub</i>		? (ca. 1185)
19	?	<i>Eli</i> (1168-1070)	? (ca. 1160)
20	?	<i>Phinehas</i> (?-1070)	? (ca. 1135)
21	?	<i>Ahitub</i>	? (ca. 1110)
22	?	<i>Ahimelech</i>	<i>Jesse</i> (ca. 1085)
23	<i>Zadok</i>	<i>Abiathar</i>	<i>David</i> (1040-970)

\* Lineage Founder  
*Founders of Families (lineage segments)*  
<sup>+</sup> in dates B.C.