

# ROUTH

## TO THE READER

### EDITION OF THE GREEK TEXT

The present English translation of Routh (the Greek spelling of Ruth) follows the Greek edition by Alfred Rahlfs, which is generally regarded as the best available for this biblical book (*Septuaginta. Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, 2 vols. [Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935]). Departures from Rahlfs' text as the basis for the English translation are rare, except where punctuation is concerned. Rahlfs' Septuagint as a whole is based principally upon three early codices, not upon all available textual evidence, but for the book of Routh Rahlfs presumably was able to draw upon his earlier work involving c. 50 manuscripts. See A. Rahlfs, *Das Buch Ruth griechisch als Probe einer kritischen Handausgabe der Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1922), which was not available to me, and *Studie über den griechischen Text des Buches Ruth* (MSU 3, 2; Berlin: Wiedmannsche Buchhandlung, 1922), also published in *Nachrichten von der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (Philologisch-historische Klasse, 1922) 47–164.

### TRANSLATION PROFILE OF THE GREEK

The book of Routh is a fairly literal translation of the Hebrew, with the Greek text often matching the Hebrew in a word-for-word fashion. At times the translator reflects distinctions in the Hebrew that seem to be of no consequence semantically, as in the consistent representation of אָמַר לֵאמֹר (both meaning "said to") as εἶπεν plus dative (15x) and εἶπεν πρὸς (7x) respectively.

Not surprisingly, the Greek text displays a high tolerance for Hebraic modes of expression, retaining certain idioms like "uncover your ear" (4.4) and generally keeping the paratactic syntax of the Hebrew original. The latter is illustrated by the fact that וְ (meaning "and") (etc.) that begins most Hebrew sentences is reproduced in Greek by the word καί ("and") somewhat less than 90% of the time. Typically this is done even when the resulting Greek is awkward or unappealing stylistically.

Evidently the merits of this kind of close translation were seen to outweigh its disadvantages. By virtue of its Hebraisms, the translation had the power to evoke the original. Non-Jewish readers, no doubt, would have found it strangely worded or even obscure in places, but for the reader who shared the translator's social setting, the Hebraisms in Routh must have been valued as highly accurate renderings.

To speak of a tendency toward literal translation, however, is to tell only part of the story. In many ways the translator exhibits a degree of flexibility and freedom in the treatment of the text. Renderings as completely regular as the example of εἶπεν mentioned above are the exception rather than the rule, and the usual Greek equivalent was often rejected where clarity or other considerations came into play. An interesting example is the rendering of אֲנִי, "I," by ἐγὼ εἶμι, "I am," a feature of Kaige texts (of which Routh is one) by which אֲנִי was distinguished from its synonym אָנֹכִי. This rendering, which is generally found in Routh (in 2.10; 3.9, 12; and twice in 4.4), is replaced by ἐγὼ alone in 2.13 and 3.13, where ἐγὼ εἶμι would have resulted in difficult or ungrammatical Greek.

Often, too, a single Hebrew word is represented by a variety of Greek ones. Three different Greek words, νεάνις, "young woman" (2.5), παῖς, "lass" (2.6), and παιδίσκη, "maid-servant" (4.12), are all used to translate Hebrew נַעֲרָה when it refers to Routh, and a fourth Greek word, κοράσιον, "girl, young woman" (2.8, etc.), is used when נַעֲרָה refers to the female workers of Boos (Boaz). Throughout, the attentive reader will find that Routh, like any translation, is very much an interpretation.

Not infrequently we find that information drawn from the context is inserted into a verse in order to clarify its meaning. These insertions are mostly minor; in a typical if prosaic example from 1.15, in place of MT's "she said" the Greek specifies "Noemin said to Routh." A more substantive insertion occurs in 4.8, where the next-of-kin removes his sandal, as in the MT, "and gave it to him" (to Boos), an act that is implied by 4.7 but not stated in the Hebrew text. Minuses relative to the MT are less frequent. Often they seem to involve words that were seen as superfluous, as with "days of" in the Hebrew text of 1.1. Several may have been motivated by a sense of propriety, as in the omission of "tonight" in 1.12.

Of course many of the differences between the Hebrew text that we know today and the Greek trans-

lation might have been present in the *Vorlage* (the translator's Hebrew text) rather than originating in the translation. Such was evidently the case with the name of Noemin's husband, which is Elimelech in our present-day Hebrew text but is Abimelech in the Greek text (six times in the book). The difference between the two names is only one letter in the vowelless ancient Hebrew script.

#### THE NETS TRANSLATION OF ROUTH

NETS Routh attempts to capture something of the character of the Greek translation. Like the Greek translation, the present English one is relatively literal. In attempting to reflect the Greek closely, it is a more literal rendering of the Greek than the NRSV is of the Hebrew. (For the role of the NRSV as the base text for NETS, see "TO THE READER OF NETS.") In fact, since the Greek often renders the Hebrew literally, and NETS Routh attempts to render the Greek literally, NETS frequently represents the *Hebrew* phraseology more closely than the NRSV does.

It follows that divergences of NETS Routh from NRSV Ruth in many cases do not indicate divergences of the Greek text from the Hebrew Masoretic Text, but rather stem from the different translation philosophies of NETS and the NRSV. Wherever possible, however, the wording of the NRSV has been retained so that it can be compared profitably with NETS. A somewhat free translation within NETS, Routh may, therefore, be the result of a desire to preserve the NRSV where possible, or it may reflect the necessity for grammatical English.

In many cases the NRSV does not translate the conjunction "and" into English, especially when it begins a sentence, or the NRSV renders it "now," "then," "so," or the like. In this matter NETS Routh is more conservative, generally translating "and." But where both Hebrew and Greek have initial "and," and the NRSV does not translate it, NETS Routh also ignores it, so as not to imply that the Hebrew and Greek differ. When the Greek uses the alternative conjunction  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ , NETS tries to use a nuanced English equivalent instead of "and." In more significant matters NETS Routh tends to follow the Greek rather than retaining an NRSV translation that does not adequately represent it.

Generally the Greek words in the book of Routh are used in their ordinary meanings, but at times the linkage between a Hebrew word and its typical Greek equivalent apparently caused the Greek word (at least in "biblical Greek") to be used in a Hebraic sense. Examination of Hellenistic sources has often turned up Greek parallels to supposed Hebraisms, but a residue remains that cannot be explained as ordinary Greek. Examples in Routh include  $\kappa\alpha\iota$ , "and," introducing an apodosis or conclusion,  $\delta\tau\iota$ , "that" as an asseverative (perhaps explicable as ellipsis); and  $\epsilon\nu$ , "in," marking the recipient of a thought or emotion.

That certain Hebraisms (but not others) were tolerated seems to point to the audience's familiarity with them, due either to their use in earlier parts of the Septuagint or to their penetration into Jewish liturgical or other settings. If indeed the audience understood certain words and expressions in their Hebrew senses, rather than as ordinary Greek, one might justify a freer, more idiomatic rendering of the Greek than the present one. But in the absence of evidence (as is often the case) that these Greek expressions were so understood, and in keeping with NETS policy, I have adopted a conservative approach, translating the expressions literally except where the sense was in peril or where English grammar would not permit a literal rendering.

Here and there the reader might perceive overtones of the King James Version or other exemplars of "biblical English" ("and it shall be," "look upon [favorably]," etc.). Similarly, it seems, the first audience of Routh experienced its Hebraistic constructions as the "biblical Greek" that they had come to know from oral translations. But NETS Routh avoids "biblical English" where it might obscure the meaning. Thus in 3.3 NRSV's ill-chosen "anoint"—a word restricted to ritual contexts in contemporary English—is rejected in favor of "apply oil."

#### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Detailed comments on a draft of this translation by Peter J. Gentry have proven invaluable. The translation also owes much to the insightful comments of Albert Pietersma.

FREDERICK W. KNOBLOCH

**1** It was when the judges were judging, and there was a famine in the land, and a man went from Baithleem in Iouda to sojourn in the countryside of Moab, he and his wife and his sons. <sup>2</sup>The name of the man was Abimelech, and the name of his wife, Noemin, and the name of his two sons, Maalon and Chelaion, Ephrathites from Baithleem in Iouda. They went into the countryside of Moab and remained there. <sup>3</sup>And Abimelech, the husband of Noemin, died, and she was left, she and her two sons. <sup>4</sup>They took for themselves Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpha, and the name of the second, Routh. And they lived there about ten years, <sup>5</sup>and both Maalon and Chelaion also died, and the woman was left, apart from her husband and apart from her two sons.

<sup>6</sup> And she set out, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they came back from the countryside of Moab, for they had heard in the countryside of Moab that the Lord had <sup>a</sup>looked upon<sup>a</sup> his people, giving<sup>b</sup> them bread. <sup>7</sup>And she went out from the place, there where she had been, and her two daughters-in-law with her, and they were going on their way to return to the land of Iouda, <sup>8</sup>and Noemin said to her daughters-in-law, "Go now, go back, each to her mother's house. May the Lord do mercy with you, as you have done with the dead and with me. <sup>9</sup>May the Lord give to you, and may you find rest, each in the house of her husband." And she kissed them, and they lifted up their voice and wept. <sup>10</sup>They said to her, "We are returning with you to your people." <sup>11</sup>And Noemin said, "Turn back now, my daughters! Now why are you going with me? Do I still have sons in my womb, and will they become husbands for you? <sup>12</sup>Turn back now, my daughters, for I am too old for a husband to have me. For if I said, 'I have confidence that a man will marry me and I will bear sons,' <sup>13</sup>you would not wait for them until they mature, would you? Or would you, on their account, refrain from getting married? Don't, my daughters, for it has been more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me." <sup>14</sup>And they lifted up their voice and wept further. Orpha kissed her mother-in-law and returned to her people, but Routh followed her.

<sup>15</sup> And Noemin said to Routh, "See, your sister-in-law has turned back to her people and to her gods; now turn back, you too, after your sister-in-law." <sup>16</sup>But Routh said,

"Do not oppose me, to make me abandon you  
or turn back<sup>c</sup> from after you.  
For wherever you go, I will go,  
and wherever you lodge, I will lodge;  
your people shall be my people,  
and your God my God.

<sup>17</sup> And wherever you die, I will die—  
there will I be buried.

Thus and so may the Lord do to me,

and thus and so may he add—

for death alone<sup>d</sup> shall part me from you!"

<sup>18</sup>Then when Noemin saw that she was determined to go with her, she ceased speaking to her further.

<sup>19</sup> So the two of them went on until they came to Baithleem. And the whole city was abuzz because of them, and they<sup>e</sup> said, "Is this Noemin?"

<sup>20</sup>She said to them,

"Call me no longer Noemin;  
call me Bitter,  
for the Sufficient One was greatly  
embittered against me.

<sup>21</sup> I went away full,  
and the Lord has brought me back empty.  
Why do you call me Noemin  
when the Lord has abased me  
and the Sufficient One has maltreated me?"

<sup>22</sup> And Noemin returned, and Routh the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, returning from the countryside of Moab. Now they came to Baithleem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

**2** And with regard to Noemin there was a man, an acquaintance of her husband, and the man was powerful, of the kin of Abimelech, and his name was Boos. <sup>2</sup>And Routh the Moabite said to Noemin, "Let me go now to the field and gather among the ears of grain, behind anyone in whose eyes I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, daughter." <sup>3</sup>And she went and gleaned in the field behind the reapers. And by happenstance she happened upon the part of the field belonging to Boos, who was of the kin of Abimelech. <sup>4</sup>And there, from Baithleem, came Boos! He said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you." They said to him, "The Lord bless you." <sup>5</sup>And Boos said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "To whom does this young woman belong?" <sup>6</sup>The servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, "She is the Moabite lass, the one who came back with Noemin from the countryside of Moab." <sup>7</sup>She said, 'Let me glean now and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers.' And she came, and she stood from morning until evening. She did not rest a bit in the field."

<sup>8</sup> And Boos said to Routh, "fDid you not hear, daughter<sup>f</sup>? Do not go to glean in another field, and you should not go from this one. Stick close to my girls here. <sup>9</sup>Keep<sup>d</sup> your eyes on the field, wherever they are reaping, and walk behind them. See, I have commanded the young men not to touch you. If you want anything to drink, go to the vessels, and drink from what the young men draw." <sup>10</sup>And she fell upon her face and did obeisance on the ground and said to him, "Why is it that I have found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me? And I am a foreigner!" <sup>11</sup>And Boos answered and said to her, "All that you have done together with your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you

<sup>a</sup>Or visited <sup>b</sup>Or to give <sup>c</sup>May it not befall me to abandon you or to turn back = Ra <sup>d</sup>Lacking in Gk <sup>e</sup>I.e. the women  
<sup>f</sup>I.e. Listen, daughter

left your father and your mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know yesterday or the day before. <sup>12</sup>May the Lord repay you for your work, and may your recompense be full from the Lord, God of Israel, to whom you came, to put your trust under his wings!" <sup>13</sup>Then she said, "May I find favor in your eyes, sir, because you have comforted me and because you have spoken to the heart of your slave, and see, I shall be like one of your maidservants."

<sup>14</sup> And Boos said to her, "It is already time to eat. Come here, and eat some of the bread, and dip your morsel in the wine vinegar." And Routh sat by the side of the reapers, and Boos heaped up barley groats for her. She ate and was satisfied and had some left over. <sup>15</sup>And she got up to glean, and Boos commanded his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the standing sheaves, and do not dishonor her. <sup>16</sup>By all means carry for her, and even throw aside something for her from the bundles, and leave it, and she will glean, and do not rebuke her."

<sup>17</sup> And she gleaned in the field until evening and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an oiphi<sup>a</sup> of barley. <sup>18</sup>She picked it up and came into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. And taking it out, Routh gave her what she had left over after she had been satisfied. <sup>19</sup>Her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you glean today? And where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you." And Routh told her mother-in-law where she worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boos." <sup>20</sup>And Noemin said to her daughter-in-law, "He is blessed by the Lord, because he has not forsaken his compassion for the living and for the dead." And Noemin said to her, "The man is near to us; he is one of our next-of-kin." <sup>21</sup>And Routh said to her mother-in-law, "He even said to me, 'Stick with my servants<sup>b</sup> until they have finished all the harvest that belongs to me.'" <sup>22</sup>Noemin said to Routh, her daughter-in-law, "It is good, daughter, that you go with his girls, and they<sup>c</sup> will not confront you in another field." <sup>23</sup>And Routh stayed close to the girls of Boos, gleaning<sup>d</sup> until he completed the reaping of the barley and the wheat, and she lived with her mother-in-law.

**3** But Noemin her mother-in-law said to her, "Daughter, shall I not seek rest for you so that it may be well with you? <sup>2</sup>Now, is not Boos our acquaintance, whose girls you were with? Look, he is winnowing the threshing floor of the barley<sup>e</sup> this very night. <sup>3</sup>Now bathe, and apply oil, and put your clothing on yourself, and go up onto the threshing floor. Do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished drinking and eating. <sup>4</sup>And it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall observe the place there where he is lying, and you shall go

and uncover the place at his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what you shall do." <sup>5</sup>Then Routh said to her, "Everything that you say I will do."

<sup>6</sup> And she went down to the threshing floor and did according to everything that her mother-in-law had commanded her. <sup>7</sup>And Boos ate, and his heart was content, and he went to lie down on part of the heap of grain. Then she came stealthily and uncovered the place at his feet. <sup>8</sup>Now it was at midnight, and the man was startled and troubled, and there, lying at his feet, was a woman! <sup>9</sup>So he said, "Who are you?" Then she answered, "I am Routh, your slave; spread your wing<sup>f</sup> over your bondwoman, for you are a next-of-kin." <sup>10</sup>Boos said, "May you be blessed by the Lord God, daughter, for your last instance of compassion is better than the first, that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. <sup>11</sup>And now, daughter, do not be afraid. Everything that you say I will do for you, for the whole clan of my people knows that you are a strong woman <sup>12</sup>and that I am, truly, a near kinsman, yet there is even a nearer kinsman than I. <sup>13</sup>Spend the night, and it shall be in the morning, if he will act as next-of-kin for you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to act as next-of-kin for you, the Lord lives, I myself will act as next-of-kin for you. Lie down until morning."

<sup>14</sup> And she lay at his feet until morning but got up before a man could recognize his neighbor. And Boos said, "It must not be known that a woman came to the threshing floor." <sup>15</sup>And he said to her, "Bring the apron that you have on." And she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it upon her, and he<sup>g</sup> went into the city. <sup>16</sup>And Routh came in to her mother-in-law, and she said, "Who are you, daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done for her, <sup>17</sup>and she said to her, "He gave me these six measures of barley, for he said to me, 'Do not go in empty-handed to your mother-in-law.'" <sup>18</sup>Then she replied, "Sit, daughter, until you observe how not a word will fail<sup>h</sup>, for certainly the man will not rest until he settles the matter<sup>i</sup> today."

**4** And Boos went up to the gate and sat down there, and right there, passing by, was the next-of-kin of whom Boos had spoken. And Boos said to him, "Come over; sit down here, <sup>1</sup>Hidden One!" And he went over and sat down. <sup>2</sup>And Boos took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here," and they sat down. <sup>3</sup>And Boos said to the next-of-kin, "Concerning the portion of the field that belongs to our brother Abimelech, which has been given to Noemin, who returned from the countryside of Moab, <sup>4</sup>I said, I will <sup>k</sup>uncover your ear<sup>k</sup>, saying: Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you are acting as next-of-kin, act as next-of-kin, but if you are not acting as next-of-kin, tell me, and I shall know, for there is no one except you to

<sup>a</sup>Heb 1 ephah = 22 liters <sup>b</sup>Or young men <sup>c</sup>i.e. people <sup>d</sup>Or in order to glean <sup>e</sup>Possibly barley on the threshing floor <sup>f</sup>i.e. part of the cloak <sup>g</sup>Or she <sup>h</sup>Or fall short <sup>i</sup>Possibly fulfills his word <sup>j</sup>i.e. apparently Name Withheld <sup>k</sup>i.e. bring it to your attention

## ROUTH 4

243

act as next-of-kin, and I come after you." So he said, "I am the one; I will act as next-of-kin." <sup>5</sup>And Boos said, "The day you acquire the field from the hand of Noemin and from Routh the Moabite, the wife of the deceased, it is necessary for you to acquire her also in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance." <sup>6</sup>And the next-of-kin said, "I will not be able to perform the kinsman's function for myself without ruining my inheritance. Take for yourself my right of inheritance, for I will not be able to act as next-of-kin."

<sup>7</sup> And this was the statute in former times in Israel concerning the right of inheritance and concerning exchange: to confirm every agreement, a man would take off his sandal and give it to his neighbor who was acquiring the right of inheritance. This was an attestation in Israel. <sup>8</sup>And the next-of-kin said to Boos, "Acquire for yourself my right of inheritance," and he took off his sandal and gave it to him. <sup>9</sup>And Boos said to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have acquired everything of Abimelech's and all that belongs to Chelaion and Maalon from the hand of Noemin. <sup>10</sup>I have also acquired Routh the Moabite, the wife of Maalon, for myself as a wife, to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, and the name of the deceased shall not be extirpated from his brothers and from the clan of his people. Today you are witnesses." <sup>11</sup>And all the people who were at the gate said, "We are<sup>a</sup> witnesses." And the elders said, "May the Lord make

your wife who is coming into your house like Rachel and like Leia, who built up, both of them, the house of Israel and produced might in Ephratha, and there shall be a name in Baithleem. <sup>12</sup>And, through the offspring that the Lord will give you from this maidservant, may your house be like the house of Phares whom Tamar bore to Iouda."

<sup>13</sup> And Boos took Routh, and she became a wife to him. And he went in to her, and the Lord granted her conception, and she bore a son. <sup>14</sup>And the women said to Noemin, "Blessed be the Lord, who did not bring your next-of-kin to an end this day! And may he call your name in Israel! <sup>15</sup>He shall be to you a restorer of life and shall sustain your gray head. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him." <sup>16</sup>And Noemin took the child and laid him in her bosom and became a nanny<sup>b</sup> to him. <sup>17</sup>The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Noemin." They named him Obed. This was the father of Iessai, the father of Daud.

<sup>18</sup> And these are the generations of Phares: Phares became the father of Hesron, <sup>19</sup>then Hesron became the father of Arran, and Arran became the father of Aminadab; <sup>20</sup>Aminadab became the father of Naasson; Naasson became the father of Salman; <sup>21</sup>Salman became the father of Boos; Boos became the father of Obed; <sup>22</sup>Obed became the father of Iessai, and Iessai became the father of Daud.

<sup>a</sup>Lacking in Gk <sup>b</sup>Perhaps *foster mother*

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