

Ruth, Song of Songs, Lamentations, and Esther

The Book of Ruth – Part 1

Interpreting the Text:

1. While we know that the book of Ruth takes place during the same time as Judges (Ruth 1:1 “In the days when the judges ruled...”) and immediately follows this book in the Christian Bible canon, Dr. Baden and Dr. Vayntrub say that the tones are very different. What phrases from Ruth stand out as distinctly “upbeat” or optimistic? What are the implications of this contrast between the texts?
2. Did you notice anything different about this narrative compared to other stories in the Hebrew Bible, like the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38? Any similarities? What are the dominant themes or objectives of these stories?
3. How would you characterize Ruth and Naomi’s relationship? Does this kind of friendship or family tie remind you of any other relationships in the Bible?

Applying the Text:

1. Dr. Baden and Dr. Vayntrub say that the characters in Ruth demonstrate extraordinary moral fiber. What examples from this book would you use to help teach someone in your community about strong moral values?
2. Dr. Baden and Dr. Vayntrub joke that Ruth often features in wedding services. How do you feel about this story being connected with contemporary marriage rites? What are your arguments for or against its use in this context?