

Ruth, Song of Songs, Lamentations, and Esther

The Book of Ruth – Part 2

Interpreting the Text:

1. It's curious that this book which mostly centers around Naomi's decisions is titled "Ruth." Why do you think this is? What does this tell us about the author's intent or the function of patriarchy in the time of its writing?
2. What strikes you most about Ruth and Naomi's relationship? How does their relationship change over the course of the book? Do you perceive anything "particularly motherly or feminine" about Ruth and Naomi's dynamic? Why or why not? (See Dr. Vayntrub's comment at 2:13 for context).
3. What did you learn? Did this week's discussion change your reading of this text in any way(s)? If so, how?
4. How would you characterize the male characters' roles in this story? Do you think men are central or peripheral in this narrative? Explain your thinking.

Applying the Text:

1. Most of the Hebrew Bible focuses on the lives of men, so Ruth is unique for its featuring two named women. How does this story serve to challenge patriarchy, in its historical context and today? How might it still be supportive of patriarchy?
2. What do we learn about family obligations and commitments in Ruth and Naomi's world? How are family dynamics similar or different in your cultural context? How does the story of Ruth make you think more about your family system?