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Numerical Features of the Book of Ruth

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Numerical Features of the Book of Ruth

A New Approach to its Structural Design

Please read the [General Introduction](#)

Detailed outline based on content and numerical features

The story of Ruth is a finely crafted numerical work of art, which is composed of 12 scenes in the story as such (1,1-4,17), and an Epilogue, the genealogy of Perez (4,18-22). I shall adduce evidence to show that the Epilogue, which is demarcated by the only Petuchah in the book, is structurally part and parcel of the story. That the book as a whole is a cohesive unity is demonstrated by its **85** (5x17) verses and **1296** words by which it has been finalized and sealed as I shall show further below.

Strikingly, the number **1296** is a multiple of **48**, the numerical value of the name Ruth (20+6+22=48).

It is therefore not surprising to find that Scene 4 (2,1-7), the crucial passage in which Ruth takes action to seek a benefactor, is made up of **96** (2x48) words. Moreover, Scene 10, in which Boaz takes steps to redeem Naomi's land (4,1-6) has **106** words, which is a multiple of **53**, the numerical value of the name Naomi (14+16+13+10=53). For the numerical value of the name Boaz (**25**) see Observation 5 below.

Scenes 1 (1,1-7) with **104** (4x26) words, Scene 2 (1,8-14) with **102** (6x17) words, Scene 3 (1,15-22) with **119** (7x17) words, and Scene 5 (2,8-14) with **136** (5x26) words, are all sealed by multiples of the numbers **26** and **17** in order to express the presence of YHWH in what is described in the text.

Additionally, 37 of the 85 verses (44%) and 949 of the 1296 words (73%) are highlighted by **17** and **26**.

The book divides into three clearly defined parts:

- I. The events before Ruth meets Boaz (1,1-3,5): seven scenes arranged in a menorah pattern, with **Scene 4** in pride of place at the centre, Ruth's decision to go and glean after the reapers.
- II. The events after the two met on the threshing floor (3,6-4,17): five scenes, with **Scene 10** in pride of place at the centre, Boaz's actions to redeem Naomi's lap of land.
- III. The Epilogue (4,18-22): the genealogy of Perez.

Part I The events before Ruth meets Boaz (1,1-3,5):

Scene 1: Having moved to Moab Naomi decides to return (1,1-7):	104 (4x26) words.
Scene 2: The decision of Naomi's daughters-in-law (1,8-14):	102 (6x17) words.
Scene 3: Ruth is determined to go with her mother-in-law (1,15-22):	119 (7x17) words.
Scene 4: Ruth joins the reapers to glean; Boaz hears about her (2,1-7):	96 (2x48) words.
Scene 5: On invitation Ruth gleans in the field of Boaz (2,8-14):	136 (8x17) words.
Scene 6: Ruth tells Naomi about Boaz: he is a relative! (2,15-23):	146 words.
Scene 7: Naomi's strategy for Ruth to meet Boaz (3,1-5):	66 words.

Part II The events after the two met on the threshing floor (3,6-4,17):

Scene 8: Ruth does what Naomi said and Boaz meets her (3,6-13):	112 words.
Scene 9: Boaz gives Ruth barley for her mother-in-law (3,14-18):	80 words
Scene 10: Boaz takes steps to redeem Naomi's land (4,1-6):	106 words.
Scene 11: Boaz performs the rituals and marries Ruth (4,7-12):	117 words.
Scene 12: Ruth gets married, bears a son; the women bless Naomi (4,13-17):	73 (48+25) words.

Part III The genealogy of Perez (4,18-22):

Epilogue: The genealogy of Perez (4,18-22):	39 words.
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Observation 1 These features are based on two minor corrections in 3,5 and 3,17, where I follow the Qere reading, LXX and a number of Hebrew manuscripts – see BHS and the table below.

Observation 2 The reason why Perez has been chosen as the progenitor of the genealogy, is obviously because the house of Perez is regarded as the model par excellence of a fruitful posterity (4,12). There is absolutely no reason for problemizing this, as some commentators have done. See further Observation 7.

Observation 3 The problematic expression עשה־חיל in 4,11 has nothing to do with the social status of Boaz, as is generally accepted, but concerns his masculine virility, precisely as the context requires: "Engender procreative power". See my article "The Crux in Ruth 4,11", in: ZAW 79 (1967), 364-367.

Twelve different views on the structural design of the book of Ruth

W. RUDOLPH (*Das Buch Ruth . Das Hohe Lied . Die Klagelieder*, in: KAT XVII 1-3, 1962):

- 1,1-7a Die Vorgeschichte
- 1,7b-19a Ruths Entscheidung
- 1,19b-22 Die Ankunft in Bethlehem
- 2,1-17 Die erste Begegnung zwischen Ruth und Boas
- 2,18-23 Ruth erstattet Bericht
- 3,1-5 Der Plan der Noomi
- 3,6-15 Die Nachtszene auf der Tenne
- 3,16-18 Ruth erstattet Bericht
- 4,1-12 Die Szene im Tor
- 4,13-17 Ruth wird Mutter
- 4,18-22 Die Genealogie von Perez bis David.

E. WÜRTHWEIN (*Die fünf Megilloth: Ruth, Das Hohelied, Esther*, in: HAT 18, 1969, 1-24):

- 1,1-22a Naemis Auszug und Heimkehr:
 - 1,1-7a Ein bitteres Los in der Fremde
 - 1,7b-19a Dränge mich nicht, dich zu verlassen...
 - 1,19b-22a Daheim in Bethlehem
- 1,22b-2,23 Boas, der getreue verwandte:
 - 1,22b-2,17 Beim Ährenlesen auf dem Acker des Boas
 - 2,18-23 Ruths Bericht tröstet Naemi
- 3,1-18 Boas wird gebeten, Ruth zu "lösen":
 - 3,1-5 Naemis Plan
 - 3,6-15 Zur Nacht auf der Tenne
 - 3,16-18 Wieder bei Naemi
- 4,1-22 Die Lösung:
 - 4,1-12 Die Verhandlung im Tor
 - 4,13-17 "Naemi is ein Sohn geboren
 - 4,18-22 Der Stammbaum des Perez.

G. GERLEMAN (*Ruth . Das Hohelied*, in: BKAT XVIII, 1965): *Outline based on the chapter arrangement.*

- 1,1-5 Anfang der Geschichte.
- 1,6-22 Die Heimkehr. 2,1-23 Auf dem Acker des Boas
- 3,1-18 Auf der Tenne des Boas. 4,1-22 Die Lösung.

E.F. CAMPBELL (*Ruth*, in: The Anchor Bible, 1975)

- I. A Family of Sojourners (1,1-5)
- II. Returning Home (1,16-22)
- III. Amid Alien Corn (2,1-23)
- IV. The Encounter on the Threshing Floor (3,1-18)
- V. The Resolution at the City Gate (4,1-12)
- VI. "A Son is Born to Naomi" (4,13-17)
- VII. A Genealogical Appendix (4,18-22).

J.M. SASSON (*Ruth*, The John Hopkins University Press, 1979):

- In Moab (1,1-6)
- The Parting (1,7-14)
- The Pledge (1,15-19a)
- Back to Bethlehem (1,19b-22)
- A Plan (2,1-7)
- Boaz and Ruth: The First Encounter (2,8-13)
- Boaz Responds (2,14-18a)
- The Report (2,18b-23)
- Naomi's Plan (3,1-5)
- Ruth and Boaz: The Second Encounter (3,6-15)
- Nothing to Do but Wait (3,16-18)
- Legal Discussions (4,1-12)

Birth of Obed (4,13-17)

The Ancestry of David (4,18-22).

R.L. HUBBARD (*The Book of Ruth*, in: NICOT, 1989): *The most detailed outline of the literary structure, "as a simple device which enables the reader to grasp the main sections and flow of thought"*.

I. REPORT: THE STORY OF NAOMI AND RUTH (1,1-4,17)

A. NAOMI RETURNS TO BETHLEHEM (1,1-22)

1. Introduction: Tragedy strikes a Bethlehemite Family (1,1-5)

a. Report of Migration (1,1-2)

b. Report of Double Bereavement (1,3-5)

2. The Return Itself (1,6-22)

a. Report of Actions (1,6-21)

(1) The Conversation en Route (1,6-18)

(a) First Exchange (1,6-10)

(b) Second Exchange (1,11-13)

(c) Third Exchange (1,14-18)

(2) The Arrival at Bethlehem (1,19-21)

b. The Narrator's Summary (1,22)

B. RUTH FINDS FAVOR WITH BOAZ (2,1-23)

1. Introduction Comment concerning Boaz (2,1)

2. Report of Actions (2,2-23)

a. The Meeting with Boaz (2,2-17)

(1) Ruth's Declaration (2,2)

(2) The Meeting Itself (2,3-17)

(a) Summary Report (3,3)

(b) Content (2,4-17)

(i) Two Conversations (2,4-13)

α. Boaz and the foreman (2,4-7)

β. Boaz and Ruth (2,8-13)

(ii) Mealtime (2,14-16)

(iii) Report: How much Ruth gleaned (2,17)

b. Epilogue: Ruth reports to Naomi (2,18-23)

(1) Transition (2,18)

(2) The Conversation (2,19-23)

C. RUTH PROPOSES MARRIAGE TO BOAZ (3,1-22)

1. The Proposal Itself (3,1-15)

a. Naomi's Clever Plan (3,1-5)

b. Report of Ruth's Compliance (3,6-15)

(1) Summary Report (3,6)

(2) The Report Itself: At the Threshing Floor (3,7-15)

(a) Midnight: Dialogue of Ruth and Boaz (3,7-13)

(b) Before dawn: Boaz's Gift (3,14-15)

2. Interlude: Ruth reports to Naomi (3,16-18)

a. The Report Itself: (3,16-17)

b. Naomi's Response (3,18)

D. WIDOW NAOMI HAS A BABY (4,1-17)

1. Report of Legal Process (4,1-12)

a. Introduction: Boaz Convenes a Legal Assembly (4,1-2)

b. The Legal Process Itself (4,3-12)

(1) Boaz Obtains the Right of Redemption (4,3-8)

(a) Boaz and kinsman: Legal Discussion (4,3-6)

(b) Ceremony of the sandal (4,7-8)

(2) Boaz Buys the Property and Ruth (4,9-12)

2. Naomi Receives a Son (4,13-17)

a. Transition: Report of Marriage, Pregnancy, Birth (4,13)

b. The Reception Itself (4,14-17)

II. THE GENEALOGY OF PEREZ (4,18-22).

PH. TRIBLE (“Ruth, Book of”, in: The Anchor Bible V, 1992, 842-847):

External Design. A symmetrical design structures the book (Bertman):

Three sections in chapters 1 and 2 match, in reverse order, three in chapters 3 and 4.

The family history(1,1-5).

- (1) Ruth receives Naomi’s permission to glean in the fields (2,2).
- (2) Ruth goes to the fields (2,3).
- (3) Boaz seeks the identity of Ruth (2,4-7).
- (4) Boaz requests that Ruth stay, deems her worthy of blessing, gives her food, and orders his men (2,8-17).
- (5) Returning to Naomi, Ruth reports the meeting and receives counsel (2,18-23).

The second half of the book opens with five analogous elements:

- (1) Naomi sends Ruth to the threshing floor (3,1-5).
- (2) Ruth goes to the threshing floor (3,6).
- (3) Boaz seeks the identity of Ruth (3,7-9).
- (4) Boaz deems Ruth worthy of blessing, gives her food, and protects her from other men (3,10-15).
- (5) Returning to Naomi, Ruth reports the meeting and receives counsel (3,16-18).

The next section corresponds to section two of the first half:

Kinship ties (4,1-13).

A meeting between the women of Bethlehem and Naomi (4,14-17).

The genealogy of the closing section (4,18-22) returns in theme to the family history at the beginning.

F.W. BUSH (*Ruth, Esther*, in WBC 9, 1996):

Act 1. Prologue and Problem: Death and Emptiness (1,1-2)

Scene 1. Setting and Problem (1,1-6)

Scene 2. Emptiness Compounded (1,7-19a)

Scene 3. Emptiness Expressed (1,19b-22)

Act 2. Ruth meets Boaz, Naomi’s Relative, on the Harvest Field (2,1-23)

Scene 1. Ruth goes to Glean and Happens upon the Field of Boaz (2,1-3)

Scene 2. Ruth and Boaz meet on the Harvest Field (2,4-17a)

Scene 3. Naomi evaluates the Meeting (2,18-23)

Act 3. Naomi sends Ruth to Boaz on the Threshing Floor (3,1-18)

Scene 1. Naomi reveals her Plan for a Home and Husband for Ruth (3,1-5)

Scene 2. Ruth carries out Naomi’s Plan, and Boaz offers to be the Redeemer (3,6-15)

Scene 3. Naomi evaluates the Encounter: Boaz will act (3,16-18)

ACT 4. Resolution and Epilogue: Life and Fullness (4,1-22)

Scene 1. Boaz Acquires the Right to Redeem Ruth and Naomi (4,1-12)

Scene 2. A son is born to Ruth and Boaz: Naomi is Restored to Life and Fullness (4,13-17)

Scene 3. Epilogue. A Judean Family Restored: The Line of David (4,18-22).

D.A. DORSEY (*The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, 1999, 121-128):

a Introduction: devastation of Naomi’s family (1,1-5)

b Two of Naomi’s relatives deliberate whether to support her (1,6-19a)

c Return to Bethlehem in emptiness and hopelessness (1,19b-22)

d TURNING POINT: meeting of Ruth and Boaz (2,1-23)

c’ Ruth’s appeal at the threshing floor and her return to Bethlehem in fullness and hope (3,1-18)

b’ Two of Naomi’s relatives deliberate whether to support Naomi (4,1-12)

a’ Conclusion: Restoration of Naomi’s family (4,13-22).

I. FISCHER (*Rut*, in: HTKAT, 2001):

Kapitel 1: Auszug und Rückkehr von Noomi

1,1-5: Die Auswanderung von Bethlehem nach Moab

1,6-10: Noomis Dank zum Abschied

1,11-14: Der halb geglückte Überzeugungsversuch

1,15-19a: Der Treueschwur Ruts und die Rückwanderung der beiden Frauen

1,19b-22: Die Ankunft in Bethlehem und die Begegnung mit den Frauen

Kapitel 2: Rut versorgt Noomi mit Brot

2,1-3: Das eröffnende Gespräch zwischen Rut und Noomi
 2,4-7: Boas kommt auf das Feld und spricht mit dem Vorarbeiter
 2,8-14: Die erste Begegnung Ruts mit Boas
 2,15-17: Die Anweisung des Boas an die Erntenden
 2,18-23: Das deutende Gespräch zwischen Rut und Noomi

Kapitel 3: Die nächtliche Begegnung von Rut und Boas

3,1-6: Das eröffnende Gespräch zwischen Noomi und Rut
 3,7-15: Rut geht nachts zu Boas auf die Tenne
 3,16-18: Das deutende Gespräch zwischen Rut und Noomi

Kapitel 4: Die gesellschaftliche (Re-)integration Noomis und Ruts

4,1-12: Die Verhandlung im Tor
 4,13-17: Die Heirat als Integration Ruts und als (Re-)integration Noomis
 4,18-22: Der Stammbaum Judas von Perez bis David.

M.C.A. KORPEL, *The structure of the book of Ruth*, Assen: Van Gorcum, 2001: *She briefly discusses twenty different divisions of the text and analyses it herself as if it were a kind of poetry: 4 Cantos, 13 Sub-cantos, and 34 Canticles.*

Cantos	Sub-cantos	Canticles
Chapter 1	Headings not available.	
I	1,1-5	1,1-2
	1,6-10	1,3-5
	1,11-17	1,11-13; 1,14; 1,15-17
	1,18-22	1,18-19; 1,20-21; 1,22
Chapter 2		
II	2,1-7	2,1-2; 2,3-4; 2,5-7
	2,8-16	2,8-10; 2,11-13; 2,14-16
	2,17-23	2,17-19; 2,20-21; 2,22-23
Chapter 3		
III	3,1-9	3,1-5; 3,6-7; 3,8-9
	3,10-18	3,10-14; 3,15-16; 3,17-18
Chapter 4		
IV	4,1-6	4,1-2; 4,3-4; 4,5-6
	4,7-12	4,7-8; 4,9-10; 4,11-12
	4,13-17	4,13; 4,14-15; 4,16-17
	4,18-22 Appendix	4,18-20; 4,21-22

M. KÖHLMOOS (*Ruth*, in: ATD (Neues Göttinger Bibelwerk) 9,3, 2010):

1,1-6: Von Moab nach Bethlehem
 1,7-19a: Im Niemandland
 1,119b-22: In Bethlehem
 2,1: Boaz
 2,2: Ruth und Naomi
 2,3-18a: Feld
 2,18b-23: Ruth und Naomi
 3,1-6: Naomi und Ruth
 3,7-15: Tenne
 3,16-18: Naomi und Ruth
 4,1-12: Tor
 4,13-17: Naomi und die Frauen von Bethlehem
 4,18-22: Die Toledoth des Perez.

						Part II: The events after the two met on the field	
51	Ruth 3,6	7	27		776	Scene 8 Ruth does what Naomi said; Boaz meets her	
52	Ruth 3,7	14	60		790		
53	Ruth 3,8	10	45		800		
54	Ruth 3,9	14	48		814		
55	Ruth 3,10	18	73	13	832		
56	Ruth 3,11	18	54		850		
57	Ruth 3,12	12	37		862		
58	Ruth 3,13	19	72	14	881		
8	Ruth 3,6-13	112	416(16x26)		112	Scene 8 is sealed by letters 416 (16x26) letters.	
59	Ruth 3,14	17	63		898	Scene 9 Boaz gives Ruth barley for her mother-in-law 3,14 Boaz wants to keep her visit secret: 17 words. 3,17b Qere: : כי אמר אלי אל-תבואי ריקם אל-חמותי. See 3,5. The loss of אלי (K) is due to haplography.	
60	Ruth 3,15	16	62		914		
61	Ruth 3,16	15	46		929		
62	Ruth 3,17	14	48		943		
63	Ruth 3,18	18	57		961		
5	Ruth 3,14-18	80	276		80		
64	Ruth 4,1	19	68		980	Scene 10 Boaz takes steps to redeem Naomi's land 4,3-6 Boaz confers with the next of kin about the redemption of Elimelech's parcel of land: 78 words.	
65	Ruth 4,2	9	37		989		
66	Ruth 4,3	12	53		1001		
67	Ruth 4,4	29	78 (3x26)	111	1030		
68	Ruth 4,5	18	70		1048		
69	Ruth 4,6	19	63		1067		
6	Ruth 4,1-6	106	402		106		
70	Ruth 4,7	18+	76		1085		
71	Ruth 4,8	7/25	27		1092	Scene 11 Boaz performs the rituals and marries Ruth 4,7-8 Boaz performs the ceremony of the sandal: 25 w. 4,10 Also this crucial statement has 25 words, which is not simply a happy coincidence, for 25 is the numerical value of כַּעֲזָ (2+16+7=25). 4,12 "May your house be like that of Perez!": 17 words.	
72	Ruth 4,9	21	79		1113		
73	Ruth 4,10	25	90		1138		
74	Ruth 4,11	29	108	15	1167		
75	Ruth 4,12	17	60	16	1184		
6	Ruth 4,7-12	117	440		117		
76	Ruth 4,13	15	51	17	1199		
77	Ruth 4,14	15	48=Ruth	59	1214		
78	Ruth 4,15	18	67		1232		
79	Ruth 4,16	9+	36		1241		
80	Ruth 4,17	16/25	60		1257	P	
5	Ruth 4,13-17	73	273		73		
4,18-22						Part III: Epilogue: The genealogy of Perez There are ten generations from Perez (cf. 4,12!) to David in which Boaz represents the seventh generation and David the tenth. 48 is the numerical value of רִיתָ (20+6+22=48).	
81	Ruth 4,18	7	28		1264		
82	Ruth 4,19	8	31		1272		
83	Ruth 4,20	8	36		1280		
84	Ruth 4,21	8	31		1288		
85	Ruth 4,22	8	28		1296		Col.
5	Ruth 4,18-22	39	154		39		
85	Ruth 1-4	1296 (27x48)	4953	18x	1296		

Observation 4 The fact that the book is made up of a number of words that are a multiple of the numerical value of Ruth, **1296 (27x48)**, is an esoteric scribal device to provide the book with her signature. Compare also 2,1-7 and 4,13-15. In combination with the **85 (5x17)** verses which seal the book as a literary unity, its significant number of words show that the Epilogue is an integral part of the story.

Observation 5 Also interesting is the use of the numerical value of the name of Boaz, **25**, in no less than four instances (3,4-5, 4,7-8, 4,10 and 4,16-17) to provide the passages in question with Boaz's signature.

To crown it all is the use of Ruth's and Boaz's numerical signatures in Scene 12, their marriage, the birth of their son, the congratulations for Naomi and the name giving: **48+25=73** words, which is an esoteric scribal device to underline the union of the couple.

See my article "[Hidden Signatures in the Hebrew Bible](#)".

Overview of the words spoken by the various characters

I owe thanks to Klaas Eikelenboom for having compiled this list and checked my work.

Speech	Verses	Speaker	Spoken to	Intr.	Words	Sum w.	
1	1,8-9	Naomi	Orpah and Ruth	4	22	22	
2	1,10	Orpah and Ruth	Naomi	2	4	26	
3	1,11-13	Naomi	Orpah and Ruth	2	53	79	
4	1,15	Naomi	Ruth	1	10	89	
5	1,16-17	Ruth	Naomi	2	34	123	
6	1,19b	Women in Bethl.	Women in Bethl.	1	2	125	
7	1,20-21	Naomi	Women in Bethl.	2	28	153	
8	2,2a	Ruth	Naomi	5	10	163	
9	2,2b	Naomi	Ruth	2	2	165	
10	2,4a	Boaz	The reapers	7	2	167	
11	2,4b	The reapers	Boaz	2	2	169	
12	2,5	Boaz	The upper servant	6	3	172	
13	2,6-7	The upper servant	Boaz	6	25	197	
14	2,8-9	Boaz	Ruth	4	36	233	
15	2,10	Ruth	Boaz	7	7	240	
16	2,11-12	Boaz	Ruth	4	39	279	
17	2,13	Ruth	Boaz	1	16	295	
18	2,14	Boaz	Ruth	5	8	303	
19	2,15-16	Boaz	The young men	5	17	320	
20	2,19a	Naomi	Ruth	3	8	328	
21	2,19b	Ruth	Naomi	7	7	335	
22	2,20a	Naomi	Ruth	3	11	346	
23	2,20b	Naomi	Ruth	3	5	351	
24	2,21	Ruth	Naomi	3	17	368	
25	2,22	Naomi	Ruth	5	11	379	
26	3,1-4	Naomi	Ruth	4	55	434	
27	3,5	Ruth	Naomi	2	5	439	+ לֵי
28	3,9a	Boaz	Ruth	1	2	441	
29	3,9b	Ruth	Boaz	1	10	451	
30	3,10-13	Boaz	Ruth	1	66	517	
31	3,14b	Boaz	Household	1	6	523	
32	3,15a	Boaz	Ruth	1	6	529	
33	3,16	Naomi	Ruth	1	3	532	
34	3,17	Ruth	Naomi	1	13	545	+ לֵי
35	3,18	Naomi	Ruth	1	17	562	
36	4,1	Boaz	The kinsman	1	5	567	
37	4,2	Boaz	The ten elders	1	2	569	
38	4,3-4	Boaz	The kinsman	2	36	605	
39	4,4b	The kinsman	Boaz	1	2	607	

40	4,5	Boaz	The kinsman	2	16	623
41	4,6	The kinsman	Boaz	2	17	640
42	4,8	The kinsman	Boaz	3	2	642
43	4,9-10	Boaz	Elders and people	5	41	683
44	4,11-12	Elders and people	Boaz	6	40	723
45	4,14-15	Women	Naomi	4	29	752
46	4,17	Female neighbours	Public	5	3	755
Totals:				138	755	

Observation 6 Certain speeches stand out as momentous, being specifically highlighted by **17** and **26**.

1. The crucial discussion between Naomi and her daughters-in-law (Speeches 1-2): **26** words.
2. Naomi urges Orpah and Ruth to turn back (Speech 3): **53** words (numerical value of Naomi).
3. Ruth is adamant in her decision to go with her mother-in-law (Speech 5): **34** (2x**17**) words.
4. The six speeches in Chapter 1 have altogether **153** (9x**17**) words, signifying God's approval.
5. Words spoken by Boaz to the young men in the field (Speech 19): **17** words.
6. Ruth reports to Naomi what Boaz told her to do (Speech 24): **17** words.
7. Words spoken by Boaz during the night and the morning after (Speeches 30-32): **78** (3x**26**) words.
8. Naomi's reaction to Ruth's report about the barley as a gift from Boaz (Speech 35): **17** words.
9. The kinsman relinquishes his right of redemption (Speech 41): **17** words.
10. The name giving by the women in Bethlehem (Speeches 6, 45, and 46): 2+29+3=**34** (2x**17**).

Observation 7 The term אִשְׁתֵּי הַיֵּל, 'virtuous woman' appears 3x in the Hebrew Bible: in Proverbs 12,4 and 31,10 and in Ruth 3,11, where Boaz describes Ruth as 'a virtuous woman'. The vital role played by Ruth as the person who restores and continues (with the help of Boaz) the line of the devastated family of Elimelech and Naomi, is precisely the reason why she deserves this honorific qualification.

However, she does not stand alone in this respect, because she has a famous forerunner in Tamar, the mother of Perez (Genesis 38). Though Tamar is not called a 'virtuous woman', her father-in-law, Judah, characterises her as 'righteous', which is as honorific as 'virtuous'. In a comparable way, like Ruth, Tamar restores and continues (with the help of Judah) the line of the devastated family of Judah and his wife.

The fact that Tamar and her son Perez are explicitly mentioned in the book of Ruth (4,12) speaks volumes, showing that the two stories are inextricably linked together. They are in many respects similar because the situations are strikingly analogous. It would be worthwhile to make a synopsis of the two stories, which has never been endeavoured as far as I know. To begin with, see E. van Wolde, "Texts in dialogue with texts: intertextuality in the Ruth and Tamar narratives", in: *Biblical Interpretation* 5,1, 1997, pp. 1-28.

This is not the place, nor the time, to go deeper into the relationship between the two stories and to give an answer to the question whether the Book of Ruth is a midrash on the Story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38, or on Proverbs 12,4a and 31,10-31, or on Deuteronomy 23-25; see Georg Braulik, "The Book of Ruth as Intra-Biblical Critique on the Deuteronomic Law," *Acta Theologica* 19 (1999), 1-20.

For a study on the literary context, structural design, and the numerical features of the Story of Judah and Tamar, see my [article from 2008](#).