

Ruth – 1 Samuel 1-3

Ruth

From [The Jewish Study Bible](#):

This beautiful story revolves around the relationship between Naomi, a woman from Bethlehem, in Judah, and her Moabite daughter-in-law, Ruth. Naomi, her husband, and their two sons have come to Moab to escape from famine in Bethlehem. The first chapter recounts, in short order, the death of Naomi's husband, the marriage of her sons to Moabite women, the sons' deaths ten years later, and Naomi's decision to return to Bethlehem. One daughter-in-law, Orpah, returns to her Moabite family. The other, Ruth, declares allegiance to Naomi and to the God of Israel and returns with Naomi. Despite Ruth's company, Naomi is embittered at her many losses. In the course of the coming weeks, however, these losses are all reversed. In the second chapter, Ruth gleanes in the field of Naomi's kinsman, Boaz, and acquires enough grain to sustain Naomi and herself for some time. In the third chapter, Naomi devises a plan for Ruth's future security: Ruth will pay a nighttime visit to the threshing floor where Boaz has been winnowing the barley harvest, and will thereby elicit a promise of marriage. The plan is successful and culminates, in chapter four, in the marriage of Ruth and Boaz and the birth of their child, Obed. The book ends with a genealogy which traces the line of Obed back to Perez, the child of Judah and Tamar (Gen. 38), and forward to King David.

The simplicity of the story belies the literary craft of the book. **Its central theme is the movement from emptiness to fulfillment.** This theme is expressed on two planes, the agricultural and the personal. The agricultural sequence anticipates the personal sequence by one step all along the way. The famine precedes Naomi's bereavement, whereas the renewed harvest during which Ruth gleanes in Boaz's fields anticipates the abundance that awaits Naomi herself with Obed's birth. The fidelity and love between Naomi and Ruth is the most positive portrayal of women's relationships in biblical literature. The centrality of women is also emphasized by the references in Ruth 4 . 1 1-12 to other prominent biblical women, namely, Leah and Rachel, the two wives of Jacob, and Tamar, whose son by Judah, who himself is Jacob's son, is an ancestor of Boaz, and therefore of Obed and David as well.

The story portrays Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz as models of *hesed*, that is, of loyalty and commitment that go beyond the bounds of law or duty. *Hesed* is exemplified in the fidelity of Ruth to Naomi, the loving concern of Naomi for Ruth, and the kindness of Boaz to both women. Related to the motif of *hesed* is the role of God. God is mentioned numerous times by the three main characters, but the actions of the story are never explicitly mentioned as deriving from God. Rather, God remains in the shadows, implying that divine activity lies behind the reversal of the deprivations that have afflicted Naomi and the nation as a whole.

The authorship of the book is unknown and its date is difficult to establish. Many scholars propose a date between 950 and 700 BCE, that is, between the time of David and the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Others suggest a date during the period of the Babylonian exile or in the early period of the return (586-500 BCE). In the latter case, the book may be read as promising that those who return from exile will be blessed, just as Naomi was when she returned from Moab to Bethlehem. A story recounting the lineage of David might also have had special meaning at a time after the Davidic monarchy had come to an end. If the story is dated to the early exilic period, its positive

depiction of Ruth the Moabite may be polemical, emphasizing, in contrast to Ezra-Nehemiah, that foreigners may be integrated into the Jewish community.

In the Jewish Scriptures, Ruth is included among the five "megillot" (scrolls) in the third division, namely, the "writings" (Kethuvim). Because the book is read in the synagogue on Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, it usually appears second among the *megillot*, after Song of Songs, which is read at Passover, though other sequences for these five books are found in manuscripts. The association with Shavuot¹ is appropriate. The events told in Ruth span a period somewhat equivalent to that of Passover to Shavuot, that is, a seven-week period from the beginning of the barley harvest to the end of the wheat harvest.

Furthermore, King David, the culmination of the genealogy in Ruth 4.18-22, was traditionally thought to have been born and to have died on Shavuot. Finally, Shavuot has been identified since the 2nd or 3rd centuries of the Common Era as the time of the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai (cf. Exod. chs 19-20). This element of the feast is related to the prevalent rabbinic theme of Ruth as the ideal convert to Judaism who takes the Torah upon herself just as the Israelites did at Mount Sinai.

In non-Jewish versions and translations of the Bible, Ruth is placed between Judges and the books of Samuel, following the order of the Septuagint. This placement acknowledges the fact that the book is set in the period of the judges (1.1) and ends with a genealogy of David (4.18-22). **It therefore provides a link** between the chaotic period when Israel was ruled by judges and the stories that lead up to the establishment of the monarchy, which reaches its highest point in the reign of David.²

Other Ways to View the Book of Ruth

Ruth's Moabite origins have led many interpreters—convincingly, in my view—to see this story as a quiet polemic against the opposition of Ezra and Nehemiah to intermarriage with the surrounding peoples when the Judahites returned to their land in the fifth century B.C.E. The author may have picked up a hint from 1 Samuel 22:3–4, where David, said here to be Ruth's great-grandson, is reputed to have placed his parents under the protection of the king of Moab to keep them safe from Saul. Readers should note that for biblical Israel, Moab is an extreme negative case of a foreign people. A perennial enemy, its origins, according to the story of Lot's daughter in Genesis 19, are in an act of incest. The Torah actually bans any sort of intercourse, social, cultic, or sexual, with the Moabites. Against this background of hostility, Moab in this book provides refuge for the family of Elimelech fleeing from famine (like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), and the two Moabite daughters-in-law are faithful, loving women, with Ruth's moral nobility altogether exemplary. It is this that Boaz is aware of from the outset, and he is in no way put off by Ruth's identity as a Moabite, unlike the kinsman who declines to perform the levirate obligation. Ruth is a perfectly virtuous Moabite—*'eshet hayil*, a "worthy woman"—who becomes the progenitrix of the royal line of the Judahite kingdom. **It is hard not to see in the boldly iconoclastic invention of this plot an argument against the exclusionary policy on foreign wives propagated by Ezra and Nehemiah. This would also make the fifth century B.C.E., at the moment when intermarriage was an urgent issue, a plausible time for the composition of the book.**

¹ Shavuot means "weeks," and is commonly known as the Feast of Weeks. Shavuot marked the wheat harvest in the land of Israel. In addition, Orthodox rabbinic traditions teach that the date also marks the revelation of the Torah to Moses and the Israelites at Mount Sinai.

² [The Jewish Study Bible](#), p. 1578-1579.

It is remarkable that a story in all likelihood framed for a polemic purpose should be so beguiling. Charm is not a characteristic that one normally associates with biblical narrative, but this idyll is charming from beginning to end, understandably making it one of the most perennially popular biblical books. If the writer set out to make Ruth the Moabite a thoroughly good person in order to implement his argument for openness to exogamy, he also had a rare gift for making good characters convincing, manifested from the very beginning in Naomi's solicitous speech to her daughters-in-law and then in Ruth's unforgettable pledge of devotion to her. This author was finely aware of the conventions of earlier biblical narrative as he was sensitive to the prose style of his predecessors, but he subtly adapted those conventions to his own artistic and thematic ends. **He clearly is familiar with the betrothal type-scene that plays an important role in Genesis and early Exodus**, but in his canny version, it is a young woman, not a young man, who encounters her future spouse near a well in a foreign land, and the foreign land, paradoxically, is Judah, which she will then make her homeland, "coming back" with Naomi to a place where she has never been.

Another recurrent device of classical biblical narratives is the use of the first piece of dialogue assigned to a character to define the distinctive nature of the character. That procedure is splendidly realized in Ruth's first speech, addressed to Naomi, in chapter 1. The lyric suasive force of her speech should be noticed, for it is the first signal instance of one of the appealing features of the prose of the Book of Ruth. Earlier biblical narrative often introduces brief poetic insets into the prose—formal poems, sometimes just a line or two in length, that mark a portentous juncture of the story, a blessing or a prayer or an elegy (the valedictory words of Rebekah's family to her as she leaves to become Isaac's bride, Jacob's cadenced cry of dismay when he believes Joseph has been torn apart by a wild beast). In Ruth, on the other hand, the dialogue repeatedly glides into parallel structures that have a strong rhythmic quality and sound rather like verse but do not entirely scan as formal poetry. Naomi's relatively long speech to her daughters-in-law abounds in loose parallel structures and emphatic repetitions, culminating in one parallelism that actually scans as verse in the Hebrew: "would you wait for them till they grew up? / For them would you be deprived of husbands?" Ruth's beautifully cadenced response is still closer to poetry: "For wherever you go, I will go. / And wherever you lodge, I will lodge. / Your people is my people, / and your god is my god."

These gestures toward poetry continue to mark the speech of the characters down to the words of blessing of the townswomen near the end of the last chapter. The balance, the rhythmic poise, the stately symmetries of the language are an apt manifestation of the harmonious world of the Book of Ruth: **the characters express a kind of moral confidence ultimately stemming from a sense of the rightness of the traditional values of loyalty, love, and charity** and of the sustaining force of providence even in the face of adversity. All this taken together, consummated with the most finely managed artistry, makes the Book of Ruth one of literature's most touching stories with a happy ending.³

Ruth 1

1. "It came to pass in the days when the judges ruled..." שָׁפְטִים הַשְּׁפָטִים – וַיְהִי בִימֵי שְׁפָטֵי הַשְּׁפָטִים – The judges (chieftains, governors, the *shofetim* שְׁפָטִים, we have learned in Judges, were tribal leaders in Israel in the time period before the establishment of the monarchy). (Ruth 1.1)

³ Robert Alter, [The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary](#), W.W. Norton & Company, 2018, 4654-4655/5277 electronic version.

2. “In the country of Moab” (Ruth 1.1). There is tension between Moab and Israel in several biblical texts, but this tension does not exist in this book. Naomi, her husband, and her two sons went into Moab to avoid the famine in their homeland.
3. בֵּית לֶחֶם Bet-lechem means “house of bread,” (Ruth 1.1) so there is a pun here in the text where a famine exists in the house of bread.
 - a. “Ephrathites of Bethlehem-Judah...” Ephrathah is another name for Bethlehem (see Ruth 4.11).
 - b. Elimelech (Naomi’s husband) אֱלִימֶלֶךְ literally means “my God is king” (Ruth 1.2).
 - c. Mahlon (Naomi’s son) מַחֲלֹן means “sickness” (Ruth 1.2).
 - d. Chilion (her second son) חִילֹן means “pining,” or “wasting away.” (Ruth 1.2).
 - i. The family names may have symbolic significance, and thus due to the pun in the first verse, when combined with the meaning of the names of the individuals in the very beginning of the text, some have suggested that this not be read as a historical text.⁴
4. The sons of Naomi marry women of Moab, and they dwell there about ten years (Ruth 1.4).
5. Naomi’s husband Elimelech dies (Ruth 1.3).
6. Mahlon and Chilion die (Ruth 1.5), leaving Naomi a widow with two Moabite daughters, Orpah and Ruth.
7. Naomi decides to return to her homeland, and tells her daughters in law to return to Moab, as they are essentially outsiders (Ruth 1.6-9).
 - a. The Lord will “deal kindly with you” (Ruth 1.8). This verse uses the noun *hesed* חֶסֶד, which will come up through the narrative. See also: Ruth 2.20, 3.10.⁵
 - b. The key characters in the text demonstrate *hesed*.⁶
 - c. Naomi says “are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?” (Ruth 1.11)⁷

⁴ *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1580.

⁵ Ruth 2.20 reads “Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not failed in his kindness to the living or to the dead! For,” Naomi explained to her daughter-in-law, “the man is related to us; he is one of our redeeming kinsmen” (JPS translation). The LXX reads:

καὶ εἶπεν Νωεμὶν τῇ νύμφῃ αὐτῆς εὐλογητός ἐστιν τῷ κυρίῳ ὅτι οὐκ ἐγκατέλιπεν τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῶν ζώντων καὶ μετὰ τῶν τεθνηκότων καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ Νωεμὶν ἐγγίξει ἡμῖν ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐκ τῶν ἀγχιστευόντων ἡμᾶς ἐστιν. “And Naomi said to her daughter maiden/daughter-in-law, blessed (good-messaged) is the Lord, for he did not forsake (lit: he did not leave down) his **mercy** with the living or with **the ones having died** and Naomi said to her, the man near to us is of the ones **being as next of kin**, for he is one of us.” (My translation. I translated ἀγχιστευόντων this way as it comes from ἀγχιστος “nearest, closest.” It is noteworthy that the Greek translators took *hesed* for ἔλεος – mercy, pity, or compassion.)

⁶ In Ruth, the main characters demonstrate *hesed* in a variety of ways. Ruth showed unwavering covenant loyalty and love to Naomi by remaining with her mother-in-law when she returned to Bethlehem and by seeking to marry Boaz in order to carry on the line of Elimelech, Naomi’s dead husband (Ruth 1; 3). Boaz showed *hesed* by caring more about Elimelech’s name and line than his own, marrying Ruth in order to give Elimelech an heir (Ruth 4.1–12). Naomi also demonstrated mercy to Ruth by taking her to her homeland and bringing her into her faith. Naomi also testified to the *hesed* of the Lord, recognizing the hand of the Lord as His *hesed* was not just for the others, but for them personally (Ruth 2.20). She also emphasized that the Lord brought them to Boaz, one of the family’s redeemers. Truly the *hesed* of the Lord is evident throughout. Ligonier.org accessed November, 2021.

⁷ According to Deuteronomy 25.5-10, a childless widow is bound to marry her dead husband's brother. This is referred to as levirate law (from Latin "levir," "brother-in-law"). The first son of a levirate marriage will legally be

- d. Three times (Ruth 1.8, 11,12) Naomi tells her daughter-in-laws to turn away and to go back to Moab.⁸
8. Orpah returns to Moab (Ruth 1.14), but Ruth says “whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God, where thou diest, will I die, and there I will be buried...” (Ruth 1.16-17).
9. Ruth and Naomi go into Bethlehem, and these two widows are “empty” (Ruth 1.21), and Naomi says “call me Mara”⁹ meaning “bitter” (Ruth 1.20), and it is the beginning of the barley harvest (Ruth 1.22).¹⁰

Ruth 2

1. Naomi’s kinsman, Boaz is introduced (Ruth 2.1).
2. Ruth asks Boaz if she can glean the fields after the reapers harvest (Ruth 2.7).¹¹
 - a. “so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house” (Ruth 2.7 KJV). The literal reading of the Hebrew text is “and so she came, and took a stand from the morning until now, this is her¹² abiding/sitting the house a little.”
 - i. Some commentators emend the text by omitting “the house,” in conformity with the Septuagint, which reads:

“καὶ ἦλθεν καὶ ἔστη ἀπὸ πρωῒθεν καὶ ἕως ἑσπέρας οὐ κατέπαυσεν ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ μικρόν.” And she came **and stood**, from morning even until evening, and **she did not rest** in the field *but* little.”
 - b. Boaz responds, “My daughter, go not to glean in another field... but abide here fast by my maidens” (Ruth 2.8).¹³
 - c. Ruth asks how he even should “takest knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?” (Ruth 2.10)
 - d. May the Lord reward your deeds. May you have a full recompense from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have sought refuge!” (Ruth 2.12 JPS translation)¹⁴
 - e. “Dip thy morsel in the vinegar...” וְיָצַק בְּרֵגְלֵיךָ בַּחֶמֶץ (Ruth 2.14). Vinegar - *hōmes* חֶמֶץ is a refreshing drink of sour wine and oil. Boaz’s generosity, in providing roasted grain,

the dead man's son for purposes of inheritance. Even were Naomi to give birth to more sons, they would not be obligated by levirate law to marry the widows, because they would not have had the same father as did the dead men (because Elimelech has now passed away).

⁸ *Ruth Rabbah* points out that Naomi urges her daughters-in-law to turn back three times. This number corresponds to the number of times that potential converts should be strongly discouraged. Those who persist, however, should be educated and accepted as sincere converts. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1580.

⁹ “Call me Mara...” מָרָא לִי מָרָא Naomi desires to be called *mara*, מָרָא, meaning “bitterness,” from *mar* מָר, an adjective used to describe water or food as “bitter.”

¹⁰ The barley harvest is associated with Passover in the spring (Leviticus 23.10).

¹¹ According to the law that is written, the poor were allowed to walk behind the harvesters and gather the grain that they left behind (Leviticus 19.9-10, 23.22; Deuteronomy 24.19-21). This is because the Lord remembers the “stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.”

¹² The mappiq in the *he* - הַבְּתוּלָה makes this feminine possessive.

¹³ Like Naomi, Boaz refers to Ruth as *daughter*. This form of address conveys his warm attitude toward her, and also stresses the generational difference between them. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1582.

¹⁴ This verse summarizes the message of Ruth: Whoever seeks shelter with the God of Israel will be rewarded. Rabbinic interpreters understand this phrase as a reference to Ruth's conversion. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1582.

foreshadows the important role he will come to play in providing for both Ruth and Naomi.¹⁵

3. Ruth is able to glean “about”¹⁶ an ephah of barley in one day (Ruth 2.17).¹⁷
 - a. Naomi is impressed with the amount Ruth brings home (Ruth 2.19-20)
 - b. Boaz is our “next kinsmen” (Ruth 2.20).¹⁸
4. Ruth gleaned “unto the end of the barley harvest, and of the wheat harvest” (Ruth 2.23).¹⁹

Ruth 3

1. Naomi proposes that Ruth have “rest” (Ruth 3.1).²⁰

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ כִּי־פִיָּה the ki preposition means that this is “about” an ephah of barley.

¹⁷ An ephah is about 2/3 of a bushel, *Jewish Study Bible*, 1582. Campbell puts this measurement at 3/5 a bushel. Edward Campbell, *The Anchor Bible: Ruth A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible Doubleday, 1975, p. 103. Campbell elaborates on Ruth’s bounteous gathering, “The ephah is the dry-measure equivalent of a bat. W. F. Albright computed the capacity of a “bath” from a jar with *bt* inscribed on it found at Tell Beit Mirsim. His figure is about twenty-two liters or 5.8 gallons (U.S. measure). This archaeological datum serves as the basis for R. B. Y. Scott’s calculations of measures of capacity in BAR, p. 352. Another system, followed by most German commentaries, traces the ephah back to the calculated capacity of a Persian *maris*, and would yield a set of values just under twice as large. As it happens, this set accords rather well with Josephus’ measures for the “bath” (Antiquities 3.8.3, 8.2.9). In either case, we should heed Scott’s double warning that the base of calculation is not certain, and that **we do not know what variations developed throughout the biblical period**. The amount **Ruth carried home was rather impressive for a gleaner**, but we are not called upon to add to her list of virtues that she was as strong as an ox. At most, **her load would have weighed 47.5 pounds**, while Scott’s calculations (which I prefer) **would be about twenty-nine pounds**. Campbell, p. 104.

¹⁸ This word “kinsmen” comes from *ga-al* לָאָל, a word meaning “redeemer,” or one who avenges a person who needs vengeance or a defense.

¹⁹ Barley is harvested in April, wheat in May, millet and grapes in July, grapes and figs in September.

²⁰ The temple can be viewed as a place where one finds rest. In Doctrine and Covenants 84 we read, “And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; For without this no man can **see the face of God**, even the Father, and live. Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might **behold the face of God**; But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his danger was kindled against them, swore that they should not **enter into his rest** while in the wilderness, **which rest is the fulness of his glory**.” D&C 84.22-24, emphasis added. Elder Craig Zwick taught: “Thus, a primary responsibility of all who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood is to teach the doctrines of salvation. To prepare us to enter into the rest of the Lord so that we might “rest with him in heaven” (Moroni 7:3) is what the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood are all about... The ‘rest of the Lord’ in eternity is entering into the presence of the Lord.” [Elder W. Craig Zwick, Enter into the Rest of the Lord, Ensign, February 2012.](#)

2. Naomi encourages Ruth to go to Boaz at **the threshing-floor** גֶּרֶן - *goren* (Ruth 3.2),²¹ “uncover his feet” (3.4),²² and “he will tell thee what thou shalt do” (Ruth 3.4).²³
 - a. The threshing-floor as a place to **settle legal disputes**.²⁴

²¹ The threshingfloor is the location where the Holy of Holies would reside. 2 Samuel 24.18-25 portrays David purchasing the threshingfloor from Araunah the Jebusite for 50 shekels of silver. This is where David builds an altar to the Lord (2 Sam. 24.25), and where the cosmic holy of holies will be, where the “seeds are gathered in.” Indeed, Jesus Christ states that “I will gather my people as a man gathereth his sheaves into the floor” (3 Nephi 20.18), meaning of course, the threshingfloor. Cosmically, this rock was important, as the ark of the covenant would rest upon it. Aubrey Johnson observes that “just as the Ark is the symbol of Yahweh’s Person, so Mount Zion corresponds to the divine Mount of Assembly, and the Temple itself is the earthly counterpart of the divine King’s heavenly Palace. (Aubrey Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel*, Wipf and Stock, 2006, p. 75.)

²² Alternately, the Hebrew noun could mean “the place of his feet.” In any case, it is an odd detail. Since the verb of uncovering is the one used in biblical prohibitions of uncovering the nakedness of someone—that is, engaging in intimacy—the erotic tease of the narrative is again manifested... Ruth lies down not alongside Boaz but at his feet, an expression of her lower social status and of the subservient role of wives in relation to their husbands in biblical society. The uncovering may simply be an act to show that someone is present, and so when Boaz awakens in the middle of the night, perhaps what first startles him—though it is unreported—is his exposed feet, after which he realizes that a woman is present. Robert Alter, 4669/5277. This reading of “uncovering Boaz’s feet” has fertility implications, no matter how it is read. Another group of scholars of this verse gave this interpretation of this phrase: “The crucial aspect of Naomi’s instructions to Ruth, to uncover Boaz’s feet and lie down, is also the most ambiguous. Naomi may simply mean that Ruth should uncover a place at Boaz’s feet and lie down. The word *feet*, however, may also be a euphemism for the carnal organs (see Isaiah 7.20).” *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1583.

²³ “Because we know so little about the customs of that day, it is hard to judge whether Naomi’s plan was bold or conventional. Unquestionably there was some risk. Boaz was a kinsman, and in ancient Israel, kinsmen had particular responsibilities toward their brothers’ widows. (Deuteronomy 25:5-10.) Naomi knew that. **She also knew that Boaz was not her nearest kinsman**, but that since he had shown an interest, he might seek to assume that responsibility if he were encouraged. Weighing everything carefully, she decided to instruct Ruth on how a woman could properly approach such a man and seek his protection in marriage. Relying on Ruth to follow her instructions explicitly, she told her to go to the threshing room where Boaz would be sleeping to guard his grain from thieves. Washed and dressed in her finest, she was to wait until he was asleep; then she was to uncover his feet and lie down beside him. There was nothing in those actions intended to compromise or entrap him, but merely an attempt to let him know that if he sought to marry the widow of his next of kin, the woman herself would find such an arrangement acceptable. Ruth obeyed. Boaz was at first surprised, then delighted. He acknowledged both his obligation and Naomi’s hand in the affair. Taking care for Ruth’s reputation, he sent her away before dawn but not before he had given her six measures of barley, saying, ‘Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law.’” Jerrie W. Hurd, *Our Sisters in the Bible*, Deseret Book, 1983, p. 59.

²⁴ Aranov writes, “In rural communities the role of the city gate was played by the communal threshing-floor. The threshing-floor became the normative setting for the resolution of legal disputes. It served in fact as the “gate” of the rural village.” Aranov, p. 167-169. He continues, “It was a well-worn tract of land, due to heavy traffic by man and beast converging there so that this public area of any rural commons tended to resemble the tamped, hardened surface of a threshing-floor. Indeed, the term *goren* itself does not always necessarily indicate a genuine threshing-floor. The familiar courtyard immediately inside the gate of a city or of a palace was a circular, apsidal or semi-circular open area where the public assembled and which they termed a “goren.” The Rabbis of the Midrash understood the root *grn* as denoting any smooth, flat, circular area where a court sat and which topographically suggested the aspect of a threshing-floor. These texts indicate that the Rabbis were familiar with altogether different meanings for the root *grn* other than threshing-floor. One of these “different” meanings of words such as: *goren*, *magrattu*, *idra*, *kislah*, *kislah*, *kalakku* and similar roots is that in addition to signifying a place for grain processing and grain storage, they also connote the idea of “courtroom.”

- b. The threshing-floor as sacred space, **as a temple**.²⁵
 - i. Why was this location sacred to the ancients?²⁶
- c. The threshing-floor is where the Ark of the Covenant would be placed, and is symbolic of the cosmic connection between the heavens and the earth.²⁷
 - i. This is due to the notion of **sacral kingship**- that the king represented the God. This anointing of the king took place at the threshing-floor.²⁸
- d. The threshing-floor was the **site of fertility**, the symbol for life itself.²⁹
 - i. The sacred marriage was performed at the threshing-floor.³⁰
 - ii. Sacred "combat" associated with the New Year rites was enacted here as well.³¹
- e. The threshing-floor was the origin of the **temple drama** and of theatre itself.³²

²⁵ Aranov writes, "Throughout the entire ancient Near East, the threshing place acquired an aura of sanctity and came to be viewed as an alternate temple of the gods- a place where the gods' immanence might be sensed at any moment." Maurice Moshe Aranov, [The Biblical Threshing-Floor in Light of the Ancient Near Eastern Evidence: Evolution of an Institution](#), dissertation, New York University, 1977, p. 38-39."

²⁶ Aranov writes, "To see the threshing-floor as a miniature Planet Earth is to accord to the *goren* (the threshing-floor) a special significance. Hence, as image of the earth, the threshing-floor acquired an aura of cosmic significance which lent itself to sacral application. **Ancient Near Eastern man accorded this sacral quality to the threshing-floor in all of his dealings.** Thus, the widespread primitive conception of the threshing-floor as a microcosm of the universe lent itself admirably to cultic adaptation. As a rule, structures in which religious rites took place, generally signified the cosmic rule of the god worshipped there. **The idea that a temple should represent the universe, implied that the temple or shrine is a microcosm of a macrocosm.** However, although the general perception of the **threshing-floor** amongst the ancients was a symbolic earth-image, **their primary consideration for selecting it as a cultic center**, more likely lay in the psychology of the Near Eastern farmer whose religious expression was fertility oriented." Aranov, p. 44-45.

²⁷ The Ark of the Covenant was placed before the throne in the Holy of Holies in the Rock that was believed to be the connecting place between heaven and earth. Ritmeyer, [Secrets of Jerusalem's Temple Mount](#), p. 91-110. Ritmeyer's suggestion that the Ark was not simply placed on the floor of the Holy of Holies, but that anciently an **indentation the same size as the Ark had been carved** into the Rock so that the Ark sat in the Rock, suggests that the Ark became an extension of the Rock. Ritmeyer's report reads: 'The Priests brought the Ark of the Covenant of YHWH to its place, in the holy of Holies of the Temple' (1Kings 8:6). That 'place' can now be identified as the rectangular depression in es-Sakhra [the sacred Rock that is covered by the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem] that measures 2 feet, 7 inches by 4 feet, 4 inches – 1.5 by 2.5 cubits – the same dimensions as the Ark of the Covenant that God commanded Moses to build in the wilderness (Exodus 25:10) and that was later housed in the Temple." Ritmeyer, p. 104.

²⁸ Aranov, p. 212-214. "To be a king meant that he was a fertility provider and custodian of the moral order... and was peculiarly well-fitted to administer justice... he ruled not only his people but established order in the cosmos as well... the king was "a scion of the gods, descendant of divinity, nursling of the goddess, defender of the gods' tomb and the gods' representative upon the earth."

²⁹ Ancient Near Eastern fertility drama was usually mounted on the most sacred day of the year--the gods' day-- which was also the New Year observance. The threshing-floor was selected as the arena for enacting these dramatic presentations because of its fertility associations and because it provided the pragmatic presence of the fertility god, who was conceived as being manifest in the cut grain lying before them. As the "grave" of the god, the threshing-floor was viewed as a most suitable place whence the gods' epiphany might become manifest. Aranov, p. 200-201.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 206-209.

³¹ Ibid., p. 209-212.

³² The earliest form of group religious expression in the ancient Near East related directly to harvest ritual at communally sanctioned seasonal harvest rites. By their very nature, these communal expressions of thanksgiving for the harvest and of deity-placation, took on dramatic form. The Osiris-Tammuz core of nature-worship lent itself especially to dramatization of the mythopoeic story-line which bound together the community of worshippers. It is

3. Ruth proposes to Boaz (Ruth 3.6-18).
 - a. "spread thy skirt over thine handmaid" (Ruth 3.9).
 - b. "I am thy near kinsman" (Ruth 3.12).
 - c. "she lay at his feet until the morning" (Ruth 3.14).
 - d. Boaz measures out six measures of barley unto her (Ruth 3.15-17).³³

Ruth 4

1. Boaz holds a gathering at the city gate to determine who is to redeem Ruth (Ruth 4.1-12).
 - a. "up to the gate" (Ruth 4.1). The gate was the commercial and judicial center of the town, where legal, business, and political transactions were conducted.³⁴
 - b. Meanwhile, Boaz had gone to the gate and sat down there. And now the redeemer³⁵ whom Boaz had mentioned passed by. He called, "Come over and sit down here, So-

the consensus of scholarship that the seasonal re-enactment of elements of the "dying-and-rising god" motif at the new year harvest festival rites in which the seasonal passion of the vegetation god was lamented and his spring resurrection celebrated, is the origin of "theatre." Aranov, p. 197. Over time, the sacred drama of the ancients became "secularized." Aranov explains, "Until the present era, festal occasions of religions originating in the ancient Near East, continue to preserve dramatic components and fertility elements tracable to the original core of Tammuz myth. Amongst these components still employed, are springtime death-and-resurrection sequences, enthronement-of-the-god rituals, cultic processions carrying sacred objects and images outside of the shrines... "harvest-home" rites... and "assignment of destiny" rituals. **Only subsequent to the actual passing of mythological dramatic rite into ritual liturgy were prayers substituted for dramatic reenactment and only after the secondary stage— remembrance of the mythology via liturgy— did "theatre" become "secularized"** with the addition of epic poetry and artful evocation of sentiment instituted as a substitute for prayer and sacrifice. The origin of "theatre" as a cultic, fertility stimulation activity relates to **its original setting— the Near Eastern threshing-floor— where cultic "theatre" was originally performed.** Even the smallest Aegean town had its own theatre and dramatic festival. It was upon the "orchestra" set upon the hilltop threshing-floor adjacent to the crude altar mounted there, that the rustic "country Dionysia" and village play were performed as "fertility magic" at sacred occasions with the intention of enhancing **crop growth. The village-play grew into the more popular city-festival at which Tammuz-style rites were conducted. These were eventually refined to become the "mystery-plays" which crystallized the corporate yearnings of the peasantry for fertility and for immortality.** The essential element in all of these cultic exercises was the dramatic reenactment of the vegetation god's tragic experience which was performed as a religious sacrament. These rites began with a period of mourning and were followed by dances and harvest rites... **In the process of time, "theatre" became entirely secularized utilizing non-sacred scripts directed towards entertainment of "the masses."** Hence, what had originated as a cultic reenactment of the mythology of vegetation ritual performed with the intention of promoting crop fertility eventually proceeded to provide a visual enactment of the dramatic experiences of the gods which afford a rationale for the seasonal calendar. Aranov, p. 201-205.

³³ Here, as at the end of chapter 2, Ruth is provided with a large amount of grain to bring home to Naomi. The grain that Boaz gives her symbolizes the "seed" that he will later provide in order for their child to be conceived. Noting that six measures of barley is far too much for a single person to carry, the Rabbis suggested symbolic interpretations. Rashi, following *Ruth Rabbah* and various Talmudic traditions, claimed that the text literally meant "six grains of barley," as a portent that their future son would be blessed with six blessings: the spirit of wisdom and discernment, counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and the fear of the Lord (see Isa. 11.2). *Ruth Rabbah* suggests that the six grains of barley refer to six righteous descendants: David, Hezekiah, Josiah, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1584. Campbell notes the problem with "six measures," stating that any way it is measured (**285 pounds or 174 pounds**), it is more than Ruth can possibly carry. See: Campbell, p. 127.

³⁴ *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1584.

³⁵ *Ha-go-el*, לַגֹּאֵל – the redeemer, or kinsmen.

and-so!"³⁶ And he came over and sat down. Then [Boaz] took ten elders of the town and said, "Be seated here"; and they sat down (Ruth 4.1-2, JPS translation).

- c. He (Boaz) said to the redeemer, "Naomi, now returned from the country of Moab, must sell the piece of land which belonged to our kinsman Elimelech. I thought I should disclose the matter to you and say: Acquire it in the presence of those seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you are willing to redeem it, redeem! But if you will not redeem, tell me, that I may know. For there is no one to redeem but you, and I come after you." "I am willing to redeem it," he replied. Boaz continued, "When you acquire the property from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabite, you must also acquire the wife of the deceased, so as to perpetuate the name of the deceased upon his estate." The redeemer replied, "Then I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own estate! You take over my right of redemption, for I am unable to exercise it." (Ruth 4.3-6, JPS translation).³⁷
2. Boaz weds Ruth (Ruth 4.13).
 - a. She bears a son, Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of King David (Ruth 4.17).
 - b. This story shows that Ruth, an outsider, as the grandmother of King David, and one of the key matriarchs in the lineage of Jesus Christ. This is an account of the "Beauty for Ashes" principle. See Isaiah 61.3.

Samuel

The books of Samuel were originally one book. In the Septuagint it was divided into two, owing to its length, and the Christian tradition followed this division. In Hebrew Bibles used by the Jewish community, this division was not made before the 15th century, under the influence of the [Vulgate](#). Following a pattern found in some other biblical books, which end with the death of a main character, the division in the book of Samuel was made at the point of Saul's death. Thus, 1 Samuel recounts the periods of Eli (chs 1-4), Samuel (chs 5-12), and Saul (chs 13-31); 2 Samuel tells of the reign of David. The work was named after the prophet Samuel (b. B. Bat. 14b), because the story of his birth opens the book and he is the principal figure in the first part. He greatly influenced events during his life and even after his death, since he anointed the first two kings, whose actions and fate occupy the major part of the book of Samuel.

The book of Samuel consists chiefly of narratives, which are supplemented with a few songs, lists, and brief notices. Its central concern is with the personal life of the leaders. Their aspirations, feelings, and passions are depicted realistically, displaying negative qualities as well as positive ones. Through the

³⁶ Although Boaz must have known the name of the kinsman, the narrative does not report it. Many Jewish commentators have expressed disapproval of the man's behavior. *Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1584.

³⁷ This account has some difficulties. Berlin and Brettler explain: Certain textual difficulties in vv. 3-5 make it difficult to reconstruct exactly the legal background of these proceedings. It is only here that we learn of Elimelech's land, which needs to be redeemed in order to provide for Naomi and Ruth. On redemption of land, see Lev. 25.24-34, 47-55; Jer. 32.7-15. 5: Boaz implies that the acquisition of Ruth as wife is necessarily tied to the redemption of land. **According to biblical law, levirate marriage pertains only to the brother of the dead husband** (Deut. 25.5-10). For this reason, neither Boaz nor the other kinsman is legally bound to marry Ruth. Nor does biblical law link levirate marriage with redemption of the land. Nevertheless, it is clear that within this story, the link that is articulated by Ruth on the threshing floor is accepted as a fundamental premise by the other characters as well as by the narrator. *Ibid.*, p. 1585.

events of their lives the main ideas of the book are expressed. As a rule, human beings, not God, occupy the central stage, their lot being determined by their conduct. God acts behind the scenes, usually refraining from direct, supernatural intervention, shaping individual destinies through the natural course of events.

Samuel, the only person in the Bible whose biography begins before his birth and extends after his death, acted as both judge and prophet. Saul, the first king, who led Israel after Samuel, is depicted in most of the book as an unstable character. When he tries to free himself from Samuel's stern tutelage, a break ensues between the two men, and Saul is rejected in favor of David-the focal figure in both books. David, as opposed to Saul, is generally portrayed in a favorable light. His personality is many-faceted and richer than any other figure in the Bible. He is a strong leader, successful in war and peace, a gifted musician and poet, deeply religious, endowed with a strong sense of justice, respectful and loyal towards Saul. **Only in his dealings with his children does he appear weak.** He sins, abusing his power, but repents wholeheartedly. At the peak of his reign he receives God's promise that his dynasty will reign forever.

Background

The book of Samuel describes the transition from the rule of the judges to the monarchic system of government. It tells of the foundation of the monarchy and its early struggles, paying special attention to questions concerning the rights, duties, and restrictions of the kings. It depicts how, through clashes between King Saul and the prophet Samuel, and between King David and the prophet Nathan, **a type of kingship emerged that radically differed from the absolute kingship prevalent in the ancient Near East.** According to the Bible, **kings in Israel were not allowed to do whatever they fancied.** They were subject to a higher power and to the rule of law and morality, upheld by the prophets.

The book also deals with the transfer of government from the old leaders to the new. Though hereditary succession was not unknown (see esp. Judg. chs 6--9), the three leaders Eli, Samuel, and Saul were not succeeded by their sons, but by others - each of whom had initially been under the patronage of his predecessor. The transfer was effected smoothly in the case of Eli and Samuel, with difficulty in the case of Samuel and Saul, and with bitter conflict in the case of Saul and David, culminating in Saul's recurring attempts to kill David.

Composition

Several stories in the book of Samuel occur twice, though in different versions. Cases in point include the stories about **the election of Saul** (9.15-10.9; 10.20-24), **his rejection by Samuel** (13.8-14; 15.9-33), David's first meeting with Saul (16.14-23; 17.31-37,55-58), **the killing of Goliath** (in one case by David, in the other by Elhanan, 17.40-51; 2 Sam. 21. 19), Saul's attempt to kill David by throwing his spear at him (18. 10-1 1; 19.9-10), David's escape from Saul (19.1 1-12; 20.1-21.1), his taking refuge with Achish (21.1 1-16; 27.1-28.2; 29.1-11), and **his refusal to kill Saul** when he had the opportunity to do so (24. 1-22; 26.1-25). The origin of the saying, "Is Saul too among the prophets?" is explained twice and in different ways (10.10-12; 19.18-24), and there are two divergent accounts of Saul's death (31 .1-7; 2 Sam. 1.3-10).

Different versions of the same story, which are often met with in folk tales, arose, **in all likelihood, when these stories were transmitted orally**, before they were written down. The double, and sometimes contradictory, stories were probably included in the book of Samuel because they were not seen as

different versions of the same story, but as accounts of different events, or because of the light they shed on the protagonists. As for contradictions, these were looked at in a different way from today: Consistency was not considered essential. Besides, the contradictions could always be resolved in one way or another (see, for instance, how the two differing accounts of the killing of Goliath are reconciled in 1 Chron. 20.5).

Jewish sources ascribe the composition of the book of Samuel to Samuel himself (*b. B. Bat.* 14b). But since his death is already recorded in chapter 25, the prophets Gad and Nathan, who are mentioned together with Samuel as the authors of a history of David (1 Chron. 29.29), are said to have finished the work (*b. B. Bat.* 15a). In the book of Samuel itself one source is mentioned: the Book of Jashar, from which David's elegy for Saul and Jonathan was taken (2 Sam. 1.18).

Biblical scholarship has posited a plurality of sources. In this respect three main theories have been put forward. First, the book of Samuel is composed of two or three parallel and continuous narrative strands, which run through the whole length of the book (this view was current in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries). Second, the book of Samuel consists of many single, independent narratives. Third, the book of Samuel is a compilation of large thematic units-such as the Ark narrative, the Saul cycle, the history of David's rise, the so-called succession narrative (which continues into the first chapters of Kings)-which are not parallel but arranged one after the other. **Most scholars hold that the book of Samuel was also subjected to a Deuteronomistic redaction** (that is, based on the tenets of the book of Deuteronomy), but it is generally agreed that this redaction was much slighter than in the book of Judges or the book of Kings. Some scholars assume a prophetic stratum between the older narrative material and the Deuteronomistic redaction. In any case, many hands have contributed to the formation of the book of Samuel as is also borne out by the differences in style and narrative method-yet the different elements have generally been integrated into one unified whole.

In its final form the book of Samuel and particularly the figures of David and Saul have had a great impact on Jewish and Western thought and art. Many compositions - religious, moral, and political - as well as innumerable works of poetry, drama, narrative prose, painting, sculpture, and music have been influenced by them, and they continue to be a source of inspiration even today.³⁸

1 Samuel

1 Samuel 1: Hannah prays for a son

1. Hannah is the wife of Elkanah, a man with two wives (1 Sam. 1.1-2). Annually, the man comes to the tabernacle at Shiloh to worship (1 Sam. 1.3).
2. Hannah weeps (1 Sam. 1.7).
3. She vows a vow, that if she is given a son, she will dedicate him to the Lord (1 Sam. 1.11).
4. Eli the priest (v.9) thinks she is drunk (v.13).
5. Eli tells her to go in peace, that the petition will come true (1 Sam. 1.17).
6. The Lord remembered her (v. 19), she conceives and bears Samuel (1 Sam. 1.20).
7. Hannah weans her son (v. 24), and brings him to Eli to "lend to the Lord" (1 Sam. 1.28).

1 Samuel 2

³⁸ *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 558-561, emphasis added.

1. The Song of Hannah³⁹ - she praises the Lord (1 Sam. 2.1-10).⁴⁰
2. Eli's sons were misbehaving as "sons of Belial" (1 Sam. 2.1-17).⁴¹
 - a. "Now Eli's sons were scoundrels, they paid no heed to the Lord" (1 Sam. 2.12 JPS translation).⁴²
3. Samuel, contrary to Eli's sons, was engaged in the service of the Lord (1 Sam. 2.18-19).
4. Eli blessed Elkanah and Hannah (1 Sam. 2.20), and Hannah conceives and has 3 sons and 2 daughters (v. 21).⁴³
5. Eli's sons and their misconduct (1 Sam. 2.22-36).
 - a. 1 Sam. 2.22 talks about how the sons of Eli "lay with the women at the door of the tabernacle," while the LXX does not even mention this.⁴⁴
 - b. Samuel grows in favor with God and men (1 Sam. 2.26).
 - c. A man of God warns Eli (1 Sam. 2.27).

³⁹ Hannah is famous for her sacrifice, but like Nephi and Deborah the prophetess she praised the Lord in psalm (2 Ne. 4; Judg. 5). Women, filled with the spirit of prophecy testifying of the goodness of God, are more common in the Bible than any other scripture (Judg. 5; Lu. 1:46-55; 68-79; 2:36-38; Acts 21:9, et al). "Too often Hannah is remembered for bargaining with God and then giving her son Samuel to serve in the temple. Her faith and capacity for love and sacrifice deserve more of our emphasis." Dawn Hall Anderson and Marie Cornwall, eds., *Women Steadfast in Christ: Talks Selected from the 1991 Women's Conference*, Deseret Book, 1992, p. 131.

⁴⁰ Hannah's song, which is **similar in style and content to certain psalms** (cf. v. 8 with Ps. 113.7-8), expresses thanks and praise to God for a victory over an enemy. **It fits neither Hannah's situation nor her personality.** Moreover, a king is mentioned in v. 10, whereas at Hannah's time the monarchy had not yet been established in Israel. The song was put in Hannah's mouth because of v. 5, while the barren woman bears seven, and because of its general idea, that God often completely reverses the fortunes of human beings, in accordance with their conduct. The idea of reversal is underscored by the contrasts between or within the lines of the parallelisms in the central part of the song. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 563.

⁴¹ The priest's boy would demand (raw) meat even before the suet was sacrificed to the Lord. He would also threaten to use force.

⁴² "Their conduct was scandalous even in a decrepid age, and the unblushing frankness of their vices led 'the people of the Lord to transgress,' by 'bringing into contempt' the sacrificial services of the sanctuary. The main element of hope and the prospect of a possible revival lay in the close adherence of the people to those services. But the sons of Eli seemed determined to prove that these ordinances were mainly designed for the advantage of the priesthood, and therefore not holy, of Divine significance, and unalterably fixed. Contrary to the Divine institution, 'the priest's right,' as he claimed it, was to take, if necessary by force, parts of the sacrifices before these had really been offered unto the Lord (Lev. 3:3-5; comp. 7:30-34)." Alfred Edersheim, *Old Testament Bible History*, chapter 2.

⁴³ "As the Lord promises all his children, once a test is fully met, the blessings are then bestowed, whether in this life or the next (see D&C 58:3-4). Hannah was likewise blessed once the commitment to her vow had been fully tested. Not only did Samuel become a great prophet, serving the Lord all his days, but also Hannah's yearnings for more children were fulfilled. Through Eli the Lord praised Hannah's commitment to her vow, then blessed her with the promise of more children. Hannah was eventually granted three more sons and two daughters (see 1 Sam. 2:20-21). At last her cup truly overflowed with blessings of great joy. Hannah's testimony reaches across dispensations to our time, and her story is an invitation to apply the same principles of righteousness. Through doing so we, too, might rejoice in the Lord as we experience his innumerable blessings in our lives." Linda M. Campbell, "[Hannah: Devoted Handmaid of the Lord](#)," *Ensign*, Mar. 1998, 49.

⁴⁴ Ruth 2.22 in the LXX reads as follows: καὶ Ἠλὶ πρεσβύτης σφόδρα καὶ ἤκουσεν ἃ ἐποίουν οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ. "And Eli was very old and he heard the things which his sons had done to the children of Israel." (My translation) No such indication of the sons of Eli doing anything to any women exist in this verse of the Septuagint.

- d. Hophni and Phineas, the sons of Eli- it is predicted that they will die “in one day” (1 Sam. 2:34). This is fulfilled in 1 Sam. 4:11, 17-18, when the Philistines capture the Ark of the Covenant.

1 Samuel 3

1. “There was no open vision” (1 Sam. 3:1).
2. The Lord calls Samuel (1 Sam. 3:2-14).
 - a. Questions arise, such as, “Why did the Lord not speak to Eli?”⁴⁵
 - b. Thomas S. Monson spoke of “The boy Samuel, one of tender years.”⁴⁶
3. Samuel tells Eli of his experience (1 Sam. 3:15-18).
4. All Israel, from “Dan to Beer-sheba” knew that Samuel was a prophet of the Lord (1 Sam. 3:19-21).

⁴⁵ The question comes to one's mind, Why didn't God, for instance, speak to Eli, for Eli was at that time the prophet and high priest in ancient Israel? But Eli could not or would not do as he was told. He had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. They were heirs to the priesthood, but they were profligate and wicked, and Eli could not or did not control them (1 Sam. 2:12-17). Thus, the Lord had to choose someone else. He chose a small lad, and as God called, “Samuel,” Samuel answered: “Speak, for thy servant heareth” (1 Sam. 3:10). And soon, all Israel from Dan to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was a prophet of God. Theodore M. Burton, *Conference Report*, April 1961, pp. 126-129.

⁴⁶ Remember that throughout the ages of time, our Heavenly Father has shown **His confidence in those of tender years. The boy Samuel must have appeared like any boy his age** as he ministered unto the Lord before Eli. As Samuel lay down to sleep and heard the voice of the Lord calling him, Samuel mistakenly thought it was aged Eli and responded, “Here am I.” However, after Eli listened to the boy's account and told him it was of the Lord, Samuel followed Eli's counsel and subsequently responded to the Lord's call with the memorable reply, “Speak; for thy servant heareth.” The record then reveals that “Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him. Contemplate for a moment the far-reaching effect of the prayer of a boy, born in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and five in Sharon, Windsor County, state of Vermont—even Joseph Smith, the first prophet of this dispensation. The Father and the Son appeared to him, and divine guidance was provided—all for the purpose to exalt the children of God. Thomas S. Monson, “[The Upward Reach](#),” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 48–49.