

Ruth & Samuel 1-2

# The Placement of Ruth

- English Bibles, following the LXX, place it **between Judges and I Samuel**
  - “In the days when Judges ruled . . .” (1:1)
  - The closing genealogy connects the family story with that of David, the first king (4:18–22)
  - after-the-fact glorification of David by the honoring of his ancestors; a sort of prologue to the accounts of kings that follows
- While the topic and the dating of its story fit, the genre and the date of composition put it in a different class than the Deuteronomistic History
- Hebrew Bibles place it instead **in the *Ketuvim* part of the *Tanakh***

# The story of Ruth, taking place during reign of the judges. Why important?

## How did faith survive?

“The judges period that provided the setting was notorious for its apostasy and covenantal ignorance and offense; faith was at a premium. How did the faith of Israel survive? We suggest that it survived in the families of common folk such as Elimelech and Naomi. The overall picture was grim, but there were faithful individuals.”  
(Hill & Walton 251).



# Ketuvim

- The **Ketuvim or writings** are distinguished from *Torah* (“Law,” namely Genesis–Deuteronomy) and *Nevi’im* (“Prophets,” both Former [DH] and the Later Prophets)
- The writings of this section were the **last to take shape**, starting at some point after the exile and continuing as late as the first century B.C.
- Consists of diverse genres
  - Songs and Prayers (Psalms)
  - Wisdom Literature (Proverbs, Job)
  - Apocalyptic Literature (Daniel—prophesied earlier, but the book as currently stands was revised and edited later)
  - **Chroniclers History** (1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah)
  - **Diverse material grouped together as “The Five Scrolls”** (Song of Solomon, **Ruth**, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther)

In the Jewish canon, the book of Ruth is one of the Writings; in many manuscripts it is placed after the book of Proverbs, so that Ruth provides a narrative illustration of the “woman of valor” with which the book of Proverbs ends (Prov 31:10).

# The Five Scrolls

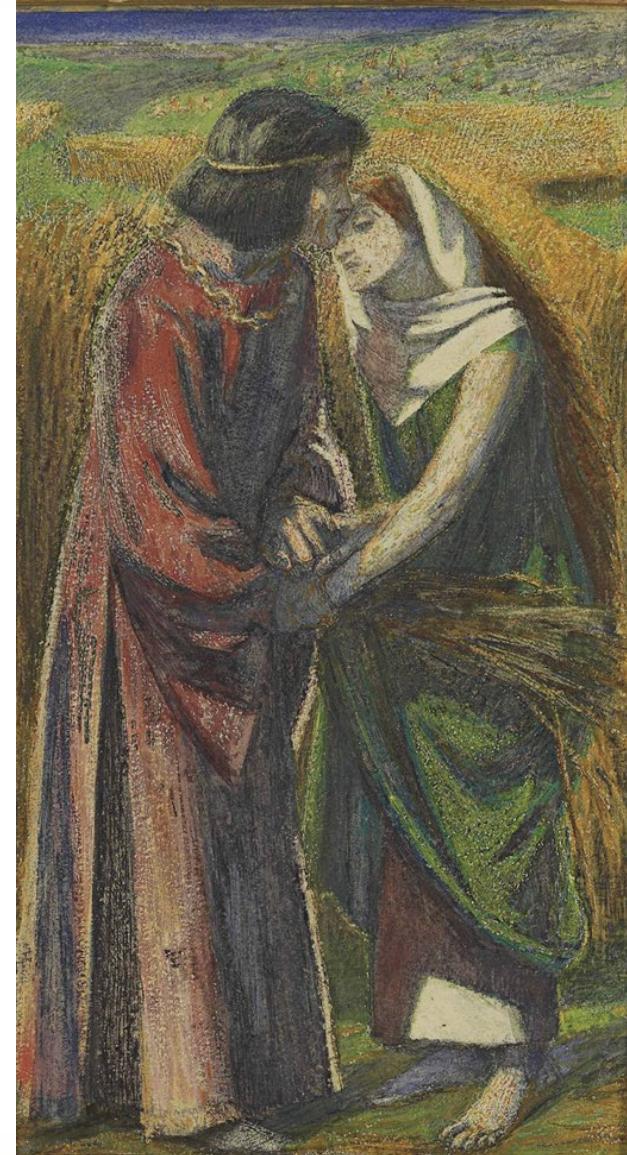
- Represents some of ancient Israel's most **reflective literature on the human condition**—stories and expositions on **love**, **loyalty**, **death**, loss, and **destiny**
  - Later practice had them read at the great festivals: *Ruth was read at Shavuot (Pentecost) because of its reference to the barley harvest*
- Little in common with each other in form or content
  - **A romantic short story (Ruth)**
  - A collection of dirges (Lamentations)
  - Love poetry (Song of Solomon)
  - A Philosophical treatise (Ecclesiastes)
  - A historical novella (Esther)

# Overview of Ruth

- Author: Unknown
  - Original early story may have been heavily edited or reworked in a later period
- Possible Dates
  - Early (between 950 and 700 B.C.)
    - part of the cultural flowering of the united monarchy or the glorification of the Davidic dynasty under the Divided Monarchy
  - Late (after the exile, c. 537 B.C. and following)
    - Some Aramaic and later usages
    - *Might have meant to counter the reforms of Ezra, who forbade marriage with Moabites* (Ezra 10:1-5; Nehemiah 13:23-27)



The book of Ruth is often thought to be a sweet, tender story with a romantic ending. Ruth is a nice young woman who cares for her mother-in-law, finds a man, and lives happily ever after. The story is actually far more complex, interesting, and relevant.



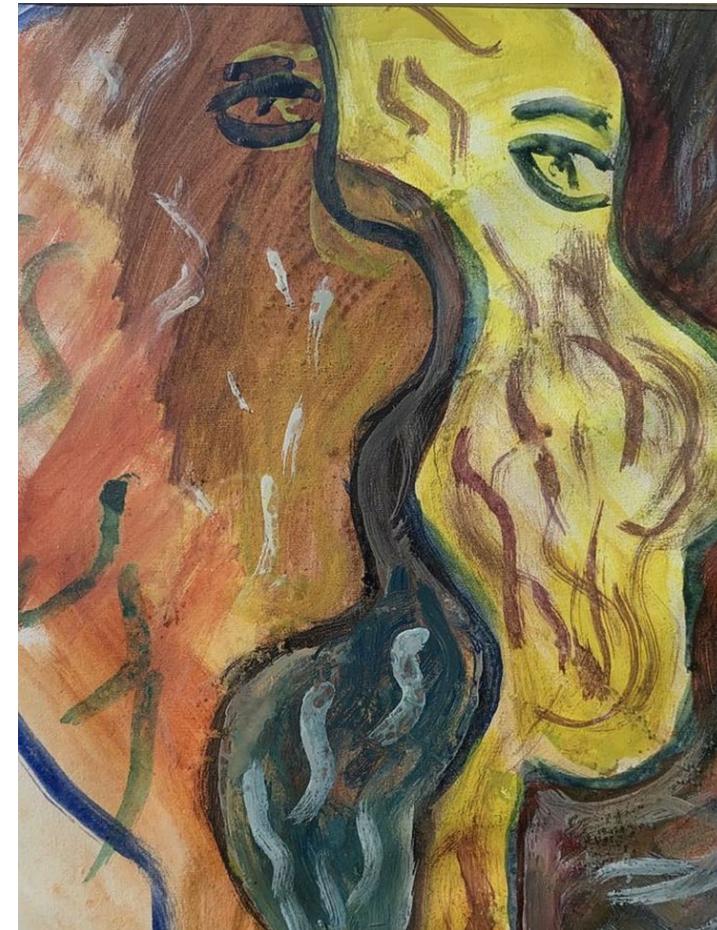
# What is the book of Ruth about?



What are its major themes/issues?

# What is the book of Ruth about?

- A story of *hesed*
- A story of duty
- **A story of sisterhood & female ingenuity**
- *Family continuity achieved largely through women*
- **An example of a *go'el* (redeemer)**
- **A story of how God works in our lives**
- *Choice of faith over nationality*
- *Respecting others choices: Orpah*
- **A story of integration & refugees, a polemic against xenophobia**



# Hesed: loyalty born from love (1:8; 2:20, 3:10)

“Related most frequently to covenant loyalty, the Hebrew term hesed envelops all the far-reaching implications of Yahweh’s loyalty to his covenant. The King James Version frequently translates the term “mercy,” while the New American Standard Bible chooses the compound term “lovingkindness.” These only begin to introduce all the varied ways whereby God demonstrates his covenant loyalty, and this variety is reflected in the decision by the translators of the New International Version to use an array of terms: Kindness, love loyalty, and more. Ruth is a book of hesed on both the human and divine levels. . . . All this demonstrates that hesed to one another is among the most fitting vehicles God can use to display his own hesed” (Hill & Walton 253).



# Hesed: loyalty born from love (1:8; 2:20, 3:10)



According to Rabbinic tradition, the main theme is *chesed* (Hebrew), loyalty or faithfulness arising from commitment. *Chesed* may pertain between God and a human community and between members of a family or community. The main characters, Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz, all manifest acts of *chesed*. Naomi shows concern for the welfare of her widowed daughters-in-law, especially Ruth, although technically she has no obligation toward them. Ruth's *chesed* in cleaving to Naomi goes beyond all expectation, and her seeking marriage with Boaz, the family protector, underlines her loyalty to the family. Boaz too acts with *chesed* when he accepts the double responsibility of land purchase and marriage, thereby preserving the lineage and inheritance of a family that were almost lost. (NRSV 382).

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for 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 will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. (Ruth 1:16-17)



- *Hesed*: loyalty born from love
- Choice of faith over nationality
- Ruth as a *go'el* (redeemer): she voluntarily sacrificed all that she had to show kindness beyond what anyone would expect or require.
- Sisterhood: female ingenuity & solidarity.



- Central role women play in the book; most female centered text in the Old Testament
- The women support one another. Ie Naomi with the other women in Bethlehem
- Features the strength of women working together to bring about change
- They ensured the continuity of the family and the nation
- Able to survive and flourish in an androcentric story world
- Special bond of solidarity and love between two women; endorses women's solidarity
- Stereotypical model of competition and hostility between women is gone; sisterhood is a real option
- Joint parenthood of Naomi and Ruth at the end

# Go'el (Redeemer)

In fulfilling his promise to Ruth, Boaz steps up and takes responsibility both to redeem Naomi's land and to enter into a levirate marriage with Ruth "to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren" (4:10). Once again Boaz has generously interpreted any legal responsibilities he might have had in these cases. As a result of that generosity, the barrenness of both the land and of Naomi and Ruth that was introduced in chapter 1 has been replaced with fruitfulness of the land and in the marriage of Boaz and Ruth for "The lord gave [Ruth] conception, and she bare a son" (4:13). (Dr. Strathearn)



# A story of a Refugee & how they are to be treated

**Repetition of Ruth as a Moabite:** Ruth is clearly to be seen as a foreigner. She was not just a non-Israelite, she was a native of one of Israel's traditional enemies and the descendant of an infamous incestuous relationship.

Not much is known about Ruth's people, the Moabites, during the Judges period aside from the brief oppression at the time of Ehud. The Moabites were a kindred people to the Israelites, descended from Abraham's nephew Lot (Gen 19:37). They occupied the territory across the Dead Sea from Judah. They had shown hostility toward the Israelites at the time of Moses (Num. 21-25) but were sympathetic to David's cause when he was a fugitive from Saul (1 Sam 22:3-4). Later they were subdued by David (2 Sam 8:2) Hill & Walton 251.



# Ruth as a poor foreigner

Few options for survival when they reach Bethlehem. Fortunately for them it is the time for the barley harvest. Gleaning was a way for poor people to obtain food.

According to the law of Moses, the poor had the right to harvest the corners of the field where the reapers were forbidden by law to reap. When reaping with a scythe, the swinging-arm movement naturally created a circular motion which would leave the square corners of the field untouched. A remarkable exercise in compassion, diligence, and gratitude, this law taught the landowners selflessness and consideration for others while teaching those who had to reap industry and self-respect.



# Important issues we see in the text when we recognize Ruth as a foreign worker

- Ruth as a lowly agricultural worker; like most foreign workers who work as menial laborers, their livelihood depends to a large extent on seasonal changes and market demands
- Field as a dangerous place for an unattached young foreign woman.
- Ruth works hard and is noticed but this does not seem to be enough to allow her to integrate into the host society.
- Ruth must rely on legal statutes to secure food for her & Naomi
- Integration is only achieved through marriage
- Is Ruth ever fully accepted by the people of Bethlehem? They call her son the son of Naomi?
- Ruth's repeated designation as a Moabite; Ruth is repeatedly recognized as a foreign worker



# How is Boaz a source of inspiration for the appropriate treatment of foreigners?



# Boaz as a source of inspiration for the appropriate treatment of foreigners

- Boaz treats Ruth with sympathy; he notices her and does not treat her as other; he makes sure his hired hands do not harass her sexually; he shares his provisions by allowing her to drink from the workers' supply of water and to glean much more than the law required of him in caring for the poor; he invites her to share a meal (which symbolizes her acceptance into society); and he encourages her with praise.
- He does not treat her as a foreigner.
- When Boaz declares his intentions to marry the Moabite woman; everyone praises the union. The women of Bethlehem all praise Ruth for her devotion to Naomi, so maybe she is accepted.



# The Book of Ruth in the Modern World

All of us at times need someone like Boaz in our lives to help us navigate dark times; but we also need to become a Boaz so that we can be redeemers for those in our community circles who may undergo times when they feel lost, hungry, poor or that they are invisible in the margins of society.

War and famine continue to force people to flee from their homes and families. Amnesty International reports that **globally there are 26 million refugees, half of which are children, who are seeking safe places for their families to both live and to thrive.** Ruth is a reminder that refugees can, and do, contribute in really significant and meaningful ways in their adopted homes, but there is still much for us to do collectively and individually to welcome and help integrate them into society before all of God's children can feel safe, can be fed, and can feel loved in this mortal world. **As covenant makers, it is our responsibility to reach out to those on the margins of our society. We cannot sit back and expect others to take care of them. Just as with ancient Israel, God expects each one of us to dedicate at least some of our personal "harvests" for the needy, even if all we have to give is a widow's mite.** (Dr. Strathearn, BYU)



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Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has invited each member of the Church to be “committed to freeing the world from the virus of hunger, freeing neighborhoods and nations from the virus of poverty.” He continued to plead that we reach out to those who exist on the margins of our societies, “May we hope for … the gift of personal dignity for every child of God, unmarred by any form of racial, ethnic, or religious prejudice. Undergirding all of this is our relentless hope for greater devotion to the two greatest of all commandments: to love God by keeping His counsel and to love our neighbors by showing kindness and compassion, patience and forgiveness. These two divine directives are still—and forever will be—the only real hope we have for giving our children a better world than the one they now know.” Jeffrey R. Holland, “A Perfect Brightness of Hope,” *Ensign*, May 2020, 82.

# A story of how God works in our lives

“Interestingly, the actions that drive the plot of the book are, with two exceptions (1:6; 4:13), performed by its human characters, but in the end the women give all the credit to Yahweh. Theologically, the book teaches that God primarily works through human actions (hidden providence) and sometimes through direct intervention.” (Hubbard & Dearman 154)

The book of Ruth “is a powerful witness of God’s intricate providence toward those who love and trust him. A poignant reminder that redemption comes only through the mercy and grace of God, the book of Ruth shows that it is often through the loving kindness (Hebrew, hesed) of others that God’s mercy and grace are experienced” (Fronk Olsen 77).



*As before this city and the world this statue now stands. Let all read at the base and do as inscribed: “Ye are my hands.” An endless invitation to a city now restored. To learn of and do the needed work of the Lord. Uchtdorf, May 2010*

# Introduction to Samuel

- Samuel?
  - There's no compelling reason for these to be called "Books of Samuel"
    - Samuel did not write them and only appears in the first of 1 Samuel
      - The Talmud, reflecting Jewish tradition, claimed that **Samuel started the book** and that **Nathan and/or Gad completed it**
  - Better title: "Rise of the Monarchy" or "Kingship in Israel"
    - **Sefer Sh'muel** or the Book of Samuel (Hebrew)
      - The history of the monarchy was so long that it filled two scrolls, hence the division in titles of Samuel (**Sefer Sh'muel**) and Kings (*Sefer Melachim*)
      - LXX (Greek) actually calls 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings, **1–4 Basileiōn, "Kingdoms" or "Reigns"**
        - Greek has vowels, whereas Hebrew does not, so the LXX version took 4 scrolls!
        - Modern editions take the titles from the Hebrew text but the divisions from the Greek
  - Authorship
    - Part of the Deuteronomistic history, likely written or heavily edited by DH<sup>2</sup>
    - Written during the exilic period, after the monarchy had failed
      - Obvious pro-monarchy sources and anti-monarchy sources throughout
    - **Originally 1–2 Samuel were one book and cover the period from around 1100 BC - 960 BC**
    - The division into two separate books probably occurred when the book of Samuel was translated into Greek, which necessitated putting the book on two scrolls instead of one.
    - Possible sources/lost books
      - Samuel's records (incl. 1 Sam 10:25), books of Nathan the Prophet and Gad the Seer (1 Chr 29:29), Book of Jasher (2 Sam 1:18)

# Central Figures in Samuel

- 1-2 Samuel divide into three main sections each focusing on one figure
  - 1. Samuel (1 Sam. 1-12) – the last judge who institutes the monarchy at the end of his life
  - 2. Saul (1 Sam 13-31) – the first king, the problematic king
  - 3. David (2 Samuel) – the glorious king
- Focus on **prophets**, **priests**, and **kings**—a system of checks and balances
  - **Samuel, Nathan, Gad**
  - **Eli, Abiathar, Zadok**
  - **Saul, David**

# Themes

- **Unification of Israel**
  - This centralization illustrated by the focus on monarchy and the creation of a political and spiritual capital
- **Institution of the Monarchy** – Last words of Joshua look forward to this
  - We can see the Deuteronomistic historian's interest in the leadership of Israel, specifically the perceived failure of Israel's political and spiritual leadership
    - The first writer/editor had a positive view of monarchy (DH<sup>1</sup>?), but the final editor (DH<sup>2</sup>), perhaps after 586 B.C., had a negative view
- **Establishment of Jerusalem as the capital**
  - Although this happens late in the narrative, it is pivotal
  - David captures the Jebusite city of Jerusalem and makes it his political capital
  - Movement of the ark to threshing floor of Araunah, signaling YHWH's move to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 24:18–25)
- **Reversal of fortunes**
  - “The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich:  
he bringeth low, and lifteth up.” (1 Samuel 2:7)

# Style

See esp. Seely, "An Introduction to 1 and 2 Samuel," SS3, 259–270 (packet, 74–79)

- Generally **theological narrative**, as in much of the OT until now
  - *Uses historical events to teach theological principles*
- Increasing incidents of **discourse**, where speeches, dialogue, and even character's thoughts are reported directly
  - this adds vividness and drama
- Frequent **juxtaposed contrasts**
  - e.g., righteousness of Samuel contrasted with the wickedness of the sons of Eli; Saul's attempts to kill David intertwined with David's refusal to "hurt the Lord's anointed"; plotting of David opposite the loyalty of Uriah
- **Irony**
  - For instance, Nathan's story about the poor man's sheep and his declaration to David, "thou art the man" [2 Sam 12:7])

# Structure

- **Samuel (1 Sam. 1–12)** – the last judge who institutes the monarchy at the end of his life
- **Rise and Fall of Saul & Introduction to David (1 Sam 13–31)**
- **Rise and Decline of David (2 Samuel)**
- **The Rise of David (1:1–10:19)**
  - David Established as King (1:1–5:6)
  - David's Consolidation of the Kingdom (5:6–6:23)
  - The Davidic Covenant (7:1–29)
  - David's Conquests for and Administration of the Kingdom (8:1–10:19)
- **The Decline of David (11:1–24:25)**

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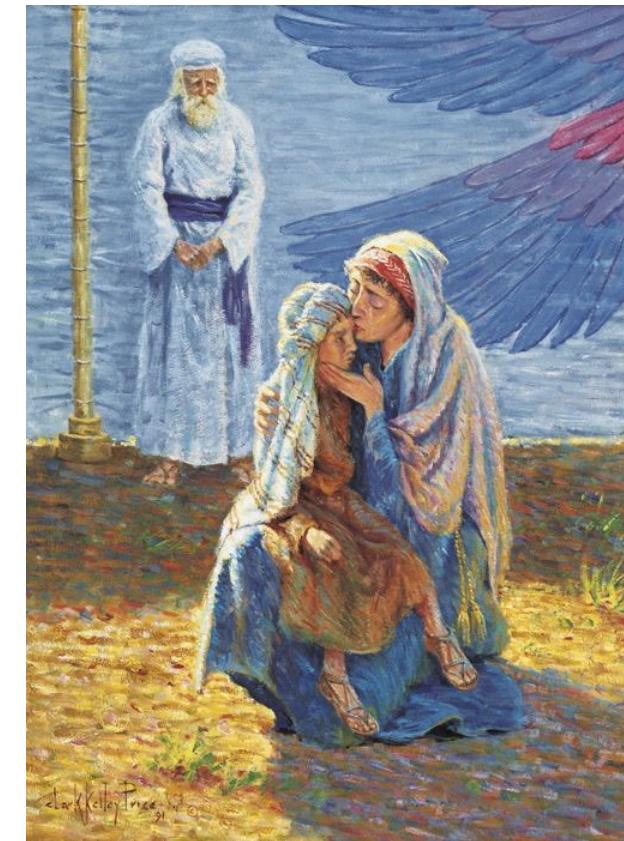
# Background and Birth of Samuel (1:1-28)

- **Elkanah, Hannah** and Peninnah
  - Elkanah is said to be an Ephraimite, but elsewhere (1 Chr) he is listed as a Levite (perhaps a later attempt to explain why he could sacrifice and act as a priest)
  - Peninnah the “second wife” or “co-wife” in later periods
- **Hannah and Eli**
  - Hannah’s Oath “O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and ... give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will **give him unto the Lord all the days of his life.**” (1 Samuel 1:11)
  - Eli sees Hannah’s silent prayer and thinks her drunk
    - The author continuously alludes to Eli as an ineffective high priest, here and elsewhere, leading to his own downfall, and that of his high priesthood
- **Samuel** – “**Name of God**” or “I have asked him of the Lord” a play on the Hebrew *shemeel* “**He who is from God**”



# Hannah:

- How do you view Elkanah, Hannah, & Eli?
- Where is God in this Story?
- What messages do you take away?
- Why is this a useful story for today's readers?"



# Hannah's Song (2:1-10)

And Hannah prayed, and said,  
“My heart rejoiceth in the Lord,  
mine horn is exalted in the Lord:  
my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies;  
because I rejoice in thy salvation.

*There is none holy as the Lord:*  
*for there is none beside thee:*  
*neither is there any rock like our God...*  
so that the barren hath born seven;  
and she that hath many children is waxed  
feeble.

The Lord killeth, and maketh alive:  
he bringeth down to the grave,  
and bringeth up.

**The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich:  
he bringeth low, and lifteth up...**

He will keep the feet of his saints,  
and the wicked shall be silent in darkness;  
for by strength shall no man prevail.  
The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken  
to pieces;  
out of heaven shall he thunder upon them;  
the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth;  
**and he shall give strength unto his  
king,  
and exalt the horn of his anointed.”**

- This is likely an ancient poem of Thanksgiving though it fits appropriately here, and looks forward to the anointing of a king
- **Model for Mary's Magnificat in Luke 1:46-55 (the humbling of the proud and the lifting up of the poor is the major thematic connection.)**

Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 anticipates everything that will follow: the joy of the blessed, the holiness and sovereignty of God, divine protection for those who wait on God, the humbling of the proud and lifting of the poor and needy from the ash heap, and the confession that God judges and chooses whom he will for kingship.” (Hess 270).