

Sample annotated outline

You should notice that each section has verse references to the right, and an explanation (annotation) explaining not simply the content, but more importantly, the significance of each section. This sample only has two levels (1A & 1B) but yours for Esther should go three levels deep (1A, 1B, and 1C, or if you're into the old-fashioned outlining method, then I, A, 1.)

- 1A **INTRODUCTION: NAOMI EMPTIED** 1:1-5
This introductory section describes the hopeless state of Naomi. Although she at one time had the present security of a husband and the future hope of descendants through her two sons, she was now left hopeless. She found herself without the security of a husband or sons, alone in a foreign land with only two childless widows from Moab as her family. All hope for protection, support, and continuation of the family line was gone.
- 2A **NAOMI RETURNS FROM MOAB** 1:6-22
In a state of despair, Naomi returns to Israel with the hope, but no promise, of being filled. This section provides a test of the loyalty of Ruth toward Naomi and YHWH.
- 1B *Ruth Shows Her Loyalty to Naomi* 1:6-18
Orpah's understandable decision to remain in Moab serves as a foil highlighting Ruth's faithfulness. As an example of worldly enticement Orpah remained in Moab and became a successful TV talk-show host whose weight loss programs became nationally known.
- 2B *Ruth and Naomi Return to Israel* 1:19-22
Ruth's insistence on making Naomi's people and God her own, and the oath by YHWH which she takes indicate her trust in God. As the pair arrives back in Israel Naomi expresses her condition twice. She tells her friends to call her "Mara" (bitter) instead of "Naomi" (pleasant) (1:20), and then states "I went away full but the Lord has brought me back empty" (1:21).
- 3A **RUTH AND BOAZ MEET IN THE HARVEST FIELDS** 2:1-23
In a touching story of compassion Boaz meets and voluntarily cares for Ruth. His actions toward her bespeak concern in any culture. As before, the author announces the theme of the chapter in the first verse.
- 1B *Ruth Begins Work* 2:1-7
According to Jewish law Ruth goes into the fields to glean the left-overs from Boaz's field hands. Apparently Boaz's character is appreciated even by his workers (2:4).
- 2B *Boaz Shows Kindness to Ruth* 2:8-16
The message of this section is Boaz's voluntary and extra-ordinary care of Ruth. His invitation for her to glean in his fields, (2:8); provision of a lunch meal, (2:14); and directions to his workers to leave extra grain for her and not to rebuke her (2:16), demonstrate concern for her total welfare.
- 3B *Ruth Returns to Naomi* 2:17-23
The news of Boaz's favor to Ruth gives new hope to Naomi. Indeed, this, the center of the book, is the turning point in Naomi's fortunes. Boaz's kindness offers tangible hope for Ruth's emptiness.

- 4A RUTH GOES TO BOAZ AT THE THRESHING FLOOR 3:1-18
According to Naomi's instructions Ruth follows up on Boaz's kindness and, by her actions, asks him to act as a redeemer.
- 1B *Naomi Instructs Ruth* 3:1-6
It was customary for the land owner to remain by the grain at the threshing floor to protect his investment during the harvest. Naomi's instructions to lie down by Boaz were not an attempt at seduction (for Ruth's character continues to be blameless, [3:6]), but an appropriate proposal of marriage.
- 2B *Boaz Promises to Redeem* 3:7-14
Boaz's response is positive yet guarded. He agrees to redeem her providing that the one kinsman who is nearer refuses his responsibility.
- 3B *Ruth Returns to Naomi* 3:15-18
In the midst of a secretive and significant encounter at the threshing floor Boaz curiously insists that Ruth not return to her mother-in-law empty handed, filling her shawl with barley. The author weaves this incident into the empty-full motif of the book, showing that at every encounter with the kinsman, the empty are made full.
- 5A BOAZ REDEEMS AND MARRIES RUTH 4:1-12
Boaz exercises his right of kinsman redeemer after the nearer kinsman refuses.
- 1B *Refusal of the Next of Kin* 4:1-8
According to custom Boaz goes through the proper channels to obtain the right to redeem Ruth. The nearer kinsman refuses, thus providing a foil for Boaz. His grace and favor are emphasized by the unnamed kinsman's refusal to help.
- 2B *Redemption of Ruth by Boaz* 4:9-12
Boaz announces his redemption of the line of Elimelech and married Ruth. The prophetic response of the elders is that Ruth's offspring might build Israel and that Boaz might become famous in Israel. The elders' final statement compares this union to the ancestral kinsman-redeemer of Judah.
- 6A CONCLUSION: NAOMI FILLED 4:13-17
This section balances that of the introduction (1:1-5). At this point Naomi receives back all and more than she lost. She rejoices with her friends with whom she had previously lamented. The bitter one has become pleasant once again and the empty one has been filled. This section also serves to climax the immediate story of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz.
- 7A GENEALOGY OF DAVID 4:18-22
The final section, a genealogy, lifts the story from an individual level to a higher national level with the emphasis on David. As Boaz had rescued the line of Elimelech and the lives of Ruth and Naomi, so also David would rescue the nation from the near spiritual extinction of the period of the Judges. And on yet another level, David's life and actions give promise of the ultimate Kinsman who would redeem all spiritually empty men, making their lives full.