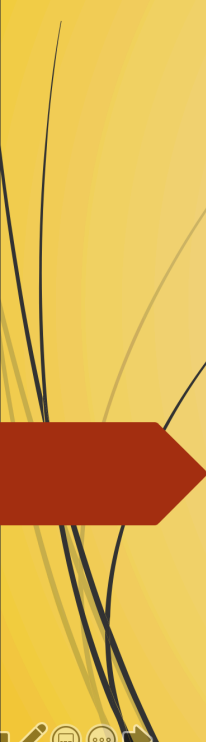


European Association of Biblical
Studies
Annual Meeting 2021



Elimelech or Abimelech? A Study on the Textual Variant of the Name of Noemin's Husband in LXX-Ruth

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Overview

- General information concerning the rendering of proper names in LXX-Ruth
- Elimelech or Abimelech?
 - A different *Vorlage*?
 - Translation or transmission of a different variant?
 - Literary criticism
- Conclusions

General information concerning the rendering of proper names in LXX-Ruth

► Transliteration

► Hellenization

- 4,11: הַלֵּאָה → Λεία-ας
- 4,12: הַיְּהוּדָה → 'Ιούδας-α

► Translation

- 1,20: מַרְאָה → *Πικρά -ᾱς (acc. Πικράν)
- 4,1: פְּלִנִּי אֶלְמָנִי → *κρύφιος -ου (voc. κρύφιε)

► Textual variant

- 1,2.3; 2,1.3; 4,3.9: אֶלְיָמֶלֶךְ → Ἀβειμέλεχ

Elimelech or Abimelech?

➤ אֱלִימֶלֶךְ

- only explicitly theophoric name in the book of Ruth
- “(my) God is king”

➤ Ἀβειμέλεχ

- Greek in form but Hebrew in meaning
- “my father is king”
- “father of the king”

A different *Vorlage*?

➤ Hebrew witnesses

- MT
- 4QRuth^a → אלימלך
- MS 5441 → יִמְלֵךְ

➤ Versions

- Certain Greek manuscripts
- Vulgata
- Syriac version till 2,11
- Targum of Ruth



Elimelech

➤ Literary or internal criticism

- Divine royalty
- Opposition between the name and his action
- *Difficilior lectio potior*

Translation or transmission of a different variant?

➤ Ἀβειμέλεχ

- B
- A (in 2,1; 4,3 and 4,9)
- 19' (in 2,3; 4,3.9)
- Syriac version from 2,1 on

➤ Ἐλιμέλεχ

- Hexaplaric witnesses

➤ Ἀβιμέλεχος -ου

- Flavius Josephus (*Antiquitates Iudaicae* V 318-319.323.333)

Literary criticism

- Involuntary modification?
- Assan-Dhôte and Moatti-Fine:
 - to mark the passage from a divine royalty to a human one
 - to underline the negative qualities of the character
- Schipper
 - possible reference to the royal line that will descend from this character
- Saxegaard
 - intertextual link with Gn 20

■ Biblical intertextual level

- Gn 20,2-21,32
- Gn 26,1-26
- Jdg 8,31-10,1
- 2Kgdms 11,21
- Ps 33 (MT 34),1
- (Hebrew Bible) 1Chr 18,16

■ Intra-textual level

- Abimelech is not mentioned in the final genealogy
- Daud's ancestry goes back to the character of Boos (4,17.21-22)

Ruth 1,1-3

Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ κρίνειν τοὺς κριτὰς καὶ ἐγένετο λιμὸς ἐν τῇ γῇ, καὶ ἐπορεύθη ἀνὴρ ἀπὸ Βαιθλέεμ τῆς Ἰούδα τοῦ παροικῆσαι ἐν ἀγρῷ Μωάβ, αὐτὸς καὶ ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ. καὶ ὄνομα τῷ ἀνδρὶ Ἀβειμέλεχ, καὶ ὄνομα τῇ γυναικὶ αὐτοῦ Νωεμὶν, καὶ ὄνομα τοῖς δυσὶν υἱοῖς αὐτοῦ Μααλὼν καὶ Χελαιών, Ἐφραθαῖοι ἐκ Βαιθλέεμ τῆς Ἰούδα· καὶ ἦλθοσαν εἰς ἀγρὸν Μωάβ καὶ ἦσαν ἐκεῖ. καὶ ἀπέθανεν Ἀβειμέλεχ ὁ ἀνὴρ τῆς Νωεμὶν, καὶ κατελείφθη αὐτὴ καὶ οἱ δύο υἱοὶ αὐτῆς.

It was when the judges were judging, and there was a famine in the land, and a man went from Baithleem in Iouda to sojourn in the countryside of Moab, he and his wife and his sons. The name of the man was Abimelech, and the name of his wife Noemin, and the name of his two sons Maalon and Chelaion, Ephrathites from Baithleem in Iouda. They went into the countryside of Moab and remained there. And Abimelech, the husband of Noemin, died, and she was left, she and her two sons. (NETS)

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- The name of Abimelech is not the only element whose meaning refers to “father”: the name of Moab, direction of his departure, destination of his moving and place where he “is, remains and dies”, may be also “punning” on Hebrew אב (“father”).
 - the LXX offers a coherent *pater familias*, who by his name and through his action refers to “father”
 - Theological implications of the divine absence from the name Abimelech
 - the LXX does not reveal the divine presence in the scene, characterised by the famine, the moving out from Baithleem and death
 - God appears in the narrative for the first time in 1,6, when the initial tragic situation begins to reverse and when the women set out on the road thanks to divine action (*motus primus* which allows the change of the initial situation)

Conclusions

- The textual variant in the LXX-Ruth, concerning the name of Noemin's husband seems to be a choice of the translator.
- The translator offers nuances and new meanings at the literal and theological level of the Greek text.
 - He creates by name and through actions a coherent "father"
 - He does not reveal the divine presence in the first scene
 - He accentuates the presence of God, who appears in the narrative in 1,6, when the initial tragic situation takes another and better direction

BRILL | Ferdinand Schöningh

BIBLISCHE ZEITSCHRIFT
65 (2021) 310-323

**Biblische
Zeitschrift**
brill.com/bz

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Beatrice Bonanno, "Elimelech or Abimelech? A Study on the Textual Variant
of the Name of Noemin's Husband
in LXX-Ruth" in *Biblische Zeitschrift* 65, 2021/2, p.310-323





Thank you for your attention!

