And God said: My children are rebellious, annihilating them is impossible, returning them to Egypt is impossible, exchanging them with another nation I cannot do, so/but what shall I do to them, behold, I shall surely torture them, and purify them through starvation. “And there was famine in the land.”

– Ruth Rabba, Introduction

The Book of Ruth tells a story of a stranger’s journey from her birthplace—the state of Moab—to her new homeland in Beth Lehem. The story is also about Ruth’s transformation from a stranger, a total other, into a native. Before I proceed to my counter-mainstream reading of the story of Ruth, a short synopsis of it, as told in the Hebrew Bible is necessary.

The story moves between two geographical places: Moab, a nation that has been cursed by God beyond ten generations, and Beth Lehem in Judea, where there is famine. Naomi, her husband, Elimelekh and their two sons—Machlon and Kilyon—decide to migrate to Moab in search of food. They settle there for ten years, where the sons marry Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. The three men subsequently die, and upon hearing that there is no longer famine in Judea, Naomi decides to return to Beth Lehem, a journey of around fifty miles to the northwest. On route, Orpah, turns back, but Ruth continues on with Naomi. Once in Beth Lehem, the hungry Ruth gleans barley from the fields of Boaz, who is Naomi’s relative. Boaz and Ruth meet, and he assumes responsibility for her well being. Naomi instructs Ruth to approach him sexually, she does and they subsequently marry. Ruth becomes pregnant and gives birth to Obed, the forefather of King David.

Ruth is more than just a woman and a widow; under different circumstances one could label her a pariah. As a Moabite, she belongs to one of the most symbolically “polluted” of biblical peoples. She is constructed as a foreigner in the book of Ruth, a status that puts her outside of the purview of the legal system, where she has no national and political rights. Of course, as an outsider to the legal system, she is not obliged to obey the law and is free to leave, free to return to Moab. But she comes instead with Naomi to Beth Lehem. In the Bible and in the mainstream interpretation of the story, Ruth is rewarded for her loyalty to Naomi; not only is she redeemed by Boaz, but she is also incorporated into Judean culture and ultimately becomes the ancestor of King David and of the future messiah. In this way Ruth enters the *comunitas* of the Hebrew people and, from her previously cursed cultural location, is assimilated into the heart of the sacred canon.

In stories of famine and hunger, when feeding finally occurs, the readers are also fed. Hunger and satiation are familiar sensations; readers identify with them, consuming and being consumed, feeding and being fed throughout the process of reading. Ideologically, such stories also serve existential allegories or didactic models. In this article, I map out the narrative dynamic of the Book of Ruth and demonstrate how its complex theological, psychological, territorial, and genealogical content makes it an ideal model of adoption and appropriation of otherness. I argue that Ruth delivers an important moral lesson about the rewards of inclusion and belonging within the literal and symbolic treatment of hunger and feeding. In this connection, I trace the evolution and affect of Ruth’s trauma of hunger and survival to the annihilation of Sodom, the departure of Lot and his family, and the etiological conception of Moab in Genesis.

My reading of hunger and satiation in the book of Ruth exposes the ideological operation of gendered (or even sexualized) foreignness and its treatment within the culture of the Bible. I approach the story as a

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3 In her book *Khronikah shel Predah* (A Chronicle of Separation—On Deconstruction’s Disillusioned Love), Michal Ben Naftali challenges the codes that have silenced Ruth and writes the missing intimate account of her subjectivity. Against the ideological construction of her appropriation, by focusing on the uncelebrated position of