

Ruth 3:15—“he” or “she”? 1611 & 1769 KJV Editions

Ruth 3:15, in the widely-used 1769 revision of the King James Bible, reads: “Also he said, Bring the vail that *thou hast* upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six *measures* of barley, and laid *it* on her: and **she** went into the city.” However, other editions of the King James Version read “he” in Ruth 3:15. The 1611 edition of the KJV reads: “And he said, Bring the vaile that thou hast vpon thee, and holde it. And when she helde it, he measured six *measures* of barley, and laide it on her: and **he** went into the citie.” Scrivener’s 1873 edition of the KJV likewise reads: “Also he said, Bring the vail that *thou hast* upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six *measures* of barley, and laid *it* on her: and **he** went *into* the city.”¹

Modern Bible versions are likewise divided between “he” and “she,” some with footnotes mentioning the difference, and others without any note:

And he said, “Bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out.” So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her. Then **she** went into the city. (ESV)²

And he said, “Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it.” So she held it, and he measured six *measures* of barley and placed *it* on her. Then **she**¹ went into the city. (LSB)³

Again he said, “Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it.” So she held it, and he measured six *measures* of barley and laid *it* on her. Then **she**¹ went into the city. (NASB)⁴

He also said, “Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out.” When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and placed the bundle on her. Then **he**^c went back to town. (NIV)⁵

Also he said, “Bring the shawl that *is* on you and hold it.” And when she held it, he measured six *ephahs* of barley, and laid *it* on her. Then **she**⁵ went into the city. (NKJV)⁶

Then he said, “Bring the cloak you are wearing and hold it out.” So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley, and put it on her back; then **he** went into the city. (NRSV)⁷

And he said, “Bring the mantle you are wearing and hold it out.” So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley, and laid it upon her; then **she** went into the city. (RSV)⁸

¹ *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible: Of the Authorized English Version* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1873), Ru 3:15.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ru 3:15.

³ As in many mss; M.T. *he*

⁴ *Legacy Standard Bible* (Three Sixteen Publishing, 2022), Ru 3:15.

⁵ So with many mss.; M.T., *he*

⁶ *New American Standard Bible*, electronic edition. (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1986), Ru 3:15–16.

^c Most Hebrew manuscripts; many Hebrew manuscripts, Vulgate and Syriac *she*

⁵ *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ru 3:15.

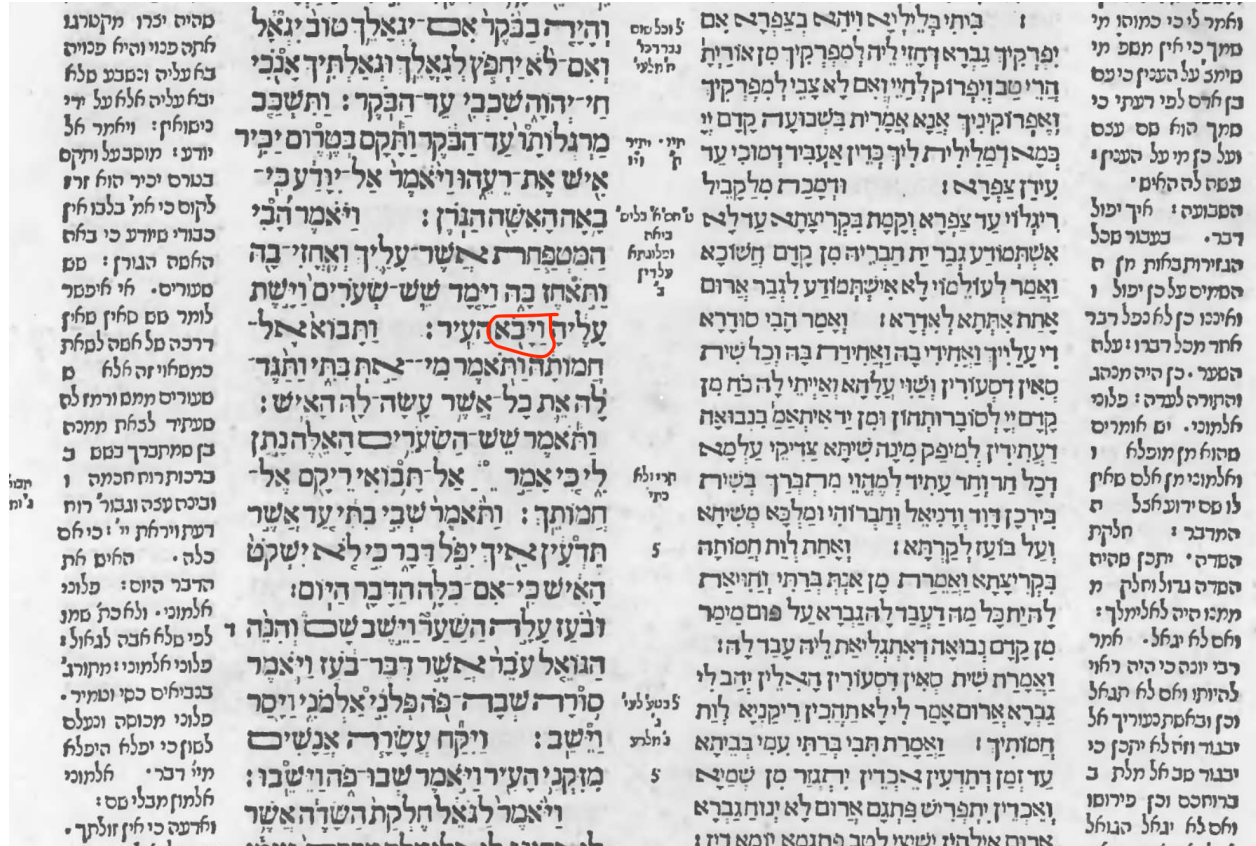
⁵ Many Heb. mss., Syr., Vg. *she*; MT, LXX, Tg. *he*

⁶ *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Ru 3:15. Note that the NKJV departs from the reading of the 1611 KJV to follow the 1769 revision. Note also the puzzling NKJV note that the LXX reads “he,” when the LXX simply has the verb εισηλθεν, which can be either masculine or feminine; compare the discussion below of the LXX reading.

⁷ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Ru 3:15.

⁸ *The Revised Standard Version* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1971), Ru 3:15. Note that, as editions of the KJV shifted between “he” and “she,” so revisions of modern versions likewise vary: the Revised Standard Version reads “she,” while the New Revised Standard Version reads “he.”

While the Trinitarian Bible Society's edition of the Hebrew *Textus Receptus* as edited by Ginsburg,⁹ the United Bible Society's *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, and the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* all indicate the existence of manuscripts with the “and she went” (וַתֵּבֵן) reading,¹⁰ all these sources nevertheless contain “and he went” (וַיֵּבֵן) in the body of the Hebrew text. The 1524-1525 Hebrew *Textus Receptus*, edited by the Hebrew Christian Jacob ben Chayyim, the basis for the Authorized, King James Version, likewise reads וַיֵּבֵן, “and he went” in Ruth 3:15:



The printed text of the LXX is ambiguous, while English translations differ:

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ Φέρε τὸ περίζωμα τὸ ἐπάνω σου. καὶ ἐκράτησεν αὐτό, καὶ ἔμέτρησεν ἕξ κριθῶν καὶ ἐπέθηκεν ἐπ' αὐτήν· καὶ εἰσηλθεν εἰς τὴν πόλιν.

And he said to her, Bring the apron that is upon thee: and she held it, and he measured six measures of barley, and put them upon her, and **she** went into the city. (Brenton)¹¹

⁹ C. D. Ginsburg, ed., *Holy Bible: The Holy Scriptures in the Original Languages: תורה נביאים כתובים*, 1894/1998, Bomberg / Ginsburg / Chayyim ed. *H KAINH DIAQHKH*, Beza/Scrivener, 1894. London, England: Tyndale House/Trinitarian Bible Society, 1894/1998.

¹⁰ E. g., the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* apparatus indicates: “G T | καὶ εἰσηλθεν Ῥούθ G^{Ms} (V) (S) (harm–synt, cf KR) . That is, the reading found in the text itself, “and he read,” וַיֵּבֵן, is supported by the Old Greek and the Targum, while numbers of manuscripts of the Old Greek, the Vulgate, and the Syriac support the “she read” reading.

¹¹ Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton, *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament: English Translation* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1870), Ru 3:15.

And Boos said, “It must not be known that a woman came to the threshing floor.”¹⁵ And he said to her, “Bring the apron that you have on.” And she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it upon her, and **he**^g went into the city. (NETS)¹²

The textual apparatus in the critical Gottingen edition of the LXX indicates that MSS of the LXX can be found that add either “Ruth” (ροϋθ) or “Booz” (βουζ).¹³ The Latin Vulgate reads “she”:

Et rursum: Expande, inquit, pallium tuum, quo operiris, et tene utraque manu. Qua extendente, et tenente, mensus est sex modios hordei, et posuit super eam. Quæ portans **ingressa** est civitatem, (Clementine)¹⁴

et rursum expande inquit palliolum tuum quo operiris et tene utraque manu qua extendente et tenente mensus est sex modios hordei et posuit super eam quæ portans **ingressa** est civitatem (Weber)¹⁵

And again he said: Spread thy mantle, wherewith thou art covered, and hold it with both hands. And when she spread it and held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it upon her. And **she** carried it, and went into the city,¹⁶

However, the Tremellius-Junius Latin Bible reads: “Quumque dixiffet, cedo ventrale e quo tegeris, & tene illud, eaque tenuiffet illud: tunc demenfus fex menfuras horei impofuit ei, deinde ingreffus eft ciuitatem,” which supports Boaz (“ingressus est”) entering the city.

The Hebrew Targum supports “he” in Ruth 3:15:

ואמר הכי סודרא דעליך ואחדי בה ואחדת בה וכל שית סאין דשערין ושוי עלהא ואיתיהיב לה כח וגבורא מן קדם ייי לסוברא יתהון ומן יד איתאמר לה בנבואה דעתידין למיפק מנה שיתא צדיקי עלמא דכל חד וחד מתברך בשיתא ברכן דויד ודניאל וחבריה ומלכא משיחא ועל בועז לקרתא:

Then he said, “Bring the scarf that is on you and hold it.” She held it, and he measured out six seahs of barley and put them on it. Strength and power were given to her from before the Lord to carry them, and immediately it was said to her prophetically that there would descend from her six of the most righteous men of all time, each of whom would be blessed with six blessings: David, Daniel and his companions, and the King Messiah. Then **Boaz** went to the town.

Wycliff, translating the Bible from Latin, supports “she”:

And eft, Spreed, he seith, thi mantil, with which thou art couerd, and hold with ethir hoond. The which spredynge and holdynge he mesuride sixe bushels of barli, and put vpon hir; the which berynge wente into the cyte, (Wycliffe, Early Version, from Latin)¹⁷

And eft he seide, Stretche forth thi mentil with whichthou art hildid, and holde thou with euer either hond. And while sche stretchide forth and helde, he mete sixe buyschels of barly, and puttide on hir; and sche bar, and entride in to the citee, (Wycliffe, Later Version, from Latin)¹⁸

The pre-KJV English Bibles translated from Hebrew are mixed:

^g Or *she*

¹² Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., “Routh,” in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint (Primary Texts)*, trans. Frederick W. Knobloch (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Ru 3:14–15.

¹³ Udo Quast, ed., *Ruth*, vol. IV, 3, *Vetus Testamentum Graecum. Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis Editum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 183.

¹⁴ *Biblia Sacra Juxta Vulgatam Clementinam.*, Ed. electronica. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2005), Ru 3:15.

¹⁵ Robertus Weber and R. Gryson, *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, 5th revised edition. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1969), Ru 3:15.

¹⁶ *The Holy Bible, Translated from the Latin Vulgate* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), Ru 3:15.

¹⁷ John Wycliffe, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Apocryphal Books: Early Version*, ed. Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden, vol. I–IV (Oxford: Oxford, at the University Press, 1850), Ru 3:15.

¹⁸ John Wycliffe, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Apocryphal Books: Later Version*, ed. Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden, vol. I–IV (Oxford: Oxford, at the University Press, 1850), Ru 3:15.

And he sayde againe: Bring the mantel that thou hast vpon thee, and holde it. And when she held it, he mette in sixe measures of barlye, and layde it on her: And **she** gat her into the citie. (Bishop's)¹⁹
Also he said, bring the shete that thou hast upon thee, and holde it. And when she helde it, **he** measured six *measures* of barly, and laied them on her, & went into the citie. (Geneva)²⁰

Thus, numbers of sources support both readings. But which reading is correct?

Ruth 3:15: The Correct Reading

The reading that the Holy Spirit gave to the original human penmen in Ruth 3:15 was **וַיֵּלֶךְ**, “and he went.” Believers can know that “and he went,” not “and she went,” **וַיֵּלֶךְ**, is the correct reading, because God promised to preserve every original language word of Scripture (Matthew 5:18) and the Hebrew *Textus Receptus*—and even the Hebrew critical text—reads “and he went” (**וַיֵּלֶךְ**). The reading in the 1611 edition of the KJV (and of the Geneva Bible) is, therefore, correct, and the 1879 KJV edited by Scrivener did well to return to the “he” of the 1611 from the “she” of the 1769 KJV. The NKJV is also in error when it reads “she” in Ruth 3:15. While neither reading is a factual error, as doubtless both Ruth and Boaz entered into the city, Scripture’s promises of perfect preservation validate that “and he went” is the correct reading in Ruth 3:15.

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¹⁹ *The Bishop's Bible*, Accordance electronic edition; studylight.org, Ruth 3:15.

²⁰ *Geneva Bible* (Geneva: Rovland Hall, 1560), Ru 3:15.