

CONCLUSION

by Rabbi Dr. Meir Levin

We now complete our study of the Book of Ruth. Before we started, we made certain assumptions and these assumptions guided our interpretation of Ruth. This book is, on the surface a story of a young Moabite maiden who finds acceptance and builds a home among Judeans. A heartwarming and charming tale, indeed, but surely a Biblical book is much more than merely a tale. In the tradition of Jewish interpretation we assumed that Ruth can be understood on several levels: moral/psychological, teaching how to rise above personal limitations; inspirational, demonstrating how elevated women and men deal with the challenges of their lives; and finally theological, teaching us about Redemption, for individuals and of the world.

As pointed out in the introduction, we encounter three redemptive circles within the Book of Ruth. In the first, the family of Elimelech is restored to its previous place in Bethlehem and the personal destiny Machlon is fulfilled through the progeny of his widow, Ruth. In the second, spiritual essence of Lot is returned to the family of Abraham. The daughter of his daughters' daughters, Ruth, not only rejoins the Abrahamic covenant but contributes to it the qualities of Royalty that Lot took with him into the exile of Moab. Surprisingly, the sin of the daughters of Lot actually serves as the stepping stone on the road to redemption, for through it, good is separated from; the good is reabsorbed into the main trunk of Godliness, while the evil is forever rejected. What we learn about the second circle helps us to understand the third one.

The third is the cosmic circle of Redemption. This circle is only half completed. We learn that David stands in the center of History - midway between Adam and the Messiah (ADaM=Adam, David, Messiah). Boaz and Ruth completed the work that prepared the way for David. They and the generations before them battled to separate the fragments of good from evil and to set together the great framework for the redemption of humanity.

On the most apparent level the generations of the Judges struggled with the challenge of bringing everyday life, agriculture, settlement and social and external relations with the surrounding Gentile world, under the sovereignty of the Torah. Ruth, who came from Moab is an example of this challenge. On the deeper level, there was the challenge of foreign worships, philosophies and concepts. David and the institution of the Monarchy represented successful conclusion to this period of national development and maturity. The generations after David are charged with unifying the fragments into a single coherent tapestry. Sometimes they succeeded and sometimes they failed. We await successful completion on the second half of the circle in which we also play a role. The

book of Ruth teaches us how to surmount the challenge from the outside, which still tempt us today. It also, however, tells us that it is within our power to emerge victorious for our forefathers have already done most of this work for us. Our present challenge, however, is to bring the world in all of its myriad manifestations under the banner of one Torah, one God and one united humanity under the Almighty.

Thank you for learning together. May Hashem bless all of us to successfully resolve personal trials, to rise higher and higher in His service and to see the Redemption of the nation of Israel and of the whole mankind, soon, speedily and in our day. Amen. So may it be His will.

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