

# MEGILLAS RUS - A LESSON ABOUT THE BASICS

by Rabbi Yehudah Prero

The guest contributor to this issue is R' Aryeh Winter.

In the last post, we mentioned that the Megilla of Ruth is read on Shavuot. Ruth, a Moavite, was the daughter-in-law of Na'omi. Na'omi's husband Elimelech and her two sons Machlon and Kilyon died when the family was living outside of the land of Israel. After the death of her husband and children, Na'omi decided to return to her homeland. Ruth insisted on going with her mother-in-law. The two returned to Israel as paupers. Ruth went out to the fields, hoping to collect the part of the harvest which by Jewish Law goes to the poor. Ruth went to the field of Boaz, who was a relative of Elimelech, Ruth's deceased father-in-law, and one of the most respected men of his generation. Boaz, upon finding out that Ruth was collecting in his field, made sure that Ruth collected all that she needed to bring home in order for her and Na'omi to live.

When Boaz met Ruth, he explained to her why he was dealing with her in such a kindly fashion (2:11). He said *"It has been told to me all that you have done for your mother-in-law...and that you left your mother and father and your birthplace and you went to a nation that you did not know."* The Targum explains that Boaz was also telling Ruth through prophecy that she would merit having the kingship of Israel descend from her on account of these two deeds. The Targum states that Boaz mentioned the deeds in this specific order: First, that she supported her mother-in-law; Second, that she left her idols and parents and converted to a nation she did not know. From the words of the Targum and the order in which these deeds were listed, there seems to be an implication that the first act, the support of Na'omi, is at least equally responsible for Ruth meriting her great reward.

A question that arises upon reading this is how Boaz could equate these two actions. One action was an incredible act of self-sacrifice. Ruth, our Sages tell us, was the daughter of the king of Moav. Ruth, after the death of her husband, did not return to the comfort of the palace life in which she was raised. Instead, she decided to convert and become part of the Jewish nation! Ruth went from being a princess in a royal court to becoming a pauper, destitute, and dependent upon charity for her very sustenance. The other action of Ruth was an ordinary kindness. It was a daughter-in-law helping her elderly mother-in-law. What was so special about this everyday act that because of it, Ruth would merit to be the mother of Jewish royalty, and even more outstanding, that the act was placed on the same plane as Ruth's extraordinary self-sacrifice in her decision to convert?

The answer is that Boaz is teaching us that even the smallest and seemingly most mundane act, if done with the proper intentions, can be elevated to an act of great self-sacrifice. Ruth, by performing

the act of kindness with a pure heart and with every fiber of her being in a desire to do the will of Hashem, raised her small act of kindness above everyone else's similar acts of kindness. Because of this act of kindness, she merited having the monarchy of Israel descend from her. When approaching Shavuos, the day we celebrate the acceptance of the Torah, many of us have lofty goals, ideals, and aspirations which we greatly desire to fulfill. Boaz should remind us that we need to remember the potential greatness in everyday, ordinary acts. When these acts are done properly, we can merit great reward.