

SHAVUOS PART II

by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari

Why do we read Megillat Ruth on Shavuot? Many reasons for our reading have been given but there is no Bet Medrash without new insights.

The Avnei Nezer queried as to why Ruth merited all the beauty of Israel in that King David and the King Messiah were descended from her. There were many converts who sacrificed everything in order to draw close to Klall Yisrael and yet they did not merit this. She did so by virtue of her reply to Naomi's telling her of the 4 death penalties enforceable by Bet Din, that, 'wherever thou diest, I will die'. She did not balk at the idea that her conversion would include the possibility of incurring that punishment of the Bet Din that was part of her becoming a Jewess. That was a desire that was called forth from the depths of her very heart and lies at the innermost being of Israel that will be reached by the Messiah.

In order to understand this we may look at the answer of the Tosfot (Shabbat, 88a) as to why it was necessary for Hashem to hold the mountain over Israel during Matan Torah. After all, they had already said naseh ve nishmah. The answer that there was the fear that when Israel saw the great fire at Sinai they would withdraw their promise out of fear, is not clear. On the contrary, their increased fear should make them even more afraid of recanting, since the punishment for that is greater than refusing the Torah in the first place. This is parallel to what the convert is told before the conversion. 'Know that before, you would not be liable for karet for eating cheilev, whereas on converting to Judaism you do become liable' (Yevamot, 47). But it was His will that Israel should be prepared to receive the Torah, even if it meant that there was a danger of falling into Gehinom as a result. Then they really would be special. This is truly the whole manner of Ruth.

'By virtue of the 6 ears of barley that Boaz gave to Ruth she merited the 6 Tzaddikim who would be descended from her. And each of them had 6 attributes. They are David, Hezekiah, Yeshayahu, Hananiah, Misha'el, Azariah, Daniel and the King Messiah' (Midrash Rabba, Ruth, chapter 7). The Master Menachem Mendel of Kotsk, said that the whole concept of kingship couldn't exist in Israel and had to come to them from Ammon [Naama, mother of Rechavam] and Moav [Ruth]. The reason for this is that Israel is like one body, and just as in the body one organ cannot impose its will on another, so too one Jew cannot impose their will on another. Moshe could be a king only because he stood outside of Israel and was considered equal to the whole nation. Therefore since that is what is involved in kingship they had to get it from outside, from Ammon and Moav. These were both the

descendants of Lot in Sdom and their hallmark is pride, even as it is written, ' We have heard of the pride of Moav; he is very proud ' (Yeshayhu, 16:6). Through kingship, Israel could take pride out of the klipah of Moav and bring it to holiness so that it could be used for the Name of Heaven. Chazal said that the reason why the kingship of Shaul could not endure was because they could not find in a defect in him (Yoma, 28b); that is he did not have the strength of lordship and ruling necessary for kingship. He himself said, ' I have listened to the voice of the people', but Shmuel told him, 'even if you are small in your own eyes, you are still the head of the tribes of Israel'. Now Boaz added to this strength that came to Ruth from Moav, the 6 ears of barley that she should merit these 6 righteous ones. He did not know if they would come through him as the kinsman still had first right to redeem, yet he acted in generosity and kindness with her. He did not consider his own interests but only the benefit of Israel, that kingship- David and the King Messiah should come to them from Moav. Indeed, is a great righteousness to further the nation's and the klall interests first; one that is paramount throughout the whole development of kingship and royalty in Israel, starting from David, as is evident from the whole of Tehillim.

Orpah is the letters of Pharaoh, the letters of Oref [neck]. Stiff -necked having the connotation of stubbornness and arrogance, as we saw in Pharaoh who would not submit till Egypt was smitten with the 10th plague. She is so named because she turned her back on her mother-in-law. Ruth, however, is the letters of tur, a dove, who offers her throat in her simplicity. We know that Oref is the opposite of throat (Hulin ,19b). When Israel went out of Egypt, they took out the great wealth and that Oref was part of the wealth. The statement, 'who took you out of Egypt' symbolizes the transformation of that oref. So G-d said that by transforming that stubbornness into a virtue, Israel will have the power to serve Him. That virtue continued in Israel throughout the ages. As with the word of G-d, Heavens were created, so the Ten Commandment altered their behavior so that they could become a vessel for His words. Since the middah of Orpa become that of Israel through Ruth, we read Meggilat Ruth on Shavuot, the time of Matan Torah.

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