

A Shavuot Message
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Women bring Redemption through Yearning for Hashem

“At the time of Meshiach the lower will become higher and the inner hidden layer of reality will be revealed.”¹ As we move forward toward the Messianic age, we experience an increased interest in the woman’s role in bringing about the final redemption. Ruth, the mother of Kingdom, is the perfect role model and inspiration for women who aspire to follow her path of righteousness and to make a difference in the world. She is particularly a role model for the many righteous converts who join the Jewish people at this time, before we reach the epoch when converts will no longer be accepted.² The book of Ruth takes place in Israel, during the bleak period of the Judges when there was a lack of unity and central leadership. This period parallels our current era, about which the following can also be ascribed: “*In these days there is no king in Israel; each person does whatever is straight in his own eyes*” (Judges 17:6). In spite of—or perhaps because of—the fact that Ruth was a convert from the lowest people whose ability to convert was questionable, she nevertheless was able to shine her light amidst Israel’s dark times. She eventually brought about the sprout of Meshiach through the birth of her great grandchild, King David.³

Thirsting for Hashem

...דאמר רבי יוחנן למה נקרא שמה רות שיצא ממנה דוד שריוהו להקב"ה בשירות ותושבחות.

Rabbi Yochanan said; why was her name called Ruth? Because David—who satiated (*Rivahu*) the Holy One, blessed be He, with hymns and praises—descended from her. (Baba Bathra 14/b)

The Midrash teaches us that it was this essential quality—the quality of song that is expressed through the melodies of Tehillim with its power to fluctuate from low to high and from high to low—that enabled David, the composer of Tehillim, to emerge from her. Perhaps Ruth’s spiritual ascent from the lowest to the highest, together with sacrificing the highest physical comfort for the lowest, created a “vibration” that generated the musical sequences of Tehillim, composed by David. This diverse sequence is a vital quality for the king, enabling him to identify with and to include the souls of all his people—from low to high—within him.

Her name, Ruth, is derived from the root *Riva*, which means “to satiate thirst.” The seed of Ruth’s spiritual thirst to cleave to Hashem, regardless of the price, sprouted forth fruits

¹ Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, [Mashiah and Jewish Leadership](#).

² Talmud, Avodah Zarah 3/b

³ Megillat Ruth 4:21-22

by the way of David's Tehillim, satiating Hashem's thirst for the prayers of the righteous. When we are completely determined in our desire for spirituality and are willing to pay the price, by overcoming the repeated obstacles that appear on the way, we too have the opportunity to perfect an attribute within us that can become manifested by our descendants, and anchored in eternity.

Rabbi Nachman teaches that Hashem is concealed within the obstacles themselves. "A person of reason, when examining the obstacle, finds Hashem... a person without reason sees an obstacle and immediately retreats." An obstacle is an aspect of a thick cloud. The thick cloud is darkness. "And the people stood from afar"⁴ for the masses retreat when they see an obstacle. But Moses, the epitome of reason and spiritual cognizance, approached the thick cloud where G-d was. Moshe approached the obstacle, for he knew that Hashem was hiding within the cloud.⁵

Crying for Hashem

מדרש זוטא רות פרשה א

על ע"ז שתי נשים מסרו עצמן על שבט יהודה תמר ורות תמר היתה צועקת אל אצא ריקנית מן הבית ורות כל שעה שחמותה אומרת לה לכי בתי היתה בוכה שנאמר ותשנה קולן ותבכינה עוד (רות א' י"ד)

Two women gave over their soul for the sake of the tribe of Yehuda: Tamar and Ruth. Tamar would cry out, 'Let me not go out empty-handed from this house'". Ruth, whenever her mother-in-law told her, 'Go, my daughter' she would cry, as it states: "And they lifted their voice and they cried more." (Ruth 1:14) (Midrash Zuta Ruth Parsha 1)⁶ Why, according to the Midrash, does "they lifted their voice and cried" refer to Ruth alone? Don't both Ruth and Orpha cry? A close reading of the text and comparison with verse 9 alludes to the fact that although tears streaks both of the sisters' faces, actually only one of them cries from her heart, while the other cries crocodile tears. Alshich⁷ notices that the Hebrew word for "lifting their voice in crying" (ותשנה) is missing the *alef*.⁸ This alludes to the fact that one of them does not truly lift her voice in prayerful crying. Orpha's crying is short-lived until she kisses her mother-in-law goodbye as written in the continuation of the verse. Yet, Ruth's cry comes from the depths of her being, reverberating in the heart of "the sweet singer of Israel," David, who beseeches Hashem through his Tehillim when he cries out: ה' ממעמקים קראתיך — "From the depths I called out to You, Hashem." (Tehillim 130:1) As a result of Ruth's heartfelt crying, David is able to testify about himself: ואני תפילה — "I am prayer".⁹

There's a story said that after the chorban Yermiyahu was crying and a non-Jewish philosopher met him and asked how can such a brilliant man like you cry over wood and stones. To which Yermiyahu answered that you'll never understand it. The Navi wasn't crying for what was and all that we lost but he cried for a yearning to see Hashem to feel that closeness that we enjoyed in the Bais Hamikdosh. He was telling the goy that you

⁴ Shemot 20:18)

⁵ Rabbi Shalom Arush, The Garden of Yearning, translated by Rabbi Lazer Brody p.64

⁶ See also Yalkut Shimoni Ruth, 601, where the verse in Ruth 1:9 is mentioned.

⁷ See Alshich on Ruth 1:14

⁸ Compare also with Ruth 1:9, ותשנה קולן ותבכינה

⁹ Tehillim 109:4. See also our Section 1, *From Ruth to David*

will never understand how a Jew cries for we don't cry out of hopelessness we cry because we know there will be an end to all our troubles and we yearn for that day. That is what all our tears should be for.

The main way Rabbi Karelitz – Chazon Ish's nephew –tests the sincerity of a conversion candidate, is how deeply she can be moved to tears by her desire to become Jewish. I personally experienced the desperate cries and tears of a student when he asked her “And how would you feel if you could never become Jewish?” Needless to say, the student passed Rabbi Kerelitz sincerity test.

Cleaving to Hashem

The name “Ruth” is related to the word רוּיָה—which denotes satisfying the spiritual thirst that Ruth expressed in her desire to follow Naomi and become part of her people. Rav Hirsch relates her name to the Hebrew word רְעוּת, which means “friend” or “connected.” Ruth desired to be connected with the people of Israel and she was finally accepted.

Ruth's desire to convert is contrasted to Orpha who kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, when the megillah states: *“but Ruth cleaved to her”* (Ruth 1:14) וְרֹתַבָּה דְבָקָה בָּהּ the Hebrew word בָּהּ can either mean “to her” [to Naomi] or “to the letter Heh” which represents Hashem. Ruth was indeed cleaving to Hashem through Naomi. So strong was Ruth's devotion to G-d, as well as to Judaism, that she clung to Naomi who represented both to her.

It is also possible to explain that Ruth was cleaving to Malchut.¹⁰ According to Kabbalah, each of the main characters of *Megillat Ruth* corresponds to one of the letters of Hashem's name. Elimelech corresponds to Yud- (Chachma, Wisdom), Naomi to the first Heh (Bina, analytical understanding), Machlon/Boaz to the Vav (Six middle sephirot) and Ruth to the last Heh of Hashem's name (corresponding to Malchut- “Kingdom”, the last of the ten sephirot. Malchut is the mida of Emuna- pure faith. It has nothing of it's own. Ruth had overcome her ego and become a pure channel for the Shechina.

Malchut & Song

The name “Ruth,” if reversed, spells out *“Tor”*—the Hebrew word for dove—to which the Jewish People is compared.¹¹ By adding the letter “Heh” to “Tor,” you get the word “Torah.” Ruth accepted the entire Torah when she decided to follow her mother-in-law to the Land of Israel; all this in-spite of the gloomy prospects

¹⁰ The revelation of G-d's kingdom. (The last of G-d's 10 manifestations)

¹¹ See Rashi, Bereishit 15:10

for building her future there, since it hadn't yet become clear that a woman from Moav would be accepted as a convert to the Jewish people.

זהר חדש מדרש רות

(ו) רות הפכה לשמה וכו', רות, שהיא ה' אחרונה, מלכות, הפכה את שמה רות, אל תור. שנאמר, ותור וגוזל. כי מלכות נקראת ג"כ תור. וכן כתוב, יונתי בחגוי הסלע בסתר המדריגה הראיני את מראיך השמיעיני את קולך כי קולך ערב ומראך נאוה. הרי שהמלכות נקראת יונה דהיינו תור

Ruth reversed her name etc. Ruth, which is the last "Heh" referring to "Kingdom," reversed her name "Ruth" to "Tur," as it states "A turtledove and a young pigeon" (Bereishit 15:9), for Kingdom is also called a "dove." Thus it states, "O my dove, who are in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the cliff, let me see your countenance. Let me hear your voice, for sweet is your voice and your countenance is comely." (Song of Song's 2:14). Behold, Kingdom is called "pigeon," meaning "dove". (Zohar Chadash, Midrash Ruth)

The Zohar makes a direct link between the name "Ruth"— רות when reversed to "Tor"— תור (meaning dove) and the Davidic Kingdom which originated from her. The dove is associated with "kingdom" because the king rules his people through the power of his voice (speech); and the dove is a singing bird whose song we request to hear. We may venture to say that it was Ruth's spiritual thirst that enabled her to birth a spark into the world that would someday be the quintessential song expressed in David's *tehillim*. The songs of David that were sung in the Temple are intrinsically related to David's ability to establish Hashem's Kingdom on Earth.

Ruth's declaration of Faith

ספר רות פרק א (טז) ותאמר רות אל תפגעני בי לעזבך לשוב מאתריך כי אל אשר תלכי אלך ובאשר תליני אליו עמך עמי ואלהיהך אלהי:

(יז) באשר תמותי אמות ושם אקבר פה יעשה ה' לי וכה יסיף פי המות יפריד ביני וביןך:

"And Ruth said, entreat me not to leave you, or to return from following after you, for wherever you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge, your people are my people; and your G-d is my G-d. Where you die I will die and there I will be buried..."(Ruth 1:16-17)

Ruth resisted Naomi's dissuasion by pouring forth her love and utter devotion with words that were akin to a powerful and passionate melody. She opened her declaration of faith with the words אל תפגעני בי which are usually translated as "do not entreat me;" however, the Hebrew word תפגעני from the root פגע has several meanings. The most common meaning is "to kill."¹² Ruth was telling Naomi: "Do not kill me!" ("Leaving me behind would be like killing me.")¹³ Her devotion to become Jewish was so strong that she otherwise would have felt spiritually dead.

How can regular people lift ourselves up when we don't feel connected to our spirituality?

¹² See 1 Shmuel 22:17, 1 Kings 2:25

¹³ Malbim, Ruth 1:16

The teachings about Ruth, her devotion, dedication and yearning are beautiful, but it may be difficult to relate to her, as we may still feel so far from her level. How can we connect to someone who gave up everything in order to connect with Hashem, if our desires sometimes may be directed at Hagendaas ice-cream, a day on the beach or with a junk novel. Knowing that Hashem wants our heart not just the motions but the emotions "רחמנא ליבא באי" **what can we do to lift ourselves up from lowly desires to bring ourselves to yearn for Hashem even with a fraction of Ruth's yearning?**

The Garden of Yearning by Rabbi Shalom Arush with Rabbi Lazer Brody's more than translation give us practical advice and encouragement. As soon as we make a decision that we WANT to lift ourselves up to yearn for Hashem rather than ice-cream we are already on the track!

“When we learn the value of desire, we realize that a mere thought of tshuva, such as, “I want to do what Hashem wants me to do” is enough to alter a person’s status from evil to righteous. This knowledge prevents us from becoming discouraged if we slip and fall, for all we have to do is to renew our resolve to serve Hashem with all our hearts, and we’re back on our feet again!

As long as the flame of desire to get closer to Hashem still flickers in our hearts, Hashem continues to regard us as righteous. Hashem judges us not so much by where we are, but where we want to go. The desire in our heart is more important than even actions.

Hashem knows that personal improvement is a long road, but He regards us as Tzadikim the minute we begin our journey of yearning to be better.”¹⁴

Rather than saying you are what you eat, we could say: “You are what you yearn for— You are what you want to be.

As Shavuot is nearing this is the time to make a resolve, to believe in ourselves and imagine what we can become. Let us decide to want to become closer and closer to Hashem!!!

¹⁴

Rabbi Shalom Arush, The Garden of Yearning, translated by Rabbi Lazer Brody pp. 20-21