

## The Month of Sivan:

# Shavuot- The Holiday of Perfected Relationships

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### Introduction

Shavuot is a special holiday for me, this year it celebrates 34 years from the beginning of my Teshuva process. I remember my first Shavuot when Rabbi Goldstein said, "Now that you have received the Torah, what are you going to do with it? Can you give it back? No! You got to keep it!"

So this is what I have tried to do ever since. My husband heard the same message and soon after we found each other and decided to keep the Torah together. Keeping the Torah is not just about the length of your sleeves, but especially about building a Jewish family, becoming a good wife and mother in the Torah way.

According to Arizal, everything that takes place in the world is a reflection of underlying spiritual relationships. Blessings come into the physical world as a result of unifications in the spiritual world.<sup>1</sup> There are endless spiritual relationships interconnected with relationships we experience among ourselves within our people and on a personal level within our marital relationship – a reflection of relationship with the Divine. In order to fully receive the Torah we need to perfect our relationships and be in complete unity with one another as the Jewish people were at *Matan Torah* "like one being with one heart."<sup>2</sup>

We, women, are masters of relationship. Connecting to others on the deepest level is most women's highest aspiration, as sisters, wives and mothers etc. The reason we read *Megillat Ruth* on Shavuot is not only because Ruth was the mother of royalty, the great-grandmother of King David, or because she was the first official convert to the Jewish faith, blazing the trail for all of us toward radical self-transformation. The inner relevance of the story of Ruth mainly stems from the quality of the core relationship it portrays. Ruth teaches us the perfected relationship between a mother-in-law, Naomi, and a daughter-in-law, Ruth, and their incredibly otherworldly bond. In contrast, the mother-in-law, and a daughter-in-law relationship is the archetype of the most challenging relationship throughout the centuries. The spiritual energy created by the true loving bonds in the story of Ruth generates spiritual unifications which forms the perfect vessel for receiving the Torah. In order to learn from Ruth and develop perfect relationships we need to develop awareness of who we are – our unique existential essence, while developing tolerance for others who are different than ourselves, yet complementary. The more we extend ourselves in order to connect with someone who is most different from ourselves, the more Torah can be revealed and the greater a *tikun* (rectification) is formed.

<sup>1</sup> See for example Arizal, *Sha'ar Ruach Hakodesh* 50a.

<sup>2</sup> Rashi, *Shemot* 19:2. (וייחון ישראל כאיש איש אחד בלב אחד).



## Bridging the Divisiveness in the World

*Megillat Ruth* alludes to the prototype of perfected relationship achieved by “Rachel and Leah, who both built the house of Israel.”<sup>3</sup> Rachel corresponds to the lower revealed world as opposed to Leah who is associated with the hidden spiritual world.<sup>4</sup> Although they were diametrically opposed, with such different personalities, they engendered the greatest unification – the foundation for ultimate *Ahavas Yisrael* – Jewish unity. Ruth who is the reincarnation of Rachel, and Naomi who is the reincarnation of Leah<sup>5</sup> added the second story to their original building. The *Ahavas Yisrael* which we learn both from the relationship of Rachel with Leah, as well as Ruth’s relationship with Naomi is the foundation for receiving the Torah. Rachel and Leah bridged the source of divisiveness in the world: the division between heaven and the earth, between the waters above and the waters below, between *klal* (general) and *prat* (details), between the written and oral Torah. Rachel and Leah affected each other to the greatest extent that Leah, who originally cried her eyes out in her inner world of prayer,<sup>6</sup> became the endeared wife of Yisrael – the mother of sons. Rachel who originally embodied the physical external world,<sup>7</sup> learned to cry, as it states “Rachel cries for her children...”<sup>8</sup> Rachel and Leah initially brought the qualities of Yosef and Yehuda into the world. As mother’s their greatest desire was peace and harmony among their children. Rachel and Leah perfected their relationship as sisters, mothers, and wives to such a degree that they became eternalized as spiritual energies that we can tap into.

Rachel and Leah did such an incredible team work overcoming the greatest obstacles of jealousy – can you imagine your husband being married to another woman let alone your sister? Can you imagine your husband loving your sister more than he loves you without being jealous? Can you imagine your sister being blessed with carrying the fruits of your husband’s offspring in her womb while you remain barren? Even for Rachel and Leah it was not easy but their sisterly love and care for one another overcame their jealousy. They were able to unify to the extent of becoming one person!<sup>9</sup>

## The Two Tablets: Rachel and Leah

“The two tablets is the secret of Leah and Rachel, the two *Heh*’s [of Hashem’s name]. Therefore there were 5 [ה] commands on each tablet, and for this reason they are called the tablets of testimony. For the secret of testimony, is the connection between Leah and Rachel. Therefore, the Torah was given on Shabbat, for on Shabbat Leah and Rachel connect. This is the secret of, ‘The tablets are the deed of G-d’”<sup>10</sup> When we connect with one another, we bring down the Shechina – the Divine Feminine indwelling Presence. Each of us have a spark of Divinity within us, our unification is therefore a testimony to the Oneness of Hashem Who includes us all.

<sup>3</sup> *Megillat Ruth* 4:11.

<sup>4</sup> Arizal, *Sefer Etz Chaim*, gate 38, chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup> The Rama of Pano, *Sefer Gilgulei Neshamot*, Ot 50.

<sup>6</sup> *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Vayetze* chapter 4.

<sup>7</sup> Arizal, *Etz Chaim*, gate 23, chapter 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Yirmeyahu* 31:14.

<sup>9</sup> Arizal, *Sefer Nahar Shalom* 30a.

<sup>10</sup> *Shemot* 32:16, *Sefer Yesharesh Ya’acov the Principles of Leah and Rachel*.

This testimony is revealed especially on Shabbat when we disconnect from the virtual reality in order to connect with each other and Hashem, as we turn off all our distracting appliances and devices. Leah represents the commandments between “People and G-d,” whereas Rachel represents the commandments “between People.” Perhaps it is also possible to say that Rachel is the Tablets – she holds the house of Israel together. Leah is the writing – she brought the individual qualities through her many tribes.

Some of us naturally gravitate towards refining our ethical interpersonal behavior, whereas other types are very conscientious in their relationship with Hashem, eating only the highest level of kosher foods, praying with the greatest devotion and keeping the Shabbat in to the letter of the law. Often the different types of people believe their half of the Tablets make up the whole, rather than working on including the unity of both Tablets in their service. Which Tablet do you gravitate towards? What can you do to reach a balance?

### Building the Eternal Home of Israel

“All the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said: ‘We are witnesses. May Hashem make the woman that comes into your house like Rachel and like Leah, who both built the house of Israel; and do valor in Efrat and be famous in Beit Lechem.’”<sup>11</sup> It is impossible to build the house of Israel except through both Rachel and Leah...<sup>12</sup> The First Temple corresponds to Avraham who called it a mountain, the Second Temple to Yitzchak who called it field. The Third Temple, may it be built soon, corresponds to Ya’acov who called it a house...<sup>13</sup> This is what the elders said to Boaz<sup>14</sup> ... This implies that from Rachel and Leah the house of Israel is built, that is the third Temple...<sup>15</sup> When all the people in the gate blessed Boaz that Ruth be like Rachel and Leah, who both built the house of Israel, they alluded to the third Temple called “The House of Israel.” The first Temple is associated with Leah, the first *heh*, while the second Temple with Rachel, the last *heh*. The third Temple will be built through both of them. This is the secret of “and they both walked together.”<sup>16</sup> The Hebrew word for ‘both’ is שתייהן/*stei’hen*. This word can also be broken up to שתי ההי"ן – the two [letters of] *heh*.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, both Rachel and Leah build the house of Israel. This is what the Beit Din of Boaz testified at the wedding of Boaz and Ruth, which laid the foundation of *malchut* (kingdom). For kingdom comes from both of them: Mashiach son of David from Leah, and Mashiach son of Yosef from Rachel.<sup>18</sup> Why do we need to unify both Rachel and Leah to build the Temple? How does Ruth embody the qualities of both Rachel and Leah?

<sup>11</sup> Ruth 4:11.

<sup>12</sup> *Arvei Nachal, Parashat Miketz.*

<sup>13</sup> *Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim 88a.*

<sup>14</sup> Ruth 4:11.

<sup>15</sup> *Agra d’Pirka, 322.*

<sup>16</sup> Ruth 1:19. “They both walked together” – the higher and the lower *Shechina* the two *hehs*. When they are united together, then *bina* and *malchut*, Leah and Rachel becomes one, and the *Yud Heh* unites with the *Vav Heh* of Hashem’s name.

<sup>17</sup> *Tikunei Zohar 10a.*

<sup>18</sup> B’nei Yissaschar, *Article about the months of Kislev and Tevet 4.*

*Malchut* includes all the archetypes and the full name of Hashem. Rachel the small one is the last *heh* in Hashem’s name, she emerges from the first *heh* – *Bina* – The upper Mother – Leah. The Temple will be built when the lower *heh* unifies with the upper *heh*, *malchut* with *Bina*, Rachel with Leah, in the secret of “They both walked together” (Ruth 1:19). This is the opposite of [when Rachel is alone in exile] “How she sat alone” (*Eicha* 1:1).

In order to build the house of Israel we must accept one another allowing his or her difference to affect us on the deepest level while affecting her with our own specialness. For example, a husband may be very tight with money trying to save for a rainy day, whereas his wife loves to spend both on herself as well as sharing with others. A great rectification is enacted when the husband learns to buy expensive jewelry for his wife, and the wife learns from her husband to minimize her purchases and wait until the end of season sales. Through this character building work we will be able to repair the breach that divides between us. On a macro level, we will unite the different factions of our people when we learn to manifest our relationship with others on the deepest level as sisters, wives and mothers, even mother-in-laws!

### Becoming One

In Kabbalah Leah and Rachel are at times inter-included to become one. Leah is Rachel's crown. She is included in Rachel, for Rachel is the main one.<sup>19</sup> The root of Leah is in *Da'at* (knowledge) and Rachel is in *Tiferet* (beauty and harmony). Therefore, Leah is included in Rachel for *da'at* is the inner experience of *Tiferet*. Rachel and Leah were originally supposed to be one person in the physical world. The reason they became divided into two is only because of the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge. The fact that Rachel and Leah are two separate women reflects the separation between Hashem and His name. When evil will be eradicated from the word, then the Hashem and His Name will become one.<sup>20</sup>

On Shavuot we rectify eating from the Tree of Knowledge as we sacrifice the two *Chametz* bread. On Shavuot, when Heaven and Earth are united, the *yud heh* with *vav heh* of Hashem's name, we read the Scroll of Ruth, which heralds the final redemption and the rebuilding of the Temple from the bricks of the highest unification of unconditional love! Therefore, redemption will take place in the merit of the righteous women who overcome jealousy, indifference, anger, and power-struggle to express true love in relationship on all levels.

Rachel and Leah embodied all the unifications necessary in order to truly receive the Torah in the highest way, and connect both of the two Tablets – the Oral with the Written Torah, the Torah with *tefilah* (prayer), the internal with the external. In this way they laid the template for manifesting the unity between Torah, Hashem and Israel in the building of the eternal Temple. Most women can trace themselves to one of these two archetypes. Let us get in touch with their qualities and identify our own personal strengths connected to either Rachel or Leah or both, and the challenges we need to overcome in order to accept, acknowledge and admire the opposite qualities and balance our energies between both the Rachels and Leahs of our time.

<sup>19</sup> *Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah* 14:17.

<sup>20</sup> *The Gates of Leshem*, 2:3, chapter 1, *The matters of the Avot*.

