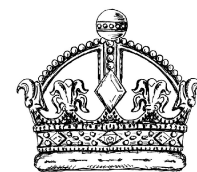


SHAVUOS

Adapted from the discourses of *Rabbi Henschel Lebowitz ZT"l*

by Rabbi Avi Rubin



In Megilas Rus, we learn the story of Rus Ha'Moavia. The story starts when Elimelech, one of the great men of Bnei Yisroel, leaves Eretz Yisroel because of a famine. He travels with his wife, Naomi, and his sons Machlon and Chilyon, to the land of Moav. There, Elimelech's sons get married to two princesses of Moav, Orpah and Rus. Eventually, Elimelech and his sons die. Naomi decides to go back to Eretz Yisroel. Orpah and Rus wish to follow Naomi, but Naomi is able to convince Orpah to go back home. Rus refuses to turn back. Instead, she converts to become a Jew and stays with Naomi.

Life in Eretz Yisroel is very difficult for Naomi and Rus. They are very poor. Naomi is too old to work and Rus does the best she can to support her. It is the time of the wheat harvest and Rus goes out to the field to gather leket. (Leket, which we learned about in Parshas Emor, are stalks of grain that a farmer has accidentally dropped while cutting the grain. If he drops one or two stalks at a time, he is supposed to leave them for the poor people.) Rus finds herself working in the field of a man called Boaz. Boaz notices how proper and refined Rus acts and after finding out who she is, invites her to continue working in his fields for the rest of the harvest season. He also gives her lunch and plenty of grain to take back to Naomi.

The Targum says, that when Boaz invited Rus to join him for lunch, he told her that he was a navi, a prophet. Hashem told him of the great things Rus had done. First, that she had worked very hard to support her mother-in-law, Naomi. Second, that she had left Moav to come to Eretz Yisroel and be Jewish. As a reward for these two great acts, Hashem promised that kings and prophets would come from her. Boaz later married Rus and their great-grandson was Dovid Hamelech. There were many kings and prophets in their family and eventually the Moshiach will come from them too.

It seems hard to understand how Boaz could have compared these two deeds. Many people take care of their parents and in-laws in their old age. On the other-hand, leaving Moav must have been very difficult. Her father had been the king and she lived as a princess. In Eretz Yisroel she was poor. She had left behind her family and her homeland. In Eretz Yisroel she was a stranger with no friends. She did this because she felt that converting to become Jewish was the right thing to do. This certainly must have been much harder to do than simply taking care of her mother-in-law. How can Boaz compare these two deeds as if they are equal?

The answer is that the value of a mitzvah is in how dedicated you are when you perform it. When Rus took care of Naomi, she was ready to do whatever was needed, no matter how difficult it was. She ready ready and willing to put in as much effort as she did when she converted and left her homeland. It was for this reason that she was rewarded for these two mitzvos equally, they were performed with equal effort.

Have a good Yom Tov!!
Rabbi Rubin

In Megilas Rus we find the source for...

“...וַתַּגִּד לַחֲמוּתָהּ אֵת אֲשֶׁר עָשְׂתָה עִמּוֹ...” (רות ב' י"ט)

“...And she told her mother-in-law all that she had done for him (Boaz)...”

When Rus came back from gathering stalks of grain in Boaz's field, Naomi asked how her day had been. She told Naomi about what she had done for Boaz. Now, Boaz had given Rus a safe place to work, lunch, and grain to take home to Naomi. But, it does not seem that Rus had helped Boaz in any way. Why does Rus say that she did things for Boaz? We learn out from here a rule about tzedaka. The poor person who receives tzedaka does more for the person giving tzedaka than the giver does for the poor person. This is because all the poor person has received is money or food. The giver receives reward in Olam Habah, which is much more valuable. (Even though the giver benefits, the poor person should still say, “Thank you” since he benefits as well.)

(מדרש רבה)

“וְרַחֲצֵתָ וְסָכַתָּ וְשָׁמַתָּ שְׂמֹלֶתְךָ [שְׂמֹלֶתְךָ] עָלֶיךָ...” (רות ג' ג')

“And you should wash and annoint yourself and put on your clothes...”

Naomi told Rus to put on her clothes before going to see Boaz. Since she was already wearing clothes, why did Naomi need to tell her to get dressed? Naomi was telling she should change into her special Shabbos clothes. From here we learn that we should have special clothes for Shabbos. (ירושלי פאה פ"ח ה"ז)

“וַיִּקַּח עֶשְׂרֵה אַנְשֵׁים מִזְּקֵנֵי הָעִיר...” (רות ד' ב')

“And he took ten men of the elders of the city...”

Boaz gathered together ten men to watch as he and his relative decided who would marry Rus. He had gathered the men together because there was going to be a wedding. He wanted them to be present for the wedding. From here we learn that you should have a minyan present at a wedding. (כתובות ז')