



NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה. MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

Soldiers of Torah

מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כָּל יֵצֵא צֶבֶא בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל תִּפְקְדוּ אֹתָם לְצִבְאוֹתָם. (במדבר א, ג)

From the age of twenty and up, everyone who goes out with the troops in Yisrael, you shall count them according to their troops. (*Bemidbar 1:3*)

It is the way of the world to count the troops before they go out to battle, in order to know how big and powerful the army is. This is to evaluate whether the army can stand up to the enemy, and to decide on the most appropriate strategy.

But the Jewish people at that time were not actually going out to war. The conquest of *Eretz Yisrael* was in the hands of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. Also in *Sefer Yehoshua* we don't find that they counted the people before conquering the Land.

So why were they counted here?

Because in truth, after the Jewish people left *Mitzrayim* and received the Torah, they were standing before a big and tough war. This was the war against the darkness and *tumas hataavos* that had conquered the world.

And so wrote *Shlomo Hamelech* in *Shir Hashirim*:

הִנֵּה מִטְתּוֹ שֶׁל־שְׁלֹמֹה שְׁשִׁים גְּבוּרִים סְבִיב לָהּ מִגְּבֵרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. כָּל־ם אֶחָזִי חֶרֶב מִלְּמַדֵּי מִלְחָמָה – Here is the bed of Shlomo, there are sixty mighty men around it, among the mighty warriors of Yisrael. They all wield swords and are trained in battle. Each man has his sword on his thigh, due to the fear at night.¹

What was this “bed of Shlomo”?

Rashi *ad loc* explains that it was the holy *Mishkan*. Around it were the sixty ten-thousands of Israelites who went out of Egypt. They were the mighty warriors of the battle of Torah. The “fear at night,” against which they armed themselves, was lest they forget the Torah, causing harsh troubles to come upon them and the world at large. So explains Rashi.

¹ *Shir Hashirim 3:7-8.*

When the Jewish people readied themselves for this tough war, they counted the people, to know their strength, and to emphasize to every individual that he is a soldier who is counted as a member of the army, and he needs to join up with all the warriors and fight fiercely in the war of Torah.

This war began at the very beginnings of our nation, and it continues in full force today as well.

The enemies who stand against the *kedushah* of *Hashem* are the waves of *chilul Shabbos*, the assimilation into foreign cultures, and all the other travesties that have increased so greatly. There is a thick cloud of secularism and disdain for Torah enveloping us.

What are we to do? How should we make battle?

About this it says **כָּלֵם אֶחָזִי חָרֵב מְלֻמְדֵי מִלְחָמָה** – “They all wield swords and are trained in battle.” Which battle? The battle of Torah. Another *shiur*,

another *blat Gemara*, another *kapitel Tehillim*, another *mitzvah* and another *chesed*.

The main thing is to know that we are in a time of war. And when a person is at war, there is no day and no night and no taking it easy. We need to just do the *mitzvos* with *mesirus nefesh* and every ounce of energy we have.

This is why the Jewish people were counted. It teaches us that success in the war of Torah requires mass enlistment of all our forces. It's not enough for just a few elite units to go out to battle for Torah.

We need to make sure today, more than ever, not just that we learn Torah and keep *mitzvos* ourselves, but that others do so as well. We need to support Torah institutions and strengthen *shiurim*, encourage neighbors and relatives. Because the more soldiers show up for combat duty, the more impressive our successes will be, *b'ezras Hashem*. ●

PARSHA TOPIC

The Royal Rus

David is the Jewish People

We read the Book of Rus on Shavu'os, and there are various reasons for this. One is because Shavu'os is the *yahrzeit* of *David Hamelech*. So we read the Book of Rus, which describes the ancestry of *David Hamelech*.

David Hamelech was one of the four pillars of the world. The three *Avos*, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, are the ones who planted the deep roots of the Jewish people. But *David Hamelech* was the very expression of the Jewish people.

The Jewish people is the most beloved and precious people to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. There

לְעֵיִלוֹי נִשְׁמֹת

מוֹהַ"ד מִשֵּׁה בֶן אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַמְבוֹרָה ז"ל
וּמוֹהַ"ד בְּרוֹךְ זֶאֱב בֶּן נִפְתָּלִי קְדָאוֹס ז"ל

גְּדֵבַת נְכֻדֵיהֶם ~ עֲטֻדַת זְקִינִים בְּנֵי בָנִים וְהַפְאֶרֶת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתֵם

are many *pesukim* that express *Hashem's* love of and closeness to *Am Yisrael*. The person who most expresses this wonderful relationship is *David Hamelech*. As the Rambam writes about him, "His heart is the heart of the entire congregation of Yisrael."¹

We are all waiting for *Mashiach ben David*, and it is among the principles of our *Emunah* that a wonderful future is ahead of us. The day will come when the entire Jewish people will be gathered to *Eretz Yisrael*, each person will have his own *nachalah*, his own ancestral land estate, there won't be any more troubles and sicknesses, no pain and no suffering. We are destined to live for thousands of years in the presence of *Hashem Yisborach*, in utter delight. After that will come a more distant future called *Olam Haba*. And the foundation stone of all this future is none other than *David Hamelech*.

That Which Was, Will Be

Megilas Rus mainly describes Ruth the Moabite and Boaz the *Gedol Hador*, who took her as wife. There is a whole description of their special personalities, and by what merit it is that *David Hamelech*, who is the greatest personality of all generations, descended from them.

The Torah teaches us that if we emulate the beauty of their personalities, we too can merit having children, grandchildren and further descendants who will shine in the skies of Judaism.

Because there is a basic principle: **מה שִׁהְיֶה הוּא** **שִׁיִּהְיֶה** – "That which was, will be."² *Hashem* created a cyclical world. Everything that happened in the past will happen again in the future. Just like there was a woman named Rus, and there was a man named Boaz, and they had a descendant named David, so we can be like Rus and Boaz, and from us will come a *tzaddik* like David, if we just go in their ways, if we work on acquiring for ourselves the greatness that their personalities had.

¹ *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Melachim 3:6.*

² *Koheles 1:9.*



It's a Different Atmosphere

In order to get what really happened with Rus and Boaz, we need a little introduction before we go into the story itself. We need some background, because it will change the whole way we perceive this story that took place thousands of years ago.

One of our problems in understanding *Tanach* is that the events took place thousands of years ago, and the world constantly changes. In every country and in every nation there is a certain atmosphere, a certain social setting, and it changes as time goes on. We weren't alive back in those days, so it very hard for us to understand things that transpired back then. This is why we don't really understand most historical events.

I will give you an example. We are in Johannesburg, South Africa. Let's imagine a Jew going down the street late at night, at 2:00 AM, and he notices a small child sitting at a street corner. He goes up to him and asks, "Where are you from? Why don't you go home?"

The child answers, "I got lost."

He asks the child where he lives, then he puts out his hand and walks with him in the streets of

Johannesburg at night, in the dark, in danger from the local population, taking him all the way home.

A person who doesn't live in Johannesburg won't understand it, but someone who lives here knows how terrifying it is to walk the streets alone at 2:00 AM, and can appreciate what a sacrifice and what a great *chesed* this Jew did.

This is the problem we encounter when we read stories in the *Tanach*. A lot of things are different now than they were a few thousand years ago. So first of all, let's try to get into the atmosphere of that era, and this will snap the whole story into perspective.

Nations We Hate

Every nation has other nations that it considers its friends, and those that are its enemies, whom it bitterly hates.

For instance, for everyone sitting here, how do we feel about Germans, about Nazis? Most of us really hate Nazis. I once met a German who converted to Judaism, and I knew that his grandfather was a bona fide Nazi. I had to work on myself to greet him with a nice, warm smile, because Jews have something against Nazis.

But who did Jews hate back then, in the time of *Megilas Rus*? Ammon and Moav. If you would tell a Jew back then that so-and-so is an Ammoni or a Moavi, it would be like waving a red flag in front of a bull.

Why?

First of all, the forefathers of Ammon and Moav were *mamzerim*. When *Hashem* overturned Sedom, and Lot was sheltering in the cave with his two daughters, and, embarrassingly enough, they became pregnant, they gave birth to two boys named Ammon and Moav. This was the worst birth imaginable. These two nations are built on a foundation of immorality.

And it was not just the circumstances of their birth. These two nations were the lowest, the ugliest, the most immoral that could be. They always hated the Jewish people because of their historical origins.

The Torah commands us regarding them:

לֹא יָבֹא עַמּוֹנִי וּמוֹאָבִי בְּקִהְלֵהּ ה' וְגו' עַל דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא קִדְּמוּ אֶתְכֶם בְּלַחֵם וּבַמַּיִם בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּצִאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם וְאֲשֶׁר שָׁכַר עֲלֵיךְ אֶת בְּלָעַם – אֵן בְּעוֹר מִפְּתוֹר אֲרָם נְהָרִים לְקַלְלֶךָ – An Ammonite and a Moabite shall not enter the congregation of *Hashem*... because they did not greet you with bread and water on the way when you left Egypt, and because they hired against you Bilaam ben Beor from Pesor Aram Naharayim to curse you.³

We don't like these nations because they are so lowly. They have no gratitude for the fact that *Avraham Avinu* saved their forefather Lot when he was taken captive in war. They are the most disgusting nations that the Jewish people ever knew.

Elimelech's Punishment

Now let's get into the story of Rus and Boaz.

The story starts with Elimelech, who was a great man and an outstanding figure in his generation. Besides that, he was also very rich. When the famine struck, he simply could not take it, seeing thousands of Jews suffering starvation. If he would have remained in *Eretz Yisrael*, he would have had to sell all his treasures to feed everyone, and become poor himself, because he would have needed to support an entire people. He was an *adam gadol*, and the Jewish people expected him to help them out in their time of trouble.

What did Elimelech do? He took his family and left the country. He left *Eretz Yisrael*. *Chazal* say this was not the right thing to do, and it was only made worse by the fact that he chose Moav as his new country of residence. He went to live among the sworn enemies of the Jewish people.

Not only that, but his two sons, Machlon and Kilyon, married two princesses, the daughters of the king of Moav. They were prominent men in the Jewish nation, and the king of Moav was very interested that his daughters should marry Jews of high status. However, back at home, people saw Elimelech and his sons as traitors.

³ *Devarim* 23:4-5.

After a short while, the three of them, Elimelech and his two sons, died.

A Sacrifice of Love

Elimelech's wife, Naomi, was a great *tzadekes*, but she went along with her husband. Now she was all alone, and she knew very well that she deserved this punishment.

She turned to her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Rus, and told them that she is going back to *Eretz Yisrael*. She had had enough; she learned her lesson. These two princesses politely said they will come along with her back to her people. But in the end, Orpah gave Naomi a kiss and said goodbye, while Rus stuck with Naomi and returned with her to *Eretz Yisrael*.

We need to understand the significance of the decision that Rus made when she went with Naomi.

Rus knew that when she gets to *Eretz Yisrael*, she is going to get a very cool welcome. People are going to say that she is a Moabite and had no right to marry a Jew in the first place. But she married him nonetheless, and that's why he died. It's her fault.

She felt that she was a big *tzadekes*, but she knew she will not be viewed that way and will not be accepted. People are likely to tell her to just get out of here, that she comes from a very lowly nation and doesn't belong among the Jewish people.

But she didn't care about all this. She loved *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, she loved His Torah, and even though she knew what was waiting for her and how she will be treated, she went along with Naomi out of love and devotion to *Hashem* and His Torah. She didn't care about anything else. She just wanted to be close to the Jewish people, because then she will be close to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

She demonstrated amazing greatness. She was a princess, the daughter of the king of Moav, her father expected her to come back to his home, and now she is going to the Jewish people instead, to suffer shame and discrimination. Instead of living a

luxurious life in the royal palace, she will glean ears of grain left in someone's field.

Her sister-in-law Orpah also had *derech eretz*, but when Naomi told her to stay in Moav, she did. She just kissed Naomi goodbye and parted ways with her. But Rus gave up on all the pleasures of this world and went to *Eretz Yisrael* knowing very well that she is destined for a life of poverty and deprivation.

Sometimes when a person does an act of *mesirus nefesh*, at least someone appreciates what he did, and says that he is a *tzaddik*. But no one said a good word to Rus, because she was a Moabite.

And there was another problem, too. It was not clear at all if she would ever be able to marry a Jew. The Torah says that a Moabite man may not take a Jewish wife, even if he converts. What about a Moabite woman marrying a Jewish man? This was a subject of controversy over the course of generations, and at that time, the *Halachah* had not yet been clarified.

Boaz knew the *Halachah*. He knew that there is a *Halacha l'Moshe miSinai* stating that it is only a Moabite man who is forbidden to marry a Jew, not a Moabite woman to marry a Jewish man. However, there were many people in his generation who did not know this. They thought she would never be able to marry a Jew.

So here we have a woman who gives up all the pleasures of life that she could have happily enjoyed in the royal palace, and does so in order to join the Jewish people. She comes without a penny in her pocket and without the ability to build a Jewish home. Only because of her tremendous love for *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

Due to this greatness, Rus is called the *Ima shel Malchus*,⁴ the Matriarch of the Davidic Dynasty. There are four *Imahos*. They are Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah. The *Imahos* did not just give birth to the Jewish people; they are the mothers of the Jewish people in their essential nature. Rus is called *Ima shel Malchus*, which makes her also the

4 *Bava Basra* 91b.

mother of *Mashiach*. If not for Rus, there would be no *David Hamelech* and no *Mashiach*. It is not by chance that *David Hamelech* descends from her. It is because she is *Ima shel Malchus* in her essential nature.

In order for the *Melech Hamashiach*, who is *Hakadosh Baruch Hu's* most beloved son, to descend from her, she needs to be a woman with such tremendous love for *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* that she is ready to give up everything just to be close to *Hashem*.

Naomi tried to convince her to stay in Moav. She told Rus that she has no future in *Eretz Yisrael*. No husband, no *parnasah*, just humiliations. But Rus refused to part with Naomi. Naomi had taught her *Yiddishkeit*, and she was not going to part with her no matter what. Even if she dies, she will be buried with Naomi. There is no way she is going to separate from Naomi. She is devoted in heart and soul to Naomi and to the Torah that she taught her.

Back to Beis Lechem

Naomi and Rus set out on their way, and arrived in Beis Lechem, Naomi's hometown.

At that time, Boaz was the *Gedol Hador*. He was the *Nasi*. He was

an elderly man, in his eighties. He had a large family and was also very wealthy. He was known and respected by all.

The day Naomi and Rus came back to Beis Lechem, the wife of Boaz passed away, and the whole Jewish people attended her *levayah*.

Naomi and Rus came along in the middle of the *levayah*. Everyone was shocked to see them. And people really gave it to them: *וַתֹּאמְרֵנָה הַזֹּאת נְעָמִי* – “The women said, ‘Is this Naomi?!’” Look what happened to Naomi, the wealthiest woman in all of *Eretz Yehudah*. It's all because she abandoned us, she betrayed us. And look who is coming after her, look who she brought along with her – a Moabite woman!

Naomi and Rus needed to eat, and since Rus helped Naomi, she went to glean ears of grain in the fields for both of them. *Megilas Rus* tells us how Boaz treated her well. He told her how he warned the young men to leave her alone. Because had he not told them, they would have thrown her out since she was a Moabite.

She suffered all the humiliations quietly. She gleaned a little to eat, for herself and her mother-in-law, and went back to her mother-in-law.

To be continued next week

