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A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

חג השבועות – מגילת רות

וְיָהִי בַיּוֹם שֶׁפֶט הַשְּׁפֵטִים, וְיִהְיֶה רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ, וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֶחֶם יְהוּדָה לְגוֹר בְּשָׂדֵי מוֹאָב וכו'. וַיָּבֹאוּ שָׂדֵי מוֹאָב, וַיְהִי שָׁם וכו'. וַתֵּקָם הִיא וְכָל־תִּיָּהּ וַתֵּשֶׁב מִשָּׂדֵי מוֹאָב וכו'. וַתֹּאמֶר נַעֲמִי שִׁבְנָה בְּנֹתַי לָמָּה תִּלְכְּנָה עִמִּי, הַעוֹד לִי בָנִים בְּמַעִי וְהִיוּ לָכֶם לְאֶנְשִׁים וכו'. וַתִּשַׁק עֲרֹפָה לְחֻמוֹתֶיהָ וְרוֹת דָּבְקָה בָּהּ. וַתֹּאמֶר הֲנָה שָׂבָה יְבַמְתֶּךָ אֶל עַמָּה וְאֶל אֱלֹהֶיהָ, שׁוּבִי אַחֲרָי יְבַמְתֶּךָ. (מגילת רות פרק א)

And it happened in the days when the Judges judged, that there was a famine in the land, and a man went from Beis Lechem in Yehudah to sojourn in the fields of Moav ... They came to the field of Moav and there they remained. ... She then arose along with her daughters-in-law to return from the fields of Moav ... Naomi said: 'Turn back, my daughters. Why should you come with me? Have I more sons in my womb who could become husbands to you? ...' Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Rus clung to her. So she said: 'Look, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and to her god; go follow your sister-in-law.' (Megillas Rus Chap. 1)

The Vilna Gaon (*Even Shlomo* 3:1) writes that *בְּטַחֲוֹן*, *trust*, and *הַסְתַּפְקוּת*, *contentment with less*, are essential values necessary for developing good *middos*. Someone who lacks *bitachon* cannot fully observe the Torah because they are constantly worried about the future. Additionally, dissatisfaction with one's circumstances can lead to being consumed by desires and make it difficult to resist temptations and inclinations to sin.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* observes that in Megillas Rus, we find multiple instances of this concept acting out. This could be another reason for our *minhag* to read this Megillah on Shavuos to impart this crucial lesson.

The Megillah begins by telling how Avimelech and his family left Eretz Yisroel to live in Moav. This decision led to their spiritual decline and eventually their deaths. The *possuk* describes Avimelech as a prominent figure, as signified by the title *אִישׁ*, which is used throughout Tanach to denote prominence. Rashi cites Chazal that he was very wealthy and the *פְּרִנְס הַדּוֹר*, *provider of the generation*, but left Eretz Yisroel because he was tight-fisted and could not bear the paupers' constant requests for help. The Midrash further infers from the double terminology *וַיָּבֹאוּ שָׂדֵי מוֹאָב, וַיְהִי שָׁם*, *they came to the field of Moav and there they remained*, that Avimelech and his family initially wanted to live in the countryside, but found that the inhabitants' behaviour was immoral. They then contemplated living in the cities, where peoples' conduct was better, but discovered a lack of water supply. As a result, they returned to settle in the rural areas, even though it meant compromising their spiritual surroundings.

From this series of events, we learn that a lack of *bitachon* in Hashem and an inability to be content with one's situation can lead to spiritual deterioration. Avimelech and his family left the spiritual protection of Eretz Yisroel because they were unwilling to give charity and failed to trust Hashem that He could provide for both them and the public. Furthermore, even after relocating to Moav, they chose more comfortable living conditions at the expense of spiritual well-being. Their failure to accept their situation led to their downfall, as ultimately, Machlon and Kilion integrated into the culture of

Moav and married Moabite woman. Instead of sojourning in Moav temporarily as originally planned, they settled there permanently, which resulted in their punishment of death.

Following this, when Naomi decided to return to Eretz Yisroel, both Orpah and Rus initially wished to accompany her. They were ready to abandon the wealth and status that they were accustomed to, recognising that their ticket to a meaningful life and entering תַּחַת כְּנָפֵי הַשְּׂכִינָה entailed going with impoverished Naomi. However, when Naomi explained the extent of their sacrifice and the difficulties they would face, things changed. Naomi explained how their likelihood of marrying again was extremely unlikely and would surely not be anytime soon. This was due to the slim chance of her bearing children and because their marital status was not universally accepted as permitted. (We find that this fear was not unfounded as the Goel refused to marry Rus, claiming (4:6): לֹא אוֹכֵל לְגֹאֵל לִי, פֶּן: אֶשְׁחִית אֶת נַחֲלָתִי, *I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I imperil my inheritance.*) With this revelation, Orpah's determination faltered, and she kissed her mother-in-law and bid her farewell.

The *possuk* continues how Naomi then turned to Rus and said: הִנֵּה שָׁבָה יְבִמְתְּךָ אֶל עַמָּהּ וְאֵל אֱלֹהֶיהָ, שׁוּבִי אַחֲרַי יְבִמְתְּךָ, 'Look, your sister-in-law has returned to her people **and to her god**; go follow your sister-in-law.' These words are surprising, as Naomi had only talked about returning to her people, and it seems shocking that Orpah would so quickly return to idolatry. The Midrash explains that by returning to her people, she also returned to her gods. The Rosh Yeshiva explains that this too illustrates the concept that without *bitachon*, there is no protection from sin. Since Orpah was unable to trust that Hashem would not forsake her and was unwilling to accept a compromised lifestyle, she succumbed and returned to her people and previous idolatrous ways.

The Midrash in last week's *parshah* (*Bamidbar* 1:1) explains the *possuk* אֶל מִשְׁהַבְּמִדְבָּר סִינִי to mean that whoever does not make himself הֶפְקֵר like a מִדְבָּר – desert, is unable to acquire Torah and wisdom. Some Meforshim explain that in this context, *hefker* means to not be troubled or concerned about any worldly matters. This too can be understood with the lesson from the Gaon. A person can only be bothered and disturbed about events in his physical life when there is an absence of *bitachon*. One who utterly trusts in Hashem will not suffer from anxiety or a lack of patience, since he believes that everything is for the best. For this reason, someone with *bitachon* won't be distracted by worries and will be able to focus on acquiring Torah and wisdom.

This Shavuos, when we hear the story of Megillas Rus, may we internalise the lesson it contains; the only way to ensure our commitment to Torah and *mitzvos* is by cultivating the *middos* of *bitachon* and *histapkus*. May we be *zoche* to develop these qualities, which will guarantee our loyalty and steadfastness to Hashem and His Torah under whatever trying conditions we may face.

גוט יום טוב!

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