



SHEVUOS

TORAH

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The Revelation of Mashiach

Boaz's Blessing to Rus

Inspired by her extraordinary self-sacrifice in converting to Judaism and caring for her mother-in-law, Naomi, as well as her exemplary modesty, Boaz blessed Rus saying, "ישלם ה' פעלך ותהי משכורתך, 'שלמה מעם ה'!" 'May Hashem repay you for your actions, and may your reward be complete from Hashem.'

The Yalkut sees in the word שלמה, complete, a reference to King Shlomo. The Midrash² relates that Rus lived to see her descendant, King Shlomo, sitting on his royal throne, judging the case of the two harlots who each claimed the same infant.

What was the particular significance of this court case, that it was of import to Rus to have lived to witness it? The main point was that she lived a long life and merited seeing the glorious kingdom of Shlomo, her descendant.

Boaz and Manoach

Ivtzan was one of the leaders of the Jewish people during the period of the Judges, the several hundred-year era following the conquest of Eretz Yisrael, before Shaul was coronated as king. The Gemara³ relates that Ivtzan was really Boaz.

He had thirty sons and thirty daughters whom he married off⁴. He is faulted for having excluded Manoach, the father of Shimshon, from his children's marriage celebrations. Manoach and his wife were barren at the time, and Boaz excluded them saying, "Manoach is barren and he will not be able to repay me by inviting me to his children's celebrations." Therefore, all of his sixty children died in his lifetime. Manoach, on the other hand, merited begetting Shimshon, who was also one of the leaders during the era of the Judges.

[Rus, upon considering marriage to Boaz, was concerned that her children would also die. Naomi reassured her saying, "אבקש לך מנוח"⁵, (which translates as – 'I will seek tranquility for you,' but can homiletically be understood to mean) 'I will seek [the man] מנוח,' meaning – you need not be concerned; I will make sure he is invited to the wedding.]

There are many difficulties with this Gemara.

The Targum at the end of Rus relates that it was in the merit of Boaz's prayer that the famine in Eretz Yisrael was terminated, and the entire Jewish nation was sustained in his merit. How can it be that the merit of a man who was too miserly to invite a barren couple to his child's wedding feast - because he would not be invited back – could sustain an entire nation?

Furthermore, Boaz was extremely generous in other situations. He was especially sensitive to the needs of poverty stricken Rus and Naomi, and commanded his servants to intentionally drop extra grain for her to take (as the Torah allotted the dropped stalks of grain for the poor person). In his great love for Jews in general, Boaz instituted that they should bless each other with the name of Hashem⁶.

Moreover, Boaz had sixty children. Most people don't even have a quarter of that number. Even if his guests would invite him to their children's wedding feasts, they would be doing so for considerably less meals than he invited them to, so the difference between them and Manoach was insignificant.

Penina and Chana

Penina and Chana were both married to Elkana. Penina had many children, while Chana was barren. Penina would taunt Chana, "Did you buy clothing for your son? Did you wash your son's face so that he should go to yeshiva?"

Penina was severely punished for her actions. Chana, in her shirah (song), praised G-d that He can transform a person's lot completely, "עד עקרה ילדה שבעה ורבת בנים אמללה"⁷, 'Until a barren woman

gives birth to [seven children] and [the one who had] many children is bereaved.' With each child that Chana gave birth to, Penina lost two as a punishment.

However, R' Levi states that Penina's intentions were pure⁸. She perceived that Chana was not praying fervently enough for children and by provoking her, she impelled Chana into broken-hearted prayer. Ultimately, it was through these prayers that Chana merited children.

Why was Penina so severely punished if her intentions were pure?

Hidden and Revealed

The Zohar⁹ states: The Torah is hidden and revealed.

The meaning of this Zohar is as follows: The Torah is the blueprint of the world, as our Sages state, "Hashem studied the Torah and [from it] created the world." Therefore, a Torah scholar can find every phenomenon of the world in the Torah.

However, this goes even deeper. Some things in the world are apparent for all to see. These can readily be found in the simple meaning of Torah. Other phenomena are hidden in the world; no one knows about them. These will not be apparent in the plain meaning of the text. One would have to contemplate the meaning of the text very deeply in order to uncover those phenomena as contained in the Torah. The Torah reflects reality perfectly.

This explains why the Torah does not explicitly state that Yaakov learned for fourteen years before embarking upon his journey to Charan to find a marriage partner, and we must infer this information from the amount of years Yishmael lived¹⁰. Yaakov was *hiding* in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever so that Eisav should not find him. Because he was *hiding*, the Torah also *hid* this information in the number of years that Yishmael lived. What could be a better hiding place for the Torah of Yaakov, than the lifetime of Yishmael?!

An Explanation of Penina and Chana

Externally, it seemed as if Penina was insensitive and cruel to Chana. Therefore, according to the simple understanding of the verses, Penina lost her children as a punishment for tormenting Chana. This is not an incorrect understanding of the episode. Someone studying Tanach, who understands the episode according to this view, fulfills the commandment of learning Torah.

It was only after about a thousand years that R' Levi arrived at the hidden intentions of Penina, through delving into the deeper meaning of the verses. Because Penina's pure intentions were hidden, the Torah also hid it.

Of course Penina was not punished for what - we later learned - was truly an act of kindness. So why did she lose her children? Well, this touches upon the age-old question of why the righteous suffer. Maybe it was because of sins of previous incarnations that Penina was made to suffer so. Penina and Chana were reincarnations of the wives of Lemech, Ada and Tzila¹¹.

Hiding the Seed of Mashiach

The Satan is desperately afraid of Mashiach - and always tries to destroy the carriers of the seed of Mashiach - because when he will arrive, the task of the Satan will end and he will cease to exist. Therefore, Hashem hides the transmitting of the seed of Mashiach from the Satan, so he should not concentrate all of his powers upon the infant that is being born and destroy it.

Hashem hides Mashiach in all sorts of seemingly sordid episodes, so that it should not dawn upon the Satan that the seed of Mashiach is being transmitted through these people. Lot and his daughters and Yehuda and Tamar are examples of this. (This concept was explained at length in Parshas Masei.)

When Boaz married Rus, there were many scholars – like Doeg and Achitofel - who were of the opinion that it was forbidden for him to do so because she was a Moabite convert, and it is forbidden for Moabite converts to marry into the Jewish nation. (In the final analysis, this is only true regarding the men of Moav, and not the women.)

Later, when it was time for King David to come into the world, Hashem caused that Yishai fathered him in an inferior fashion, as the Midrash relates.

All of this took place so that David could be born, unharmed by the Satan. Hidden in a seemingly spiritual garbage heap, the holy soul of David - who is Mashiach – slipped into this world unnoticed.

The Positive Intention of Boaz

Shimshon, from the tribe of Dan, could have been Mashiach, if not for a failing of his. Yaakov - while blessing Dan - thought that Shimshon would turn out to be Mashiach, until he visualized his eventual outcome¹². Even though he did not end up actually being Mashiach, he rescued the Jewish people on numerous occasions from their enemies and was a great leader.

Early generations had deep intuitive powers. Even gentiles of those days understood things that Jews of later generations did not. Of course, the great Jewish leaders of early generations, who were inspired by Divine perception, certainly understood the essence of things.

The tzaddik Boaz saw that Manoach contained a spark of Mashiach and would need exceptional merit to transmit it to his offspring. Because they lacked the merit of producing great children, Manoach and his wife were barren. It is possible that this was due to the fact that Manoach was not a Torah scholar.

Boaz snubbed Manoach and his wife by excluding them from his children's weddings, saying that it was because Manoach was barren. Brokenhearted, Manoach was impelled to pray with all his might that Hashem bless him with children. The brokenhearted prayers of Manoach were the catalyst for the miraculous birth of Shimshon.

When the children of Boaz began dying, everyone said that it was because of his disgraceful treatment of Manoach. However, this is only how it seemed externally. Hashem knew that Boaz's intentions were for the good; and, to the contrary, he was rewarded for his actions by fathering Mashiach.

The true reason his sixty children died in his lifetime was because the Satan - knowing that Mashiach will descend from the children of Boaz - concentrated all of his powers to destroy them by arousing the full measure of harsh judgment upon them, and no creature is perfect enough to withstand judgment unmitigated by mercy.

Maligning the Descendant of Boaz and Rus

Boaz was not swayed by the prevalent opinion of his time that it was proper to be stringent and not marry a Moabite woman. He did this with deep insight. The law was clear to him - it was completely permissible to marry a Moabite woman (and the prohibition of marrying Moabite converts applied only to the men of Moav).

However, it did not dawn upon the Satan that the seed of Mashiach could be transmitted in a marriage that many of the legal authorities of the time ruled as prohibited by Torah law. Furthermore, Moav was the lowliest of the nations, being that they descend from the lowly union of Lot and his daughter.

Therefore, the Satan allowed Oved - the child of Boaz and Rus - and the children afterwards to remain alive. Even during the times of King David there were people who scoffed and said that the descendants of Boaz and Rus were prohibited from marrying into the Jewish people.

The Emergence of Mashiach Ben David

The concealing of the seed of Mashiach Ben David was necessary until, "נִשְׁבַּע ה' לְדָוִד אֶמֶת לֹא יִשׁוּב, 'Hashem swore to David a truth that He will not depart from: I will place your children upon the throne.'¹³

From then on it was forbidden for the Satan to destroy the children of David, because Hashem Himself had promised that they would reign forever. The descendants of David would endure pain and punishment, if necessary, but never again would the Satan be permitted to destroy them.

When the descendants of David were ensured of continuity, it was safe for their purity to be revealed plainly for all to see. No longer was it necessary to keep it hidden from the Satan.

King Shlomo

King Shlomo was the climax of the kingdom of David. His reign was a sample of the utopian conditions that will exist when Mashiach will arrive.

Concerning him the verse states, "וישב שלמה על כסא ה'", 'Shlomo sat upon the throne of Hashem.' His kingship was so great; he reigned upon the celestial creations¹⁵ and even upon the demons¹⁶.

The ultimate expression of the greatness of his rulership was the court case of the two harlots who fought over the baby. The Arizal teaches that these women were none other than the two wives of the Satan who oppose the two Matriarchs of holiness, Rachel and Leah. These female demons are Lilith - who kills Jewish children - and Na'ama, the mother of Ashmadei, king of the demons.

The Ohr HaChaim explains that regarding the evil forces, the female is stronger than the male¹⁷. He describes his awesome fight with the evil forces and how he succeeded in vanquishing the male aspect of the evil forces, but the female aspect only partially.

The kingship of Shlomo was so great that even the stronghold of the evil forces, its feminine chiefs, submitted to his verdict.

King Shlomo sat as judge, and they stood humbly before him, despite the fact that they were very angry at Shlomo because he had captured Ashmadei¹⁸. When Shlomo ruled that the child should be cut in half, the fiery devil did not throw herself upon Shlomo with the full force of her wrath, but meekly responded, "Please my lord, give her the child alive, and don't kill him¹⁹."

In the time of Shlomo, the kingdom of evil submitted itself completely to the kingdom of holiness.

Explaining the Blessing of Boaz

The blessing of Boaz to Rus - that she would live to witness Shlomo judging these two women - can now be understood.

The situation during the era of Shlomo would be the complete opposite of the situation Rus was facing. The holy soul of Rus - who was a reincarnation of the great and righteous Tamar, and was the carrier of the seed of Mashiach - was forced to hide from the Satan. It was therefore garbed in the role of a convert from the lowly Moabite nation, whom some of the Torah leaders of the time even deemed unfit to marry into the Jewish nation.

However, in the era of the Kingdom of Shlomo, the situation would be completely different. Then, holiness was not cowed by the Satan; to the contrary! The apex of the powers of evil - the feminine side of the Satan - submitted itself to holiness.

Boaz blessed Rus that she merit seeing the day when holiness will not have to hide anymore.

The Months of Tamuz and Av

From Rosh Chodesh Shevat until Shavuot is a time of spiritual ascent. After Shevuot, we begin the descent into the lowly days of Tamuz and Av.

During Tamuz and Av, the powers of evil are very strong, and holiness must lie low. Because joy is holiness, sadness is the required mood (due to the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash). In general, it is

very difficult to serve Hashem during the summer months. The feminine forces of evil cloak themselves in garments that make it torturously hard to maintain purity of thought.

However, our task is not to sink in the swamp, but to dig into the depth of these days. True, one cannot discern holiness with a superficial glance; but that is only because it is hidden due to the upper hand of the evil forces!

Lo and behold! Mashiach is born on Tisha B'Av²⁰. There is a glory hidden in these days; when Mashiach will come, these will be the most joyful days of the year. It is only now in exile that they are cloaked in a veil of sadness.

Connection to G-dliness is possible if one only searches for it beneath the surface! We are guaranteed that if we search for Hashem, we will find Him.

ותחזינה עינינו בשובך לציון ברחמים

May our eyes merit seeing Your return to Tzion, with compassion

¹ רות ב:יב

² רות פרשה ב' סימן ב'

³ ב"ב דף צ"א ע"א

⁴ שופטים יב:ח

⁵ רות ג:א

⁶ סוף מסכת ברכות

⁷ שמואל א' ב:ה

⁸ ב"ב דף ט"ז ע"א

⁹ ויקרא ח"ג דף ע"א ע"ב

¹⁰ רש"י סוף פרשת תולדות

¹¹ בספר ג"נ לרמ"ע מפאנו

¹² תרגום יונתן עה"כ יהי דן נחש (פ' ויחי)

¹³ תהלים קלב:יא

¹⁴ דברי הימים א:כט

¹⁵ סנהדרין דף כ' ע"ב

¹⁶ בראשית רבה י' ה'

¹⁷ אור החיים פ' ויחי

¹⁸ גיטין דף ס"ה

¹⁹ מלכים א' ג:כו

²⁰ מדרש רבה איכה