



## Shavuoth and Ruth: Inner Dimensions

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles  
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

A name conveys the essence of whatever is being named. The name most often used in our liturgy for the holiday of Shavuot is *Zman Matan Torateinu*, the time of the giving of the Torah. We read the Book of Ruth on *Shavuot*, for, just as we accepted the Torah as our way of life, so too did Ruth.

Ruth clung to Naomi. She declared with every fiber of her being that she would not be separated from Naomi or her God. It is this same kind complete dedication to God that must form the cornerstone of our own lives. In fact, this was the Sinai experience. Rav Soloveitchick, in trying to reconcile contradictory timelines for matan Torah presented by Rashi and Ramban, explains that when we received the *Torah* at Sinai, we underwent our own two step conversion process. The *dveikut* of our hearts and minds, the essence of our commitment, was actualized at the foot of the mountain, on *Shavuot* day. This clinging to Hashem, constituted the marriage ceremony between Hashem and *Bnei Yisroel*. This spiritual, essential intimacy is what we celebrate on *Shavuot*. Every year we reenact this experience and reaffirm our intimate connection to Hashem. We did not actually get the *luchot* at that time, nor did we offer the sacrifices that would consummate the union until later.

The next two interrelated names are *Chag Hekatzir*, the harvest festival, and *Chag Habikurim*, the first fruit festival. Much of the action in the Book of Ruth involves different aspects of the harvest, from Ruth gleaning in the fields to Boaz's commitment on the threshing floor. From the kindness Ruth shows Naomi, to the acts of kindness Boaz shows his destitute relatives, we are shown how the members of *Bnei Yisroel* should act.

This contrasts with the negative behavior of Elimelech, Machlon and Chilyon who died after running away from the suffering of their brethren. It is from this that we learn that proper *middot* must precede the acquisition of Torah as Ruth did before her conversion.

We have forty nine days, including three intense days of separation and preparation to elevate ourselves to be proper receptacles for the Divine Presence. The *Netivot Shalom* points out that on *Rosh Hashanah* we get judged on all things physical, but on *Shavuot* we get judged on the spiritual abundance we will receive. This is derived from the Chazal that states on this day the world is judged for the fruit of the tree. The tree is symbolically Hashem, while the fruit represent the souls of *Bnei Yisroel*. On this day, Hashem is deciding how much Torah and how much intimacy with Him we will achieve in the coming year.

*Bikurim* are the first fruits the newborn produce of the trees. In a similar way, at Mount Sinai each Jew was born anew, a "first fruit" of his Maker. As the *Netivot Shalom* points out in the name of the Berditchever Rebbe, the entire purpose of this festival is the message of renewal, as it is written, "At the time of the giving of the *Torah* you will offer a new offering to Hashem."

The simple explanation for the name *Shavuot* lies in the command to count seven weeks from Pesach. But it also means oaths, for on this day we took an oath to be loyal to Hashem, and Hashem took an oath to be loyal to us. However, there is yet another oath relevant to the festival, the oath of Boaz when he realized Ruth was at his feet. The *Maayon Beis Hashoevah* proposes that Naomi was trying to rectify the relationship of Judah and Tamar through their descendent, Boaz.

Although our commentators say it was Divinely ordained, there was still the hint that perhaps Judah suffered a lapse. Naomi sensed that this stain needed to be removed to enable the full strength of the royal dynasty she knew was destined to descend from Boaz and Ruth to come to fruition. She knew that the only way to completely rectify a misdeed is by finding oneself in a similar situation. Boaz stopped himself by invoking the name of Hashem, by taking an oath that he would in fact marry Ruth if the closer relative refused to do so. This gave him the strength to rein in his passion, rectify the lapse of Judah, and provide the purity necessary for the future Davidic dynasty.

The final name is the Festival of *Atzeret*, of being reined in and closed up with Hashem. This means selflessly focusing on the other. This was the relationship of Boaz to Ruth. Boaz gave Ruth six barley grains to seal the deal symbolizing the future righteous descendants destined to be born from Ruth. Boaz recognized that the nation needed the traits Ruth possessed as a Moabite to establish a lasting monarchy. A king needs some arrogance but he also needs to be altruistic. When Boaz gave Ruth these six barley grains, he symbolically transferred the future Davidic line to her, whether it would be through this other unnamed relative or through himself. This selflessness exhibited by both Boaz and Ruth, Boaz in his willingness to remove himself from the royal lineage and the young Ruth in agreeing to a levirate marriage to begin with and then marrying the elderly Boaz, is the kind of selfless devotion of a true marriage. This is the *dveikut* we hope to establish and renew between our *neshamas* and Hashem every *Shavuot*.



## Seeking Mashiach in the Time of the Corona Virus Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Being ready for Mashiach means putting our faith solely in Hashem. He is now leveling the field. Everyone knows that no amount of money, prestige, social standing, or political know how, will solve this pandemic. Hashem is telling us we can't put our trust in anyone but Him.

We're shattered. Every heart sighs. But Hashem could heal us in a moment. He hears us. He knows who we are and He'll do exactly what we need to clear the field. Imagine a parent who sees a child caught in a terrible accident. He's in terrible pain, but he'll do whatever he has to for his child. So too Hashem feels our pain more acutely than when we do. He's doing whatever He has to for us.

*Teshuva* doesn't mean wallowing in regret. It means finding the light in oneself and bringing it forth. It means letting go of the nonsense,

tapping in to one's spiritual self, and returning it to its source. Mashiach will know the words to say to help us get there. The corrupt politicians, the people you don't like, they all have light inside. It just needs to be uncovered and given a path towards articulation. The Jews will do teshuva. It could happen very fast. The effect will be that the non-Jews will repent too. They will discover the good within themselves. When the whole world is on the path to rectification, Hashem will bring us all back to Israel.

In Egypt, only a small percentage of the Jewish nation left. They were so consumed by the society they lived in, they weren't willing to leave. But in the times of Mashiach, the prophet Yechezkel tells us, we will all leave. When we get to Israel we will discover ourselves. Eliyahu Hanavi will tell each person what tribe they belong to. This will determine the lifestyle they will lead, where they will live, and what they will do.

*Mashiach's* era will consist of two stages. In the first stage life will continue as it was with one critical difference -we will be living a life of light and goodness. Termites might still destroy your furniture. You might still be 30 pounds overweight. But life will be different.

In stage two all the rules will change. There is much less known about this time period. At some point our choices will become very limited because all we will want will be good. There will no longer be the test of choosing good over bad but rather choosing good over good. There will be the revival of the dead, the judgement, and eternal life.

To merit the coming of *Mashiach* we need to be educable. We need to be willing to let go of our trust in everything but Hashem. Hashem has levelled the field and created an empty space. We need to fill it with *bitachon*.

## Shir Shel Yom: Shabbos Kodesh

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

"How great are your actions Hashem, your thoughts are very deep. An ignoramus does not know nor does a fool understand...The wicked blossom like grass and all those who do evil flourish." They are given good in this world in order that they may be destroyed completely in the next world. "My eyes have gazed on them that lie in wait for me, my ears have heard my desire of the evil-doers that rise up against me."

It seems only the first verse of this chapter refers to Shabbat. The rest speaks about the righteous who suffer and the wicked who are successful and that eventually justice will prevail.

The Redak explains that the first verses speak about Shabbat. "*Lehagid baboker chasdecha*- To proclaim His kindness in the morning..." Why do we thank Hashem especially on *Shabbat*? On this day we are not involved with the physical. The soul can soar without distractions. It's a time to express gratitude to Hashem and speak about His chesed.

"*Vemunatcha ba'leleiot*-And His faithfulness at night." This refers to Friday evening and *Motzai Shabbat*. Then too, there is more quiet time to connect to Hashem and to thank Him for the magnitude of His deeds. Mah gadlu masecha Hashem connects to *Zecher l'maaseh bereishit*. Shabbat is a time when we can think about the Creator and the spirituality we see in the world. Creation indicates a designer. "*Me'od amku machshevosecha*- Your thoughts are very deep." Although we have the ability to look at the world and appreciate the spirituality in it, we still recognize that we are limited in this physical world. There are deep things beyond our grasp, questions we cannot answer, such as- Hashem was, is, and will be. Why at a certain point did He create the world? This is something only Hashem knows.

Most commentaries say that this chapter refers to the World To Come which is called *Yom shekulo Shabbat*- a day that is completely Shabbat. This will be the reality after the coming of *Mashiach* and the resurrection of the dead. Now we have six week days and *Shabbat*. At the time of *Mashiach*, the essence

of all the days will be *Shabbat*.

Seforno explains that day symbolizes the bright era of redemption while night signifies the bitterness of exile. When the redemption will come, when we will get to *olam haba*, obviously we will speak about the kindness of Hashem. But even now when we are still in exile, it's good to thank Hashem. If a person works hard, but knows that at the end of the day a large sum of money will be waiting for him, he'll be happy all along. Although the situation at the moment seems difficult, the certainty that at the end of the day Hashem will redeem us, calls for gratitude.

"*Ki simchtani Hashem b'falecha b'maasei yadecha aranen*- For You Hashem have made me happy with your actions, I'll exult in the work of your hands." We thank Hashem for creating us with a divine image and for giving us the means to actualize this potential with the help of the work of His hands- all of creation.