

מעני תורה

שבועות

“Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death”: Do the *Mitzvot* Infringe Upon our Liberty – or Secure It?

Mrs. Melissa Kapustin
Jewish History

One of the most famous speeches from the Revolutionary era in American history is Patrick Henry's “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” address to the Virginia Convention in 1775:

Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!¹

Patrick Henry felt so strongly about “liberty” that he vocalized his many objections and fears of the original United States Constitution as a replacement of one form of tyrannical government for the possibility of another. As the Founding Fathers debated the most appropriate way to secure liberty for all citizens yet allow for the formation of a functioning country, Henry reminded those present at the Virginia Ratifying Convention in 1788:

You are not to inquire how your trade may be increased, nor how you are to become a

great and powerful people, but how your liberties can be secured; for liberty ought to be the direct end of your government.²

To Patrick Henry, liberty was the goal. For Jews, however, liberty is a means to achieve our goals.

Every year we celebrate the *Pesach* holiday, and one of the most famous phrases from that time of year is “Let My People Go.” This phrase is said by G-d to Moshe when He commands Moshe to appear before

Pharaoh to begin the process of the Jewish Exodus from Egypt. The general focus of *Pesach* is Jewish freedom from the chains of servitude in Egypt. We celebrate *Pesach*, each one of us sitting at our *Seder* table trying to experience the feeling of once having been a slave and becoming free men and women. We eat the “bread of affliction,” taste the “bitter herbs,” and ultimately,

drink the wine of freedom. We experienced our redemption from Egypt, finally earning our liberty from Egyptian oppression. After tasting liberty, why would we want to celebrate *Shavuot*- a holiday in which we commemorate receiving an enormous book of laws?

If we explore the full text of the *pasuk* in *Shemot* 7:26, we will find that freedom alone was not the ultimate goal of *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*. The *pasuk* reads: “Then *HaShem* said to Moshe, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what G-d says: Let my people



go, so that they may serve Me.” Based upon the verse above, G-d explicitly intended that we leave Egypt so that we may serve Him. Clearly, G-d never intended our freedom from Egypt as the sole purpose of our redemption.

The situation that faced the Jews who left Egypt is in some ways similar to the multiple questions that faced the American revolutionaries in the fledgling United States – we have freedom, now what? What do we do we do with our liberty? To what extent does “freedom” dictate whether we will commit ourselves to any laws? Does liberty mean freedom to do whatever we want, whenever we want? What if the liberty of one person infringes upon the liberty of another? Patrick Henry and many other 18th and 19th Century thinkers viewed “liberty” as the protection of one’s unalienable natural rights. No longer should people live under an oppressive government; laws in most situations were considered “a necessary evil.”

Unlike the fear of the revolutionaries as they debated the ratification of a body of laws for the American people, Jews count 49 days every year from *Pesach* to *Shavuot*, eagerly anticipating our acceptance of G-d’s laws. We spend each day counting the *Omer*, mentally preparing ourselves for the true goal of our freedom from Egypt. Unlike Patrick Henry who saw liberty as the main goal for Americans, we as G-d’s people see freedom/liberty as the tool to achieve our main purpose. As slaves, we were unable to serve G-d to the fullest extent possible. Yet, what are we celebrating? Replacing our service of Pharaoh with our service of G-d? Should we be celebrating the fact that we have gone from under Egyptian rule to under G-d’s rule? Could the 613 *mitzvot* be construed as replacing one “bondage” for another?

The answer to the above questions lies in our understanding of why we have G-d’s commandments. Many of the Founding Fathers in the United States eventually recognized the fact that unfettered freedom may in fact harm a society. Unlike the heated debates surrounding the making of the Constitution, we as Jews were privileged to be granted the Divine “Constitution.” We did not need to rely on our own arguments in favor of protecting liberty vs. infringing upon other liberties to protect society. G-d has

provided us with 613 *mitzvot* to guide us through life. The *Torah* does not infringe upon our liberties, but helps protect them. Had we left Egypt and had not received the *Torah* – where would we be? As we celebrate *Shavuot*, we should remember the often quoted maxim from *Pirkei Avot* 6:2; “*Ein lecha ben chorin ela mi she-osek ba-Torah* – The only person who is truly free is one who involves oneself in *Torah*.” Without *Torah*, securing every “liberty” the world has to offer is not true freedom.

¹“Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death,” Patrick Henry, Second Virginia Convention, March 23, 1775.

²“Shall Liberty or Empire Be Sought,” Patrick Henry, Virginia Convention, June 5, 1788.

Rashi’s Approach to *Matan Torah*

Miri Wagner (’15)

What was *HaShem*’s plan for how He was going to conduct *Matan Torah*? Who will speak to whom and how will *Bnei Yisrael* hear what *HaShem* says? When *HaShem* told Moshe His original plan for how He wanted to conduct *Matan Torah*, He said, “I will come to you in a cloud, and the people will hear when I speak to you and they will believe forever...” (*Shemot* 19:9). The *pasuk* continues, however, and says, “and Moshe told the words of the people to *HaShem*” (*Shemot* 19:9). Therefore, a problem arises, since the *pasuk* never mentions *Bnei Yisrael*’s response to *HaShem*’s original plan.

To answer this question, Rashi fills in the blanks to explain what occurred in this *pasuk*. Rashi explains that *HaShem*’s original plan was to speak to Moshe from the midst of a cloud as *Bnei Yisrael* would overhear and subsequently, they would believe in Him forever. This was Plan A, but when Moshe told the proposal to *Bnei Yisrael*, they asked Moshe if they could hear the *mitzvot* straight from *HaShem*, with no intermediary, since they felt that this method would have a greater impact. This was Plan B.

The question remains: which plan was chosen? Rashi explains that ultimately, they both happened. Rashi says that *HaShem* began by telling the first two commandments directly to *Bnei Yisrael*, the second plan. As a result, however, *Bnei Yisrael* were scared and

asked for Plan A. Therefore, Moshe told *Bnei Yisrael* the last eight commandments and acted as an intermediary.

There are three proofs from the *Torah* that lead us to believe that Rashi is correct in saying that both Plan A and Plan B occurred. The first proof that Plan A happened is at *Matan Torah*, in *Shemot* 19:16. There, *HaShem* appears in a cloud as it says, "And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there was thunder and lightning and a thick cloud upon the mount." Additionally, in *Shemot* 19:17 it says, "And Moses brought forth the people"; here Moshe is acting as an intermediary. In *Shemot* 19:19, Moshe again acts as an intermediary as it says, "Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice." There is, however, also evidence that Plan B occurred. In *Shemot* 19:16, it says, "And all the people that were in the camp trembled." *Bnei Yisrael* were scared because *HaShem* was talking to them directly. In *Shemot* 19:17, it says that *Bnei Yisrael* were going, "...to meet God" with no intermediary. Moreover, in *Shemot* 19:18, it says, "Because the Lord descended upon it." The reason that *HaShem* descended upon the mountain was to speak to *Bnei Yisrael*. This is all evidence of Plan B.

There is additional proof of Rashi's opinion within the wording of the Ten Commandments. The first two commandments are, "I am *HaShem*, Your God," (*Shemot* 20:2), and, "You should not have any other gods except for Me..." (*Shemot* 20:2). Both of these commandments are in the first person. In those cases, *HaShem* is speaking directly to *Bnei Yisrael*, thereby indicating that Plan B is occurring. The last eight commandments, however, are told in the third person; indicating that the speaker has changed. The initial speaker was *HaShem* and Plan B was in effect, however, Plan A ultimately happened since Moshe soon took over because *Bnei Yisrael* were too scared. Rashi says that between the second and third commandments Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* had a conversation. *Bnei Yisrael* said to Moshe, "'If you speak to us, we will listen, but if *HaShem* speaks to us, we will die.' Moshe replied saying 'Do not worry...'" (*Shemot* 20:15-16). According to Rashi, the conversation that Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* had did

not really take place after the Ten Commandments, but rather, it took place in between the second and third commandment. Rashi explains that Moshe said, "Do not worry..." and then continued to say the Ten Commandments since *Bnei Yisrael* were too scared to continue hearing them from *HaShem*. The only reason why this story is not between the second and third commandments in the *Torah* is because *HaShem* did not want to interrupt something as important as the Ten Commandments for a short story. Therefore, the story was put right after the commandments were given. The change of speaker in between the second and third commandment is another proof that helps prove Rashi's idea of Plan A and Plan B both occurring at *Matan Torah*.

The third proof that helps prove Rashi's idea of Plan A and Plan B both happening at *Matan Torah*, is when Moshe is describing *Matan Torah* in *Devarim*. Moshe explains Plan B happening at *Matan Torah* when he says, "The Lord spoke with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire" (*Devarim* 5:4). The words, "face to face" indicate that *HaShem* spoke directly to *Bnei Yisrael*. In the next *pasuk*, however, Moshe describes Plan A occurring. He says, "I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the Lord; for you were afraid because of the fire, and did not go up on the mountain," (*Devarim* 5:5). The fact that Moshe includes both Plan A and Plan B while describing *Matan Torah* further proves Rashi's opinion.

Rashi explains that the first two commandments were said by *HaShem* directly to *Bnei Yisrael* and the last eight commandments were relayed from *HaShem* to *Bnei Yisrael* with Moshe being the intermediary. Rashi states that *Bnei Yisrael* were too scared and therefore, needed Moshe to speak to them. At the time of *Matan Torah*, *Bnei Yisrael* were on a much higher level than we are currently on. They had the opportunity and ultimately did hear from *HaShem* face to face. When they became too scared to hear *HaShem* face to face, they asked Moshe to take over and give them the rest of the *mitzvot*. They did not run away and refuse to accept the *mitzvot* because they were scared; *Bnei Yisrael* still got the *mitzvot* and said "*na'aseh ve-nishma*." Although we are not

on the same level that *Bnei Yisrael* was on at the time and we do not have the opportunity to hear from *HaShem* face to face, we do have the opportunity to speak to Him. We can pray to *HaShem* whenever we want. We should take advantage of this privilege and pray for the coming of *Mashiach* soon and in our time.

Most ideas are taken from Mrs. Kraft's 10th grade Tanach class.

When did Rut Convert?

Nina Miller ('16)

After the death of Naomi's husband and two sons, Machlon and Kilyon, in *Megillat Rut*, Naomi was ready to travel back to her home in the land of *Yehudah*. Her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Rut, accompanied her as she left. It is written in *Megillat Rut* that Naomi then told Orpah and Rut to return to their mothers' houses three times. Rut 1:8 says: "*Va-tomer Naomi li-shtei kaloteha 'lechnah shovnah isha li-veit imah'* – Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law: 'Go, return, each of you to her mother's house.'" In 1:11, it is written: "*Va-tomer Naomi 'shovnah benotai lamah telechnah imi'* – Naomi said, 'Turn back my daughters. Why should you come with me?'" Naomi continues in *pasuk* 12: "*shovnah, benotai lechnah* – Turn back, my daughters, go along." Why did Naomi say "*shovnah*," or "return," three times?

The Midrash says Naomi was fulfilling the obligation of rejecting a non-Jew who wants to convert three times before accepting them. Each time she said "*shovnah*," she was fulfilling that obligation to ensure a convert is loyal and committed to Judaism. This implies that both Rut and Orpah had not yet converted. R. Nossan Scherman brings the *Zohar Chadash's* question: if this is true and they were not actually Jewish before this point, meaning their mar-

riages to Machlon and Kilyon were halachically invalid, then why are the two women called "*kaloteha*," daughters-in-law of Naomi? Naomi would not have been related to them. Furthermore, as the story unfolded, Rut met Boaz, whom she ended up marrying, because he was a relative of Machlon and could perform the *mitzvah* of *yibum*. Boaz was the redeemer of Rut's property, but if she had never been married to Machlon, she wouldn't have had the right to any of his property. If she was not Jewish, then Boaz had no obligation to marry her.

The *Zohar Chadash* also gives an answer to this question. When Rut and Orpah had married their husbands, they had converted but had remained under the presumption of "*eimat ba'alah*," fear of her husband. In those days, if a woman's husband insisted that she convert, she would have no choice but to agree. However, after the death of Machlon and Kilyon, Naomi put Rut and Orpah to the test. Had their original conversion been sincere? Were they committed Jews or were they following Naomi back to Israel out of pity? Orpah turned back because her conversion had never been completely sincere, but Rut remained strong in her beliefs and in her loyalty to Naomi and the Jewish people.



Thoughts on *Megillat Rut* and *Shavuot*

Miriam Blum ('15)

In addition to the cheesecake, flowers and greenery of *Shavuot*, we read *Megillat Rut*. Why do we read *Megillat Rut*? How is this particular story about Rut and her realization of *HaShem's* presence in the world associated with our celebration of receiving the *Torah* on *Shavuot*?

The *Yalkut Shimoni* explains that the reading of *Rut* on *Shavuot* teaches that "the *Torah* is acquired only through suffering and affliction." In his reasoning, the *Yalkut Shimoni* refers to Rut's struggles leading

up to her acceptance of the *Torah*. Despite losing her husband, leaving her homeland and traveling to a foreign land, Rut attained a great belief and trust in *HaShem*. *Bnei Yisrael*, too, experienced hardships in their Egyptian exile, but they were rewarded with the gift of *HaShem's Torah*. This moment of *Matan Torah* is the event which we celebrate on *Shavuot*.

Additionally, the Abudraham expounds, *Megillat Rut* is read on *Shavuot* because *Bnei Yisrael* were required to undergo circumcision and immersion, similar to converts, in order to receive the *Torah*. We read *Megillat Rut* "in honor of Rut who was a convert and became the mother of Israel's royal family...we say when we received the *Torah*, we were all converts." Rut told Naomi, "Your nation is my nation, your G-d is my G-d" (*Rut* 1:16). Rut serves as an example of how to be proud of our Jewish identities.

Furthermore, *Megillat Rut* has an additional message. Nowadays, we are living in a society filled with temptations and distractions, which may cause us to stray from *HaShem*. Rut serves as a role model for us as she exemplifies dedication towards the Jewish people, as well as a reminder of the responsibilities that we took upon ourselves at *Matan Torah*, our responsibilities as Jews to serve *HaShem* with pride and joy. *Shavuot* gives us the opportunity to revisit the spiritual experience of *Matan Torah* and *Megillat Rut* is an essential component of that. *Chag Sameach!*



What's the Deal With the Dairy? Why We Eat Dairy Foods on *Shavuot* Naima Hirsch ('15)

Every *Shavuot*, many Jews have the custom to eat dairy meals, unlike other holidays where meals are traditionally comprised of meat dishes. Many also have the custom to eat a dairy meal and then a meat meal afterwards. This leads us to the question of why we eat dairy specifically on *Shavuot*.

The Rama answers this question by explaining that we eat dairy and then meat because *Shavuot* is an extension and conclusion of *Pesach*. Just as on *Pesach*, we traditionally eat two different cooked dishes to commemorate the *Korban Pesach* and the *Korban Chagigah*, so too on *Shavuot* we eat two different kinds of cooked foods – dairy and meat.

The *Geulat Yisrael* offers another explanation as to why we eat dairy meals on *Shavuot*. Before *Matan Torah*, the Jewish people were allowed to eat meat that was not slaughtered ritually and even meat from non-kosher animals. However, once the Jews received the *Torah*, they knew about all of the laws of *kashrut* and *shechitah*, and they understood that the utensils they had previously been using for meat were not kosher. Therefore, the Jews had to eat dairy foods until they had an opportunity to *kasher* their dishes and utensils. In commemoration of this we eat dairy on *Shavuot*.

Ta'amei ha-Minhagim gives yet another answer to this question. Before the Jews received the *Torah*, they were afraid that drinking milk would be considered *ever min ha-chai*, eating a limb from a live animal, so they did not drink milk. After *Matan Torah*, however, the Jews realized that drinking milk was in fact permitted according to *Halachah*, leading to the custom of eating dairy meals in commemoration of *Matan Torah*.

R. Shimon of Ostropol offers a *gematria*-infused connection. The Hebrew word "*chalav*" has the numerical value of forty, which is the same number as the days Moshe spent on *Har Sinai* when receiving the *Torah*.

Whichever opinion you choose to use to understand this custom, they all have a running theme, a connection to *Matan Torah* and the *Torah* itself. This *Shavuot*, when eating our cheesecake and blintzes, we can focus on the true meaning behind the famous *minhag* of eating dairy on *Shavuot*.

Shavuot: Zeman Matan Toratenu

Tamar Schwartz ('16)

If you ask almost any observant Jew why he or she celebrates *Shavuot* they will probably tell you that it is the day we commemorate *Matan Torah*. However, if you look in *Chumash*, not once does it mention *Matan Torah* in connection with the holiday of *Shavuot*. It was



solely Chazal who connected the two. The only origins we know of the *chag* are agricultural, with *Shavuot* known as *Chag ha-Bikkurim*. Why does the *Chumash* not connect

Matan Torah with *Shavuot*?

R. Menachem Leibtag suggests that the commemoration of *Matan Torah* is unlike any other major event, such as *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*, which we remember on *Pesach*, or even everyday commemorations like *Keri'at Shema* or *tefillin*. There is nowhere in the *Torah* where we are told to commemorate the event of *Ma'amad Har Sinai*. If you look at *Sefer Devarim* 4:9-16, one of the biblical sources for the events that occurred on *Har Sinai*, it seems to state that we are only required to remember the events at *Har Sinai* in relation to the prohibition against making images of G-d; not as the official holiday of *Matan Torah*.

Additionally, we do not even know the specific day on which the *Torah* was actually given! In *Parshat Yitro*, 19:1, we are simply told, "*Ba-chodesh ha-*

shlishi la-tzeit Bnei Yisrael me-Eretz Mitzrayim ba-yom ha-zeh ba'u Midbar Sinai – In the third month of *Bnei Yisrael's* departure from the land of Egypt, on this day they came to the Sinai Desert." There is no specification of when "*ba-yom ha-zeh*, on this day," is. Rashi comments on the words of the *pasuk* in *Parshat Yitro* and says that the day was *Rosh Chodesh Sivan*, and the *Gemara* in *Shabbat* 86b calculates that *Matan Torah* was on the 6th or 7th day of *Sivan*. Rashi further highlights the significance of the phrase "on this day," which comes to teach us that the *Torah* should always be new to you as if it was given to you on that day, so fresh in your mind that you are eager to learn it. This implies that the *mitzvah* in relation to commemorating *Matan Torah* is an activity for every day, treating *Torah* like it is a brand new exciting book every single day.

The *Chumash* itself avoids giving any actual date of *Matan Torah*. The *Chumash* only focuses on the importance of it in our lives every day. However, *Chazal* seems to give us an exact time to commemorate the gift of *Torah* on this holiday, *Shavuot*. To return to our original question, how can our Rabbis connect the two if the *pasuk* clearly declared *Shavuot* an agricultural holiday and did not note the exact date of *Matan Torah*?

R. Aryeh Klapper, quoting R. David Hartman, distinguishes between *Matan Torah* and *Kabbalat ha-Torah* (the giving of the *Torah* and the receiving of the *Torah*). When the *Chumash* refers to the actual event at *Har Sinai*, it uses the language of *kabbalah* – the act of receiving the *Torah*. This is the foundation of the *Matan-Torah*-related obligation that we have, to accept the *Torah* and engage in its study every day. Thus the *Chumash* does not specify the exact date for the giving of the *Torah*, and it uses the words "*ba-yom ha-zeh*." In addition, however, *Am Yisrael* sees the *Torah* as a gracious present from *Ha-Shem*, which we choose to celebrate and commemorate annually on *Shavuot*. Our goal is that through our yearly commemoration of the receiving of the *Torah*, as well as through our daily learning of *Torah*, we can appreciate it in every way and feel a sense of gratitude for the gift of *Torah*. This appreciation is not meant to just be felt on the day of *Shavuot* itself, but all year round.

The Giving of the Torah

Tova Greenberg (14)

When we think about the holiday of *Shavuot*, we generally tend to view it as an easy holiday to prepare for compared to other ones. *Shavuot* is one of the *Shalosh Regalim*, and is also the shortest holiday of the *Shalosh Regalim* that involves the least amount of preparation. However, people often forget to think about the true meaning of *Shavuot*, which is an incredibly important and meaningful *chag*. On *Shavuot*, we celebrate the Jewish people receiving the *Torah*, which is the main point of our existence. But the precise nature of *Shavuot* remains mysterious.

The *Torah* translates the word *Shavuot* to literally mean, "The Feast of Weeks," meaning that this holiday is based on agriculture. R. Aryeh Klapper asks: How did *Shavuot* come to be a holiday about receiving the *Torah* when the *Torah* mentions only the agricultural aspect? Also, which is more important: the actual day we received the *Torah* or simply following the *Torah* every single day? Furthermore, the holiday has confusing chronology. The *Torah* records the date of *Matan Torah* in an unclear way. What are we really celebrating on *Shavuot*?

Rashi explains the chronology of *Matan Torah* as the follows: On *Rosh Chodesh Sivan* the Jewish people came to *Har Sinai* (*Parashat Yitro* – *Sefer Shemot* perek 19). The next day, Moshe went up to *Har Sinai* where *HaShem* told Moshe to tell *Bnei Yisrael* about the opportunity to accept the *Torah*. When Moshe conveyed this to *Bnei Yisrael*, they agreed to do whatever *HaShem* commanded them. On this occasion, Moshe was told that on the day of *Matan Torah*, *HaShem* will speak to him from a thick cloud. The people will witness this event, and this will show the importance of

Moshe's prophecy forever. *HaShem* warns Moshe that *Bnei Yisrael* must purify themselves on the fourth and fifth days in order to receive the *Torah*.

Matan Torah itself is described in *perek 20* of *Parshat Yitro*. All of the Ten Commandments were said in a single word and *HaShem* subsequently repeated and explained each one individually. After *Matan Torah*, Moshe was commanded to go to *HaShem*, and to remain with Him to receive the stone *luchot*. Rabbi Aryeh Klapper explains that the receiving of the *Torah* should be celebrated more than the "giving" of the *Torah* because *Matan Torah* only occurred once in a specific time in history, but every day we can receive and learn the *Torah* anew. Since the giving was an historic occurrence, whose impression is meant to last for generations, *Bnei Yisrael* needed to be purified before getting the *Torah*. It was, and is, the holiest gift *HaShem* has given us.

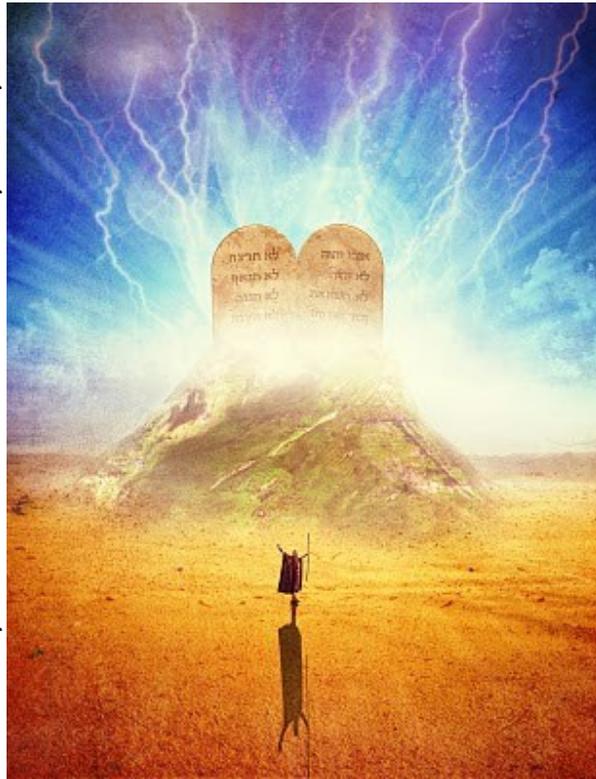
Although the date that *HaShem* gave us the *Torah* may not be recorded completely exactly, we should understand that the holiday of *Shavuot* is a time to appreciate and embrace the *Torah* that *HaShem* gave us and that we have believed in for generations. This is why we should stay up all night learning *Torah* and we should even strive to learn some new *mitzvot* that we can follow. Therefore, *Shavuot* is not simply a time to eat cheesecake; rather it is a special *chag* where one can truly appreciate the *Torah* that *HaShem* has given us. It is truly an incredible gift.

Why Do We Read *Megillat Rut* on *Shavuot*?

Hannah Siegel (16)

Megillat Rut is an undoubtedly beautiful story. It demonstrates many Jewish values and is highly inspiring. But the question remains, why do we specifically read it on *Shavuot*?

An interesting way to approach this question is the use of *gematria*, which ties *Rut* with *Shavuot*'s theme of the



acceptance of *mitzvot*. The *gematria* of "Rut" is 606. On *Shavuot*, the Jewish people received 606 new *mitzvot*, which, when added to the 7 pre-existing *mitzvot bnei Noach*, totals 613 *mitzvot*. The *Machzor Vitri* quotes a different answer, but along the same lines of *mitzvah* acceptance. Rut accepted the *Torah* upon herself, just like the *Bnei Yisrael* did on *Shavuot*. At our Bar/Bat Mitzvahs we become responsible for the *mitzvot*, but how many of us renew that commitment annually? Rut teaches us how important it is to remember the true basis for our lifestyle. We frequently perform *mitzvot* without thinking about them, so often that they become almost mundane. It is our responsibility on *Shavuot* to remember what we are trying to achieve with our *mitzvot*: we are trying to become closer to *HaShem* and to each other.

The story of Rut's conversion is very applicable to our lives, inspiring us with Rut's zeal and enthusiasm, even in the face of adversity. Sometimes we lose faith when times are difficult. We question God's plan, His presence in our lives, and who we are. Rut teaches us that however difficult our circumstances are, the hard times are when it is truly important to turn back to God and to seek comfort in our *tefillot* and *mitzvot*.

Another connection between Rut and *Shavuot* is explained by Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org). Rut was the great grandmother of David, who died on *Shavuot*, but there is a deeper aspect to that connection. David came from a simple background. He was the youngest of his brothers, and he was just a teenage shepherd when he was chosen as king. He quickly adapted to his new lifestyle, and became an amazing king. Similarly, when *Bnei Yisrael* got the *Torah*, they were not the finest of nations. They were a nation that had been enslaved and punished, and had sinned horribly. Is that the type of nation that would be expected to receive the amazing gift of G-d's *Torah*? *HaShem*, however, chose to see beauty in *Bnei Yisrael*, see their potential, and give them the gift of His *Torah*, in spite of their mistakes. This, in my opinion, is truly the reason we read *Megillat Rut* on *Shavuot*.

Chag Samaech!

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