

Zera Shimshon

by Rabbi Shimshon Chaim Nachmani zt"l

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Chapter LVI: Ruth

Essay 12. Six measures of barley and the six deficiencies of Adam

פְּסוּק "וּתְאֹמַר שְׁש־הַשְּׁעָרִים הָאֵלֶּה נָתַן לִי כִּי אָמַר [אֵלַי] אֶל־תְּבוֹאִי רִיקָם אֶל־חַמּוֹתָי". וְהִנֵּה מֵלֶת "אֵלַי" קָרִי וְלֹא כְּתִיב, לְפִי שְׂאִין דָּרְכוּ שֶׁל בּוֹעֵז לְהַרְבּוֹת שִׁתְּיָה עִם הָאִשָּׁה, וְלָכֵן לֹא דִבֶּר עִמָּה פָּנִים בְּפָנִים אוֹ נָתַן לָהּ רֶמֶז וְהִיא הִבִּינָה, וּמִשּׁוֹם הֵכִי קָרִי וְלֹא כְּתִיב, וְעֵינַי עוֹד לְעֵיל עַל פְּסוּק "עֵינַיךָ בַּשָּׂדֶה" וְכוּ'.

There is a verse: **“These six measures of barley he gave me, for he said [to me]: ‘Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.’”**¹ Now the word **“to me”** [אֵלַי] [*elai*] is read but not written,² because it was not Boaz’s way to engage in excessive conversation with a woman.³ Therefore, he did not speak with her face-to-face, but rather gave her a hint and she understood. Because of this it is read but not written. See further above (Essay 2) on the verse, **“Keep your eyes on the field they are reaping, and follow them,”**⁴ in which additional reasons are given that **“to me”** is read but not written.

אֵלֶּה אֵי קוּשְׁיָא הָא קוּשְׁיָא דְמַה טַעַם הוּא זֶה כְּדִי שְׁלֹא תְּבֹא רִיקָם אֶל חַמּוֹתָהּ לְמַת לָהּ שֶׁשׁ שְׁעוּרִים, וְכִי אִם לֹא הִיא מְטַעַם זֶה לֹא הִיא נוֹתֵן לָהּ כְּלוּם בְּתַמִּיחָה, וְהִיא עֵנִיָּה הִתְמַה וּבוֹעֵז הִיא צָרִיךְ לְמַת לָהּ בְּתוֹרַת צְדָקָה. וְאִם תְּאֹמַר שְׁלֹא הִיא נוֹתֵן לָהּ שֶׁשׁ אֵלֶּה פְּחוֹת מִזֶּה, הֲלֹא עֵדִיין לֹא יִדְעֵנוּ לָמָּה דִּנְקָא שֶׁשׁ וְלֹא שְׁבַע וְלֹא חֲמֵשׁ דִּהֵינּוּ פְּחוֹת אוֹ יוֹתֵר.

Rather, if there is a difficulty, this is the difficulty: what kind of reason is this—that in order that she not go empty-handed to her mother-in-law he gave her six measures of barley? If not for this reason, would he not have given her anything at all? This is astonishing. She was poor, and Boaz ought to have given to her as charity.

If you should say that he would not have given her six measures, but less than that, we still do not know why he specifically gave her six and not seven or five—that is, fewer or more.

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¹ Ruth 3:17.

² Nedarim 37b.

³ Pirkei Avot 1:5.

⁴ Ruth 2:9.

ואם נִתְרַץ פֶּה־יָא דְאִמְרִינּוּ בְּפֶרֶק חֶלֶק מֵאֵי "שִׁשְׁ-הַשְּׁעָרִים" אֵילִימָא שֵׁשׁ שְׁעוּרִים מִמֶּשׁ, וְכִי דְרָכּוּ שָׁל בּוֹעֵז לִיתָן מִתְּנָה שֵׁשׁ שְׁעוּרִים, אֶלָּא שֵׁשׁ סְאִין, וְכִי דְרָכּוּ [ה] שֶׁל אִשָּׁה לִיטוּל שֵׁשׁ סְאִין, אֶלָּא רִמְזוּ לָהּ שְׁעֵתִידִין שֵׁשׁ בְּנִים לְצֵאת מִמִּנְהָ שְׁמִתְבָּרְכִין בְּשֵׁשׁ בְּרָכוֹת וְכו' ע"כ. הֲלֹא עֲדִיין הַקּוּשְׁיָא בְּמִקּוּמָה עוֹמְדָת שְׁהִטְעַם שְׂאוּמֵר הַכְּתוּב אִינוּ דּוֹמָה לְטַעַם שְׂאוּמֵר בְּגִמְרָא, שְׂאֵם הוּא רִמְזוּ עַל הַבְּנִים וְכו' מַה עֲנִין לֹמֵר "אֶל-תְּבוֹאֵי רִיקָם אֶל-תְּמוֹתָךְ", הֲלֹא בְּלֹא הֲכִי הָיָה נוֹתֵן לָהּ שֵׁשׁ מִשׁוּם הַרְמָז הַנִּל, וְעוֹד דְּאֵי מִשׁוּם "אֶל-תְּבוֹאֵי רִיקָם" וְכו' אֶפִּילוּ בְּחֻדָּא אוּ בְּתַרְתֵּי סְגִי.

Perhaps we can answer in accordance with that which is said in tractate Sanhedrin, the 11th chapter entitled *chelek* ["All Israel have a share in the World-to-Come]."

What are "six measures of barley"? [*Se'orim* is barley and usually interpreted as "measures of barley," but the quantity of the measure is not explicitly stated.] If you say literally six barley grains, is it Boaz's way to give a gift of six barley grains? Rather, six *se'ah*. But is it a woman's way to carry six *se'ah* [which is very heavy]? Rather, he hinted to her that six sons would eventually descend from her, who would be blessed with six blessings, etc.

- Sanhedrin 93a-b

Even so, the difficulty still remains in place. For the reason stated by Scripture is not similar to the reason stated by the Gemara. If it is a hint regarding the sons, etc., what relevance is there in saying, "Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law"? Even without this concern for Naomi, he would have given her six measures because of the aforementioned hint.

Furthermore, if it were merely because of "do not go empty-handed," etc., even one or two would have sufficed.

וְנִשׁ לֹמֵר שֶׁיְדוּעַ שְׁבָרוֹת הָיוּ בָּהּ שְׁנֵי דְבָרִים טוֹבִים, אַחַת הַפְּרִידָה טוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר הוֹכִיחַ ה' וַיַּעֲדָה לְהוֹצִיא מִמִּנְהָ מַלְכוּת בֵּית דָּוִד וּמִלְכּוּת הַמִּשְׁמִיחַ, וְהִיא הַפְּרִידָה שֶׁלְקַח לוֹט מֵאַבְרָהָם בְּהַפְרָדוֹ מֵעֲמּוֹ פִּידוּעַ לְיִדְעֵי חֵן. וְהַשְּׁנִית כִּי רוּחַ מַחְלוֹן הָיָה בְּקַרְבָּהּ וְהָיָה כְּמוֹ יְבוּם, וְכִמוֹ שְׁכַתְבָּנוּ לְמַעַלָּה בְּפִסּוּק "וַתֵּן ה' לָכֶם" וְכו' וְעֵי"ש. וּמִמִּנְהָ יֵצֵא עוֹבֵד לְפִי שֶׁבַעבּוֹדְתוֹ אֵת ה' תִּיקֶן וְכו' כְּמוֹ שְׁכַתְבּוֹ הַמְּקוּבָּלִים. וְלִפִּי זֶה כְּשֶׁנּוֹלַד עוֹבֵד מְרוֹת כְּתִיב "וַתִּקְרָאנָהּ לוֹ הַשְּׂכֵנֹת שֵׁם לְאִמֵּר יִלְד-בֵּן לְנַעֲמִי", דְּהִינּוּ רוּחַ מַחְלוֹן שֶׁהָיָה רוּחַ קְדוֹשׁ בְּקַרְבָּהּ, וְזֶה הַמַּחְלוֹן הָיָה בְּנֶה שֶׁל נַעֲמִי מִמֶּשׁ, וּמִשׁוּם הֲכִי אִמְרוּ יוֹלַד בֵּן לְנַעֲמִי דִּנְקָא.

It may be said that it is known that Ruth possessed two good qualities. One good quality was the "good separation," a Divinely ordained, purposeful transition that ultimately leads to cosmic repair and redemption. The separation from her past and the severing of her native ties were essential stepping stones designed to pave the way for her conversion and integration into the Jewish people.⁵ In this way, G-d discerned and designated to bring forth from her the kingdom of the House of David and the King Messiah. This was the "separation" that Lot took from Abraham when he separated from his people, as is known to those versed in esoteric wisdom. Kabbalists teach that Lot carried a spark from Abraham's soul that would eventually emerge through Moab, via Ruth, via David, to the Messiah.⁶

The second good quality was that the spirit of Mahlon was within her, and it was like Levirate marriage, as we wrote above (Essay 1) on the verse "May the L-rd grant to you,"

⁵ Moses Alshich, *Einei Moshe* (Venice 1601), 2:1:3.

⁶ Zohar I:110a-110b (Vayera 21:307-311).

etc., see there. As explained in Essay 1, based on the *Saba deMishpatim* section of the Zohar: when a husband dies, he leaves a spirit of holiness within his wife, which finds rest only when she marries a Jewish husband — and this is the secret of Levirate marriage. Since Mahlon was a holy soul, his spirit of holiness remained within Ruth after her conversion and marriage to Boaz.

From her would emerge Obed [“servant”], for through his service of G-d he rectified, etc., as the Kabbalists wrote. According to this, when Obed was born from Ruth, it is written: “And the neighboring women gave him a name, saying: ‘A son has been born to Naomi,’”⁷ i.e., Ruth’s son was considered a grandson to Naomi, meaning in the context of a Levirate marriage, the spirit of Mahlon that was within [Ruth], which was a holy spirit within her, was considered as the father. This Mahlon was literally Naomi’s son, and therefore they specifically said: “A son has been born to Naomi,” crediting Naomi as the grandmother of Obed.

ובמדרש ילקוט על פסוק "אלה תולדות השמים והארץ", כל "תולדות" שבמקרא חסרין וא"ו בתראה בר מתרין, "ואלה תולדות פריץ", והדין, ומפני מה אינן חסרין, כנגד ששה דברים שנישלו מאדם הראשון, זיוו חיותו וקומתו פרי הארץ פרי האילן והמאורות וכו' ועיי"ש ושוב אינם חוזרים לתיקונם עד שיבוא בן פריץ דהיינו משיח עכ"ל.

In Midrash Yalkut Shimoni (Parashat Bereshit, remez 17) on the verse (Genesis 2:4), “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth”⁸:

All occurrences of the word “generations” [toldot] [תולדות] in Scripture are written deficiently, as תולדת, lacking the final vav, except for two: “And these are the generations of Perez,”⁹ and this one. Why are they deficient? The Gematria of vav is six, and thus they are missing corresponding to the six things that were taken from the first Adam: his radiance, his vitality, his stature, the fruit of the earth, the fruit of the tree, and the luminaries, etc., see there. They do not return to their full rectification until the son of Perez comes—that is, the Messiah.

- Yalkut Shimoni, parashat Bereisheet, remez 17

ובפירושו מנחת שי הביא בשם ספר גאולת הגר דהיינו טעמא ש"פריץ" הראשון נקוד קמץ וסגול והשני בתרין סגולותא ששה נקודות, להורות שעד פריץ היו ששה דברים חסרים לגמרי ממין האדם ומפריץ ואילך עד דוד חזרו שלשה מהם, ששה זיו מצינו במשה, פירות הארץ ופירות האילן חזרו ונמקנו גם כן במקצת, אבל חיי האדם והקומה והמאורות נשארו חסרים לגמרי, ולעתיד יחזרו כלם לתיקונם הראשון, לכן "פריץ" הראשון קמץ וסגול להורות שבתחלה היה הפל סתום וחסר ואחר כך נפתחו שלשה, ו"פריץ" השני בשש נקודות להורות שלעתיד יחזרו כלם עכ"ל.

In the commentary *Minchat Shai* on parashat Vayeshev,¹⁰ he cites in the name of the sefer *Ge'ulat HaGer*¹¹ that this is the reason why in Ruth 4:18, “these are the generations of

⁷ Ruth 4:17.

⁸ Gen. 2:4.

⁹ Ruth 4:18.

¹⁰ Yedidiah Norzi (ca. 1560–1626), *Minchat Shai* (composed 1626), a Masoretic commentary.

¹¹ Rabbi Elyakim Getschlik Rothenburg, *Geulat HaGer* (Prague 1618), a commentary on the Targum of the five megillot.

Perez: Perez begot Hezron,” the first occurrence of “Perez” is vocalized with *kamatz* and *segol* [פֶּרֶז], while the second occurrence has two *segols* [פְּרֶז], which together are six vowel points.

This teaches that until Perez there were six things entirely lacking from mankind, and from Perez onward until David, three of them returned. For we find radiance in Moses, and the fruits of the earth and fruits of the tree also returned and were somewhat restored. However, vitality, stature,¹² and the luminaries remained entirely deficient, and in the future all of them will return to their original perfection. Therefore, the first “Perez” has *kamatz* and *segol*, indicating that at first everything was closed and lacking, and afterward three were opened. The second “Perez,” with six vowel points, indicates that in the future all six will return.

- *Minchat Shai*, parashat Vayeshev

ואם כן בזמן בועז שהיה מפרץ עד דוד כבר חזרו ונתקנו שלשה, והנה אלו השש שעורים הם כנגד הששה דברים שיתקנו בזמן המשיח בן בנה של רות. אמנם לפי שפארתו זמן היו שלשה קצת מתוקנים היה די ליתן לה שלשה, שאלו יבואו בזכות משיח דוקא. אבל בשלש האחרים שגם באותם הדורות היו זוכים בהם לא היה צורך ליתן לה. אבל אם היה גותן לה שלש בלבד היה נראה שכל שבח הבן הנולד יהיה הכל מתמת אותה פרידה טובה שהיתה ברות ולא מתמת רות מחלון בן פרץ וכן נעמי שהיה בקרבה.

Accordingly, in the time of Boaz—which was from Perez until David—three had already returned and been restored. These six measures of barley therefore correspond to the six things that will be rectified in the time of the Messiah, descendant of Ruth. However, since at that time three were already somewhat restored, it would have sufficed to give her three, for those would come specifically through the merit of the Messiah. But regarding the other three, which people in those generations also already enjoyed, there was no need to give her anything corresponding to them. Yet if he had given her only three, it would have appeared that all the greatness of the child to be born would come solely from that “good separation” that was in Ruth, and not from the spirit of Mahlon son of Perez and son of Naomi, which was within [Ruth].

ומשום הכי נתן לה שש כלומר שלשה, תזכי מתמת הפרידה, ושלשה, מתמת רות מחלון, ובין כלם הם שש, ובנה "אל-תבואי ריקם אל-חמותי", דהיינו נעמי אם מחלון, שהרי בשביל רות תוקנו שלשה ובשביל שותפות של רות מחלון תוקנו לגמרי כל הששה, ובהכי אתי שפיר הכל.

Therefore, he gave her six—meaning: three you will merit because of the separation, and three because of the spirit of Mahlon. Together they are six. Thus, “you shall not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law,” namely Naomi, mother of Mahlon. For through Ruth three things would be rectified, and through the partnership of Mahlon’s spirit all six would be completely rectified. In this way, everything fits well.

¹² Although the Gemara (Berachot 54b) records that Moses was ten cubits tall, this does not contradict the teaching here, since Adam’s original stature reached from earth to heaven (Sanhedrin 38b); even Moses’ exceptional height represents only a negligible fraction of what was lost.

והשעורים הם מורים על הדברים החסרים, שהרי השעורים הם רמז לעניים שגם הם הם עניים לגבי החיטים. והראיה שבפרקי שירה כתוב שבולת שעורים אומרת "תפלה לעני כי יעטף" וכו'. וגם מנחת העומר באה שעורים לפי שיצאו ממצרים והיו עניים מתורה, ומשום הכי בפסח קרב העומר משעורים אבל בשבועות שקבלו התורה והעשירו מזבחות הביאו שתי הלחם מחיטים, וקרוב לזה דרשו דורשי רשומות.

The barley signifies the deficient things, for barley is an allusion to the poor, who themselves are “poor” in comparison to wheat. The proof is that in chapter 3 of *Perek Shirah*¹³ it is written: “The stalk of barley says: ‘A prayer of the poor man when he faints.’¹⁴”

Likewise, the *omer* offering came from barley because Israel left Egypt and were poor in Torah. Therefore, on Passover the *omer* was offered from barley, but on Shavuot, when they received the Torah and became enriched with merits, they brought the two loaves from wheat.

Similar to this is what the interpreters of symbolic teachings expounded.

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¹³ *Perek Shirah* is an ancient Midrashic work in which each element of Creation praises G-d with a Biblical verse.

¹⁴ Ps. 102:1.