

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter LVI: Ruth

### Essay 6. A blessing upon Ruth's stomach

**מדרש** על פסוק "ותאכל ותשבע ותתר", אמר ר' יצחק כתיב "צדיק אכל לשבע נפשו", ואם כן שמעתי תרי, או שרתה ברכה בידיו של אותו צדיק או במעיה של אותה צדקת. ממה דכתיב "ותאכל ותשבע ותתר" נראים הדברים שהברכה שרתה במעיה של אותה צדקת עכ"ל. יש לדקדק מעיקרא מאי קשיא ליה ולבסוף מאי ניקחא ליה, ואיך מתחלה היה שומע מפסוק זה תרתי ולבסוף חדא.

There is a **Midrash on the verse**, “At mealtime, Boaz said to her, ‘Come over here and partake of the meal, and dip your morsel in the vinegar.’ So she sat down beside the reapers. He handed her roasted grain, **and she ate, and she was satiated, and she left some over.**”<sup>1</sup>

**Rabbi Yitzchak said: It is written, “The righteous man eats until his soul is satiated, but the belly of the wicked is empty.”<sup>2</sup> If so, you hear from this two things: Either a blessing rested in the hands of this righteous man, or in the stomach of this righteous woman.” From the fact that it’s written, “and she ate, and she was satiated, and she left some over,” the words appear to teach that the blessing rested in the stomach of this righteous woman.**

- Yalkut Shimoni, Ruth, remez 604:2

**We need to check from the outset what difficulty [Rabbi Yitzchak] had, and at the end what satisfaction he found, and how at the beginning he was hearing from this verse two things, viz, that the teaching was that a blessing benefited either Boaz's hands or Ruth's stomach, and at the end one thing, that Ruth's stomach was blessed. I.e., it seems that a miracle occurred, for it seems that Boaz only gave her a little food, and yet she was not only satiated, but had some left over. But did the miracle occur because of Boaz's merit, i.e., did the blessing rest in his hands, or did the miracle occur because of Ruth's merit, i.e., did the blessing rest in her stomach?**

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth 2:14.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. 13:25.

וגיש לומר דמתחלה קשה ליה על מילת "ותמר" שגראית מיומרת שהרי חובה על כל אדם שישיר פתיתין על שלחנו כדי להודות להשם ותברך על חסדו שהשפיע לנו מטובו עד שישבענו והתרגנו. וכל מי שאינו משיר אינו רואה סימן ברכה שגאמר "איין־שריד לאכלו על־כן לא־יחיל טובו", וכן כתב הלבוש ארח חיים (סימן ק"פ). ועוד כתבו המפרשים על פסוק "צדיק אכל לשבע נפשו" שהצדיק אינו אוכל כדי שביעה אלא עד כדי שביעה ולא עד בכלל, וזהו "לשבע" כלומר עד השביעה, וכן פרש רש"י "לשבע נפשו" דומה שיהא שבע עכ"ל.

**It can be said at the outset that he had difficulty with the word “and she left some over,” for it appears extraneous, for it is incumbent upon every person to leave over a piece of food on his table in order to acknowledge G-d, may He be Blessed, for His kindness that He gave us abundantly from His goodness, such that we were satiated and had leftovers. Anyone who does not leave over a piece of food on his plate will not see a sign of goodness, as it is said, “None of his food shall remain; therefore, his fortune will not prosper.”<sup>3</sup> Thus wrote the Levush, Orach Chaim (siman 180, se’if 2).<sup>4,5</sup> Also, the commentators wrote on the verse, “The righteous man eats until his soul is satiated,” that the righteous man does not eat for satiation, rather only up until the point that he is satiated, but not including that point. This is the meaning of “until his soul is satiated,” as if to say “until but not including satiation,” and thus Rashi explains, “It always seems to him that he is satiated.”<sup>6</sup>**

ומעתה הרגיש המדרש שמי קשיות חזא דלא הנה ליה למימר "ותמר" שהרי דבר חובה הוא להותיר ממאכלו, ועוד מדקאמר "ותשבע" נראה שאכלה כדי שביעה וזה אינו דרך הצדיקים. והנה ליה למימר "ותאכל לשבע" ותו לא. לכן סלקא דעתיה שפא להשמיענו אהד משני דברים, שאם הנה אומר הפתוב "לשבע" הייתי יכול לומר שהיתה נראה בעינייה להיות שביעה שכן דרך הצדיקים להסתפק אף במעט, ומפל שכן פאן שהנה רק מעט קלי והיתה צריכה נמי לשיר ממנו, אבל אין הכי נמי שלא היתה כלל שביעה אלא מצד שהיא צדקת. ומשום הכי קאמר "ותשבע" דהיינו שהיתה שביעה ממש, שפאותו מעט שנתן לה בועז פדקתיב "ויצבטלה קלי" דהיינו קומץ, באה שם הברכה שאכלה כדי שביעה ועוד ניתומר בו, ולפי זה ברכה זו באה בזכותו של בועז.

**Now, the Midrash felt two difficulties. One was that [Scripture] should not have said “and she left some over,” for this matter is obligatory to leave something over from one’s food. Also, by saying “and she was satiated,” it appears that she ate for satiation, and this is not the way of the righteous. To eliminate both of these concerns, [Scripture] should have said “and she ate until but not including satiation,” and nothing else.**

**Therefore, it may enter one’s mind that [the Midrash] came to inform us of one of two things. That if Scripture had said “until satiation,” I would be able to say that it appeared to be satiation, as this is the way of the righteous, to be satiated even with a little. This is even**

<sup>3</sup> Job 20:21.

<sup>4</sup> Mordecai ben Avraham Jaffe (c. 1530–1612), his *Levush Malchut* (published 1590–99) is a compilation of Jewish law, provided with reasons for the laws that often follow a Kabbalistic approach.

<sup>5</sup> The practice of leaving food over is known as Raavad’s fast, after a teaching of Abraham ben David (“the Raavad”) (c. 1125–1198), Provençal rabbi and commentator on the Talmud.

<sup>6</sup> Rashi on Prov. 13:25.

more so the case here, as there was only a little grain, and she also needed to leave some of it over. But it is indeed so that it wasn't considered satiation, as she was a righteous woman.

Because of this, it also said “and she was satiated,” that is, that she was actually satiated, that with the little that Boaz gave here—as it is written, “and he handed her roasted grain,”<sup>7</sup> which means a handful—a blessing came there, that she ate in order to be satiated and still had some left over. I.e., since it does say that she was satiated, the initial thought is that she was not so righteous, and that the miracle was not in her merit. **Because of this, this blessing came in the merit of Boaz.**

**אִי נִמְלִי** יֵשׁ לֹאמֵר שֶׁשָּׂרְתָה בְּרִכָּה בְּמַעֲיָה שֶׁל אוֹתָהּ צְדָקָת דְּאִיתְרַמְאֵי מִלְתָּא שֶׁשְׂבִיעָה מְקוּדָם וְנִיתוּמַר מִמְאָכְלָה אַף מָמָה שֶׁהִיטָה צְרִיכָה לְאָכּוֹל עוֹד כְּדֵי לְהַגִּיעַ עַד הַשְׂבִיעָה. וּמִשּׁוּם הַכִּי קָאמַר "וַתִּשְׂבַּע וַתֵּמַר", דְּהֵינּוּ "וַתִּשְׂבַּע" דְּנִקָּא לְפִי שְׂבָעָה הַבְּרָכָה שֶׁלֹּא מִיִּדְעָתָה, וְעוֹד "וַתֵּמַר" יוֹמַר מָמָה שֶׁהִיטָה רְאוּי לְהוֹתִיר.

Alternatively, it can be said that the blessing rested in the stomach of that righteous woman, that the matter just happened that she was satiated initially, and so she left over some of her food even from what she would have ordinarily needed to eat more of in order to arrive at the satiation. Because of that, it said “and she was satiated, and she left some over,” which is that she was literally satiated because the blessing came without her knowing, and also she left more over than what was appropriate to leave over.

וְנִזְהוּ שֶׁאָמַר הַמְדַרְשׁ שֶׁמַּעֲתָ מִינַּה תְּרַתִּי, וְאִתְרַ כֹּךְ בָּא לְהוֹכִיחַ שֶׁהַבְּרָכָה שָׂרְתָה בְּמַעֲיָה מָמָה דְּכַתִּיב "וַתֵּמַר", שֶׁהִיטָה לוֹ לֹאמֵר "וַתֵּאָכֵל וַתִּשְׂבַּע וַתֵּמַר". כְּדַכְתִּיב "וְהִמְלֵאכָה הָיְתָה דָבָר" וְכוּ' "וַתֵּמַר" וְיִמָּהוּ "וַתֵּמַר", אֶלָּא וְדֵאִי שֶׁהִיא גְרָמָה שֶׁיּוֹמַר מָמָה הַמְאָכֵל הַרְבֵּה, דְּהֵינּוּ שֶׁהַבְּרָכָה בָּאָה בְּמַעֲיָה מִתְּמַת צְדָקוֹת שֶׁלֶּהּ.

**This is what the Midrash said: You hear from [Scripture] two things, and afterward it came to prove that the blessing rested in her stomach.** How did Rabbi Yitzchak determine that was the correct choice of the two possibilities? He decided that **from the fact that it is written “and she had some left over.” That is, it should have said, “and she ate, and she was satiated, and there was some left over,”** written passively, as it is written, “**their efforts had been enough for all the tasks to be done, with some left over.**”<sup>8</sup>

Rather, it is written actively, “she left some over,” because **certainly she caused to be left over much of this food.** Thus, Rabbi Yitzchak concludes **that the blessing came to her stomach from her righteousness.**

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<sup>7</sup> Ruth 2:14.

<sup>8</sup> Ex. 36:7.