

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter LVI: Ruth

### Essay 7. What we can learn from Boaz's kindness toward Ruth

**פסוק** "איפה לקטת היום ואנה עשית זה מפיך ברוך". יש לדקדק דמה ענגן ברכה זו ונקא למי שיכיר אותה, ועוד מה באה להוסיף בברכה זו, דממה נפשך אם הגרים בכלל ישראל הם כבר נאמר "ומברכה ברוך", שמי שעושה חסד עם אחרים גם הוא מתברך, ובפרט מי שנותן בסכר פנים לעני שמסתמא מפיסו בדברים ומתפלל עליו, דפשיטא שהוא בכלל "מברכה ברוך", ואם הגרים אינם בכלל ישראל לגמרי ואינם בכלל "מברכה ברוך", אם כן מנא לה לנעמי ליתן ברכה זו למי שעושה עמה חסד, ועוד שנתנה ברכה זו למי שמכיר אותה בלבד.

**There is a verse, “Her mother-in-law asked [Ruth], ‘Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be he who took notice of you!’”<sup>1</sup>**

**We need to check what relationship this blessing specifically has to one who took notice of her.**

**Whichever way you look at it:** On the one hand, **if the converts are completely in the category of Israel, then it has already been said about them, “Blessed are those who bless you.”<sup>2</sup> That is, if Ruth were considered fully Jewish, then one who acts with kindness towards others, such as Boaz acting kindly toward her, is also blessed. Specifically, one who with a pleasant countenance gives to a poor person, and who apparently consoles him with words and who prays for him, then it is obvious that he is in the category of “Blessed are those who bless you.”** So why would Naomi need to say that Boaz should be blessed?

On the other hand, **if the converts are not completely in the category of Israel and are not automatically in the category of “Blessed are those who bless you,” if so, why did Naomi give this blessing to one who acted with kindness toward [Ruth]?**

**Also, another question is why did she give this blessing only to one who took notice of her?**

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth 2:19.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 27:29.

ונש' לומר דבפרק ד' דיבמות אמרינו דגרים בזמן הנה מעונים לפי שאין בקיאים בדקדוקי מצות או שאינם עושים מאהבה וטעמים אחרים ועיי"ש. ואם כן הסבירא נותנת שבני אדם המבקשים בני טובים לעשות להם צדקה וחסד לא יפסו דעתם בהועיל לגרים, בהשכם שאין הכי נמי שמצנה להחיותם ולא לעשות להם חס ושלום שום אונאה, אבל אין חיוב לעשות להם כל כך צדקה וחסד.

**It can be said that in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of tractate Yevamot (page 48b) it is said that converts at that time are persecuted because they are not experts in the details of the commandments, or because they do not fulfill them out of love [of G-d], but only out of fear [of the punishments for failing to observe them], or for other reasons, and see there.**

**If so, the explanation provides that people who seek out the righteous, to treat them with charity and kindness, may not have their thoughts satisfied with the benefit of their money to the converts. I.e., they may think it's better to give charity to someone who was born Jewish. They may be thinking that it is indeed so that the commandment is to sustain [converts] and certainly not to deceive them, G-d forbid, but that there is no obligation to give them so much charity and kindness.**

משום הכי אמרה נעמי "יהי מכירך ברוד", שכתב העשרה מאמרות (במאמר אם כל חי סימן ח') שנהלשון של "והתברכו" ו"נברכו" האמור באבות, הוא מלשון הברכת האילן, שהרי משפילין ענף מן האילן ונטמן בארץ ובעפר עד שישרוש גזעו, ומה שגדל אחר כך מיניה הוא דקא רבי, כך הוא רמז לגרים דמינו הו' ונדחו והשתא הוא דאחדרו וכו', ועיי"ש (בסימן ז) שזיווגם של אברהם ושרה הנה משלים לתולדותיו של אדם הראשון והוא כעין מעשה היבום עכ"ל.

**Because of that, Naomi said, "Blessed be he who took notice of you,"** because Boaz was doing more than just sustaining Ruth. He was being very generous with his charity, as well as showering her with kindness.

**The *Asara Ma'amarot* (the article *Em Cal Chai*, third section, siman 8),<sup>3</sup> wrote that the language of "shall bless themselves"<sup>4</sup> and "will be blessed"<sup>5</sup> that was said of the patriarchs is from the language of an agricultural practice, "the kneeling of the tree." That is, the root of the word "blessed" is *berech* [ברך], which means "knee," as kneeling is a sign of respect. A Mishnah in Orlah 1:5 explains the agricultural practice whereby [farmers] bring down a branch from the tree, as though it's kneeling down toward the ground, and they hide it in the earth and dust until the stump takes root. Then what appears to be a new plant comes up out of the ground, but what lifts up afterward from [the stump] also draws nourishment from the parent vine or tree.**

**Asara Ma'amarot said that this is a hint of the converts, that they had been heretics and outcast, but now He has returned us, etc., and see there, in *Em Cal Chai*, third section, siman 7. This explains that the marriage of Abraham and Sarah completed the generations of the first**

<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Menachem Azaria da Fano ("Rema M'Pano") (1548–1620), Italian Kabbalist and commentator on the Talmud. *Asara Ma'amarot* ("Ten Utterances") was published in Venice in 1597.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. 22:18; Gen. 26:4.

<sup>5</sup> Gen. 12:3; Gen. 18:18; Gen. 28:14.

man, and this is like an action of raising up, as Abraham and Sarah made many converts in Charan, whom they brought with them to the Holy Land. While converts may seem to be a new branch of the tree, it's important to remember that they are actually connected to the source, to Abraham and Sarah.<sup>6</sup>

וְהִשְׁתָּא יוֹבֵן "יְהִי מִכִּי־רַד בְּרוּד" מִי שְׁמִכִּיר בְּדֵשׁ אֶת גִּיּוֹרֵת דְּמִינֵן הוּוּ וְנִדְחֵוּ. אִם כֵּן יִבִּין שְׁהוּא בְּכָלֵל "מְבָרְכִיד בְּרוּד", וְאָמַר דִּנְקָא "בְּרוּד" דְּהִינֵנוּ כְּעֵין הַבְּרַכַּת הָאֵילָן וְכוּ', וְרַצְתָּה לְרִמּוּז ל"מִי יִשְׁאַנְהָ" לְהַקִּים שְׁם אֲמַת דְּהִינֵנוּ כְּמוֹ יְבוּם וְהַבְּרַכַּת הָאֵילָן.

Now **“Blessed be he who took notice of you” will be understood: He who took notice of you, that you are a convert, that you had been a heretic and outcast**, but that you have returned to the true faith for which your soul was created. **If so, he will understand that you are completely in the category of Israel, such that he is in the category of “Blessed are those who bless you.”** [Scripture] specifically said **“blessed”** [בְּרוּד] [*baruch*], from the root *berech*, meaning “knee,” which is as the **“kneeling of the tree,”** etc.

She wanted to hint that **“who can bear”<sup>7</sup> to establish a truth there, which is like raising up converts and the “kneeling of the tree,”** that converts may seem to be a new branch, but actually remain connected to Abraham and Sarah.

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<sup>6</sup> As explained by Rabbi Yisroel Zilberberg. This material from *Asara Ma'amarot* is also discussed in *Zera Shimshon*, Chapter XI –Vayigash, essay 9.

<sup>7</sup> Prov. 18:14.