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By the Hakham
Rabbi Ya'aqob Menashe, 'a"h

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5782 פֶּרֶשֶׁת בַּמִּדְבָּר – שָׁבוּעוֹת

Bammidbar: Mentioning a Name Is a Sign of Closeness

בַּמִּסְפָּר שְׁמוֹת כָּל-זָכָר לִגְלָלָתָם

"According to the number of their names, each male according to their polls" (Bammidbar 1:2). This is the commandment for a census of the Children of Israel. Mentioning the name of another person appears to cause a certain endearment towards the person whose name one is mentioning.

When a person hates another, he is unable to bring himself to mention that person's name, but uses some other name, nickname or epithet, sometimes derogatory, to refer to him. Doegh and Aḥitophel never mentioned King David's name, but only referred to him as Ben Ishai (the son of Ishai).

It mentions in Kissei Dawid that the reason why it says, "בַּמִּסְפָּר שְׁמוֹת" (according to the number of their names) is to show how endeared the Jewish people are to HQB"H. The fact that He is using their names is a sign of His great love for the Jewish people and increases their status.

(See Kissei Dawid, Bammidbar)

Why Does Ruth Apparently Repeat Herself?

"וְתֹאמַר רוּת אֶל-תִּפְגְּעֵי-בִי לְעֹזֵבְךָ לְשׁוֹב מֵאַחֲרָיִךְ" Ruth said, 'Don't press me to leave you, to turn away from you' (lit. from after you)" (Ruth, 1:16). An explanation for the apparent redundant repetition of the same idea, when Ruth says, "to leave you, to turn away from you" can be found in Em HaMelekh.

Rabbenu Ḥakham Yoseph Ḥayyim, 'a"h, says that one possible explanation is that when Ruth saw Na'omi was refusing to let her return with her, she thought that Na'omi didn't want her to accompany her because she believed that after a year or two she would leave and return to her land and become a non-Jew once again as she was originally, Heaven forbid.

Another possibility, is that she would not do so during Na'omi's lifetime, because of the embarrassment, but after she passes away perhaps Ruth would return to her old ways. That is why there is a doubling of the words. Ruth tells Na'omi not to press her on account of the fear that Ruth would return to her old ways after a year or two and, secondly, she tells her that she will not turn away 'after her', meaning after her long life.

In keeping with that Ruth adds, "Where you go I will go...your G-d is my G-d...where you die, I will die", and so on, to assure Na'omi of her honorable intentions.

(See Em HaMelekh)



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Hitting or Scratching on Shabbath

Hitting or beating and causing bleeding, is forbidden on Shabbath. Even bruising, which causes the blood to collect under the skin, but not actually emerge, is forbidden. There are different opinions as to which category of Melakha (servile work) this falls under. Some say it falls under Neṭilath Neshamah (Shoḥet [killing/slaughtering]), others say Mefareq (a subset of Dash [threshing]), while others opine that it is Şobeya' (dyeing).

If someone scratches himself in a particular spot for an extended amount of time, in such a way that the area becomes red and remains that way for a day or two, it is forbidden on Shabbath. This falls under the category of Şobeya'.

Scratching a wound, or any part of the body, which causes blood to emerge, is forbidden on Shabbath. This could fall under the category of Neṭilath Neshamah or Mefareq.

(See Derekh HaTorah, 27:12-14)

Why is Shabu'oth Two Days In the Diaspora?

It used to be that outside the Land of Israel the Jewish people had to keep a second day of Yom Ṭob because of a doubt as to when the moon would be sanctified and on what day the Holiday would fall. Nowadays, even though we have a fixed calendar and know exactly on which day each Holiday falls, we still keep a second day in keeping with the custom of our forefathers.

The question is why this should be so with regard to Shab'uoth. The dates of all the Holidays are specified in the Torah, except for Shabu'oth. In the case of Shabu'oth, the Torah states that it comes seven full weeks after the second day of Pesah (Passover), which means that it falls on the sixth of Siwan. Once we know when Pesah falls, we know exactly when Shabu'oth falls and have no need for the sanctification of the moon. So what is the need to have a second day in the diaspora?

The answer is that the Ḥakhamim ordained that there should be a second day of Yom Ṭob on all Holidays so that there should be no confusion between one Holiday and another.

(See Maamar Mordekhai [Eliyahu], Hilkhoth Ḥaggim, 16:19)

Women's Corner - by Rabbanith Ruth Menashe 'a"h

Ruth, the Convert, and Us

Bo'az praises Ruth for the path she chose and for her actions. He said to her: "May G-d reward your actions, and may payment be full from G-d" (Ruth 2:12). What unique actions and special qualities did Bo'az, the head of the Sanhedrin (high court), see in Ruth the Moabite? What brought about such an expression of esteem from him?

Ḥakham Yoseph Ḥayyim, 'a"h, brings the following explanation in his interpretation of Meghillath Ruth. Ruth's greatness came as a result of the high spiritual level she reached on her own, with tenaciousness and persistence. She acquired her good deeds and profound kindness despite the home and nation she came from - the palace of the Moabite king.

In addition, Bo'az comforts Ruth by telling her not to be upset about the time she had wasted before she converted. On the contrary, through her actions she sanctified the name of Heaven. People looked at her and said: "Look at this (righteous) convert who spent so many years in impurity and now raised herself to such a high level of holiness and righteousness."

My dear friends, let us remember this important lesson from Ruth, the convert. If we, or people around us, were brought up in homes which were not (fully) founded on the values of our Torah, we can still reach great heights regardless of our environment. As a matter of fact, such circumstances should be utilized to our own advantage, since there is a hidden blessing attached to them. We have a unique opportunity to glorify G-d's name by elevating ourselves from the lowest level, to the ultimate height.