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Parashat HaShavua

Bamidbar, 5 Sivan 5775

Ruth and Torah

Rabbi Daniel Mann

Many and fascinating reasons are given for the *minhag* to read *Megillat Ruth* on *Shavuot*. Some link Ruth's acceptance of the Torah to Bnei Yisrael's acceptance, through which she and they, respectively, became converts (see Bina La'itim, Drush 17). If we take that approach, it is striking how different the path of Ruth was from that of Bnei Yisrael. At Sinai, the entire process of *matan Torah* was divinely orchestrated in a miraculous manner in which Hashem revealed Himself and the people had little choice but to accept (see Avoda Zara 2b – Hashem held a mountain over their heads). Ruth, on the other hand, accepted Torah after Hashem seemed to have abandoned her husband and his Jewish family and after she was repeatedly discouraged by Naomi.

The S'fat Emet (640) says we read Ruth on Shavuot to teach that concerning Torah, the study is not the main thing but action is (Avot 1:15). He continues: "By involvement in Torah, man's spirit is fixed, and he can then fix his actions." Again, Ruth seems to not fit so well into the description, as her wonderful actions preceded her involvement in Torah.

How, indeed, did Ruth come to Judaism? The simple (and, I submit, the correct) reading of the *p'sukim* is that she was drawn to Naomi's personality and wanted to follow her. The crux of the desire for conversion is included in Ruth's speech of: "Where you shall go I shall go, and where you shall sleep I will sleep; your nation is my nation and your G-d is my G-d. Where you shall die, I will die, and there shall I be buried ..." (Ruth 1:16-17). While this seem to indicate that the conversion was highly based on a personal connection to Naomi, *Chazal* (Yevamot 47b) saw in each element of these *p'sukim* an acceptance of a different set of *halachot*.

Based on the above, we will explain Ruth's impetus for conversion as follows. Ruth viewed Naomi as an ideal human being – a kind, devoted woman with beautiful piety. Ruth was drawn to Naomi indeed, but not for her wit or her money (the latter, she no longer had), but by the Torah within Naomi, which Ruth understood was the source of her piety and refinement. Thus, when Ruth proclaimed she wanted to follow Naomi in her various stations in life, *Chazal* viewed it as an acceptance of the related Torah values that these engendered.

Now we can appreciate the similarity between Ruth's conversion and that of Bnei Yisrael. Some (see Meshech Chochma, Devarim 33:4) explain that the mountain held over Bnei Yisrael's head was not a physical threat but a powerful draw to Hashem that they could not overlook. To a great extent, that is what Ruth, with her special sensitivity, experienced vis-à-vis Naomi. When the Sefat Emet speaks of the Torah reflecting on the actions, it is not Ruth's actions, at least not originally. Rather, Naomi's actions were reflective of the Torah she absorbed. It was Naomi's Torah actions, which were mirrored in Ruth's image, that are the Torah of action that connects *Megillat Ruth* to Shavuot.

May we learn Torah in a way that improves our actions and improve our actions in a way that glorifies the Torah we learn and practice.

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by Rav Daniel Mann

Special *Halachot* of *Motzaei Shabbat Kiddush/Havdala*

Question: Please review the unique *halachot* of *Kiddush* of Shavuot night that falls on *Motzaei Shabbat*.

Answer: First of all, the most basic advice is to take a good look at the *siddur* before you start to see what you will be saying –the five *berachot* that follow the acronym of **yaknehaz** (wine, *Kiddush*, candle, *Havdala*, *Shehecheyanu*). Beyond that, we will divide some of the unique *halachot* into categories. (Almost all of the *halachot* we are mentioning can be found in *Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata* (II) 62:9-22, and we will not list specific citations from there.)

Pre-Havdala: If one wants to do work that it is forbidden on Shabbat but permitted on *Yom Tov* and it is late enough, he/she should have *davened Ma'ariv* with the addition of *Vatodi'einu* (the *Yom Tov* equivalent of *Ata Chonantanu*) or made the declaration of *Hamavdil*. Regarding the latter, it is important to remember to say "... *hamavdil bein kodesh l'kodesh*."

Wine: While both *Kiddush* and *Havdala* should preferably be made over wine (or grape juice), bread (*challa*) can be used for *Kiddush* but not for *Havdala* (the status of other beverages is beyond our present scope). Regarding this *Kiddush* that also includes *Havdala*, the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chayim* 296:2) cites two opinions if bread suffices, but the *Rama* says that it does. Nevertheless, the *Mishna Berura* (296:16) says that an extra effort should be made to use wine in deference to the opinions that this is fully required.

The *minhag* that many have to pour enough wine for *Havdala* to spill over is not in effect in this case.

Besamim: There is no *beracha* on *besamim* because the festivities of *Yom Tov* are sufficient "resuscitation" after the loss of the *neshama yeteira* (*Tosafot*, *Beitza* 33b). The *beracha* on *besamim* is not made after *Yom Tov* finishes either. If one mistakenly made the *beracha* on the *besamim* in the midst of the *Havdala*, it does not cause a problematic break (*Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata* 62:(22) and *Nitei Gavriel* 30:2, contrary to the opinion of *Shalmei Toda*, p. 149).

Candle: There are major discussions as to whether the *beracha* on fire justifies lighting a new flame and combining flames to create a torch effect. We dealt with the matter in *Living the Halachic Process* III, D-4. Our operative suggestion is to take the *Yom Tov* candles and hold them together for the *beracha*. According to any system, it is important to not directly extinguish the flame.

Even those who usually shut the electric lights to get more significant benefit from the *Havdala* candle's light can make the *beracha* on the candle(s) with the electric lights on.

Women: On every *Motzaei Shabbat*, it is preferable for a woman not to make her own *Havdala* due to questions about whether she is obligated in *Havdala* and the *beracha* on the candle and due to the *minhag* that women not drink from *Havdala* wine (see our treatment of the topic in *Living the Halachic Process* II, C-8). Here, there is more of a problem because voluntarily making a *beracha* in the midst of a *Kiddush* in which she is certainly obligated and should not interrupt is questionable. However, if necessary, a woman may recite the whole *Yaknehaz Kiddush*, and she is then allowed and indeed required to drink from the wine.

Mistakes: If one forgot to make the *Havdala beracha* and he is in the middle of the meal, he should make it, over a cup of wine, before continuing to eat, as it is always forbidden to eat before *Havdala*. If, during *Kiddush*, he did not have in mind the possibility of drinking wine during the meal, he must make another *beracha* on the wine, but otherwise he drinks the wine without an additional *beracha*.

Finishing the *beracha* with "*hamavdil bein kodesh l'chol*" instead of "*hamavdil bein kodesh l'kodesh*" is equivalent to not saying *Havdala* at all.

One who left out *Shehecheyanu* can make it up throughout the *chag*. A forgotten "*Borei Meorei Ha'eish*" can be made up only that night.



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Ein Ayah

(from the writings of Harav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, z.t.l.)

Being Accustomed to Light

(condensed from Ein Ayah, Shabbat 2:28)

Gemara: One who is used to candles will have sons who are *talmidei chachamim*.

Ein Ayah: One should not make the mistake of diminishing the significance of the similarity between certain physical phenomena relating to man and lofty spiritual matters. For the same G-d Who created our spirit provided it with all its powers and characteristics. Man's power of imagination and of art have strong tendencies based on Hashem's wisdom and goodness.

In the eyes of our imagination and our artistic sense, there is a connection between the light of a candle lighting up the physical darkness and the light of the Torah illuminating the darkness of the spirit. The relationship between these two phenomena allows one to impact on the other in a positive manner in a way that leads man to the path of life in which he guards the path of Hashem.

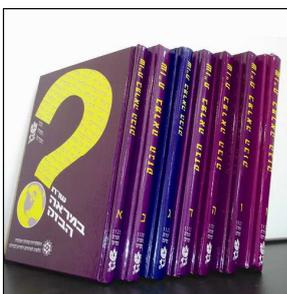
When a person is accustomed to a nice amount of candle light, he develops the characteristic of appreciating how good light is and how difficult it is to sit in darkness. If he is not used to light, then he will not be as aware of light's importance, and he will think that light is no more than an advantage, not a necessity for man to be complete.

From a physical perspective, the eye of one who is accustomed to a lot of light will not feel the extra clarity of sight with extra light, for only at the time that he is first exposed to the light do the light rays enter his eyes and stimulate his retina. After that point, the pupils are constricted, and the amount of light rays that are let in are adjusted to that which is appropriate. Despite this, one who is used to an abundance of light will still desire the extra light even though he will not feel how it is palpably advantageous. Rather, it is a characteristic of man to love light once he has become accustomed to it. Habit will set the spirit's characteristic on its natural standing.

The above physical phenomenon regarding physical light can teach us by example about the impact of the light of Torah for one who is accustomed to it and benefits from its glow. He comes to feel how critical the Torah's light is and how bad and difficult darkness is. The more he is accustomed to the light of Torah, the greater his love for it. He will realize that this special light creates an intrinsically positive characteristic in man in the spiritual realm, just as physical light does in the physical world.

One should prepare himself to use the idea of being accustomed and appreciating physical light to acquire a greater inclination towards all forms of light, including the spiritual light of Torah, which is related at its root to true internal desires. Then, even if by chance circumstances, he is distanced from the light of the Torah, he will have sons who are *talmidei chachamim*. This depends on the realization that the light of Torah is critical, to the extent that one who lacks it is to be compared to one who sits in darkness. Rather, one should become accustomed to light and realizes its great value.

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Responsibility for a Sefer Torah Burnt Along with a Yeshiva

(based on Chelkat Yaakov, Choshen Mishpat 26)

Case: A neighborhood [in New York, apparently] emptied out of Jews and its shul closed. The shul decided to keep their *sefer Torah* in a yeshiva; no payment was exchanged. Hooligans burned down the yeshiva, including the *sifrei Torah*. This created publicity and sentiment around the Jewish community, and donors were elicited to give *sifrei Torah* to replace those that were burnt. Now, the owner of the shul's *sefer Torah* wants that yeshiva to "return" a *sefer Torah*. The yeshiva responds that they are exempt as a *shomer chinam* (unpaid watchman). The owner also claims that since the yeshiva received new *sifrei Torah* through their campaign to replace the old ones, including the one he owned, he should get it.

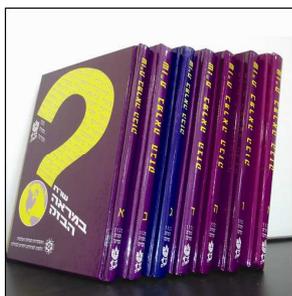
Ruling: While *hekdesh* (the infrastructure of the *Beit Hamikdash*) was exempt from the obligations of *shomrim*, this does not apply to yeshivot (see Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 95:1). However, in this case, where the *sefer Torah* was destroyed by arson, it is considered *oness* (an extenuating circumstance), and the yeshiva is exempt for a few reasons.

A *shomer* is obligated to pay only if he accepts upon himself, at least implicitly, the obligations of a *shomer*. If he simply allows one to keep his object in his possession, he is exempt (ibid. 291:1). Often one gives his *sefer Torah* to a shul or yeshiva because he lacks a good place to keep it, not because he expects their involvement in its safe-keeping. Even if, due to a *sefer Torah*'s sanctity/importance, one usually accepts responsibility to watch it, we must determine what type of *shomer* the shul is.

One could claim that, assuming the shul (or, in this case, the yeshiva) uses the *sefer*, they become like a *sho'el* (borrower), who is obligated to pay even when it is destroyed through *oness*. However, not everyone who uses the object he is watching is a *sho'el*. It is only when the borrower receives all the benefit from the arrangement. The Shach (72:29) says that when one lends a *sefer* to his friend, since the fact that the lender does a *mitzva* provides him with certain benefits, it makes the friend considered, according to some opinions, only a *shomer sachar*, who is exempt from *oness*. While the Netivot Hamishpat (ad loc.) argues, he will agree in a case like this where the owner's benefit is strong, that the yeshiva is a *shomer sachar*.

Does the yeshiva owe the *sefer Torah*'s owner because they asked for donations to replace it? The *gemara* (Sanhedrin 48a) discusses what to do with money that was solicited for the needs of a specific dead person but exceeds the basic needs – does it go to the deceased's minor needs or to his inheritors? We see that money that is raised for the needs of a specific poor person stays with the recipient (including his inheritors) even when it exceeds the needs for which it was raised.

One might think to apply the idea of "how can one make profit from his friend's cow?" (see Bava Metzia 36b). In other words, in our case, how can the yeshiva be allowed to receive compensation from the community for the loss of someone else's *sefer Torah*. However, the context there is different (we will not go into the details), as there the one who is paying has a level of obligation to pay, and therefore he pays the real owner, not the middleman. Here, in contrast, people decided to make donations to the yeshiva because of their losses, only one of which was the *sefer Torah* in question. There is nothing that naturally links those donations to the owner of the *sefer Torah*. Therefore, the yeshiva does not have to return a *sefer Torah*.



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