

# Parsha Ponders

Shavuot | June 1, 2025 | 5 Sivan 5785

## *Reneged responsibility recollections<sup>1</sup>*

ושלמון הוליד את-בעז ובעז הוליד את-עובד: ועבד הוליד את-ישי וישי הוליד את-דוד

Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Oved. Oved begot Yishai, and Yishai begot David<sup>2</sup>

The story of *Megillas Rus* is a fascinating tale of a sincere convert to Judaism. We are taught<sup>3</sup> that the final lines of the *Megillah* are the most crucial, as they delineate the lineage of Kind David, from his great grandmother Rus. There were those in history who questioned David's right to the throne, and even his pedigree, considering Rus was a Moabite woman<sup>4</sup>. The Jewish people are forbidden from marrying members of the Moabite nation, even if they convert<sup>5</sup>. However, this prohibition only refers to Moabite men. The *Megillah* is testifying that King David's lineage is not to be questioned. However, why is it only prohibited to marry Moabite men, and not their women?

The Torah itself tells us<sup>6</sup> that the reason that the Moabites are banned is because they didn't offer us bread and water when we were wandering in the wilderness. The *gemarra* asks<sup>7</sup> that this reasoning should also prohibit the Moabite women, as they also didn't offer us bread. The answer is that it is not the practice of women to wander out of their tents and approach strangers<sup>8</sup>. They were not expected to offer us bread, so they were never forbidden to marry.

One could ask<sup>9</sup> that this reasoning makes sense for women of modesty, but we know that the Moabite women were depraved in their behavior. Why then would the Moabite women have an excuse which didn't apply to them? True, the Moabite women had no morals or modesty. However, at the same time, they were not expected to be more outgoing than the men. Since the men didn't even go out, there was no claim against the women. As such, the women remained permitted to marry into the Jewish people<sup>10</sup>.

We mentioned that the ultimate purpose of the *Megillah* was to confirm the monarchy of King David. If so, why do our Sages tell us<sup>11</sup> that this *Megillah* doesn't contain any laws of the permissible or forbidden, purity or impurity? They say that the *Megillah* is simply to teach us the reward for good deeds. Rus was good to her mother-in-law Naomi, so she merited to become a member of the Jewish people. Rus was good to Boaz, so she merited to be the matriarch of the Davidic dynasty. It would seem that this *Megillah* does teach us something in Jewish law, for it affirms David's right to be king! The answer is that it's true, the end of the *Megillah* serves this purpose. However, why is the story so lengthy to describe Rus and Naomi and what happened to Elimelech and his two sons? The *Midrash* is

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on a *devar Torah* developed by Rav Daniel Glatstein, available at <https://www.torahanytime.com/lectures/194026>

<sup>2</sup> Ruth 4:21,22

<sup>3</sup> Zohar Chadash Rus p. 78a (Mossad HaRav Kook ed.), Ibn Ezra, Introduction, Shores Yishai, Introduction

<sup>4</sup> Yevamos 76b

<sup>5</sup> Deuteronomy 23:4

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. v. 5

<sup>7</sup> Yevamos 77a

<sup>8</sup> Psalms 45:14

<sup>9</sup> Maharshai in Chochmas Shlomo *ad. loc.* He answers that the *gemarra* is really referring to the Jewish women. They were in the tents, so the Moabite women had no one to give bread and water to.

<sup>10</sup> Bach in his commentary on *Megillas Rus*, Meishiv Nefesh, Introduction. He rejects the Maharshai's approach as it doesn't match the wording of the *gemarra*

<sup>11</sup> Rus Rabbah 2:14

telling us that the story itself teaches us nothing about Jewish law, but instead the reward for good deeds<sup>12</sup>.

This approach seems to make a disconnect between the story of the *Megillah* and the end of it. However, it might be possible to connect them<sup>13</sup>. As we said, the Moabite women are permissible to marry because they were not more responsible than the men. Since the men didn't offer bread, the women weren't held accountable. We also see from the beginning of the *Megillah* that Hashem loves acts of kindness, and despises those who avoid it<sup>14</sup>. Elimelech ran away from the opportunity to give *tzedaka* and consequently died. One could then ask, Naomi also ran away from the famine in the land of Israel. Why wasn't she held accountable? Why wasn't she punished, and instead given the opportunity to be an instrumental part of setting up Rus with Boaz, securing the Davidic dynasty?

The same thing we said regarding the Moabite women can be said for Naomi. Her husband ran away from doing *tzedaka*, so he was punished. However, Naomi wasn't more responsible than her husband. If her husband isn't doing his job, she's exempt. Just like there's no claim against the Moabite women for not providing bread.

The same way the *Megillah* begins by teaching us that those who avoid good deeds are punished, but the women are not more responsible than the men, so too the end of the *Megillah*. The Moabite men are rejected, because they refused to do acts of kindness. However, the Moabite women were not more responsible than the men. There's no claim against them, so the *Megillah* ends by telling us that Rus, a Moabite woman, was able to marry Boaz. The *Megillah* concludes by affirming the monarchy of King David, by telling us that her descendant with Boaz was King David. We see then that the *Megillah* has one unified theme, both at its beginning and end.

Chag Sameach!

---

<sup>12</sup> Bach *loc. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> The following is Rav Daniel Glatstein's innovation

<sup>14</sup> Bach *loc. cit.*