

א ב י ס כ ל ת ו ר א !

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ה' סיון תשפ"ו · שבועות

מגילת רות

By Noah Levy '29

Why do we read מגילת רות on שבועות? A simple answer is that both of them happen around the time of the wheat harvest. A deeper, more spiritual answer is that רות embraces Hashem and on שבועות we are also embracing Hashem by accepting the תורה. However, there are a few problems with this. If the main point of מגילת רות was that she was embracing Hashem and staying Jewish even after her husband had died then the story should have ended when Rut said she would go with נעמי, symbolising this sustained connection with Hashem (רות א:ט"ז-י"ז). Why doesn't מגילת רות just end here?

There is a מצוה in the תורה called יבום. When a husband dies childless the brother of the husband marries the wife. You might think that this is because the wife is lonely and with no kids around life would not be good for her. Alternatively, the reason we have יבום is to remember and to sustain the memory of the husband who died (דברים כ"ה:ו). In רות since there is an element of יבום we can understand why the story continues even after רות stays with נעמי. רות is committed to sustaining the memory of her dead husband.

רות is a great person, she is committed to her dead husband, committed to תורה, committed to G-d, and she is full of kindness. But then, there is the story of רות uncovering בועז's feat while he is sleeping and

lying down next to him. This story seems to ruin the image of רות, the virtuous, kind, and committed רות.

When this happens רות causes בועז to tremble, as it says, "וַיִּחָרַד הָאִישׁ וַיִּלָּפֶת" "and the man trembled and turned away" (רות ג:ח). He could have cursed her, for this shock, but he did not because once he blessed her he could not undo it, similarly to when יצחק does not curse יעקב after already blessing him.

Therefore, that moment at the threshing floor, when Boaz controlled his inclination, his will to curse her in a moment marks the climax of מגילת רות. בועז recognized the purity of רות's motives, and thus blessed her, rather than cursing her. בועז also married her but in public unlike what others might have done in such circumstances. As a result the marriage was honorable. From this point on, רות has now fulfilled her duty, the מגילה story can now end.

In conclusion, the reason the story must continue is because רות still has to fulfill her מצוה of יבום in an honorable way, not just simply taking בועז as a husband, but doing so in a way that also keeps the marriage honorable. As a result of this honorable marriage, רות and בועז were blessed with being the ancestors of דוד and ultimately משיח.

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The Food of שבועות

By Eitan Orkaby '27

Just like each holiday, שבועות has its special food: milk. In almost every house on שבועות there will be cheesecake, quiche, ice cream, and many other delicious dairy products, but why dairy?

If we look at the other holidays, all of their food fit the spirit of the holiday. By ראש השנה we have all sorts of food as a merit to have a good upcoming year. On סוכות we make sure to eat our food in a סוכה to remember how we dwelled like that in the desert. On פסח we eat various foods like matzah to remember the suffering of Egypt. Therefore, when eating dairy products there must be some connection to the holiday of שבועות, else we would not do so.

Firstly, we must understand what the holiday of שבועות is all about. After counting 49 days, from the second day of פסח, we reach the giving of the תורה on הר סיני (see last year's edition "What Day is שבועות On?" for more information). This climax highlights the nature of the holiday, one surrounding תורה, hence why we stay up all night learning (see last year's edition "Learning All Night " for more information). As every time there is anything to celebrate we must have food, שבועות deserves its own food that symbolises תורה. Two foods that do this are milk and honey; "דבש וחלב תחת לשונך" (שיר השירים ד:א) "honey and milk under your tongue". Water is also compared with תורה as "כָּל צֹמֵא לֵבֹא לַמַּיִם" "all who are thirsty go drink water" (ישעיהו נ"ה:א), where the thirst is the lack of תורה. Blood and wine are two crucial components to bringing sacrifices, which makes them

also connected to תורה in a sense. As רש"י says, in מסכת תענית ג, without dew the world would not last, which is exactly what is said about תורה, without it the world would not last. And finally, "שִׁמְךָ תוֹרֶךְ שִׁמְךָ" (שיר השירים א:ג) "Your Name is like the finest oil", where תורה is the epitome of Hashem's Name.

These seven foods are also considered the seven liquids in which food can become susceptible to impurity upon contact with a liquid. And this is no coincidence, as the higher holiness something has, the higher its chance to contract impurity. These being the main foods associated with תורה it would seem that all of them should be eaten on שבועות. However, some of them are not edible foods, like dew and blood, and of honey, milk, wine, water, and oil, milk is the only food that can be made into an actual meal itself. Thus, most people have the custom to eat dairy products.

What it would seem is that to fully connect with תורה through food, one should have as many of the seven liquids as possible, except for wine as it will make one fall asleep before learning through the night. However, one must understand that the whole purpose of שבועות is to celebrate receiving the תורה through learning it, while eating special food is just a custom to add to the celebration. Through learning תורה we will be able to fully celebrate the receiving of the תורה.



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