**Class # 29 – Shavuos: Home Alone**

Senior Fellowship Leadership Program

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**Rules for Success in a year of Shavuos for one:**

1. Honestly acknowledge the disappointment and even anger and work it through. (1. Count our blessings. 2. Temporary problem not a new reality 3. Don’t be a victim. There is still plenty we can do to ensure a meaningful learning... Prepare!).
2. Failure to Plan is Planning to Fail.
3. Don’t Make the Perfect the Enemy of the Good (1 hour after dinner with a nice coffee (don’t forget pareve creamer on your shopping list if you eat meat at dinner).
4. Make sure you have learning options (mix it up with topics, don’t know what mood you will be in, don’t do one topic too long).

Topic # 1 – Megillat Ruth – Read The Megillah

**Study area #1**

**Ch. 2 -** Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband’s side, a man of substance, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “I would like to go to the fields and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone who may show me kindness.” “Yes, daughter, go,” she replied;

and off she went. She came and gleaned in a field, behind the reapers; and, as luck would have it, it was the piece of land belonging to Boaz, who was of Elimelech’s family.

1. Why was Naomi passive in dealing with her food insecurity?
2. Why was Ruth active and diligent in her food gathering?
3. How does this relate to our economic downturn? Are most people passive like Naomi or active like Ruth? Give an example of passive and active reaction to the pandemic’s economic challenge.

Presently Boaz arrived from Bethlehem. He greeted the reapers, “The LORD be with you!” And they responded, “The LORD bless you!”

Boaz said to the servant who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose girl is that?”

The servant in charge of the reapers replied, “She is a Moabite girl who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.

She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers.’ She has been on her feet ever since she came this morning. She has rested but little in the hut.”

Boaz said to Ruth, “Listen to me, daughter. Don’t go to glean in another field. Don’t go elsewhere, but stay here close to my girls.

Keep your eyes on the field they are reaping and follow them. I have ordered the men not to molest you. And when you are thirsty, go to the jars and drink some of [the water] that the men have drawn.”

She prostrated herself with her face to the ground, and said to him, “Why are you so kind as to single me out, when I am a foreigner?”

Boaz said in reply, “I have been told of all that you did for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband, how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth and came to a people you had not known before.

May the LORD reward your deeds. May you have a full recompense from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have sought refuge!”

She answered, “You are most kind, my lord, to comfort me and to speak gently to your maidservant—though I am not so much as one of your maidservants.”

At mealtime, Boaz said to her, “Come over here and partake of the meal, and dip your morsel in the vinegar.” So she sat down beside the reapers. He handed her roasted grain, and she ate her fill and had some left over.

When she got up again to glean, Boaz gave orders to his workers, “You are not only to let her glean among the sheaves, without interference,

but you must also pull some [stalks] out of the heaps and leave them for her to glean, and not scold her.”

She gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned—it was about an ’ephah of barley—

and carried it back with her to the town. When her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned, and when she also took out and gave her what she had left over after eating her fill,

her mother-in-law asked her, “Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be he who took such generous notice of you!” So she told her mother-in-law whom she had worked with, saying, “The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz.”

Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not failed in His kindness to the living or to the dead! For,” Naomi explained to her daughter-in-law, “the man is related to us; he is one of our redeeming kinsmen.”

Ruth the Moabite said, “He even told me, ‘Stay close by my workers until all my harvest is finished.’”

And Naomi answered her daughter-in-law Ruth, “It is best, daughter, that you go out with his girls, and not be annoyed in some other field.”

So she stayed close to the maidservants of Boaz, and gleaned until the barley harvest and the wheat harvest were finished. Then she stayed at home with her mother-in-law.

1. How do you reconcile Ruth active nature with her humility and self-deprecation?

Resource: Rashi in English - <https://www.sefaria.org/Ruth.2.1?lang=en&with=Rashi&lang2=en>

After completing the megillah

**התועלת הרביעי**. הוא להודיע שהמתקרב אל ה׳ יתברך יצליחו ענייניו. הלא תראה איך סבב ה' יתברך להצליח רות עד שכבר נשאת לשופט מהשופטים וזכתה להיות מזרעה המלכות על ישראל לנצח וזה שכבר יצא ממנה דוד אשר נתנה לו המלוכה ברית מלח

The [Ralbag’s] Fourth Benefit: This story informs us that one who brings themselves close to Hashem, May He Be Exalted, will be successful in life. You see from the story how Hashem caused Ruth’s success to the degree that she married one of the Judges [The Ralbag accepts the Midrashic view that Boaz was the Judge Ivtzan] and merited that have her descendants become the eternal line of Kingship in Israel. You see that King David emerged from her who was given the eternal covenant that the Kingship will never depart from his lineage.

1. What role did Ruth play in her success and what role did Hashem play in her success? What does that teach us in our own lives?

A Selection from Pirkei Avot

1:6

יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן פְּרַחְיָה וְנִתַּאי הָאַרְבֵּלִי קִבְּלוּ מֵהֶם. יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן פְּרַחְיָה אוֹמֵר, עֲשֵׂה לְךָ רַב, וּקְנֵה לְךָ חָבֵר, וֶהֱוֵי דָן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת:

Joshua ben Perahiah and Nittai the Arbelite received [the oral tradition] from them. Joshua ben Perahiah used to say: appoint for thyself a teacher, and acquire for thyself a companion and judge all men with the scale weighted in his favor.

**Rambam comments: Make for yourself a mentor":** He means to say even if he is not fit to be your mentor; still place him upon you as a mentor, so that you can give and take (discuss and argue) with him, and as a result of this the study of wisdom will come to your hand. As the study of a man on his own is good, but his study from someone else will be better established in his hand and it will be more clear - and even if he is like him in wisdom or below him. And so did they elucidate the explanation of this commandment.

1. How does it help you to image your study partner as your mentor, if they are in fact not fit to be your mentor???

And he said, "**acquire for yourself a friend"**. He said it with an expression of acquisition and he did not say, "Make for yourself a friend," or "Befriend others." The intention of this is that a person must acquire a friend for himself, so that all of his deeds and all of his matters be refined through him, as they said ([Taanit 23a](/Taanit.23a)), "Either a friend or death." And if he does not find him, he must make efforts for it with all his heart, and even if he must lead him to his friendship, until he becomes a friend. And [then] he must never let off from following [his friend's] will, until his friendship is firmed up. [It is] as the masters of ethics say, "When you love, do not love according to your traits; but rather love according to the trait of your friend." And when each of the friends has the intention to fulfill the will of his friend, the intention of both of them will be one without a doubt. And how good is the statement of Aristotle, "The friend is one." And there are three types of friends: a friend for benefit, a friend for enjoyment and a friend for virtue. Indeed, a friend for benefit is like the friendship of two [business] partners and the friendship of a king and his retinue; whereas the friendship for enjoyment is of two types - the friend for pleasure and the friend for confidence. Indeed, the friend for pleasure is like the friendship of males and females and similar to it; whereas the friend for confidence is when a man has a friend to whom he can confide his soul. He will not keep [anything] from him - not in action and not in speech. And he will make him know all of his affairs - the good ones and the disgraceful - without fearing from him that any loss will come to him with all of this, not from him and not from another. As when a person has such a level of confidence in a man, he finds great enjoyment in his words and in his great friendship. And a friend for virtue is when the desire of both of them and their intention is for one thing, and that is the good. And each one wants to be helped by his friend in reaching this good for both of them together. And this is the friend which he commanded to acquire; and it is like the love of the master for the student and of the student for the master.

1. How do you acquire or buy a friend? Isn’t that weird?
2. What are the three levels of friendship?

**"and judge every person as meritorious:"** Its subject is when there is a person whom you do not about him if he is righteous or if he is wicked and you see him doing an act or saying something and if you interpret it one way it will be good and if you interpret in another way it will be bad - [in this case,] take it to the good and do not think bad about it. But if the man is known to be famously righteous and of good deeds; and an action of his is seen that all of its aspects indicate that it is a bad deed and a person can only determine it to be good with great stretching and a distant possibility, it is fit that you take it that it is good, since there is some aspect of a possibility that it is good. And it is not permissible for you to suspect him; and about this did they say ([Shabbat 97a](/Shabbat.97a)), "The body of anyone who suspects proper ones will be struck." And so [too] when it is an evildoer and his deeds are famous, and afterwords we see him that he does a deed, all of the indications about which are that it is good but there is an aspect of a distant possibility that it is bad; it is fit to guard oneself from him and not to believe that it is good, since there is a possibility for the bad. And about this is it stated ([Proverbs 26:25](/Proverbs.26.25)), (Also) "Though he be fair-spoken do not trust him, etc." But when he is not known and the deed is indeterminate towards one of the two extremes; according to the ways of piety, one must judge a person as meritorious towards whichever extreme of the two extremes [would be the case].

1. When does the rule of judging people favorably apply? When does it not apply?
2. What disposition in a person is this value trying to battle?

1:10

שְׁמַעְיָה וְאַבְטַלְיוֹן קִבְּלוּ מֵהֶם. שְׁמַעְיָה אוֹמֵר, אֱהֹב אֶת הַמְּלָאכָה, וּשְׂנָא אֶת הָרַבָּנוּת, וְאַל תִּתְוַדַּע לָרָשׁוּת:

Shemaiah and Abtalion received [the oral tradition] from them. Shemaiah used to say: love work, hate acting the role of the authority, and do not attempt to draw near to the ruling authority.

Rabbi Ovadiah Bartenurah comments

**"Love work":** Even if he has from what to sustain himself, he is obligated to work, as idleness leads to distraction ([Ketuvot 59b](/Ketubot.59b))

10

**"hate lordship":** and do not say, “I am a great man and it is a disgrace for me to work" - since Rav said to Rav Kahana ([Pesachim 113a](/Pesachim.113a)), "Flay a carcass in the market and take your pay, and do not say, 'I am a priest, I am a great man and the matter is a disgrace to me.'" Another explanation: “hate lordship,” [meaning] distance yourself from the taking of authority over the public, as lordship buries those that have it.

10

**"and do not become familiar with the government":** in order to receive lordship through it. And also (another possibility is) “do not become familiar with the government” so that they will not make you transgress the doctrine of your Maker, as happened with Doeg the Edomite. **"with the government" (*rishut* which literally means permission):** Dominion is called permission, as the government has permission in its hand to do according to its will.

1:14

הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אִם אֵין אֲנִי לִי, מִי לִי. וּכְשֶׁאֲנִי לְעַצְמִי, מָה אֲנִי. וְאִם לֹא עַכְשָׁיו, אֵימָתָי:

He [also] used to say: If I am not for myself, who is for me? But if I am for my own self [only], what am I? And if not now, when?

English Explanation of Pirkei Avot – Joshua Kulp

This first statement of Hillel’s is not a statement lauding selfishness, but rather a statement which places a person’s character and qualities squarely on his own two shoulders. A person must work in this world to acquire his own merits, for no one else can do this on his behalf. The second statement balances out the first. Although a person must be concerned for himself, his responsibilities do not end there. One who does only for himself does not contribute to his people and to the world. He is not important, for when he passes away, no one else will be effected. Finally, if a person puts off his responsibilities, when will he find time to carry them out. As we say in English, “now is as good a time as ever”.

Rambam - He said, "If I myself will not be the one that arouses my soul to virtue, who will arouse me, as I have no one to stimulate me from outside," like we have elucidated in the second chapter (Eight Chapters 2). "And since it is in my power to incline my soul to any side that I want, what deed have I done from the good deeds." It is as if he is [questioning] himself and saying, "What am I?" [This is] to say, "What is [becoming of] me? I am not complete, even if I did this matter." And afterwards he went back and said, "If I do not acquire these traits now in the days of my youth, when will I acquire them? Not in the days of old age, as it is difficult to veer from [one's] characteristics at that time because the acquisitions and the traits have hardened and settled - whether they are virtues or whether they are vices." And the wise one said ([Proverbs 22:6](/Proverbs.22.6)), "Educate a youth according to his way, and he will also not veer from it when he gets old."