

Sources for Shiur on Loss and Healing in Megillat Rut

Based on Shiur by Rivka Kahan

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I. The Nature of Loss in Megillat Rut

1. Yalkut Shemoni- aggadic compilation

And what is the relevance of Rut to Shavuot that it should be read on Shavuot at the time of Matan Torah? To teach you that the Torah is only given through the experience of suffering.

2. Rut, 1:1-5

In the days when the chieftains ruled, there was a famine in the land; and a man of Bethlehem in Judah, with his wife and two sons, went to reside in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and his two sons were named Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. They came to the country of Moab and remained there. Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth, and they lived there about ten years. Then those two—Mahlon and Chilion—also died; so the woman was left without her two sons and without her husband.

3. Rut Rabbah 2:10 (Medrash)

And the woman was left. (1:3). R. Chanina said: she was like that which was left over.

4. Rut, 1:7

Accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, she left the place where she had been living; and they set out on the road back to the land of Judah.

5. Rut Rabbah, 2:12 (Medrash)

And they walked on the way to return to the land of Yehuda ... another explanation: "And they walked on the way" -- the path was made narrow for them, because they went barefoot.

6. Parallels between Iyov and Rut

Similarities	Sefer Iyov	Megillat Rut
Both lose children and possessions	Iyov loses his children and possessions (Ch. 1)	Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; Then those two— Mahlon and Chilion— also died; so the <u>woman was left</u> without her two sons and without her husband.
Both attribute misfortune to Hashem, both use name Shakkai	As G-d liveth, who hath taken away my right; And the Almighty (Shakkai), who hath dealt bitterly with me (Job 27:2)	"Do not call me Naomi," she replied. "Call me Mara, for Shakkai has made my lot very bitter. (Ruth 1:20)
Society is amazed at the extent of their misfortunes	And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and threw dust upon their heads toward heaven. (Job 2:12)	When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole city buzzed with excitement over them. The women said, "Can this be Naomi?" (Ruth 1:19)
Both are blessed in the end; Iyov (again) has seven sons and Naomi has Rut, who is compared to seven sons	He had also seven sons and three daughters. (Job 42:13)	He will renew your life and sustain your old age; for he is born of your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons." (Rut 4:15)

Iyov sees four generations, Rut's genealogy is given through four generations	And after this Job lived a hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. (Job 42:16)	Salmon begot Boaz, Boaz begot Obed, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David. (Rut 4:21-22)
Possibly same historical period - <i>shfot ha'shoftim</i>	Rabbi Elazar said: Iyov was in the time of the judges/chieftains	In the days when the chieftains ruled (Rut 1:1)

7. R. Yosef Zev Lipovitz, *Nachlat Yosef* (19th-20th cent. Eretz Yisroel)

Chazal call Megillat Rut "the book of punishment" like Sefer Iyov, because in both of them it is told about great disasters that flowed over a wealthy, honored family. And when we investigate the matter, we will find that the book of the Megillah encompasses all types of human tragedy -- in the life of the state and the family and the individual. Nevertheless, there is a great difference in the impression that the two books leave upon us (Iyov and Rut). From the verses of Sefer Iyov, a wind of suffering and grief blows over us, while in Sefer Rut, even though you read in it of famine, exile, death and distress, you do not feel the grief and groaning within it.

8. Gemara Bava Batra 14

The baraita continues: **The order of the Writings is: Ruth and the book of Psalms, and Job and Proverbs; Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations; Daniel and the Scroll of Esther; and Ezra and Chronicles.** The Gemara asks: **And according to the one who says that Job lived in the time of Moses, let the book of Job precede the others.** The Gemara answers: **We do not begin with suffering**, i.e., it is inappropriate to start the Writings with a book that deals so extensively with suffering. The Gemara asks: But the book of **Ruth**, with which the Writings open, **is also about suffering**, since it describes the tragedies that befell the family of Elimelech. The Gemara answers: This is **suffering which has a future** of hope and redemption.

II. Divine Justice Through the Eyes of Iyov and Rut

9. Iyov 3:11-12

(11) Why did I not from the womb? Why did I not perish at birth? (12) Why did the knees receive me? And wherefore the **breasts**, that I should suck?"

10. Iyov, 38:1-4

(1) Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: (2) Who is this that darkeneth counsel By words without knowledge? (3) Gird up now thy loins like a man; For I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto Me. (4) Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast the understanding."

11. Rut 1:8; 1:20-21

(8) But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Turn back, each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me!

(20) Do not call me Naomi," she replied. "Call me Mara, for Shakkai has made my lot very bitter. I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. (21) How can you call me Naomi, when the LORD has dealt harshly with me, when Shakkai has brought misfortune upon me!"

12. Rashi on Rut 1:21

has dealt harshly with me, *i.e., has testified against me*: Has testified that I had sinned before Him

13. Rut 2:12

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!

14. Rut 4:11

All the people at the gate and the elders answered, "We are [witnesses to marriage of Boaz and Rut]. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built up the House of Israel! Prosper in Ephrathah and perpetuate your name in Bethlehem!

15. Rut, 4:14

And the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not withheld a redeemer from you today! May his name be perpetuated in Israel!"

III. The Scope of Chesed of Megillat Rut

16. R. Zeira said: This Megillah does not have [teaching about] purity or impurity, and not about that which is forbidden or that which is permitted. And why was it written? To teach you how great is the reward for those who perform deeds of kindness.

17. Rambam, *Moreh Nevuchah*, b. 1138 Spain, d. 1204, Egypt

In our Commentary on the Sayings of the Fathers (Ch. 5:7), we have explained the expression *chesed* as denoting an excess [in some moral quality]. It is especially used of extraordinary kindness. Loving-kindness is practiced in two ways: first, we show kindness to those who have no claim whatever upon us; secondly, we are kind to those to whom it is due, in a greater measure than is due to them. In the inspired writings the term *chesed* occurs mostly in the sense of showing kindness to those who have no claim to it whatever. For this reason, the term *chesed* is employed to express the good bestowed upon us by G-d: "I will mention the loving-kindness of the L-rd" (Isa. 63:7). On this account, the very act of creation is an act of G-d's loving-kindness. "I have said, the Universe is built up in loving-kindness" (Ps. 89:3); *i.e.*, the building up of the Universe is an act of loving-kindness. Also, in the enumeration of G-d's attributes, Scripture says: "And abundant in loving-kindness" (Exod. 34:6). The term *tzedakkah* is derived from *tzedek*, "righteousness;" it denotes the act of giving every one his due, and of showing kindness to every being according as it deserves.

18. The Rav, *Tribute to the Rebbetzin of Talne*

"*Ve-Torat hesed al leshonah*: and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue" Kindness is not always identical with greatness. As long as kindness is rational, logically warranted and justified by normal considerations, it does not have to be equated with greatness. When does kindness turn into greatness? When kindness reaches the dimension of the absurd and becomes *chesed* which, according to Maimonides, connotes exaggeration, too much, unwarranted and unnecessary. For example, if you respond to the request of a stranger who asks to spend the holidays with you, you perform a good deed, but not a great deed. However, if the stranger who came for the holidays stays on indefinitely and you care for him as if he were a member of your household, then you are performing not only a charitable deed but a great deed. The more absurd, the greater the deed.

19. Comparison between Avraham Avinu and Rut

Avraham Avinu	Rut
The LORD said to Abram, “Go forth <u>from your native land and from your father’s house</u> to the land that I will show you. (Breishit 12:1)	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 <u>you left your father and mother and the land of your birth</u> and came to a people you had not known before. *Rut 2:11)
Is not the whole land before you? Let us separate: if you go north, I will go south; and if you go south, I will go north.” (Breishit 13:9)	Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus and more may the LORD do to me if anything but death parts me from you.” (Rut 1:17)

20. Comparison between Rivka and Rut

Rivka	Rut
Abraham was now old, advanced in years , and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. (Breishit 24:1)	Turn back, my daughters, for I am too old to be married . Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I were married tonight and I also bore sons (Rut 1:12)
but will go to the land of my birth and get a wife for my son Isaac (Breishit 24:4)	Accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, she left the place where she had been living; and they set out on the road back to the land of Judah . (Rut 1:7)
And he said, “O LORD, God of my master Abraham, grant me good fortune this day , and deal graciously with my master Abraham (Breishit 24:12)	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. (Rut: 2:3)
let the maiden to whom I say, ‘Please, lower your jar that I may drink,’ and who replies, ‘Drink , and I will also water your camels’—let her be the one whom You have decreed for Your servant Isaac. Thereby shall I know that You have dealt graciously with my master (Breishit 24:14)	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. ” (Rut 2:9)
Raising her eyes, Rebecca saw Isaac. She alighted from the camel (Breishit 24:64)	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?” (Rut 2:10)

Rivka	Rut
I inquired of her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ And she said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel, son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.’ And I put the ring on her nose and the bands on her arms (Breishit 24:47)	Boaz said to the servant who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose girl is that?” (Rut 2:5)
And they blessed Rebecca and said to her, “O sister! May you grow Into thousands of myriads; May your offspring seize The gates of their foes.” (Breishit 24:60)	All the people at the gate and the elders answered, “We are. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built up the House of Israel! Prosper in Ephrathah and perpetuate your name in Bethlehem! (Rut 4:11)
Isaac then brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he took Rebecca as his wife. Isaac loved her, and thus (Isaac) found comfort after his mother[’s death]. (Breishit 24:67)	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.” (Rut 2:13)
Isaac then brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he took Rebecca as his wife. Isaac loved her, and thus found comfort after his mother’s death. (<i>Id.</i>)	So Boaz married Ruth; she became his wife, and he cohabited with her. The LORD let her conceive, and she bore a son. (Rut 4:13)
Rebecca said to Isaac, “I am disgusted with my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob marries a Hittite woman like these, from among the native women, what good will life be to me?” So Isaac sent for Jacob and blessed him. He instructed him, saying, “You shall not take a wife from among the Canaanite women. Up, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother’s father, and take a wife there from among the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother, May El Shakkai bless you, make you fertile and numerous, so that you become an assembly of peoples. (Breishit 27:46-28:3)	and the two went on until they reached Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole city buzzed with excitement over them. The women said, “Can this be Naomi?” (Rut 1:19)

IV. The Spiritual Dimension of Rut's Chesed

21. Rut Medrash Rabbah

And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law farewell (Rut 1:14)-- every kiss is frivolous except for three: kisses of greatness, and kisses of meeting, and kisses of leaving. Of greatness, as it is written: "Samuel took a flask of oil and poured some on Saul's head and kissed him." (I Samuel 10:1) And kisses of meeting, as it is written: "He went and met him at the mountain of G-d, and he kissed him." (Exod. 4:25) And kisses of leaving, as it is said: "And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law farewell." Rabbi Tanchuma said: "Also kisses of affinity, as it is said: "Then Jacob kissed Rachel." (Gen. 29:11) Why? Because she had affinity with him.

22. Rut 1:14

They broke into weeping again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law farewell. But Ruth **clung** to her.

23. Rut 2:8

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.

24. Rut 2:21

Ruth the Moabite said, "He even told me, '**Stay close** by my workers until all my harvest is finished.'"

25. Rut 2:23

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.

26. Devarim 4:4

while you, who **held fast** to the LORD your God, are all alive today.

27. Devarim 10:20

You must revere the LORD your God: only Him shall you worship, to Him shall you **hold fast**, and by His name shall you swear.

28. Devarim 11: 22

If, then, you faithfully keep all this Instruction that I command you, loving the LORD your God, walking in all His ways, and **holding fast** to Him,

29. Rut Medrash Rabbah

Rut 1:16-17

Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.'

Medrash

"And Ruth said: entreat me not to leave you and to return from following you" (Rut 1:16)- what does **entreat** [lit. "hurt"] mean? Ruth said to Naomi, "Do not sin against me by telling me to leave and return from following you. I intend to convert anyway, and it is better that I do it with you than with someone else."

30. I Samuel 20:13

But if my father intends to do you harm, may the LORD do thus to Jonathan and more if I do [not] disclose it to you and send you off to escape unharmed. May the LORD be with you, as He used to be with my father.

V. The Courageous Dimension of Rut's Chesed

31. The Rav, *Abraham's Journey*, pp. 177-78

Lot's daughter had something beautiful to contribute to the emerging personality of the King Messiah. What did this primitive girl possess that the Almighty, gathering virtues and noble traits from all over the world, picked up? She was uncouth and primitive, she committed incest, and yet she was the great-grandmother of Ruth. The Messiah will be her descendant!

She was under the impression, says Rashi (Gen. 19:31), that a cosmic cataclysm had struck and only three human beings had survived. (Years ago, we were unable to imagine this, but now we understand that it is something that can happen any day). She acted as she did because she wanted to save humanity. This girl wanted to rebuild the world, to start from scratch and raise another race to take the place of the human race, which she believed had been destroyed simultaneously with the destruction of Sodom. This was heroism of an undreamt caliber. Instead of giving up, she had the courage to try to rebuild the world, to make a new humanity arise from the ashes of Sodom. She convinced her younger sister. Never mind that their method was primitive and crude. These two girls took upon themselves an impossible task, something staggering and awesome.

"And the firstborn said unto the younger: Our father is old and there is not a man in earth . . . Come, let us make our father drink wine, that we may preserve the seed of our father." (Gen. 19:31-32) The plan *per se* was reprehensible, but their motivation was imaginative, noble, and heroic. The King Messiah will save the world. Indeed, he will achieve what his great-great-grandmothers wanted to do. The great-great-grandson, the King Messiah, will accomplish what lonely girls could not. The heroism of Lot's daughters consisted in their commitment to mankind and their urge to save it.

32. Breishit Medrash Rabbah

"And your two daughters who are found, etc." R. Toviya the son of R. Yitzchak said: Two findings, Rut the Moabite and Naamah the Amonite. R. Yitzchak said: "I found Dovid my servant" (Tehillim 89:21). Where did I find him? In Sodom.

VI. The Historical Context of Rut's Chesed

33. Rut 2:9

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.

34. Rut Rabbah (Medrash)

"And it was in the days the judges judged." (Rut 1:1) "Laziness brings sleep" (Proverbs 19:15), this means that Israel was too lazy to act with kindness to Joshua, as it is written: "and they buried him in the area of his inheritance north of Mount Gaash" (Joshua 24:30) Rabbi Berachya said: "We have checked all of the verses and didn't find a place named "Mount Gaash," rather it means that Israel was too **lazy (*nitga'ashu*)** to do kindness with Joshua, at that time the land was being divided, and the process of dividing it was too dear to them, and so Israel was busy with their work: one was dealing with his field, one with his vineyard, one with his olives, and this one with his building to show the meaning of the verse: "An idle soul will go hungry." (Proverbs 19:16) They did not do a kindness for Joshua, and the Holy One, blessed is He, wanted to turn the world on its dwellers like it says in the verse: "And the earth quaked and roared." (Psalms 18:8)

35. Rut Rabbah 1:1 (Medrash)

"In the days the judges judged" (Ruth 1:1)[which could also be "the judges were judged"]. Woe to a generation that judges its judges and woe to a generation whose judges need to be judged.

36. Rashi on Rut 1:1-2

Rut 1:1 In the days when the chieftains ruled, there was a famine in the land; **vayelech ish mi'Bet Lechem Yehudah- and a man of Bethlehem in Judah**, with his wife and two sons, **went** to reside in the country of Moab.

And a man went. He was very wealthy, *ish* denotes an important person, as the Targum renders, "*gavrah rabbah*, a great man," and the leader of the generation. He left Eretz Yisrae-l for regions out of the land because of stinginess, for her was miserly toward the poor who came to press him; therefore, he was punished.

37. R. Yosef Zev Lipovitz, *Nachlat Yosef* (1889-1996)

Am Yisrae-l was weakened by a deficiency in the "vitamin" of kindness, and in order to fill this deficiency, a non-Jewish soul, which was rich in this "vitamin," was taken and planted within Am Yisrae-l. The arrival of Rut was like a transfusion of blood into the body of the Jewish people, which prepared it for renewed life. In the heart of Rut the Moaviah nested the great spirit that brought to the world Messianic strength. The greatness of Mashiach is that he will bring changes in the relations of people and the relations of nations, and will remove barriers between them (*see Rambam Hilkhos Melakhim*). From which source does this flow? From Rut ...

38. Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, pp. 36-39 (1905-1997)- Austrian Holocaust survivor, psychiatrist and neurologist

We stumbled on in the darkness, over big stones and through large puddles, along the one road leading from the camp. The accompanying guards kept shouting at us and driving us with the butts of their rifles. Anyone with very sore feet supported himself on his neighbor's arm. Hardly a word was spoken; the icy wind did not encourage talk. Hiding his mouth behind his upturned collar, the man marching next to me whispered suddenly, "If our wives could see us now! I do hope they are better off in their camps and don't know what is happening to us."

That brought thoughts of my own wife to mind. And as we stumbled on for miles, slipping on ice, supporting each other time and again, dragging one another up and onward, nothing was said, but we both knew: each of us was thinking of his wife. Occasionally I looked at the sky, where the stars were fading and the pink light of the morning was beginning to spread behind a dark bank of clouds. But my mind clung to my wife's image, imagining it with an uncanny acuteness. I heard her answering me, saw her smile, her frank and encouraging look. Real or not, her look was then more luminous than the sun which was beginning to rise. . . .

Had I known then that my wife was dead, I think that I would still have given myself, undisturbed by that knowledge, to the contemplation of her image, and that my mental conversation with her would have been just as vivid and just as satisfying. "Set me like a seal upon thy heart, love is as strong as death."

VII. Comparing Rut and Iyov to Yonah

39. Yonah, 3:10-4:4

God saw what they did, how they were turning back from their evil ways. And God renounced the punishment He had planned to bring upon them, and did not carry it out. This displeased Jonah greatly, and he was grieved. He prayed to the LORD, saying, "O LORD! Isn't this just what I said when I was still in my own country? That is why I fled beforehand to Tarshish. For I know that You are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, renouncing punishment. Please, LORD, take my life, for I would rather die than live." The LORD replied, "Are you that deeply grieved?"

40. Hosea, 1:1

The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri, in the reigns of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, and in the reign of King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel.

41. Amos, Ch. 1

The words of Amos, a sheep breeder from Tekoa, who prophesied concerning Israel in the reigns of Kings Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

42. Yonah, 1:1

The word of the LORD came to *Jonah son of Amittai*:

43. Iyov, 1:1

There was a man in the land of Utz named Job. That man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.

44. Yonah, 4:5-4:11

Now Jonah had left the city and found a place east of the city. He made a booth there and sat under it in the shade, until he should see what happened to the city. The LORD God provided a ricinus plant, which grew up over Jonah, to provide shade for his head and save him from discomfort. Jonah was very happy about the plant. But the next day at dawn God provided a worm, which attacked the plant so that it withered. And when the sun rose, God provided a sultry east wind; the sun beat down on Jonah's head, and he became faint. He begged for death, saying, "I would rather die than live." Then God said to Jonah, "Are you so deeply grieved about the plant?" "Yes," he replied, "so deeply that I want to die." *Then the LORD said: "You cared about the plant, which you did not work for and which you did not grow, which appeared overnight and perished overnight. And should not I care about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not yet know their right hand from their left, and many beasts as well!"*