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Congregation Adat Reyim
Tikkun Leil Shavuot 5770 study session

Ruth's Conversion

Midrash Rabbah on Chapter 1 of the Book of Ruth

Ruth 1:1. It came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a man of Beth-Lehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

- 'Bimei sh'fot ha-shoftim' can be rendered 'in the days when the judges were judged'. There was no central power and much anarchy. Bava Batra 15b: If a judge said 'take the splinter from between your teeth', the defendant would respond 'take the beam from between your eyes'.*
- *Judges did not know enough Torah. Famine came as punishment for that.*
- 'Vay-hi' twice means famine for bread and famine for Torah. (Yalkut Shimoni)*
- "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25)*
- Wealthy Elimelech may have left because he was afraid of lawless mobs preying on his family (Pri Chayyim)*

Ruth Rabbah 1:4

THAT THERE WAS A FAMINE IN THE LAND. Ten famines have come upon the world.

- One in the days of Adam,
- one in the days of Lamech,
- one in the days of Abraham,
- one in the days of Isaac,
- one in the days of Jacob,
- one in the days of Elijah,
- one in the days of Elisha,
- one in the days of David,
- one in the days when the judges judged,
- And one which is destined still to come upon the world.[Or: travels about and visits the world. See Gen. Rabbah 25:3.]

- One in the days of Adam, as it is said, "Cursed is the ground for your sake" (Gen. 3:17);
- one in the days of Lamech, as it is said, "From the ground which the Lord has cursed" (Gen. 5:29);
- one in the days of Abraham, as it is said, "And there was a famine in the land; and Abram went down into Egypt" (Gen. 12:10);
- one in the days of Isaac, as it is said, "And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine" (Gen. 26:1);
- one in the days of Jacob, as it is said, "For these two years has the famine been in the land" (Gen. 45:6);
- one in the days of Elijah, as it is said, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years" (I Kings 17:1);
- one in the days of Elisha, as it is said, "And there was a great famine in Samaria" (II Kings 6:25);
- one in the days of David, as it is said, "And there was a famine in the days of David three years" (II Sam. 21:1);
- one in the days of the judges, as it is said, "THERE WAS A FAMINE IN THE LAND" (Ruth 1:1);
- and one which is destined to come to the world, as it is said, "That I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11).

R. Huna said in the name of Samuel: The real famine ought to have come in the days of Saul, and not in the days of David, but since Saul was but the stump of a sycamore tree [i.e., of small merit] and would have been unable to withstand it, the Holy One, blessed be He, deferred it and brought it in the time of David who, since he was a scion of an olive-tree [rich in merit], was able to withstand it. As the proverb expresses it, "Shela has sinned, but John must pay." So all these [famines] did not come upon feeble people, but upon strong ones, who could withstand them...

It has been taught: In time of pestilence and in time of war, gather in your feet, [i.e., remain at home] and in time of famine, spread out your feet [i.e., go abroad]. Why then was Elimelech punished? Because he struck despair into the hearts of Israel. He was like a prominent man who dwelt in a certain country, and the people of that country depended upon him and said that if a dearth should come he could supply the whole country with food for ten years. When a dearth came, however, his maidservant went out and stood in the market place with her basket in her hand. And the people of the country said, "This is the man upon whom we depended that if a dearth should come he would supply our wants for ten years, and here his maidservant stands in the market-place with her basket in her hand!" So with Elimelech! He was one of the notables of his place and one of the leaders of his generation. But when the famine came he said, "Now all Israel will come knocking at my door [for help,] each one with his basket." He therefore arose and fled from them. This is the meaning of the verse AND A CERTAIN MAN OF BETH-LEHEM IN JUDAH WENT. [Rada: Play on the name: A certain man went so as not to give from his house (beth) bread (lehem) to Judah.]

Ruth Rabbah I:5

5. AND A CERTAIN MAN... WENT - like a mere stump! [To which nothing is attached--surely he did not go empty-handed! Why then is nothing said about what he took with him?] See now how the Holy One, blessed be He, favors the entry into Eretz Israel over the departure therefrom! In the former case it is written, "Their horses... their mules... their camels," etc. (Ezra 2:66), [of the return from Babylon] but in this case it is written AND A CERTAIN MAN WENT - like a mere stump. The reason is that in the latter case, since they were leaving the country for another land, Scripture makes no mention of their property, [but states simply] AND A CERTAIN MAN WENT--as though empty-handed.

TO SOJOURN IN THE FIELDS OF MOAB (I, 1)...HE AND HIS WIFE AND HIS TWO SONS.
He was the prime mover, and his wife secondary to him, and his two sons secondary to both of them.
[deduced from the order of the words.]

Ruth I-2. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Kilion, Ephrathites of Beth-Lehem in Judah. And they came to the country of Moab, and remained there.

Ruth Rabbah II:5

-AND THE NAME OF THE MAN WAS ELIMELECH. R. Meir was wont to interpret names and R. Joshua b. Karhah was wont to interpret names.

-AND THE NAME OF THE MAN WAS ELIMELECH, since he used to say, "To me shall the kingdom come." [Eli-Melech: 'to me, the king.']

-A reference to his descendant [by levirate marriage] King David?

-AND THE NAME OF HIS WIFE WAS NAOMI, for her actions were pleasant and sweet. [Naomi means sweet. See Ruth 1:20.]

-AND THE NAME OF HIS TWO SONS MAHLON AND CHILION,

-MAHLON, in that they were blotted out (nimhu) from the world,

-and CHILION. in that they perished (kalu) from the world.

-How did they know their life history at the time of their birth? Berakhot 3b-4a: The name given to a person affects his or her future in ways that will be evident later in life.

-EPHRATHITES. R. Joshua b. Levi [interpreted it to mean] courtiers; and Rabbi b. R. Nehemiah said: Aristocrats.

Another interpretation of EPHRATHITES is, R. Phinehas said, [possessing] all that crown with which Ephraim was crowned by our patriarch Jacob at the time of his departure from the world. He said to him: 'Ephraim, leader of the tribe, leader of the college, all that is exalted and praiseworthy in my children shall be called by your name.' For example, "The son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite" (I Sam. 1:1), "And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite" (I Kings 11:26). Now David was the son of an Ephrathite (I Sam. 17:12). So MAHLON AND CHILION, EPHRATHITES.

Ruth Rabbah II:6

-AND THEY CAME INTO THE FIELD OF MOAB AND REMAINED THERE.

At first they came to the cities, but they found the inhabitants steeped in transgression. They then went to the large cities and found a dearth of water. They thereupon returned to the cities, [As a rule, the larger the city the more iniquitous it is.]

-They were an observant family.

Ruth I-3. And Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons.

Ruth Rabbah II:7

AND ELIMELECH, NAOMI'S HUSBAND, DIED (Ruth 1:3). It has been taught [Ber. 17a]: All must die, and death must come to all. Happy is he who departs this world with a good name!

-The death of a man is felt by none but his wife, as it is said, AND ELIMELECH, NAOMI'S HUSBAND, DIED.

-The death of a woman is felt by none but her husband, as it is said, 'And as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died unto me [alai](Gen. 48:7).

-R. Johanan said: [The meaning is] the death of Rachel is [heavy] upon me. Our Patriarch Jacob said, "The death of Rachel is more grievous to me than all the calamities which have befallen me."

Ruth Rabbah II:8

R. Johanan said on behalf of R. Simeon: The Holy One, blessed be He, brings into the world numbers of associations [i.e., those born under the same planetary influence] and numbers of brotherhoods. If one of the association die, the whole association becomes apprehensive, since R. Samuel b. Abba said in the name of R. Johanan: There are [predetermined] periods of office, and one does not overlap that of the other even a hairsbreadth.

-R. Jose b. Halaftha said: Never during my life did I call my wife "my wife" or my home "my home", but I called my wife "my home" and my home "my wife". Nor did I call my ox "my ox" or my fields "my fields", but I called my ox "my fields" and my fields "my ox". [The idea is that the interchangeability of terms shows their close association. "The wife is the spirit of the home"; the field is useless without the ox.]

-AND SHE WAS LEFT, AND HER TWO SONS. R. Hanina, the son of R. Abbahu, said: She became like the remnants of the meal-offerings. [Of little importance, now that her husband was dead.]

Ruth I-4. And they took wives of the women of Moab; the name of one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth; and they dwelled there about ten years.

Ruth Rabbah II:9

AND THEY TOOK THEM WIVES OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MOAB (Ruth 1:4). It was taught in the name of R. Meir: They neither proselytized them, nor gave them ritual immersion [conversion to Judaism], nor had the new law -- Ammonite, but not Ammonitess; Moabite, but not Moabitess -- been propounded, that they should escape punishment on its account. [The justification of marrying a Moabitess is to be found in the interpretation of Deut. 23:4, to refer only to males. This new law had not yet been propounded.

-They did not change or reinterpret the(oral) law. They had simply forgotten it, as it was hardly ever applied, such marriages being rare given the enmity between Israel and Moab.

-The quote (Deut. 23):

4. An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever;

5. Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when you came out of Egypt; and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.

6. Nevertheless the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam; but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing to you, because the Lord your God loved you.

7. You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days for ever.

8. You shall not loathe an Edomite; for he is your brother; you shall not loathe an Egyptian; because you were a stranger in his land.

-THE NAME OF THE ONE WAS ORPAH, because she turned her back ("oref) on her mother-in-law. [She later left Naomi as Naomi told her.]

-Sotah 42b: The text has Harafah and also Orpah! [II Sam. 21:18 and Ruth 1:4.] Rav and Samuel [differ in their interpretation]. One said that her name was Harafah. And why was she called Orpah? Because all had intercourse with her from the rear [orfin]. The other said that her name was Orpah. And why was she called Harafah? Because all ground her like a bruised corn [harifoth]. Thus it states: And the woman took and spread the covering over the well's mouth and strewed harifoth [bruised corn] thereon. [II Sam. 17:19].

-AND THE NAME OF THE OTHER, RUTH, because she 'considered well' (ra'athah) the words of her mother-in-law.

-R. Bibi said in the name of R. Reuben: Ruth and Orpah were the daughters of Eglon, [King of Moab. See Judg. 3:12.] as it is said, 'I have a secret errand unto you, O King. And he said: Keep silence, 'etc. (Judg. 3:19), and it is written, 'And Ehud came to him... and Ehud said: I have a message from God to you. And he arose out of his seat.' (Judg. 3:20). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "You did arise from your throne in honor of Me. By your life, I shall raise up from you a descendant sitting upon the throne of the Lord." [David, Ruth's descendant.]

Ruth I-5. And both Mahlon and Kilion died; and the woman was bereft of her two sons and her husband.

Ruth Rabbah II:10

AND MAHLON AND CHILION DIED, BOTH OF THEM (Ruth 1:5).

-R. Hunia and R. Joshua b. Abin, and R. Zabda the son-in-law of R. Levi said: The Merciful One never exacts retribution of man's life at first. [First God punishes a man by depriving him of his property and only after that does He smite him in his person.]

-*Ezek. 18:23: God does not want the wicked to die but repent.*

-Where is this taught? From Job, as it is said, 'There came a messenger to Job, and said: The oxen were plowing, etc.' (Job 1:14).

-R. Hama b. R. Hanina said: The Holy One, blessed be He, gave him a foretaste of the World to Come, [as it is said], 'The plowman shall overtake the reaper' (Amos 9:13). [Referring to the Messianic time.] And the Sabeans made a raid, and took them away' (Job 1:15).

-R. Abba b. Kahana said: They sallied forth from Kfar Kiryanos and traversed the whole of Abilena as far as the tower of [the mountain of] Zeboim, and there they died. [Kfar Kiryanos is in Media, Abilena in Perea, and Zeboim in Palestine. The Midrash means "a very long distance".]

-'And I only am escaped alone to tell you' (Job 1:15).

-R. Hanina said: The word 'only' intimates a limitation; he also was smitten and wounded. [Even I am not left whole.]

-R. Judah said: Alone. While he was yet speaking, he also, having told the news, immediately expired. [By combining the end of Job 1:15 with the beginning of Job 1:16, we get the suggestion that he lived only long enough to speak.]

'While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said: The Chaldeans set themselves in three bands' (Job 1:17).

-R. Samuel b. Nahman said: As soon as Job heard this, he began to array his troops for war, saying, "How many armies can I mobilize, how many troops can I assemble. And this against the most despised nation in the world, as it is said, 'Behold, the land of the Chaldeans -- this is the people that was not' (Isa. 23:13). [Meaning], would that it did not exist! [As though God regretted having created them] -- [this nation] comes to cast its terror upon me!" But when he [the messenger] told him, A fire of God fell from Heaven (Job 1:16), he said, 'It comes from heaven, what am I able to do?' [as it is said] 'So that I kept silence, and went not out of the door' (Isa. 31:34). Immediately he took a shard with which to scrape himself. [I.e., only after the loss of his wealth was he bodily smitten] In the case of Egypt, too, it was so. [First of all] He smote their vines also, and their fig- trees (Ps. 105:33). After this, He gave over their cattle also to the hail (Isa. 78:48), and only then [do we read], And smote all the firstborn in Egypt (Isa. 51).

-And even in the case of the plague-spots it is so.

-First they come upon a man's house. If he repents of his evil, it is well, but if not, the house must have the stones removed, as it is said, 'Then the priest shall command that they take out the stones' (Lev. 14:40).

-If he repents, it is well; if not, the house must needs be demolished. [Lev. 14:45]

-If he repents, it is well; if not, the plague comes upon his garments [Although in the Bible, the chapter of the garments precedes that of the house, and that of the body comes first of all.] and they must be cleansed [Lev. 13:54].

-If he repents, it is well; if not, they must be rent, as it is said, 'Then he shall rend it out of the garment' [Lev. 13:56].

-If he repents, it is well; if not they must be burnt, as it is said, 'And he shall burn the garment' [Lev. 13:52]. Then only do they come upon his body.

-If he repents, it is well; if not, he has to leave [the camp for seven days] and return. [I.e., he must go without the camp, where he is shut up for seven days, and then return for re-examination; see Lev. 13:4ff.]

-If he repents, it is well; if not, He shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his dwelling be [Lev. 13:46].

-And so it was with Mahlon and Chilion also. First of all their horses, their asses, and their camels died, then Elimelech, and lastly the two sons.
-AND THE WOMAN WAS LEFT. R. Hanina said: She was left as the remnants of the remnants [of the meal-offering]. [Which are of no value whatsoever. After her husband's death, she was yet of some little importance; with her sons' death that, too, went]

Ruth I-6. Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, to return from the country of Moab; for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them bread.

Ruth Rabbah II:11

THEN SHE AROSE WITH HER DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW, THAT SHE MIGHT RETURN FROM THE FIELD OF MOAB; FOR SHE HAD HEARD IN THE FIELD OF MOAB THAT THE LORD HAD REMEMBERED HIS PEOPLE (I, 6).

-She heard from pedlars making their rounds from city to city. And what was it she heard? THAT THE LORD HAD REMEMBERED HIS PEOPLE AND GIVEN THEM BREAD.

-One verse says, 'For the Lord will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance' (Ps. 94:14), -whereas another verse says, 'For the Lord will not forsake His people for His great Name's sake' (I Sam. 12:22).

-R. Samuel b. Nahmani said: Sometimes He does it for the sake of His people and His inheritance, and sometimes He does it for the sake of His Great Name.

-R. Ibbi said: When Israel merits it, [He does it] for the sake of His people and His inheritance, but when Israel does not merit it, for the sake of His Great Name.

-*Open miracles when Israel is deserving, under guise of natural events when Israel is not (Or HaChaim on Num. 24:17)*

-The Rabbis say: In the land of Israel [He does it] for the sake of His people and His inheritance; in the Diaspora, for the sake of His Great Name, as it is said, 'For Mine own sake, for Mine own sake, will I do it' (Isa. 48:11).

Ruth I-8. And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each of you to her mother's house; the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead, and with me.

Ruth Rabbah II:13

AND NAOMI SAID UNTO HER TWO DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW: GO, RETURN EACH OF YOU TO HER MOTHER'S HOUSE (1, 8)

--i.e. to her people's house.

-The mother of Abnimos of Gadara [a famous heathen philosopher] died, and R. Meir went up to condole with him and he found them sitting in mourning. Some time later his father died, and R. Meir again went up to condole with him, and found them engaged in their normal occupations. He said to him: "It appears to me that your mother was more dear to you than your father!" He answered him: "Is it not then written, TO HER MOTHER'S HOUSE, but not "to her father's house"?" R. Meir answered him: "You have spoken well, for a heathen indeed has no father." [In Jewish law, the child of a non-Jewish marriage has only mother-right.]

-*Gen. R. 18:5: "Gentiles do not recognize paternity"; also Sanh. 58a on who a convert may marry from his biological family.*

Ruth Rabbah II:14

THE LORD DEAL KINDLY WITH YOU.

-R. Hanina b. Adda said: The written word is ya'aseh: He *certainly* will deal kindly with you.

-AS YOU HAVE DEALT WITH THE DEAD, in that you busied yourselves with their shrouds;

-AND WITH ME, in that they renounced their marriage settlement.

-*They did not collect from their husbands' estate to support Naomi*

-R. Z'era said: This scroll [of Ruth] tells us nothing either of cleanliness or of uncleanness, either of prohibition or permission. For what purpose then was it written? To teach how great is the reward of those who do deeds of kindness.

-*They buried their husbands according to Jewish law, the ultimate kindness, even though they were not Jewish. We read Ruth on Shavuot because Torah is kindness, and so is Ruth.*

-Talmud: Samuel wrote Book of Ruth (Bava Batra 74a)

Ruth I-9. The Lord grant you that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.

Ruth I-10. And they said to her, No, we will return with you to your people.

Ruth I-11. And Naomi said, Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

Ruth Rabbah II:15

THE LORD GRANT YOU. R. Jose said: All the boons and all the consolations which the Holy One, blessed be He, is destined to bestow on Solomon, as it is written, And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding (I Kings 5:9), shall come from you.

-THAT YOU MAY FIND REST. The written word [umtzena] suggests a singular. One of you will find rest, not both.

-EACH OF YOU IN THE HOUSE OF HER HUSBAND. From this we see that a woman has no contentment except in her husband's house. (*Tanch. Bo 16*)

-THEN SHE KISSED THEM, AND THEY LIFTED UP THEIR VOICE AND WEPT. AND THEY SAID TO HER... AND NAOMI SAID: TURN BACK, MY DAUGHTERS, WHY WILL YOU GO WITH ME? ARE THERE YET ANY MORE SONS IN MY WOMB, THAT THEY MAY BE YOUR HUSBANDS? Can then a man marry the widow of his brother [who became widowed] before he was born? [Had Naomi been pregnant, the law of levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5f) would apply, since the unborn child is regarded as "in the world". But since she was not pregnant, any child which she might have later would not be bound by this law, since it would be only a half-brother on the mother's side.]

Ruth I-12. Turn back, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say, I have hope, even if I should have a husband tonight, and should bear sons;

Ruth Rabbah II:16

TURN BACK, MY DAUGHTERS, GO YOUR WAY. R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Judah b. Hanina: Three times is it written here "turn back", corresponding to the three times that a candidate for conversion is repulsed [to warn him of the difficulties of Judaism and make sure of the sincerity of his convictions]; but if he persists after that, he is accepted.

-R. Isaac said: [It is written,] 'The stranger [proselyte] did not lodge in the street' (Job 21:32): A man should rebuff with his left hand, but bring near with the right.

-FOR I AM TOO OLD TO HAVE A HUSBAND, etc. SHOULD I EVEN HAVE A HUSBAND TONIGHT. R. Johanan said: The Torah teaches us a lesson of decency, that intercourse should take place not by day but by night. That is the meaning of what is written, 'In the evening, she went in, and on the morrow she returned' (Est. 2:14).

-*The Persians were modest re sex (Ber. 8b). See also Gen. R. 64:5: R. Johanan said: To have intercourse by day is indecent, intercourse is permitted at night only.*

While it is written here SHOULD I EVEN HAVE A HUSBAND TONIGHT.

Ruth I-14. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth held fast to her.

Ruth I-15. And she said, Behold, your sister-in-law is gone back to her people, and to her gods; go back you after your sister-in-law.

Ruth Rabbah II:20

AND THEY LIFTED UP (VATTISENAH) THEIR VOICES AND WEPT (I, 14). There is an alef missing [from VATTISENAH] teaching that they went on their way weeping, with diminishing strength.

-R. Berekiah said in the name of R. Isaac: Forty paces did Orpah go with her mother-in-law, and [for this reason retribution] was suspended for her descendant [Goliath] for forty days, as it is said, 'And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days' (I Sam. 17:16).

-Why is Orpah being punished? What did she do wrong?

-R. Judah said in the name of R. Isaac: Four miles did Orpah proceed with her mother-in-law, and as a reward four mighty men descended from her, as it is said, These four were born to the giant (II Sam. 21:22).

-All four were killed by David. II Sam. 21:22: These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

-R. Isaac said: The whole of that night when Orpah separated from her mother, a hundred heathens raped her. That is the meaning of the verse, 'And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion... out of the ranks of the Philistines' (I Sam. 17:23).

-The ketib is mimma'archoth, [suggesting a sexual relationship] referring to the hundred men [lit. "foreskins"] who violated her that night. *[mim'arot, interpreted as mimme'ah ervot]*

-R. Tanhuma said: And one dog also, as it is written, 'And the Philistine said to David: Am I a dog' (I Sam. 17:43).

[ISam 17:43. And the Philistine said to David, Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.]

Ruth Rabbah II:21

AND ORPAH KISSED HER MOTHER-IN-LAW.

-All kissing is folly except on three occasions, the kiss of high office, the kiss of meeting after separation, and the kiss of parting:

-Of high office, as it is written, 'Then Samuel took the vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him' (I Sam. 10:1).

-Of meeting, as it is written, 'And he met him in the mountain of God and kissed him' (Ex. 4:27);

-Of parting, as it is written, 'AND ORPAH KISSED HER MOTHER-IN-LAW.'

-R. Tanhuma added: Also the kiss of kinship, as it is said, 'And Jacob kissed Rachel (Gen. 29:II): Why? Because she was his relation.

AND SHE SAID: BEHOLD, YOUR SISTER-IN-LAW IS GONE BACK, etc. (Ruth 1:15). Once she returned UNTO HER PEOPLE she returned UNTO HER GOD.

Ruth 1:16. And Ruth said, Do not entreat me to leave you, or to keep from following you; for wherever you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; Ruth 1:17. Where you die, I will die, and there be buried; the Lord do so and so to me, and more besides, if even death separates me from you.

Ruth Rabbah II:22

AND RUTH SAID: DO NOT ENTREAT ME TO LEAVE YOU, AND TO RETURN FROM FOLLOWING AFTER YOU (Ruth 1:16). -What is the meaning of DO NOT ENTREAT ME? She said to her, "Do not sin against me; do not turn your misfortunes away from me." [The root of 'to entreat' also means a "misfortune", a "plague", so: Do not seek to turn me away by reciting your misfortunes to me; or Do not court misfortune through me by repulsing me.]

-Rashi: 'Do not entreat me' means 'do not pester me'

-TO LEAVE YOU AND TO RETURN FROM FOLLOWING AFTER YOU. I am fully resolved to become converted under any circumstances, but it is better that it should be at your hands than at those of another.

-Implies Jewish women, alone, had the power to convert Gentiles. Extension of matrilineal descent?

When Naomi heard this, she began to unfold to her the laws of conversion, saying: "My daughter, it is not the custom of daughters of Israel to frequent Gentile theatres and circuses," [which had a reputation for lewdness], to which she replied,

-WHEREVER YOU GO I WILL GO. She continued: 'My daughter, it is not the custom of daughters of Israel to dwell in a house which has no mezuzah,[Deut. 6:9]' to which she responded, 'AND WHERE YOU LODGE, I WILL LODGE. YOUR PEOPLE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE' refers to the penalties and admonitions [of the Torah], AND YOUR GOD MY GOD to the other commandments of the Bible.

Ruth Rabbah II:23

Another interpretation:

-WHEREVER YOU GO I WILL GO: to the tent of testimony, to Gilgal, Shiloh, Nob, Gibeon, and the Permanent Temple.[The different places where the Sanctuary was, until the Temple was erected

permanently in Jerusalem-the first two mentioned are an anachronism, since they were no longer in existence by this time (Radal)]

-AND WHERE YOU LODGE, I WILL LODGE: I shall lodge overnight with the sacrifices. [Deut. 16:7, was interpreted to mean that one had to lodge overnight in Jerusalem on the first night of the Festivals, after the Festival sacrifice had been offered.]

-YOUR PEOPLE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE, in that I will destroy all idolatry within me, and then

-AND YOUR GOD SHALL BE MY GOD, to pay me the reward of my labor.

Ruth Rabbah II:24

-WHERE YOU DIE WILL I DIE refers to the four forms of capital punishment inflicted by the Court: stoning, burning, beheading, and strangulation. [By whatever mode you die, I am prepared to die] [Sanh. 49b]

-AND THERE WILL I BE BURIED; these are the two graves prepared by the Beth din, one for those who have suffered stoning and burning, the other for those decapitated and strangled.

-THE LORD DO SO TO ME AND MORE ALSO. Naomi said to her: My daughter, whatever good deeds and righteous actions you are able to acquire, acquire in this world, for in the World to Come, DEATH SHALL PART YOU AND ME.

-You cannot earn any more credit after death.

Ruth I-18. When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her.

Ruth Rabbah III:5

AND WHEN SHE SAW THAT SHE WAS STEADFASTLY MINDED TO GO WITH HER (Ruth 1:18). R. Judah b. Simon commented: Come and see how precious in the eyes of the Omnipresent are converts. Once she decided to become converted, Scripture ranks her equally with Naomi. ["To go with her."]

-When did Ruth convert?

-If after her husband's death (as Book of Ruth implies) then her marriage was not Jewishly recognized. So why is Naomi called her 'mother-in-law' and why is Ruth marrying Boaz pursuing levirate laws that wouldn't apply, and how can Boaz redeem Ruth's property if she was not Jewishly entitled to her husband's estate?

-If upon marrying her husband (as assumed in Zohar Chadash Ruth 180-182), then how can Naomi, a Jew, urge her, another Jew, to go back to Moab, marry a Moabite and worship idols?

-Rabbi Nosson Scherman resolves: Ruth converted before marriage because she was forced, but confirmed her sincerity with Naomi later. Elimelech came to Moab a rich and powerful man, arranged marriages of sons with king's daughters if they converted. They had to accept for political reasons. Naomi later put Ruth and Orpah to the test, pretending to free them of their conversion. Orpah accepted, Ruth stayed Jewish.

Ruth I-19. So the two went until they came to Beth-Lehem. And it came to pass, when they came to Beth-Lehem, that all the city was stirred because of them, and they said, Is this Naomi?

Ruth I-20. And she said to them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara; for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

Ruth I-21. I went out full, and the Lord has brought me back empty; why then do you call me Naomi, seeing the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?

Ruth Rabbah III:6

SO THEY TWO WENT (Ruth 1:19). R. Samuel b. Simon said: That day was the day of the reaping of the Omer, [The measure of barley which was offered on the second day of Pessah] as we have learned elsewhere [Men. 65a]: All the towns near by assembled together that it might be reaped with great ceremony. Others say that on that day Ibzai [The Judge of Bethlehem] married his daughter.

R. Tanhuma in the name of R. "Azariah and R. Menahema in the name of R. Joshua b. Abin said: It is written, "O Lord God of Hosts, who is a mighty one, like unto You, O Lord" (Ps. 89:9), who brings things about in their due season. The wife of Boaz died on that day, and all Israel assembled to pay their respects, and just then Ruth entered with Naomi.

Thus one was taken out when the other entered and ALL THE CITY WAS ASTIR CONCERNING THEM, AND THE WOMEN SAID: IS THIS NAOMI? (Ruth 1:19).

-Is this the one whose actions were fitting and pleasant (ne'imim)? In the past she used to go in a litter, and now she walks barefoot, and you say, IS THIS NAOMI?

-In the past she wore a cloak of fine wool, and now she is clothed in rags, and you say, IS THIS NAOMI?

-Before her countenance was ruddy from abundance of food and drink, and now it is sickly from hunger, and yet you say, IS THIS NAOMI?

-And she said to them, CALL ME NOT NAOMI, CALL ME MARAH. Bar Kappara said: Her case was like that of an ordinary ox which its owner puts up for sale in the marketplace, saying, "It is excellent for ploughing, and drives straight furrows." "But," say the bystanders, "if it is good for ploughing, what is the meaning of those weals on its back? So said Naomi, WHY DO YOU CALL ME NAOMI (PLEASANT), SEEING THE LORD HAS TESTIFIED AGAINST ME, AND THE ALMIGHTY HAS AFFLICTED ME (I, 21).

Ruth Rabbah III:7

I WENT OUT FULL AND THE LORD HAS BROUGHT ME BACK EMPTY (ib.). I went out full with sons and daughters.

-Another interpretation of I WENT OUT FULL, is, I was pregnant. WHY DO YOU CALL ME NAOMI, SEEING THE LORD HAS AFFLICTED ("ANAH) ME, AND THE ALMIGHTY HAS DONE EVIL TO ME. God has afflicted me with His Attribute of Justice, as in the verse, "If you afflict ("aneh) him in any wise" (Ex. 22:22). Another interpretation of "anah is 'testified' against me, as in the verse, "He has testified ("anah) falsely against his brother (Deut. 19:18).

-Another interpretation: All His concern was with me, [I have been afflicted more than others] for in this world THE LORD HAS AFFLICTED ME, but of the Messianic future it is written, "Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good" (Jer. 32:41) [irrelevant, but added in order to end on a cheerful note]
