Jewish Tribune – Shavuos

**Ashreinu!**

I would like to share an electrifying idea that pertains to Megilas Rus and contains, in my very humble opinion, a key ingredient not just to successful parenting and chinuch, but to the Yom Tov of Shavuos and our approach to Yiddishkeit generally.

Towards the end of the first perek, the Megila shares the famous dialogue between Naomi and Rus where Rus is adamant that she will cleave to her mother in law and join the Jewish people. On a personal note, these pesukim are poignant, as my father ז"ל, made me and my siblings learn them by heart when we were young.

Rashi, citing the Gemara in Yevamos 47b, teaches us the principle that if someone wants to convert to Judaism, we attempt to dissuade them. This is derived from these pesukim.

Naomi tells Rus about the restriction of techum Shabbos, that it is prohibited on Shabbos for Jews to go 2,000 amos beyond the boundaries of his domain. To this restriction, Rus replies “כִּי אֶל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכִי אֵלֵךְ – wherever you go, I will go”, accepting this restriction on herself.

Naomi then tells Rus about the prohibition of yichud, seclusion with a man other than one’s husband. To this restriction, Rus responded “וּבַאֲשֶׁר תָּלִינִי אָלִין – wherever you lodge, I will lodge”. Again, Rus accepted this prohibition on herself. And so it continued.

Rav Moshe Bamberger, in his sefer Shiras HaLevi, asks a striking question. Would it not have been more accurate for Rus to have responded “Wherever you **may not** go, I will **not** go” and “wherever you **do not** lodge, I will **not** lodge”. After all, Rus was being informed about specific restrictions, in techum Shabbos and hilchos yichud.

Rav Bamberger’s answer is spectacular.

Our relationship to Torah and mitzvos should be rooted with a feeling of how beautiful and pleasant they are and how privileged and fortunate we are – אשרינו מה טוב חלקנו.

This explains Rus’ answer to Naomi. Rus did not see Yiddishkeit as a burden, full of restrictions but as a glorious way of life, an opportunity being presented to her to keep a life of Torah and mitzvos.

Yes, I may not be able to travel everywhere, but focus on the positive. This is where I can travel and more importantly, all the pleasure and privilege of keeping Shabbos and all that it entails.

Yes, certain situations of yichud are prohibited. But, other situations are allowed and more importantly, focus on the beauty and sanctity of a Jewish marriage and the warmth of family life that Yiddishkeit offers.

This explains her positive response. “כִּי אֶל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכִי אֵלֵךְ – wherever you go, I will go”, “וּבַאֲשֶׁר תָּלִינִי אָלִין – wherever you lodge, I will lodge”. Not only does Rus re-frame the perspective, but you can sense her excitement and enthusiasm.

A friend once told me of a conversation he overheard in the barber’s shop. Someone was moaning about the difficulty of an impending two-day yom tov. Another person in the barber’s shop told him “for some, one day is too long and for others two days is not enough”. How true; it is all matter of perspective.

Rus teaches us אשרינו מה טוב חלקנו, how good is our portion, ומה יפה ירושתנו and how beautiful is our inheritance. The feeling of good fortune and excitement is a powerful and beautiful message to internalise as we enter the yom tov of Kabbolas HaTorah.

As we renew our commitment to Torah once again, let us model and convey this message to our children and students. Let our Shabbos tables be places of song and simcha where our children want to be at. Let us live with a simchas hachaim that a life of Torah learning and mitzva performance can bring.

Wishing you all a wonderful Shabbos and Yom Tov.

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