Shavuos – The Ring

Question

Shavuos commemorates the time that Bnei Yisroel received the Torah. Everyone knows that. And yet, the Torah doesn’t even mention that. The only details that the Torah tells us about Shavuos have to do with the crops. The Torah says that Shavuos is Chag Hakatzir, the holiday when we harvest the new crops that grew in our fields in Eretz Yisroel. On Shavuos, there’s a mitzvah to bring the Shtei Halechem. This is a bread offering that is made out of the new wheat that grew in Eretz Yisroel. After this offering is brought, it now becomes permissible to use the new crops for offerings in the Mishkan. According to our Rabbis, Shavuos is also the time that farmers can start bringing the bikkurim offering of the new fruits that grew in their fields. Even the date of Shavuos is determined by the crops. On the second day of Pesach the Omer offering of barley is brought. Then we count seven weeks from this offering (known as sefiras ha’omer), and the next day is Shavuos.

Everything has to do with crops! Crops, crops, and more crops! Why are the crops so important, and what do they have to do with the giving of the Torah?

Mashal

“Ella! Bella! Della! Please come here!

“What is it, mother?”

“Children, look at our situation! Our cupboard is bare! We have nothing to eat! What will we do? Ever since your father passed away, life has been so difficult. You know that I’m trying. Every morning I get up early and spend the day gathering sticks, so that I can go to the marketplace and sell them for firewood. But the few pennies that I make just aren’t enough for us to live. Soon we will starve to death!”

“What can we do, mother?”

“Ella, you are the oldest, so I’m counting on you. Take the donkey and ride to the prince’s palace. The prince owns all of the fields in the area. That is where all of the jobs are. Try to find favor in his eyes, so that he will give you a job in the fields. Then, with the money that you earn, our family will be able to buy some food, and to survive.”

“I will do as you ask, mother. Let us pray that I find favor in the prince’s eyes.”

Two months passed, and Ella still had not returned from the palace.

“Oh, where can Ella be? I’m starving! How much longer can we live, eating only mushrooms and grass?”

“Maybe something terrible has happened to her! Maybe she was eaten by a monster!”

“Don’t be silly. I’m sure she’s alright. Perhaps it wasn’t so easy to get in to see the prince. I’m sure he’s very busy. Perhaps she had to wait in a very long line!”

“Or maybe he threw her in the dungeon. Or chopped off her head!”

“Stop! We mustn’t think like that! Ella must be okay. We’re counting on her!”

Suddenly, the front door opened.

“Ella! You’re back! Are you alright?”

“Yes. I’m great!”

“Were you successful in your mission?”

“Beyond my wildest imagination!”

“So you got a job? Do you have food for us? Where is it? I don’t see any food, and I’m starving!”

“No, I never got a job in the fields. But I have something much better than a sack full of food. I have this!”

And she showed them a gorgeous ring on her finger.

“Oh my goodness! Look at that ring! We’re saved! Our troubles are all over!”

“What are you talking about mother? What’s so good about a ring? We can’t eat that!”

“Don’t be silly, Della. We’re not going to eat the ring! We’re going to sell it. Then we can use the money to buy food! Right? But where did you find such a ring, Ella?”

“I didn’t find it, Bella. And we’re not going to sell it. This ring will stay on my finger forever!”

“Then how will we eat?”

“Don’t you understand children? That ring is an engagement ring! Don’t you know what that means?”

“I’ll tell them what it means! It means the prince and I are going to get married! I will become the princess, and I will live in the castle! You will all come and live there with me! All of our needs will be taken care of forever. You will never be hungry again!”

Nimshal

The ring on the girl’s finger represents the love that the prince has for her. It shows that the two of them have an inseparable relationship. Do you recognize this mashal? It’s the story of Rus and Boaz, which we read on Shavuos. Rus goes to Boaz’s field to seek his favor. Boaz provides her with food. This food is the tangible sign that she has found favor in his eyes. Naomi sees the food and she immediately recognizes what it represents. She therefore sends Rus back to marry Boaz, because she recognizes that Boaz loves Rus.

The same is true with the Jewish people and Hashem. Hashem loves the Jewish people. This relationship is through the Torah. When we study and keep the Torah, we can actually experience the resting of Hashem’s Shechina upon us. But what is the physical representation of this relationship? How do we see that Hashem loves us? The answer is through the crops in Eretz Yisroel. When the crops grow in abundance in Eretz Yisroel, that is the “ring on our finger.” It is the tangible sign that everyone sees, that Hashem loves the Jewish people. And that is why on Shavuos, the time of the giving of the Torah, we also celebrate the giving of the crops.