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Parashat HaShavuah Series

Shavuot

There used to be a popular game show called "You Don't Say" and it was introduced thus: "It's not what you say that counts, it's what you DON'T say!"

Question: What **don't** we lain on Shavuot?

We **do** lain the Book of Ruth. Ruth embraced Judea first and then God. "*Ameich ami Vaylokayich Elokay*" – your people is my people and your God my God (Ruth 1:16) Ruth's Judaism was a commitment to join the people of Israel, not just the God of Israel.

To be a "*Mamlechet Cohanim v'Goy Qadosh*" – a kingdom of priests and a holy people (Exodus 19:6) means to serve God via the society, the peoplehood, the nation.

And we **do** read the above *passuq!*

But what **don't** we lain? We start "*baHodesh Hashlishi*" – in the third month" (Exodus 19:1) and we don't read the story of Yitro. Why? Did not Yitro also embrace God above all other gods?

Indeed Yitro did. So why not lain it? Because Yitro became a prototypical "*Ben No'ach*" good guy. He embraced the one true God. But when it came to embracing Israel and its destiny, Yitro rejected that. What does the *passuq* before "*baHodesh hashlishi*" state? "*Vayelech lo el artzo*" – he went to his land. (Exodus 18:27).

Yitro was into the theology of our God, but when it came to Israel and *Mattan Torah* – *vayelech lo el artzo*.

But Ruth *davqa vah* – clung to her (Ruth 1:14). She refused to leave Naomi, her family, the tribe of Judah, and the Jewish People. Ruth's embrace was total and not partial.

And **we** embrace the reading of this National Destiny of Torah, and reject reading the personal odyssey of the individual who - while embracing God - refuses to join the national destiny and goes it alone.

Chag Same'ach!

Rabbi Wolpoe is on the faculty of the Institute of Traditional Judaism, the Metivta.

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