

גירות must be done לשמה, i.e., with the desire of accepting the תורה and joining כלל ישראל. Therefore, one cannot be מגייר for marriage or any other external reason.

Because of this, during certain periods in Jewish history, גרים were not accepted. For example, during the reign of דוד המלך, גרים were not accepted due to a concern that their acceptance was based on fear (due to the strength of דוד's army).

Similarly, during the days of שלמה המלך there was no גירות due to a concern that the גירות was based on a desire for prestige (as כלל ישראל at that time was considered to be the jewel of the world).

The רמב"ם notes that although technically גרים were not accepted at this time, there were בית דין הדיוטות that did accept גרים. How was the status of these גרים resolved? The רמב"ם writes that their status was in the air; if they saw after a period of time that these גרים were still keeping the מצות, it could be assumed that their גירות was legitimate, and they were considered to be Jews retroactive to their גירות (meaning, for example, if it was a woman who had a child during the waiting period, the child was considered to be Jewish).

Perhaps we can use this יסוד said by the רמב"ם to understand a difficulty in מגילת רות. מגילת רות בועז married רות as a גואל of the property of נעמי (and רות was an extension of this due to her being the wife of the cousin of בועז--מחלון). However, if רות was a גיורת,

then we know that a גר is כקטן שנולד דמי--like a newborn, and any prior status--which in the case of רות would include her marriage to מחלון--is negated. Using the יסוד of the רמב"ם we can say that רות was initially מגייר before she married מחלון, however, there were doubts regarding her גירות (as it appears it was done for marriage); therefore, her גירות had a probation period, and once she decided to follow נעמי, there was a גילוי מילתא למפרע that her initial גירות (at the time of her marriage) was good, and she fell under the category of things that could be redeemed by a גואל (בועז).