## Zera Shimshon

by Rabbi Shimshon Chaim Nachmani zt"l Published Mantua 1778\*

Chapter XXXI: Emor (Lev. 21:1-24:23)

Essay 1. The death of Saul

**בְּלַרֶרֹשׁ** יַלְקוּט רֵישׁ פַּרַשַׁה זוֹ, אָמַר ר' יִהוֹשֶעַ דְּסְכָנִין בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי לֵוִי מִלַמֵּד שֵׁהַרְאַה הקב"ה לְמֹשֶׁה דּוֹר דּוֹר וְשׁוֹפְטֵיו, דּוֹר דוֹר וָדוֹרְשֵׁיוּ, וָהֶרְאָהוּ שַׁאוּל וּבַנַיו נוֹפָלִים בַּחָרֵב. אַמַר לוֹ רְבּוֹנוֹ שֵׁל עוֹלַם מֶלֶדְּ רָאשׁוֹן שֵׁעוֹמֶד עַל בַּנֵיךְ יִדְּקֶר בַּחָרֵב. אַמֶּר לוֹ הקב"ה וְלִי אַתָּה אוֹמֵר, "אֱמֹר אֱל־הַכֹּהָנִים" שֶׁהָרַג, שֶׁמְקַטְרְגִים אוֹתוֹ עכ"ל.

Midrash Yalkut Shimoni, at the beginning of this Parasha:

Rabbi Yehoshua of Sikhnin said in the name of Rabbi Levi: This teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, showed Moses every generation and its judges, every generation and its expounders, and He showed him Saul and his sons falling by the sword.

[Moses] said to Him: "Master of the Universe, the first king to stand over Your children will be pierced by the sword?" The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: "And you say this to Me? 'Say it to the priests,' that he killed, for they prosecute him."

- Yalkut Shimoni on Torah 626:6

וָהוּא תַּמוּהַ דָּלַמֵּה דַּוָקָא הָקשָׁה מֹשֶׁה מִפָּנֵי שֵׁשַׁאוּל הַיָה מֵלֶדְ רָאשׁוֹן וָנָדָקַר בַּחָרֶב. הַא אָם הַיָה מֵלֶךְ שֵׁנִי אוֹ שָׁלִישִׁי אוֹ מֶת בָּדַבַר אַחֶר לַא הָוָה קַשְׁיַא לֵיה. וְעוֹד מָהוּ שֶׁמֶּקטְרָגִים אוֹתוֹ, וְכִי אַפִּילּוּ לֹא הַיוּ מְקַטְרְגִים אוֹתוֹ לֹא הַיָּה לוֹ עוֹנֶשׁ הַחָטָא שָׁהַרַגַם.

This is perplexing. Why did Moses specifically question this, because Saul was the first king and was pierced by the sword? If he had been the second or third king or had died in another way, would it not have been a question for him? Furthermore, what does it mean that "they prosecute him"? Even if they did not prosecute him, would he not still deserve punishment for the sin of killing [the priests] of Nob?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In chapter 22 of I Samuel, Saul ordered the priests of the city of Nob killed, as he believed that they supported David. In chapter 31, the Philistines killed Saul's sons in battle, and he fell on his sword rather than be killed by them.

ְוִצשׁ לוֹמֵר שֶׁכָּחָבוּ הַמְּפָּרְשִׁים, וְאִיתָא נָמֵי בַּעֲשָׂרָה מַאֲמָרוֹת שֶׁמֵּה שֶׁזָּכָה שָׁאוּל שֶׁבָּא מִבּנְיָמִין לְהְיוֹת מֶלֶךְ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל יוֹתֵר מִשְׁאַר הַשְּׁבָטִים, מִשׁוּם שֶׁכָּל הַשְּׁבָטִים הִשְׁתַּחַוּוּ לִפְנֵי עֵשָׂו עִם יַעֲלְב וְנָתָנוּ כֹּחַ לְסְטָרָא אַחֲרָא, מַה שֶׁאֵין כֵּן בִּנְיָמִין שֶׁלֹּא הָיָה עַדִיִין בָּעוֹלָם, לְכַךְ זַכָה שֶׁיָּצֵא שָׁאוּל מִמֵּנוּ שֵׁהָיָה רִאשׁוֹן לְמַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עכ"ל.

We may say as the commentators have written, and it is also found in Asarah Ma'amarot,<sup>3</sup> that the reason Saul, who came from Benjamin, merited to be king over Israel more than the other tribes, is because all the tribes, together with Jacob, bowed before Esau<sup>4</sup> and thus gave power to the Sitra Achra (i.e., side of evil). This was unlike the case for Benjamin, who was not yet in the world at that time, being born later.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, Saul, who came from Benjamin, merited to be the first of the kings of Israel.

ְּעוֹד אִיתָא בְּזוֹהֵר פָּרָשַׁת בָּלָק (דַּף קצ"ב) שֶׁבְּשָׁעָה שֶׁבָּא הקב"ה לִיתֵּן הַתּוֹרָה, בָּא אֶל שַׂרוֹ שֶׁל עֵשָׁו, אָמַר לוֹ, רְבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלֶם הָלֹא כְּתִיב בָּה "לֹא תִּרְצָח" וְכוּ' זוֹ הִיא בִּרְכָתִי "וְעַל־חַרְבָּךְ תִחְיָה" אֶלָּא תֵּן אוֹתָה לְזָרְעוֹ שֶׁל יַעֲלְב וְכוּ'. אָמֵר לוֹ הקב"ה תֵּן לִי עֵצָה, אֵיךּ אָפַתָּה זָרְעוֹ שֶׁל יַעֲלְב. אָמֵר לוֹ, תֵּן לָהֶם חֵלֶק אַחָד מִשֶּׁלִי לַמַּתְּנָה, שֶׁיַּאחְזוּ בְּמִדַּת הַחֶּרֶב שֶׁיִהְיֶה לָהֶם רְשׁוּת לָדוּן דִּינִי נְפָשׁוֹת וְכוּ', דְּאִי לָאו הָכִי לֹא הָיוּ יְכוֹלִים לְהִשְׁתֵּמִשׁ בַּחֶרֶב כְּלָל וְעַקֶּר עכ"ל.

Also, it is brought in the *Zohar*, parashat Balak (page 192b), that when the Holy One, Blessed be He, came to give the Torah, He came to the guardian angel of Esau. [The angel] said to Him: "Master of the Universe, is it not written in it, 'You shall not murder,' etc.? Also, this is my blessing, 'and by your sword you shall live.' Rather, give it to the seed of Jacob, etc."

The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: "Give Me advice: How shall I deceive the seed of Jacob?" He said to Him: "Give them a portion of mine as a gift, that they should grasp the attribute of the sword that they may have permission to judge capital cases, etc. For otherwise, they would have no right to use the sword at all."

נִמְצֵינוּ לְמֵדִים שֶׁשֶּׁאוּל זָכָה לַמְּלוּכָה וְלְהִיוֹת מֶלֶךּ רִאשׁוֹן מִפְּנֵי שֶׁבִּנְיָמִין לֹא הִשְׁתַּחֲנָה לְצַשֶּׁוּ, וְיִשְׂרָאֵל מִשְׁתַּמְשִׁים בַּחֶרֶב עַל פִּי הַדָּת וְהַדִּין מִפְּנֵי הַמַּתָּנָה שֶׁנָּתַן לָהֶם עֵשָּׁו. וְעַל זָה קָשֶׁה לֵיה לְמֹשֶׁה אֵיךּ יִתָּכֵן שְׁמִי שֶׁהָי, מֶלֶךְּ רָאשׁוֹן מִפְּנֵי שֶׁלֹא הִשְׁתַּחְנָה לְעֵשֵׂו יָהֵא נִדְקַר בַּחֵרֵב שֵׁהִיא הַמַּתַּנָה שֲנַתַן עֲשַׂו לִישִּׁרָאֵל.

We learn that Saul merited kingship and to be the first king because Benjamin did not bow to Esau, and Israel uses the sword by law and justice due to the gift Esau gave them. This was the difficulty for Moses: How can it be that he who was made the first king because he did not bow to Esau would be pierced by the sword, which is the gift Esau gave to Israel?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Rabbi Menachem Azaria da Fano ("Rema M'Pano") (1548–1620), Italian Kabbalist and commentator on the Talmud. *Asara Ma'amarot* ("Ten Utterances") was published in Venice in 1597.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Gen. 33:3–11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Gen. 35:16–18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Ex. 20:13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Gen. 27:40.

ְוְהקב"ה הַשִּׁיב לוֹ "אֱמֹר אֶל־הַכּּהָנִים" שֶׁהָרֵג, שֶׁמְּקְטְרְגִים אוֹתוֹ, כְּלוֹמֵר הָנֵה הוּא בַּהָרִגְתָם תָּפַס מִדָּת עֵשָׂו שֶׁהוֹרֵג בַּחֶרֶב שְׁלֹא כְּדִין, וְנָתֵן כֹּח לְסִיטְרָא אַחָרָא וְאָבַד חֵלֶק זְכוּתוֹ בְּמה שֶׁבּנְיָמִין לֹא נָתוֹ לָה כֹּח. וְאָם תֹּאמֵר מֵאי חָזִית דְּסָמְכַתּ אַהָא, סְמוֹךְ אַהָּא, דְאִם מִצֵּד אֶחָד נָתוֹ לָה כֹּח, מִצֵּד אַחֵר בִּנְיָמִין לֹא נָתוֹ לָה כֹּח, אֲפְלוּ הָכִי הָא עֲדִיפָּא מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהַכֹּהְנִים שֶׁהָרֵג מְקָת הַדִּין רָאוּי מְקַערְגִים אוֹתוֹ, אוֹתוֹ דַּוְקָא שֶׁצֵּד הַחוֹבָה הִיא שֶׁלוֹ מַמָּשׁ וְצֵד הַוְּכוּת אֵינוֹ אֶלָּא בַּזְכוּת אֲבוֹתִיו. וְאָם כֵּן מִפְּנֵי מִדְּת הַדִּין רָאוּי הוֹא לִיפּוֹל בַּחָרֶב מִדָּה בְּנָגֵד מְדָּה.

The Holy One, Blessed be He, answered him: "Say to the priests," that he killed, who prosecute him, meaning that by killing them he adopted the trait of Esau, who kills by the sword unlawfully, and thus empowered the *Sitra Achra* and forfeited the merit of Benjamin, who had had not empowered it.

If you will say, "But what did you see to rely on this view? Rely on the other," for if from one side [Saul] empowered it, on the other side, his ancestor, Benjamin, did not empower it. Even so, this first view is preferable, for the priests he killed are prosecuting him, "him" specifically. For the side that is liable is specifically his, as he's the one who adopted the trait of Esau, while the side of merit is only in the merit of his ancestors. If so, because of the attribute of justice, he is deserving to fall by the sword, as measure-for-measure punishment.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Berachot 25a; Megillah 17b; Yevamot 83b.