

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter XXXIV: Bamidbar (Num. 1:1–4:20)

### Essay 3. The nations claimed that Israel was unworthy of the Torah

**מִדְרָשׁ** ילקוט על "פסוק וידבר ה' אל-משה" וכו', בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁקָּבְלוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַתּוֹרָה נִתְקַנְאוּ בָהֶם אוֹמוֹת הָעוֹלָם. מֶה רָאוּ לְהִתְקַרֵּב יוֹתֵר מִן הָאוֹמוֹת, סָתֵם פִּיהֶם הַקַּב"ה, אָמַר לָהֶם הַבִּיאוּ לִי סֵפֶר יוֹחֲסִין שְׁלָכֶם. "הִבּוּ לֵה' מִשְׁפָּחוֹת עַמִּים", כְּשֵׁם שִׁבְנֵי מְבִיאים "וַיִּתְּנֵם עַל-מִשְׁפָּחֹתָם", לְכֹף מִנְאֵם בְּרֹאשׁ הַסֵּפֶר אַחַר הַמִּצְוֹת, "אֵלֶּה הַמִּצְוֹת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת-מֹשֶׁה אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהַר סִינַי", וְאַחַר כֵּן "וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי" . . . "שָׂאוּ אֶת-רֹאשׁ כָּל-עֵדוֹת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל", שְׁלֹא זָכוּ לִיטוֹל אֶת הַתּוֹרָה אֲלָא בְּשִׁבִיל הַיּוֹחֲסִין שְׁלָהֶם עַכ"ל.

There is a Midrash, Yalkut Shimoni on the verse[s], “The L-rd spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year following the exodus from the land of Egypt, saying: Take a census of the whole Israelite company [of fighters] by the clans of their fathers’ houses, listing the names, every male, head by head.”<sup>1</sup> The Midrash states:

**At the hour that Israel accepted the Torah, the nations of the world were jealous of them. [They asked:] What did they do to be brought closer [to G-d] than the [other] nations? The Holy One, Blessed be He, shut their mouths. He said to them, “Bring Me your book of genealogies, as it is said, “Ascribe to the L-rd, O families of the peoples,”<sup>2</sup> just as my children bring “their pedigrees after their families.”<sup>3</sup>**

**For this [reason], He counted them at the beginning of the book [of Numbers] after the [giving of the] commandments [in Leviticus]. [Thus, the Book of Leviticus ends,] “These are the commandments that the L-rd gave Moses for the Israelites at Mount Sinai,”<sup>4</sup> and afterward, [the Book of Numbers begins,] “The L-rd spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai . . . take a census of the whole Israelite company,” that they merited to take the Torah only because of their genealogies.**

- Yalkut Shimoni on Torah 684:1

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<sup>1</sup> Num. 1:1–2.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. 96:7.

<sup>3</sup> Num. 1:18.

<sup>4</sup> Lev. 27:34.

צָרִיד עֵיוֹן מֵה צוֹרֵד שִׁסְתּוֹם הַקַּב"ה פִּיָּהֶם אִם אֵין שׁוֹם מְמֹשׁוֹת בְּטַעֲנָתָם שֶׁל הָאוֹמוֹת, שֶׁהָרִי הֵם לֹא רָצוּהָ מִתְחִלָּה כְּדַכְתִּיב "וְזָרַח מִשְׁעִיר לְמוֹ הוֹפִיעַ מֵהַר פָּאֲרָן" וְכוּ', וְאִמָּאֵי קָא תְּתַמוּ? וְאִיךָ שִׁיךָ קִנְיָה בְּמָה שֶׁלֹּא רָצוּ מִתְחִלָּה. וְעוֹד דָּאֵם טַעֲנָתָם טַעֲנָה מֵה סְתִימַת פֶּה הִיא זֹ לְהִבְיֵא סֵפֶר יוֹחֲסִין, וּמָה עֲנִין זֶה עִם זֶה.

**Question 1: We need to investigate what is the need for the Holy One, Blessed be He, to shut their mouths, if there is nothing concrete to the claims of the nations, since they did not initially desire [the Torah]. As it is written “And shone upon them from Seir; [G-d] appeared from Mount Paran,”<sup>5</sup> and Rashi explains this, that G-d first addressed Himself to the sons of Esau (the inhabitants of Seir), that they should accept the Torah, but they refused. He then addresses Himself to the sons of Ishmael (who dwelt in Paran), that they should accept the Torah, but they also refused. So why were they surprised when He appeared to Israel at Mount Sinai and offered them the Torah?**

**Question 2: Also, if their claim is a legitimate claim, how does it shut their mouths to ask them to bring the book of genealogies, and what does one have to do with the other?**

וְיֹשֵׁ לֹימֵר דְּגִרְסִינּוֹ בְּפֶרֶק קַמָּא דְּעֵבֻדָּה זָרָה שֶׁהָאוֹמוֹת טוֹעֲנִים פְּלוּם נְתַתְּ לָנוּ הַתּוֹרָה בְּכַפְיֵית הָהָר כִּי שֶׁרָאֵל וְלֹא קִבְּלֵנוּהָ, וְהַקַּב"ה מְשִׁיב לָהֶם מִפְּנֵי שֶׁלֹּא שִׁמְרְתֶם מִתְחִלָּה הַשְּׁבַע מִצְוֹת בְּגִי נֵחַ שְׁנַתְתִּי לָכֶם. וְהָכִי נִמְי זֹ הִיא טַעֲנָתָם, דְּהָא קוֹדֵם מִתָּן תּוֹרָה בְּלָנוּ הֵינּוּ בְּכֻלָּל בְּגִי נֵחַ וְאִף יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא שִׁמְרוּ הַשְּׁבַע מִצְוֹת כְּמוֹנוּ, וּמָה רָאוּ אֱלוֹי לְהִתְקַרֵּב שֶׁהַקַּב"ה יְכַפֵּה עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת הָהָר יוֹתֵר מִמָּה שֶׁעָשָׂה לָנוּ.

*A first specific argument of the nations: All humanity was in the category of “Sons of Noah”*

**It can be said that it’s brought in the first chapter of Avodah Zarah that the nations claimed, “You didn’t give us the Torah by overturning the mountain [over us] as [You did] with Israel,<sup>6</sup> and we did not accept it.” The Holy One, Blessed be He, answered them, “It’s because you did not observe the seven commandments of the sons of Noah that I gave to you.”**

**Indeed, this is their claim, that “Before the giving of the Torah at Sinai, we were all included in the category of the sons of Noah, and even Israel, like us, wasn’t observing the seven commandments. Thus, what did they do to be brought closer, that the Holy One, Blessed be He, overturned the mountain over them, which is more than He did for us?”**

<sup>5</sup> Deut. 33:2.

<sup>6</sup> Shabbat 88a: “ ‘And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet G-d; and they stood at the lowermost part of the mount’ (Ex. 19:17). Rabbi Avdimi bar Chama bar Chasa said: [the Jewish people actually stood beneath the mountain, and the verse] teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, overturned the mountain above them like a tub, and said to them: If you accept the Torah, excellent, and if not, there will be your burial.” I.e., the suggestion is that Israel did not accept the Torah willingly.

מִיָּד סָתַם פִּיהֶם הַקַּב"ה, אֲתֵם אוֹמְרִים שֶׁכֻּלְכֶם בְּנֵי נֹחַ וְאַף יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכֻלּוֹ, הִבִּיאוּ לִי סֵפֶר יִיחֻסֵיכֶם וְתִרְאוּ שֶׁאַתֶּם לְבַדְכֶם קְרוּיִים בְּנֵי נֹחַ, אֲבָל בְּנֵי הֵם בְּנֵי אַבְרָהָם, יִצְחָק, וְיַעֲקֹב, שֶׁיֵּצְאוּ מִכָּלל בְּנֵי נֹחַ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁהָאָרֶץ בְּזֶה הַפְּרָשָׁת דְּרָכִים (בְּדְרוֹשׁ א') וְעֵי"ש. וְאֵינָם עוֹד בְּגִלְלַתְכֶם וְלַעוֹלָם הִיָּה בֵּינֵיהֶם מִי שֶׁשָּׁמַר הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוֹת, שֶׁאַף כְּשֶׁהָיוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם לֹא פָּסְקָה יְשִׁיבָה מֵהֵם כְּדֹאמְרֵינוּ בְּפָרָק ג' דְּיוֹמָא, וְהָאֲבוֹת הוֹסִיפוּ עֲלֵיהֶם מִצְוֹת יוֹתֵר מִהַשְּׁבַע מִצְוֹת כְּגוֹן תְּפִלָּה, מַעֲשֵׂר, וְגִיד הַנֶּשֶׁה. וְעַמְרָם הוֹסִיף לָהֶם מִצְוֹת אַחֲרוֹת כְּמוֹ שֶׁפָּסַק הַרְמַב"ם (בפ"ט מֵהֵלְכוֹת מְלָכִים), וְכָל שְׁבֵט לֹנִי כְּתוּב עֲלֵיהֶם "כִּי שָׁמְרוּ אֶמְרַתְךָ וּבְרִיתְךָ יִגְזְרוּ" בְּמִצְרַיִם. וְאַחַד מֵעִיר מְזַכָּה כָּל הָעִיר, וְאַף אִם מֵתוֹךְ טִירוּף וְשֶׁעָבֹד בְּטָלוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם הִמְלִיחַ אוֹ אֶף הַשְּׁבַע מִצְוֹת עִם כָּל זֶה הֵם נִידוּנִים כְּשׁוֹגְגִים.

G-d counters the first argument of the nations

**Immediately, the Holy One, Blessed be He, shut their mouths. “You say that you are all the sons of Noah, and even Israel is included. Bring Me your book of genealogies, and you will see that you alone are called ‘sons of Noah,’ but [as for] My children, they are the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who left the category of ‘sons of Noah.’” This is as the Parashat Derachim expounded at length, in the first essay, and see there.<sup>7</sup> “They are no longer in that category because of you, because among them there were always one who observed the Torah and commandments.” Even in Egypt they hadn’t stopped sitting and learning Torah in a yeshiva, as it is said in the third chapter of tractate Yoma.<sup>8</sup> The patriarchs added more commandments for them, such as prayer, tithing, and the prohibition of eating the femoral nerve, and Amram added more commandments for them, as the Rambam ruled in the Mishneh Torah, in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Laws of Kings and Wars, halacha 1. “And regarding the entire tribe of Levi it is written, ‘They observed your words, and your covenant they maintained’<sup>9</sup> in Egypt. “One from the city causes the entire city to benefit,”<sup>10</sup> and even if with trouble and servitude in Egypt, Israel nullified circumcision or even the seven commandments, nevertheless, they will be judged as unintentional sinners. This is better than those who are judged as intentional sinners.**

אֲבָל אֲתֵם שֶׁאַתֶּם בְּנֵי נֹחַ אֵין לְכֶם דִּין שׁוֹגֵג כְּמוֹ שֶׁפָּסַק הַרְמַב"ם (בפ"י מֵהֵלְכוֹת הַנ"ל), כֵּן נֹחַ שֶׁיָּדַע שֶׁהִיא אֲשֶׁת חַבִּירוֹ וְלֹא יָדַע שֶׁהִיא אִסוּרָה עָלָיו, אֲלֵא עָלָה עַל לְבוֹ שֶׁדָּבַר זֶה מוֹתֵר לוֹ, וְכֵן אִם הִרְגוּ וְהוּא לֹא יָדַע שֶׁאִסוּר לְהַרוֹג, הָרִי זֶה קְרוּב לְמִזִּיד וְנִהְרַג. וְלֹא תִחַשְׁבׁ זֶה לָהֶם שֶׁנִּגְגָה מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהָיָה לוֹ לְלַמּוֹד וְלֹא לְלַמֵּד עַכ"ל. אֲבָל יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵהַ שֶׁעָבְדוּ עֲבוּדָה זָרָה בְּמִצְרַיִם יָשׁ לָהֶם דִּין שׁוֹגֵג, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב הִיפָּה תֵּאָר עַל פְּסוּק "מִשְׁכּוֹ וְקָחוּ לְכֶם" דְּלֹא עוֹבְדֵי עֲבוּדָה זָרָה מִמֶּשׁ הָיוּ דָאִם כֵּן הָיוּ מְשׁוּמְדִים חַס וְשְׁלוֹם וְלֹא עָבִיד רַחֲמָנָא נִיפְסָא לְמְשׁוּמְדִים, אֲלֵא טוֹעִים הָיוּ לְחֻשׁוֹב שֶׁהָיָה מִמֶּשׁ בְּדָבָר שֶׁל עֲבוּדָה זָרָה לְרַפּוּאָה וְהָיוּ מִתְרַפְּאִין בּוֹ כְּמוֹ שֶׁרְאוּ הַמִּצְרַיִים עוֹשִׂים, וְהַעֲלָה עֲלֵיהֶם הַפְּתוּב כְּאִילוּ עָבְדוּ גִלּוּלֵי מִצְרַיִם עַכ"ל.

**“But you, who are sons of Noah, do not have a judgment of inadvertently violating a prohibition,” as the Rambam ruled in the tenth chapter of the above laws:**

<sup>7</sup> Yehuda Rosanes (1657-1727), Rabbi of Constantinople, *Perashat Derachim*.  
<sup>8</sup> Our version of Yoma 28b reads “לא פרשה ישיבה מהם”, but the version given by the *Zera Shimshon* appears in Ein Ya’akov and in the manuscripts MS Harley 5508 and MS Oxford 366. The meaning is the same, with פסקה meaning “ceased,” and פרשה meaning “separated.”  
<sup>9</sup> Deut. 33:9.  
<sup>10</sup> Sanhedrin 111a.

A son of Noah who knew that she was his fellow's wife, but did not know that she was forbidden to him, or it occurred to him that this act was permitted, or one killed without knowing that it is forbidden to kill, he is considered close to having sinned intentionally and is executed. This is not considered as an inadvertent violation, because he should have learned [the obligations incumbent upon him] and did not learn.

- Mishneh Torah, Kings and Wars, 10:1

But Israel, who worshiped this idolatry in Egypt, they do have a judgment of inadvertently violating a prohibition, as the *Yafeh To'ar*<sup>11</sup> wrote on the verse, "Go, pick out lambs for your families, and slaughter the Passover offering,"<sup>12</sup> that they were not literally idol worshippers, for if so, they would have been apostates, G-d forbid, and does the Merciful One perform miracles for apostates?<sup>13</sup> Rather, they erred to think that there was some efficacy in a type of idol worship for healing and they would be healed thereby, as they saw the Egyptians doing, but Scripture raised against them [a claim] as if they had worshipped idols of Egypt.

וְכַתְּבוּ הַתּוֹסְפוֹת בְּפָרֶק ג' דְּבִכּוּרוֹת (דף כ"ג) דְּטוֹעָה בְּדִין וְשִׁכְסְבוּר שְׁמוּתָר לְבַטֵּל מִקְרֵי שׁוֹגֵג, וְכֵן פָּסַק הַפְּרִי הַדֵּשׁ (י"ד סִימָן צ"ט), וּמִכָּל שֶׁכֵּן שָׂאָף בְּשַׁעַת מַתָּן תּוֹרָה הָאוֹמוֹת טָעוּ בְּסִבְרָתָם, שֶׁבְּגֵי עֲשׂוֹ חֲשָׁבוּ שְׁמוּתָר לְהַרוֹג וְעִמּוֹן וּמוֹאָב שְׁמוּתָר לְגָאֵף וְיִשְׁמַעְעָל שְׁמוּתָר לְגִנוּב וְכו' ל כ"ל בְּסִמּוּד.

The Tosafists wrote in the third chapter of Bechorot (page 23a) that it was an error in the law when one was of the opinion that it was permitted to nullify accidental cases, and the *Pri Chadash* rules the same. Moreover, even at the time of the giving of the Torah, the nations were wrong in their interpretation, that the sons of Esau thought it was permissible to kill, and Ammon and Moab that it was permissible to commit adultery, and Ishmael that it was permissible to steal, etc. as discussed above.

**וְעוֹד יֵשׁ לֹמֵר** שֶׁהָאוֹמוֹת מִתְמַיְהִים מָה רָאוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהִתְקַרֵּב וְלֹמֵר "נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמַע" כְּדֵי לְקַבֵּל הַתּוֹרָה יוֹתֵר מִשְׂאֵר הָאוֹמוֹת שֶׁלֹּא יִכְלוּ לְקַבְּלָהּ, אֲלֵא וְדַאי צָרִיךְ לֹמֵר שֶׁלֹּא עָשׂוּ כֵן אֲלֵא מֵגֵאוּהָ שֶׁכְּשֶׁרָאוּ שֶׁהֵם חִידִים "נִבְזִים וְשִׁפְלִים" כְּדִכְתִּיב "יַעֲקֹב קָטָן", קִבְּלוּ הַתּוֹרָה כְּדֵי לְהַגְדִּיל עֲצָמוֹן, וּמַעֲתָה לֹא הָיָה לוֹ לְהַקְבִּי"ה לְקַרְבָּם הוֹאִיל שֶׁמָּה שֶׁעָשׂוּ לֹא עָשׂוּ בְּלִב שְׁלֵם אֲלֵא לְהַנְאִת עֲצָמָם, וְזֶהוּ מָה רָאוּ לְהִתְקַרֵּב וְכו'.

*A second specific argument of the nations: Israel wanted to aggrandize itself*

It can also be said that the nations were astonished what Israel did to be brought closer [to G-d] than the [other] nations, and for Israel to say, "We will do and we will hear,"

<sup>11</sup> Rabbi Samuel ben Isaac Ashkenazi Jaffe (d. late 16th century), rabbi of the Ashkenazi community of Constantinople. *Yafeh To'ar* was his commentary to the Midrash Rabbah: Genesis (Venice, 1597–1606); Exodus (Venice, 1597); and Leviticus (Constantinople, 1648).

<sup>12</sup> Ex. 12:21.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Berachot 58a: "Does the Merciful One perform miracles for liars?"

i.e., committing to observe the Torah even before they heard what it would require of them.<sup>14</sup> They did this **in order to receive the Torah**, and it was **more than the remaining nations, who were not able to accept it**.

**Rather, the nations thought, it's certainly necessary to say that [Israel] did so only out of pride, when they saw that they were “despicable and lowly”<sup>15</sup> individuals, as it is said, “Jacob is insignificant [קטן] [katan, also meaning ‘small’ or ‘young’],” they received the Torah in order to aggrandize themselves.**<sup>16</sup>

**Now, the Holy One, Blessed be He, didn't have to bring them closer to Himself, because what they did wasn't done from a whole heart, but for their own pleasure. That's the meaning of “what did they do to be brought closer [to G-d] than the [other] nations.”**

אי נמי שמה שנתרצו לקבל התורה יותר משאר האומות לפי שהם עזים יותר מהם, והעזות הוא סימן שהם רעים בטבעם, ואם כן ראויים הם להתרחק ולא להתקרב.

*A third specific argument of the nations: Israel was impudent, a bad trait*

**Alternatively, the nations argued that [the Israelites] were willing to accept the Torah more than the other nations because they were more impudent than [the other nations].<sup>17</sup> This impudence is a sign that they have a bad nature, and if so, it is proper that they be distanced from G-d, and not brought closer to Him.**

מה עשה הקב"ה סתם פיהם של האומות, ואמר להם הביאו לי ספרי ייחוסים שמהם יתברר הדבר הפך סברתכם, שהרי עשו מכר בכורתו ליצקב ואם כן יצקב הוא הגדול ועשו הוא הקטן. ועוד הם מיוחסים והם ראויים יותר לקבל התורה, מפני שהתורה נקראת תושיה, שמתלשט פחו של אדם וצריף פח גדול להתעסק בה, פדאמר ליה ר' יוחנן לריש לקיש חילף לאורייתא, ומי שהוא מיוחס יש לו נה הפח, פדאמרינו בפסחים מיום שנגנו ספר יוחסין תשש פחם של חכמים.

*G-d counters the second argument of the nations*

**What did the Holy One, Blessed be He, do? He shut the mouths of the nations, and He said to them, “Bring me your books of genealogies, for from them the matter will be clarified to the opposite of your opinion. For Esau sold his birthright to Jacob, and if so, Jacob is the elder [הגדול] [ha' gadol, also meaning “larger” or “greater”], and Esau the younger [קטן] [katan].”**

**Furthermore, they are privileged by their lineage, and they are more worthy to receive the Torah, because the Torah is called wisdom that exhausts a person's strength,<sup>18</sup> and thus a person needs great power to engage in it. This is as Rabbi Yochanan said to Reish Lakish,**

<sup>14</sup> Ex. 24:7.

<sup>15</sup> Malachi 2:9.

<sup>16</sup> There's no Scripture with this exact wording. In light of the next paragraph, it is likely a reference to Gen. 27:15 (יעקב בנה הקטן), where Rebekah had “her younger son, Jacob” put on his older brother's clothing. But it could also come from Amos 7:2 or 7:5, in which Jacob is described as small in number.

<sup>17</sup> Beitza 25b: “It is taught [in a Baraita] in the name of Rabbi Meir: For what reason was the Torah given to the Jewish people? [It is] because they are impudent [and Torah study will weaken and humble them].”

<sup>18</sup> Sanhedrin 26b, quoting Rabbi Chanan.

“Your strength is fit for Torah [study],”<sup>19</sup> and one who is privileged by his lineage has such strength, as it is said in tractate Pesachim 62b, that Rami bar Rav Yuda said that Rav said, “From the day the Book of Genealogies was hidden [and no longer available to the Sages], the strength of the Sages has been weakened, and the light of their eyes has been dimmed [as the book contained the reasons for many Torah laws and lists of genealogies that are now lost].”

ומה שהם עזים אינו סימן רע להם חס ושלום אלא אדרבא סימן טוב שיכולים להוכיח אהד את חבירו בכל פחו ואינו מתירא שיאמר לו תזור לאחוריה וראה הפיסול שיש במשפחתה כמו שעשו לפנתס הראיתם בן פוטי זה שפטם אבי אמו וכו'. ועוד שמי שהוא מיוחס הוא איש שלום כדאמרין בקידושין פרק ד' יחסותא דבבל שתיקוהא וכו'. ונהו שאמר הפתוב "ה' עז לעמו יתן", לפי שהם עזים כלומר שיש להם כח נתן להם התורה שהיא עוז, והעוז שלהם בא מחמת היחס שהוא סימן השלום, ומשום הכי סיים הפתוב "ה' יברך את-עמו בשלום".

### *G-d counters the third argument of the nations*

As far as them being impudent, this is not a bad sign for them, G-d forbid, but to the contrary it is a good sign, that one is able to reprove his fellow with his entire might when he sees him doing something wrong. He is not afraid that [the fellow] will say to him, “Look behind you and see the defect in your family,” as they did to Pinchas, “Have you seen this grandson of Puti the father of whose mother used to fatten calves for idolatrous sacrifices.”<sup>20</sup>

Also, one who is privileged by his lineage, is a man of peace, as it is said in tractate Kiddushin, chapter 4, “The lineage of Babylonia is silence.”<sup>21</sup> This is what Scripture said, “May the L-rd grant strength to His people,”<sup>22</sup> because they are impudent, as if to say that they have power given to them by the Torah, which is strength, and their strength comes because of their genealogy, which is a sign of peace, and because of this, the verse concludes, “may the L-rd bless His people with peace.”<sup>23</sup>

וענינו יש לדקדק מהיכא נפקא ליה להמדרש. דרשא זו מפסוק הנה דסמיה עליה. ונתרץ במה שהקשו המפרשים למה אמר הפתוב "במדבר סיני". דני הנה שיאמר "ונדבר ה' אל-משה באהל מועד באחד לחדש השני בשנה השנית" וכו'. וממילא אנו יודעים ש"במדבר סיני" היו, שהרי לא נסעו משם אלא בעשרים לחדש זה כדכתיב "ויהי בשנה השנית" וכו' "נעלה הענן מעל משכן העדת". ופרש רש"י, נמצאת אומר, שנים עשר חדש חסר עשרה ימים עשו בחורב, שהרי בראש חדש סיון חנו שם ולא נסעו עד עשרים באיר לשנה הבאה עכ"ל. אלא ודאי קא משמע לן שבכוח היוחסים וכו' לתורה שניתנה בסיני.

### *More on the relevance of lineage*

We still need to investigate from where does the Midrash derive this. It derives this from this verse that we rely upon, viz, Num. 1:1. This will be explained by what the

<sup>19</sup> Bava Metzia 84a.

<sup>20</sup> Rashi on Num. 25:11.

<sup>21</sup> Kiddushin 71b: “Rav says: The silence of Babylonia is its lineage. . . . Examine whether they become silent [when they quarrel] or [whether] they do not become silent.”

<sup>22</sup> Ps. 29:11.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



commentators have asked: Why does Scripture say, “In the Sinai wilderness”?<sup>24</sup> For it would have been enough if it had said, “The L-rd spoke to Moses . . . in the Tent of Meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year following the Exodus from the land of Egypt.” By that alone, we would know that they were “in the Sinai wilderness,” for they traveled from there only on the twentieth of this month, as it is written, “In the second year, on the twentieth day of the second month, the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle of the Pact and the Israelites set out on their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai.”<sup>25</sup> Rashi explained, “Consequently you must say that they spent twelve months less ten days at Choreb, since on the New Moon of Sivan (the third month) they encamped there [Ex. 19:1] and did not journey until the twentieth of Iyar of the following year.”<sup>26</sup> Rather, certainly this is coming to tell us that in the merit of the lineage, they merited the Torah, which was given at Sinai.

ויובן נמי הטעם של "למשפחתם לבית אבתם", דלביית אבותם דוקא ולא לבית אמותם, כמו שאמרו חז"ל, וקשה דהא עקר בפירות היחס בא מצד הנשים שאמרו פתחיהן במקצרים, כמו שהוצרך הפתוח להעיד "הראובני" "השמעוני" וכו' נגד מה שאומרים האומות אם בגופם שלטו המצריים כל שכן בנשותיהן, ולמה נדחו הנשים. אלא לפי שבאנשים ניכר ונדוע בפירות היחס ממה שיש שלום ביניהם ואינם מתקוטטים ומשום הכי דוקא "לבית אבתם" יתייחסו המשפחות, שבנשים לא שייך זה שכל אחת יושבת בביתה ביחידות "כל-כבודה בת-מלך פנימה".

Also understood will be the meaning of “by the clans of their fathers’ houses,” specifically their fathers’ houses, and not their mothers’ houses, as the wise men of blessed memory said.<sup>27</sup> This is difficult, for the principle of fitness of the lineage comes from the side of the women, who guarded their openings in Egypt, i.e., not engaging in relations with men other than their husbands, as Scripture required the testimony of “the Reubenites [הראובני] [ha’Reuven’i],”<sup>28</sup> “the Simeonites [השמעוני] [ha’Shimon’i],”<sup>29</sup> etc., each name sandwiched between a *yod* and a *heh*, the two letters forming one of the names of G-d, the significance being that G-d testifies that each is a legitimate son of his mother’s husband. This contrasted to what the nations said, “if the Egyptians ruled over their bodies, even more so [they must have ruled] over their wives.”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Num. 1:1.

<sup>25</sup> Num. 10:11–12.

<sup>26</sup> Rashi on Num. 10:11.

<sup>27</sup> Lev. Rabbah 32:3; Num. Rabbah 6:3. See also Bava Batra 109b.

<sup>28</sup> Num. 26:7.

<sup>29</sup> Num. 26:14.

<sup>30</sup> Rashi on Num. 26:5: “Because the nations degraded them, saying, ‘What is this lineage by [paternal] tribes? Do they think that the Egyptians did not rule their mothers? If they ruled over [the men’s] bodies, even more so over the women’s [bodies].’ Therefore, the Holy One, Blessed be He, set His name upon them: the letter ה on one side of their name and the letter ך on the other side, to say, ‘I testify for them that they are their fathers’ sons.’ [Based on Shir haShirim Rabbah 4:12]. This it is what David explained: “the tribes of the L-rd (יה) are testimony for Israel” (Ps. 122:4). This [Divine] Name (יה) testifies for them about their tribes [i.e., that they rightly attach themselves to those tribes to which they claim to belong].”

Rather, it is because among men it is recognized and known that the fitness of the lineage is from the fact that there is peace between them, and they do not quarrel. Because of that, it is specifically “by their fathers’ houses” that the families establish their clans. This is not relevant for women, for each one sits in her house in solitude, “all glorious is the king’s daughter within.”<sup>31</sup>

וְזוֹהוּ הַטַּעַם שֶׁאָמְרוּ בַּמִּדְרָשׁ הַזֶּה לִּשְׂבִישְׁעַת מִתֵּן תּוֹרָה שָׂרְאוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל הַמַּלְאָכִים שֶׁהָיוּ עוֹשִׂים דְּגָלִים נִתְּאוּ לְדְגָלִים וְהַקֵּב"ה אָמַר לְמִשְׁחָה לֵךְ וַעֲשֵׂה אוֹתָם דְּגָלִים וְכוּ' וְעִי"ש, שֶׁהָרִי כְּתִיב "וְגַם כָּל־הַעַם הַזֶּה עַל־מִקְוֵמוֹ יָבֵא בְּשָׁלוֹם", וְכִשְׁפָּל אֶחָד מִפִּיר אֶת מִקְוֵמוֹ מִתְקַיֵּים הַשָּׁלוֹם וְאִין מִחְלוּקָתוֹ.

This is the reason they said in the above-mentioned Midrash that at the time of the giving of the Torah, that Israel saw the angels who had made banners, and [Israel] yearned for banners just like the angels, and the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses, “Go and make them banners, etc.”<sup>32</sup> I.e., “The L-rd spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: Each man with his banner, as a sign, according to their fathers’ house, the Israelites shall camp around the Tent of Meeting.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, the people could find the banners of their families, and stay together in that way. For it is written, “and all these people too will go to his place in peace.”<sup>34</sup> When everyone knows his place, peace is maintained and there is no discord.

כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ בַּמִּדְרָשׁ עַל פְּסוּק "וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ" שֶׁעֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם בֵּינֵיהֶם, וּמִלְאָכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת שֵׁישׁ שָׁלוֹם בֵּינֵיהֶם, נַעֲשׂוּ דְגָלִים, וְאַף יִשְׂרָאֵל נִתְּאוּ לְדְגָלִים כְּדִי שִׁיְהִיָּה הַשָּׁלוֹם בֵּינֵיהֶם. וְכֵן בִּלְעַם כְּשֶׁרָאָה אוֹתָם דְּגָלִים אָמַר מִי יוּכַל לִיגַע בָּאוֹר, דְּהוֹאִיל שָׂאִין מִחְלוּקָת בֵּינֵיהֶם שֶׁעֲשׂוּיִים דְּגָלִים מוּבְדָלִים כָּל אֶחָד לְפִי מִקְוֵמוֹ אִין דְּבָר רַע פּוֹגַע בָּהֶם, כִּי שָׂרֵשׁ הַשָּׁטָן הוּא מַעֲרָבוֹב. וְהַשָּׁלוֹם הוּא כְּלִי מִחְזִיק בְּרִכָּה וְ"אִין שָׁטָן וְאִין פֶּגַע רַע", וְזוֹהוּ שֶׁבִשְׁעַת הַעֲגָל בָּא שָׁטָן וְעָרַבְבַּ הַעוֹלָם. וְאֶפְשָׁר שֶׁזוֹ הִיְתָה כְּפוֹנֵת הַפְּסוּק "וְאָמַר פְּרַעֲזָה לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנִבְכִים הֵם בְּאַרְצֵי", כְּלוּמַר מְעוֹרְבָבִים, וְהַשָּׁטָן שׁוֹלֵט בָּהֶם. וְכֵן הָיָה בַּמִּדְרָשׁ "וַתִּקְרְבוּן אֵלַי כָּלְכֶם" בְּעָרְבוּבָיָא.

This is as they said in the Midrash about the verse, “And G-d distinguished between the light and the darkness,”<sup>35</sup> that He made peace between them.<sup>36</sup> The ministering angels, who have peace between them, were decked out with banners, and even Israel yearned for banners in order that there would be peace between them.

Similarly, Balaam, when he saw these banners, said, “Who is able to touch these [people],”<sup>37</sup> that since there is no argument between them, as they have made distinctive banners, each one according to his place, there is no bad thing that can harm them, because the root of Satan is confusion.<sup>38</sup> Peace is the vessel that contains a blessing for Israel,<sup>39</sup> and

<sup>31</sup> Ps. 45:14.

<sup>32</sup> Some of this appears in Yalkut Shimoni on Torah 684:5, but Num. Rabbah 2:3 is a closer match.

<sup>33</sup> Num. 2:1–2.

<sup>34</sup> Ex. 18:23.

<sup>35</sup> Gen. 1:4.

<sup>36</sup> Gen. Rabbah 3:6.

<sup>37</sup> Yalkut Shimoni on Torah 685:1; Yalkut Shimoni on Nach 992:27.

<sup>38</sup> Rashi on Ps. 75:5.

<sup>39</sup> Mishnah Otkzin 3:12.



“there is no Satan and no injury,”<sup>40</sup> and this is at the time of the Golden Calf when Satan came and confused the world.<sup>41</sup> It is possible that this was the intention of the verse, “Pharaoh will say of the Israelites, ‘They are astray in the land,’ ”<sup>42</sup> as if to say, that they are confused, and Satan rules over them. Thus it was with the spies, “Then all of you came to me,”<sup>43</sup> in confusion.<sup>44</sup>

ובדרך זה יובן הטעם שהקב"ה צנה להושיע "לך קח-לך אשת זנונים וילדי זנונים" וכו' לאחר שאמר לו הַחֲלִיפֶם בְּאוֹמָה אַחֶרְתָּ, דְּמָה עָנְנָן זֶה לְזֶה. אֲלֵא לְפִי שִׂישְׂרָאֵל לֹא זָכוּ לְהִתְקַרֵּב אֵלָא מִחֲמַת יְחִס שְׁלֵהֶם מֵה שְׂאִין כֵּן שְׂאֵר הָאוֹמוֹת שֵׁ"פְלָם מְנַאֲפִים" וְאִין לְהֶם יְחִס, מִשּׁוּם הִכִּי כְּשֶׁאָמַר לוֹ הַחֲלִיפֶם בְּאוֹמָה אַחֶרְתָּ, אָמַר לוֹ "לך קח-לך אשת זנונים" דוּמְיָא דְשְׂאֵר הָאוֹמוֹת.

**In this way, the reason will be understood why the Holy One, Blessed be He, in this week’s Haftorah commanded Hosea, “Go, get yourself a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom,”<sup>45</sup> after [Hosea] said to Him, “Exchange them for another nation.”** That is:

The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Hosea: Your sons, [the Jewish people], have sinned. [Hosea] should have said: They are Your sons; they are the sons of Your beloved ones, sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Extend Your mercy over them. Not only did he fail to say that, but he said before Him: Master of the Universe, the entire world is Yours; exchange them for another nation.

- Pesachim 87a

**Rather, because Israel merited to be brought closer [to G-d] only because of their lineage, something that is not the case for the other nations, for “they all commit adultery”<sup>46</sup> and have no traceable lineage, because of this, when he said to Him, “exchange them for another nation,” He said to him, “Go, get yourself a wife of whoredom,” similar to the other nations.**

We can now understand the answers to Questions 1 and 2. G-d shut the mouths of the nations because they cast aspersions against the lineage of Israel, while G-d testified that Israel’s lineage was pure. Asking the nations to bring the books of their genealogies would show that by purchasing the birthright, Israel was not junior to Esau. It would also show that the nations suffered from a flawed lineage, something not true of Israel.

\* \* \*

<sup>40</sup> I Kings 5:18.

<sup>41</sup> Shabbat 89a: “When Moses ascended on High, he told the Jewish people: In forty days, at the beginning of six [hours], I will come. After forty days, Satan came and brought confusion to the world [by means of a storm, and it was impossible to ascertain the time]. He said to [the Jews]: Where is your teacher Moses? They said to him: He ascended on High. He said to them: Six [hours] have arrived [and he has not yet come.] And they paid him no attention. [He said to them: Moses] died. And they paid him no attention. He showed them an image of his [death]bed.” That is when they encouraged Aaron to construct the Golden Calf.

<sup>42</sup> Ex. 14:3.

<sup>43</sup> Deut. 1:22.

<sup>44</sup> Rashi on Deut. 1:22.

<sup>45</sup> Hosea 1:2.

<sup>46</sup> Hosea 7:4.