

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XLII: Matot (Num. 30:2–32:42)

Essay 4. Moses' crucial role in the war against Midian

מִדְרָשׁ ילקוט על פסוק "אחר תאסף אל-עמיה", אמר לו הקב"ה אם אתה רוצה להיות שנים הרבה לא יראו ישראל נקמה באויביהם ולא תכבש מדן לפניהם. מיד אמר משה מוטב שתכבש מדן לפניהם ויראו ישראל מפלה בשונאייהם עכ"ל. יש לדקדק מה ענין משה עם מלחמת מדין.

Midrash Yalkut Shimoni on the verse, "You shall surely avenge the Israelite people on the Midianites; then you shall be gathered to your kin"¹:

The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to [Moses]: "If you wish to live many more years, the Israelites will not witness vengeance upon their enemies, and Midian will not be subdued before them." Immediately, Moses said: "It is better that Midian be subdued before them and that Israel see the downfall of their enemies."

- Yalkut Shimoni, parashat Matot, Remez 785

We need to check what the connection is between Moses and the war with Midian.

ויש לומר שכתבו המקובלים שכל מלך או שר שפא לעשות נקמה באיזו אומה צריף שיהיה לו איזה חיבור וקישור עם אותה האומה, כגון פנחס שפא מבנות פוטיאל, עשה נקמה במדן, דוד שפא מרות המואביה, עשה נקמה במואב, ויהושע שיהיה מזרע יוסף שנתגדל בבית פוטיפר והיה עתיד להיות חתנו של סטרא אחרא שלקח רחב הזונה והיא יודעת זאת, עשה מלחמה בעמלק, דעמל"ק ובלע"ם גימטריא במצרי"ם, פי במצרים בא בלעם בפת עמלק ליתן עצה לפרעה, שלושה היו באותה עצה וכו'. וכאן "ויבא עמלק" מהיכן בא? אמרו ו"ל שפא מאצל בלעם הרשע. ועמלק הוא ראש לקליפות, שאחר שפכו סיון ועוג והיה להם ליכנס בארץ ישראל כתיב "ראשית גוים עמלק" עכ"ל.

It can be said, as the Kabbalists have written, that every king or prince who comes to exact vengeance upon a nation must have some connection or bond with that nation.² For example, Pinchas, who descended from the daughters of Putiel,³ exacted vengeance upon Midian. One rabbinic tradition identifies Putiel as Jethro, who was the priest of Midian.⁴

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¹ Num. 31:2.

² Zohar II:114a, "Judgment can only be sweetened at its root."

³ Ex. 6:25.

⁴ Sotah 43a.

Another example is that **David, who descended from Ruth the Moabitess, exacted vengeance upon Moab.**⁵

Another example is **Joshua, who was from the seed of Joseph, who was raised in the house of Potiphar. Joshua was destined to become the son-in-law of the *Sitra Achra*, the Other Side, the realm of impurity, evil, and the forces that oppose holiness, as he took as wife Rahab the harlot,⁶ and she knew this.**⁷ Thus, he waged war against Amalek.⁸

For Amalek [עמלק], with a Gematria of 240, and **Balaam** [בלעם], with a Gematria of 142, have a combined Gematria of 342, which is equal to that of *Be'Mitzrayim* [במצרי"ם] ["In Egypt"], because it was in Egypt that Balaam came with the power of Amalek to advise Pharaoh, as we know from Sotah 11b, **"three were [consulted by Pharaoh] in that counsel [regarding how to handle the Israelites], Balaam, and Job, and Yitro."**

Also here, "Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim."⁹ **From where did he come? [The rabbis,] of blessed memory, said that he came from Balaam the wicked.**¹⁰ **Amalek is the head of the *klipot*, the impure spiritual forces, for after [the Israelites] conquered Sihon and Og and were meant to enter the Land of Israel, it is written: "Amalek is the first of the nations,"**¹¹ the first nation who feared not to proclaim war against Israel.¹²

אָבֵל צָרִיכִים אָנוּ לְמוֹדְעֵי מַהוּ הַטַּעַם שֶׁצָּרִיךְ שָׁנָה הַמְלֻכָּה אוֹ הַשָּׂר יִהְיֶה לוֹ חַיְבוּר עִם אוֹתָהּ הָאוּמָה שֶׁעוֹשֶׂה נְקָמָה. וְגַם לוֹמַר דְּאִתָּא בְּשִׁלְחַן עֲרוּךְ אֲרַח חַיִּים (סִימָן קנ"ד) תִּשְׁמִיִּשׁ קְדוּשָׁה כְּגוֹן תִּיק שֶׁל תְּפִילִין וּמְזוּזוֹת וְסִפְרִים יֵשׁ לָהֶן קְדוּשָׁה וְצָרִיךְ לְגוֹנְנָן, וְעוֹד שֵׁם (סְעִיף א' בַּהֲגֵהָ) דְּאֲרוֹן הַבְּנוּי בְּחוּמָה אִם הַסִּפְרִים מְתַקְלָקְלִין בּוֹ אֵין בּוֹ קְדוּשָׁה, וּפִירֵשׁ הַמְּגַן אֲבֵרָהֶם דְּלֹא חָלָה עָלָיו קְדוּשָׁה מְעִיקְרָא דְּלֹא מְקַרֵּי תִשְׁמִיִּשׁ דִּידֵיהּ אֱלֵא מְזִיק דִּידֵיהּ עכ"ל.

But we need to be informed of the reason why it is necessary that the king or officer who enacts vengeance should have a connection with the nation upon which he takes vengeance.

To begin our analysis, it can be said, as it is found in the *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* (siman 154, se'if 3): **"Accessories of sacred objects, such as bags for tefillin cases, mezuzot, and books, possess holiness and must be buried."** Further there (se'if 1, in the Rema's gloss): **"[Regarding] a cabinet built into the wall, if the books are damaged in it,"** such as being burned in a fire or becoming waterlogged, **"[the cabinet itself] does not possess holiness."** The *Magen Avraham* (se'if katan 3) explains: **"Holiness did not rest upon it from the beginning,**

⁵ II Sam. 8:2.

⁶ Megillah 14b.

⁷ This could mean that Rahav knew that she was destined to marry Joshua, based on their souls recognizing each other. This general concept is recognized, for example, in Zohar I:91b, and in Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Chapter 20. Or, in keeping with the theme of this paragraph, it could mean that Rahab knew that in order to successfully fight Amalek, Joshua needed a connection to them, which she herself could provide as a reformed harlot.

⁸ Ex. 17:9.

⁹ Ex. 17:8.

¹⁰ Esther Rabbah 7:13.

¹¹ Num. 24:20.

¹² Zohar II:64b.

because it is not called an accessory [for holding a sacred object], but rather something that damages [the sacred object].” I.e., while the cabinet held the sacred books, it did not protect them from being damaged by fire or by water.

וְהִנֵּה נוֹדַע לְחַכְמֵי הָאֱמֻת שֶׁכֵּל הַנְּשָׂמוֹת הַקְּדוּשׁוֹת מִתְחַלֵּה הָיָה בְּיַד הַקְּלִיפּוֹת, וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר "מִי־יִתֵּן טְהוֹר מִטְמֵא" כְּגוֹן אֲבָרָהֶם מִתְרַח וְכוּ', וְכֵן דָּוִד הָיָה בְּמוֹאָב דְּכַתִּיב "מִצְאָתִי דָּוִד עַבְדִּי" הֵיכֵן מִצְאָתִיו בְּסֻדּוֹם, וְכֵן פְּנִיחָס בָּא מִבְּנוֹת פּוּטִי־אֵל, וְכֵן הָיָה בָּא מִיֹּסֵף שֶׁלָּקַח אֶסְנַת בַּת פּוּטִי־פְרַע. וְעוֹד הָיָה מוֹכֵן לְקַבֵּל רֶחֶב הַזּוֹנָה לְתַשְׁלוּם חֲצֵי גּוֹפּוֹ דְדָכַר בְּלֹא נִוְקָבָא פְּלַג גּוֹפָא.

Now it is known to the sages of truth, the Kabbalists, that all holy souls were originally in the hands of the *klipot*. Thus it says, “Who can bring the pure from the impure,”¹³ and the Midrash interprets, **“such as Abraham from Terach, Hezekiah from Ahaz, Yoshiya from Amon, Mordekhai from Shimi, Israel from idolaters, the World-to-Come from this world.”**¹⁴

Likewise, David was in Moab, as it is written, “I found David, My servant,”¹⁵ which the Midrash interprets: **“where did I find him? In Sodom.”**¹⁶ **Likewise, Pinchas descended from the daughters of Putiel. Likewise, Joshua descended from Joseph, who took as wife Asenath, daughter of Potiphara.**¹⁷ **[Joshua] was also prepared to take in Rahab the harlot, to complete the other half of his body, for the male without the female is only half a body.**¹⁸

וְאִם כֵּן הָיָה סְלֵקָא דְעֵתָהּ שֶׁכְּמוֹ שֶׁקוֹדֵם הוּצְאָת הַנִּיּוֹצִיּוֹת הַקְּדוּשׁוֹת מִן הַקְּלִיפּוֹת לֹא הוּמַר לָנוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלַחְמָה עִם אוֹתָהּ הָאוֹמָה, כְּמוֹ שֶׁנִּצְטָנָה מִשֶּׁהָ שְׂלֵא לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלַחְמָה עִם עַמּוֹן וּמוֹאָב בְּשִׁבִיל שְׂתֵי פְרִידוֹת טוֹבוֹת שְׁעֵתִיד לְהוֹצִיא מֵהֶם, כִּד לְאַחַר הוּצְאָת הַפְּרִידוֹת טוֹבוֹת יֵשׁ לָנוּ לוֹמֵר שֶׁאֲסוּר לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּהֶם מְלַחְמָה לְפִי שֶׁנֶּעֱשׂוּ כְּמוֹ אֲרוֹן וְתִיק לְנִיּוֹצֵי קְדוּשָׁה שֶׁהָיוּ בְּתוֹכָם וַיֵּשׁ לָהֶם הַדִּין שֶׁל תְּשֻׁמֵי־שֵׁי קְדוּשָׁה שֶׁטְעוּנִין [גְּנִיזָה]. אֲלֵא דְמַצִּד אַחַר יֵשׁ לוֹמֵר שֶׁהוֹאִיל שֶׁנִּיּוֹצֵי קְדוּשָׁה הָיוּ מִתְקַלְקְלִים בְּתוֹכָם לֹא נִקְרְאוּ מֵעוֹלָם תְּשֻׁמֵי־שֵׁי קְדוּשָׁה אֲלֵא מִזִּיק לְקְדוּשָׁה, וְעוֹד שֶׁמִּנֵּע אוֹתוֹ הַנִּיּוֹצִי מִלְּבֹא לְעוֹלָם קוֹדֵם לָנוּ, אֲבָל מֵאֵן מוֹכַח שֶׁהַקְּלִיפָה הַזִּיקָה אוֹתוֹ הַנִּיּוֹצִי דִּלְמָא שְׁמַרְהָ אוֹתוֹ כְּרֵאוּי.

If so, you might have thought as follows. Before the extraction of the sparks of holiness from the *klipot*, it was forbidden for us to wage war against that nation, as Moses was commanded not to wage war with Ammon and Moab because of the two good offspring that were destined to come from them.¹⁹ **So too, after the extraction of the good “offspring” (i.e., the sparks), one might say that it is forbidden to wage war with them, since they became like an ark or container for the sparks of holiness that were within them. Therefore, perhaps they are like tefillin cases, which take on the status of items used for holiness, which require burial.**

¹³ Job 14:4.

¹⁴ Num. Rabbah 19:1.

¹⁵ Ps. 89:21.

¹⁶ Gen. Rabbah 41:4.

¹⁷ Gen. 41:45.

¹⁸ Zohar III:7b.

¹⁹ Bava Kamma 38b, referring to Ruth the Moabite and to Naamah the Ammonite, Solomon’s wife.

However, on the other hand, one may say, as the Rema and Magen Avraham taught regarding the cabinet, that, since the sparks of holiness were being damaged while within them, by exposing them to impurity, [such nations] were never considered accessories of sacred objects, but rather damaging agents to holiness. Furthermore, they prevented that spark of holiness from coming into the world earlier. But who can prove that the *klipah* damaged that spark? Perhaps it guarded it properly.

לְכוּ צְרִיף שְׂדֵנְקָא אוֹתוֹ הַנִּיצוּץ יִנָּקֵם מִן הָאוֹמָה הַהִיא, מִפְּנֵי שְׂאוֹתוֹ הַנִּיצוּץ יוֹדֵעַ הַהִזִּיק שְׁהֵי רֹצֵחַ לַעֲשׂוֹת לוֹ אוֹ שְׂמַנְעוּ מַלְעֲשׂוֹת מִצְוֹת קוֹדֵם וְזֶה, וְהָכִי אֵימָא בְּשִׁלְחֵן עֲרוּף חֲשׂוֹן מִשְׁפָּט (סִימָן שפ"ח) שְׁהַמְזִיק מִמּוֹן חֲבִירוֹ וְאִין יוֹדֵעַ מָה הִזִּיק הַנִּיצוּץ נִשְׁבַּע וְנוֹטֵל, כִּי צָד הָרִי שְׁלֵקָח כְּלֵי סְתוּם מִחֲבִירוֹ וְהִטִּילוּ לָיִם אוֹ שָׂרְפוּ בְּאֵשׁ וְטָעַן הַנִּיצוּץ שְׁהֵי מְלֵא מַרְגְּלוֹת וְכִיּוֹצֵא נְאֻמָּן.

Therefore, it is necessary that specifically that very spark of holiness should exact vengeance upon that nation, because that spark knows the harm that [the nation] desired to do to it, or how [the nation] prevented [the spark] from performing mitzvot until that time.

Thus, it is brought in *Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat* (siman 388, se'if 1): If someone damages another's property and it is not known what damage was caused, the injured party swears and collects. How so? For example, if someone took a sealed vessel from his fellow and threw it into the sea or burned it in fire, and the injured party claims that it was filled with pearls or the like, he is believed.

אָבֵל אִם אוֹתוֹ הַנִּיצוּץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מַלְחָמָה בְּאוֹתָהּ הָאוֹמָה אִם כֵּן זֶהוּ סִימָן שֶׁלֹּא קִבֵּל שׁוּם נִזְק מִהַקְלִיפָה וְהַדוֹר שֶׁל אוֹתוֹ הַנִּיצוּץ אוֹ הַצְּדִיק אֵינּוּ יְכוּל לִנְקוּם מֵאוֹתָהּ אוֹמָה מִפְּנֵי שְׂאֲדָרְבָּא עֲשֻׁתָּה טוֹב לְדוֹר הַזֶּה שֶׁלֹּא הִבִּיאוּ לְעוֹלָם אֶלָּא דוֹקָא בְּדוֹר הַזֶּה, וְהֵיךָ מְקוּם לוֹמַר שְׁהַקְלִיפָה לֹא הִזִּיקָה כְּלוּם לְקְדוּשָׁה, וְאִם כֵּן נִקְרָאת כְּמוֹ תֵּיק וְאָרוֹן שְׁהֵם תְּשִׁמִּישִׁי קְדוּשָׁה, וְרָאָה עַל זֶה שְׁהִרִי הַנִּיצוּץ לֹא תִבַּע כְּלוּם. וּבְכָאֵן מִן הַדִּין הֵיךָ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל יַעֲשׂוּ נִקְמָה בְּמִדְיָן לְפִי מָה שְׁהַחֲטִיאוּם, אֶלָּא לְפִי שְׂמִישָׁה נִתְגַּדֵּל שֶׁם וְנִשָּׂא אִשָּׁה שֶׁם הִזְתָּה צְרִיכָה מַלְחָמָה זֶה לְהַעֲשׂוֹת עַל יְדֵי מִשָּׁה כְּדֵי לְהַרְאוֹת שְׂאִין לָהֶם דִּין תְּשִׁמִּישִׁי קְדוּשָׁה, וְאִם הֵיךָ מִתּ מִשָּׁה קוֹדֵם לֹא הֵיךָ אֶפְשָׁר עוֹד לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לִיטוֹל נִקְמָה, וּמִשׁוּם הָכִי אָמַר הַכְּתוּב "נִקָּם נִקְמַת" וְכוּ' "אֶחָד תִּאָּסֵף" וְכוּ', לְפִי שְׂאֶחָד שְׂנֵאָסֵפְתָּ אִין מְקוּם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לִיטוֹל נִקְמָה מֵהֶם.

But if that spark of holiness does not wage war against that nation, then it is a sign that it suffered no harm from the *klipah*. Then the generation of that spark or the righteous person connected to it cannot take vengeance upon that nation, because on the contrary, it did good to this generation by not bringing [the spark of holiness] into the world until now, which benefited this particular generation. One might say that the *klipah* did no harm at all to the holiness. If so, then it is considered like a case or an ark, which are vessels used for sacred objects. The proof for this is that the spark did not make any claim of damages; i.e., it did not seek retribution.

But in this case, it was proper for Israel to exact vengeance upon Midian, because they caused them to sin by enticing them into sexual immorality and idolatry.²⁰ However, since Moses

²⁰ Num. 25:1–15.

reached maturity there²¹ and married a woman from there,²² it was necessary for this war to be carried out by Moses, in order to demonstrate that [Midian] does not have the status of an accessory of a sacred object. If Moses had died beforehand, it would no longer have been possible for Israel to take vengeance. Therefore, Scripture says, “You shall surely avenge the Israelite people on the Midianites; then you shall be gathered to your kin,” because once you are gathered to your kin, Israel will no longer be able to take vengeance upon them.

אָבֵל עֲדֵיין קִשָּׁה לְשׁוֹן הַמְדָּרֵשׁ הַנֶּאֱמָר לְעֵיל דְאָמַר שְׂאֵם מִשָּׁה הָיָה רוֹצֵה לְחַיּוֹת הַרְבֵּה לֹא הָיָה אֶפְשָׁר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לִיטּוֹל נִקְמָתָם אֲלֵא עַד סְמוּדָה לְמִיתָתוֹ שֶׁל מִשָּׁה, וְהַדְּבָר צָרִיךְ בִּיאוּר לָמָּה זֶה נֶעַל מֵה זֶה. אֲמָנָם בָּמָה שְׁנִכְתוּב בַּחִידוּשׁ הַבָּא יוֹבֵן שְׁפִיר וְדוֹק, וְעֵיין עוֹד לְקַמֵּן בְּפָרָשַׁת הָאֲזִינוּ בְּעִנְיַן גּוֹג וּמַגּוּג.

However, it is still difficult to understand the language of the Midrash quoted above, which said that if Moses had wished to live longer, Israel would not have been able to take their vengeance until just before Moses’ death. This matter requires clarification, why should this be so, and for what reason?

But with what we will write in the next insight, Essay 5, it will be well understood, for Moses himself deserved punishment, for he did not rebuke the tribe of Shimon, which the census figures show were the victims of the plague of 24,000 Israelites who perished. **Examine this carefully.**

Also, see further below in Parashat Ha’azinu, Essay 7, regarding the matter of Gog and Magog, in which we further discuss whether the nations that once harbored sparks of holiness should be treated as accessories of sacred objects.

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²¹ Ex. 2:15.

²² Ex. 2:21.

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XLII: Matot (Num. 30:2–32:42)

Essay 4. Moses' crucial role in the war against Midian

מִדְרָשׁ ילקוט על פסוק "אחר תאסף אל-עמיה", אמר לו הקב"ה אם אתה רוצה להיות שנים הרבה לא יראו ישראל נקמה באויביהם ולא תכבש מדן לפניהם. מיד אמר משה מוטב שתכבש מדן לפניהם ויראו ישראל מפלה בשונאייהם עכ"ל. יש לדקדק מה ענין משה עם מלחמת מדין.

Midrash Yalkut Shimoni on the verse, "You shall surely avenge the Israelite people on the Midianites; then you shall be gathered to your kin"¹:

The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to [Moses]: "If you wish to live many more years, the Israelites will not witness vengeance upon their enemies, and Midian will not be subdued before them." Immediately, Moses said: "It is better that Midian be subdued before them and that Israel see the downfall of their enemies."

- Yalkut Shimoni, parashat Matot, Remez 785

We need to check what the connection is between Moses and the war with Midian.

ויש לומר שכתבו המקובלים שכל מלך או שר שפא לעשות נקמה באיזו אומה צריף שיהיה לו איזה חיבור וקישור עם אותה האומה, כגון פנחס שפא מבנות פוטיאל, עשה נקמה במדן, דוד שפא מרות המואביה, עשה נקמה במואב, ויהושע שיהיה מזרע יוסף שנתגדל בבית פוטיפר והיה עתיד להיות חתנו של סטרא אחרא שלקח רחב הזונה והיא יודעת זאת, עשה מלחמה בעמלק, דעמל"ק ובלע"ם גימטריא במצרי"ם, פי במצרים בא בלעם בפת עמלק ליתן עצוה לפרעה, שלושה היו באותה עצוה וכו'. וכאן "ויבא עמלק" מהיכן בא? אמרו ו"ל שפא מאצל בלעם הרשע. ועמלק הוא ראש לקליפות, שאחר שפכו סיוון ועוג והיה להם ליכנס בארץ ישראל כתיב "ראשית גוים עמלק" עכ"ל.

It can be said, as the Kabbalists have written, that every king or prince who comes to exact vengeance upon a nation must have some connection or bond with that nation.² For example, Pinchas, who descended from the daughters of Putiel,³ exacted vengeance upon Midian. One rabbinic tradition identifies Putiel as Jethro, who was the priest of Midian.⁴

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¹ Num. 31:2.

² Zohar II:114a, "Judgment can only be sweetened at its root."

³ Ex. 6:25.

⁴ Sotah 43a.

Another example is that **David, who descended from Ruth the Moabitess, exacted vengeance upon Moab.**⁵

Another example is **Joshua, who was from the seed of Joseph, who was raised in the house of Potiphar. Joshua was destined to become the son-in-law of the *Sitra Achra*, the Other Side, the realm of impurity, evil, and the forces that oppose holiness, as he took as wife Rahab the harlot,⁶ and she knew this.**⁷ Thus, he waged war against Amalek.⁸

For Amalek [עמלק], with a Gematria of 240, and **Balaam** [בלעם], with a Gematria of 142, have a combined Gematria of 342, which is equal to that of *Be'Mitzrayim* [במצרי"ם] ["In Egypt"], because it was in Egypt that Balaam came with the power of Amalek to advise Pharaoh, as we know from Sotah 11b, **"three were [consulted by Pharaoh] in that counsel [regarding how to handle the Israelites], Balaam, and Job, and Yitro."**

Also here, "Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim."⁹ **From where did he come? [The rabbis,] of blessed memory, said that he came from Balaam the wicked.**¹⁰ **Amalek is the head of the *klipot*, the impure spiritual forces, for after [the Israelites] conquered Sihon and Og and were meant to enter the Land of Israel, it is written: "Amalek is the first of the nations,"**¹¹ the first nation who feared not to proclaim war against Israel.¹²

אָבֶל צָרִיכִים אָנוּ לְמוֹדְעֵי מַהוּ הַטַּעַם שֶׁצָּרִיךְ שָׁנָה הַמְלֻכָּה אוֹ הַשָּׂר יִהְיֶה לוֹ חַיְבוּר עִם אוֹתָהּ הָאוּמָה שֶׁעוֹשָׂה נְקָמָה. וְגַם לומר דְּאִתָּא בְּשִׁלְחַן עֲרוּךְ אֲרַח חַיִּים (סִימָן קנ"ד) תִּשְׁמִי שִׁי קְדוּשָׁה כְּגוֹן תִּיק שֶׁל תְּפִילִין וּמְזוּזוֹת וּסְפָרִים יֵשׁ לָהֶן קְדוּשָׁה וְצָרִיךְ לְגוֹנְנָן, וְעוֹד שֵׁם (סְעִיף א' בַּהֲגֵהָ) דְּאֲרוֹן הַבְּנוּי בְּחוּמָה אִם הַסְּפָרִים מְתַקְלָקְלִין בּוֹ אֵין בּוֹ קְדוּשָׁה, וּפִירֵשׁ הַמְּגַן אֲבָרְהָם דְּלֹא חָלָה עָלָיו קְדוּשָׁה מְעִיקְרָא דְּלֹא מְקַרֵי תִשְׁמִישׁ דִּידֵיהּ אֲלֵא מְזִיק דִּידֵיהּ עכ"ל.

But we need to be informed of the reason why it is necessary that the king or officer who enacts vengeance should have a connection with the nation upon which he takes vengeance.

To begin our analysis, it can be said, as it is found in the *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* (siman 154, se'if 3): **"Accessories of sacred objects, such as bags for tefillin cases, mezuzot, and books, possess holiness and must be buried."** Further there (se'if 1, in the Rema's gloss): **"[Regarding] a cabinet built into the wall, if the books are damaged in it,"** such as being burned in a fire or becoming waterlogged, **"[the cabinet itself] does not possess holiness."** The *Magen Avraham* (se'if katan 3) explains: **"Holiness did not rest upon it from the beginning,**

⁵ II Sam. 8:2.

⁶ Megillah 14b.

⁷ This could mean that Rahav knew that she was destined to marry Joshua, based on their souls recognizing each other. This general concept is recognized, for example, in Zohar I:91b, and in Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Chapter 20. Or, in keeping with the theme of this paragraph, it could mean that Rahab knew that in order to successfully fight Amalek, Joshua needed a connection to them, which she herself could provide as a reformed harlot.

⁸ Ex. 17:9.

⁹ Ex. 17:8.

¹⁰ Esther Rabbah 7:13.

¹¹ Num. 24:20.

¹² Zohar II:64b.

because it is not called an accessory [for holding a sacred object], but rather something that damages [the sacred object].” I.e., while the cabinet held the sacred books, it did not protect them from being damaged by fire or by water.

והנה נודע לחכמי האמת שכל הנשמות הקדושות מתחלה היו ביד הקליפות, וכן הוא אומר "מי יתן טהור מטמא" כגון אברהם מתרח וכו', וכן דוד היה במואב דכתיב "מִצֵּאתִי דָּוִד עֶבְדִּי" היכן מצאתיו בסדום, וכן פנחס בא מבנות פוטיאל, וכן הושע בא מיוסף שלקח אסנת בת פוטיפרע. ועוד היה מוכן לקבל רחב הזונה לתשלום חצי גופו דכר בלא נוקבא פלג גופא.

Now it is known to the sages of truth, the Kabbalists, that all holy souls were originally in the hands of the *klipot*. Thus it says, “Who can bring the pure from the impure,”¹³ and the Midrash interprets, “such as Abraham from Terach, Hezekiah from Ahaz, Yoshiya from Amon, Mordekhai from Shimi, Israel from idolaters, the World-to-Come from this world.”¹⁴

Likewise, David was in Moab, as it is written, “I found David, My servant,”¹⁵ which the Midrash interprets: “where did I find him? In Sodom.”¹⁶ Likewise, Pinchas descended from the daughters of Putiel. Likewise, Joshua descended from Joseph, who took as wife Asenath, daughter of Potiphara.¹⁷ [Joshua] was also prepared to take in Rahab the harlot, to complete the other half of his body, for the male without the female is only half a body.¹⁸

ואם כן היה סלקא דעתך שקמו שקודם הוצאת הניצוצות הקדושות מן הקליפות לא הותר לנו לעשות מלקמה עם אותה האומה, כמו שנצטנה משה שלא לעשות מלקמה עם עמון ומואב בשביל שתי פרידות טובות שעתיד להוציא מהם, כך לאחר הוצאת הפרידות טובות יש לנו לומר שאסור לעשות עמיהם מלקמה לפי שנעשו כמו ארון ותיק לניצוצי קדושה שהיו בתוכם ויש להם הדין של תשמישי קדושה שטעונין [גניזה]. אלא דמצד אחר יש לומר שהאיל שניצוצי קדושה היו מתקלקלים בתוכם לא נקראו מעולם תשמישי קדושה אלא מזיק לקדושה, ועוד שמנע אותו הניצוץ מלבא לעולם קודם לכן, אבל מאן מוכח שהקליפה הזיקה אותו הניצוץ דילמא שמרה אותו כראוי.

If so, you might have thought as follows. Before the extraction of the sparks of holiness from the *klipot*, it was forbidden for us to wage war against that nation, as Moses was commanded not to wage war with Ammon and Moab because of the two good offspring that were destined to come from them.¹⁹ So too, after the extraction of the good “offspring” (i.e., the sparks), one might say that it is forbidden to wage war with them, since they became like an ark or container for the sparks of holiness that were within them. Therefore, perhaps they are like tefillin cases, which take on the status of items used for holiness, which require burial.

¹³ Job 14:4.

¹⁴ Num. Rabbah 19:1.

¹⁵ Ps. 89:21.

¹⁶ Gen. Rabbah 41:4.

¹⁷ Gen. 41:45.

¹⁸ Zohar III:7b.

¹⁹ Bava Kamma 38b, referring to Ruth the Moabite and to Naamah the Ammonite, Solomon's wife.

However, on the other hand, one may say, as the Rema and Magen Avraham taught regarding the cabinet, that, since the sparks of holiness were being damaged while within them, by exposing them to impurity, [such nations] were never considered accessories of sacred objects, but rather damaging agents to holiness. Furthermore, they prevented that spark of holiness from coming into the world earlier. But who can prove that the *klipah* damaged that spark? Perhaps it guarded it properly.

לְכוּ צְרִיף שְׂדֵנְקָא אוֹתוֹ הַנִּיצוּץ יִנָּקֵם מִן הָאוֹמָה הַהִיא, מִפְּנֵי שְׂאוֹתוֹ הַנִּיצוּץ יוֹדֵעַ הַהִזִּיק שְׁהֵי רֹצֵחַ לַעֲשׂוֹת לוֹ אוֹ שְׂמַנְעוּ מַלְעֲשׂוֹת מִצְוֹת קוֹדֵם וְזֶה, וְהָכִי אֵימָא בְּשִׁלְחֵן עֲרוּף חֲשׂוֹן מִשְׁפָּט (סִימָן שפ"ח) שְׁהַמְזִיק מִמּוֹן חֲבִירוֹ וְאִין יוֹדֵעַ מָה הִזִּיק הַנִּיצוּק נִשְׁבַּע וְנוֹטֵל, כִּי צָד הָרִי שְׁלֵקָח כְּלֵי סְתוּם מִחֲבִירוֹ וְהִטִּילוּ לָיִם אוֹ שָׂרְפוּ בְּאֵשׁ וְטָעַן הַנִּיצוּק שְׁהֵי מְלֵא מַרְגְּלוֹת וְכִיּוֹצֵא נְאֻמָּן.

Therefore, it is necessary that specifically that very spark of holiness should exact vengeance upon that nation, because that spark knows the harm that [the nation] desired to do to it, or how [the nation] prevented [the spark] from performing mitzvot until that time.

Thus, it is brought in *Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat* (siman 388, se'if 1): If someone damages another's property and it is not known what damage was caused, the injured party swears and collects. How so? For example, if someone took a sealed vessel from his fellow and threw it into the sea or burned it in fire, and the injured party claims that it was filled with pearls or the like, he is believed.

אָבֵל אִם אוֹתוֹ הַנִּיצוּץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מַלְחָמָה בְּאוֹתָהּ הָאוֹמָה אִם כֵּן זֶהוּ סִימָן שֶׁלֹּא קִבֵּל שׁוּם נִזְק מִהַקְלִיפָה וְהַדוּר שֶׁל אוֹתוֹ הַנִּיצוּץ אוֹ הַצְדִּיק אֵינּוּ יָכוֹל לִנְקוּם מֵאוֹתָהּ אוֹמָה מִפְּנֵי שְׂאֲדָרְבָּא עֲשֻׁתָּה טוֹב לְדוּר הַזֶּה שֶׁלֹּא הִבִּיאוּ לְעוֹלָם אֶלָּא דוֹקָא בְּדוּר הַזֶּה, וְהֵיךְ מְקוּם לוֹמַר שְׁהַקְלִיפָה לֹא הִזִּיקָה כְּלוּם לְקְדוּשָׁה, וְאִם כֵּן נִקְרָאת כְּמוֹ תֵּיק וְאָרוֹן שְׁהֵם תְּשִׁמִּישִׁי קְדוּשָׁה, וְרָאָה עַל זֶה שְׁהִרִי הַנִּיצוּץ לֹא תִבַּע כְּלוּם. וּבְכָאן מִן הַדִּין הֵיךְ לִישְׁרָאֵל יַעֲשׂוּ נִקְמָה בְּמִדְיָן לְפִי מָה שְׁהַחֲטִיאוּם, אֶלָּא לְפִי שְׂמִישָׁה נִתְגַּדֵּל שֶׁם וְנִשְׂא אִשָּׁה שֶׁם הִזְתָּה צְרִיכָה מַלְחָמָה זֶה לְהַעֲשׂוֹת עַל יְדֵי מִשָּׁה כְּדֵי לְהַרְאוֹת שְׂאִין לָהֶם דִּין תְּשִׁמִּישִׁי קְדוּשָׁה, וְאִם הֵיךְ מִתְּשָׁה קוֹדֵם לֹא הֵיךְ אֶפְשָׁר עוֹד לִישְׁרָאֵל לִיטוֹל נִקְמָה, וּמִשׁוּם הָכִי אָמַר הַכְּתוּב "נִקָּם נִקְמַת" וְכוּ' "אֶחָד תִּאָּסֵף" וְכוּ', לְפִי שְׂאֶחָד שְׂנֵאָסֵפְתָּ אִין מְקוּם לִישְׁרָאֵל לִיטוֹל נִקְמָה מֵהֶם.

But if that spark of holiness does not wage war against that nation, then it is a sign that it suffered no harm from the *klipah*. Then the generation of that spark or the righteous person connected to it cannot take vengeance upon that nation, because on the contrary, it did good to this generation by not bringing [the spark of holiness] into the world until now, which benefited this particular generation. One might say that the *klipah* did no harm at all to the holiness. If so, then it is considered like a case or an ark, which are vessels used for sacred objects. The proof for this is that the spark did not make any claim of damages; i.e., it did not seek retribution.

But in this case, it was proper for Israel to exact vengeance upon Midian, because they caused them to sin by enticing them into sexual immorality and idolatry.²⁰ However, since Moses

²⁰ Num. 25:1–15.

reached maturity there²¹ and married a woman from there,²² it was necessary for this war to be carried out by Moses, in order to demonstrate that [Midian] does not have the status of an accessory of a sacred object. If Moses had died beforehand, it would no longer have been possible for Israel to take vengeance. Therefore, Scripture says, “You shall surely avenge the Israelite people on the Midianites; then you shall be gathered to your kin,” because once you are gathered to your kin, Israel will no longer be able to take vengeance upon them.

אָבֵל עֲדֵיין קִשָּׁה לְשׁוֹן הַמְדָּרֵשׁ הַנֶּאֱמָר לְעֵיל דְאָמַר שְׂאֵם מִשָּׁה הָיָה רוֹצֵה לְחַיּוֹת הַרְבֵּה לֹא הָיָה אֶפְשָׁר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לִיטּוֹל נִקְמָתָם אֲלֵא עַד סְמוּדָה לְמִיתָתוֹ שֶׁל מִשָּׁה, וְהַדְּבָר צָרִיךְ בִּיאוּר לָמָּה זֶה נֶעַל מֵה זֶה. אֲמָנָם בָּמָה שְׁנִכְתּוּב בַּחִידוּשׁ הַבָּא יוֹבֵן שְׁפִיר וְדוֹק, וְעֵיין עוֹד לְקַמֵּן בְּפָרָשַׁת הָאֲזִינוּ בְּעֵנֵן גּוֹג וּמַגּוּג.

However, it is still difficult to understand the language of the Midrash quoted above, which said that if Moses had wished to live longer, Israel would not have been able to take their vengeance until just before Moses’ death. This matter requires clarification, why should this be so, and for what reason?

But with what we will write in the next insight, Essay 5, it will be well understood, for Moses himself deserved punishment, for he did not rebuke the tribe of Shimon, which the census figures show were the victims of the plague of 24,000 Israelites who perished. **Examine this carefully.**

Also, see further below in Parashat Ha’azinu, Essay 7, regarding the matter of Gog and Magog, in which we further discuss whether the nations that once harbored sparks of holiness should be treated as accessories of sacred objects.

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²¹ Ex. 2:15.

²² Ex. 2:21.

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XLII: Matot (Num. 30:2–32:42)

Essay 4. Moses' crucial role in the war against Midian

מִדְרָשׁ ילקוט על פסוק "אחר תאסף אל-עמיה", אמר לו הקב"ה אם אתה רוצה להיות שנים הרבה לא יראו ישראל נקמה באויביהם ולא תכבש מדן לפניהם. מיד אמר משה מוטב שתכבש מדן לפניהם ויראו ישראל מפלה בשונאייהם עכ"ל. יש לדקדק מה ענין משה עם מלחמת מדין.

Midrash Yalkut Shimoni on the verse, "You shall surely avenge the Israelite people on the Midianites; then you shall be gathered to your kin"¹:

The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to [Moses]: "If you wish to live many more years, the Israelites will not witness vengeance upon their enemies, and Midian will not be subdued before them." Immediately, Moses said: "It is better that Midian be subdued before them and that Israel see the downfall of their enemies."

- Yalkut Shimoni, parashat Matot, Remez 785

We need to check what the connection is between Moses and the war with Midian.

ויש לומר שכתבו המקובלים שכל מלך או שר שפא לעשות נקמה באיזו אומה צריף שיהיה לו איזה חיבור וקישור עם אותה האומה, כגון פנחס שפא מבנות פוטיאל, עשה נקמה במדן, דוד שפא מרות המואביה, עשה נקמה במואב, ויהושע שיהיה מזרע יוסף שנתגדל בבית פוטיפר והיה עתיד להיות חתנו של סטרא אחרא שלקח רחב הזונה והיא יודעת זאת, עשה מלחמה בעמלק, דעמל"ק ובלע"ם גימטריא במצרי"ם, פי במצרים בא בלעם בפת עמלק ליתן עצוה לפרעה, שלושה היו באותה עצוה וכו'. וכאן "ויבא עמלק" מהיכן בא? אמרו ו"ל שפא מאצל בלעם הרשע. ועמלק הוא ראש לקליפות, שאחר שפכו סיוון ועוג והיה להם ליכנס בארץ ישראל כתיב "ראשית גוים עמלק" עכ"ל.

It can be said, as the Kabbalists have written, that every king or prince who comes to exact vengeance upon a nation must have some connection or bond with that nation.² For example, Pinchas, who descended from the daughters of Putiel,³ exacted vengeance upon Midian. One rabbinic tradition identifies Putiel as Jethro, who was the priest of Midian.⁴

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¹ Num. 31:2.

² Zohar II:114a, "Judgment can only be sweetened at its root."

³ Ex. 6:25.

⁴ Sotah 43a.

Another example is that **David, who descended from Ruth the Moabitess, exacted vengeance upon Moab.**⁵

Another example is **Joshua, who was from the seed of Joseph, who was raised in the house of Potiphar. Joshua was destined to become the son-in-law of the *Sitra Achra*, the Other Side, the realm of impurity, evil, and the forces that oppose holiness, as he took as wife Rahab the harlot,⁶ and she knew this.**⁷ Thus, he waged war against Amalek.⁸

For Amalek [עמלק], with a Gematria of 240, and **Balaam** [בלעם], with a Gematria of 142, have a combined Gematria of 342, which is equal to that of *Be'Mitzrayim* [במצרי"ם] ["In Egypt"], because it was in Egypt that Balaam came with the power of Amalek to advise Pharaoh, as we know from Sotah 11b, **"three were [consulted by Pharaoh] in that counsel [regarding how to handle the Israelites], Balaam, and Job, and Yitro."**

Also here, "Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim."⁹ **From where did he come? [The rabbis,] of blessed memory, said that he came from Balaam the wicked.**¹⁰ **Amalek is the head of the *klipot*, the impure spiritual forces, for after [the Israelites] conquered Sihon and Og and were meant to enter the Land of Israel, it is written: "Amalek is the first of the nations,"**¹¹ the first nation who feared not to proclaim war against Israel.¹²

אָבֶל צָרִיכִים אָנוּ לְמוֹדְעֵי מַהוּ הַטַּעַם שֶׁצָּרִיךְ שָׁנָה הַמְלֻכָּה אוֹ הַשָּׂר יִהְיֶה לוֹ חַיְבוּר עִם אוֹתָהּ הָאוּמָה שֶׁעוֹשָׂה נְקָמָה. וְגַם לומר דְּאִתָּא בְּשִׁלְחַן עֲרוּךְ אֲרַח חַיִּים (סִימָן קנ"ד) תְּשִׁמִּישִׁי קְדוּשָׁה כְּגוֹן תִּיק שֶׁל תְּפִילִין וּמְזוּזוֹת וּסְפָרִים יֵשׁ לָהֶן קְדוּשָׁה וְצָרִיךְ לְגוֹנְנָן, וְעוֹד שֵׁם (סְעִיף א' בַּהֲגֵהָ) דְּאֲרוֹן הַבְּנוּי בְּחוּמָה אִם הַסְּפָרִים מְתַקְלָקְלִין בּוֹ אֵין בּוֹ קְדוּשָׁה, וּפִירֵשׁ הַמְּגַן אֲבָרְהָם דְּלֹא חָלָה עָלָיו קְדוּשָׁה מְעִיקְרָא דְּלֹא מְקַרֵי תְּשִׁמִּישׁ דִּידֵיהּ אֱלֵא מְזִיק דִּידֵיהּ עכ"ל.

But we need to be informed of the reason why it is necessary that the king or officer who enacts vengeance should have a connection with the nation upon which he takes vengeance.

To begin our analysis, it can be said, as it is found in the *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* (siman 154, se'if 3): **"Accessories of sacred objects, such as bags for tefillin cases, mezuzot, and books, possess holiness and must be buried."** Further there (se'if 1, in the Rema's gloss): **"[Regarding] a cabinet built into the wall, if the books are damaged in it,"** such as being burned in a fire or becoming waterlogged, **"[the cabinet itself] does not possess holiness."** The *Magen Avraham* (se'if katan 3) explains: **"Holiness did not rest upon it from the beginning,**

⁵ II Sam. 8:2.

⁶ Megillah 14b.

⁷ This could mean that Rahav knew that she was destined to marry Joshua, based on their souls recognizing each other. This general concept is recognized, for example, in Zohar I:91b, and in Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Chapter 20. Or, in keeping with the theme of this paragraph, it could mean that Rahab knew that in order to successfully fight Amalek, Joshua needed a connection to them, which she herself could provide as a reformed harlot.

⁸ Ex. 17:9.

⁹ Ex. 17:8.

¹⁰ Esther Rabbah 7:13.

¹¹ Num. 24:20.

¹² Zohar II:64b.

because it is not called an accessory [for holding a sacred object], but rather something that damages [the sacred object].” I.e., while the cabinet held the sacred books, it did not protect them from being damaged by fire or by water.

והנה נודע לחכמי האמת שכל הנשמות הקדושות מתחלה היו ביד הקליפות, וכן הוא אומר "מי יתן טהור מטמא" כגון אברהם מתרח וכו', וכן דוד היה במואב דכתיב "מִצָּאתִי דָּוִד עֶבְדִּי" היכן מצאתיו בסדום, וכן פנחס בא מבנות פוטיאל, וכן יהושע בא מיוסף שלקח אסנת בת פוטיפרע. ועוד היה מוכן לקבל רחב הזונה לתשלום חצי גופו דכר בלא נוקבא פלג גופא.

Now it is known to the sages of truth, the Kabbalists, that all holy souls were originally in the hands of the *klipot*. Thus it says, “Who can bring the pure from the impure,”¹³ and the Midrash interprets, **“such as Abraham from Terach, Hezekiah from Ahaz, Yoshiya from Amon, Mordekhai from Shimi, Israel from idolaters, the World-to-Come from this world.”**¹⁴

Likewise, David was in Moab, as it is written, “I found David, My servant,”¹⁵ which the Midrash interprets: **“where did I find him? In Sodom.”**¹⁶ **Likewise, Pinchas descended from the daughters of Putiel. Likewise, Joshua descended from Joseph, who took as wife Asenath, daughter of Potiphara.**¹⁷ **[Joshua] was also prepared to take in Rahab the harlot, to complete the other half of his body, for the male without the female is only half a body.**¹⁸

ואם כן היה סלקא דעתך שקמו שקודם הוצאת הניצוצות הקדושות מן הקליפות לא הותר לנו לעשות מלקמה עם אותה האומה, כמו שנצטנה משה שלא לעשות מלקמה עם עמון ומואב בשביל שתי פרידות טובות שעתיד להוציא מהם, כך לאחר הוצאת הפרידות טובות יש לנו לומר שאסור לעשות עמיהם מלקמה לפי שנעשו כמו ארון ותיק לניצוצי קדושה שהיו בתוכם ויש להם הדין של תשמישי קדושה שטעונין [גניזה]. אלא דמצד אחר יש לומר שהאיל שניצוצי קדושה היו מתקלקלים בתוכם לא נקראו מעולם תשמישי קדושה אלא מזיק לקדושה, ועוד שמנע אותו הניצוץ מלבא לעולם קודם לכן, אבל מאן מוכח שהקליפה הזיקה אותו הניצוץ דילמא שמרה אותו כראוי.

If so, you might have thought as follows. Before the extraction of the sparks of holiness from the *klipot*, it was forbidden for us to wage war against that nation, as Moses was commanded not to wage war with Ammon and Moab because of the two good offspring that were destined to come from them.¹⁹ **So too, after the extraction of the good “offspring” (i.e., the sparks), one might say that it is forbidden to wage war with them, since they became like an ark or container for the sparks of holiness that were within them. Therefore, perhaps they are like tefillin cases, which take on the status of items used for holiness, which require burial.**

¹³ Job 14:4.

¹⁴ Num. Rabbah 19:1.

¹⁵ Ps. 89:21.

¹⁶ Gen. Rabbah 41:4.

¹⁷ Gen. 41:45.

¹⁸ Zohar III:7b.

¹⁹ Bava Kamma 38b, referring to Ruth the Moabite and to Naamah the Ammonite, Solomon's wife.

However, on the other hand, one may say, as the Rema and Magen Avraham taught regarding the cabinet, that, since the sparks of holiness were being damaged while within them, by exposing them to impurity, [such nations] were never considered accessories of sacred objects, but rather damaging agents to holiness. Furthermore, they prevented that spark of holiness from coming into the world earlier. But who can prove that the *klipah* damaged that spark? Perhaps it guarded it properly.

לְכוּ צְרִיף שְׂדֵנְקָא אוֹתוֹ הַנִּיצוּץ יִנָּקֵם מִן הָאוֹמָה הַהִיא, מִפְּנֵי שְׂאוֹתוֹ הַנִּיצוּץ יוֹדֵעַ הַהִזִּיק שְׁהֵי רֹצֵחַ לַעֲשׂוֹת לוֹ אוֹ שְׂמַנְעוּ מַלְעֲשׂוֹת מִצְוֹת קוֹדֵם וְזֶה, וְהָכִי אֵימָא בְּשִׁלְחֵן עֲרוּף חֲשׂוֹן מִשְׁפָּט (סִימָן שפ"ח) שְׁהַמְזִיק מִמּוֹן חֲבִירוֹ וְאִין יוֹדֵעַ מָה הִזִּיק הַנִּיצוּץ נִשְׁבַּע וְנוֹטֵל, כִּי צָד הָרִי שְׁלֵקָח כְּלֵי סְתוּם מִחֲבִירוֹ וְהִטִּילוּ לָיִם אוֹ שָׂרְפוּ בְּאֵשׁ וְטָעַן הַנִּיצוּץ שְׁהֵי מְלֵא מַרְגְּלוֹת וְכִיּוֹצֵא נְאֻמָּן.

Therefore, it is necessary that specifically that very spark of holiness should exact vengeance upon that nation, because that spark knows the harm that [the nation] desired to do to it, or how [the nation] prevented [the spark] from performing mitzvot until that time.

Thus, it is brought in *Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat* (siman 388, se'if 1): If someone damages another's property and it is not known what damage was caused, the injured party swears and collects. How so? For example, if someone took a sealed vessel from his fellow and threw it into the sea or burned it in fire, and the injured party claims that it was filled with pearls or the like, he is believed.

אָבֵל אִם אוֹתוֹ הַנִּיצוּץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מַלְחָמָה בְּאוֹתָהּ הָאוֹמָה אִם כֵּן זֶהוּ סִימָן שְׁלֹא קִבֵּל שׁוּם נִזְק מִהַקְלִיפָה וְהַדוּר שֶׁל אוֹתוֹ הַנִּיצוּץ אוֹ הַצְדִּיק אֵינּוּ יְכוּל לִנְקוּם מֵאוֹתָהּ אוֹמָה מִפְּנֵי שְׂאֵדְרָבָא עֲשֻׁתָּה טוֹב לְדוּר הַזֶּה שְׁלֹא הִבִּיאוּ לְעוֹלָם אֶלָּא דוֹקָא בְּדוּר הַזֶּה, וְהֵיךָ מְקוּם לוֹמַר שְׁהַקְלִיפָה לֹא הִזִּיקָה כְּלוּם לְקְדוּשָׁה, וְאִם כֵּן נִקְרָאת כְּמוֹ תִּיק וְאָרוֹן שְׁהֵם תְּשִׁמִּישִׁי קְדוּשָׁה, וְרָאָה עַל זֶה שְׁהִרִי הַנִּיצוּץ לֹא תִבַּע כְּלוּם. וּבְכָאֵן מִן הַדִּין הֵיךָ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל יַעֲשׂוּ נִקְמָה בְּמִדְיָן לְפִי מָה שְׁהַחֲטִיאוּם, אֶלָּא לְפִי שְׂמִישָׁה נִתְגַּדֵּל שֶׁם וְנִשָּׂא אִשָּׁה שֶׁם הִזְתָּה צְרִיכָה מַלְחָמָה זֶה לְהַעֲשׂוֹת עַל יְדֵי מִשָּׁה כְּדֵי לְהַרְאוֹת שְׂאִין לָהֶם דִּין תְּשִׁמִּישִׁי קְדוּשָׁה, וְאִם הֵיךָ מִתְּשָׁה קוֹדֵם לֹא הֵיךָ אֶפְשָׁר עוֹד לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לִיטוֹל נִקְמָה, וּמִשׁוּם הָכִי אָמַר הַכְּתוּב "נִקָּם נִקְמַת" וְכוּ' "אֶחָד תִּאָּסֵף" וְכוּ', לְפִי שְׂאֶחָד שְׂנֵאָסֵפְתָּ אִין מְקוּם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לִיטוֹל נִקְמָה מֵהֶם.

But if that spark of holiness does not wage war against that nation, then it is a sign that it suffered no harm from the *klipah*. Then the generation of that spark or the righteous person connected to it cannot take vengeance upon that nation, because on the contrary, it did good to this generation by not bringing [the spark of holiness] into the world until now, which benefited this particular generation. One might say that the *klipah* did no harm at all to the holiness. If so, then it is considered like a case or an ark, which are vessels used for sacred objects. The proof for this is that the spark did not make any claim of damages; i.e., it did not seek retribution.

But in this case, it was proper for Israel to exact vengeance upon Midian, because they caused them to sin by enticing them into sexual immorality and idolatry.²⁰ However, since Moses

²⁰ Num. 25:1–15.

reached maturity there²¹ and married a woman from there,²² it was necessary for this war to be carried out by Moses, in order to demonstrate that [Midian] does not have the status of an accessory of a sacred object. If Moses had died beforehand, it would no longer have been possible for Israel to take vengeance. Therefore, Scripture says, “You shall surely avenge the Israelite people on the Midianites; then you shall be gathered to your kin,” because once you are gathered to your kin, Israel will no longer be able to take vengeance upon them.

אָבֵל עֲדֵיין קִשָּׁה לְשׁוֹן הַמְדָּרֵשׁ הַנֶּאֱמָר לְעֵיל דְאָמַר שְׂאֵם מִשָּׁה הָיָה רוֹצֵה לְחַיּוֹת הַרְבֵּה לֹא הָיָה אֶפְשָׁר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לִיטּוֹל נִקְמָתָם אֲלֵא עַד סְמוּךְ לְמִיתָתוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה, וְהַדְּבָר צָרִיךְ בִּיאוּר לָמָּה זֶה נֶעַל מֶה זֶה. אֲמָנָם בָּמָּה שְׁנִכְתּוּב בַּחִידוּשׁ הַבָּא יוֹבֵן שְׁפִיר וְדוֹק, וְעֵיין עוֹד לְקַמֵּן בְּפִרְשַׁת הָאֲזִינוּ בְּעִנְיַן גּוֹג וּמַגּוּג.

However, it is still difficult to understand the language of the Midrash quoted above, which said that if Moses had wished to live longer, Israel would not have been able to take their vengeance until just before Moses’ death. This matter requires clarification, why should this be so, and for what reason?

But with what we will write in the next insight, Essay 5, it will be well understood, for Moses himself deserved punishment, for he did not rebuke the tribe of Shimon, which the census figures show were the victims of the plague of 24,000 Israelites who perished. Examine this carefully.

Also, see further below in Parashat Ha’azinu, Essay 7, regarding the matter of Gog and Magog, in which we further discuss whether the nations that once harbored sparks of holiness should be treated as accessories of sacred objects.

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²¹ Ex. 2:15.

²² Ex. 2:21.