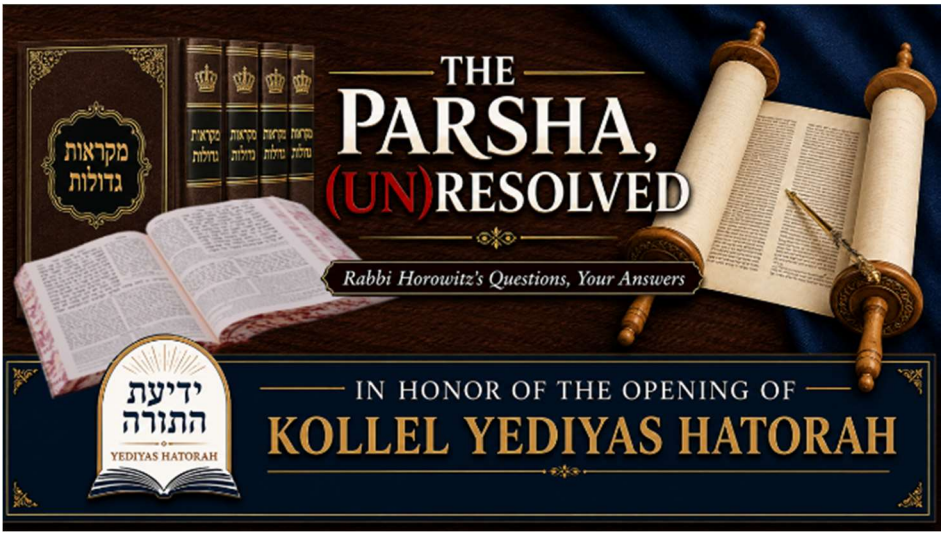


Parshas Berashis

שנת תשפ"ז

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

Lemech's Kal Vachomer

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THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

Lemech's Kal Vachomer

ד:כג וַיֹּאמֶר לֶמֶךְ לְנָשָׁיו עָדָה וְצִלָּה שְׁמַעַן קוֹלִי נְשֵׁי לֶמֶךְ הַאֲזֵנָּה אִמְרָתִי כִּי אִישׁ הָרַגְתִּי לְפִצְעִי וְיֶלֶד לְחַבֻּרָתִי:

And Lemech said to his wives, Adah and Tzillah: Hear my voice, wives of Lemech, listen to my words; for have I killed a man by my wound, and a child by my injury?

Rashi explains, in his second interpretation: "And the Midrash Bereishis Rabbah says: Lemech did not kill anyone. His wives separated from him after they had fulfilled the mitzvah of having children, because a decree had been issued that the descendants of Kayin would be destroyed after seven generations. They said: Why should we give birth in vain? Tomorrow the Flood will come and wash everything away. He said to them: 'Have I killed a man by my wound?' Did I kill Hevel, who was a man in stature and a child in years, that my descendants should be destroyed because of that sin? If Kayin, who killed, had his punishment suspended for seven generations, then I, who did not kill, certainly should have it suspended for many times seven generations! This is a foolish kal vachomer, for if so, Hashem would never collect His debt and fulfill His word."

But were it not for the words of the Midrash, his argument would seem very correct.

It says in Shemos 34:7, "He visits the sin of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, upon the third generation and upon the fourth generation," it seems that this pasuk fits together with our case. The meaning may be that Hashem visits the sin upon the fourth generation in addition to the third, for a total of seven generations, as we find here: "Sevenfold shall Kayin be avenged," meaning, after seven generations.

However, see Sanhedrin 27b: "A man shall be put to death for his own sin"... But are children not punished for the sin of their fathers? Is it not written, "He visits the sin of the fathers upon the children"? There it is speaking when they continue to hold onto the deeds of their fathers. **Rashi himself similarly explains the pasuk:** "He visits the sin of the fathers upon the children — when they continue to hold onto the deeds of their fathers, as He already explained elsewhere, 'to those who hate Me.'"

If so, in our case, according to the Midrash Lemech had not killed anyone. Certainly the punishment decreed upon Kayin should not apply to him, exactly as Lemech himself argued by means of a kal vachomer. And seemingly Hashem Himself agrees with the basic point of his argument in the pasuk, "A man shall be put to death for his own sin"!

THE QUESTION Why do Chazal say that this is a foolish kal vachomer, when it would seem that Hashem Himself agrees with the basic point of Lemech's argument?

Consider the question and send your approach before next week's issue.

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION & ANSWERS

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

Parshas V'Zos Habracha 5787

Was Shevet Gad Strong or Weak?

לג:כ — וּלְגָד אָמַר בָּרוּךְ מַרְחִיב גָּד כְּלָבִיא שָׁכֵן וְטָרַף זְרוֹעַ אַף־קָדְקֹד:

"And of Gad he said: Blessed is He Who broadens Gad, he dwells like a lion, and tears the arm together with the crown of the head."

Rashi explains, "*He dwells like a lion* — Because his territory was near the border, he is compared to lions, for those who live near the border must be mighty. *And tears the arm together with the crown of the head* — Their slain could be recognized by their wounds, for they would sever the head together with the arm in a single blow." Rashi thus describes Shevet Gad as exceptionally mighty, precisely the type of warriors suited to live along the border.

Yet earlier, on pasuk 18, Rashi writes that Gad was one of the five weakest shevatim, "These five shevatim whom he blessed last — Zevulun, Gad, Dan, Naftali, and Asher — he repeated their names in order to strengthen and empower them, because they were the weakest of all the shevatim… Yosef brought these before Pharaoh because they appeared weak, so that Pharaoh would not appoint them as officers in his army."

THE QUESTION **Rashi seemingly contradicts himself regarding Shevet Gas's strength.**

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

It is worth noting that the same question can also be asked regarding the tribe of Dan: "And of Dan he said: Dan is a lion cub; he leaps from the Bashan," and Rashi explains: "Dan is a lion cub — he too lived near the border, and therefore he compares him to lions." Yet Dan too was among the five weak tribes mentioned above.

1. The simplest answer was suggested by several Talmidei Chachamim, and this also seems to be the understanding of the **Sifsei Chachamim**: indeed, these tribes were the weaker ones among all the tribes, but since they were destined to live on the border and would need to defend all of Eretz Yisrael, Moshe therefore blessed them that they should become mighty enough to fulfill their role. It was only through his blessing that they became mighty like lions.

It is still somewhat difficult: why place specifically the weaker tribes on the border, in a way that required a special blessing to strengthen them? Would it not have been better to place the stronger tribes on the border, and then bless them to become even stronger?

Perhaps it can be said that in truth all the tribes were mighty, as Rashi explains in Bereishis 44:13: "Each man loaded his donkey — they were men of strength and did not need to help one another load." It was only in relation to one another that some were stronger and some weaker. But even the weaker among them, compared to ordinary people, were very mighty, and were therefore fully fit to defend the border.

On the contrary, our primary task is not warfare, but Avodas Hashem and Torah study. It therefore makes sense that the choicest among the nation, and those possessing the greatest strength, should be more fully devoted to Avodas Hashem, rather than using their strength for guarding the border — something that any of the tribes could do very well. As R' Yochanan said to Reish Lakish [Bava Metzia 84a], "Your strength is for Torah!" We therefore find that the service in the Beis Hamikdash and the responsibility to teach Torah to Klal Yisrael were given to the tribe of Levi, one of the stronger tribes. Yehudah as well was especially associated

with Torah study, as it says, "Yehudah is my lawgiver," and similarly Yissachar: "Those of Yissachar who understood the times, to know what Yisrael should do," as discussed in Meseches Yoma 26a.

2. Some suggested that although Yosef brought these five weak brothers before Pharaoh, we have no proof that their descendants in the days of Moshe were also weak. Even if Gad himself was weak, his descendants several generations later could have been extremely mighty.

However, according to this, it is difficult to understand Rashi's explanation that Moshe repeated their names in order to strengthen and empower them. Why should they have needed this because their ancestor had been weak several generations earlier?

2. In truth, this itself raises a major question on Rashi: what connection is there between Yosef bringing those brothers before Pharaoh because of their weakness, and the blessing of their descendants in the days of Moshe Rabbeinu? Therefore, I believe that there is room to examine these words of Rashi more closely.

Rashi in Bereishis 47:2 already cites a disagreement as to which tribes Yosef brought before Pharaoh. He first quotes a Medrash Raba which explains that Yosef chose five of the brothers who appeared weaker, so that Pharaoh would not select them for military service. These were Reuven, Shimon, Levi, Yissachar, and Binyamin. The fact that they were weaker is indicated by that which Moshe did not repeat their names in his blessings, whereas he did repeat the names of the stronger brothers.

Rashi continues that the Bavli gives the opposite identification - the brothers whose names Moshe repeated were actually the weaker ones, and these were the five whom Yosef brought before Pharaoh. Yehudah is an exception, since the repetition of his name was for a different reason. The Sifrei follows the same view as the Bavli.

The opinion of the Medrash is easily understood. The repetition of the names is simply an indication to us which brothers were more mighty, with no connection

to the situation in the days of Moshe Rabbeinu. And as it happened, the tribes of Gad and Dan were also mighty like their ancestor, were compared to lions, and lived on the border, as is explicit in the pesukim.

On the other hand stands the opinion of the Gemara and the Sifrei, which is also the opinion of Targum Yonasan there in Parashas Vayigash, that Yosef brought before Pharaoh those whose names were repeated. What is very interesting is that none of those sources says that these tribes were weak, or that the reason their names were repeated was in order to strengthen them.

The **Gemara in Bava Kama** 92a says: "Rava said to Rabbah bar Mari: It is written, 'From among his brothers he took five men.' Who were these five? He said to him: Thus said R' Yochanan: those whose names were repeated. But Yehudah's name was also repeated? He answered: His name was repeated for a different matter..." It is only Rashi himself who adds and explains there: "The pasuk teaches that they were the weakest of all, and required strengthening. Therefore he repeated their names to strengthen them. Yosef brought those before Pharaoh so that Pharaoh would not choose them to be military commanders and burden them."

Similarly, the **Sifrei** simply says regarding each of these five tribes: "And of Zevulun he said — why is this stated? Because it says, 'From among his brothers he took five men and presented them before Pharaoh,' but their names were not specified, and this was one of them." The same is said regarding all five of these tribes, without any explanation why specifically these five were chosen. Likewise, **Targum Yonasan** says: "And from among his brothers he took five men — Zevulun, Dan, Naftali, Gad, and Asher — and presented them before Pharaoh," again without explaining the reason.

Were it not for Rashi, we would not need to explain that these tribes were weak and that Yosef did not want Pharaoh to place them in the army. The source for that idea is the Midrash Rabbah, according to which these five brothers were not brought before Pharaoh at all. It appears that Rashi understands that the Midrashim disagree only as to which brothers were brought, but not regarding the

meaning of "from among his brothers" — namely, from the weaker ones — or regarding Yosef's reason for choosing those five specifically.

For this reason, Rashi is forced to introduce a different explanation for the repetition of the names: that it was in order to strengthen the weaker tribes. But this is very difficult, as we already noted. The simple implication of the pesukim is that they were among the strongest of all the tribes, and there is also no obvious reason to assume that an entire tribe would be weak merely because their ancestor had been weak several generations earlier.

If not for Rashi, it would seem possible to explain differently: there is no disagreement as to which tribes were actually stronger or weaker, and all agreed that the repetition of the names in Moshe's blessing was intended to indicate their strength. Their only disagreement was regarding Yosef's intention in choosing which brothers to bring before Pharaoh.

According to the Midrash, he chose the weaker brothers in order to conceal the strength of the others, so that Pharaoh would not place them in his army. But according to the Gemara, we can suggest an entirely different reason. Perhaps he specifically wished to intimidate Pharaoh and discourage him from fighting them, or something similar. Nor must "from among his brothers" mean those inferior in strength; it could mean those of lesser lineage — the four sons of the maidservants and the youngest son of Leah.

It therefore requires explanation why Rashi combines the reasoning of the Midrash Rabbah with the opinion of the Bavli in a way that gives rise to all of the above difficulties.

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