

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter VI: Toldot (Gen. 25:19-28:9)

### Essay 4. Was David bloodthirsty?

**יְלִקוּט** על פסוק "וַיִּשְׁלַח בְּיָבִיאָהּ וְהוּא אֲדָמוּנִי", פִּיּוֹן שְׂרָאָה שְׂמוּאֵל אֶת דָּוִד אֲדָמוּנִי נִתְיַרָא אָמַר זֶה שׁוֹפֵף דָּמִים כְּעֵשׂוֹ, אָמַר לוֹ הַקַּב"ה עֵשׂוֹ מִדַּעַת עֲצָמוֹ הוּא הוֹרֵג אֲבָל זֶה מִדַּעַת סְנֵהֲדָרִין הוּא הוֹרֵג עַכ"ל. קִשְׁשָׁה וְכִי לֹא הָיָה לוֹ לְהִיּוֹת כִּף נֶהְלֵא כְּתִיב בְּדוֹד "כִּי דָמִים רַבִּים שָׁפַכְתָּ", שְׁהָיָה לוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת הַרְבֵּה מִלְחָמוֹת עִם אוֹיְבָיו ו"מֵה־הָיָה לוֹ" לִירָא.

**Yalkut Shimoni, on the verse** in which the prophet, Samuel, meets David and is commanded by G-d to anoint him as the future king, **“So they sent and brought him. He was ruddy-cheeked, bright-eyed, and handsome. And the L-rd said, ‘Rise and anoint him, for this is the one.’”**<sup>1</sup> **“When Samuel saw that David was ruddy, he was afraid and said: ‘This one will shed blood, like Esau.’ The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him, ‘Esau killed at his own initiative, but this one kills at the initiative of Sanhedrin.’”**<sup>2</sup>

**This is difficult to understand. Wasn't it supposed to be this way? After all, it is written about David: “You have shed much blood.”**<sup>3</sup> **He was supposed to fight many wars with his enemies, so “what happened to him,”**<sup>4</sup> **to Samuel, to be afraid?**

וְנִשׁ לֹאמַר שֶׁזֶה הָאֲדָמוּנוֹת אֵינּוּ סִימָן שֶׁיְהִיָּה שׁוֹפֵף דָּמִים לְבַד, אֲלֵא שְׂמֻנְגוֹ רַע, כְּדָאִיתָא בְּמִדְרָשׁ עַל פְּסוּק "וַיִּצְאָה הָרֵאשִׁוֹן אֲדָמוּנִי" שֶׁשָּׂתָה כָּל דָּם נִידָתָהּ, וְלָכֵן כְּשֶׁרָאָה שְׂמוּאֵל אֶת דָּוִד אֲדָמוּנִי נִתְיַרָא וְאָמַר, אִף כִּי הָאֲמָתָה הוּא שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת הַרְבֵּה מִלְחָמוֹת, עִם כָּל זֶה לֹא הָיָה לוֹ לִיטַנֵּף וּלְטַמֵּא נַשְׁמָתוֹ כְּעֵשׂוֹ בְּדָם נִידָהּ, כְּמוֹ שְׂמֵלֶת "אֲדָמוּנִי" רוֹמְזֶת עַל זֶה, וְהַשִּׁיב לוֹ הַקַּב"ה עֵשׂוֹ מִדַּעַת עֲצָמוֹ וְכו'.

**One can say that this redness is not necessarily a sign that he is a bloodshedder, but rather that his nature is bad, as is stated in the Midrash on the verse, “The first one emerged red, like a hairy mantle all over; so they named him Esau,”**<sup>5</sup> **which explains that in the womb, Esau drank all the blood of her menstruation,**<sup>6</sup> **i.e., he absorbed the moral contamination from his mother, creating a violent nature. Therefore, when Samuel saw that David was ruddy, he became afraid and said: “Even though the truth is that he will have to engage in many wars,**

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<sup>1</sup> I Sam. 16:12.

<sup>2</sup> Yalkut Shimoni, parashat Toldot, remez 110:24; Yalkut Shimoni on Nach 124:9; Gen. Rabbah 63:8.

<sup>3</sup> I Chron. 22:8.

<sup>4</sup> Ex. 32:1, 32:23.

<sup>5</sup> Gen. 25:25.

<sup>6</sup> Yalkut Shimoni, parashat Toldot, remez 110:25.

**nonetheless, he should not stain and defile his soul like Esau, with the blood of menstruation.” The word “ruddy” alludes to this. The Holy One, Blessed be He, responded to him: “Esau killed at his own initiative, etc.”**

וַעֲדִיין קָשָׁה מֵהַ תִּירוֹץ הוּא זֶה וְלָמָּה שָׁתָּה דָּם נִידָה, וַיֵּשׁ לֹאֲמַר דְּלַעֲוֹלָם לֹא שָׁתָּה, וְלָמָּה קָרָאוּ "אֲדָמוּנִי" מִשּׁוּם דְּאֲמַרִּינָן בְּמִדְרָשׁ פְּרָשַׁת תְּזַרְיַע עַל פְּסוּק "חַיִּים וְחֶסֶד עֲשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי", אִם שָׁל אִשָּׁה מְלֵא דָם עֹמֵד וּמִמֶּנּוּ יוֹצֵא לְמַקּוֹר נִידָתָהּ, וּבִרְצוֹנָהּ שָׁל הַקַּב"ה הוֹלֵכֶת טִיפָה שָׁל לְבָנוֹת בְּתוֹכוֹ וּמִיָּד הַנֶּלֶד נוֹצֵר ע"כ. וּבִסְפָר עֲשָׂרָה מְאֻמְרוֹת (מְאֻמְרָה חֲקוֹר דִּין ח"ג פ' עֲשִׂירִי) כִּתֵּב שְׁנַפְּשׁ דָּוִד הֵיטָה מִתְקַשָּׁה לְצֵאת לְהִתְלַבֵּשׁ בְּאוֹתָהּ טִיפָה שֶׁהִזְרִיעַ אָבִיו בְּשַׁעַה שֶׁהָיָה שׁוֹתָה בְּכּוֹס זֶה וְנוֹתֵן עֵינָיו וְלִבּוֹ בְּכּוֹס אַחֵר, וְהַקַּב"ה בִּישָׂרוֹ שְׂאָבִיו צְדִיק גָּמוֹר וְכָל מַעֲשָׂיו לְשֵׁם שְׁמַיִם, וְהַבְּטִיחוּ עַל דַּעַת אִמּוֹ שֶׁעָשָׂתָה בְּזֶה עֲבִירָה לְשָׂמָה עכ"ל.

**Yet this remains difficult: What kind of answer is this, and why did David drink the blood of menstruation? One can say that he never actually drank it, and so why is he called “ruddy,” because it is said in the Midrash, parashat Tazria on the verse, “You created life and kindness for me”<sup>7</sup>: “A woman’s womb is filled with blood, and from there it emerges and goes to the place of her menstruation. By the will of the Holy One, Blessed be He, a white drop goes and falls inside it; immediately the fetus is formed.”<sup>8</sup>**

**In the book *Asara Ma’amarot* (Ma’amar Chakor Din, part 3, section 10) it is written that although Yishai and his wife had many children, he began to have concerns about whether his grandfather Boaz had been correct to marry Ruth, the convert from Moab. Yishai thought that perhaps he was unworthy to remain married to his wife, and he planned to instead have a child with his maidservant. However, she secretly switched places with his wife, and she became pregnant. At this point, the soul of David was struggling to emerge and to be clothed in that drop that his father had sowed when he was drinking from one cup, i.e., having relations with his wife, but directing his eyes and heart towards another cup, i.e., thinking that he was with his maidservant. The Holy One, Blessed be He, informed [David’s soul] that his father was a completely righteous man and that all his actions were for the sake of Heaven, and assured him that, regarding his mother, that the offense she committed, tricking Yishai by changing places with the maidservant, was done for the sake of Heaven.**

וְזוֹ הִיא פְּנוּנַת הַמִּדְרָשׁ הַזֶּה כֹּל הַנּוֹלָדִים נוֹצְרִים מִיָּד שֶׁנּוֹזְרָעוּ וְאֵינָם מִתְעַפְּבִים כְּלוּם תוֹךְ אוֹתוֹ דָּם נִידָה שֶׁבְּתוֹךְ הָאֵם שָׁל הָאִשָּׁה, אֲבָל דָּוִד שֶׁנִּתְעַפֵּב שֵׁם הַרְבֵּה לְפִי שֶׁהִיטָה נִפְשׁוֹ מִתְקַשָּׁה לְצֵאת לְהִתְלַבֵּשׁ וְכוּ', עַל כֵּן קִלְטָה הַטִּיפָה אוֹתוֹ הַצָּבַע אֲדָמוּנִי וְהָיָה דוֹמָה כְּמִי שֶׁשָׁתָּה אוֹתוֹ דָּם, וְהֵאָמַת הוּא שֶׁלֹּא שָׁתָּה כְּלוּם, שֶׁלֹּאֲחֵר שֶׁנִּכְנְסָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ בְּאוֹתָהּ הַטִּיפָה נוֹצֵר הַנֶּלֶד וְנִפְרָשׁ מֵהַדָּם שֶׁיֵּשׁ בָּאֵם הָאִשָּׁה, מֵהַ שְׂאִין כֵּן עֲשׂוֹ שְׂאֵר לְאֲחֵר שֶׁנִּכְנְסָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ בְּטִיפָה שֶׁלּוֹ שָׁתָּה מִרְצוֹנוֹ דָּם נִידָתָהּ שָׁל אִמּוֹ, וּמִשּׁוּם הֵכִי הוֹרֵג נְמִי מִדַּעַת עֲצָמוֹ, מֵהַ שְׂאִין כֵּן דָּוִד שֶׁקִּלְטַת הַצָּבַע שֶׁלֹּא כִּרְצוֹנוֹ וּמִשּׁוּם הֵכִי הוֹרֵג מִדַּעַת סְנֵהֲדָרִין.

**And this is the meaning of the Midrash: Here, all the beings that are born are immediately created as soon as they are sown, and they do not delay at all within the menstrual blood of the mother. However, regarding David—whose soul was delayed there for a long time because it was struggling to emerge and be clothed—the drop he absorbed took**

<sup>7</sup> Job 10:12.

<sup>8</sup> Lev. Rabbah 14:9.

on a reddish hue from the *niddah* blood because of the delay, and it appeared as though he had drunk that blood. But the truth is that he drank nothing, for after the soul entered that drop, the fetus was formed and separated from the blood that was in the mother. This is not the case with Esau, who, even after the soul entered his drop, willingly drank his mother's menstrual blood. Therefore, he killed by his own will, whereas David, who absorbed the color unwillingly, killed by the authority of the Sanhedrin.

אָבֵל עֲדִיין קָשָׁה נִהְיָא אִף דְּוֹד הָרַג שְׁלֵא בְּסִנְהֶדְרִין, דְּאִמְרִינן בְּמַסְכַּת שַׁבָּת פָּרַק ה' שְׁהֵיגָה לוֹ לְדוֹן אֶת אוֹרְיָה בְּסִנְהֶדְרִין וְלֹא דָנוּ. וְיֵשׁ לוֹמֵר שְׁבַעֲקָר הֵדִין אִם מוֹרֵד בְּמַלְכוּת צָרִיד לְדוֹנוּ בְּסִנְהֶדְרִין אוֹ לֹא, מֵצִינּוּ מַחְלוּקַת בֵּין תּוֹסְפוֹת וְהַרְמָב"ם, שְׁמַדְבָּרֵי הַרְמָב"ם (בְּפָרַק ג' מֵהַלְכוּת מְלָכִים) נִרְאֶה דְלֹא בְּעֵי סִנְהֶדְרִין כָּלֵל, שְׁכַתֵּב סֵתָם, יֵשׁ לְמַלְאָךְ רְשׁוּת לְהוֹרְגוֹ, וּמַדְבָּרֵי תּוֹסְפוֹת בְּסִנְהֶדְרִין (דָּף ל"ו) נִרְאֶה דְסָבִירָא לְהוּ דְצָרִיד לְדוֹנוּ בְּסִנְהֶדְרִין אֲלֵא דְלֹא דִיִּינִינן לִי כְּשֶׁאֵר חֲזִיבֵי מִיתוּת בֵּית דִּין וְעִי"ש. וּמַעֲמָה אֲפָשָׁר לוֹמֵר שְׁדוּד עֲשָׂה מַעֲשָׂה כְּסִבְרַת הַרְמָב"ם דְּאִין צָרִיד לְדוֹנוּ בְּסִנְהֶדְרִין כָּלֵל, וְהַנְּבִיא הוֹכִיחוּ שְׁהֵיגָה לוֹ לְחוּשׁ לְסִבְרַת הַתּוֹסְפוֹת כְּדִי לְהַצִּיל נַפְשׁ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל דְכָתִיב בְּהוּ "וְשִׁפְטוּ הָעֵדָה . . . וְהַצִּילוּ הָעֵדָה", אָבֵל מְכַל מְקוּם לֹא נִקְרָא שְׁהַרְגַּ מִדַּעַת עֲצָמוּ, אֲלֵא שְׁסַבֵּר שְׁהֵדִין הוּא כָּד.

But it is still difficult, and in fact, for even David killed someone without the Sanhedrin's approval, as it is said in tractate Shabbat, chapter 5 (56a), that he should have judged Uriah in the Sanhedrin, but they did not judge him. It can be said that in principle, if someone rebels against the monarchy, it is a question whether they should be judged by the Sanhedrin or not. We find a disagreement between Tosafot and the Rambam on this matter. From the words of the Rambam (in chapter 3 of the Laws of Kings, halacha 8), it appears that he does not require the Sanhedrin at all, as he writes generally that the king has the authority to kill him. But from the words of Tosafot in tractate Sanhedrin (page 36a, commentary on the word "Rabba"), it appears that they hold that the person should be judged by the Sanhedrin, but we do not judge him as we do with other capital offenders by the court. See there.

And now, it is possible to say that David acted according to the opinion of the Rambam, who holds that there is no need for him to be judged by the Sanhedrin at all.

However, the prophet rebuked him, saying that he should have considered the view of Tosafot, in order to save the life of a Jew, as it is written, "the assembly shall decide between the slayer and the blood-avenger in such cases; The assembly shall protect the killer from the blood-avenger, and the assembly shall restore him to the city of refuge to which he fled, and there he shall remain until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the sacred oil."<sup>9</sup> But in any case, it is not considered that he killed by his own will, but rather that he believed the law to be such.

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<sup>9</sup> Num. 35:24–25.

ובנה יובן הפסוק "את אוריה החתי הכית בקרב", ולמה דוקא בקרב, כדי להראות שהנה מורד במלכות שדינו ליהרג בקרב דוקא כמו שפסק שם הרמב"ם, ולמה לא חששת לסברת התוספות כדי להציל נפש, צריך לומר שהואיל שהטעם שמורד במלכות חייב מיתה הוא מפני שזולג בכבודו של מלך, הוא הדין שאין לו למלך לזלזל בעצמו, וכאן שפנונת דוד היתה ליקח את אשתו שהיתה כבר מעוברת ממנו, הנה לה בוששת פנים לדונו בסנהדרין. אבל מאי טעמא "אתו הרגת בקרב בני עמון" ששם עבודה נרה הנה חקוק על אותה הקרב כדאיתא בזוהר.

**With this, we can understand the verse in which Nathan criticized David: "You have struck Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you took his wife and made her your wife and killed him by the sword of the Ammonites."<sup>10</sup> David ordered Uriah to the frontlines against the Ammonites, where it was almost certain that he would be killed, as indeed happened. Why did he kill him specifically with the sword? To show that he was rebelling against the monarchy, and his punishment was to be killed by the sword, just as the Rambam rules there.**

**Why didn't you consider the view of Tosafot, in order to save a life? We must say that since the reason a rebel against the monarchy is sentenced to death is because he has belittled the honor of the king, it follows that the king himself should not belittle his own honor. Here, since David's intent was to take the wife of Uriah, who was already pregnant with his child, it would have been a disgrace to David to judge [Uriah] in the Sanhedrin. But why is it that Nathan criticized David by saying, "you killed him by the sword of the Ammonites." Because [the sword] had idolatry engraved on it, as is stated in the Zohar:**

On each of the swords of the children of Amon, a crooked serpent was engraved, an image of a dragon, which is their idol. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said, you have empowered that abomination. For when the children of Amon killed Uriah together with many of the children of Yisrael, the sword of the children of Amon grew strong at that time, and much strength was added to that idol and abomination.

- Zohar II:107a

אמנם עדיין יש לדקדק בסברת הרמב"ם הנזכר למעלה, דהא מדהוכיח הנביא לדוד על זה שמע מינה שהדין הוא שצריך לדונו בסנהדרין. וגש לומר דהקא שאני, שאוריה לא נתפגון קלל למרוד במלכות ומשום הכי הנה צריך לדונו בסנהדרין אם נקרא מורד במלכות או לא, וכשאנו אומרים שיש רשות למלך הונו היקא שמכונן ודאי למרוד בו. ומטעם זה אפשר לומר שהוצרך שלמה להוסיף חומר השבועה על ציווי לשמע, כדי שיתחייב מיתה אף אם יעבור בלא פנונת מרד, כמו שבאמת כן הנה המעשה.

**However, there is still a question on the reasoning of Maimonides mentioned above, for the prophet rebuked David for this, which implies that the law is that he should have been judged by the Sanhedrin. It can be said that here it is different, since Uriah did not intend to rebel against the monarchy at all. Therefore, it was necessary to judge him in the Sanhedrin to determine whether he could be considered a rebel against the monarchy or not. When we say that the king has the authority to kill, this applies only when the person is clearly intending to rebel.**

<sup>10</sup> II Sam. 12:9.

**For this reason, it can be said that Solomon had to add the severity of the oath to the command to Shimei, so that he would be liable for death even if he transgressed without the intent of rebellion, as in fact happened in this case.** This refers to I Kings, chapter 2, where David explained that Shimei had insulted him,<sup>11</sup> but then upon later meeting him, David swore that he would not [personally] have him killed. However, at the end of his life, David instructed his son, Solomon, to take revenge for him, saying: “So do not let him go unpunished; for you are a wise man and you will know how to deal with him and send his gray hair down to Sheol in blood.”<sup>12</sup> Solomon ordered Shimei to move to Jerusalem and remain there, but after 3 years Shimei left. When he returned, Solomon had him executed.<sup>13</sup>

וְנָהוּ מִשְׁמֵעוֹת הַכְּתוּב "וְנִעְתָה אֶל-תִּנְקָהוּ", וְקִשָּׁה דְאִיךְ מִצְנָה לֹא שְׁלֵא יִנְקָהוּ וְהָא אִם לֹא יִמְצָא עֲוֹלָתָהּ בּוֹ אִי אֶפְשָׁר לֹא לְהַמִּיתוֹ, וְעַל זֶה תִּירֵץ, "כִּי אִישׁ חָכָם אֶתָּה", אֲכַל הוּא אֵינּוּ אִישׁ חָכָם וְלִפְעָמִים יִהְיֶה תּוֹעֵה בְּשׂוֹגֵג, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּבַר חֲטָא וְזָלַל בְּדוֹד, וְגַמְרִי אֵין אָדָם חוֹטֵא אֶלָּא אִם כֵּן נִכְנָס בּוֹ רוּחַ שְׁטוּת, וְ"מֵה-שִׁהְיָה הוּא שִׁיְהֶיָה" כִּי "עֲוֹנוֹתָיו יִלְכְּדוּ".

**This is the meaning of the verse, “So do not let him go unpunished.” This is difficult to understand, for how can he command that he not be absolved, when if no guilt is found in him, it is impossible to kill him? About this, it is explained, “You are a wise man,” but Shimei is not a wise man, and sometimes he may err unintentionally, as he already sinned and insulted David. We learn that a person does not sin unless a spirit of folly enters him.**<sup>14</sup> “What has been will be,”<sup>15</sup> for “the wicked man’s sins will trap him.”<sup>16</sup>

**אִי נִמְלִי** בְּדִרְבָּר אַחֲרָת, דְּהִנֵּה נִחְלָקוּ רִשׁ"י וְר"ת, דְּרִשׁ"י אָמַר שֶׁהֵגֵט פְּרִיטוֹת שֶׁהֵיָה כּוֹתֵב אִישׁ לְאִשְׁתּוֹ הֵיָה עַל תְּנָאי אִם יָמוּת בְּמִלְחָמָה, וְר"ת סוֹבֵר שֶׁהֵיָה גֵט גָּמוּר בְּצִנְעָא. וּבְעַל חִידוּשֵׁי אַגְדוֹת תִּירֵץ לְמָה לֹא דָנוּ בְּסִנְהֶדְרִין אֵלֶיכָא דְרִשׁ"י דְּאָמַר שֶׁהֵגֵט הֵיָה עַל תְּנָאי אִם יָמוּת בְּמִלְחָמָה, שְׂאֵם הֵיָה דֵּן אוֹתוֹ בְּסִנְהֶדְרִין לֹא הֵיָה גֵט לְמַפְרַע מִפְּנֵי שְׁלֵא הֵיָה מֵת בְּמִלְחָמָה, וְלִדְבָרֵי ר"ת שֶׁאָמַר שֶׁהֵיָה גֵט גָּמוּר בְּצִנְעָא יֵשׁ לוֹמַר שְׁלֵא דָנוּ בְּסִנְהֶדְרִין שְׁלֵא יֵאמְרוּ בָּא עֲלֵינוּ בְּעִקְפִין עַכ"ל.

**Alternatively, it can be explained in another way. Behold, Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam disagree—Rashi says that the bill of divorce that a man wrote to his wife was conditional, that if he dies in battle, it would take effect. But Rabbeinu Tam holds that it was a complete bill of divorce, written secretly.**<sup>17</sup>

**And the author of *Chiddushei Aggadot*, i.e., the Maharsha, explained why they did not judge him in the Sanhedrin according to Rashi, who says the bill of divorce was conditional on his death in battle. He said that if they had judged him in the Sanhedrin, the bill of divorce would not have been valid retroactively, because he did not die in battle. But according to Rabbeinu Tam, who says it was a complete bill of divorce, one can say they did not judge him in the Sanhedrin so that they would not say they acted indirectly against him.**

<sup>11</sup> As related in II Sam. 16:13.

<sup>12</sup> I Kings 2:9.

<sup>13</sup> I Kings 2:36–46.

<sup>14</sup> Sotah 3a.

<sup>15</sup> Eccl. 1:9.

<sup>16</sup> Prov. 5:22.

<sup>17</sup> Shabbat 56a, commentary on “*Get*”.

ובנה נפרש הפסוק, "את אוריה הקחי הכית בתרב", ולמה בתרב, מפני שהיה מורד במלכות, "ואת-אשתו לקחת לך לאשה", דמשמע כבר לקחה אפילו קודם שימות אוריה, שמע מינה דסבירא לך כפירוש ר"ת שהגט היה גט גמור, ואם כן למה "ואתו הרגת בתרב בני עמון" דנראה דסבירא לך כפירוש רש"י שהגט היה על תנאי, אם ימות במלחמה יהיה גט, ואם לאו לא יהיה גט, ובשביל זה הרגת אותו "בתרב בני עמון", ועל כן עבדת תרמי דסתרן אהדדי או כרש"י או כרבינו תם.

**With this, we can explain the verse of Nathan's criticism: "You have struck Uriah the Hittite with the sword"—and why with the sword? Because he was a rebel against the monarchy. "You took his wife and made her your wife"—which implies that he already took her even before Uriah died. From this, we can infer that you follow the explanation of Rabbeinu Tam, that the bill of divorce was a complete bill of divorce.**

**But if so, why is it that "you killed him by the sword of the Ammonites"? This suggests that you follow the explanation of Rashi, that the bill of divorce was conditional, that if he dies in battle, it would be valid, but if not, it would not be valid. For this reason, you killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Thus, you acted in a way that contradicts itself, whether according to Rashi or according to Rabbeinu Tam.**

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