

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XLIV: Devarim (Deut. 1:1–3:22)

Essay 1. Why an initial hint is later made explicit

"אלה הדברים" פרש רש"י לפי שהן דברי תוכחות לפיכך סתם הדברים והזכירם ברמז, מפני כבודם של ישראל. קשה דהא לשמן במשנה תורה גופניה התזכרו פולם בפירוש, מחלוקת קרח ומרגלים ועגל וכו' ומהו שפאן סתם, ומה פבוד יש לישראל כאן.

“These are the words that Moses addressed to all Israel on the other side of the Jordan: Through the wilderness, in the Arabah near Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahab, it is eleven days from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea by the Mount Seir route.”¹ **Rashi explained: “Because these are words of rebuke** and he is enumerating here all the places where they provoked G-d to anger, **therefore he suppresses all mention** [of the matters in which they sinned] **and refers to them by hint** [contained in the names of these places] **because of the honor due Israel.**”²

A difficulty is that later in the repetition of the Law itself, i.e., in the Book of Deuteronomy, **all of these** discussions of how they provoked G-d **are repeated explicitly: the controversy with Korah,³ and the spies,⁴ and the Golden Calf,⁵ etc. What is [the meaning] that here Moses suppressed** mention of these things?

Also, what honor is due Israel here?

וגיש לומר דאיתא במדרש רבה על פסוק זה ראויים היו התוכחות לומר מפי בלעם, והברכות מפי משה. אלא אילו הוכיחם בלעם היו ישראל אומרים שונא מוכיחנו, ואילו ברכם משה היו אמות העולם אומרים אוהבם ברכם. אמר הקב"ה יוכיחן משה שאוהבו, ויברכם בלעם ששונאן, כדי שיתבררו התוכחות והברכות ביד ישראל עכ"ל.

It can be said that it's brought in the Midrash Rabbah on this verse:

The rebukes should have been said from the mouth of Balaam, and the blessings from the mouth of Moses. However, had Balaam rebuked them, Israel would have said: “An enemy is rebuking us.” [I.e., they would have discounted such rebukes.] Had Moses blessed them, the nations of the world

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¹ Deut. 1:1–2.

² Rashi on Deut. 1:1–2.

³ Deut. 11:6.

⁴ Deut. 1:22.

⁵ Deut. 9:16.

would have said: “Their beloved is blessing them.” [I.e., they would have discounted such blessings.] **The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: “Let Moses, who loves them, rebuke them, and Balaam, who hates them, bless them, so that it will be clear that the rebukes and the blessings are deserved by Israel.”**

- Deut. Rabbah 1:4

ולכן אמר הכתוב "אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה אל-כל-ישראל", הואיל שפאו מפי משה דוקא ולא מפי בלעם נראין לישראל כמו רמז בעלמא ואין להם כל כך בושת פנים ומשום הכי הנפירן ברמז מתחלה, לומר להם שכל מה שיפרש אחר כך הוא לטוב להם ולכבודם, כדי שלא ישמעו מפי בלעם ואינם נחשבים אלא רמז בעלמא.

Therefore, Scripture said, “These are the words that Moses addressed to all Israel,” since they came specifically from the mouth of Moses and not from the mouth of Balaam, they appeared to Israel as a mere hint and there was no embarrassment. Because of this, they were initially mentioned with a hint, to say to them that everything that will be specified afterward is for their good and for their honor. Thus, it wouldn’t be heard from the mouth of Balaam. Also, it would only be considered as a mere hint.

ועוד יש לומר דאיתא בפרק ו' דסנהדרין כתנאי "הנסתרות לה' אלהינו וכו'", מלמד שלא ענש על הנסתרות עד שעברו ישראל את הירדן דברי ר' יהודה, אמר לו ר' נחמיה וכי ענש על הנסתרות מעולם, נהלא כבר נאמר וכו', אלא פשם שלא ענש על הנסתרות כך לא ענש על הנגלות עד שעברו את הירדן.

Furthermore, it can be said that it’s brought in the 6th chapter of tractate Sanhedrin:

There is a dispute between Tannaim [regarding the verse] “Concealed acts concern the L-rd, our G-d, but with overt acts, it is for us and our children forever to apply all the provisions of this Law.”⁶

Why [in a Torah scroll] are there dots over [each of the letters in the words] “to us and to our children” and over the *ayin* in [the word] “forever”? **This teaches that [G-d] [punished for revealed sins in the wilderness, but] did not punish for hidden sins until the Jewish people crossed the Jordan [River]. This is the statement of Rabbi Yehuda.**

Rabbi Nechemya said to him: And does [G-d] ever punish [the nation] for hidden [sins committed by individuals]? But isn’t it already stated: “[The hidden matters belong to the Lord,] our G-d . . . forever” [i.e., that we won’t ever be collectively punished for the secret sins of individuals]? Rather, [the dots over the words teach that] just as [G-d] did not punish [the nation as a whole] for hidden [sins committed by individuals], so He did not punish [the nation] for [sins committed publicly by individuals] until the Jewish people crossed the Jordan [River].

- Sanhedrin 43b

⁶ Deut. 29:28.

ומשום הכי אמר הכתוב "אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה אל-כל-ישראל בעבר הירדן", שאלו התוכחות שעשה משה כאן לישראל במשנה תורה הם כמו רמז בעלמא, לפי שעדיין הם בעבר הירדן, שלא קבלו עליהם הערבות אהד על חבירו, ואפילו על הנגלות פדעת ר' נחמיה, וכל אהד מהם אינו חייב אלא על חלקו ונקה שהיה לו באותו חטא, והרבה מהם היה להם באותם החטאים חלק קטן מאד שהוא כמו רמז בעלמא כדאשכחן בעגל זבח וקטר, בסייף וכו', שמח בלבם בהדרוקן. ואפשר נמי לומר שמתחלה הוכיחם דרך רמז כלפי מי שחטא מעט, ואחר כך הוכיחם בפירוט, כנגד מי שחטא הרבה.

Because of this, Scripture said, “These are the words that Moses addressed to all Israel on the other side of the Jordan,” that these rebukes that Moses gave here to Israel in the repetition of the Law were a mere hint, because they were still on the other side of the Jordan. For each person had not accepted a collective responsibility on behalf of his fellow, not even for the public sins according to the opinion of Rabbi Nechemya, and thus each of them was only liable specifically in his participation in that sin. Many of them have a very small portion of these sins, which is like a mere hint, as we found for the Golden Calf:

One who sacrificed and burned [incense to the Calf, i.e., idolatrous practices deserving of capital punishment, was punished] by the sword. One who embraced and kissed [it, was subject to a divine punishment of] death [by a plague]. One who rejoiced inwardly [but performed no action, was killed] by edema.

- Yoma 66b

It’s also possible to say that initially, [Moses] rebuked them by way of a hint directed toward one who sinned a bit, and afterward he rebuked them in detail, directed to one who sinned a lot.

ולפי זה יש לפרש הפסוק "האיש אהד חטא ועל כל-העדה תקצף", דקשה שהרי מצינו שהרבה מהם חטאו ובפרט מאתים וחמשים איש, ומהו "האיש אהד" שנגרעה שלא היה חוטא אלא איש אהד, ועוד אם האמת שהיה איש אהד החוטא מה היתה סברת הקב"ה מתחלה להכרית הפל, ולמה אמר "חטא" ו"תקצף" לשון עתיד.

According to this, we need to interpret the verse, “But they fell on their faces and said, “O G-d, Source of the breath of all flesh! If one man will sin, will You be wrathful with the whole community?”⁷ This is difficult to understand, for here we find that many of them sinned, and specifically 250 men, so what is the meaning of “one man”? That appears as if only one man sinned. Also, if the truth was that one man sinned, why was the initial opinion of the Holy One, Blessed be He, to cut off everyone? Also, why did [the verse] say “will sin” and “will You be wrathful” in the future tense?

⁷ Num. 16:22.

וגיש לומר דאָתנא בפלוגתא דר' יהודה ור' נחמיה אם עניש על הנסתרות או על הנגלות אשר שעברו את הירדן, שהקב"ה מתחלה דן אותם להחמיר בסברת ר' יהודה, שיהיו סייבים במדבר בערבות על הנגלות, ואחר כך בארץ אף על הנסתרות, ומשה השיב להקב"ה שאדרבא יש לנו לומר כר' נחמיה שלאחר שעברו את הירדן לא יכנסו ערבים אלא על הנגלות. וממילא נשמע שעל הנסתרות מעולם לא נתחייבו.

It can be said that the controversy of Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Nechemya arrived if the punishment was on the hidden sins or on the revealed sins after they crossed the Jordan, that the Holy One, Blessed be He, initially judged them harshly, according to the opinion of Rabbi Yehudah. For they were liable in the wilderness for the collective responsibility on the revealed sins, and afterward in the Land of Israel they were also liable even for the concealed sins. Moses answered to the Holy One, Blessed be He, that to the contrary we should say as Rabbi Nechemya, that after they crossed the Jordan, that they would only be liable under collective responsibility because of revealed sins. In any case, we hear that they are never liable for hidden sins.

וכן אמר משה לפני הקב"ה מפאן ולהבא אם איש אחד יחטא דהיינו בייחוד ובנסתר, האם "על כל־העדה תקצף" מטעם ערבות, הלא זה יהיה דין קשה נגד מדתה שאמה רחום וחנון, וכתוב "ברגז רחם תזכור". אלא הדין שיש לעשות היינו שלא יתחייבו רק על ערבות הנגלות. ולפי זה עתה, שלא נתחייבו כלל על הערבות, אין לה לקצוף כלל על מי שלא חטא. אמר לו אם כן העלו "מעל משפך־קרח" וכו'.

Thus, Moses said before the Holy One, Blessed be He, in the future, after crossing the Jordan, if one man should sin, which is privately and secretly, "will You be wrathful with the whole community," due to collective responsibility? Isn't this a harsh judgment that contradicts Your nature of being "compassionate and gracious"?⁸ Also, it is written, "though angry, may You remember compassion."⁹ Rather, the proper judgment is that they should only be liable under collective responsibility for revealed sins. Therefore, now, before they cross over the Jordan, when they are not guilty at all for collective responsibility, You have no reason to be wrathful at all on one who has not sinned. [G-d] said to him, "If so, 'withdraw from the abodes of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram,'¹⁰ 'lest you be wiped out for all their sins.'"¹¹

וכן יש לפרש הפסוקים "וְחֶסֶד ה' מְעוֹלָם וְעַד־עוֹלָם עַל־יְרֵאָיו וְצַדִּיקוֹתוֹ לְבָנֵי בָנִים: לְשֹׁמְרֵי בְרִיתוֹ וְלוֹזְכְּרֵי פְקֻדוֹי לַעֲשׂוֹתָם", דלקאורה קשה מה ענין ברית לפאן ומהו זה הברית, ומהו "ולוזכרי פקדיו לעשותם".

We also need to explain the verses, "But the L-rd's kindness is eternal toward those who fear Him, and His beneficence is for the children's children of those who keep His covenant and remember to observe His precepts."¹² Apparently, it is difficult to understand

⁸ Ex. 34:6.

⁹ Habakkuk 3:2.

¹⁰ Num. 16:27.

¹¹ Num. 16:26.

¹² Ps. 103:17–18.

what relevance the covenant is to this, and which covenant this is referencing, and what is the meaning of “and remember to observe His precepts.”

אָמַנְם הַפְּסוּק "וְתִסְדָּד ה'" מִיִּירִי בְּמִי שְׁמוֹכִיחַ אֶת תְּבִירוֹ לְשֵׁם שְׁמַיִם, וְכֵן אָמְרוּ בְּפֶרֶק קמ"א דְּתַמִּיד אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בְּרַ
נַחְמָנִי אָמַר ר' יוֹנָתָן כָּל הַמוֹכִיחַ אֶת תְּבִירוֹ לְשֵׁם שְׁמַיִם מוֹשְׁכִין עָלָיו חוּט שֶׁל תְּסֻדָּה שְׁנֵאָמַר "הֵן יִמְצָא". וְהֵינּוּ "תְּסֻדָּה ה'"
הוּא נְטוּי עַל יְרֵאָיו, שֶׁהֵם מוֹכִיחִים לְשֵׁם שְׁמַיִם בְּסִטְרָה כְּרֵאוּי לָהֶם וְלֹא בְּרִבִּים, וְאַחַר כֵּן הוֹסִיף לְבַאֵר "לְשִׁמְרֵי בְּרִיתוֹ",
שֶׁזֶה הַבְּרִית הוּא מֵה שְׁקִבְלוּ עֲלֵיהֶם בְּעֶבְרָם אֶת הַיְרֵדוֹן, כְּדָכְתִּיב "לְעִבְרָךְ בְּבְרִית" וְכוּ', לְהִיּוֹת עֲרֻבִים זֶה עַל זֶה עַל הַנְּגִלוֹת,
וְכַדְבְּרֵי ר' נַחְמָנִי הֵנ"ל.

Indeed, the verse, “But the L-rd’s kindness is eternal” is speaking about one who rebukes his fellow for the sake of Heaven, and thus it is said in the 1st chapter of tractate Tamid:

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani says that Rabbi Yonatan says: Anyone who rebukes another for the sake of Heaven is privileged to dwell in the portion of the Holy One, Blessed be He . . . Moreover, the Heavenly court extends over him a thread of kindness, as it is stated: “He will find more favor than he who flatters with the tongue.”¹³

- Tamid 28a

“The L-rd’s kindness” is given to those who fear Him, for they rebuke for the sake of Heaven privately, as is appropriate for them, and not publicly. Afterward, for clarification he added, “of those who keep His covenant,” for this covenant is what they received upon themselves upon crossing the Jordan, as it is written, “You stand this day . . . in Israel . . . to enter into the covenant of the L-rd, your G-d, which the L-rd, your G-d is concluding with you today, with its sanctions.”¹⁴ This is to be collectively responsible for each other, according to the words of Rabbi Nechemya above.

וְלֹא דִי שֶׁהֵם מְקַיְימִים הַבְּרִית הַזֶּה לְהוֹכִיחַ הַבְּרִיּוֹת עַל הַנְּגִלוֹת, אֲלֵא אִם עוֹשִׂים לְפָנִים מִשׁוֹרֵת הַדִּין, כְּשִׁיּוֹדְעִים שְׂאִיזָה אָדָם
יֵשׁ לוֹ אִיזָה עוֹן בְּסִטְרָה וְהֵם אֵינָם יְכוֹלִים לְהוֹכִיחוֹ, אוֹ שֶׁהוּא לֹא יִקְבֹּל. וְכֵשֶׁם שְׁמַצְנָה לּוֹמַר דְּבַר הַנְּשַׁמֵּעַ כֵּן מַצְנָה שְׂאִיזָה
לּוֹמַר דְּבַר שְׂאִיזָה נִשְׁמַע, אִז מִתְחַכְּמִים וְזוֹכְרִים אוֹתוֹ הַעוֹן בְּפָנָיו וְהַעוֹנֵשׁ וְהַשֹּׁכֵר הַתְּלוּי בּוֹ, וְהוּא מַעֲצָמוֹ מִתְחַרֵּט בְּלִי בּוֹשָׁה
וְלֹא בְּאוֹפֵן תּוֹכְהָה.

It’s not enough that they uphold this covenant to rebuke people regarding open [sins], rather they need to go beyond the letter of the law, as it is known that some man will engage in some sin privately, and they won’t be able to rebuke him, or that he won’t accept the rebuke. Just as one is commanded to say something that will be received by a sinner, so too he is commanded not to say something that will not be received by a sinner.¹⁵ Thus, they should be wise and remind [the sinner] that the sin is before him and what punishment and reward

¹³ Prov. 28:23.

¹⁴ Deut. 29:9–11.

¹⁵ Yevamot 65b.

is dependent upon violating or refraining from violating it, and then [the sinner] by himself will repent without shame and without having to rebuke him.

וּבְדַרְדָּר אֶהְרֹן הִכְהֵן שְׂאֵמְרוּ בְּמִדְרָשׁ כְּשֶׁהָיָה רוֹאֵה שְׁנֵי אֲנָשִׁים מְרִיבִים זֶה עִם זֶה, אוֹ שְׂאִישׁ אֶחָד הָיָה מְלֵא עֲוֹנוֹת הָיָה הוֹלֵךְ תָּמִיד עִמּוֹ, וְזֶה אוֹמֵר בְּעֵצְמוֹ אֵלֹהֵי הָיָה יוֹדֵעַ אֶהְרֹן כַּמָּה מְכוֹעְרִים מַעֲשֵׂי לֹא הָיָה נִדְבָק עִמִּי, וּבִשְׂבִיל זֶה הָיָה עוֹשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה, וְכֵן בְּשֵׁנֵי אֲנָשִׁים הַמְרִיבִים זֶה עִם זֶה הָיָה הוֹלֵךְ מֵאֶחָד וְאוֹמֵר חֲבִירָה שְׁלָם עִמָּךְ וְכֵן עִם אֶחָד וּבְלִבָּם הָיוּ מְבִינִים לַעֲשׂוֹת שְׁלוֹם, וְאָמַר הַכָּתוּב "וּלְזָכְרִי כִּקְדָּיו לַעֲשׂוֹתָם", כִּדִּי שְׂבִנִי אֲדָם יַעֲשׂוּ הַמִּצְוֹת וְיִתְרַחֲקוּ מִהַעֲבִירוֹת.

This is according to the actions of Aaron the priest, about whom it is said in the Midrash that when he saw two men fighting with each other, or one man was full of iniquity, [Aaron] would always walk with [the man who was full of iniquity], and this man would say to himself, “If Aaron were to know how ugly my actions were, he would not be sticking with me,” and because of this he would repent. Similarly, with two men fighting with each other, he would walk with one and say, “your friend is at peace with you,” and similarly with the other man he would say the same thing, and in their hearts they would understand to make peace with each other.¹⁶ The Scripture says, “and remember to observe His precepts,” that men will fulfill the commandments and distance themselves from the sins.

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¹⁶ Avot de'Rabbi Natan 12:3.