

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter XLIX: Ki Teitzei (Deut. 21:10–25:19)

### Essay 7. Ammon and Moab

**"על-דבר אשר לא-קדמו אתכם בלחם" וכו', פרש רש"י על העצה שיעצו אתכם להחטיאכם. והקשו על זה דבפסוק יש טעם אחר מפורש, ומנא ליה לרש"י לפרש טעם אחר, ותירצו דרש"י דניק מלת "דבר", שהיה לו לומר "על-אשר". אבל עם כל זה לדידן קשיא טובא, שהרי רש"י עצמו כתב כאן בסמוך שהטעם שנתעבו עמון ומואב הוא מפני שהחטיאו את ישראל, שהחטיאו לאדם קשה לו מן ההורגו. ולמה לא פירש הכתוב עקר הטעם ונקט טעם שאינו עקר דהיינו על "אשר לא-קדמו" וכו'.**

“No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted into the congregation of the L-rd, or descendants of such, even in the tenth generation, shall ever be admitted into the congregation of the L-rd; **because of the matter they did not meet you with food** and water on the way after you left Egypt, and because they hired Balaam son of Beor, from Pethor of Aram-naharaim, to curse you.”<sup>1</sup> **Rashi interprets** “because of the matter [דבר] [*devar*]”: **“because of the advice which they gave you in order to entice you into sin.”**<sup>2</sup> Rashi is referring to the Ammonite and Moabite women, who seduced some Israelite men and had them sacrifice to their false god.<sup>3</sup>

**People question this, because for this verse there is another explicit explanation, viz, not providing food and water, and how does Rashi know to explain a different reason?**<sup>4</sup> **The solution they give is that Rashi is being precise regarding the word “matter” [דבר] [*devar*], because [Moses] could have said “because [על-אשר] [*al-asher*] they did not meet you with food,” i.e., omitting the word “matter.”** It was that apparently superfluous word that led Rashi to his interpretation.<sup>5</sup> The word “*devar*” [דבר] can mean “matter,” as we have translated, but could also mean “speech” or “word,” and according to Rashi’s interpretation, the “speech” was advice that enticed Israel to sin.

**Nevertheless, there’s still a good question, for Rashi himself wrote here in a nearby verse, that the reason that Ammon and Moab became detested was because they caused Israel to sin, as causing someone to sin is worse than killing him.**<sup>6</sup> **Why didn’t the first verse explain the primary reason, as Rashi gave it, that Ammon and Moab should be excluded from converting because they enticed the Israelites to sin? Why did it instead select a reason that was not primary, that they did not meet you with food and water?**

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<sup>1</sup> Deut. 23:4–5.

<sup>2</sup> Rashi on Deut. 23:5.

<sup>3</sup> Num. 25:1–2.

<sup>4</sup> Kli Yakar on Deut. 23:5.

<sup>5</sup> Sifte Chachamim on Deut. 23:5.

<sup>6</sup> Rashi on Deut. 23:9.

ונש לומר דאי הנה פתיב הטעם של המהטיא את האדם, לא הנה אפשר לן לומר עמוני ולא עמונית מואבי ולא מואבית, שיהרי באמת עקר החטא בא מחמת הנשים. אלא פתב הטעם על "אשר לא-קדמו" וכו' שגם שם יש להקשות הנה להם לקדם אנשים לקראת אנשים ונשים לקראת נשים, וצריך לתרץ "כל-כבודה בת-מלך פנימה", דהינו שאין דרך האשה לצאת. וממילא אנו לומדים שמה שיצאו נמי להטיא את ישראל, אין להם שום עונש שיהרי אנוסות היו מאביהן.

**It can be said that if the reason for them being detested were written as being due to causing someone to sin, we could not state the teaching of the Gemara that “an Ammonite man [is prohibited from converting to Judaism], but not an Ammonite woman; a Moabite man [is prohibited from converting to Judaism], but not a Moabite woman,”<sup>7</sup> because the truth is that the foundation of the sin of enticement came because of the women.**

**Rather, the reason they were detested was written regarding the matter that “they did not meet you with food,” while only hinting at the primary reason by adding the word “*devar*.” Now, even there one can question that they should have had men meet the men, and women meet the women. I.e., if one says that the verse is understating the sin of the Ammonite and Moabite women, so as to allow them to convert in future generations, shouldn't the women also be condemned because they didn't come to bring food to the Israelite women? One needs to solve this question with the verse, “The king's daughter is glorious within [her chamber],”<sup>8</sup> meaning that it is not the custom for women to go out.**

But how could we say they didn't bring food out of modesty? They were willing to go out to seduce the Israelite men! What sort of modesty is that? **Therefore, we learn that even though [the Ammonite and Moabite women] went out was to cause Israel to sin, they do not receive any punishment, because they were compelled to act this way by their fathers.**

ופירוש הפסוק כן הוא, לפי האמת עיקר הטעם שנתעבו עמוני ומואבי הוא על החטא שההטיאום, אבל לא על מעשה החטא ממלש, אלא על העצה וההכרח שאנסו האבות את בנותיהם, וזהו "על-דבר". ואפלו הכי אם הנה להם הזכות להיות מקדימים בלחם ומים היו נתקנים קצת, משום דבפרק י"א דסנהדרין אמרינו גדולה לגימא שמקרבת הרחוקים, ומעלמת עין מן הרשעים, אבל עכשיו שלא קדמו, נתעבו.

**The explanation of the verse is as follows: The truth is, the primary reason why Ammon and Moab became detested is because of the sin that they caused [Israel] to sin. But it wasn't because of the sin itself, rather because of the advice and compulsion that the fathers forced their daughters into it. This is the meaning of “because of the matter,” that the Ammonite and Moabite men were the true guilty parties, and that's why they are forbidden to convert, but not their women.**

**Nonetheless, if they had had the merit to provide bread and water, it would have somewhat rectified their sin, as in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of tractate Sanhedrin, it is said, “great is eating . . . as it draws near those who are distant, and averts the eye from the wicked,”<sup>9</sup> but now that they did not meet you with food and drink, they are detested.**

<sup>7</sup> Yevamot 77a.

<sup>8</sup> Ps. 45:14.

<sup>9</sup> Sanhedrin 103b.

ואם תאמר ונהרי מואב שלבסוף ארבעים שנה קדם להם בלחם ומים, כדכתיב "אכל בפסח תשבגני" וכו' "כאשר עשוי-לי בני עשו" וכו' "והמואבים הישבים בער", ואפלו הכי נתעבו. יש לומר כמו שכתב מהרש"א בסנהדרין שהיה להם לעשות בחנם, לתשלום גמול מה שעשה אברהם אבינו לאביהם לוט. והיה להם לעשות זה בדרך כשיצאו ממצרים, ואיתא ברש"י, ובמדרש "בדרך": בשעת טירוףכם וכו'.

**But you might say: Since Moab eventually provided them with bread and water after forty years, as it is written:**

Then I sent messengers from the wilderness of Kedemoth to King Sihon of Heshbon with an offer of peace, as follows; “Let me pass through your country. I will keep strictly to the highway, turning off neither to the right nor to the left. **What food I eat you will supply for money**, and what water I drink you will furnish for money; just let me pass through; **as the descendants of Esau** who dwell in Seir **did for me, and the Moabites who dwell in Ar**—that I may cross the Jordan into the land that the L-rd, our G-d, is giving us.

- Deut. 2:26–29

**Even so, they were detested. It can be said what the Maharsha writes in his commentary on Sanhedrin, that [the Moabites] should have supplied food to the Israelites for free, as a payment of kindness for what our father Abraham did for their father, Lot, rescuing him after he had been taken captive.<sup>10</sup> They should have done this on the way when they left Egypt, and not forty years later! As it is brought in the Rashi<sup>11</sup> and in the Midrash<sup>12</sup> on the text “on the way after you left Egypt”: “‘on the way’ [means] ‘at the time of their exhaustion,’” emphasizing the sin of the Moabites not providing food and water then.**

ואם תאמר שמה שלא עשו בחנם אין להם כל כך אשמה, מפני שצריך ממון הרבה להאכיל ששים רבוא, והיה ממונם קביב להם. ולפי שהיו חסים על ממונם, משום הכי לא הקדימו מתחלה. אמנם כשראו שישאל פרונו לבני עשו, אז גם הם יצאו לקראתם במזונות הצריכים להם, אם פן למה הוציאו כל כך ממון עם בלעם שהיתה נפשו רחבה, כמו שאמר "אם יתן-לי בלק מלא ביתו פסח ונהב" כדי לקלל את ישראל. אלא ודאי מכאן מוכח שלא היו חסים על ממונם, אלא אדרבא היו שונאים את ישראל. ומה שהקדימו להם המזונות לסוף ארבעים שנה, לא היה אלא לתועלת עצמם, כדי לקבל הפעות ולמכור ממונם, ומשום הכי נתעבו בדין.

**But you might say that their failure to provide hospitality for free was not so blameworthy, since it requires a significant amount of money to feed sixty myriads, and their wealth was precious to them. Given that they were careful with their money, that’s why they did not provide hospitality at first. But when they saw that Israel had repaid the children of Esau, they also came out to meet them with the food they needed.**

<sup>10</sup> Gen. 14:12–16.

<sup>11</sup> Rashi on Deut. 23:5.

<sup>12</sup> Sifrei Devarim 250:2; Yalkut Shimoni, Ki Teitzei, remez 933:22.

However, if so, that they were concerned about safeguarding their money, **why did they spend so much money on Balaam, who was “avaricious and covetous of the wealth of others,”<sup>13</sup> as he said, “Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold” to curse Israel, “I could not do anything, big or small, contrary to the command of the L-rd, my G-d.”<sup>14</sup> Rather, certainly from here it is proven that they were not worried about their money. Rather, to the contrary, they hated Israel. Their provision of food at the end of forty years was merely for their own benefit, to receive money and sell their goods. Therefore, they were judged to be detestable.**

ואמר הכתוב "ולא־אָבָה" וכו' "לשמע אל־בלעם ונהפך" וכו' "לך את־הקללה לברכה", וקשה מהו מלת "לך", שְהָרִי הקללה לא באה לעולם, ולא יצאה מן הפה ולא הגיעה לישראל, ואם כן מלת "לך" מיותרת היא.

The verse says, **“But the L-rd, your G-d, would not listen to Balaam; instead, the L-rd, your G-d reversed the curse into a blessing for you, because the L-rd, your G-d loves you.”<sup>15</sup> A question is what is the meaning of the word “for you,” for the curse never came, it didn’t leave Balaam’s mouth and did not reach Israel. If so, the word “for you” seems superfluous.**

ויש לומר שפְּבַר ידוע שמהמברך את ישראל יהנה גם הוא ברוך, והמקלל את ישראל יהנה ארור. וקא משמע לן קרא שאף על פי שבלעם ברוך את ישראל, עם כל זה לא נתברך, אלא אדרבא לפי שכונתו היתה לקלל, ובאומות הקב"ה חושב המחשבה כמעשה, משום הכי נשאר בכלל אורריו ארור, וזהו "ונהפך . . . לך" וקא את הקללה לברכה ולא לבלעם. ועיין עוד לעיל סוף פרשת בלק.

It can be said that it is already known that generally, one who blesses Israel will also be blessed, while one who curses Israel will be cursed.<sup>16</sup> However, the verse, “the L-rd, your G-d, reversed the curse into a blessing for you,” teaches us that even though Balaam blessed Israel, he himself was not blessed. On the contrary, because his intent was to curse, and since among the nations, the Holy One, Blessed be He, considers intent as if it were action,<sup>17</sup> therefore, [Balaam] remained under the category of “those who curse you are cursed.”<sup>18</sup> This is the meaning of “the L-rd, your G-d, reversed the curse into a blessing for you”—it’s particularly “for you” that He has reversed the curse into a blessing, and not for Balaam, who was not blessed for the blessing that he gave Israel under duress from G-d.

See further above, at the end of parashat Balak, essay 13.

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<sup>13</sup> Rashi on Num. 22:18.

<sup>14</sup> Num. 22:18.

<sup>15</sup> Deut. 23:6.

<sup>16</sup> Num. 24:9.

<sup>17</sup> Rashi to Deut. 26:5; Sifrei Devarim 301:3.

<sup>18</sup> Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 8:8; Jerusalem Talmud Megillah 1:9; Jerusalem Talmud Sukkah 3:10.