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יִתְכַּן שֶׁבִּלְהַל רְאוּבֵן יִצְעֵק בְּלִילָהּ מִפְּתוֹרָהּ שֶׁלֹּא תִּלְדַּךְ - According to the literal approach,⁹⁷ it is possible that Reuben confounded Bilhah's bed by lying with her, out of his concern that Bilhah should not bear any more children to Jacob.⁹⁸ - לְיַעֲקֹב עוֹד כִּי הוּא הַבְּכוֹר, וְהָשֵׁב לָקַחַת שְׁנֵי חֲלָקִים. - For he was the firstborn, and expected to receive two portions of inheritance, as stipulated in Deuteronomy 12:17, so he would lose more than any of the other brothers if another heir were now born to Jacob. - וְלֹא פָּחַד מֵאִמּוֹ, כִּי זָקְנָה הָיְתָה. - He was not afraid of his mother Leah bearing more children, however, because she was old and beyond child-bearing age.⁹⁹

וְלָכֵן נִסְלַח מִמֶּנּוּ הַבְּכוֹרָה. - Alternatively: He was concerned for his mother's honor, and refrained from defiling Zilpah because she was her maidservant. - מִדָּה בְּנֹגֵד מִדָּה - This is why Reuben's punishment for this act was that the birthright was taken away from him (below, 49:4; I Chronicles 5:1), measure for measure.¹⁰⁰ - וְזֶה טַעַם "וַיִּהְיוּ בְנֵי יַעֲקֹב שְׁנָיִם עָשָׂר". - This is the reason for The sons of Jacob were twelve being attached to the story of Reuben and Bilhah - to stress that, as a result of Reuben's actions, [Jacob] had no more children after this.¹⁰¹

Ramban
גרסא
כז

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ג. לָקַח רְאוּבֵן אֶת מִשְׁתּוֹ וְהִשְׁמִידָהּ
לִיד מִשְׁתַּבְּלִילָהּ, לְמַנֵּעַ אֶת יַעֲקֹב
מִמְּנָה. [חֲטוּי עֲוִיּוֹת]
ד. שָׁכַב בְּמִשְׁתָּהּ לִילֹת הַרְבֵּה פֶּן יָבֹא
יַעֲקֹב בְּמִשְׁתָּהּ. [הִרְאִישׁ]

ג. רָצָה שֶׁיַּעֲקֹב יִחְשַׁב שֶׁנֶּאֱקָרָה עַל יָדִי
רְאוּבֵן וְיִמְנַע עֲצָמוֹ מִמְּנָה. [הִרְאִישׁ]

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55b

(1) - This question whether Reuven sinned or not is a matter of dispute between Tannaim recorded in the following Baraisa: "פָּחַד בְּנֵי אֶל-תּוֹתֵר" - At the beginning of the aforementioned verse Jacob says of Reuven: **WATER-LIKE IMPETUOSITY - YOU SHALL NOT BE FOREMOST**. You lost your right to national leadership because of the impetuosity you displayed in rushing to vent your anger in the matter of Bilhah. The Baraisa regards the word **פָּחַד** (impetuosity) as an acronym^[20] and interprets the verse accordingly: **ר' אֶלְיָזָר אָמַר - (א) פָּחַד (ב) פָּחַד (ג) פָּחַד** represents: **פָּחַד (א) - (ב) YOU ACTED HASTILY, (ג) YOU BECAME LIABLE, (ד) YOU BELITTLED.**^[21] **ר' יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אָמַר - (א) פָּחַד (ב) פָּחַד (ג) פָּחַד** represents: **פָּחַד (א) - (ב) YOU TRAMPLED ON THE LAW, (ג) YOU SINNED, (ד) YOU ACTED LEWDLY.**^[22]

4

We have already seen several times (above, 9:21, 12:8, 13:3) that the written form **אָהֳלָה** alludes to the tent shared by husband and wife, where the wife — as mistress and manager of the home — has precedence. It is possible, then, that in our verse, too, **אָהֳלָה** denotes the tent that Ya'akov formerly shared with Rachel.

Thus, the meaning of our verse would be: He pitched his tent, which now he could no longer share with Rachel, at some distance from the herd tower, around which his family — i.e., also Leah and the other wives — had encamped. As long as Rachel was alive, Ya'akov lived also with Leah and his other wives; but after Rachel's death, he separated also from them.

Accordingly, it is possible that Reuven slept in Bilhah's tent in order to induce Ya'akov to return to his mother, Leah. He wanted his father

to understand that his sons were disturbed about his separation from his family. But Reuven did not attain his objective. Ya'akov continued to live apart from his wives, and the result was that the number of his sons did not increase beyond the twelve he had already fathered: **בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב שְׁנָיִם עָשָׂר**.

Rav Hirsch
גרסא
כז

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2

R' Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of R' Yonasan: - Whoever says that Reuven sinned is simply mistaken, (10) ... for it is simply mistaken, (10) ...

is stated: And the sons of Jacob were twelve, (11) which teaches that all twelve were equal. (12) R' Yonasan continues expounding this verse: But how, then, do I establish the beginning of that verse: And [Reuven] lay with Bilhah, the concubine of his father? - It teaches that [Reuven] disturbed his father's bed, (13) and Scripture regards him as if he lay with her.

The Gemara elaborates on Reuven's indiscretion: It is taught in a Baraisa: R' Shimon ben Elazar says: THAT RIGHTEOUS PERSON [Reuven] WAS SAVED FROM THAT SIN, (14) FOR THIS DEED DID NOT COME TO HIS HAND. (14) R' Shimon ben Elazar offers proof: ... IS IT POSSIBLE THAT [REUVEN'S] DESCENDANTS WOULD IN THE FUTURE STAND ON MT. EIVAL AND DECLARE, CURSED IS HE WHO LIES WITH HIS FATHER'S WIFE, (15) AND THIS VERY SIN WOULD COME TO HIS HAND? (16) BUT HOW, then, DO I UPHOLD the beginning of that verse: AND [REUVEN] LAY WITH BILHAH, THE CONCUBINE OF HIS FATHER? - It informs us that [REUVEN] SOUGHT to redress THE AFFRONT TO HIS MOTHER, Leah. HE SAID: IF MY MOTHER'S SISTER [Rachel] WAS A RIVAL TO MY MOTHER, SHALL THE MAIDSERVANT [Bilhah] OF MY MOTHER'S SISTER BE A RIVAL TO MY MOTHER? No! HE thereupon ROSE AND DISTURBED [LEAH'S] BED - i.e. he moved Jacob's bed to her tent. (17)

RABBAN GAMLIEL SAYS that the word implies: (a) YOU PRAYED, (b) YOU ENTREATED, (c) YOU TREMBLED, (d) YOU DREW BACK, (e) THE SIN FLEW AWAY FROM YOU. Nevertheless, RABBAN GAMLIEL SAID: WE STILL NEED the exegesis of THE sage from Mt. MODAI, (18) for R' ELAZAR OF Mt. MODAI (18) SAYS: REVERSE

THE WORD AND EXPOUND IT thus: (1) YOU TREMBLED, (2) YOU DREW BACK, (3) THE SIN FLEW AWAY FROM YOU. The Gemara presents a similar exegesis by an Amora: Rava said - and some say it in the name of R' Yirmiyah bar Abba: (4) YOU REMEMBERED THE PUNISHMENT FOR THIS MATTER, (5) YOU MADE YOURSELF SICK WITH A GREAT SICKNESS, (6) YOU HELD BACK FROM SINNING. {

Handwritten notes in Hebrew: ... 556

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¹³This was the practice of the Kohanim with the people: When any person would slaughter a sacrifice the Kohen's attendant would come while the meat was cooking, with a three-pronged fork in his hand. ¹⁴He would thrust it into the pot or the cauldron or the pan or the kettle, and everything the fork would bring up the Kohen would take with it. This is what they would do with all the Israelites who would come there, to Shiloh. ¹⁵Even before they would burn the fat [upon the Altar] the Kohen's attendant would come and say to the man who was bringing the offering, "Give some meat for roasting for the Kohen; he will not take cooked meat from you, but only raw [meat]." ¹⁶The man would say, "Let them first burn the fat [upon the altar] and then take for yourself whatever your soul desires." But [the attendant] would say, "No; give it now, or else I will take it by force." ¹⁷The sin of the attendants was very great before HASHEM, for the men had disgraced HASHEM's offering.

²²Eli became very old. He heard about all that his sons were doing to all of Israel, and that they would lie with the women who congregated at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, ²³

Handwritten notes in Hebrew: ... 2

7

¹When Samuel became old, he appointed his sons judges over Israel. ²The name of his firstborn son was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah; they were judges in Beer-sheba. ³But his sons did not follow his ways. They were swayed by profit; they took bribes and they perverted justice.

Handwritten notes in Hebrew: ...