

ימי עיון בתנ"ך תשפ"ד

With gratitude for the innovative voices of a new generation of talmidot chachamot

The Not-Quite Wives of Judges and the Path to Civil War

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(1) Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*

I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.... Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.... **Finally, [the nation] is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willing to die for such limited imaginings.**

(2) Midrash Tanchuma Ki Teitzei 1:1

(Deut. 21:10:) “When you go out to war [against your enemies, and the Lord your God gives them into your hand and you take them captive].” Our masters have taught (Avot 4:2), “[One] good deed/commandment brings about [another] good deed/commandment, and [one] transgression brings about [another] transgression.” (Deut. 21:11-12:) “And when you see among the captives a woman of pretty form...” What is written after that (in vs. 15), “When a man has two wives.” Two [wives] in [one] house [means] strife in the house. And moreover (ibid., cont.) “one loved and the other hated,” or both of them hated. What is written after that (in vs. 18)? “If one has a defiant and rebellious son.”

Whenever anyone marries a “woman of pretty form,” there results from it a defiant and rebellious son. Thus we find it so in the case of David, because (as suggested by II Sam. 3:3) he had desired Maacah bat Talmai king of Geshur, while he had gone to war; so Absalom came out of him [in this union. The latter] wanted to kill him and (according to II Sam. 16:22) slept with his ten concubines before the eyes of all Israel and in broad daylight. Also because of him several myriads from Israel were killed. And he created discord in Israel...

R. Jose says, “Is it because a defiant and rebellious son ate half a pound of meat and drank half a log of undiluted wine that the Torah says for him to go out to the court and be [executed by] stoning (cf. Deut. 21:18-21)? It is simply that Torah has foreseen the end of the

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thinking of a defiant and rebellious son. As in the end he will squander his father's assets with wastrels with whom he eats and drinks, until he seeks what he has been accustomed to and does not find it. Then he goes out to the crossroads, where he kills people and robs them. So the Torah is saying, 'Let him die innocent and not die guilty,' for the death of the wicked benefits them and benefits the world." ...[Hence] we have learned "[One] transgression brings about [another] transgression."

(3) Yael Ziegler, *Ruth: From Alienation to Monarchy*, 30

A successful society revolves around recognition of the Other, the ability to see a person who has a name and an individual identity. Appreciation of the distinctiveness of each individual stimulates acts of generosity, loyalty, and compassion. On the flip side, when a person is viewed without a name or individuality, he becomes an object...

(4) Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions", 11

Emotional communities are largely the same as social communities—families, neighborhoods, syndicates, academic institutions, monasteries, factories, platoons, princely courts. But the researcher looking at them seeks above all to uncover systems of feeling, to establish what these communities (and the individuals within them) define and assess as valuable or harmful to them (for it is about such things that people express emotions); the emotions that they value, devalue, or ignore; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognize; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore.

(5) Yoram Hazoni, *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture*

When we think of "works of reason," we think of works written to advance these concerning the way the world is in general, beyond the experiences of any given individual or nation. And most of the biblical texts just seem to be the wrong genre for making such arguments: More than two-thirds of the Bible consists of narrative prose recounting histories or stories. And narratives seem, by their very nature, to deal with the contingent and the particular... The specificity of these texts seems to rule out any real possibility that they were intended to engage in a tradition of discussion about subjects of a general nature. (66)

...the repetition, not of character types, but of certain events... What results from the construction of these sets of events from far-flung instances is a generalized account of a certain kind of circumstance – often including both the motives of the individuals involved and the consequences of their actions – which can easily be seen as referring to a thesis of a general nature. (74)

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