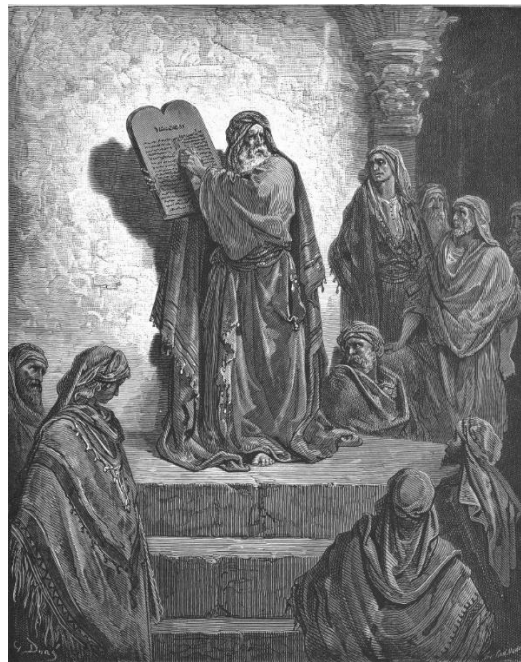

EZRA-NECHEMIAH

CHAPTER 10: EZRA'S INTERVENTION

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CONGREGATION OR TORAH

פרשת פקודי תשפ"ד

SHECHANIAH'S PROPOSAL

(1) EZRA 10:1-4

(1) Now while Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there was gathered together to him out of Israel a very great assembly of men and women and children; for the people wept very bitterly. (2) Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered Ezra, "We have trespassed against our God, and have married foreign women of the peoples of the land, yet now there is hope for Israel concerning this thing. (3) Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. (4) Arise; for the matter belongs to you, and we are with you. Be of good courage, and do it."

(א) וקהתפלגל עזרא וקהתנדתו בכה ומתנפיל לפני בית האלהים נקבצו אליו מישראל קהל רב-מאד אנשים ונשים וילדים כייבכו העם הרבה-דקה: (ב) ויען שכניה בן-יחאל מבני [עילם] (עולם) ויאמר לעזרא אנחנו מעלנו באלהינו ונשוב נשים נכריות מעמי הארץ ועתה יש-מקנה לישראל על-זאת: (ג) ועתה נכרת-ברית לאלהינו להוציא כל-נשים והנולד מהם בעצת אדני והחרדים במצנת אלהינו וכתורה יעשה: (ד) קום כיי-עליך הדבר ואנחנו עמך חזק ועשה:

(2) EZRA 8:5

(ה) מבני שכניה בן-יחזיאל ועמיו שלש מאות הזכרים:

(5) Of the sons of Shecaniah, the son of Jahaziel; and with him three hundred males.

(3) SANHEDRIN 11A

תנא מעשה באשה אחת שבאתה לבית מדרשו של רבי מאיר אמרה לו רבי אחד מכם קדשני בביאה עמד רבי מאיר וכתב לה גט כריתות ונתן לה עמדו פתבו פולם ונתנו לה. ורבי מאיר מהיכא גמיר לה משמואל הקטן ושמואל הקטן מהיכא גמיר לה משכניה בן יחאל דכתיב {עזרא י':ב'} ויען שכניה בן יחאל מבני עילם ויאמר לעזרא אנחנו מעלנו באלהינו ונשוב נשים נכריות מעמי הארץ ועתה יש מקנה לישראל על זאת.

It is taught in a *baraita*: There was **an incident involving** a certain woman who came to the study hall of Rabbi Meir. **She said to him: My teacher, one of you,** i.e., one of the men studying in this study hall, **betrothed me through intercourse.** The woman came to Rabbi Meir to appeal for help in identifying the man, so that he would either marry her or grant her a divorce. As he himself was also among those who studied in the study hall, **Rabbi Meir arose and wrote her a bill of divorce, and he gave it to her.** Following his example, **all those** in the study hall **arose** and **wrote** bills of divorce **and gave them to her.** **And from where did Rabbi Meir learn that characteristic? From Shmuel HaKatan,** in the incident outlined above. **And from where did Shmuel HaKatan learn it? From Shecaniah ben Jehiel, as it is written:** “And Shecaniah, the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said to Ezra: We have broken faith with our God, and have married foreign women of the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope for Israel concerning this” (Ezra 10:2). And although he confessed, Shecaniah is not

listed among those who took foreign wives (Ezra 10:18–44). Evidently, he confessed only to spare the others from public embarrassment.

(4) R' YAAKOV MEDAN, "MECHALEK MISHPACHOT"

כולם בוכים יחד עם המנהיג. בכי של תסכול ושל ייאוש מול בעיה שנראית גדולה מכל פתרון אפשרי. הם נושאים מן הסתם את עיניהם לשמים בתפילה לפתרון שירד בענן כבוד על ההר. דומה שהנס שהתרחש בפועל גדול לא פחות מענן היורד משמים. לפתע קם אלמוני מבני העלייה הראשונה ומכריז: יש תקווה. יש פתרון. עזרא יוביל, וכולנו אחריו. שכניה בן יחיאל מציע סדר יום - שפתיחתו כמובן בכריתת ברית חדשה בין כל עם ישראל לבין א-לוהיו - ו... לובש בגדי עבודה. קשה שלא להיזכר בן דמותו מחטא בעל פעור. גם שם הייתה בעיה דומה. הזנות עם בנות הנכר - בנות מואב ובנות מדין. גם שם היה ה'פתרון' - כולל של המנהיג - בכי. אבל היה אחד שקם.

All of them cry with the leader. These are tears of frustration and hopelessness against a problem which appears greater than any possible solution. Presumably, they raise their eyes to heaven in prayer for a solution to descend in a heavy cloud on the mountain. And it appears that a miracle happens with a great act, not inferior to a cloud descending from heaven. Suddenly, an anonymous man from the first wave of arrivals arose and declared: There is hope. There is a solution. Ezra will lead, and all of us will follow him. Shechaniah ben Yecheiel suggests an order of action which begins, of course, with execution of a new covenant between the nation of Israel and its Gd. And... he wears blue-collar garb. It is hard not to be reminded of his twin from the sin of Baal Peor. There, too, was a similar problem. Immorality with foreign women – the women of Moav and Midian. There, too, the 'solution' – including that of the leader – was to cry. But there was one who arose.

(5) BEMIDBAR 25:6-8

(ו) וְהִנֵּה אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּא וַיִּקְרַב אֶל-אֶחָיו אֲתֵּי-הַמִּדְיָנִית לְעֵינֵי מֹשֶׁה וּלְעֵינֵי כָּל-עֲדַת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָמָּה בְּכִים פָּתַח אֶהָל מוֹעֵד:
(ז) וַיֵּרָא פִּינְחָס בֶּן-אֶלְעָזָר בְּנוֹ-אֶהָרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וַיִּקָּם מִתּוֹד הָעֵדוּהָ וַיִּקַּח רֶמַח בְּיָדוֹ: (ח) וַיָּבֵא אֶחָר אִישׁ-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-הַקִּבְּהָ וַיִּדְקַר אֶת-שְׁנֵיהֶם אֶת אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת-הָאִשָּׁה אֶל-קִבְּתָהּ וַתַּעֲצֹר הַמַּגֵּפָה מֵעַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

(6) Behold, one of the Children of Israel came and brought to his brothers a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the Children of Israel, while they were weeping at the door of the Tent of Meeting. (7) When Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from the midst of the congregation, and took a spear in his hand. (8) He went after the man of Israel into the alcove and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her womb. So the plague was stayed from the Children of Israel.

(6) MALBIM EZRA 10:3

ובאשר ידעו רבים יקומו נגדם ולא ירצו להוציא נשותיהם, ועזרא לא היה לו כח להעניש רק על דין תורה, והוא היה צריך להפחידם עתה בעונשין יותר חמורים, שע"ז יש כח להכלל אם יקבלו הדבר בשבועה, שאז הכלל יש להם בזה דין מלך שיכול להעניש בעונשים יותר מן הדין...

And when the masses would find out, they would rise against them and they would not wish to divorce their wives, and Ezra would lack the power to punish them beyond the laws of Torah. He needed to intimidate

them now with more harsh punishments – which would be within the power of the community if they would accept this with an oath. Then the community, which has the status of a king for this, could punish them with punishments beyond those mandated by the law...

WHY NOT CONVERT THEM?

(7) IBN EZRA EZRA 10:3

בעצת ד' - לקרב אל קהל ד' או להרחיק. ולא מצאנו שהקריבו אחד מהם, ואולי הוציאום שלא היו גיורות כרות המואביה.

“At the counsel of Gd” – To draw near to the nation of Gd or to distance. And we do not find that they brought any of them close; perhaps they removed them because these were not converts like Ruth of Moav.

(8) R' YAAKOV MEDAN, “MECHALEK MISHPACHOT”

בדורו של עזרא היה העם היהודי בארץ חלש מבחינה תורנית, מבחינה תרבותית, מבחינה כלכלית ומבחינה פוליטית. הנשים הנכריות הרבות שזרמו אליו היו מורידות אותו לטמיון.

In the generation of Ezra, the Jewish nation in the Land was weak, in terms of Torah, culture, finance and political strength. The many foreign women who streamed in would bring the nation down, into assimilation.

SEPARATING THE FOREIGN WOMEN

(9) ABARBANEL MALAKHI 2:10

ולא האשימם הנביא פה ולא ג"כ בספר עזרא שהיו נותנים בנותיהם לגוים כי אם שהיו לוקחים להם נשים נכריות אולי היו עושים זה בחושבם שהם ימשלו בנשותיהם ולא יתפתו לעבוד ע"ז שלהם, אבל בנות ישראל לא הגיעה רשעת הדור להבעל לגוים כי ידעו שבהכרח תמשך האשה אחר עבודת בעלה, גם שחרפה היה להם לתת את בנותיהם לאיש אשר לו ערלה

The prophet did not indict them here, or in Ezra, for giving their daughters to the nations, but only for taking foreign women. Perhaps they [only] did this, thinking they could control their wives and not be drawn into their idolatry, but the wickedness of the generation had not reached the point of having Jewish women live with non-Jews. They knew that the woman would be compelled to follow her husband's worship. Also, it would be shameful to give their daughters to men without *brit milah*.

(10) METZUDAT DAVID EZRA 10:11

מעמי הארץ – לבלי תת מבנותיכם לעובדי כוכבים.

“From the nations of the land” – so as not to give your daughters to idolators.

(11) PROFESSOR SHAYE COHEN, *THE BEGINNINGS OF JEWISHNESS*, P. 268

Ezra's jurisdiction extended only to the members of his people, and he could do nothing to a foreign man who had married an Israelite woman.

(12) DA'AT MIKRA EZRA 10:14

בְּעָרֵינוּ – אֵף עַל פִּי שְׁנַחֲנָה רְשׁוּת לְעֹזְרָא עַל כָּל
 יְהוּדֵי עֵבֶר הַנָּהָר לֹא שָׁלַט בְּאֵלֶּה שֶׁעָבְרוּ לְדוֹר
 בֵּין הַנְּכָרִים, וּבְעֶקֶר הָיוּ אֵלּוּ נָשִׁים, שֶׁנִּשְׂאוּ לְעַמֵּי
 הָאָרְצוֹת. הַהֲשִׁיב – אֲשֶׁר הוֹשִׁיב. מְזַמְּנִים –

“In our cities” – Even though Ezra was given authority over all of the Jews of the “Beyond the River” region, he did not rule over those who went to live among the gentiles, and these were primarily women who married the nations of the land.

THE INTERVENTION

(13) EZRA 10:5-11

(5) Then Ezra rose, and made the chiefs of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel, swear that they would do according to this word. So they swore. (6) Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib, and when he came there, he ate no bread, nor drank water; for he mourned because of the trespass of those of the captivity. (7) They made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together to Jerusalem; (8) and that whoever didn't come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the assembly of the captivity. (9) Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together to Jerusalem within the three days; it was the ninth month, on the twentieth of the month. And all the people sat in the broad place before the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain. (10) Ezra the priest stood up, and said to them, "You have trespassed, and have married foreign women, to increase the guilt of Israel. (11) Now therefore make confession to Hashem, the God of your fathers, and do His pleasure; and separate yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the foreign women."

(ה) וַיָּקָם עֹזְרָא וַיִּשְׁבַּע אֶת־שָׂרֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים
 הַלְוִיִּם וְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת כַּדְבָר הַזֶּה
 וַיִּשְׁבְּעוּ: (ו) וַיָּקָם עֹזְרָא מִלִּפְנֵי בַּיִת
 הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל־לִישְׁבֵּת יְהוֹחָנָן
 בֶּן־אֵלִישִׁיב וַיֵּלֶךְ שָׁם לֶחֶם לֹא־אָכַל וַיִּמָּוֶה
 לֹא־שָׁתָה כִּי מִתְאַבֵּל עַל־מַעַל הַגּוֹלָה: (ז)
 וַיַּעֲבִירוּ קוֹל בִּיהוּדָה וּבִירוּשָׁלַם לְכָל־בְּנֵי
 הַגּוֹלָה לְהִקְבֹּץ יְרוּשָׁלַם: (ח) וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר
 לֹא־יָבֹא לִשְׁלֹשֶׁת הַיָּמִים כַּעֲצַת הַשָּׂרִים
 וְהַזְקֵנִים יִחָרֵם כָּל־רְכוּשׁוֹ וְהוּא יִבְדֵּל מִקַּתֵּל
 הַגּוֹלָה: (ט) וַיִּקְבְּצוּ כָל־אֲנָשֵׁי־יְהוּדָה
 וּבְנֵי־מִן וְיְרוּשָׁלַם לִשְׁלֹשֶׁת הַיָּמִים הוּא חֹדֶשׁ
 הַתְּשִׁיעִי בַעֲשָׂרִים בַּחֹדֶשׁ וַיִּשְׁבּוּ כָל־הָעָם
 בְּרַחֲוֹב בַּיִת הָאֱלֹהִים מִרְעִידִים עַל־הַדְּבָר
 וּמִהִגָּשְׁמִים: (י) וַיָּקָם עֹזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן וַיֹּאמֶר
 אֲלֵהֶם אַתֶּם מְעַלְתֶּם וּתְשִׁיבוּ נָשִׁים נְכָרִיּוֹת
 לְהוֹסִיף עַל־אֲשַׁמַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל: (יא) וְעַתָּה תִּגְנוּ
 תוֹדָה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם וַעֲשׂוּ רְצוֹנֵי
 וְהִבְדַּלְתֶּם מֵעַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ וּמִן־הַנָּשִׁים הַנְּכָרִיּוֹת:

(14) MALBIM EZRA 10:8

יחרם כל רכושו, זה בתוקף מה שנעשה מן הכלל כנ"ל ג', ועז"א כעצת השרים והזקנים, שהכלל י"ל כח לזה

“All of his property will be chereḿ” – This is by the authority of the communal action, as mentioned above in 10:3. Thus he said, “By the counsel of the officers and the elders,” for the community possesses this power.

(15) GITTIN 36B

אמר רבי יצחק מנין שהפקר בית דין היה הפקר שְׁנָאֹמֵר {עזרא י':ח'} וכל אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָבֹא לִשְׁלֹשַׁת הַיָּמִים כְּעֵצַת הַשָּׂרִים וְהַזְּקֵנִים יִחָרֵם כָּל רְכוּשׁוֹ וְהוּא יִבְדֵּל מִקְהַל הַגּוֹלָה.

Rabbi Yitzhak says: From where is it derived that property declared ownerless by the court is ownerless? As it is stated: “And whoever did not come within three days according to the counsel of the princes and the Elders, all of his property shall be forfeited, and he shall be separated from the congregation of the captivity” (Ezra 10:8).

THE RESPONSE

(16) EZRA 10:12-17

(12) Then all the assembly answered with a loud voice, "As you have said concerning us, so must we do. (13) But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand outside. Neither is this a work of one day or two; for we have greatly transgressed in this matter. (14) Let now our princes be appointed for all the assembly, and let all those who are in our cities who have married foreign women come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges of it, until the fierce wrath of our God be turned from us, until this matter be dispatched." (15) Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahzeiah the son of Tikvah stood up against this matter, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them. (16) The children of the captivity did so. Ezra the priest, with certain heads of fathers' houses, after their fathers' houses, and all of them by their names, were set apart; and they sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. (17) They made an end with all the men who had married foreign women by the first day of the first month.

(יב) וַיַּעֲנוּ כָל־הַקְהָל וַיֹּאמְרוּ קוֹל גָּדוֹל כֹּה [כְּדַבְרֵךְ] (כדבריד) עָלֵינוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת: (יג) אֲכָל הָעָם רַב וְהָעֵת גְּשָׁמִים וְאִין פֶּח לַעֲמֹד בַּחוּץ וְהַמְלֵאכָה לֹא־לָיוֹם אֶחָד וְלֹא לַשְּׁנַיִם כִּי־הָרַבִּינוּ לַפֶּשַׁע בְּדַבַּר הַזֶּה: (יד) יַעֲמְדוּ־נָא שָׂרֵינוּ לְכָל־הַקְהָל וְכָלוּ אֲשֶׁר בְּעָרֵינוּ הַהִשִּׁיב נָשִׁים נְכָרִיֹּת יָבֵא לַעֲתִים מִזְמָנִים וְעַמְתָּם זְקֵנֵי־עִיר וְעִיר וְשֹׁפְטֵיהֶּ עֹד לְהִשִּׁיב חֲרוֹן אַף־אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִמֶּנּוּ עַד לַדָּבָר הַזֶּה: (טו) אָדוּ יוֹנָתָן בֶּן־עֲשָׂהאֵל וַיַּחֲזִיקוּ בְּוַתְּקוּהָ עִמָּדוֹ עַל־זֹאת וּמִשְׁלָם וְשַׁבְּתַי הַלְוִי עֲזָרָם: (זז) וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן בְּנֵי הַגּוֹלָה וַיִּבְדְּלוּ עֲזָרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֲנָשִׁים רֵאשֵׁי הָאָבוֹת לְבֵית אֲבוֹתָם וְכָל־שְׂמֹת וַיִּשְׁבּוּ בַּיּוֹם אֶחָד לַחֲדָשׁ הָעֵשִׂירִי לְדִרְיוֹשׁ הַדָּבָר: (יז) וַיִּכְלוּ בְּכָל אֲנָשִׁים הַהִשִּׁיבוּ נָשִׁים נְכָרִיֹּת עַד יוֹם אֶחָד לַחֲדָשׁ הָרֵאשׁוֹן:

(17) SHEMOT RABBAH 50:5

"ויעש בצלאל" - וכי בצלאל עשה לעצמו, שבכל דבר דבר הוא אומר "ויעש בצלאל"? אלא על שנתן נפשו עליו ביותר לא קיפח הקב"ה שכרו, ופרסמו הכתוב על כל דבר דבר. כיוצא בדבר אתה אומר (עזרא י) "אך יונתן בן עשהאל ויחזיה בן תקוה עמדו על זאת, ומשלם ושבתו הלוי עזרום," אלא יונתן נתן נפשו על הדבר הרבה, ולפי שבאו וסיעוהו העלה עליהם הקב"ה כאלו עשו הם המעשה, אבל יונתן ע"י שנתן נפשו בדבר פרסמו הכתוב.

“And Betzalel made” – Did Betzalel do it himself, such that for every item it says, “And Betzalel made”? Rather, because he especially sacrificed of himself, Gd did not cheat him of his wages, and the text publicized his role with each item. Similarly, Ezra 10:15 says, “Only Yonatan ben Asahel and Yachziah ben Tikvah stood for this, and Meshulam and Shabtai HaLevi assisted them,” but Yonatan especially sacrificed of himself. And because they came and assisted him, Gd considered it as though they had done the deed, but Yonatan, who sacrificed for it, is publicized in the text.

(18) DA'AT MIKRA EZRA 10:15

(טו) עָמְדוּ עַל־זֹאת – וְשָׂארוּ בְגִלְלָהּ זֶה; הַשָּׂרִים הָאֲחֵרִים לֹא הִסְפִּימוּ לָכֶּךָ וְהָלְכוּ לָהֶם. וּמִשְׁלָם

“Stood for this” – stayed for this reason; the other officers did not agree and left.

(19) MALBIM EZRA 10:15

"אך יונתן", שלא עמדו נגד זה לקנתר על הדבר רק שני אלה, ושנים שעזרום, אבל יתר העם הסכימו לזה:

“Only Yonatan,” for no one opposed the matter other than these two, and the two who helped them. The rest of the nation agreed to it.

SEPARATING FROM FOREIGN WIVES

(20) EZRA 10:18-44

(18) Among the sons of the priests there were found who had married foreign women: of the sons of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and his brothers, Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. (19) They gave their hand that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their guilt. (20) Of the sons of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah. (21) Of the sons of Harim: Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uzziyah. (22) Of the sons of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah. (23) Of the Levites: Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah (the same is Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. (24) Of the singers: Eliashib. Of the porters: Shallum, and Telem, and Uri.

(יח) וּמִצְאָה מִבְּנֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים אֲשֶׁר הָשִׁיבוּ בָנִים נְכָרִיּוֹת מִבְּנֵי יִשׁוּעַ בְּרִיּוֹצְדָק וְאֶחָיו מִעֲשֵׂיָה וְאַלְיָעָזָר וְנָרִיב וְגַדְלִיָּה: (יט) וַיִּתְּנוּ יָדָם לְהוֹצִיא נְשֵׁיהֶם וְאֲשָׁמִים אֵיל־צֹאן עַל־אֲשָׁמָתָם: (כ) וּמִבְּנֵי אִמֶּר חַנָּנִי וְזִבְדִּיָּה: (כא) וּמִבְּנֵי חֶרֶם מִעֲשֵׂיָה וְאַלְיָה וְשִׁמְעֵיָה וַיַּחֲזִיקוּ וַיִּעֲזְבוּ: (כב) וּמִבְּנֵי פַשְׁחֹר אֶלְיֹעֲנַי מִעֲשֵׂיָה וְשִׁמְעֵאל וְנִתְנָאֵל יוֹזָבָד וְאַלְעֲשָׂה: (כג) וּמִבְּנֵי הַלֵּוִיִּם יוֹזָבָד וְשִׁמְעִי וְגַלְיָה הוּא קְלִיטָא פְתַחְיָה יְהוּדָה וְאַלְיָעָזָר: (כד) וּמִבְּנֵי הַשֹּׁרְרִים אֶלְיָשִׁיב וּמִבְּנֵי הַשְּׂעִרִים שְׁלֹם וְנָטָם וְאוּרִי: (כה) וּמִבְּנֵי הַבָּרִים פֶּרְעָשׁ מִבְּנֵי רְמִיָּה וַיִּנְיָה וּמִלְפִיָּה

(25) Of Israel: Of the sons of Parosh: Ramiah, and Izziah, and Malchijah, and Mijamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah. **(26) Of the sons of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Elijah.** (27) Of the sons of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. (28) Of the sons of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, Athlai. (29) Of the sons of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, Jeremoth. (30) Of the sons of Pahathmoab: Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, and Binnui, and Manasseh. (31) The sons of Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, (32) Benjamin, Malluch, Shemariah. (33) Of the sons of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, Shimei. (34) Of the sons of Bani: Maadai, Amram, and Uel, (35) Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhi, (36) Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, (37) Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu, (38) and Bani, and Binnui, Shimei, (39) and Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah, (40) Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, (41) Azarel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah, (42) Shallum, Amariah, Joseph. (43) Of the sons of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Iddo, and Joel, Benaiah. (44) All these had taken foreign wives; and some of them had wives by whom they had children.

ומימן ואליעזר ומלכיה ובניה: **(כו) ומבני עילם מתניה זכריה ויהיאל ועבדי וירמות ואליה:** (כז) ומבני זתוא אליועני אלישיב מתניה ירמות וזבד ועזיזא: (כח) ומבני בכי יהוחנן חנניה זבי עתלי: (כט) ומבני בני משלם מלוך ועדניה ישוב ושאל [ורמות] (ירמות): (ל) ומבני פתח מואב עדנא וכלל בניה מעשיה מתניה בצלאל ובנוי ומנשה: (לא) ובני חרם אליעזר ישיה מלכיה שמעיה שמעון: (לב) ובנמן מלוך שמריה: (לג) מבני חשם מתני מתתה זבד אליפלט ירמי מנשה שמעוי: (לד) מבני בני מעני עמרם ואואל: (לה) בניה בדניה [פלוהו] (כלוהי): (לו) ובניה מרמות אלישיב: (לז) מתניה מתני [ויעשי] (ויעשו): (לח) ובני ובנוי שמעוי: (לט) ושלמה ונתן ועדניה: (מ) מכנדבי ששי שרי: (מא) עזראל ושלמיהו שמריה: (מב) שלום אמריה יוסף: (מג) מבני נבו יעאל מתתיה זבד זבינא [בני] (ידו) ויאל בניה: (מד) כל-אלה [נשא] (נשאי) נשים נכריות ונש מהם נשים וישימו בנים:

(21) KERITOT 11A

אמר רב חסדא: מלמד שכולן שפחות חרופות בעלו.

Rav Chisda said: This teaches that all of them had lived with *shifchot charufot*.

(22) RASHI EZRA 10:19

על אשמתם - הוראת שעה היתה:

“For their guilt” – This was a ruling for the moment.

(23) DA'AT MIKRA EZRA 10:19

(ויק' ה יז-יט); והם כשוננים היו בדבר זה מפני שחשבו שאסור החתון חל רק על העמים ששמותיהם פרושו בתורה⁵⁰.

They were like negligent sinners in this matter, because they thought that the prohibition of intermarriage applied only on those nations which had been mentioned in the Torah.

(24) MALBIM EZRA 10:2

לפי מה שחשב אח"כ שמות האנשים שנשאו נשים נכריות היו מעטים לערך העם הרב שהיו עתה בא"י, ובכ"ז היה החטא כללי כאשר נעשה בפרהסיא והשרים לא מיחו בדבר

Based on the subsequent list of names of men who married foreign women, these were only a few relative to the large nation which now lived in Israel. And yet, it was considered a communal sin because it was done in public, and the leaders had not protested.

(25) DA'AT MIKRA EZRA 10:44, N. 67

בְּדָבָר הַזֶּה (י יג), נִמְצְאוּ לְמִדִּים שְׁלֹא עָלָה בְיָדֵי
 עֹזְרָא לְהוֹצִיא אֶת מַחְשֶׁבְתוֹ לְפַעַל בְּשִׁלְמוֹת, עַד
 שָׁבָא נִחְמָה וְהִגְשִׁימָה בְכַח שְׁלִטוֹנוֹ.

We learn that Ezra did not successfully execute his intention fully, until Nechemiah came and actualized it with the power of his rule.

67 'זישימו' במקום ויולידו, ראה רד"ק לתה' קז מא: וישם כצאן משפחות. ואולי יש בלשון זה משום זלזול, מעין מה שדרשו בתנחומא לפ' וישב את הפסוק 'אשר יצאו משם פלשתים' (בר' י יד) – אינו אומר 'אשר הולידו', אלא אשר יצאו, להודיע שהן כלן בני זמה.

“They placed” comes in place of “they fathered”... Perhaps this language is derogatory, like what we find in the Tanchuma to Vayeshev: “who came forth from the Plishtim” (Bereishit 10:14) – it doesn’t say “who fathered” but “who came forth,” which shows that they were all children of lewdness.

ASSESSING EZRA

(26) R' TZVI SINENSKY, “SEPARATING FROM FOREIGN WIVES”

Ezra acts, but only once he has been prodded by his supporters. Even then, Ezra’s actions seem conflicted. On the one hand, he demands that the people to swear that they will impose the covenant. On the other hand, he again secludes himself in the chamber, where he continues to fast. The voice calling the Jews to gather in Jerusalem seems to emanate not from Ezra, but from his followers.

The success of the initiative is similarly mixed. At first glance, it appears to be a remarkable triumph; the Jews gather in Jerusalem within three days, follow Ezra’s command, and separate from their wives within just three months. Considering that Ezra has just arrived in Judea, this is nothing short of remarkable.

Upon closer examination, however, the people’s commitment appears lukewarm. After all, imagine the scene. The situation is dire. Ezra has called upon the nation to gather in three days’ time. Grasping the gravity of the situation, the people drop all their responsibilities and travel immediately to Jerusalem. They arrive, fearing the grave situation – and the weather forecast. Ezra continues to thunder at them, demanding

confession. They gamely agree, but add that the process probably ought be delayed due to the imminent precipitation. The odd juxtaposition of fear of sin and rain, no matter how relentless the precipitation might have been during the rainy season of Kislev, seems to belie the Jews' commitment.

Even the actual separation produces mixed results. While many couples do divorce, a count of the families reveals that just 113 marriages dissolve. While this is a remarkable achievement on the part of Ezra, it represents a miniscule percentage of the total families in Judea, which equaled roughly 50,000. While we don't know exactly how many had intermarried, the verses do record that "they had transgressed extensively in this matter" (10:13). That three months were required for the process to unfold would seem to indicate that many more families were expected to appear but never did. Moreover, the fact that Ezra's contemporary Nechemia was repeatedly required to confront the sin implies that Ezra had failed to truly solve the problem...

Whereas Nechemia was a forceful political personality deeply grounded in Torah values, Ezra was first and foremost a brilliant, dedicated scholar. Ezra was not, in essence, a man of action. At the end of the day, Ezra is an introvert who thrives on the solitude of the "Beit Midrash." Only when prodded does Ezra rise to the occasion and move mountains to profoundly shape his community.

(27) R' YOEL BIN-NUN, "SHIUR YOTZEI DOFEN B'HANHAGAT HATZIBBUR"

בהקרבה אישית של כבודו חולל עזרא זעזוע ציבורי כזה, ורק כך הפעיל את סמכותו.

By sacrificing his honor, Ezra facilitated a communal upheaval, and only in this way did he utilize his authority.

(28) SHEMOT 24,7; 34:28

(ז) ויקח ספר הברית ויקרא באזני העם ויאמרו כל אשר דבר י"י נעשה ונשמע:

(7) He took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people, and they said, "All that Hashem has spoken, we will do and we will listen."

(ח) ויהי־ישם עמי־י"י ארבעים יום וארבעים לילה לא אכל לחם ולא שתה מים לא שתה וכתב על־הלוח את דברי הברית עשרת הדברים:

(28) He was there with Hashem forty days and forty nights. He did not eat bread and he did not drink water. He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten statements.

(29) R' TZVI SINENSKY, "SEPARATING FROM FOREIGN WIVES"

The only reason Moshe returns to Sinai is due to the Jews' sin of the Golden Calf. His return to the mountaintop comes under far from ideal circumstances. Quite the opposite: it is an attempt to achieve repentance for the Jews' transgression. The parallels to the Revelation in *Ezra* chapter 10, as well as in *Nechemia* chapter 8, are intended to accomplish much the same. Although the community has sinned,

effectively trampling the Torah that Moshe taught at Sinai, as in the case of Moshe's return to the mountain, repentance creates the possibility of renewed covenantal commitment. The parallels to Sinai, in other words, reinforce the idea that *Shivat Tzion* represents a time of renewed commitment to our relationship with God, the central theme of the theophany and Moshe's ascent to Sinai in search of atonement.

In light of this motif, we may more fully appreciate the ubiquity of variations on the term "covenant" in *Ezra-Nehemiah*. In our story, the people commit to a "*brit*," covenant, to separate from foreign wives. In *Nehemiah*, we read that despite the Jews' sins, God has stayed faithful to His covenant (*Nehemiah* 9:32). The people craft an "*amana*," pledge (*ibid.*, 10:1), an oath, and a vow to "follow the teaching of God, given through Moshe God's servant" (10:30). Although Ezra's work remains incomplete, the larger, optimistic theme of the restoration of the covenant has been established as a cornerstone of our book.

FURTHER READING

(30) MALBIM EZRA 10:1

"ל' שנקבצו ג"כ נשים שבעליהם לקחו נשים נכריות והם בכו ג"כ.

One can say that the women whose husbands took foreign wives came and cried also.

(31) RAMBAN VAYIKRA 24:10

והצרפתים אומרים כי טעם הגרות מפני שהיה קודם מתן תורה, והיה משפטו לילך אחר הזכר ממה שאמרו (יבמות עח:):
"באומות הלך אחר הזכר." וכאשר נולד זה לא מלו אותו כי מצרי היה בדינו, אבל כשגדל נתגייר לדעתו ונמול. ואין דעתי כך, כי
מעט שבא אברהם בברית היו ישראל ובגוים לא יתחשבו

The French say that the reason for the conversion was that this was before the Torah was given, and the law was to follow the male, as Yevamot 78b says, "Among the nations, follow the male." When he was born they did not circumcise him, for we held him to be Egyptian. But when he grew up, he converted willingly and was circumcised. And I do not agree with this, for from the time Avraham entered the Covenant, Israel was not included among the nations.

(32) ARUKH L'NER KERITOT 11A

רש"י בפירושו לעזרא כתב על 'ואשמים איל צאן על אשמתם' "הוראת שעה היתה." וכן כתב גם האבן עזרא שם. והנה על האבן עזרא אין תימא כ"כ דהרבה פעמים מפרש ע"פ פשט הפסוק חוץ לדרש, אבל על רש"י צ"ע שמפרש נגד הגמרא.

In his commentary to Ezra, Rashi wrote regarding 'And the guilty ones brought a ram for their guilt,' "This was a ruling for the moment." So wrote Ibn Ezra there, too. For Ibn Ezra this is not surprising; he often explains according to a simple reading of the text, without derash. But for Rashi, this requires examination, as he explains counter to the Talmud...

(33) MISHNA KERITOT 6:3

רבי אליעזר אומר מתנדב אדם אשם תלוי בכל יום ובכל שעה שירצה והיא נקראת אשם חסידים.

Rabbi Eliezer said: One may volunteer an *asham talui* on any day and at any time he wishes; this is called an "asham of the pious".

(34) NETZIV, LETTER PUBLISHED IN "L'MA'AN TZIYON" (TRANS: R' MORDECHAI TORCZYNER)

And as was in the days of Ezra the Scribe, who gathered some thousands from Babylon from all types of people – Torah giants and those who revered Gd, and also from those men who married foreign women,

who regularly violated Shabbat, and who did not know Torah at all. All of these gathered and prepared the settlement of the land in cities, such that afterward the land was filled with her children. So, too, we must wake up to the call of the desire of Gd, which is heard from one end of the world to the other, everywhere our brethren are scattered, banished and tortured, to do all we can, whether a little or a lot, and with all segments of Jewry. Regarding all of them will be fulfilled the message of Ezra the Scribe in his time, "The hand of Gd is upon all who seek Him, to benefit, etc. (Ezra 8:22)"

<https://etzion.org.il/en/tanakh/ketuvim/sefer-ezra/ezra-chapter-10-separating-foreign-wives>

<https://www.929.org.il/page/851/post/22666>

OUTLINE
