

Parashat Vayigash 5778  
R' Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig

## תרגום אונקלוס

ומלכי צדק מלך שלם חציה לחם ויין והוא כהן לקל עליון:	בראשית יד:יח
ויקרא פרעה שם יוסף צפנת פענח ויתן לו את אסנת בת פוטי פרע כהן אן לאשה ויצא יוסף על ארץ מצרים:	בראשית מא:מה
ומשה הנה רעה את צאן יתרו חתנו כהן מדן וינהג את הצאן אחר המדבר ויבא אל הר האלקים חרבה:	שמות ג:א
ואתה הקרב אליה את אהרן אחיה ואת בניו אתו מתוך בני ישראל לכהנו לי אהרן נדב ואביהוא אלעזר ואיתמר בני אהרן:	שמות כח:א
רק אדמת הפהנים לא קנה פי חק לפהנים מאת פרעה ואכלו את חקם אשר נתן להם פרעה על פן לא מכרו את אדמתם:	בראשית מז:כב
ויאמר ד' אל משה אמר אל הפהנים בני אהרן ואמרת אליהם לנפש לא יטמא בעמיו:	ויקרא כא:א

1. **R' Chezekiah ben Manoach** [13th Century, France], **Chizkuni**, Bereishit 47:22 [Translation from [mg.alhatorah.org](http://mg.alhatorah.org)]

רק אדמת הכהנים השרים כמו כהן מדין. לא קנה פן יתגרו במלך. ד"א לפי שדנהו לזכות כמו שפי' למעלה גבי ויתנהו אל בית הסהר.

**"Only the soil belonging to the priests (Joseph did not transfer to Pharaoh)." They therefore would not have any reason to start a rebellion against Pharaoh. A different reason given for Joseph's preferential treatment of the priests is as we explained already, [that the priests had suggested a method by which to test if Joseph or the wife of Potiphar had spoken the truth, as a result of which, Joseph instead of being hanged had only been put in jail].**

2. **Rashi** [1040 – 1105, France], **ibid.** [Translation from mg.alhatorah.org]

**הכהנים** - הכוהנים, כל לשון כהן משרת לאלהות הוא, חוץ מאותן שהם לשון גדולה, כמו (שמות ב טז) כהן מדין, (לעיל מא מה) כהן און:

**הכהנים** means THE PRIESTS. The term **כהן** always means one who ministers to Deity except in those cases where it denotes one of high rank, e.g. (Exodus 2:16) "Jethro the chief of (**כהן**) Midian" and (Genesis 41:45) "the chief of (**כהן**) On").

3. **Shmuel II 8:18** [*JPS 1917 Translation*]

וּבְנֵיהוּ בֵּין יְהוּדָע וְהַפְּרָתִי וְהַפְּלָתִי וּבְנֵי דָוִד כְּהֻנִּים הָיוּ:

and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief ministers.

- 4. Divrei HaYamim I 18:17 [JPS 1985 Translation]**

וּבְנֵיהוּ בֶן יְהוֹדָע עַל הַפְּרָתִי וְהַפְּלָתִי וּבְנֵי דָוִד הָרִאשׁוֹנִים לֵיד הַמֶּלֶךְ:

Benaiah son of Jehoiada was commander of the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were first ministers of the king.

Why did Onkelos change his translation of כֹּהֵן across these different pasukim?

- Using different terminology demonstrates to the reader that they should view the idolatrous priest and Jewish priest differently. (R' Dr. Rafael Posen, *Parshegen*, Bereishit 14:18)
- There are contextual differences that pushed Onkelos to translate differently in each case. (מתניה בארי, <https://goo.gl/jmtcwb>)

5. **Devarim 11:10** [JPS 1985 Translation]

כִּי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה בָּא שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ לֹא כְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם הוּא אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאָתָם מִשָּׁם אֲשֶׁר תִּזְרַע אֶת זֶרְעָהּ וְהִשְׁקִיתָ בְּרִגְלָהּ כְּגֹן הַיָּרֵק:

For the land that you are about to enter and possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come. There the grain you sowed had to be watered by your own labors, like a vegetable garden;

6. **Vayikra 18:3** [JPS 1985 Translation]

כְּמַעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ-מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר יֹשְׁבֵתָם-בָּהּ לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וְכְמַעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ-כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְבִיא אֲתָכֶם שָׁמָּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וּבַחֲקֵיהֶם לֹא תִלְכּוּ:

You shall not copy the practices of the land of Egypt where you dwelt, or of the land of Canaan to which I am taking you; nor shall you follow their laws.

**Yonatan Grossman, The Priests of Egypt and the Kohanim of Israel** <https://goo.gl/XjNKus>

I believe that this phenomenon can be examined from two different perspectives: that of the nation, and that of the kohanim themselves.

**1. From the point of view of the nation:** In contrast to the priests of pagan cultures (such as Egypt) whose function was limited to religious ritual, kohanim had an educational function. At the same time as serving God in the mishkan and in the beit ha-mikdash they were responsible for teaching the nation, for ensuring justice and righteousness and for spreading Torah in the hearts of Israel. This is clearly apparent from a number of pesukim.

(Devarim 21:5). (Devarim 33:10); (Yirmiyahu 18:18); (Yechezkel 7:26), etc.

Since a significant portion of the kohen's job involved educating the nation, it was necessary to ensure that he would constantly be on the move amongst the various tribes, reaching even the most far-flung outlying areas, in order to teach the nation Torah and its values. Therefore inheritance and a permanent abode were denied him.

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**2. From the point of view of the kohanim:** The tension and contrast between dwelling in a fixed place and perpetual wandering accompanies us throughout Sefer Bereishit. The most outstanding example of this is Lot's separation from Avraham (13:5-18). After Avraham and Lot return from Egypt they decide to separate. The first choice of land is given to Lot. Standing on the Beit El ridge, he looks around and decides where he wants to live. "And Lot lifted his eyes and saw the entire plain of the Jordan, for it was all good pasture-land before God destroyed Sedom and Amora, like the garden of God, like the land of Egypt as you come to Tzo'ar. And Lot chose himself the entire plain of the Jordan, and Lot traveled eastwards, and they separated from each other." Lot chooses to live in Sedom for "it was all good pasture-land;" in other words, there was a permanent water source there. The Torah compares two other places to Sedom: "The garden of God" (i.e., the garden of Eden) and "the land of Egypt." The most outstanding common feature of these three sites is the permanent and fixed local water source (the rivers in the garden of Eden, and the Nile in Egypt) - a solution to several economic problems and something which facilitates permanent dwelling in one fixed place.

Lot chooses to live in a place which reminds him of the Egyptian culture which he has just left; a place he will not have to leave when he seeks pasture for his flocks, thanks to the bountiful water supply. In complete contrast, as soon as Lot departs, God promises the land to Avraham but tells him: "Arise, walk about in the land, along its length and breadth, for to you I shall give it." It is specifically this wandering and walking about that will give Avraham his right to the land. And indeed, we are told immediately thereafter, "And Avraham removed his tent..." - in other words, he began wandering. (It is interesting to note that later on when the angels come to visit Avraham he is in his TENT, while when they visit Lot, the latter lives in a HOUSE.)

It is not only Avraham the individual who is required to wander and not to rest on his economic laurels, but the entire nation as well. Surprisingly enough, the Torah lists as one of the reasons for the choice of Eretz Yisrael specifically the lack of permanent water-resources: "For the land which you are coming to in order to inherit it - it is not like the land of Egypt from whence you departed, where you sowed your seeds and watered with your foot, like a vegetable garden. The land which you are passing over to inherit is a land of mountains and valleys; you shall drink water at the mercy of the rains. It is a land which God inquires after; God's eyes are always upon it, from the beginning of the year until the end of the year." (Devarim 11:10-12) It is not a bountiful land which is chosen as the dwelling place for Israel, but rather a place which is dependent on the rains and on the raingiver - God.

I believe that a similar phenomenon, on a different level, characterizes the relative position of the kohanim. The entire nation enters the land, settles in it, sows seeds and builds houses. But the one special tribe which is dedicated to God's service must continue to wander; that tribe must continue to experience the sense of basic dependence on the One who watches over us, who "opens His hand and satisfies all living things in want."