**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

**MIDRASH ON THE PARASHA**

**Dr. Tziporah Lifshitz**

**Parashat Shemini:**

**The Selection of Israel and the Dietary Laws**

**Introduction**

The final chapter of *Parashat Shemini,* Chapter 11 of the Book of *Vayikra*, lays out the laws of purity as they apply to the animal kingdom, the first issue being which species within it may be eaten and which may not. After discussing creatures of the land, water and sky, the Torah states:

The only flying insects with four walking legs that you may eat are those which have [knees extending above their feet](https://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=3&CHAPTER=11#C2230), wherewith to leap on the earth (***le-natter*** *bahein al ha-aretz*). Among these, you may [only] eat members of the [red locust](https://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=3&CHAPTER=11#C2231) family, the [yellow locust](https://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=3&CHAPTER=11#C2232) family, the [spotted grey locust](https://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=3&CHAPTER=11#C2233) family, and the [white locust](https://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=3&CHAPTER=11#C2234) family.

This leads *Vayikra Rabba*, in the first of the three units it dedicates to the laws of keeping kosher, to cite a verse from *Chavakuk* which uses a verb with the same root to describe God’s relationship with the other nations of the earth.

He stands and shakes the earth (*vaymoded eretz),* He looks and makes the nations tremble (***vayatter*** *goyim*).

*Vaymoded* may also be rendered “measures” or “examines;” *vayatter* may also be rendered “releases” or “allows” or “permits.”

The Midrash seeks, in each of these units, to provide a different answer to the same question: what is the meaning of the commandments regarding which foods are prohibited and which are permitted?

In this week's *shiur,* we will examine the first of these sections, which deals with the distinction between Israel and the nations of the world:

**The Text**

Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai opened: "He stands and measures the earth, He looks and releases the nations (*vayatter goyim*)" (*Chavakuk* 3:6).

The Holy One, blessed be He, took the measure of all the nations and found no nation fit to receive the Torah except for Israel.

And the Holy One, blessed be He, measured all the generations and found no generation fit to receive the Torah except for the generation of the wilderness.

The Holy One, blessed be He, measured all the mountains and found no mountain upon which the *Shekhina* could rest except for Mount Moriya.

The Holy One, blessed be He, measured all the cities and found no city in which the Temple could be built except for Jerusalem.

The Holy One, blessed be He, measured all the mountains and found no mountain upon which the Torah could be given except for Mount Sinai.

The Holy One, blessed be He, measured all the lands and found no land fit for Israel except for Eretz Israel. This is what is stated: "He stands and measures the earth."

"He beholds and releases the nations."

Rav said: He permitted (*hittir*) their blood, He permitted their treasure. He permitted their blood: "You shall save alive nothing that breathes" (*Devarim* 20:16). He permitted their treasure: "And you shall eat the spoil of your enemies" (ibid. v. 14).

Rabbi Yochanan said: He made them jump into Gehinnom, as it is stated: "Wherewith to leap upon the earth" (*Vayikra* 11:21).

Rabbi Huna the Great of Tzipori said: He untied their belts. This is what is stated: "He opens the bond of kings, and binds their loins with a belt" (*Iyov* 12:18).

Ulla Bira'a said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: [This may be likened] to one who went out to the threshing floor, taking his dog and donkey with him. He loaded his donkey with five *se'a* and his dog with two. That dog complained.[[1]](#footnote-1) So he removed one *se'a* from it, but it still complained. So he removed both *se'a*, but it still complained. He said to it: You are not laden [at all] and yet you complain?

So too regarding the seven commandments that the descendants of Noach accepted upon themselves, since they could not comply with them, He stood up and removed them from the backs of the nations, and put them on Israel.

Rabbi Tanchum bar Chanilai said: [This may be likened] to a doctor who went in to visit two sick people, one who was fit to live, and one who was not fit to live. About the one who was fit to live, he said: Let him not eat this or that. About the one who was not fit to live, he said: Whatever he wants, give him.

So too for the nations of the world who will not live in the World to Come, "[Every moving thing that lives shall be for food for you] as the green herb have I given you all" (*Bereishit* 9:3). But for Israel who will live in the World to Come: "These are the living things which you may eat among all the beasts that are on the earth" (*Vayikra* 11:2). (*Vayikra Rabba* 13, 2)

This *derasha* is comprised of three parts:

1. A *derasha* in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai
2. *Derashot* on the verse: "He looks and releases the nations"
3. Two parables

### "He stands and measures the earth" —

### the symmetry and precision in divine selection

The words "He stands and measures the earth" in Chavakuk's prophecy are expounded by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in a tangible manner, as referring to the precise examination conducted by God that precedes the selection of a special place or group of people.[[2]](#footnote-2) The selection relates first and foremost to the human plane — the selection of Israel from among the nations, and the selection of the generation of the wilderness from among all the generations. Afterwards, the selection relates to the dimension of space.

Rabbi Ze'ev Wolf (the Maharazav) in his commentary (ad loc.) notes the peculiar order in which the various matters appear in the *derasha*, as dictated by the wording of the verse being expounded:

It should first have stated that He measured all the lands, and afterwards that He measured all the cities, but since it expounds the verse, “[He] measures the earth,” it therefore mentions all the lands at the end.

However, he does not explain the overall order of the matters mentioned in the *derasha.*

Upon closer examination it appears that the *derasha* is comprised of three pairs of complementary statements, 1-6, 2-5, and 3-4, which create three circles, the innermost of which involves the resting of the *Shekhina* in the Temple in Jerusalem:

1. And He found no nation fit to receive the Torah except for Israel.
2. And He found no generation fit to receive the Torah except for the generation of the wilderness.
3. And He found no mountain upon which the *Shekhina* could rest except for Mount Moriya.
4. And He found no city in which the Temple could be built except for Jerusalem.
5. And He found no mountain upon which the Torah could be given except for Mount Sinai.
6. And He found no land fit for Israel except for Eretz Israel.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's *derasha* points to the precise match between Israel and the Torah, and the deliberate selection of all the components of the actualization of the "Divine essence": the revelation at Sinai, the generation of the wilderness, Eretz Israel, Jerusalem and the Temple. The correspondence between the people and the generation, on the one hand, and the mountain, the city and the land, on the other, reinforces the interpretation that what we have here is not a casting of blame or responsibility on the nations of the world, but rather an exploration of symmetry and inner nature. Accordingly, the word *ra'ui* which is used here in connection with the nation, the generation and the land should be understood in the sense of "fit, appropriate."[[3]](#footnote-3)

### "He looks and Releases the Nations" — the implications of the selection of ISrael

The second part of the *derasha* focuses on the first statement in the first part of the *derasha*: "He found no nation fit to receive the Torah except for Israel," and it discusses the implications of the selection of Israel on God's relationship with the nations of the world. The three *derashot* of which it is composed are brought in the chronological order of the expounders: Rav, of the first generation of the Amoraim of Babylonia; Rabbi Yochanan, of the second generation of the Amoraim of Eretz Israel; and Rabbi Huna, of the fifth generation of the Amoraim of Eretz Israel.

In two of the three *derashot* of the continuation of the verse in *Chavakuk*, "He looks and releases the nations," the phrase “*vayatter goyim”* is expounded in the sense of permit or untie: He permits the blood or the treasure of the seven nations, He permits something that had once been forbidden, or He unties a belt. According to all of these interpretations, the word *vayatter* is understood as a *kal* conjugation of the root *nun-tav-reish.*

In Rav's *derasha*, the selection of Israel implies a command to destroy the inhabitants of Eretz Israel, in order to eradicate their corrupt culture and prevent Israel's contact with it. The Divine commandment dictates the removal of some of the nations from the world in order to permit the nation of Israel to fulfill its destiny. What is more, the actual implementation of this plan is cast upon Israel, who thereby prove the full harnessing of themselves to their historic role.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The meaning of Rabbi Huna's *derasha* becomes clear from the parable offered by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, that God releases the nations from their obligation regarding the seven *mitzvot* cast upon the descendants of Noach. The image of the untying of a belt that appears in the verse from the Book of *Iyov* which is expounded symbolizes the decline in their spiritual standing, and the biblical context is the removal of God's direction from the nation:[[5]](#footnote-5)

He leads counsellors away stripped, and judges makes He fools.

He opens the bond of kings, and binds their loins with a belt.

He leads priests away stripped, and overthrows the mighty.

He removes the speech of men of trust, and takes away the sense of the elders.

He pours contempt upon princes, and loosens the belt of the strong.

He uncovers deep things out of darkness, and brings out to light the shadow of death.

He increases the nations, and destroys them; He enlarges the nations, and leads them away.

He takes away the heart of the chiefs of the people of the land, and causes them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way.

They grope in the dark without light, and He makes them to stagger like a drunken man. (*Iyov* 12:17-25)

As opposed to Rav, who relates to the destruction of the Canaanite peoples at a certain point in history, Rabbi Huna points to the price that the nations pay for the selection of Israel on the spiritual plane, namely, that God removes from them the possibility of achieving human betterment by way of the seven Noachide commandments.[[6]](#footnote-6) Rabbi Huna considers the quality of life of the nations of the world from the time of the revelation at Sinai and onward, seeing it as mundane life lacking majesty and nobility.[[7]](#footnote-7)

In the second *derasha* of the phrase "*vayatter goyim*," the word *vayatter* is expounded as a *pi'el* conjugation of the root *nun-tav-reish*, in the sense of "leaping"; hence: "He made them jump into Gehinnom." As opposed to Rav and Rabbi Huna, Rabbi Yochanan focuses his attention on the recompense for the soul in the future that is beyond life in this world. The content of the *derasha*, however,is puzzling. Why does God's selection of Israel require that He cause the nations to jump into Gehinnom?

All three *derashot* express criticism of or disappointment with the actions of the nations. The need to kill the nations of Canaan stems from the evil of their beliefs and practices; the assertion that God "made them jump into Gehinnom" is understandable in the context of punishment for sin, and also the removal of the belt and the obligation in the seven Noachide commandments attests to disappointment and despairing of the possibility that they will be able to fulfill them in the future.

The parables that appear in the third part of the *derasha* fit in with this direction of thought. The first parable explicitly refers to the inability of the nations to fulfill the seven Noachide commandments. The second parable uses the conclusion that follows from this, that only Israel will merit life in the World to Come, to explain the dietary laws.

The conceptual line that emerges from this analysis contains a fundamental justification for the harsh remarks about the nations of the world in the *derashot* of the Amoraim on the phrase *“vayatter goyim,”* namely, that they have brought this situation upon themselves.

In light of what we have seen above, it may be established that the Amoraic *derashot* included in the second and third part of the *derasha* under discussion stand in contrast to the *derasha* of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai as explained above, expressing the symmetry and precision of Divine selection. If so, we can point to the *derasha* of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai as an independent Tannaitic unit, inserted here by the Amoraim of Eretz Israel for the purpose of creating a new *derasha*, the end of which relates to the matter of forbidden foods. What this means is that the original intention of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's *derasha* is indeed as proposed above, and that it was understood differently by the latter Sages who use it for their own needs.

Is it possible to reinterpret Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai's *derasha* in a different way — perhaps in the way that the Amoraim read it? We wish to propose an alternative interpretation that fits in with the message emerging from the other parts of the *derasha.* However, as already noted, this is not the "natural" reading of the *derasha*.

Perhaps the recurring phrase "the Holy One, blessed be He, measured all the… and found no…" also expresses God's disappointment, as it were, with a world that is incapable of connecting with the Divine, not because this is beyond the world's power, but because humanity perverts its ways and misses the purpose of its existence. What is more, with its actions, humanity defiles its natural environment — the mountains, cities and lands — to the point that God cannot dwell in them either.[[8]](#footnote-8)

### "He untied their belts" —

### observance of the TOrah's commandments

Let us return to the parables appeared in the third part of the *derasha.* Their role in the *derasha* is to clarify and elaborate upon the meaning of Rabbi Huna's remark in his *derasha* that God "untied their belts."

The first parable describes two animals that are made to carry a load, but only the donkey is a pack animal, whereas the dog is not meant to carry loads at all.[[9]](#footnote-9) The allusion here is that the Torah's commandments are natural to Israel, as opposed to the nations of the world who are not built to observe them. In this sense, the parable continues the conceptual line of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's *derasha* of the verse, "He stands and measures the earth." It is no wonder, then, that the parable as well is recorded in his name.[[10]](#footnote-10)

A question may be raised as to the point in time to which the parable refers. On the face of it, this parable and the parable that follows both relate to the time at which the Torah is given; together, they paint a picture in which the Giving of the Torah to Israel marks the end of an era for the nations of the world. From the time of the creation of man, the nations of the world have the opportunity to actualize God's expectations of them. With the Giving of the Torah to Israel, this possibility disappears.

However, the parable can be read differently, as a conceptual model of partnership between Israel and the nations of the world in bearing the word of God in the world, as opposed to the actual reality in which the nations have left the arena. According to this model, Israel accepts the Torah not in place of the nations, but alongside them, and their acceptance of the Torah is not an end point, but a starting point. At the same time that Israel accepts the Torah (in the parable, the load of five *se’a* corresponds to the five books of the Torah), the nations also received a smaller load (the parable speaks of two; I cannot explain what this means here), and together they can advance human history to its perfection.[[11]](#footnote-11)

This reading combines Israel's natural suitability for the Torah with the possibility that the nations of the world can be partners in the process of repairing the world.

The theme of the dissatisfaction of the nations of the world runs throughout the parable: "It complained." Their complaints while bearing the load are understandable. But why do they continue to complain even after the load has been removed from them and cast upon Israel? It seems that they are not at peace with the removal of the burden of the commandments from their shoulders. Whether we understand that the nations want the standing of spiritual superiority without the burden, or that they are unable to accept the insult of their rejection, or that they truly grieve at their being distanced from God — they continue to deal with the absence of the commandments, and with their successors, the people of Israel.[[12]](#footnote-12)

The second parable is reported in the name of Rabbi Tanchum bar Chanilai, an Amora from Eretz Israel who was a contemporary of Rabbi Yochanan. This parable is built on two assumptions: the first assumption is that, as opposed to Israel, the nations of the world will not merit eternal life; and the second is that those who will merit eternal life will receive the commandments. The connection between them lies in the effort required to fulfill the commandments: the distinction between one kind and another, between the forbidden and the permitted, and between the unclean and the clean.

In contrast to the first parable which emphasizes the burden and the difficulty of accepting God's commandments, this parable notes their healing power. Presenting Israel and the nations of the world as sick reflects humanity's need for repair. However, only Israel will be offered the opportunity to achieve repair through the fulfillment of the Torah's commandments.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The end of the second parable contrasts the prohibitions placed on certain foods at the end of *Parashat Shemini* to the permission to consume meat granted to the descendants of Noach after the flood:

About the one who was fit to live, he said: Let him not eat this or that. About the one who was not fit to live, he said: Whatever he wants, give him. So too for the nations of the world who will not live in the World to Come, “[Every moving thing that lives shall be for food for you] as the green herb have I given you all” (*Bereishit* 9:3). But for Israel who will live in the World to Come: “These are the living things which you may eat among all the beasts that are on the earth” (*Vayikra* 11:2).

Does Rabbi Tanchum bar Chanilai see in all of the descendants of Noach already at the time of their emergence from the ark those who are not fit to live, and whose sole purpose is to give rise to the people of Israel — like the theory of the seed and the husk in *Sefer Ha-Kuzari*?

The decision to obey God's command and not eat that which the Torah has forbidden of the animal kingdom echoes the command issued in the Garden of Eden forbidding man to eat of the Tree of Knowledge:

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it… (*Bereishit* 2:16-17)

Thus, the people of Israel ascend the steps of watchfulness and holiness until they merit actualizing themselves as "Israel who will live in the World to Come."

### For further Study:

### *Vayikra Rabba* and the *Mekhilta*

An earlier version of the *derasha* under discussion is found in the halakhic Midrash of the Tannaim, where the same verse in *Chavakuk* is expounded in connection with the Giving of the Torah to Israel:[[14]](#footnote-14)

Another explanation: "I am the Lord your God"…

Therefore the nations of the world were asked to receive the Torah.

In order not to give them an excuse for saying to the *Shekhina*:

Had we been asked, we might have accepted it.

Thus they were asked, and they did not accept it…

He appeared to the descendants of the wicked Eisav and said to them: Do you accept the Torah?

They said to Him: What is written in it?

He said to them: "You shall not kill."

They said to Him: That is the inheritance that our father passed down to us, as it is stated: "And by your sword shall you live" (*Bereishit* 27:40)…

But when He came to Israel… they all opened their mouths and said: "All that the Lord has spoken will we do, and obey."

And similarly it is stated: "He stands and measures the earth, He looks and releases the nations" (*Chavakuk* 3:6).

Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said: If the seven commandments given to the descendants of Noach, which they accepted, they are unable to uphold, all the more so the commandments in the Torah!

This may be likened to a king who appointed two trustees.

One was in charge of a treasure house of straw, while the other was in charge of a treasure house of silver and of gold.

He who was in charge of the straw was suspected [of wrongdoing], and he complained that he was not put in charge of the treasure house of silver and of gold.

He who was in charge of the silver and the gold said to him:

Worthless man, you denied the straw; all the more so would you deny the silver and gold.

Surely there is a *kal va-chomer* argument: if the seven commandments which were given to the descendants of Noach they were unable to uphold, all the more so all the commandments of the Torah. (*Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael, Yitro, Ba-chodesh* 5)

Let us consider several similarities and differences between the two sources. In the anonymous *derasha* appearing in the first part of the *Mekhilta* passage, it is explicitly stated that that the nations of the world are given the option to receive the Torah, as it emerges from the proposed reading of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's parable in the source under discussion.

In the *Mekhilta*, no expression is given to the idea we saw in *Vayikra Rabba*, that the nations of the world were relieved of seven Noachide commandments because of their inability to fulfill them. In contrast, it contains a different idea that is not found in the *derasha* under discussion, that the nations of the world could have or wished to receive the Torah.

The parable of Rabbi Shimon bar Rabbi Elazar is fundamentally different from the parables appearing in the Amoraic *derasha*, but it parallels the parable of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in that it presents the nations of the world as complainers and Israel as responding to them and putting them in their place.

In general, the *Mekhilta* displays a more positive attitude toward the nations of the world in comparison to the *derasha* under discussion.

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. *Mattenot Kehuna* (ad loc.) explains the word *malchit* (complain) in the sense of breaking down under a load. Margaliot in his edition of *Vayikra Rabba* explains the word in the sense of heavy breathing. See ed. Margaliot, Vol. 1, p. 275, n. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Seeing the verse in its context shows that it refers to the revelation at Sinai:

God comes from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran, selah; His glory covers the heavens, and the earth is full of His praise.

And a brightness appearsh as the light; rays has He at His side; and there is the hiding of His power.

Before Him goes the pestilence, and fiery bolts go forth at His feet.

He stands and shakes the earth, He looks and makes the nations tremble; and the everlasting mountains are dashed in pieces, the ancient hills do bow; His goings are as of old.(*Chavakuk* 3:3-6) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Compare with Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's statement in *Bereishit Rabba* 12, 2, from which a similar position emerges:

Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai said: This may be likened to a king of flesh and blood who built a palace. The people went in and said: if the pillars were taller, it would be beautiful; if the walls were taller, it would be beautiful; if the ceiling were higher, it would be beautiful. Now, would a person come and say: If only I had three eyes or three legs!

Thus, it is not written here: “Even that which he has already done” but rather: “Even that which they have already done” (*Kohelet* 2:12). As it were, the King of kings’ kings and His court appoint over each and every organ and limb of yours and stand you up: “Has He not made you and established you” (*Devarim* 32:6). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See the command given to Shaul to destroy Amalek in I *Shemuel* 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. According to their plain meaning, these verses deal not with Israel, but with some unspecified people, and the verse expounded here relates in the *derasha* to all of the nations of the world except for Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The sash is one of the special garments worn by the priests. See *Yirmeyahu* 13:11:

For as the belt cleaves to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave to Me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Yehuda, says the Lord, that they might be to Me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory.

See *Bereishit Rabba* 36, 23, regarding the meaning of putting on or removing a garment in the context of the reward given to Shem and Yefet for covering their father's nakedness. There is symmetry between the acceptance of the seven Noachide commandments in the wake of the flood and the morality of some of the sons of Noach, which finds expression in the act of covering. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Rabbi Huna's remarks should be examined as referring (also) to the Roman Empire. It is interesting to note that in his time, the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as its state religion. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. This echeos the style of Yirmeyahu's words of prophecy concerning the sin of idolatry:

Have you seen that which backsliding Israel did? She went up upon every high mountain and under every leafy tree, and there played the harlot…

And it came to pass through the lightness of her harlotry, that the land was polluted, and she committed adultery with stones and with stocks. (3:6-9)

For according to the number of your cities are your gods, O Yehuda. (11:13)

See also *Bereishit Rabba* 31, 7:

"I will destroy them with the earth" (*Bereishit* 6:13). Rabbi Huna and Rabbi Yirmeya said in the name of Rav Kahana: Even to the depth of three handbreadths that a plow digs. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The dog appears in rabbinic literature as a metaphor for the nations of the world in general and Amalek in particular. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. This fact reinforces the argument made above that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's *derasha* comes to point out the compatibility between Israel and the Torah. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The gradual transfer of the load from the dog to the donkey — one and then the other — symbolizes God's original desire that the nations of the world should also accept the commandments. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The connection between them, which continues even after the other nations are no longer partners, finds expression in the very fact that Israel responds to the the nations' complaints: "You are not laden [at all] and yet you complain?" [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Here it is clear that we must explain that the Giving of the Torah to Israel finalizes the transition from the possibility of universal repair to the repair of all of humanity by way of Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See also *Sifrei, Devarim* 311:

Another explanation: “When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance” (*Devarim* 32:8) — when the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah to Israel, He stood and looked and beheld, as it is stated: “He stands and measures the earth, He looks *vayatter goyim*” (*Chavakuk* 3:6), and there was no nation among the nations fit to receive the Torah except for Israel. Thus, “He set the borders of the peoples [to the number of the Israelites]” (*Devarim* 32:8).

See another parallel to this *derasha* on BT *Bava Kama* 38a, where there are three *derashot* on "He stands and measures the earth":

Rabbi Abbahu said: The verse states: “He stands and measures the earth, He looks *vayatter goyim*.” God beheld the seven commandments which were accepted by the descendants of Noach, but since they did not observe them, He rose up and permitted their money to Israel.

Rabbi Yochanan said: The same can be inferred from this [verse]: “He appeared from Mount Paran” (*Devarim* 33:2), [implying that] from Paran He made their money appear to Israel…

Rabbi Mattana said: “He stands and measures the earth; He looks,” etc. What did He look at? He looked at the seven commandments which were accepted by the descendants of Noach, and since there were some who rejected them, He rose up and exiled them from their lands. But how can the word in the text be [etymologically] explained to mean exile? Here it is written *“vayatter goyim”* and in another place it is [similarly] written, “*lenater bahein al ha-aretz,”* which is rendered in the Targum “wherewith to leap upon the earth.”

What was the statement made by Rav Yosef? It was this. Rav Yosef said: “He stands and measures the earth; He looks,” etc. What did He look at? He looked at the seven commandments which had been accepted by the descendants of Noach, and since there were some who rejected them, He rose up and granted them permission. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)