**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

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

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

**MIDRASH ON THE PARASHA**

**Dr. Tziporah Lifshitz**

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

Dedicated in loving memory of

Dr. Saul G. Agus, z”l

Whose 5th Yarzheit is Iyar 3

Marcelle A. Agus and

the Agus /Fox Families

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

**Parashat Tazria:**

**The Four Kingdoms:**

**Symbolism and Meaning in Vayikra Rabba**

**Introduction**

Two issues, in *Parashat Shemini* and *Parashat Tazria* respectively, are expounded in *Vayikra Rabba* as relating to the four kingdoms that subjugate Israel in the classical era: impure (i.e. non-kosher) animals and the plague of *tzara'at*.

In this *shiur,* we will examine these *derashot* and search for the objective of the Amoraim of Eretz Israel (the authors of these *derashot)* in their work. We will consider the Midrashic methods and conceptual foundations that emerge from each of the two *derashot*, while we search for common lines of thought.

**The Four Kingdoms as *Tzara’at***

We will begin our study with an issue that first appears in the ninth verse of *Parashat Tazria,* occupying the rest of this Torah portion and most of the next:namely, the matter of *tzara'at.* The verse that is expounded opens the section dealing with *tzara'at*:

And the Lord spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, saying: When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising (*se’eit*), or a scab (*sapachat*), or a bright spot (*baheret*), and it becomes in the skin of his flesh the plague (*nega)* of *tzara'at*, then he shall be brought to Aharon the priest, or to one of his sons the priests. (*Vayikra* 13:1-2)

The Midrash expounds:

"*Se’eit*" — this is Bavel, as it is stated: "That you shall take up (*venasata*) this parable against the king of Bavel, and say: How has the oppressor ceased! The exactress of gold (*madheiva*)ceased" (*Yeshayahu* 14:4).

Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said: The kingdom that said: Measure (*medod*) and bring (*havei*), measure and bring.

Rabbi Yishmael bar Nachman said: The kingdom that reddens (*madhevet*) the face of everyone coming near her.

Rabbi Tavyumi said: Because of a mouth of gold.

And the Sages said: Because of a head of gold. "You are the head of gold" (*Daniel* 2:38)

"*Sapachat*" — this is Madai, which raised up the wicked Haman, who incited like a snake, as it is stated: "Upon your belly you shall go" (*Bereishit* 3:14).

"*Baheret*" — this is Yavan, which was selective (*mevacheret*) with its decrees and said to Israel: Write on the horn of an ox that you have no part in the God of Israel.

"*Nega tzara'at” —* this is Edom, which came from the power of the elder, as it is stated: "And it will become in the skin of his flesh the plague of *tzara'at*" (*Vayikra* 13:2).

In this world, the priest examines the patches of plague, but in the future, the Holy One, blessed be He, will say: I will purify you. This is what is stated: "And I will sprinkle pure water upon you, and you shall be pure" (*Yechezkel* 36:25).

(*Vayikra Rabba* 15, 9)

The terms *se’eit*, *sapachat*, *baheret* and *nega tzara'at* are identified in this *derasha* with the four kingdoms of Bavel, Madai, Yavan and Edom, and all of them together are likened to *tzara'at* found in the body of the people of Israel, until that time in the future when God will appear in the role of a priest and purify them. This *derasha* is far removed from the plain meaning of the verse, according to which the wording, "And it will become in the skin of his flesh the plague of *tzara'at*," relates to the fact that each of the three signs appearing in the verse — a rising, a scab and a bright spot — may be diagnosed as *tzara'at.* In the *derasha*, this phrase is expounded as referring to the fourth kingdom, the kingdom of Edom.[[1]](#footnote-1)

It is difficult to point to a conceptual sequence between the various *derashot* regarding each of the kingdoms, as they appear before us.

The *derasha* "*Se’eit* — this is Bavel" is built on an exposition of the word *madheiva* in the verse in *Yeshayahu* 14:4: "That you shall take up (*venasata*) this parable against the king of Bavel, and say: How has the oppressor ceased! The exactress of gold (*madheiva*)ceased," in four different ways.

The exposition of Rabbi Abba bar Kahana, "The kingdom that said: Measure and bring, measure and bring," is explained by Rabbi Ze'ev Wolf in his *Maharazav* commentary (ad loc.) as relating to the heavy levies imposed on Israel: "Since the word [*madheiva*] is unique in the biblical text, it is expounded as an abbreviation for the words *medod ve-havei*, measure (*medod*) all your crops and bring (*havei*) tribute."

The *Mattenot Kehuna* commentary (ad loc.) proposes two explanations for the *derasha* of Rabbi Yishmael bar Nachman, "The kingdom that reddens (*madhevet*) the face of everyone coming near her": that the kingdom of Bavel frightens everyone coming near her, or that it causes everyone sorrow.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The meaning of Rabbi Tavyumi's *derasha*, "Because of a mouth of gold," is unclear.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The Sages' *derasha*, "Because of: a head of gold. 'You are the head of gold' (*Daniel* 2:38)," relates to Nevukhadnetzar's first dream about an image with a head of gold which symbolizes the four kingdoms.[[4]](#footnote-4) Note should be taken of the connection between the repeated motif of gold in relation to the kingdom of Bavel in the books of *Yeshayahu* and *Daniel*, and the word *se’eit* that is expounded here.[[5]](#footnote-5)

The other *derashot* about the kingdoms are shorter. "'*Sapachat*' — this is Madai" relates to Haman who was not ethnically a Mede or a Persian, but joined himself to the empire, in the sense of (*Yeshayahu* 14:1) “Strangers will join them and attach themselves (*venispechu*) to the house of Ya’akov.”

"'*Baheret*' — this is Yavan" expounds the root *bet-hei-reish* as if it were *bet-chet-reish*.

The fourth exposition, "'*Nega tzara'at*' — this is Edom, which came from the power of the elder, as it is stated: 'And it will become in the skin of his flesh (*besaro*)the plague of *tzara'at*,'" expounds the word *besaro* (*Vayikra* 13:2) as referring to Eisav, Ya’akov's blood relative (*she'er besaro*). Yitzchak gives the following blessing to Eisav:

And Eisav said to his father: Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father. And Eisav lifted up his voice, and wept.

And Yitzchak his father answered and said to him: Behold, of the fat places of the earth shall be your dwelling, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by your sword shall you live, and you shall serve your brother; and it shall come to pass when you shall break loose, that you shall shake his yoke from off your neck. (*Bereishit* 27:38-40)

This is how Eisav merits to subjugate Ya’akov.[[6]](#footnote-6)

What is the conceptual lesson lying in the image of the four kingdoms that subjugate Israel as types of *tzara’at*?

First of all, this image characterizes most of Jewish history, from the destruction of the First Temple at the hands of Bavel until the end of the kingdom of Edom, as a period during which Israel is found in a state of severe impurity. A *metzora* is accounted as dead (BT *Nedarim* 64b). A *metzora* is barred not only from the Holy, but also from the camp of Israel; "He shall dwell alone, outside the camp shall his dwelling be” (*Vayikra* 13:46).

The nation of Israel is not in a position of power; it functions in the world as a shadow of itself, banished from its land (or under foreign rule within its own borders), banished from the company of "normal" nations.[[7]](#footnote-7) Only God will remove it from impurity to purity, restore it to itself.[[8]](#footnote-8) The period of the kingdoms that rule over Israel parallels the time of the Divine Presence's departure from Israel at the time of the destruction of the First Temple until its return in the eschatological future. The verse that is brought as a proof for the purification of Israel at the hand of God at the time of the redemption, "And I will sprinkle pure water upon you, and you shall be pure; from all your impurities, and from all your idols, will I purify you," is taken from Chapter 36 of the Book of *Yechezkel*, which describes Israel as having defiled Eretz Israel with their abominations, and their return to it as involving purification at the hand of God — just as the *metzora* who comes to be purified depends on the priest. However, unlike what is described in the Book of *Yechezkel*, the source of Israel's impurity is their subjugation to the nations, rather than their gravitation toward idol worship.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Another point that emerges from the image of the four kingdoms as types of *tzara’at* is that those kingdoms have no independent existence, and the whole reason for their very being is for the sake of Israel.[[10]](#footnote-10) From this perspective, the prototype for subjugators is the "*se’eit*" — the nations that subjugate Israel, who merit thereby growing into empires.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**The Four Kingdoms as Non-Kosher Animals**

In the section dealing with the forbidden foods in *Parashat Shemini*, the Torah mentions, over the course of four verses, four animals that have only one sign of purity and are therefore forbidden to be eaten:

Nevertheless these shall you not eat of them that only chew the cud, or of them that only part the hoof: the camel, because it chews the cud but parts not the hoof, it is impure to you. And the rock-badger, because it chews the cud but parts not the hoof, it is impure to you. And the hare, because it chews the cud but parts not the hoof, it is impure unto you. And the swine, because it parts the hoof, and is cloven-footed, but chews not the cud, it is impure unto you. (*Vayikra* 11:4-7)

The Torah does not content itself with spelling out the signs of purity and the need for both of them to permit the eating of a particular animal (as it does with creatures of the sea),[[12]](#footnote-12) or with the mention of a sweeping principle that any animal with only one sign of purity is forbidden to be eaten.

The *darshan* in *Vayikra Rabba* expounds this expansion in the wording of the Torah as an allusion to the four kingdoms, identifying each animal with a different kingdom:

Rabbi Yishmael bar Nechemya said: All of the prophets beheld the [four] kingdoms represented by their doings.

Adam saw the kingdoms represented by their doings. This is what is stated: "And a river went out of Eden" (*Bereishit* 2:10). Rabbi Tanchuma, and some say Rabbi Menachamasaid in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi: The Holy One, blessed be He, will in the future give the nations of the world to drink from the cup of poison. This is what is stated: "And a river went out of Eden," the place from which justice goes out.

"And from there it was parted, and became four heads" (ibid.) — these are the four kingdoms.

"The name of the first is Pishon" (ibid. v. 11), this is Bavel….

Avraham beheld the nations represented by their doings.

"And it came to pass, that, when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Avram; and, lo, a dread, even a great darkness, fell upon him" (ibid. 15:12).

"A dread" — this is Bavel"….

Daniel beheld the kingdoms represented by their doings.

"I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven broke forth upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea" (*Daniel* 7:2-3).

"The first was like a lion" (ibid. v. 4) — this is Bavel.

"And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear" (ibid. v. 5) — this is Madai.

"After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard (*ke-namer*)" (ibid. v. 6) — this is Yavan, which would make a patchwork (*menameret*) with its decrees, and say to Israel: Write on the horn of an ox that you have no part in the God of Israel.

"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly" (ibid. v. 7) — this is Edom.

Moshe beheld the kingdoms represented by their doings.

"The camel, and the hare, and the rock-badger" (*Devarim* 14:7).

"The camel" — this is Bavel. "(O daughter of Babylon)… happy shall he be, that repays you as you have served us" (*Tehillim* 137:8).

"The rock-badger" — this is Madai.

The Rabbis and Rabbi Yehuda bar Rabbi Simon [disagreed]. The Rabbis said: Just as this rock-badger has signs of impurity and signs of purity, so the kingdom of Madai gave rise to a righteous man and to a wicked man.

Rabbi Yehuda bar Rabbi Simon said: The last Darius was a son of Esther, pure from his mother's side and impure from his father's side.

"And the hare (*arnevet*)" — this is Yavan. King Ptolemy's mother's name was Arnevet (Berenice)

"And the swine" (*Devarim* 14:8) — this is Edom. Moshe placed the three of them in one verse and this one in another verse.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Why? Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish [disagreed].

Rabbi Yochanan said: Because it is equal to the [other] three.

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: More…

Rabbi Pinechas and Rabbi Chilkiya said in the name of Rabbi Simon: Of all the prophets, only two of them made it known, Asaf and Moshe. Asaf said: "The swine out of the wood does ravage it" (*Tehillim* 80:14). Moshe said: "And the swine."

Why is [Edom] likened to a swine? To tell you: Just as a swine, when it lies down and sticks out its hoofs, it says: I am pure, so too this wicked kingdom acts arrogantly, and robs, and steals, and gives itself the appearance as if holding court. It once happened that a certain governor in Caesarea who would execute robbers, adulterers, and sorcerers said to his advisors [of himself]: This very man committed all three [offenses] in one night.

Another explanation: "The camel" (*Vayikra* 11:4) — this is Bavel. "Because it chews the cud" — it praises the Holy One, blessed be He…

"And the rock-badger" — this is Madai*.* "Because it chews the cud" — it praises the Holy One, blessed be He. What did Cyrus, the king of Persia, say? "All the kingdoms of the earth has the Lord given me" (*Ezra* 1:2).

"And the hare" — this is Yavan. "Because it chews the cud" — it praises the Holy One, blessed be He. When Alexander of Macedon saw Shimon the Righteous, he said: Blessed is the God of Shimon the Righteous.

"The swine" — this is Edom. "But chews not the cud" (*Vayikra* 11:7) — it does not praise the Holy One, blessed be He. Not only does it not praise (Him), but it blasphemes Him and says: "Whom have I in heaven but You? And beside You I desire none upon earth" (*Tehillim* 73:25).

Another explanation:

"The camel" — this is Bavel. "Because it chews the cud" — it raises the righteous. "But Daniel was in the gate of the king" (*Daniel* 2:49).

"And the rock-badger" — this is Madai. "Because it chews the cud" — it raises the righteous. "And Mordekhai sat in the king's gate" (*Esther* 2:19).

"And the hare" — this is Yavan. "Because it chews the cud" — it raises the righteous. When Alexander of Macedon saw Shimon the Righteous, he stood up on his feet. [They] said to him: …You stand up before a Jew? He said to them: When I go out to war, I see an image of him and emerge victorious.

"And the swine" — this is Edom. "But chews not the cud" (*Vayikra* 11:7) — it does not raise the righteous. It is not enough that it does not raise [them], but it kills [them]. This is what is stated: "I was wroth with My people, I profaned My inheritance, and gave them into your hand" (*Yeshayahu* 47:6) — this is Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues.

Another explanation:

"The camel" — this is Bavel. "Because it chews the cud (*geira*)" — it drags (*garera*) another kingdom after it.

"The rock-badger" — this is Madai. "Because it chews the cud" — it drags another kingdom after it.

"The hare" — this is Yavan. "Because it chews the cud" — it drags another kingdom after it.

"And the swine" — this is Edom. "But chews not the cud" — it does not drag another kingdom after it. Why is it called a swine (*chazir*)? Because it returns (*mechazeret*)the crown to its [rightful] owner. This is what is stated: "And saviors shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the mount of Eisav, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's" (*Ovadya* 1:21).

(*Vayikra Rabba* 13, 5)

Let us start our discussion with an overview of the structure of the *derasha.* The *derasha* opens with the heading: "All of the prophets beheld the [four] kingdoms represented by their doings," which is followed by a refrain that is repeated four times concerning biblical figures who beheld "the kingdoms represented by their doings," namely: Adam, Avraham, Daniel and Moshe. Each refrain is followed by verses which demonstrate how each figure beholds the four kingdoms: regarding Adam, by way of the four rivers of the Garden of Eden; regarding Avraham, during his sleep in the Covenant between the Pieces; regarding Daniel, in his vision; and regarding Moshe, in the four names of the animals mentioned in our *parasha* as having one sign of purity.

In the fourth section, which relates to Moshe, there are four *derashot* of the names of the mentioned animals, each one relating to a different characteristic of the subjugating nations. The number four which repeats itself in the form and content emphasizes the design and editing done in this *derasha.*

In general, it may be argued that the idea of the four kingdoms appearing in *Vayikra Rabba*, and throughout Rabbinic literature, has far-reaching religious meaning, in that it imposes order on historical reality in the framework of a pre-existing Divine plan that gives meaning to the suffering and difficulties experienced in the present alongside hope for the future.

The characters portrayed as having beheld the four kingdoms are presented in chronological order, with the exception of Moshe, because the *darshan* wishes to conclude with the Torah section being expounded, *Parashat Shemini*. They all stand at the beginning of a new stage in the history of mankind or Israel, and they all behold the kingdoms out of a reality that has a dimension of power, or even a threat: the rivers in the Garden of Eden, the night visions of "a dread, even a great darkness, [falling] upon him," and the beasts in Daniel's vision. Only the impure animals in *Parashat Shemini* — the camel, the rock-badger, the hare and the swine — lack majesty or power.

The four *derashot* concerning the animals with one sign of purity emphasize the wickedness of the swine as opposed to the rest of the animals. The first *derasha* notes the length of Edom’s rule, and afterwards its hypocrisy: "Just as a swine, when it lies down and sticks out its hoofs, it says: I am pure, so too this wicked kingdom acts arrogantly, and robs, and steals, and gives itself the appearance as if holding court." The swine's sign of purity turns into a moral flaw, when the swine uses it to pretend to be a kosher animal. The *derasha* notes the fact that Moshe is the first one to expose the swine's identity as Edom.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The second *derasha* concerning the four animals contrasts all the kingdoms that praise God to Edom that blasphemes Him. The third *derasha* notes the fact that all the kingdoms raise righteous men, except for Edom, which persecutes and kills them. The fourth *derasha* relates to Edom's place in human history, as the nation that will return kingship to God.

The course of all the *derashot* points to the fourth kingdom as being the most difficult and perverse of them all. The need or desire to relate to the subjugation to Edom is easily understood against the background of life in Eretz Israel in the 3rd to 5th centuries in the shadow of the Roman Empire and all that follows from that, such as poverty and heavy taxes; and from the 4th century on, when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, persecution on religious grounds as well.

It seems that the *derasha* under discussion significantly contributes to shaping the Jewish recoil from pigs, and perhaps even to the extent of turning it into a symbol.[[15]](#footnote-15)

The aim of the *derasha* concerning forbidden foods is different from the aim of the previous *derasha*, which likens the four kingdoms to different types of *tzara’at*. Whereas the first *derasha* focuses on the nation of Israel as impure and *tzara’at*-stricken, and not on the nations themselves, the second *derasha* has two other aims: to present the course of the kingdoms as a premeditated Divine plan, which will end with the coming of the Messiah; and to point to the wickedness of the kingdom of Edom. In light of this, it may be asserted that beyond the basic format of the four kingdoms that appears in both *derashot*, we do not find parallel lines of thought or objectives.[[16]](#footnote-16)

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. It should, however, be noted that according to the halachic tradition of the Rabbis, there are four shades of *tzara’at*; see: Rambam, *Hilkhot Tumat Tzara’at* 1:1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This is what he says in the first explanation: "*Zahav* (gold) is *dahava* in Aramaic. It reddens the faces of people who are terrified by it." Rav Mordekhai Yaffe in his *Yefei To'ar* commentary notes that Rabbi Yishmael bar Nachman expounds the word *se’eit* in the sense of a fire, that a fires destroys the face, and therefore it reddens. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Perhaps the reference is to the rhetorical skills or the language of the Babylonians. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This source is the first biblical passage to make explicit reference to the matter of four kingdoms. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The *Yefei To'ar* explains the Rabbis' *derasha* as relating to the word *se’eit* in the sense of "lifting (*nesiat*) heads," i.e., counting. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See *Mattenot Kehuna* (ad loc.): "…And therefore it is the most difficult of all the exiles like the plague of *tzara'at.*" [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Midrash Tanchuma* brings the *derasha* under discussion, while changing its objective. Rather than dealing with the people of Israel as a *metzora* in exile, *Tanchuma* (Buber) *Tazria* 16 deals with God's vengeance on Edom by way of *tzara’at*:

Another explanation: “When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising, or a scab, or a bright spot, and it become in the skin of his flesh the plague of *tzara’at*” — this refers to the four kingdoms.

“A rising” — this is Bavel…

“The plague of *tzara’at*” — this is the wicked kingdom of Edom, which, together with its angel, the Holy One, blessed be He, afflicts with *tzara’at*, as it is stated: “Why is your strong one overthrown?” (*Yirmeyahu* 46:15)…

In the World to Come, the Holy One, blessed be He, will sit in judgment over the wicked kingdom. He will say to it: Why do you subjugate My children? It will say: You did it, for You delivered them into our hands. And the Holy One, blessed be He, will say: Because I delivered them into your hands, you showed them no mercy? But rather: “Upon the aged have you very heavily laid your yoke” (*Yeshayahu* 47:6) — this is Rabbi Akiva…

And what will I do to you? I will punish your angel, and afflict him with *tzara’at*, and then I will punish you… [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Regarding *tzara’at* as becoming distanced from God, see: *Sefer Ha-Kuzari*, II, 62:

The Rabbi: I mentioned that as one of the characteristics of the Divine Presence, that it occupies in Israel the same place as the spirit of life in the human body. It granted them a Divine life, and allowed them to find luster, beauty, and light in their souls, bodies, dispositions, and houses. When it was absent from them, their intelligence waned, their bodies deteriorated, and their beauty faded. The effect of the disappearance of the Divine light became noticeable in every individual.

Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Levi's words here are very similar to the central idea in our *derasha*. For the image of Israel in exile as a person afflicted by disease, see also *Sefer Ha-Kuzari* II, 30-44. The Midrash restricts its discussion to the nations that subjugate Israel, whereas *Sefer Ha-Kuzari* discusses the role of Israel within humanity. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See there:

Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their way and by their doings; their way before Me was as the impurity of a menstruating woman. Therefore I poured out My fury upon them for the blood which they had shed upon the land, and because they had defiled it with their idols; and I scattered them among the nations…

For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into your own land. And I will sprinkle pure water upon you, and you shall be pure; from all your impurities, and from all your idols, will I purify you…

And I will save you from all your impurities. (*Yechezkel* 36:17-29)

Yechezkel emphasizes the sins of Israel that have brought them into exile. It should be noted that according to the understanding of *Chazal* that *tzara’at* comes upon a person in the wake of sin or corrupt traits, Israel is responsible for its subjugation to the nations. Thus, the gap between the words of the prophet and those of *Chazal* is narrowed. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. It should be noted that the *derasha* does not relate to the nations of the world in general, but only to the nations that subjugate Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See the words of the Amora from Eretz Israel, Rabbi Abun, in JT *Berakhot* 2, 4, regarding the verse: "And Levanon shall fall by a mighty one" (*Yeshayahu* 10:34). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. These may you eat of all that are in the waters: whatever has fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them may you eat. And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that swarm in the waters, and of all the living creatures that are in the waters, they are a detestable thing to you. (*Vayikra* 11:9-10) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The Rashash ad loc. explains that the reference is to the way that the prohibitions of these animals appear in the Book of *Devarim.* See *Devarim* 14:7-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The conventional understanding is that "Edom" in Rabbinic literature refers to the Roman Empire after it accepts Christianity as the state religion. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See: BT *Pesachim* 112b; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, Version A, Chap. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Another question that may be raised relates to the very comparison of the kingdoms to impure animals. The Torah itself compares the tribes of Israel to animals, including impure animals. See Ya’akov's blessings to his sons in *Bereishit* 49; *Bereishit Rabba* (ed. Theodor-Albeck), MS Vatican 100, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)