**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

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

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**midrash on the Parasha:**

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Dedicated in memory of
Yitele Bat Nathan Hacohen z”l

whose yahrzeit is 11 Tammuz
by her grandson Patrice Rueff.

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***Parashat Balak:***

**“And Yisrael Abode in Shittim”**

**The Structure of the *Derashot* in the *Sifrei* on *Parashat Balak***

Contrary to what one might have expected, the *derashot* in the *Sifrei* on *Parashat Balak* do not relate to the story of Balak, Bilam or his blessings. Instead, all of the *derashot* focus on the sin of Baal Peor, its punishment, and the zealous act of Pinchas (*Bamidbar* 25:1-9). Let us examine the content of these *derashot*.

The *Sifrei* on *Parashat Balak* is built of four units of *derashot*:

1. A short *derasha* on the meaning of the word *vayeishev*, "and (Yisrael) abode"

2. The methods employed by Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yehuda Ha-nasi to expound adjacent verses

3. A *derasha* on "Shittim"

4. Addressing the action taken by Pinchas

With the exception of the second *derasha*, all the *derashot* relate directly to the subject matter and verses of the *parasha.* The first and the third units are built on the verse, "And Yisrael abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moav" (*Bamidbar* 25:1), each of them addressing a different word in the verse. The fourth *derasha*, as stated, relates to the action taken by Pinchas. By contrast, the second *derasha* deals with a broad topic relating to the order found in the Torah and the various methods of expounding the text. Its context and location specifically here are indeed puzzling.

In this *shiur,* we will deal with the first three *derashot*.

**“In all places, abiding denotes sin”**

"And Yisrael abode (*vayeishev*) in Shittim; and the people began to commit harlotry" (*Bamidbar* 25:1).

In all places, *yeshiva* denotes calamity (= sin).

As it is stated: "And the people sat down (*vayeishev*) to eat and to drink" (*Shemot* 32:6).

And it is stated: "And they sat down (*vayeishevu*) to eat bread" (*Bereishit* 37:25).

In the first section of the *Sifrei*, the term *yeshiva* that is used in the verse to describe Yisrael is expounded as referring to some calamity or sin.[[1]](#footnote-1) The recurrence of this verb in the connection with the Sin of the Golden Calf and with the sale of Yosef is adduced as support for this understanding. In both of these examples, the term *yeshiva* appears in the context of an explicit sin, but the wording of the *Sifrei,* which is formulated as a general rule (“In all places, *yeshiva* denotes calamity/ sin") is difficult. This verb denotes a fundamental human, physical action, "sitting"; is it not artificial to attribute to it such a negative connotation?

This *derasha* is further developed by Rabbi Yochanan in BT *Sanhedrin*, with additional verses brought as proof:

Rabbi Yochanan said: In all places where it is stated: "And he abode (or dwelt or sat),” it denotes sorrow.[[2]](#footnote-2)

As it is stated: "And Yisrael abode in Shittim; and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moav" (*Bamidbar* 25:1).

"And Ya’akov dwelt (*vayeishev*) in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan… and Yosef brought to his father their evil report" (*Bereishit* 37:1-2).

And it is stated: "And Yisrael dwelt (*vayeishev*)in the land of Goshen… And the time drew near that Yisrael must die" (*Bereishit* 47:27-29).

"And Yehuda and Yisrael dwelt (*vayeishev*) safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree" (I *Melakhim* 5:5).

"And the Lord stirred up an adversary to Shelomo, Hadad the Edomite; he was the king's seed in Edom” (I *Melakhim* 11:14). (*Sanhedrin* 106a)

In the first three verses cited by Rabbi Yochanan, the verb *yashav* precedes a negative development: the people’s harlotry with the daughters of Moav, the tension between Ya’akov's sons and the death of Ya’akov.

The last two verses brought by Rabbi Yochanan are a bit more of a challenge. In the verse, "And Yehuda and Yisrael dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree from Dan until Be’er Sheva, all the days of Shelomo" (I *Melakhim* 5:5), we seem to be dealing with a very positive situation. However, the verse that follows tells how Shelomo sins by multiplying the number of his horses, against the Torah's commands regarding the king.[[3]](#footnote-3) In the last verse, the verb *yashav* does not even appear, and so it is not at all clear how it is relevant.[[4]](#footnote-4)

A comparison of the opening *derasha* in the *Sifrei* with the *derasha* in the Babylonian Talmud demonstrates how the *derasha* concerning the meaning of the term *yeshiva* in *Tanakh* is received and expanded throughout the various strata of the literature of *Chazal*. Moreover, it portrays the Sages as knowing how to pay careful attention to the written text, while providing us with the keys to reach a more precise understanding of its wording and of the wisdom contained therein.[[5]](#footnote-5) In addition to the verses cited in the *derashot* brought here, we ought to discuss several other verses containing the word *vayeishev*.[[6]](#footnote-6)

* In the verse, "And Lot went up out of Tzo'ar, and dwelt (*vayeishev*) in the mountain, and his two daughters with him, for he feared to dwell in Tzo'ar; and he dwelt (*vayeishev*) in a cave, he and his two daughters" (*Bereishit* 19:30), the word *vayeishev* appears twice, and the sexual calamity that is about to take place is terrible.
* In *Shemot* 18:13, the Torah reports about how Moshe judgeד the people: "And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moshe sat (*vayeishev*)to judge the people; and the people stood about Moshe from the morning to the evening," and this matter requires reform and a different method of execution.
* The story of Mei Meriva opens with the verse: "And the Israelites, even the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Tzin in the first month; and the people abode (*vayeishev*) in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there" (*Bamidbar* 20:1).[[7]](#footnote-7)

This word is found also in additional contexts of punishment and calamity:

* Regarding the Generation of the Dispersal: "And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt (*vayeishevu*)there" (*Bereishit* 11:1-2)
* Regarding the concubine in Giva: "And his father-in-law, the girl's father, retained him; and he abode (*vayeishev*) with him three days; so they did eat and drink, and lodged there" (*Shofetim* 19:4)
* Regarding Avshalom's revolt against David: "And Avshalom dwelt (*vayeishev*)two full years in Jerusalem; and he saw not the king’s face" (II *Shemuel* 14:28);
* Regarding Yerovam ben Nevat's rebellion against Shelomo: "And it came to pass, when Yerovam the son of Nevat heard of it, for he was yet in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of King Shelomo, and Yerovam dwelt in Egypt… Then Yerovam built Shekhem in the hill-country of Efrayim, and dwelt there; and he went out from there, and built Penuel" (I *Melakhim* 12:2, 25).

As stated, examining these verses in light of the *derasha* illuminates them anew.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The phrase "*vayeishev Yisrael*" appears in the Torah in what seems to be a completely neutral context:

* "And Yisrael dwelt (*vayeishev*)in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; and they got them possessions therein, and were fruitful, and multiplied exceedingly." (*Bereishit* 47:27)
* "And Yisrael took all these cities; and Yisrael dwelt (*vayeishev*)in all the cities of the Amorites, in Cheshbon, and in all of its towns." (*Bamidbar* 21:27)
* "And Yisrael dwelt in the land of the Amorites." (*Bamidbar* 21:31)

In the wake of the *derasha*, must we understand that also in the situations described in these verses, there is a certain spiritual threat of one form or another?

The verse relating to Yisrael's dwelling in the land of Goshen is brought by the Gemara in *Sanhedrin*. The two next verses appear in the context of the conquest of the land of Sichon in *Parashat Chukat*. The emphasis upon Yisrael's dwelling in the region of the conquest is repeated in these verses, apparently because this is the first time that Yisrael "dwells,” i.e. settles, in a place where they have defeated their enemies. It suffices to compare the outcome of this war with the war waged against the Canaanites who live in the south earlier in the same chapter:

And Yisrael vowed a vow to the Lord, and said: If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy (*vehacharamti*) their cities. And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Yisrael, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed (*vayachareim*) them and their cities; and the name of the place was called Chorma. (*Bamidbar* 21:2-3)

This allows us to understand the contrast to the reality in which they live after the conquest of the Amorites under Sichon.[[9]](#footnote-9) Now, instead of giving that which they conquer to God, they find themselves in the midst of a natural process of conquest that includes the taking of spoils and settling in the areas that fall into their hands.[[10]](#footnote-10)

It is precisely with this point that the third *derasha* in the *Sifrei* opens:

VII.

Another explanation: "And Yisrael abode in Shittim," in the place of folly (*shetut*).

For Yisrael were in the wilderness for forty years,

“No place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates” *(Bamidbar* 20:5).

[And yet] they came and waged war against Sichon and Og, who fell into their hands, and they took all that was theirs.

VIII.

This proud and overweening government has only four provinces worthy of an empire, namely: Achaea, Alexandria, Carthage and Antioch.

And these had sixty cities, all of which were worthy of an empire.

As it is stated: "Sixty cities, all the region of Argov, the kingdom of Og in Bashan" (*Devarim* 3:4).

IX.

And Yisrael came and waged war against them and they fell into their hands and they took all that belonged to them.

But when Yisrael became filled with the spoils, they began to squander the spoils.

They tore clothing and cast it away, they mutilated animals and cast them away,

Because they sought only silver utensils and gold utensils.

As it is stated: "But all the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took for spoils to ourselves" (*Devarim* 3:7).

The third *derasha* is a direct continuation of the first *derasha*, outlining the course of events that leads to the "calamity/ sin". The first part of the *derasha* opens with a description of the significance of the war against Sichon. The first passage of this part points to the huge gap between Yisrael's sojourning in the wilderness and the situation in which the spoils of Sichon and Og fall into their hands. The second passage emphasizes the vastness of the spoils, whereas the third passage describes Yisrael's desire for silver and gold. The second part of this *derasha* describes the deterioration to fornication with the daughters of Moav and to idolatry:

They came and abode in Shittim, in the place of folly (*shetut*).

At that time, the Ammonites and Moabites rose up,

and built for themselves compartments from Beit Ha-yshimot to Har Ha-sheleg,

and they set up women there selling all types of pastries.

And Yisrael would eat and drink.

At that time, a person would go out to walk about the market, and try to buy something from an old woman,

and she would sell it to him at cost,

But a young woman would call out to him and say to him from inside:

Come and buy it for less.

And he would buy from [the latter] the first day and the second day.

On the third day she would say to him:

Enter inside and choose for yourself, are you not like a member of the house?

He would go in to her,

and there stood a pitcher full of Ammonite wine,

and the wine of non-Jews had not yet been prohibited to Yisrael.

She would say to him: Would you like to drink some wine?

And he would drink.

And the wine would burn inside him, and he would say to her: Give me your consent.

And she would take out an image of Peor from under her fascia and say to him:

My master, do you want me to give you my consent? Bow down to this…

Yisrael's moral fall began with their being drawn after the gold and silver in the spoils of Sichon. The use that they make of these precious metals in trade initiates the first real contact with the members of the surrounding culture, which exacts a heavy price. These two factors — the attraction to gold and silver and the contact with foreign culture — derail the Jewish people from their track, leading to many casualties.

We have shown here that the third *derasha* in the *Sifrei* on *Parashat Balak* is a direct continuation of the first *derasha.* We will now examine the second *derasha,* which separates the third *derasha* from the first one.

**Two Adjacent Sections in the Torah**

II.

Rabbi Akiva says: All adjacent sections inform each other.

III.

Rabbi Yehuda [Ha-nasi] says: Many sections are adjacent to each other, but are distant from each other as is the east from the west.

Similarly, it is stated: "Behold, the Israelites have not hearkened to me" (*Shemot* 6:12).

God said to him: "And they shall hearken to your voice" (*Shemot* 2:18).

IV.

Similarly it is stated:

"And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the harlot… [she shall be burnt with fire]" (*Vayikra* 21:9).

"And the priest that is highest among his brothers" (*Vayikra* 21:10).

How is this connected to that? He too is burnt.

To what may this be likened?

To a centurion [in charge of food distribution][[11]](#footnote-11)

who served his years but failed to be promoted to primus pilus (chief centurion), so he deserted and fled.

The king sent after him and brought him back, sentencing him to decapitation.

As he was about to be executed, the king said: Fill him a measure of gold dinars.

And they brought it before him and said to him:

Had you acted as did your fellows, you would have taken this measure of gold dinars and your life.

Now you forfeit your life and you forfeit your money.

So too [in the case of] the daughter of a priest who commits harlotry, the high priest goes out before her and says to her:

Had you acted as did your mothers,

you would have merited that a high priest issue forth from you like myself.

Now, you forfeit yourself and you forfeit your honor.

Therefore, it is stated: "And the daughter of any priest… And the priest that is highest among his brothers."

V.

Similarly it is stated: "For you are not My people" (*Hoshea* 1:9).

And it is stated: "Yet the number of the Israelites shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass that, instead of that which was said to them: You are not My people, it shall be said to them: You are the children of the living God" (*Hoshea* 2:1).

How is this connected to that?

This may be likened to a king who became angry with his wife. He called upon a scribe to come and write him a bill of divorce.

Before the scribe arrived, the king made peace with his wife.

The king said: Is it possible that this scribe should leave from here having accomplished nothing?

Rather, he said to him: Come, write that I am doubling her marriage contract.

Therefore it is stated: "For you are not My people," and then it is stated: "Yet the number of the Israelites shall be as the sand of the sea."

VI.

Similarly it is stated: "Shomeron shall bear her guilt, for she has rebelled against her God" (*Hoshea* 14:1).

And it is stated: "Return, O Yisrael, to the Lord your God" (*Hoshea* 14:2).

How is this connected to that?

To what may this be likened?

To a province that rebelled against the king, [and] the king sent a polemarch to devastate it.[[12]](#footnote-12)

That polemarch was experienced and cool-headed, and said to them:

Take some days for yourselves.

And if not, I will do to you as I did to that city and its neighbors, and to that province and its neighbors.

Therefore it is stated: "Shomeron shall bear her guilt, for she has rebelled against her God," and it is stated: "Return, O Yisrael."

The *derasha* begins with a rule formulated by Rabbi Akiva: "All adjacent sections inform each other." This rule relates to the order in which the verses of Tanakh are written. According to Rabbi Akiva, this order comes to teach us something, as the juxtaposition of two passages signals that there is a hidden connection between them, which expands and deepens the manner in which we understand the text.

Rabbi Akiva's words are brought by themselves in passage II; and in passages IV-VI, three proofs are brought for this rule. In between, in passage V, the *Sifrei* brings the dissenting view of Rabbi Yehuda Ha-nasi, who does not accept the manner in which Rabbi Akiva proposes to understand adjacent verses. He argues that the order of the Torah as it appears before us does not accord with the proposed rule. He adduces one proof.[[13]](#footnote-13)

This disagreement about how to expound the text of the Torah does not seem to have an overt connection to the sin of Baal Peor or the action of Pinchas which the *derashot* in the *Sifrei* address, and therefore the following question arises: why is it placed here? Chayim Shaul Horowitz, the editor of the critical edition of the *Sifrei*, understands the integration of Rabbi Akiva's rule in the *Sifrei* as guidance for interpreting Yisrael's sin with Baal Peor against the background of the story of Bilam.[[14]](#footnote-14)

In the words of the *Sifrei* there is no explanation of the connection between the story of Bilam and the sin of Baal Peor. The "missing link" is found in the *Sifrei* on *Parashat Matot*:

**"**Behold, these caused the Israelites, through the counsel of Bilam, to break faith with the Lord in the matter of Peor, and so the plague was among the congregation of the Lord" (*Bamidbar* 31:16).

What was the counsel of Bilam?

He said to them:

Even if you bring in all the troops in the world,

you cannot overcome them.

Are you more numerous than the Egyptians,

about whom it is stated: "And he took six hundred chosen chariots" (*Shemot* 14:7)?

But come and I will advise you what to do.

Their God hates unchastity.

Make your wives and daughters available to them for unchaste purposes,

and they will be excessive in their carnal gratification,

and their God will handle them.

For this is the rule: As long as Yisrael does His will, He fights for them.

As it is stated: "The Lord will fight for you" (*Shemot* 14:14).

But when they do not do His will,

He, as it were, fights against them.

As it is stated: "Therefore He was turned to be their enemy, Himself fought against them" (*Yeshayahu* 63:10).

And furthermore, they make the Merciful cruel.

As it is stated: "The Lord is become as an enemy, He has swallowed up Yisrael" (*Eikha* 2:5).

(*Sifrei* *Matot* 157)

In the wake of this source, the question arises: Why isn't Bilam's involvement in the sin of Baal Peor spelled out in the *Sifrei* on *Parashat Balak*? Furthermore, the *Sifrei's* formulation in two different places suggests an attempt to conceal this involvement. First of all, there is the very absence of an explanation of Rabbi Akiva's statement that "all adjacent sections inform each other," as stated above. Second, in the second part of the third unit in the description, which presents the way in which the men of Yisrael are seduced, it is stated: "At that time, the Ammonites and Moabites rose up, and built for themselves compartments from Beit Ha-yshimot to Har Ha-sheleg, and they set up women there." In other words, the initiative to construct an outdoor market comes from Ammon and Moav, and not from Bilam, as it appears in the *Sifrei* on *Parashat Matot*.

The wording of the *Sifrei* on *Parashat Balak* does not indicate a hidden objective on the part of the Ammonites and Moabites when they construct the avenue of shops, and it might even be argued that their motive is economic, so that whatever ensues is a natural development: economic relations 🡪 contact with an alien culture 🡪 influence 🡪 women 🡪 world outlook. However, the precise direction (an old woman outside, a young girl inside, her taking out her idol from her bosom) indicates deliberate intention that has no explanation in this source. What, then, is the *Sifrei's* objective in concealing Bilam's part in Yisrael's sin with Baal Peor?

It seems that we should look for the answer to this question on the educational plane. Bilam's involvement is blurred, so that no member of the Jewish people may read the story of Yisrael's sin with Baal Peor as a story of the deception of an enemy inciter whose objective is the destruction of Yisrael. Rather, it must be read as the story of the Jewish people's fall, for which they themselves are responsible.

According to the *Sifrei*, the "sin" does not begin with Bilam, but with the people's being drawn to gold and silver after the war against Sichon and Og. The phrase "in the place of folly" appears twice in the third unit of the *derasha,* once regarding the spoils, and once regarding the sin of Baal Peor. In the first place, "Shittim" is understood not as a geographical location, but as testimony to the inner spiritual state of Yisrael; in the second place, the meaning of "the place of folly" is unclear, and therefore more ambiguous.[[15]](#footnote-15) Had the Jewish people not been in the cognitive (or, more precisely, the non-cognitive) place of folly, it is less likely that they would have been seduced.

Rabbi Akiva's three proofs illustrate how the dialogue between consecutive or nearby verses creates complexity and depth in the manner in which we understand them. It is possible that the choice of these examples in the *Sifrei* echoes the issue under discussion, Yisrael's sin with Baal Peor, as they all deal with situations of crisis involving a woman. The daughter of the priest does not appreciate her elevated status, as one who is capable of bringing a high priest into the world, and she has no repair. The king's marriage falters, but the connection between husband and wife is re-established, with a deeper understanding of its meaning. The king's wise commander understands how to bring the province to accept the king's authority.

Yisrael's sin with Baal Peor is connected to the issue of geographical proximity and its meaning. For the first time, the Jewish people emerge from the bubble of the wilderness and encounter the glittery and seductive non-Jewish reality. So too the issue of the juxtaposition of Torah passages or the "exposition of proximity" in *Tanakh* relates to the dimension of place and its meaning in the "space" of God's Torah. Rabbi Akiva teaches that the question of place — whether on the Torah-related, the geographical or the mental plane — is important and meaningful.

The *Sifrei* points to the Jewish people's being drawn to gold and silver and their exposure to the culture of seduction as the root cause of their sin with Baal Peor. It seems that this is the husk of Western culture in our time. In-depth Torah study, searching for the inner connections between the verses of the Torah in accordance with the order in which they are written, provides the Jewish people with the strength to be faithful to their identity, the root of their existence, and their God.

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. The noun *kalkala* appears several times in this sense in Tannaitic literature. See Tosefta *Yoma* 4:14: "Even though he confessed before he ate and drank, he should confess after eating and drinking, lest some calamity (= sin) occurred during the meal"; Tosefta *Megilla* 3:37: "A person may not answer about a calamity, for because of the answer that Aharon gave to Moshe, the heretics separated themselves." [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The difference between the term "sorrow" (*tza'ar*) found in the Babylonian Talmud and the term "calamity" (*kalkala*) found in the *Sifrei* might testify to the different ways of thinking of the two works — the seeking of repair in the present that emerges from the *Sifrei* (and which arises also from the continuation of the *derasha* there; see below), and the grief over the past in the Babylonian Talmud. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See I *Melakhim* 5:6: "And Shelomo had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen." In *Shir Ha-shirim Rabba* (1, 3), this verse is expounded in a positive manner:

Another explanation: "Also our couch is leafy” (*Shir Ha-shirim* 1:16) — just as this bed is designed only for peace of mind, so too Yisrael, before the Temple was built, would move from place to place, “And they journeyed and they camped.” After the Temple was built, “Yehuda and Yisrael dwelt safely.” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The reference might be to Yoav the son of Tzeruya's dwelling in Egypt, which appears in the context of this verse (I *Melakhim* 11:16), which leads to the appearance of Hadad the Edomite from Egypt. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Chazal* make extensive use of this *derasha* with respect to other verses as well. See *Bereishit Rabba* 38, 7; BT *Sanhedrin* 106a; *Tanchuma* [Buber] *Ki Tisa* 13; *Tanchuma* [Warsaw] *Vayeishev* 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. An examination of the appearances of the verb *yashav* in *Tanakh* reveals that despite the "naturalness" of the act of sitting/ dwelling, the verb does not appear very often. By contrast, the verb *shuv* (return) appears many times throughout *Tanakh*. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Rabbeinu Bachya (ad loc.) explains the term *yeshiva* appearing in that verse in the wake of the rule proposed by Rabbi Akiva:

And *Chazal* expounded: In all places where it is stated: “And he abode (or dwelt or sat),” it denotes sorrow. And therefore it is written: “And Miriam died there.” And it immediately continues with the matter of the rock, which results in the deaths of Moshe and Aharon in the wilderness and their failure to enter the land.

Rabbeinu Bachya cites a later version of Rabbi Akiva's rule. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Another example of this interpretive "rule" regarding the wording of the Torah appears in *Bereishit Rabba* (41, 1):

Rabbi Tanchuma said in the name of Rabbi Chiya Rabba and Rabbi Berekhya said in the name of Rabbi Elazar: This Midrash came up with us from the Exile: In every place where it is stated, “And it came to pass,” [this means] in days of sorrow.

See also BT *Megilla* 10b; *Tanchuma* [Warsaw] *Shemini* 9; *Bamidbar Rabba* 10, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This is similar to the contrast between the conquest of Yericho and the conquest of Ai in the Book of *Yehoshua*. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. All of the Book of *Bamidbar* is under the shadow of "And they journeyed… and they camped… at the word of the Lord," until the end of *Parashat Chukat*. At this point in the Jewish people's journey toward the Land of Israel in the fortieth year, the people change gear and "abide/ dwell" as well. This change is accompanied by the spiritual danger of mental distancing from the experience of miraculous guidance in the wilderness. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See Tosefta *Demai* 6:3, ed. Lieberman, p. 94, note 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See *Mattenot Kehuna* on *Eikha Rabba*, *Petichta* 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The disagreement between these Tannaim is connected to the disagreement regarding the principle: "There is no chronological order to the Torah." In the *Sifrei, Beha'alotekha* 64, it is explicitly stated that according to Rabbi Yehuda Ha-nasi there is no chronological order. The phrase "There is no chronological order to the Torah" appears also in *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael, Beshalach, Shira* 7 and 12; see there. See also BT *Berakhot* 21b. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See his edition, page 169, note 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. This is the only instance of the "the place of folly" in Rabbinic literature. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)