

Date: 5 Adar 5785 (March 5, 2025)

Torah Portion: Tetzaveh

Topic: From Among the Children of Yisrael

It is written (Exo. 28:1), “Now you, bring near to yourself Aharon your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Yisrael.” The Midrash says that our verse can be understood in light of what is written (Zech. 10:2), “From themselves the cornerstone; from themselves the peg; from themselves the bow of war; from themselves all the officers will come forth together.” When the nations of the world seek to appoint a king for themselves, they bring a man from any place and they appoint him over themselves. The Scripture states (Gen. 36:32), “And Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom; and the name of his city was Dinhabah,” indicating that Bela was not an Edomite, but was from Dinhabah. And in verse 33, “Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his stead,” and so on.

The Midrash assumes that all these Edomite kings must have come from foreign lands, for otherwise why would Scripture mention their city of origin? It is the opinion of the Midrash that three of these Edomite kings (vv. 32-34) were descendants of Esau, though the others were not. Ramban states that all the kings were Edomites, and the cities mentioned are in fact Edomite cities.

However, the nation of Yisrael is not like this. Like Zechariah said above that the leaders of Yisrael are from themselves: their kings are from themselves, their priests are from themselves, the prophets are from themselves, their officers are from themselves (Jer. 2:26 and 32:32).

“From themselves the cornerstone” refers to King David, as it is stated (Psa. 118:22), “The stone the builders disdained has become the cornerstone.” “From themselves the peg” refers to the Kohen Gadol, as it is stated (Isa. 22:23), “I will affix him as a peg in a secure place.” “From themselves the bow of war” refers to the Torah scholars, as it is stated (1Chr. 12:2), “armed with bow, both right-handed and left-handed in slinging stones or [shooting] arrows with a bow, of the kinsmen of Saul, from Benyamin.” And “from themselves all the officers will come forth together”

How is this related to our verse in Shemot? “Now you, bring near to yourself Aharon your brother, and his sons with him.” Where do these men come from? They are from among the Children of Yisrael. Now, one could argue that the nation of Yisrael is so arrogant that they would consider men from the other nation to be unfit to rule Yisrael. After all, there are many nations that are in fact ruled by their own countrymen?

R' Tzadok HaKohen¹ explains that the Midrash does not refer to the ethnic origins of the leaders, but rather to their qualities and virtues, which reflect those of the nation at large. The entire Yisrael nation may be compared to the human body, with the leaders representing the head, heart, and eyes: the king of the heart, the Sanhedrin the eyes, and the Kohen Gadol the head. The citizenry corresponds to the rest of the body. Something that happens to one part of the body has an impact on the body in its entirety. Similarly, the leaders' virtues and qualities, such as their ability to communicate with Hashem, do not result solely from their personal achievements, but rather reflect the accomplishments and spiritual standing of the nation to which they are privileged to belong and which they were chosen to represent.

When the Yisraelites achieve great heights, so do their leaders. Conversely, when we experience spiritual decline, their leaders fall in stature. Thus, after the sin of the spies, when it was decreed that the adult Yisraelites who left Mitzrayim would not enter the Land, Hashem would no longer speak to Moshe in the manner that He formerly did. Moshe had not sinned in any way, but the Shechinah rested upon Moshe only for the sake of Yisrael, and not when Yisrael was undeserving.

Shalom.

¹ 1823-1900, Divrie Sofrim §24
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