

MORDECHAI 104A

MORDECHAI 12:1-12

BESB

Mar 12:1 And he (Yeshua) began in analogies saying, a man planted a vineyard, and (he) placed a fence (stone wall) around it and dug a wine vat and built a tower and rented it out to be farmed (by others) and went away to foreign parts.

Mar 12:2 And he (the owner) sent a servant to the farmers (vineyardists) at the appointed time of first fruits (moed of first fruits) in order to receive the [allotted] fruits from the farmers (vineyardists) of the vineyard.

Mar 12:3 But they took and beat him (the servant) and sent him away empty handed.

Mar 12:4 And again he (the owner) sent to them another servant (and) they struck him in the head with stones sending him away humiliated.

Mar 12:5 And he (the owner) sent another again and this one they killed and many others they beat some and killed others.

Mar 12:6 Still he (the owner) had a beloved [firstborn] son, which he (the owner) sent last saying they will respect my son.

Mar 12:7 But the farmers (vineyardists) said to each other this is the heir, come let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours.

Mar 12:8 And they ceased him and they killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.

Mar 12:9 What will the master of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the farmers (vineyardists) and will give the vineyard to others.

Mar 12:10 Have you not read the Scriptures (Psalm 118:22-23), "The Stone which the builders rejected has become the Head of the Corner.

Mar 12:11 This is from HaShem, it is marvellous in our eyes"?

Mar 12:12 And they (the chief priests of the Sadducees (Heb. Tz'dukim) and the scribes of the Sadducees and the elders (Heb. Zekanim) of the Sadducees) desired to get hold of him but they feared the congregation; because they understood the analogy he used. And leaving him they went away.

GREEK TEXT

Καὶ ἤρξατο αὐτοῖς ἐν παραβολαῖς λέγειν, Ἀμπελῶνα ἐφύτευσεν ἄνθρωπος καὶ περιέθηκεν φραγμὸν καὶ ὥρυσεν ὑπολήνιον καὶ ὠκοδόμησεν πύργον καὶ ἐξέδοτο αὐτὸν γεωργοῖς καὶ ἀπεδήμησεν

² καὶ ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς τοὺς γεωργοὺς τῷ καιρῷ δούλον ἵνα παρὰ τῶν γεωργῶν λάβῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ καρποῦ τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος·

³ οἱ δὲ λαβόντες αὐτὸν ἔδειραν καὶ ἀπέστειλαν κενόν

⁴ καὶ πάλιν ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἄλλον δούλον· κάκεινον λιθοβολήσαντες ἐκεφαλαίωσαν καὶ ἀπέστειλαν ἠτίμωμένον.

⁵ καὶ πάλιν ἄλλον ἀπέστειλεν· κάκεινον ἀπέκτειναν καὶ πολλοὺς ἄλλους τοὺς μὲν δέροντες τοὺς δὲ ἀποκτείνοντες.

⁶ ἔτι οὖν ἓνα υἱὸν ἔχων, ἀγαπητόν· αὐτοῦ· ἀπέστειλεν καὶ αὐτὸν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἔσχατον λέγων ὅτι Ἐντραπήσονται τὸν υἱόν μου

⁷ ἐκεῖνοι δὲ οἱ γεωργοὶ εἶπον πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς ὅτι Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ κληρονόμος· δευτε ἀποκτείνωμεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἡμῶν ἔσται ἡ κληρονομία

⁸ καὶ λαβόντες αὐτὸν ἀπέκτειναν καὶ ἐξέβαλον ἔξω τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος

⁹ τί οὖν ποιήσει ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος ἐλεύσεται καὶ ἀπολέσει τοὺς γεωργοὺς καὶ δώσει τὸν ἀμπελῶνα ἄλλοις

¹⁰ οὐδὲ τὴν γραφὴν ταύτην ἀνέγνωτε Λίθον ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες οὗτος ἐγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας·

¹¹ παρὰ κυρίου ἐγένετο αὕτη καὶ ἔστιν θαυμαστὴ ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν

¹² Καὶ ἐζήτησαν αὐτὸν κρατῆσαι καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν τὸν ὄχλον ἐγνωσαν γὰρ ὅτι πρὸς αὐτοὺς τὴν παραβολὴν εἶπεν καὶ ἀφέντες αὐτὸν ἀπῆλθον

DELITZSCH HEBREW TRANSLATION

וַיַּחֲלֵל לְדַבֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם בְּמִשְׁלִים לֵאמֹר אִישׁ אֶחָד נָטַע כֶּרֶם וַיַּעַשׂ גָּדֵר סָבִיב וַיַּחְצֵב יָקָב וַיִּבֶן מְגֹדֵל וַיִּתְּנֶהוּ אֶל־כְּרָמִים וַיִּלְוֶה לְמִרְחָקִים: ² וְלִמְזִיד שָׁלַח עֶבֶד אֶל־הַכְּרָמִים לְקַחַת מֵאֵת הַכְּרָמִים מִפְּרֵי הַכֶּרֶם:

³ וַיֵּאחָזוּהוּ וַיִּכְוֶהוּ וַיִּשְׁלַחוּהוּ רִיקָם: ⁴ וַיִּסָּף לְשַׁלַּח אֲלֵיהֶם עֶבֶד אַחֵר וְאֵתוֹ סָקְלוֹ בְּאַבְנִים וּמְחָצוֹ רָאֲשׁוּ וַיִּשְׁלַחוּהוּ בְּחִרְפָּה: ⁵ וַיִּסָּף וַיִּשְׁלַח אַחֵר וְגַם־אֵתוֹ הֲרִגוּ וְכֵן עָשׂוּ לְרַבִּים אַחֵרִים מֵהֶם הַכּוּ וּמֵהֶם הֲרִגוּ:

⁶ וְלוֹ עוֹד בֶּן יָחִיד אֲשֶׁר אָהָבוּ וַיִּשְׁלַח גַּם־אֵתוֹ אֲלֵיהֶם בְּאַחֲרָנָה כִּי־אָמַר מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יְגוּרוֹ: ⁷ וְהַכְּרָמִים הָהֵם אָמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ הִנֵּה־זֶה הוּא הַיּוֹרֵשׁ לָכֵן וְנִהְרָגְהוּ וְהִירוּשָׁה תִּהְיֶה לָּנוּ: ⁸ וַיֵּאחָזוּהוּ וַיִּהְרָגוּ אֹתוֹ וַיִּשְׁלִיכוּהוּ אֶל־מְחוּץ לְכֶרֶם: ⁹ וַעֲתָה מִה־יַּעֲשֶׂה בְּעַל הַכֶּרֶם הַלֵּא יְבוֹא וַיֵּאבֵד אֶת־הַכְּרָמִים הָהֵם וְנָתַן אֶת־הַכֶּרֶם לְאַחֵרִים: ¹⁰ הֲלֹא קִרְאתֶם אֶת־הַכְּתוּב הַזֶּה אֲבָן מֵאִסּוֹ הַבּוֹנִים הִיתָה לְרֹאשׁ פְּנֵה:

¹¹ מֵאֵת יְהוָה הִיְהִי זֹאת הִיא נִפְלְאָת בְּעֵינֵינוּ: ¹² וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ לְתַפְשׂוֹ וַיִּירָאוּ מִפְּנֵי הָעַם יַעַן אֲשֶׁר־הִבִּינוּ כִּי עָלִיֶּהֶם דְּבַר אֶת־הַמֶּשֶׁל הַזֶּה וַיִּנְיַחוּהוּ וַיִּלְכוּ:

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INTRODUCTION

In working my way through the translations of each pericope of Mordechai, I am often overwhelmed by the genius of Hakham Tsefet and of course Yeshua. Most of the time, I wonder how it ever came about to have a part in this immense project. This pericope of analogies was not so hard to translate. Actually, everything was straightforward with a couple of small exceptions. I have every respect for Rabbinic Hermeneutics therefore, I always tread lightly when I try to translate and comment. Hermeneutics and semantics have been my livelihood for some time. This pericope is filled with hermeneutic fences and semantic nuances. It can be a minefield or a garden. Therefore, we must be careful where we walk.

FOUR LAWS

Our pericope of Mordechai matches the Torah Seder, which discusses the Parah Adumah. I have commented on the remez of Parah Adumah elsewhere.^a However, I will confine this commentary to P'shat and analogies within the genre of P'shat.

The Chazal^b tell us that there are four inexplicable Torah Laws.^c Those four *chukkot*^d are not the subject of this commentary. Nonetheless, it is interesting to see that Hakham Tsefet placed this present pericope of Mordechai in contrast to the Torah Seder of Parah Adumah, which is supposed to be one of the inexplicable *chukkot*.

As is usual it will be our task to uncover this reason and see if we can determine why Hakham Tsefet used this analogous story to explain the Parah Adumah.

In short, the Parah Adumah is about ritual purity. Even though the Torah Portion is considered one of the *chukkot* Hakham Tsefet has faced the problem in a straight forward manner with a P'shat analogy.

Therefore, the question at hand is how the analogous story presented in Mordechai illuminates the Parah Adumah, Miriam's death and Moshe's striking the rock?

SCENE 1

Mar 12:1 And he (Yeshua) began in analogies saying, a man planted a vineyard, and (he) placed a fence (stone wall) around it and dug a wine vat and built a tower and rented it out to be farmed (by others) and went away to foreign parts.

His Eminence has aptly pointed out Dr. Noonan Sabin's^e comments of the pericope's connection to the house of Yisrael.^f Therefore, we see the vineyard as the people of Yisrael. What is even more fascinating is that Mordechai's pericope is verbally matched to Yeshayahu 5:1-2.

Isaiah 5:1 Let me sing of my well-beloved, a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; ² And he digged it, and cleared it of stones, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a vat therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. ^{JPS}

Mordechai uses the exact same language as this portion of Yeshayahu. Eight words from Mordechai are exact matches to the LXX of Yeshayahu. Not only are those words a direct match, they are not found in any other section of the Nazarean Codicil. On occasion, the Greek of the Nazarean Codicil will match that of the LXX. This is only because Mordechai wants us to see something that originated in Hebrew. The perplexities of translating the Nazarean Codicil mean's dealing with more than just Greek and English.^g We must consider Biblical Hebrew Ancient Greek and Mishnaic Hebrew, which was the language of the first century Jew. Because the language of Mordechai is intertwined with that

^a See [Para Adumah](#)

^b Acronym for: Chachamenu Zichronam Livrachah – “Our Sages of Blessed Memory” – i.e. Talmudic and Midrashic Scholars;

^c One of which is our present portion of the Parah Adumah. Num. R. 19.8

^d *Chukkot* is plural for *chuk*, which usually refers to an inexplicable statute or ritual law such as the tallit, mixing milk and meat ect.

^e Noonan Sabin, M. (2006), *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Gospel According to Mark*, Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, pp. 105-107.

^f Cf. Yeshayahu 5:7

^g For a more thorough discussion see Thorleif Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, The Norton Library, 1960 pp. 184ff

of Yeshayahu, we must look to that portion of Tanakh to reveal the distinctions that Hakham Tsefet had in mind.

Yeshayahu 5:1-2
וַיִּעְזָקְהוּ וַיִּסְקְלֵהוּ וַיִּטְעֵהוּ שִׁירָק וַיִּבֶן מִגְדָּל בְּתוֹכּוֹ וְגַם יָקַב הָעֵבֶב בּוֹ וַיִּקּוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת עֲנָבִים וַיַּעַשׂ בְּאֲשֵׁי־מֶזֶן:²

I have inserted the Hebrew text of Yeshayahu for the reader's benefit. The opening scene of our pericope matches the scene of Yeshayahu with perfect verbal connection. Therefore, the sixth hermeneutic rule of P'shat comes into play.^a The language of love found in Yeshayahu should therefore be read into the pericope of Mordechai. The vineyard is the beloved Yisrael as Dr. Noonan Sabin has aptly pointed out.^b However, Dr Noonan Sabin has not picked up on the Hebrew nuances of the text. The "friend" is actually the "beloved" as the above translation has made clear. Therefore, we see just how much G-d loves the Bne Yisrael.

The vineyard is on a fruitful hill. Here we must note that the language points to the location of the vineyard.

But the Temple, as I have shown, was seated on the crest of a strong hill, initially the ground was scarcely sufficient for the Temple and its altar, not being a flat plain, the plain was downhill and made a shear incline.^c

The vineyard (the Bne Yisrael) is built on a strong hill. Therefore, we conclude that the Bet Mikdash is a part of the analogy that Hakham Tsefet has in mind. This can be reinforced by other details, as we will see. The "Temple," Sanctuary is the foundation on which Yisrael resides.

But King Solomon, who was the builder of the Temple, built up the ground of the eastern side. He placed a portico on this built up area and rest of the Temple (היכל) remained bare or exposed to the open air. However, in the succeeding generations the people leveled the hill and increased the area making a larger plane.^d

and (he) placed a fence (stone wall) around it...

Two weeks ago, we dealt with the court of the Gentiles on our commentary on Mordechai 11:15-19. The "wall" of our analogy is the *soleg*, which means that the detail of our present pericope is currently focused on the Bne Yisrael and not the gentile nations.

Middot 2:3 Inside it [the Temple mount, surrounding the inner area which contained the women's court and the Temple court] is a latticed railing, ten handbreadths high. There were thirteen breaches in it, which the kings of Greece opened up. They went and closed them up again and decreed on their account thirteen prostrations. Inside it is the rampart, ten cubits [wide]. And there were twelve steps there [leading up from the rampart to the women's courtyard]. The height of each step is a half-cubit, and its tread, a half-cubit. All the steps which were there [within the Temple mount] were a half a cubit in height and a half-cubit in tread, except for those of the porch [which had a tread of a cubit]. All of the entrances and gates which were there were twenty cubits high and ten cubits wide, except for that of the porch. All the entrances which were there had doors, except for that of the porch [M. 3:7]. All the gates which were there had lintels, except for the Tadi gate, which had two stones leaning against one another [as a pointed arch]. All the gates which were there were changed [and covered] with gold, except for Niqanor's gate, because a miracle was done with them [M. Yom. 3:10]. And there are those who say, "Because their bronze shone like gold."

^a **Ka-yoze bo mi-makom aher:** Similarity in content to another Scriptural passage.

^b Noonan Sabin, M. (2006), New Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Gospel According to Mark, Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, pp. 105-107.

^c B.J. 5:184, All quotations of Josephus B.J will be mine.

^d Ibid 5:185

*Now Titus was deeply affected with this state of things, and reproached John and his party, and said to them, "Have not you, vile wretches that you are, by our permission, put up this **partition wall** before your sanctuary?"^a*

and built a tower...

Yeshauahu 5:2 and built a tower in the midst of it,...

The pericope of Mordechai would most likely have read in the very same way as Yeshayahu. Towers have two distinct purposes. Firstly, they serve as lookout to protect the vineyard in this case. In present day Yisrael, these towers are still seen in the edges of ancient vineyards. Therefore, we must associate the language with the pericope to understand that those who occupied the "tower" would have the occupation of guarding and protecting the vineyard i.e. Yisrael. These issues we have addressed in the previous two pericope. However, Hakham Tsefet makes them known through his analogous language. Consequently, we see that the guardianship of the Bne Yisrael is a part of our pericope.

The Tower serves to tell us also of the connection between the heavens and the earth per se. Therefore, we again see a picture of the Bet Mikdash in the midst of the vineyard. The language of Yeshayahu is reminiscent of Shemot 25:8

Shemot 25:⁸ And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. ^{JPS}

Here the JPS^b translation is somewhat faithful to the Hebrew original, as we will see. If we made the language a bit more archaic, it might read...

And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.

Shemot 25:8 וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם:

With the seven rules of P'shat, my mentor and teacher Rabbi Dr, Yoseph ben Haggai has also taught me that we must apply all the rules of Hebrew Grammar. Now this means that when we translate and comment we must use hermeneutic rules and follow all the rules of grammar before elucidating a text, something this noble body should remember when making replies to the comments posted weekly.

This text has a grammatical incongruity that we must point out. The anomaly is that the Mishkan (sanctuary) is written in the absolute singular. The clause "in their midst" is written in the third person masculine plural. Therefore, we might translate the verse to say, "make me a sanctuary and I will dwell in them." Or, "make me sanctuary and I will dwell in the midst of them."

How are we to interpret this verse?

Rashi tells us that the "sanctuary" would be would remain as long as it was dedicated to the service of God. ^c

dwell among them. Note that it does not say that I may dwell "in it," but "among them." ^d

This statement can be understood to mean "among them" meaning there would be more than one sanctuary or "among them" meaning among the Bne Yisrael.

^a B.J. 5:124

^b Jewish Publication Society, 1917

^c The Soncino Chumash, Edited by The Pentateuch and Haphtarah's, Edited by Dr. J.H. Hertz C.H. London Soncino Press 1992 p. 326

^d The Soncino Chumash, Edited by The Pentateuch and Haphtarah's, Edited by Dr. J.H. Hertz C.H. London Soncino Press 1992 p. 327

The Bet Mikdash or Mishkan is in the midst of the people.

*The Sanctuary was not the dwelling-place of God; cf. I Kings VIII, 27. It was the symbol of that holiness which was to be the rule of life for the Israelites, if His Spirit was to abide with the community. They were to hold themselves aloof from everything that was defiling, because God was **amongst them** (Lev. xv, 31). The Sanctuary was, therefore, the fountain of holiness for the congregation of Israel.^a*

I will elaborate on both possible interpretations. In so doing I believe we will uncover what Hakham Tsefet was trying to say and how he was relating the *mashal* of his pericope with Parah Adumah.

SCENE 2

Mar 12:2 And he (the owner) sent a servant to the farmers (vineyardists) at the appointed time of first fruits (moed of first fruits) in order to receive the [allotted] fruits from the farmers (vineyardists) of the vineyard.

Mar 12:3 But they took and beat him (the servant) and sent him away empty handed.

At present, we are faced with the perplexity of defining the text of Shemot 25:8. We need to determine the precise framework of the text in order to determine the meaning. Was G-d saying that He would dwell in the midst of the three Bet Mikdash or was G-d saying that He would dwell in the midst of the Bne Yisrael?

THREE BET MIKDASH

We would do well to ask a further question here to be able to come to a positive conclusion. How did the Sages see the three Bet Mikdash?

San 7a Another used to say: When love^b was strong, we could have made our bed on a sword-blade; now that our love has grown weak, a bed of sixty [cubits] is not large enough for us. Said R. Huna: This is alluded to in the verses: Of the former age [when Israel was loyal to God] it is said: And I will meet with thee and speak with thee from above the ark-cover;^c and further it is taught: The Ark measured nine hand-breadths high and the cover one hand-breadth, i.e. ten in all. Again it is written: As for the House which King Solomon built for the Lord, the length thereof was three score cubits, the breadth thereof twenty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits.^d But of the latter age [when they had forsaken God] it is written: Thus saith the Lord, The Heaven is my throne and the earth my footstool. Where is the house that ye may build unto me?^e

This incisive passage from the Gemara applies a witticism describing human love to the relationship between G-d and the Bne Yisrael. In his reinterpretation, Rav Huna demonstrates a deep understand of the difficult stages of the marital relationship. "When our love was strong, we could have lain together on the edge of a sword edge;^f now that our love is not strong, a bed sixty cubits wide is not big enough for us."

Rav Huna reinterprets this axiom as the waning relation between G-d and the Bne Yisrael. In the early stage of the "relationship,^g" God meets with and speaks to Israel from above the cover of the Ark,^h The

^a Ibid

^b Between my wife and myself.

^c Ex. XXV, 22.

^d I Kings VI, 2

^e Isa. LXVI, 1. Thus at first the Shechinah rested on an Ark of small dimensions, but when Israel sinned, even Solomon's Temple was too small.

^f Here we see and illustration of the Mishkan.

^g i.e., during the period in the wilderness following the exodus from Egypt

^h Shemot 25:22

two cherubim were analogous of the love between G-d and the Bne Yisrael. They, the two cherubim further illustrated the intimacy between G-d and the Bne Yisrael.

B.B. 6:4 “He who sells a piece of property to his fellow for building a house, “and so, he who contracts with his fellow to build a nuptial house for his son or a widow’s manse for his daughter— “[the contractor] builds it four cubits by six,” the words of R. Aqiba. R. Ishmael says, “That would be little more than a cattle shed!” He who wants to build a cattle shed builds it four cubits by six. [If he wants to build] a small house, it is six by eight. [If he wants to build] a large house, it is eight by ten. [If he wants to build] a hall, it is ten by ten. The height is [the sum of] half its length and half its breadth. Proof of the matter is the sanctuary [I Kings 6:17: 40 x 20 x 30]. Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says, “Is everything [supposed to be] in accord with the way in which the sanctuary is built?”

From this Mishnah the Chazal derived the following...

B.B. 99a How did they stand?^a R. Johanan and R. Eleazar [are in dispute on the matter]. One Says: They faced each other; and the other says: Their faces were inward. But according to him who says that they faced each other, [it may be asked]: Is it not written, And their faces were inward?^b [This is] no difficulty: The former^c [was] at a time when Israel obeyed the will of the Omnipresent; the latter^d [was] at a time when Israel did not obey the will of the Omnipresent. According to him who says that their faces were inward [it may be asked]: Is it not written, With their faces one to another?^e They were slightly turned sideways.^f For [so] it was taught: Onkelos the proselyte said, “The Cherubim were of image^g work^h and their faces were turned sideways as a student who takes leave of his master.ⁱ

The above Gemara is derived from a discussion on purchasing a piece of property or a house for a son’s wedding house ect. ^j

I will not labor any further on these two cherubim except to say that they were present in the Mishkan and the First Bet Mikdash but not the third. Therefore, the analogy of the waning love the Bne Yisrael had for G-d can be seen in the type and size of the Bet Mikdash. The analogy of the above cited Gemara should suffice to demonstrate for us that the Mishkan demonstrated the love between G-d and the Bne Yisrael. This love was the love of two young lovers that could not be close enough.

The subsequent Bet Mikdash demonstrate the waning love of the Bne Yisrael. Eventually the third Temple was so big that it had lost the intimacy of the Mishkan. Thus Rav Huna cites the passage saying, The Heaven is my throne and the earth my footstool. Where is the house that ye may build unto me?^k

The Sanctuary was not the dwelling-place of God; cf. I Kings VIII, 27. It was the symbol of that holiness which was to be the rule of life for the Israelites, if His Spirit was to abide with the community. They were to hold themselves aloof from everything that was defiling, because God was

^a The Cherubim in the Holy of Holies.

^b II Chron. III, 13.

^c Facing each other, a sign of affection. Symbolic of the relationship between God and His people.

^d Turning inward, away from each other, symbolic of the unrequited love of God for Israel.

^e Ex. XXV,20.

^f Partly facing one another and partly turning inward.

^g *ohgmgm* Others render, image of children, comparing it with *ohmtm* children. The latter leads on naturally to the simile, As a pupil who takes leave of his master.

^h II Chron. Ibid. v.10.

ⁱ A student, on taking leave of his master, turns sideways for some distance, before turning his back completely on him.

^j Cf. M. B.B. 6:4

^k Isa. LXVI, 1.

amongst them (*Lev. xv, 31*). *The Sanctuary was, therefore, the fountain of holiness for the congregation of Israel.*^a

For that reason, regardless of the “dwelling place” the Bet Mikdash demonstrates the relationship of the Bne Yisrael and G-d. If the “spirit” was to dwell in the people, (Bne Yisrael) the community must hold them aloof and not succumb to the ways of the Gentiles. Hence, the Bet Mikdash serves to illustrate the relationship between G-d and the Bne Yisrael irrespective of the intention of the phrase “in their midst.”

SCENE 3

Mar 12:4 And again he (the owner) sent to them another servant (and) they struck him in the head with stones sending him away humiliated. ⁵ And he (the owner) sent another again and this one they killed and many others they beat some and killed others.

The owner (i.e. G-d) went to a faraway place. The absence of G-d is a paradox to some. The Megalith of Esther plays on the meaning of Esther and G-d’s hiddenness. And, there is always the question of why G-d hides Himself from the natural world. We might here ask the question of whether G-d actually hides Himself from the natural world? Does G-d hide Himself so that we will have “faith”? The enigma may not be so hard to explain. Perhaps G-d does hide himself so that we will have more “faith.” On the other hand, I will now be faithful to my interpretation of “faith.” Conceivably, we should see the absence of G-d as a means for His people to demonstrate their “faithful obedience” in His “absence.” If the Throne of G-d loomed large in the sky every day, we would know that G-d is watching from above and we would change the way we acted. G-d’s obscurity makes it possible for us to live in a way that is faithful to who and what we really are. This means that a particular lifestyle or activity lack coercion. Hence, we live out who we really are. The owner (i.e. G-d) went to a faraway place. Why would he do such a thing? In a matter of speaking, it is all a test. How faithful are you to the revelation of G-d as found in the Torah and His mitzvot?

The faithless^b tenants beat and killed the appointed agents of G-d. This shows their contempt for G-d, His Torah, and the Mitzvot and by all means the Hakhamim. Accordingly, we can see that process of degradation. When there is no respect for the “Agents of G-d” (i.e. Hakhamim) the degradation of community is soon to fall. The Prophet Hosea makes all of this perfectly clear.

Hos 4:6-9 ⁶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. ⁷ As they were increased, so they sinned against me: *therefore* will I change their glory into shame. ⁸ They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity. ⁹ And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings. ^{KJV}

The analogy that Yeshua presents, matches the warnings of the Prophet. The Priestly class had become defunct. G-d’s absence was to allow the Priesthood the ability to disclose their true nature.

SCENE 4

Mar 12:6 Still he (the owner) had a beloved [firstborn] son, which he (the owner) sent last saying they will respect my son. ⁷ But the farmers (vineyardists) said to each other this is the heir, come let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours. ⁸ And they ceased him and they killed him and threw him out of the vineyard

The saga continues with a question

Mar 12:9 What will the master of the vineyard do?

^a Ibid

^b My use of faithless means those who are not “faithfully obedient” to G-d, His Torah, Mitzvot and Hakhamim.

Yeshua answers the question.

He will come and destroy the farmers (vineyardists) and will give the vineyard to others.

Because the Priesthood has become defunct, G-d will take away their occupation and give it to others. Of course the question is now who are these “others”? It takes little of no imagination to realize that the “others” are in fact the rightful owners of the profession of the Priesthood, the firstborn. In view of that, Hakham Tsefet, Yeshua and Mordechai are telling us that the restoration of the Priesthood of the First Born is about to be re-instituted. Scholars have noted the transition from the defunct priesthood to the Governance of G-d’s Kingdom via Rabbinic authority.

Stuart A. Cohen describes the coming era as the “*Keter Torah*.”^a

Most dramatic of all, however, was the alteration in the communal status of the keter torah. By the end of the period, in both 'Eres Yisra'el (Palestine) and Bavel (Babylonia), all facets of Jewish life had become affected by rabbinic patterns of thought and influenced by rabbinic institutions of scholarship and justice. Admittedly, in neither region did rabbis and their disciples necessarily constitute the majority of the local Jewish population. Nevertheless it remains (in Neusner's words) 'an extraordinary fact' that 'the handful of masters of ca. 140 A.D. had become by 640 A.D. so powerful a force as to affect all Babylonian Jewry and to dominate a substantial and important part of its everyday affairs.' In large measure, the comment is equally true of the situation in 'Eres Yisrael.’^b

The analogous story of Hakham Tsefet and Yeshua demonstrates the reparative failure of the Priesthood of the Kohanic lineage. I will not rehearse all that history here. Judaism’s history clearly demonstrates the struggle between Priesthood and the sanctity Am haEretz, the beloved Vineyard. The destruction of the Temples is the result failures of this Priesthood. The Priesthood as the supposed guardians of Yisrael had failed and Yeshua’s parabolic analogy tells us that the Temple would not last long.

SCENE 5

Mar 12:10 Have you not read the Scriptures (Psalm 118:22-23), “The Stone which the builders rejected has become the Head of the Corner. ¹¹ This is from HaShem, it is marvellous in our eyes”?

Who is this rejected cornerstone?

The rejected “Stone” is easily understood as King David who was rejected as potential leader by his father Jesse.^c However, the Torah also equates the “Stone” with the Shepherds of Yisrael.

Gen 49:22-24 Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine by a fountain; its branches run over the wall. ²³ The archers have dealt bitterly with him, and shot at him, and hated him; ²⁴ But his bow abode firm, and the arms of his hands were made supple, by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, from thence, **from the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel,**^{JPS}

Thus, we face a dilemma. Who is the “rejected stone”? In my humble opinion, both scenarios fit the analogy.

The pseudo-Priesthood of the Tz’dukim replaced the legitimate shepherds of Yisrael, i.e. the genuine Priesthood. This was certainly the result of Roman oppression. Admittedly, the Sadducees were

^a Stuart A. Cohen, *The Three Crowns: Structures of Communal Politics in Early Rabbinic Jewry*, Cambridge University Press, 2007 p. 147

^b Ibid

^c Tehillim, *The Book of Psalms, with an Interlinear Translation*, Schottenstein Edition, Mesorah Publications, Ltd pp. 334-5

readily acceptant of the pseudo-priesthood as a means of pecuniary gain. Thus, the rejection of the true shepherds was an act of the omnipotence of G-d. The Tz'dukim only marked the transition between the rejected Priesthood and the restitution of the legitimate priesthood of the firstborn.

The other alternative that fits the analogy is that of the Davidic demesne. As one of Davidic ancestry,^a Yeshua had demonstrated contempt for the illegitimate and defunct pseudo-priesthood of the Tz'dukim. The marvel was, G-d would restore the lost authority of the firstborn to the rightful proprietors.

EPILOGUE

Mar 12:12 And they (the chief priests of the Sadducees (Heb. Tz'dukim) and the scribes of the Sadducees and the elders (Heb. Zekanim) of the Sadducees) desired to get hold of him but they feared the congregation; because they understood the analogy he used. And leaving him they went away.

The Tz'dukim understood the analogy! Do we understand the analogy? Moreover, have we understood what Hakham Tsefet was trying to say?

Let me try to tie up all the loose ends.

How is this pericope of Mordechai related to the Parah Adumah?

A cursory look at the Mishnah Parah tells us that there was a major dispute over the process of the Parah Adumah between the P'rushim and the Tz'dukim. Actually, the Tosefta records the story in which one Kohen Gadol of the Tz'dukim died because he would not follow the Halakhic procedure found in the Mishnah.^b This automatically sets Yeshua at odds with the Tz'dukim and their antinomian practices. The altercation between the P'rushim and the Tz'dukim further illustrates the degradation of the Levitical Priesthood under the auspices of the Tz'dukim. Before there can be a redemption of the Priesthood of the firstborn there must be an eradication of the corruption of the Tz'dukim.

The Tz'dukim were acting out the similar scenario as the firstborn in in the Chet haEgel (sin of the golden calf). How so? **Chet haEgel was a sin of circumventing authority.**

Exo 24:14 And unto the elders he (Moshe) said: 'Tarry ye here for us, until we come back unto you; and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whosoever hath a cause, let him come near unto them.' ^{JPS}

Moshe leaves the authority of the people in the hands of Hur and Aaron both first-born sons. The Bne Yisrael was to go to Aaron and Hur in the advent of any circumstance that might arise.

1Ch 2:50 These were the sons of Caleb. The sons of Hur the **first-born** of Ephrath: Shobal the father of Kiriath-jearim; ^{JPS}

1Ch 4:4 and Penuel the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah. These are the sons of Hur the **first-born of Ephrath**, the father of Beth-lehem. ^{JPS}

I would also insert just a small note here. Ephrath, the father of Hur means "fruitfulness" in conjunction with the Feast of First fruits or Shavout. Hur is also listed as the husband of Miriam in the works of Josephus.

Ant 3:54 he bade his brother Aaron, and **Hur their sister Miriam's husband**, to stand on each side of him, and take hold of his hands, and not permit his weariness to prevent it, but to assist him in the extension of his hands. When this was done, the Hebrews conquered the Amalekites by main force; and indeed they had all perished, unless the approach of the night had obliged the Hebrews to desist from killing any more.

^a Cf. Matityahu 1:1

^b T. Parah 3:6-7

Admittedly, the Torah is silent about Hur. The Encyclopedia Judaica tells us that Hur was being groomed for the leadership of the people as Moshe's successor.^a I cited the Gemara of Sanhedrin 7a above. Another piece of that Gemara will further illuminate what happened to Hur.

San 7a A difference of opinion is expressed by R. Tanhum b. Hanilai, who says that the verse quoted^b refers only to the story of the golden calf, as it is written: And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it.^c What did he actually see? R. Benjamin b. Japhet says, reporting R. Eleazar: He saw Hur lying slain before him and said [to himself]: If I do not obey them, they will now do unto me as they did unto Hur, and so will be fulfilled [the fear of] the prophet, Shall the Priest and the Prophet be slain in the Sanctuary of God?^d and they will never find forgiveness. Better let them worship the golden calf, for which offence they may yet find forgiveness through repentance.^e

Chet haEgel was a sin of circumventing authority! The violation of hierarchy led to the sin of the golden calf. The Tz'dukim was committing the same exact crime against G-d by not following the Mesorah. Consequently, their crime disqualified the Tz'dukim in the same exact way that the first-born fell in the Chet haEgel.

So, let's finish up and clean up.

Numbers Rabbah 19:8 R. Aibu explained: This may be illustrated by a parable. A handmaiden's boy polluted a king's palace. The king said: ' Let his mother come and clear away the filth. In the same way, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Let the Heifer come and atone for the incident of the Calf!

We have seen in the past few weeks the redundant theme of a defunct priesthood. Rashi has repeatedly taught us that the Levitical Priesthood was the result of the sin of the firstborn in the Chet haEgel. The now defunct Priesthood must be restored to its rightful owner in the same way our vineyard must be recovered by the "Owner."

Our analogous story is a way Yeshua, through Hakham Tsefet is telling us that the Chest haEgel would be redeemed and restored in the near future. I also believe that Yeshua was telling the astute listener that the Mishkan and subsequent Bet Midrash were only created so that G-d could find a place "in the midst of His people," i.e. in their hearts.

*The Sanctuary was not the dwelling-place of God; cf. I Kings VIII, 27. It was the symbol of that holiness which was to be the rule of life for the Israelites, if His Spirit was to abide with the community. They were to hold themselves aloof from everything that was defiling, because God was **amongst them** (Lev. xv, 31). The Sanctuary was, therefore, the fountain of holiness for the congregation of Israel.*

G-d did not need a sanctuary in which to dwell. His sanctuary was to be the people. This was the premise of Hakham Tsefet as he discussed the "living stones."

1 Tsefet 2:5 And as living stones built into a spiritual house, a holy (separated) priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to G-d through Yeshua haMashiach

BS"D (B'Siyata D'Shamaya)
Aramaic: With the help of Heaven
Paqid Dr, Adon Eliyahu ben Abraham

^a Encyclopedia Judaica, Second Edition, Keter Publishing House Ltd Volume 9 pp. 624-5

^b Ps. X, 3.

^c Ex. XXXII, 5.

^d Lam. II, 20.

^e He thus made a compromise, and this compromise is denounced by the Psalmist.

^f Ibid

CONNECTIONS TO TORAH READINGS

TORAH SEDER

Mordechai 12: 5 says they “beat some.” This phrase in Greek means they suffered by the violence of the sword. This related to the Torah Seder 19:16 an one who has been killed by a sword. The Torah Seder furthers that if a man touches a a man who is killed in an open field, (i.e. vineyard) he will be unclean.

The Torah Seder mentions the “entire congregation” who rebel against Moshe (20:1) in conjunction Hakham Tsefet mentions the congregation who are faithful to Yeshua, Mordechai 12:12.

The final passages of the Torah Seder depict a congregation who acts in rebellion against Moshe and Aaron. The analogous story of Mordechai clearly speaks of a rebellious group of vineyardists.

TEHILLIM

The final verse of the Psalm speaks of a boundary, (hedge) which limits the waters. In similar fashion Hakham Tsefet speaks of the hedge built by the Owner of the vineyard. Psa 104:9 and Mordechai 12:1

ASHLAMATAH

The Story of Jephthah mimics the stone, which the builders rejected in the parody of King David. Judges 11:1-11 and Mordechai 12:10-11

MITZVOT

Torah Add	M#	Mitzvah	Oral Torah
B'Midbar 19:2	397	Precept of Red Heifer	M. Parah
B'Midbar 19:4	398	Precept of ritual impurity of the dead	M. Oholoth
B'Midbar 19:19	399	Precept that the lustral waters defiles the ritually clean	M. Parah

QUESTIONS OR REFLECTION

1. How does the analogous story presented in Mordechai illuminate the Parah Adumah and Moshe's striking the rock?
2. Was G-d saying that He would dwell in the midst of the three Bet Mikdash or was G-d saying that He would dwell in the midst of the Bne Yisrael?
3. How did the sages see the three Bet Mikdash?
4. Does G-d hide Himself so that we will have “faith”?
5. Who is this rejected cornerstone?
6. What is Chet haEgel?
7. How is Hur related to Chet haEgel?