



Shabbat Afternoon Parsha Study

תשפ"ג/5783, Parshat Hukat

Lenient, But Uncomfortable

Numbers 19:11-12, 14-16

(11) Those who touch the corpse of any human being shall be impure for seven days. (12) They shall purify themselves with [the ashes] on the third day and on the seventh day, and then be pure; if they fail to purify themselves on the third and seventh days, they shall not be pure... (14) This is the ritual: When a person dies in a tent, whoever enters the tent and whoever is in the tent shall be impure seven days; (15) and every open vessel, with no lid fastened down, shall be impure. (16) And in the open, anyone who touches a person who was killed or who died naturally, or human bone, or a grave, shall be impure seven days.

במדבר יט: יא-יב, יד-טו

(יא) הַנִּגַּע בְּמֵת לְכָל־נֶפֶשׁ אָדָם
וְטָמֵא שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: (יב) הוּא
יִתְחַטֵּא־בּוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם
הַשְּׁבִיעִי יִטְהַר וְאִם־לֹא יִתְחַטֵּא
בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לֹא
יִטְהַר: ... (יד) זֹאת הַתּוֹרָה אָדָם
כִּי־יָמוּת בְּאֹהֶל כָּל־הַבָּא
אֶל־הָאֹהֶל וְכָל־אִשָּׁר בְּאֹהֶל יִטָּמֵא
שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: (טו) וְכָל כְּלִי פְתוּחַ
אֲשֶׁר אֵין־צִמִּיד פְּתִיל עָלָיו טָמֵא
הוּא: (טז) וְכָל אִשָּׁר־יִגַּע עַל־פְּנֵי
הַשָּׂדֶה בְּחִלְל־חֶרֶב אוֹ בְּמֵת
אוֹ־בַעֲצָם אָדָם אוֹ בַּקֶּבֶר יִטָּמֵא
שִׁבְעַת יָמִים:

Numbers 31: 1-2, 6-7, 13, 19, 48-49

(1) God spoke to Moses, saying, (2) "Avenge the Israelite people on the Midianites; then you shall be gathered to your kin."... (6) Moses dispatched them on the campaign, a thousand from each tribe, with Pinhas son of Eleazar serving as a priest on the campaign, equipped with the sacred utensils and the trumpets for sounding the blasts. (7) They took the field against Midian, as God had commanded Moses, and slew every male.... (13) Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all the chieftains of the community came out to meet them outside the camp. (19) "You shall then stay outside the camp seven days; every one among you or among your captives who has slain a person or touched a corpse shall purify himself on the third and seventh days.... (48) The commanders of the troop divisions, the officers of thousands and the officers of hundreds, approached Moses. (49) They said to Moses, "Your servants have made a check of the warriors in our charge, and not one of us is missing.

במדבר לא-א-ב, ו-ז, יג, יט, מח-מט

(א) וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:
(ב) נָקִים נִקְמַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֵת
הַמִּדְיָנִים אַחֲרֵי תֹאסֹף
אֶל־עַמִּיךָ: ... (ו) וַיִּשְׁלַח אֹתָם
מֹשֶׁה אֶלֶף לַמָּטָה לַצָּבָא אֹתָם
וְאֶת־פִּינָחָס בֶּן־אֱלֶעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן
לַצָּבָא וְכָלִי הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְחִצְצֹרוֹת
הַתְּרוּעָה בְיָדָו: (ז) וַיִּצְבְּאוּ
עַל־מַדְיָן כְּאִשֶּׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת־מֹשֶׁה
וַיַּהַרְגוּ כָל־זָכָר: ... (יג) וַיֵּצְאוּ
מֹשֶׁה וְאֱלֶעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וְכָל־נְשֵׂאֵי
הָעֵדָה לִקְרַאתָם אֶל־מַחֲוִיץ
לַמַּחֲנֶה: ... (יט) וְאֹתָם חָנוּ מַחֲוִיץ
לַמַּחֲנֶה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל־הָרֶג נָפֶשׁ
וְכָל־נִגְעַ בְּחִלָּל תִּתְחַטְּאוּ בַּיּוֹם
הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי אֹתָם
וּשְׁבִיכֶם: ... (מח) וַיִּקְרְבוּ
אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הַפְּקָדִים אֲשֶׁר לְאֶלְפֵי
הַצָּבָא שָׂרֵי הָאֲלָפִים וּשְׂרֵי
הַמֵּאוֹת: (מט) וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה
עַבְדְּיָךְ נִשְׂאוּ אֶת־רֹאשׁ אַנְשֵׁי
הַמִּלְחָמָה אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדֵנוּ וְלֹא־נִפְקַד
מִמֶּנּוּ אִישׁ:

Mishnah Oholot 18:7-9

(7) The dwelling-places of non-Jews are unclean. How long must [the non-Jew] have dwelt in [the dwelling-places] for them to require examination? Forty days, even if there was no woman with him.
(8) What do they examine? Deep drains and foul-smelling waters.

משנה אהלות י"ח:ז-ט'

(ז) מְדוֹרוֹת הַגּוֹיִם, טַמְאִין. כַּמָּה יִשָּׁהּ אֶתְּכֹן וַיְהִי צָרִיךְ בְּדִיקָה? אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁאֵין עִמּוֹ אִשָּׁה.
(ח) אֶת מָה הֵם בּוֹדְקִים, אֶת הַבִּיבִים הָעֲמֻקִּים וְאֶת הַמַּיִם הַסְּרוּחִים.

Yevamot 60b-61a

§ It is taught: And similarly, Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai would say:

The graves of gentiles do not render items impure through a tent, as it is stated: "And you My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, are men [*adam*]" (Ezekiel 34:31) You, are called men [*adam*] but gentiles are not called men [*adam*].

יבמות ס:-סא.

תִּנָּיָא, וְכֵן הָיָה רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאי אוֹמֵר:

קִבְרֵי גוֹיִם אֵין מְטַמְּאִין בְּאֶהֱלָא, שְׁנַאֲמַר: "וְאַתָּן צֹאֲנִי צֹאן מִרְעִיתִי אָדָם אֲתֶם". אֲתֶם קְרוּיִין אָדָם, וְאֵין הַגּוֹיִם קְרוּיִין אָדָם.

Rabbi Ethan Tucker, Mechon Hadar, 2016

Years ago, I was privileged to share time in the beit midrash of the Jewish Theological Seminary with Rabbi Morris Shapiro. Rabbi Shapiro had been a childhood prodigy at Yeshivat Hakhmei Lublin in Poland; he was a Holocaust survivor who made it to America and served as a community rabbi. In his later years, he devoted his time to learning and to helping other beginning

learners on their own journeys. In one of my many conversations with him, he spontaneously brought up this text of R. Shimon b. Yohai. "You know," he said, "that text got me through the camps." Surprised, I asked him to elaborate. He explained that R. Shimon's statement here had enabled him to see his Nazi persecutors as being animals, as being something less than people. Had he had to confront them as true human beings, he said, as moral agents who were nonetheless choosing to perpetrate this unspeakable evil, he would have lost all faith in God and humanity and would have been sapped of any will to survive. It was precisely the dehumanization in this text that lifted up his own humanity and allowed him to live another day. As if this analysis was not stunning enough, he then added: One of the things we learned from the Nazis is that it is forbidden to talk this way anymore. R. Shimon's text for him was a oneoff: It appeared at a critical moment for him, and then was retired. But the Nazis revealed how a dehumanizing text that might serve as an escape pod for the oppressed could easily turn into a gas chamber in the hands of the powerful

Yevamot 61

"Whoever has killed anyone, and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves" Perhaps a Jew was killed And the Rabbis "Not one man of us is missing" And Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai "not one man of us is missing..." due to transgression,

Ravina said: Granted, the verse excluded gentiles from rendering items impure through a tent, as it is written: "When a man [*adam*] dies in a tent" (Numbers 19:14); but did the verse exclude them from rendering items impure via touching and carrying?

יבמות סא

"כָּל הַזֶּה נֶפֶשׁ וְכָל נֹגֵעַ בְּחָלָל
תִּתְחַטְּאוּ!" דִּלְמָא אִיקְטִיל חַד
מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. וְרַבָּנִן: "לֹא נִפְקַד מִמֶּנּוּ
אִישׁ". וְרַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחַי: "לֹא
נִפְקַד מִמֶּנּוּ אִישׁ" — לְעֵבִירָה.

רַבִּינָא אָמַר: נָהִי דְמַעְטִינָהּ קָרָא
מֵאֲטָמוּיִי בְּאֹהֶל, דְּכָתִיב: "אָדָם כִּי
יָמוּת בְּאֹהֶל", מִמַּגֵּעַ וּמִשָּׂא מִי
מַעְטִינָהּ קָרָא?

