Breishit Rabbah 72

1. AND REUBEN WENT IN THE DAYS OF THE WHEAT-HARVEST, etc. (XXX,14)...They that were full hired themselves for bread, etc. (I Sam.II, 5). ‘They that were full hired themselves for bread’ applies to Leah, who was full with children, yet hired herself; And they that were hungry have ceased (ib.) applies to Rachel, who though hungry for children yet ceased.3 While the akarah (barren) hath borne seven (ib.)- Leah, who was barren, having no womb, bore seven; She that had many children hath languished (ib.)- Rachel, from whom it was natural that most of the children should be born, yet languished. And who caused this? The Lord, [who] killeth, and maketh alive, He bringeth down to the grave and who causeth this? [The man] whose breath is in his nostrils, etc. (ib.).

(1) Reuben took only the mandrakes he found, i.e. which were ownerless so that he might justly take them. Hence when he was old, his descendants who formed the tribes of Reuben-he likewise asked for land on the other side of the Jordan, where it is plentiful, for in Eretz Israel proper they felt that they might experience difficulty in feeding their flocks without straying into other people’s fields.-Commentaries.

(2) With Reuben’s mandrakes.

(3) I.e. she originally was physically incapable of childbirth, yet God wrought a miracle for her, cf. supra, XLVII, 2 and LXIII, 5. ’E. J. renders (with the reading of cur. edd. ’akarah not as in Th.): Leah, who was to have been banished from the house; Jacob having intended to divorce her, supra, LII, 2-bore seven.

(5) Jacob having wanted her only.

Brachot 31a

R. Hammuna said: How many important laws can be learnt from these verses relating to Hannah!

Now Hannah, she spake: from this we learn that one who prays must direct his heart.

Only her lips moved: from this we learn that he who prays must frame the words distinctly with his lips.

But her voice could not be heard: from this, it is forbidden to raise one’s voice in the Tefillah.

Therefore Eli thought she had been drunken: from this, that a drunken person is forbidden to say the Tefillah.

And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken, etc. R. Eleazar said: From this we learn that one who sees in his neighbour something unseemly must reprove him.

And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord. ’Ulla, or as some say R. Jose b. Hanina, said: She said to him: Thou art not lord in this matter, nor does the holy spirit rest on thee, that thou suspectest me of this thing. Some say, She said to him: Thou art not lord, [meaning] the Shechinah and the holy spirit is not with you in that you take the harvester and not the more lenient view of my conduct. Dost thou not know that I am a woman of sorrowful spirit.

I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink. R. Eleazar said: From this we learn that one who is suspected wrongfully must clear himself.

Count not thy handmaid for a daughter of Belial; a man who says the Tefillah when drunk is like one who serves idols. It is written here, Count not thy handmaid for a daughter of Belial, and it is written elsewhere, Certain sons of Belial have gone forth from the midst of thee. Just as there the term is used in connection with idolatry, so here.

Then Eli answered and said, Go in Peace. R. Eleazar said: From this we learn that one who suspects his neighbour of a fault which he has not committed must beg his pardon; nay more, he must bless him, as it says, And the God of Israel grant thy petition.8

1. Psikhatot Rebbe (Avot Zarah, 60a): Although the Master said: ‘This is the hand of God’... (Shmuel A. 2:8) ‘This is the hand of God’...’ (Shmuel A. 2:8) ‘the hand of God’...1

2. Baraitot Bar 9b: ‘This is the hand of God’... (Shmuel A. 2:8) ‘This is the hand of God’...1

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