



Volume 11

2013

In Memory of Esther Aumann z"l

MASSEKHET

Board of Directors: Prof. Israel Aumann, Prof. Elisha Haas, Rochelle Furstenberg

Editor-in-chief: Prof. Yehuda Friedlander

Editor: Dr. Rivka Goldberg (Dvir)

Advisory Board: Prof. Shulamit Elizur, Prof. Yaffah Berlovitz, Malke Bina, Prof. Susan Handelman, Prof. Vered Noam, Prof. Uriel Simon, Prof. Haviva Pedaya, Prof. Shmuel Feiner, Prof. Avigdor Shinan

Editorial Board: Prof. Hannah Kasher, Dr. Yossi David, Dr. Yael Shemesh

Linguistic Editing: Dikla Abarbanel

Translation: Jeremy Kuttner

Contributors:

Prof. Nahem Ilan, Lander Institute, Jerusalem

Dr. Ruth Walfish, Efrata College, Jerusalem

Dr. Tamar Werdiger, Herzog College, Gush Etzion

Dr. Esther Carmel- Hakim, University of Haifa and The Emek Yezreel College

Malka Puterkovsky, Tekoa

Dr. Ruth Kara-Ivanov Kaniel, Ben Gurion University, Beer Sheva

ISSN 1565-3625

© All rights reserved

Massekhet

P.O.B. 39247, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem 9139102

massehet@gmail.com

'Massekhet' is a periodical established by Matan, The Women's institute of Torah Studies, in memoriam to Esther Aumann, one of the first students in its *Beit Midrash*. Esther, who devoted her life to her home and to raising her family, began attending the *Beit Midrash* at the age of sixty-two and for the first time in her life delved into the depths revealed in the study of Gemara, Tanach and Jewish Philosophy. Six years later she passed away of cancer. The story of her life epitomizes the complete metamorphosis that women's Torah study has undergone in the last generation.

Contents

Woman as Victim in the Book of Judges
Ruth Walfish

Couple Relations in Shir HaShirim and 'The Odyssey'
Tamar Werdiger

'Petah Ei'naim'(Opening of the Eyes) and 'The Beautiful Maiden Without Eyes' – Fear and Vision [Reiya veYira'a] in the Zohar
Ruth Kara-Ivanov Kaniel

Nadia Yehuda: From Chicago to Nahalal: Following her Love
Esther Carmel-Hakim

Readings and Reflections

*"They [The Sages] refrained from imposing an oath on her" –
A Study of the Sugya of the Widow's Oath*
Malka Puterkovsky

Book Review

"It is good that you should take hold of the one, and from the other one do not withdraw your hand" – Thoughts on Manners of Study in 'Solika HaTzedeket' by Juliette Hassine Z"l
Nahem Ilan

English Abstracts

Woman as Victim in the Book of Judges

Ruth Walfish

The book of Judges features a disproportionate number of women, relative to other books of the Bible. This essay analyzes the roles assumed by women in several stories, both individually and collectively. I wish to argue that although the attitude to women is not monolithic, very prominent examples of exploitation and abuse of women can be observed, both on an individual and a group level. I have analyzed the stories of three individuals – Jephthah's daughter, the concubine of Gibeah, and the Philistine wife of Samson – which in my opinion highlight the negative attitude toward women on the part of the male population, whether Israelite or gentile, and which also reflect the general level of morality prevalent in society as a whole. I have demonstrated that the Book of Judges teaches that a disparaging and offensive attitude towards women can result in violence and destruction, the repercussions of which reverberate throughout the nation.

Couple Relations in Shir HaShirim and 'The Odyssey'

Tamar Werdiger

The article presents an unfamiliar aspect of the perception of couple relationships as reflected in Shir HaShirim (The Song of Songs) and in 'The Odyssey', which is expressed by the figurative language featured in the works. The facet under discussion is a type of unity present in the couple's internal world, a unity which is a result of the shared world of imagination and emotion.

Set against the backdrop of the perception of couple relationships as appearing explicitly in Shir HaShirim and 'The Odyssey', the article demonstrates how each of the works hints at a deeper relationship in which the parties are partner to a significant share of this internal world. Both works hint at this unity with the assistance of figurative language but each does so in a different manner.

In 'Shir HaShirim' the unity at the base of couple relations is revealed in the overall picture of the vehicles appearing in the words of the lover and those of his beloved. The article surveys the vehicles used by the couple and demonstrates that approximately half of these imageries are common to both partners. The repeated use by the lover and his beloved of the same vehicles is testimony to a sense of resemblance between the lover's world of imagination and that of his partner. Because the world of imagination existent in figurative language (expressed by figurative language and created by its use) is not one of pure thought, but rather of experiences, emotions and feelings, use of those vehicles indicates that not only is the couples' frame of mind similar, but that their experiential world is also largely a common one. Moreover, in a

significant portion of the examples, these imageries serve the lover and his beloved in their description of each other. In other words, the same internal world common to both lovers constitutes a part of their relations, a part of the manner in which they perceive each other.

The unity in the internal world of the main couple in 'The Odyssey' - Odysseus and Penelope - is revealed in a number of extended similes ('epic similes'), which are located at key points in the story. In these similes, The vehicle suits the tenor's spouse more than it suits the tenor itself.

As will be proven by the article, this feature of these imageries, hints at a certain unity in the couple's worlds of imagination and emotion.

The existence of a perception of intimate relations consisting of unity in the partners' internal worlds in these two ancient works is evidence that this 'romantic' perception is not an innovation of recent centuries. Its appearance in two classic works of such great cultural influence, yet which differ in almost every aspect (religious, geographical, language, genre etc.) indicates that it is reasonable to presume that this perception was widespread in the ancient world.

***'Petah Ei'naim'*(Opening of the Eyes) and *'The Beautiful Maiden Without Eyes'* - Fear and Vision [Reiya veYira'a] in the Zohar**

Ruth Kara-Ivanov Kaniel

The article deals with the analogies between the parable of the Maiden 'without eyes' in the 'Saba deMishpatim' section of the Zohar, and the Zohar's homiletical interpretation of Tamar in 'The Opening of the Eyes' which appears in Parshat Acharei Mot. The two interpretations focus on the image of the *Shekhina* and the temptation and danger involved in the mystic experience.

Tamar, the mother of the Messiah and the maiden in the palace, represent the essence of revelation and concealment in the Zohar's poetics. The homiletical interpretations of them deal with the erotic processes of Torah study, the layers of its interpretation and the revelation of its secrets, and also the ecstatic experience which amalgamates vision (*reiya*) and fear (*yira'a*) during the time of the revelation. A comparison of the two characters reveals the animalistic and "dark" faces of the *Shekhina* hinted at in the riddles of the 'Saba deMishpatim', and the threat concealed in the multi-layered exegesis of the Torah. Torah study is equivalent to the meeting between Tamar and Yehuda and bears messianic potential, but also the risk of death. The attempt to cope with this duality requires a 'lover of the Torah' to participate in the process of temptation and to bear its essence of concealment and revelation. I will claim that both interpretations emphasize the independence and liberty of the female character in the literature of the Zohar and the internal processes she undergoes, prior to her encounter with the human and divine male. The connection between the *sefira* of

malkhut and that of *tiferet* incorporates the state of burning, and teaches of the necessity to accommodate evil and contend with it by concealing the face. On the psychological level, these homilies call for a fusion of the contradictory faces of the *Shekhina*, and redemption is thereby interpreted as the "mitigation" (*Hamtaka*) of the 'dark side' and a meeting with its dual and dynamic nature.

Nadia Yehuda: From Chicago to Nahalal: Following her Love

Esther Carmel-Hakim

Nadia Yehuda was a pharmacist from a wealthy Zionist family in Chicago. In 1923, after having met and fallen in love with Zvi Yehuda, one of the founders of Kibbutz Degania and the communal agricultural village of Nahalal, Yehuda aged 42, left her husband and family in order to live a life of socialist cooperation in Nahalal.

Yehuda quickly became what is now called a public-relations agent for Nahalal, and by extension, for the entire Zionist settlement endeavor. Yehuda's unmediated approach towards her distinguished guests succeeded in instilling in them a sense of personal identification with the idea of Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel. Visitors to Nahalal were impressed by this educated woman who had chosen to leave a Western, bourgeois life-style in order to embrace the hardships of farm-life in a hot, arid area which had, until not long before, been swamp-land.

Yehuda's abilities did not go unnoticed by the leadership of the Yishuv and she was drafted for public-relations and fundraising work both in Eretz Israel and abroad, where she represented Keren Ha'yesod, the Jewish National Fund and WIZO.

The success of Jewish settlement of the land in the Jezreel Valley became an international "trademark" of the Zionist movement, to no small extent by virtue of the efforts of women like Yehuda, who rose above the exhausting routine of agricultural toil and instilled daily life in the settlements with pride and pioneering spirit.

This article is based on materials from the archives of the Israel Labor Party and of Nahalal, on visitors' books and correspondence.

Readings and Reflections

"They [The Sages] refrained from imposing an oath on her" – A Study of the Sugya of the Widow's Oath

Malka Puterkovsky

At the center of this article is a study and analysis of a Talmudic *sugya* (discussion) which describes the evolvement of the *takana* of R. Gamliel HaZaken. Initially, in order to verify her claim, the widow was supposed to take an oath that she was indeed entitled to receive that which was guaranteed her by her *ketuba*. However, as a result of the tragedies which befell women who were not fastidious in their oaths, the Sages refrained from administering them to widows for fear that their oaths would not be complete, resulting in their subsequent affliction with disaster. The consequence was a situation whereby widows were unable to receive the settlement from their *ketuba* from the *Beit Din*, which in turn led to their frequent inability to remarry.

Conscious of this problematic reality, R. Gamliel ruled that instead of an obligatory oath, the widow will voluntarily take a vow on herself and will abstain from enjoying a particular pleasure should it be proved that she lied. Thus, on the one hand, the *dayanim* could confirm that the widow's demand is genuine and that she should be granted her request, and on the other hand, the *Beit Din* would not endanger the widow with the risks involved in swearing a false oath, whether consciously or unintentionally. The Talmudic *sugya*

describes the evolvement of Raban Gamliel's ruling and the manner of its implementation during the period of the Talmud, starting from the first generation of Babylonian amoraim and into the following generations.

At the conclusion of the *sugya* is a description of two differing paths instructed by R. Yehuda, which the Beit Din, by choosing one of the options, must grant the widow her request. R. Yehuda's ruling, preventing a discriminatory situation in which the widow is unable to receive that which she is legally entitled to, illustrates the objective of the *poskei halakha* – those responsible for the fashioning of the Oral Law throughout the generations i.e. development and design of practical halakhic means, capable of enabling a life of Torah and fulfillment of the mitzvot within life's ever-changing reality. This approach of the Sages from the period of the Mishna and the Talmud, and until today, is vitally important for the continued existence of the Jewish People as "Since the day of the destruction of the Temple, the Holy One Blessed be He has only four *amot* of halakha in His world". (Yalkut Shimoni, 836)

Book Review

"It is good that you should take hold of the one, and from the other one do not withdraw your hand" (Eccl. 7:18) –

Thoughts on Manners of Study in 'Solika HaTzedeket' by Juliette Hassine Z"l

Nahem Ilan

Juliette Hassine's book is a comprehensive and meticulous multi-disciplinary study, both of the historical character of Solika HaTzedeket and of the *piyutim* and *Qissot* written about her. In her book, Hassine clarifies what the *piyutim* and *Qissot* were intended for, examines the uniqueness embodied in the character of Solika and reveals hidden layers which are nevertheless vital in understanding her significance for both Jews and Muslims.¹

¹ For a concise summary see: Nahem Ilan, "Giborat Yehudey HaMaghreb", *Makor Rishon, Shabbat Supplement*, 5 Tishrei 5773 (September 21, 2012), p. 22. Another part was presented by me at an evening held for the launch of the book on Monday 12 Kislev 5773 (November 26, 2012) at Bar-Ilan University in Ramat Gan.