



Bible Commentaries
They Didn't Teach me
in Yeshivah: Shadal
(part 2)

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אם במחוקת ימצא הגנב והכה ומת אין לו דמים (שמות כב
(א

רש"י: אין לו דמים – אין זו רציחה,
הרי הוא כמת מעיקרו

אבן עזרא (הפירוש הארוך): ופירוש
אין לו דמים – אין על הורגו שפיכות
דמים. ויש לתמוה מן המפרשים דמים
– חיים . . .

Rashi: This is not regarded as a murder; it is as though he (the thief) has been dead from the beginning of his criminal act (אין לו דמים is taken to mean: he, the thief, has no blood)

Ibn Ezra: the meaning of אין לו דמים is that there is no bloodguilt on the person who killed him. I am amazed at the commentators who say that דמים means life . . .

אם במהתרת ימצא הגנב והכה ומת אין לו דמים (שמות כב
(א

שד"ל: גם ראב"ע וגם רמבמ"ן היה
קשה להם הלשון הזה המושאל
והשירי . . . ונדחקו לפרש . . . אבל
רש"י היה לו חיק טועם הדבור העברי
והבין הדבר על בוריו.

Shadal: Both ibn Ezra and
Mendelssohn found this
metaphorical poetic image
difficult . . . And they offered
forced explanations. But Rashi
had a palate that could properly
taste Hebrew speech. He
understood the words correctly.

כִּי יֵלֵד יֵלֵד לָנוּ בֶּן נָתַן לָנוּ וַתְּהִי הַמְּשֻׁרָה עַל שְׂכָמוֹ וַיִּקְרָא
שְׁמוֹ פְּלֵא יוֹעֵץ אֵל גְּבוּר אֲבִיעֵד שֵׁר שְׁלוֹם (ישעיה ט ה)

Revised Standard Version: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

New Jewish Publication Society Translation: For a child has been born to us, A son has been given us. And authority has settled on his shoulders. He has been named “The Mighty God is planning grace; the Eternal Father, a peaceable ruler.”

שד"ל ישעיה ט ה

כי הנה ידענו כי שמות רבים יש בלשון הקדש שאין הוראתם הוראת שם, אך הם מאמר שלם, כמו יהונתן אלנתן, נתנאל, . . . הוראתם ה' נתן. וכן בישעיה עמנו אל {ישעיהו ז' י"ד}, שאר ישוב {ישעיהו ז' ג'}, מהר שלל, חש בז {ישעיהו ח' ג'}, חפצי בה {ישעיהו ס"ב:ד'}, מלכים ב כ"א:א'}, כלם שמות שענינם מאמרים שלמים. וכן ה' נסי (שמות י"ז:ט"ו), ה' צדקנו (ירמיהו כ"ג:ו' ול"ג:ט"ז), ה' שמה (סוף יחזקאל), כל אחד מהשמות האלה הוא מאמר שלם, **רשב"ם בראשית לג כ: [וַיִּצָב שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְרָא לוֹ] אֵל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל - שהיצילני מלבן ומעשו. כלומר האלהים הוא אלהי יעקב. וכמו שקורין שם אדם אליעזר, עמנואל, כמו כן נקרא המזבח כך. וכמו שפירשתי פשוטו:**

שְׂאֵרָה כְּסוּתָהּ וְעִנְתָּהּ לֹא יִגָּרַע (שמות כא י)

... אומר אני כי "וענתה" הוא התנאי הראוי לה במה שהיא אשה בעולת בעל והתנאי הזה הוא התשמיש בלא ספק. ...

ורז"ל עשו (כתובות ס"ב ע"א) כמו שעשו בכל שאר חלקי התורה והגבילו השיעורים, שאם יפחות הבעל מהשיעור המוגבל לו לפי מה שהוא אדם, תוכל אשתו לבוא לצעוק חמס לפני ב"ד,

... I say that ענתה refers to the duties towards her because she is a married woman, and this must be a reference to sexual intercourse ...

As the rabbis generally do, they defined the frequency, so that if the husband falls short of the standard that was set for him, depending on his life conditions, his wife could come and complain in a court of law.

שְׂאֵרָה כְּסוּתָהּ וְעִנְיָתָה לֹא יִגְרַע (שמות כא י)

והנה חז"ל בחכמתם ובצדקתם ראו כי האישה איננה כלי ולא נבראת לתועלת האיש ולהנאתו בלבד, אבל איש ואשתו שני שותפים, התחברו ברצונם לעזור איש את רעהו באהבה ואחוה, ולא לבד השגיו של איש גורע חק אשתו, אבל השגיו גם על הפרטים היותר קלים, לבלתי יהיה האיש גורע הנאת אשתו . . .

In their wisdom and their righteousness, the rabbis understood that a woman isn't just a vessel; she wasn't created just for a man's benefit and pleasure. Rather a man and a woman are two partners who have joined together in order to help each other with love and friendship. The rabbis were not only concerned about the frequency but were also even concerned about the smallest details, that a man should not [behave in such a way that would] reduce his wife's sexual pleasure . . .

שְׂאֵרָה כְּסוּתָהּ וְעֹנֵתָהּ לֹא יִגְרָע (שמות כא י)

והפך מזה מצד אחד דרכי הנבלים
שאינם מבקשים רק הנאת עצמם והם
משוטטים תמיד לבקש זימה ונשיהם
נמאסות בעיניהם ויושבות עגונות
אלמנות חיות,

As opposed to this type of
behaviour one finds, on the one
hand, men who are scoundrels,
interested only in their own
pleasure, who are constantly
looking for lust, men who look at
their own wives with disgust and
thus the wives sit abandoned in
living widowhood.

שְׂאֵרָה כְּסוּתָהּ וְעִנְתָּהּ לֹא יִגְרַע (שמות כא י)

והפך מזה מצד אחר דרכי המתחכמים אשר האשה היא להם כשפחה לשרתם, וכסם לשמירת בריאותם (לא יבעול אלא כשימצא גופו בריא וחזק ביותר וכו' וכו', . . . [וימצא כובד ממתניו ולמטה . . . זה צריך לבעול ורפואה לו שיבעל] רמב"ם הלכות דעות פרק ד' הלכה י"ט). אבל מי שתורתו היא תורת משה והמשנה והתלמוד, הוא אוהב את אשתו כגופו ומכבדה יותר מגופו

And opposed to this, on the other hand, are those “wise men” who think that their wife is there to serve them like a handmaiden and that she is a tonic to keep them healthy (see Rambam *Deot* 4:2: “He should have intercourse only if he finds himself in good health and vigour . . . [and is conscious of a heaviness from the loins downwards . . . A man like this needs to have intercourse and it is a remedy for him.”] But the man whose Torah is the Torah of Moses and the Mishnah and the Talmud, loves his wife as much as he loves his own body, and honours her more than he honours himself.

Shadal on the love of God (Deut 6:5)

What this *mitzvah*—the *mitzvah* to love God—means requires explanation. Actually there would be no real inherent difficulty or doubt about it, were it not for the fact that the [medieval Jewish] philosophers (מתפלספים) imported the ideas of Greek thinkers into the Torah, and they changed various aspects of the Torah to get them to concur with the [classical] philosophers. And since this was an impossible thing to do, they took Torah and philosophy and made of them a mishmash that is neither Torah nor philosophy, and they ended up losing on both counts.

Nowadays that old type of philosophy exists no longer, but Jewish books are still filled with it, so that neither true scholars nor true Torah Jews find satisfaction in them.

Shadal on the love of God (cont.)

As an example, I will cite the words of the *mevaer* [Herz Homberg, 1749-1841, who wrote the commentary on Deuteronomy for Mendelssohn's humash] on this verse. And I quote:

You shall love the LORD your God: Find joy in the understanding of His infinite perfection, be elated when you proclaim His faithfulness and His unity and when you do what is pleasant in His eyes, for those are the ways of love.

The beginning of his comment (Find joy in the understanding of His infinite perfection...) follows the way of the Greek scholars; the end of his comment (do what is pleasant in His eyes) follows the way of Jewish scholars. But these two approaches are mutually exclusive....

Shadal on the love of God (cont.)

I really am amazed at the [Jewish] philosophers. How did they not realize that what the Torah wants is not what philosophy wants? Philosophy wants us to know and recognize truth. Torah wants us to do what is right and what is good. And if the Torah teaches us [a few philosophical ideas, such as] the unity of God and the fact that the world was created, it was not for the purpose that we would then acquire the true knowledge of God and recognition of His perfection as they put it. Rather it was so as to implant in our souls useful beliefs that will lead us towards justice and righteousness.

Shadal on the love of God (cont.)

And that is why the Torah and the Prophets always make God seem smaller and closer to the level of humans, attributing to Him anger and will, love and hate, happiness and sadness and various other ways of saying that He is affected [by things that happen external to Him] and that He is subject to deficiencies. All this is done so as to help us imagine some connection between us and Him. But if, to the contrary, we imagine in our hearts the God of the philosophers, who is perfect in an infinite form of perfection, then it is simply impossible to conceive any relationship or connection between Him and human beings, and one could then not imagine any of the world's religions.

What purpose can there be for prayer if God [as the philosophers claim] is not subject to being affected? What purpose is there for *teshuvah* [repentance] if God's will is not subject to change?

Shadal on the love of God (cont.)

And if you say: “If you are right that Torah and philosophy are mutually exclusive, then that means that one of them is a lie. That means that you either disdain wisdom or reject Torah.” Know that neither of these is the case. I see humans as beings composed of two opposing forces: reason and inner feelings.... It is impossible to increase the one and reject the other, for people, whether they like it or not, are under the control of both these forces. That is why the true Torah and the true philosophy (the philosophy that is not yet written in one book, but is found scattered in ten thousand books, mixed in with all sorts of errors and inaccuracies) both of them are the words of the living God. Both of them are appropriate to the nature of human beings. Both of them are true according to different understandings of truth.....

Shadal on the love of God (cont.)

Now I shall return to discuss the love of God. I say that since the divine Torah saw fit to speak in human language and to describe God to us as subject to change and as susceptible to anger and to will, to love and to hate, and so on, it is therefore appropriate to describe people also as loving God or hating Him. For the person who always bears God in mind and is always considering how to do what He wants and how to observe His laws and regulations, such a person would be called a lover of God. Someone who does not think about God and does not refrain from doing what is contemptible for God and who is constantly seeking new abominations to sin in, someone like that is called one who hates God. “Loving God” is not a separate *mitzvah*. It includes all the *mitzvot*. It does not make sense to command people to love God. The same is true of loving your neighbour or loving the stranger. The intention is that we should take steps to do what will be beneficial to them and we should refrain from actions that will hurt them or anger them.

Shadal on the love of God (cont.)

But the kind of love described by the author of *Hovot ha-levavot* [Bahya ben Pekuda;1050-1120]—“since the soul comes from the world of pure spirit its natural tendency is to the spiritual . . . and when the light of wisdom shines upon it, it will naturally separate itself from the world and all its pleasures and have nothing to do with anything other than God, and it will never think of anything else, etc....” —none of this follows the ways of Moses’ Torah. This approach is taken from the philosophers who had only disdain for the simple people who do the necessary work of this world. Rather, according to our Torah, the one “who formed the earth and made it, who alone established it—He did not create it a waste, but formed it for habitation” (Is. 45:18), and the proper worship and love of God has nothing to do with withdrawal from society and living in the desert, but rather living with other human beings and treating them with righteousness and justice.

Shadal on the love of God (cont.)

Maimonides thought (Guide 3:28) that true love of God is only possible for the person who understands all of existence and that it is a function of that person's wisdom. To that end, he included in his "Laws of the Foundations of the Torah" three chapters (chapters 2-4) that teach people something about creation in order that true love of God would enter their hearts. All of this is so distant from the purpose of the Torah! Those three chapters have nothing in common with the rest of his *Mishneh Torah*. Had he been a true philosopher [!] he would have realized that a new generation might come along and disprove the theories of Aristotle and his students concerning biology and astronomy, and that his [Maimonides'] book [*The Guide to the Perplexed*] would become the Guide to Lies (מורה שקר). But he believed (see Guide 2:22) that everything that Aristotle had to say about the sub-lunar world was indisputably true.

Shadal on the love of God (cont.)

I am not saying this in order to remove a hairsbreadth of honour from Maimonides. Rather I want to let the young scholars of our generation know that a true philosopher should not simply rely on other philosophers. Rather, it is fitting to analyze each topic on its own. Anyone who does not have the capacity to do this, but instead relies on whatever philosophers are well-accepted in his day (just as R. Abraham ibn Ezra and Maimonides did with Aristotle and the Muslim philosophers, and just as Moses Mendelssohn did with [Gottfried Wilhelm] Leibnitz and [Christian] Wolff, and just as others do nowadays with [Immanuel] Kant, [Willhelm Friedrich] Hegel, and [Benedict] Spinoza) is no more a true philosopher than someone who relies on Avraham Avinu, Moshe, Hillel, or Rabbi Akiva.

Shadal on the love of God (cont.)

My purpose in writing all this is not to dissuade the youth from studying wisdom and languages. Never has that thought crossed the minds of my ancestors and teachers, the rabbis of Italy. My sole purpose is to try to keep the youth from accepting without thinking whatever the current popular and respected philosophy is in their generation. This is a bitter illness that comes upon them not because they seek wisdom and love truth, but because they love bogus honour and are hoping to find favour in the eyes of their [gentile] contemporaries. But those who love truth and have strong and courageous minds know that there are many ideas that were famous and glorified for one or many generations and, in a later generation, were forgotten or disparaged; and there are many opinions that for a long time were considered shameful and disgraceful and then later became praised and glorified, and filled the earth.

קרבן פסח

שמות יב: שְׁה תַמִּים זָכַר בֶּן שָׁנָה יִהְיֶה לָּכֶם מִן הַכֹּבָשִׁים וּמִן הָעִזִּים תִּקְחוּ. . . .
ט אַל תֹּאכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ נָא וּבָשָׁל מִבָּשָׁל בַּמַּיִם כִּי אִם צְלִי אִישׁ רֵאשׁוֹ עַל כַּרְעֵיו וְעַל קֶרְבּוֹ.

דברים טז: **ב** וְזָבַחְתָּ פֶסַח לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ צֹאן וּבָקָר . . . **ז** וּבָשַׁלְתָּ וְאָכַלְתָּ בַמֶּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בּוֹ

- **Exodus 12:** Your lamb . . . you may take it from the sheep or from the goats . . . Do not eat any of it raw, or cooked in any way with water, but roasted—head, legs, and entrails—over the fire.
- **Deut 16:** You shall slaughter the Passover sacrifice for the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd . . . You shall cook and eat it at the place that the LORD your God will choose

שד"ל על קרבן הפסח

לפי הפשט פסח מצרים לא היה אלא מן הצאן ולא היה נאכל אלא צלי, הכל בעבור החיפזון; ופסח דורות היה צאן או בקר והיה מותר לבשלו במים, כי לא היה שם חיפזון, ואעפ"כ נהגו קדמונינו להוסיף זכר ליציאת מצרים ולהביא מן הצאן בלבד ולעשותו צלי, זכר לפסח מצרים.

According to the *peshat*, in the Passover celebrated in Egypt the sacrifice had to be a sheep and it had to be roasted, all because of the “haste” required. But the laws for the sacrifice in subsequent generations were that it could be from the flock or the herd, and could be boiled in water, for there was no principle of haste then. Nevertheless, our forefathers’ custom was to imitate the ancient practice and to bring the sacrifice only from sheep and to roast it, in commemoration of the original Passover in Egypt.

Shadal on Lev 7:18

וְאִם הֵאָכַל יֵאָכַל מִבְּשַׂר זֶבַח שְׁלֵמֶיךָ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי לֹא יִרְצָה
הַמִּקְרִיב אֹתוֹ לֹא יִחְשָׁב לוֹ פְּגוּל יִהְיֶה

אחרי כמה שנים שהייתי מתמיה על רז"ל, למה (כדברי רשב"ם) עקרו הכתוב הזה מפשוטו, היום (פורים, תר"ז) זכיתי להבין מה ראו על ככה. וכן בכל מקום שנטו רז"ל מפשט הכתובים, כשאין הדבר דעת היחיד, אבל הוא דבר מוסכם בלי חולק, איננו טעות שטעו,

For a number of years I have been wondering why the rabbis would, as Rashbam put it, uproot this verse from its plain meaning. Today, Purim 1847, I have finally understood what motivated them. So also whenever the rabbis deviated from the plain meaning of Scripture—not when their interpretation is just one man's opinion but when it is accepted unanimously—it is not because they made an [exegetical] error.

Shadal on Lev 7:18 (cont.)

אבל הוא תקנה שתיקנו לפי צורך
הדורות, ומי כמוהם ריפורמאטור?
אבל תקנותיהם היו בחכמה עמוקה
וביראת ה' ואהבת האדם, לא להנאת
עצמם או לכבודם, ולא למצוא חן
בעיני בשר ודם.

Rather it is some enactment
(תקנה) that they legislated
according to the needs of their
generation. Who can match them
as Reformers? (מי כמוהם)
(ריפורמאטור) But their enactments
were always based on deep
wisdom, fear of God and love of
humanity; never were they made
for the sake of self-interest or self-
aggrandizement, nor in order to
find favour in the eyes of people.