

From the Rabbi's Desk
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Stories with a Twist [94]

And the Same with Regard to the Good Insights into Mishnah Sotah, Chapter 1:8-9

Background to Our Story

Samson



Samson and Delila. By Peter Paul Rubens. National Gallery, London. about 1609.

Judges Chapter 14

1. And Samson went down to Timnath and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.
2. And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore get her for me as my wife.
3. Then his father and his mother said to him, is there no woman among the daughters of your brothers, or among all my people, that you must take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said to his father, get her for me; for she pleases me well.

Judges Chapter 16

18. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, come up this once, for he has told me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought money in their hand.
19. And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man and she had him shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to torment him, and his strength went from him.
20. And she said, The Philistines are upon you, Samson. And he awoke from his sleep, and said, I will go out like other times before, and shake myself free. And he knew not that the Lord had departed from him.
21. But the Philistines took him, and took out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of bronze; and he ground at the mill of the prison house.

Absalom



II Samuel, Chapter 15

1. And it came to pass after this, that Absalom got himself chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.
2. And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate; and it was so, that when any man who had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called to him, and said, Of what city are you? And he said, Your servant is of one of the tribes of Israel.
3. And Absalom said to him, See, your matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear you.
4. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man who has any suit or cause might come to me, and I would do him justice!
5. And it was so, that when any man came near to him to bow down to him, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.
6. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel who came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.
7. And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said to the king, I beg you, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the Lord, in Hebron.
8. For your servant vowed a vow while I stayed at Geshur in Aram, saying, If the Lord shall bring me back indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord.
9. And the king said to him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.
10. But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as you hear the sound of the shofar, then you shall say, Absalom reigns in Hebron.
11. And with Absalom went two hundred men from Jerusalem, who were invited; and they went in their simplicity, and knew nothing.
12. And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilohnite, David's counsellor, from his city, from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy became strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.
13. And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom.

II Samuel, Chapter 18

1. And David counted the people who were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them.
2. And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also.
3. But the people answered, You shall not go forth; for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us; but now you are worth ten thousand of us; therefore now it is better that you should be our help from the city.
4. And the king said to them, What seems you best I will do. And the king stood by the gate side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands.

5. And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

6. So the people went out into the field against Israel; and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim;

7. And there the people of Israel were defeated by the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men.

8. For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

9. And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the sky and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away.

10. And a certain man saw it, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanging from an oak.

11. And Joab said to the man who told him, And, behold, you saw him, and why did you not strike him there to the ground? And I would have given you ten shekels of silver, and a girdle.

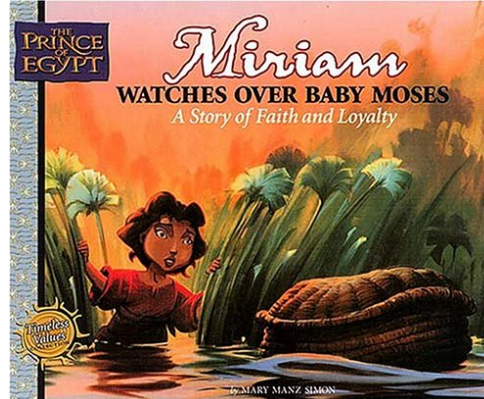
12. And the man said to Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in my hand, still I would not put forth my hand against the king's son; for in our hearing the king charged you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom.

13. Otherwise I should have acted falsely against my own life; for there is no matter hidden from the king, and you would have stood aloof.

14. Then said Joab, It is not proper for me to beg before you. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was still alive in the midst of the oak.

15. And ten young men who carried Joab's armor surrounded him and struck Absalom, and slew him.

Miriam



Exodus Chapter 2

1. And there went a man of the house of Levi and took for his wife a daughter of Levi.

2. And the woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a handsome child, she hid him three months.

3. And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark made of reeds, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child in it; and she laid it in the rushes by the river's brink.

4. And his sister stood far away, to see what would be done to him.

5. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to fetch it.

6. And when she had opened it, she saw the child; and behold, the baby wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, this is one of the Hebrews' children.

7. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call for you a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?

8. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the girl went and called the child's mother.

Numbers Chapter 12

1. And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Kushite woman whom he had married; for he had married a Kushite woman.

2. And they said, Has the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? has he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it.

3. And the man Moses was very humble, more than any other men which were upon the face of the earth.

4. And the Lord spoke suddenly to Moses, and to Aaron, and to Miriam, Come out you three to the Tent of Meeting. And the three came out.

5. And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the Tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forth.

6. And he said, Hear now my words; If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, and will speak to him in a dream.

7. Not so with my servant Moses, for he is the trusted one in all my house.

8. With him I speak mouth to mouth, manifestly, and not in dark speech; and he beheld the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

9. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed.

10. And the cloud departed from off the Tent; and, behold, Miriam had become leprous, white as snow; and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous.

11. And Aaron said to Moses, Oh, my lord, I beg you, lay not the sin upon us, because we have done foolishly, and because we have sinned.

12. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb.

13. And Moses cried to the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech you.

14. And the Lord said to Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again.

15. And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days; and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.

16. And afterward the people removed from Hazeroth, and camped in the wilderness of Paran.

Joseph & Jacob, Moses & Joseph, God & Moses



Genesis Chapter 47

28. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the whole age of Jacob was a hundred and forty-seven years.

29. And the time drew nearer that Israel must die; and he called his son Joseph, and said to him, If now I have found grace in your sight, put, I beg you, your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I beg you, in Egypt;

30. But I will lie with my fathers, and you shall carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place. And he said, I will do as you have said.

31. And he said, Swear to me. And he swore to him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head.

Genesis Chapter 50

4. And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spoke to the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I beg you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying,

5. My father made me swear, saying, Behold, I die; in my grave which I have dug for me in the land of Canaan, there shall you bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I beg you, and bury my father, and I will return.

6. And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury your father, according as he made you swear.

7. And Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt.

...

24. And Joseph said to his brothers, I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

25. And Joseph took an oath from the people of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.

26. So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

Exodus Chapter 13

17. And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest perhaps the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt;

18. But God led the people around, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea; and the people of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt.

19. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him; for he had solemnly sworn the people of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and you shall carry up my bones from here with you.

20. And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness.

Deuteronomy Chapter 34

1. And Moses went up from the plains of Moab to the Mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is opposite Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead, to Dan,

2. And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, as far as the utmost sea,

3. And the Negev, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar.

4. And the Lord said to him, This is the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, I will give it to your seed; I have made you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there.

5. So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.

6. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-Peor; but no man knows his grave till this day.

The Text: Mishnah Sotah Chapter 1:8-9

שִׁמְשׁוֹן הִלֵּךְ אַחֵר עֵינָיו, לְפִיכָךְ נִקְרוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים אֶת עֵינָיו, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שׁוֹפְטִים טז) וַיֵּאֱחָזוּהוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיִּנְקְרוּ אֶת עֵינָיו. אֲבִשְׁלוֹם נִתְגָּאָה בְּשַׁעְרוֹ, לְפִיכָךְ נִתְּלָה בְּשַׁעְרוֹ. וּלְפִי שָׂבָא עַל עֶשֶׂר פִּילִגְשֵׁי אָבִיו, לְפִיכָךְ נִתְּנוּ בּוֹ עֶשֶׂר לֹונְבִיּוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שׁמואל ב יח) וַיִּסְבּוּ עֶשְׂרֵה אֲנָשִׁים נְשָׂאֵי פְּלִי יוֹאָב. וּלְפִי שֶׁגִּבַּב שְׁלֹשָׁה לְכַבּוֹת, לֵב אָבִיו, וְלֵב בֵּית דִּין, וְלֵב יִשְׂרָאֵל, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שׁם טו) וַיִּגְבּוּ אֲבִשְׁלוֹם אֶת לֵב אֲנָשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְפִיכָךְ נִתְקַעוּ בּוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה שְׁבָטִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שׁם יח) וַיִּקַּח שְׁלֹשָׁה שְׁבָטִים בְּכַפוֹ וַיִּתְקַעֵם בְּלֵב אֲבִשְׁלוֹם:

וְכֹן לְעֵנָן הַטּוֹבָה. מֵרִים הַמְתִּינָה לְמִשָּׁה שְׁעָה אַחַת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שׁמוֹת ב) וַתִּתְצַב אַחֲתוֹ מֵרְחֵק, לְפִיכָךְ נִתְעַכְּבוּ לָהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁבַעֵה יָמִים בַּמִּדְבָּר, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (בַּמִּדְבָּר יב) וְהָעָם לֹא נָסַע עַד הָאֶסְף מֵרִים. יוֹסֵף זָכָה לְקַבֵּר אֶת אָבִיו, וְאִין בְּאֲחֵיו גְּדוֹל מִמֶּנּוּ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (בְּרֵאשִׁית ג) וַיַּעַל יוֹסֵף לְקַבֵּר אֶת אָבִיו, וַיַּעַל עִמּוֹ גַּם רָכָב גַּם פָּרָשִׁים. מִי לָנוּ גְּדוֹל מִיוֹסֵף, שְׁלֹא נִתְעַסַּק בּוֹ אֱלֹא מִשָּׁה. מִשָּׁה זָכָה בְּעֶצְמוֹת יוֹסֵף, וְאִין בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל גְּדוֹל מִמֶּנּוּ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שׁמוֹת יג) וַיִּקַּח מִשָּׁה אֶת עֶצְמוֹת יוֹסֵף עִמּוֹ. מִי גְּדוֹל מִמִּשָּׁה, שְׁלֹא נִתְעַסַּק בּוֹ אֱלֹא הַמָּקוֹם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (דְּבָרִים לד) וַיִּקַּבֵּר אֹתוֹ בְּגֵיא. לֹא עַל מִשָּׁה בְּלִבָּד אָמְרוּ, אֱלֹא עַל כָּל הַצְּדִיקִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (ישעיה נח) וְהִלֵּךְ לְפָנָיִךְ צִדְקָךְ כְּבוֹד ה' יִאֲסָפֶךָ:

Samson followed his eyes, therefore he was punished measure for measure, as the Philistines gouged out his eyes, as it is stated: "And the Philistines laid hold on him and put out his eyes" (Judges 16:21).

Absalom was excessively proud of his hair, and therefore he was hanged by his hair. And furthermore, because he engaged in sexual intercourse with ten of his father's concubines (see II Samuel 15:16 and 16:22), therefore ten spears [*loneviyyot*] were put, i.e., thrust, into him, as it is stated: "And ten young men that bore Joab's armor compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him" (II Samuel 18:15). And because he stole three times, committing three thefts of people's hearts: The heart of his father, as he tricked him by saying that he was going to sacrifice offerings; the heart of the court, as he tricked them into following him; and the heart of the Jewish people, as it is stated: "So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel" (II Samuel 15:6), therefore three spears were embedded into his heart, as it is stated: "Then said Joab: I may not tarry like this with you. And he took three spears in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive" (II Samuel 18:14).

And the same is so with regard to the reward of good deeds; a person is rewarded measure for measure. Miriam waited for the baby Moses for one hour at the shore of the Nile, as it is stated: "And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done

to him" (Exodus 2:4). Therefore, the Jewish people delayed their travels in the desert for seven days to wait for her when she was smitten with leprosy, as it is stated: "And Miriam was confined outside of the camp seven days; and the people journeyed not until Miriam was brought in again" (Numbers 12:15).

Joseph merited to bury his father, resulting in a display of great honor to his father, and there was none among his brothers greater than he in importance, for he was viceroy of Egypt, as it is stated: "And Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the Elders of his house, and all the Elders of the land of Egypt, and all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house; only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen; and it was a very great company" (Genesis 50:7-9). Who, to us, had a greater burial than Joseph, as it was none other than Moses who involved himself in transporting his coffin. Moses merited to be the only person involved in the transportation of Joseph's bones to be buried in Eretz Yisrael, and there was none among the Jewish people greater than he, as it is stated: "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him" (Exodus 13:19). Who had a greater burial than Moses, as no one involved himself in his burial other than the Omnipresent Himself, as it is stated: "And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth Peor; and no man knows of his sepulcher unto this day" (Deuteronomy 34:6). The mishna comments: Not only with regard to Moses did the Sages say that God takes part in his burial, but also with regard to all the righteous individuals, as it is stated: "Your righteousness shall go before you and the glory of the Lord shall gather you in" (Isaiah 58:8).



Explaining the Story - What is going on in our story? (Explain the sequence of events)

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? Our story deals with stories within the lives' stories of Samson, Absalom, Miriam, Joseph and Moses. What is the common thread in all our stories?

Bonus ? What is the difference between the tragic stories of Samson and Absalom and the more uplifting ones of Miriam, Joseph and Moses?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

“The Twist” – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from This Text

! What goes around comes around! ! You reap what you sow! ! Capisce?



This beautiful Mishnah describes the concept of "what goes around comes around". Through God's justice and/or through the natural consequences of our own actions, each of us reaps what he or she sows, for bad and for good.