



## Likkutei Sichos Source Sheet

### Volume 15 | Vayechi | Sicha 3

Reuben, you are my first-born, My might and first fruit of my vigor,  
Exceeding in rank And exceeding in honor.

Unstable as water, you shall excel no longer; For when you  
mounted your father’s bed, You brought disgrace—my couch he  
mounted!

יִתְרָא שֵׁאת SUPERIORITY IN DIGNITY — Since you were the first-born  
it was proper that you should be superior to your brothers by  
being endowed with the priesthood. This term שֵׁאת “lifting up”  
alludes to the נְשִׂאוֹת כַּפַּיִם the raising of the hands when the priests  
pronounce the benediction (cf. Onkelos).

וַיִּתֵּן עֹז SUPERIORITY IN POWER — meaning in royal rank, as is  
meant by עֹז in (1 Samuel 2:10) “And he will give strength (עֹז) unto  
His king”. And what caused you to lose all these?

פָּחַז כַּמִּים The impetuosity and the precipitance with which you so  
hastily showed your wrath, just like water that rushes headlong in  
its course — therefore

אַל תֹּתֵר THOU SHALT NOT BE SUPERIOR— you will not receive all  
these many prerogatives that were proper to you. And what was  
this impetuosity which you displayed?

The sons of Reuben the first-born of Israel. (He was the first-born;  
but when he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given to the  
sons of Joseph son of Israel, so he is not reckoned as first-born in  
the genealogy;

1 בְּרֵאשִׁית מִיָּט: ג'

רְאוּבֵן בְּכֹרִי אֶתָּה כְּחֵי וְרֵאשִׁית אוֹנִי יִתֵּר  
שֵׁאת וַיִּתֵּר עֹז: פָּחַז כַּמִּים אֶל-תֹּתֵר כִּי  
עֲלִית מִשְׁכְּבֵי אָבִיךָ אֶז חִלַּלְתָּ יְצוּעֵי  
עֲלֶיךָ:

2 רש"י

יִתְרָא שֵׁאת. רְאוּבֵן הָיִיתָ לְהִיּוֹת יִתֵּר עַל  
אֲחֵיךָ בְּכַהֲנָה, לְשׁוֹן נְשִׂאוֹת כַּפַּיִם:

3 וַיִּתֵּר עֹז. בְּמַלְכוּת, כְּמוֹ: וַיִּתֵּן עֹז לְמֶלֶכּוֹ  
(שְׁמוּאֵל א ב'), וְמוֹי גָּרַם לָהּ לְהַפְסִיד כָּל  
אֵלֶּה?

4 פָּחַז כַּמִּים. הַפָּחַז וְהַבְּהִלָּה אֲשֶׁר מֵהֵרָתָ  
לְהִרְאוֹת כְּעֶסֶף כַּמִּים הִלְלוּ הַמְּמַהֲרִים  
לְמַרוּצָתָם, לְכָף

5 אַל תֹּתֵר. אַל תִּרְבֶּה לְטַל כָּל הַיִּתְרוֹת  
הִלְלוּ שֶׁהָיוּ רְאוּיוֹת לָהּ, וּמֵהוּ הַפָּחַז  
אֲשֶׁר פָּחַזְתָּ? כִּי עֲלִית מִשְׁכְּבֵי אָבִיךָ:

6 דברי הימים א ה': א'

וּבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן בְּכוֹר-יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי הוּא הַבְּכוֹר  
וּבְחִלְלוֹ יְצוּעֵי אָבִיו נִתְּנָה בְּכֹרְתּוֹ לְבְנֵי  
יוֹסֵף בֶּן-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא לְהִתְיַחֵשׁ לְבְּכֹרָה:

בראשית מ"ח: כ"ב

7

And now, I assign to you one portion more than to your brothers, which I wrested from the Amorites with my sword and bow."

וְאֲנִי נִתַּתִּי לָךְ שְׂכָם אֶחָד עַל-אַחֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר לָקַחְתִּי מִיַּד הָאֲמֹרִי בְּחַרְבִּי וּבְקִשְׁתִּי:

רש"י

8

Another explanation of this verse: אחד שכם אחד ONE PORTION [ABOVE THY BRETHREN] — this refers to the birthright (Genesis Rabbah 97:6): that Joseph's children should receive two portions when Canaan would be divided amongst the tribes (cf. Deuteronomy 60:17; Joseph therefore was to be regarded as the first-born). The word שכם signifies portion.

דָּבָר אַחֵר שְׂכָם אֶחָד הוּא הַבְּכוּרָה, שֵׁיטְלוּ בְּנָיו שְׁנֵי חֲלָקִים, וּשְׂכָם לְשׁוֹן חֶלֶק הוּא,

בראשית ל"ה: כ"ג

9

The sons of Leah: Reuben—Jacob's first-born—Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.

בְּנֵי לֵאָה בְּכוֹר יַעֲקֹב רְאוּבֵן וְשִׁמְעוֹן וְלֵוִי וִיהוּדָה וְיִשְׂשַׁכָּר וְזִבְלוּן:

רש"י

10

JACOB'S FIRSTBORN — firstborn with regard to heritage, firstborn with regard to Divine Service (for before the Levites were appointed to minister to God the duty devolved upon the oldest son in each family), firstborn in any enumeration of the twelve tribes; for the right of a firstborn son was given to Joseph only in respect of the tribes — in that he founded two tribes (just as a firstborn son received a double portion in his father's property) (Genesis Rabbah 82:11).

בְּכוֹר יַעֲקֹב. בְּכוֹר לְנַחֲלָה, בְּכוֹר לְעִבּוּדָה, בְּכוֹר לְמִנְיָן, וְלֹא נִתְּנָה בְּכוּרָה לְיוֹסֵף אֲלָא לְעֵנָן הַשְּׂבָטִים – שֶׁנַּעֲשָׂה לְשְׁנֵי שְׂבָטִים:

ג.

בראשית מ"ט: ט'

11

Judah is a lion's whelp; On prey, my son, have you grown. He crouches, lies down like a lion, Like a lioness —who dare rouse him?

גִּיד אַרְיֵה? הַיּוּדָה מִטָּרֶף בְּנֵי עֲלִית כָּרַע רִבֵּץ כְּאַרְיֵה וְכִלְבִּיא מִי יְקִימוֹנוּ:

רש"י

12

FROM THE PREY (literally, tearing) — From the deed of which I suspected you when I said (Genesis 37:33) "Joseph is torn in pieces, an evil beast hath devoured him" — and by that Judah was meant who was likened to a lion —

מִטָּרֶף. מִמָּה שֶׁחֲשַׁדְתִּיךָ בְּטָרֶף טָרֶף יוֹסֵף חָיָה רָעָה אֲכָלְתָּהוּ – וְזָהוּ יְהוּדָה שֶׁנִּמְשַׁל לְאַרְיֵה—

13

רש"י

THOU WENTEST UP, O MY SON — from that murderous deed you withdrew saying, (Genesis. 5:26) “what profit is it if we slay our brother”, and similarly did he act when Tamar was condemned to death, for he said “She is righteous: mine is the blame” (cf. Rashi on Genesis 38:26), therefore as a reward כרע רבץ HE STOOPED DOWN, HE CROUCHED etc. — as we are told of the days of Solomon (1 Kings 5:5) “[Israel dwelt safely] every man under his vine etc.” (Genesis Rabbah 99:8).

בני עלית. סלקת את עצמך ואמרת מה בצע וגו', וכן בהריגת תמר שהודה, צדקה ממני, לפיכך כרע רבץ וגו', בימי שלמה איש תחת גפנו וגו' (מלכים א ה):

ה.

14

דברי הימים א ה': ב'

though Judah became more powerful than his brothers and a leader came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph.

כי יהודה גבר באחיו ולנגיד ממנו והבכרה ליוסף: {ס}

15

רש"י

**Because Judah prevailed over his brothers** as it says (Gen. 49:9): “Judah is a lion’s cub.”

כי יהודה גבר באחיו. שנאמר גור אריה יהודה (ראשית מ"ט):

16

בראשית ל"ז: כ"ט

When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he rent his clothes.

וישב ראובן אל-הבור והנה אין-יוסף בבור ויקרע את-בגדיו:

17

רש"י

AND REUBEN RETURNED — When he (Joseph) was sold he had not been present, for it was his day (his turn) to go to attend to his father (Genesis Rabbah 84:19). Another explanation is: he had not sat with them at the meal because he was occupied with his sack-cloth and fast in penitence for having disturbed his father’s couch (Genesis Rabbah 84:19).

וישב ראובן. במכירתו לא היה שם, שהגיע יומו לילה ולשמש את אביו. ד"א עסוק היה בשקו ובתעניתו על שבבל יצועי אביו:

18

רש"י על בראשית ל"ח: א'

AND IT CAME TO PASS AT THAT TIME — Why is this section placed here thus interrupting the section dealing with the history of Joseph? To teach that his brothers degraded him from his high position. When they saw their father’s grief they said, “You told us to sell him: if you had told us to send him back to his father we would also have obeyed you” (Genesis Rabbah 85:2).

ויהי בעת ההוא. למה נסמכה פרשה זו לכאן, והפסיק בפרשתו של יוסף? ללמד שהורידוהו אחיו מגדלתו כשראו בצרת אביהם, אמרו: אתה אמרת למכרו, אלו אמרת להשיבו היינו שומעים לך:

19

בראשית ל"ח: כ"ב

While Israel stayed in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father’s concubine; and Israel found out. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve in number.

ויהי בשכנן ישראל בארץ ההוא וילך ראובן וישלב את-בלהה פילגש אביו וישמע ישראל {פ} ויהי בני-יעקב שנים עשר:

AND HE LAY — Because he had disturbed his couch Scripture accounts it to him as though he had actually sinned in this manner. But why did he disturb his couch? When Rachel died Jacob removed to Bilhah's tent and Reuben came and protested against the slight thus inflicted on his mother (Leah). He said: "If my mother's sister was her rival, is that any reason why the handmaid of my mother's sister should become a rival to her!" On this account he disturbed the couch (Shabbat 55b).

וישכב. מתוך שבלבל משכבו, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו שכבה; ולמה בלבל ויחלל יצועיו? שכשמתה רחל נטל יעקב מטתו, שהיתה נתונה תדיר באהל רחל ולא בשאר אהלים, ונתנה באהל בלהה; בא ראובן ותבע עלבון אמו, אמר אם אחות אמי היתה צרה לאמי, שפחת אחות אמי תהא צרה לאמי? לכה בלבל (שבת נ"ה):

NOW THE SONS OF JACOB WERE TWELVE — Scripture begins again where it left off the previous narrative (i.e. the birth of Benjamin): when Benjamin was born the destined number of his sons was complete and it was proper that they should then be enumerated; and therefore it enumerates them. Our Rabbis explained that these words are intended to tell us that Jacob's twelve sons were all equal — they were all equally righteous, for Reuben had committed no actual sin (Shabbat 55b).

ויהיו בני יעקב שנים עשר. מתחיל לענן ראשון, משנולד בנימין נשלמה המטה ומעתה ראויים להמנות, ומנאן; ורבותינו דרשו, ללמדנו בא, שקלן שוין וכלן צדיקים, שלא חטא ראובן:

A YOUNG LION — He prophesied this with reference to David who, when he began his military career, was but as a whelp — as it states, (2 Samuel 5:2) "when Saul was king over us it was thou that didst lead out and bring in Israel" — but who later on became as a lion when they made him king over themselves. That is what Onkelos means by translating it "A ruler he shall he ארוי"א" — at the beginning

גור אריה. על דוד נתנבא — בתחלה גור בהיות שאול מלך עלינו אתה היית המוציא והמביא את ישראל (שמואל ב ה') — ולבסוף אריה, פשהמליכוהו עליהם, וזהו שתרגם אנקלוס שלטון יהא בשרוי"א — בתחלתו:

One who makes a breach Goes before them; They enlarge it to a gate And leave by it. Their king marches before them, The LORD at their head

עלה הפרץ לפניהם פרוצו ויעברו שער ויצאו בו ויעברו מלפנים לפנייהם ויהנה בראשם: {פ}

Dedicated in loving memory of **Chana Leah Bas Reb Shimon ע"ה**, on her Yartzeit 7 Teves  
*The Bruk, Banon & Deitsch Families*