



# The Community

Boruch Hashem

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## Rabbi's Article

### *Caring for Others!*

In Jacob's final blessings to his children, Jacob tells Reuben (-Genesis 49:3-4), "Reuben, you are my firstborn, my strength and the first of my might. (You should have been) superior in rank --Rashi (-Link): '(אָר שׂוֹמֵר) You were fit to be superior over your brothers with the priesthood, an expression of raising up the hands (מִשְׁמַחַת כַּפַּיִם) (to recite the priestly blessing (-Link))'-- and superior in power --Rashi: 'With kingship... and what caused you to lose all this?'-- (You have) the restlessness of water --Rashi: 'The restlessness and the haste with which you hastened to display your anger, similar to water which hastens on its course. Therefore,'-- you shall not have superiority, for you ascended upon your father's couch; then you profaned (Him Who) ascended upon my bed." Hence, Rashi speaks only of Reuben losing the two superiorities of Priesthood and Kingship, but not his Firstborn-hood. However, The Translator (Onkeles (-Link); Yonothan ben Uziel (-Link)) states, "You were meant to receive three portions, Firstborn-hood, Priesthood and Kingship." Why does Rashi leave out Firstborn-hood, especially that Rashi clearly is of the opinion that Reuben did lose to Joseph the Firstborn-hood, concerning becoming a double tribe (Joseph's two sons, Menashe and Ephraim became of the Twelve Tribes, as Levi is often removed from the category of the Twelve Tribes --for example in inheriting the Land of Israel)?"

While the question isn't on Rashi's commentary on the verse, for being that the verse states, "you shall not have superiority," hence, Rashi sees that it only applies to what the verse lists as, "superiority," which is "superior in rank (priesthood) and superior in power (Kingship)," but not, Firstborn-hood. However, this in itself is a question, why doesn't the verse list Firstborn-hood?

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The Kingship that was meant for Reuben, was given to Judah. In Jacob's blessing to Judah, Jacob says (-ibid 49:9), "A cub (and) a grown lion is Judah. From the prey, my son, you withdrew," and Rashi comments, "From the prey: From what I suspected of you, (namely) that (-ibid 37: 33), 'Joseph has surely been torn up; a wild beast has devoured him.' This referred to Judah, who was likened to a lion," and, "My son, you withdrew: You withdrew yourself and said (-ibid 37:26), 'What is the gain (if we slay our brother and cover up his blood)?' Similarly, (Judah withdrew) from killing Tamar, when he confessed (-ibid 38:26), 'She is right, (it is) from me...,' therefore, 'he crouched, lay down... (meaning that he received Kingship)'"

Rashi does not list the second case of Tamar (-Link) in commenting upon the words, "From the prey," but upon the words, "My son, you withdrew," on which Rashi lists only the case of Judah's not killing Joseph. Why does Rashi separate the two statements ("From the prey" and, "My son, you withdrew") --which seem to be one--, and then lists the case of Tamar only upon the second phrase of the verse? Additionally, what tells Rashi that Jacob is speaking at all about the case of Tamar?

To answer the first question: There are two ways that we can read these two phrases of the verse, depending on where we place the comma, (i) "From the prey my son, you withdrew," or (ii) From the prey, my son you withdrew," which will lead to a difference in who the, "son," is: (i) "From the prey my son -Joseph," or, (ii) "my son -Judah- you withdrew." In version (i), "From the prey," cannot mean Tamar, while in version (ii) it can. Hence, before Rashi can list Tamar as one of the, "From the prey," Rashi must first have a heading that connects the word<sup>1</sup>, "My son," with, "Withdrew," separating it from the word<sup>1</sup>, "From the prey," after which Rashi can then list Tamar as one of the prey that Judah withdrew from killing. --And Rashi knows that, "My son," is referring to Judah (and not Joseph), because being that Jacob is praising Judah, and there is no need for Jacob to have said that the prey is, "my son -Joseph," hence, Rashi knows that the word, "My son," is Jacob's showering praise and love upon Judah.

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There is an overwhelming general question upon this: The reason why Judah received Kingship (David, Solomon, and, 'The scepter will not depart from Judah,' hence, Moshiach (-Link), who will be an offspring of David and Solomon) is, "You withdrew yourself... Similarly, (Judah withdrew) from killing Tamar...,' therefore, 'he crouched, lay down...'" However (-ibid 37:29), "Reuben... saved him (Joseph) from their hands, and he said, 'Let us not deal him a deadly blow'?! Moreover, (i) When Judah said, "What is the gain if we slay our brother," he meant (-Rashi), "What money (will we profit)?," and (ii) Judah then suggests, "let us sell him," while Reuben's plan was, "Do not shed blood! Cast him into this pit, which is in the desert, but do not lay a hand upon him," in order to save him from their hands, to return him to his father!!"

1. In Hebrew it is one word: Benee; Miteref.

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## This Week...

FRIDAY, JANUARY 6, 2023 ★ טבת תשפ"ג ו'

Shabbat Candle Lighting: 5:26 PM · Kabbalat Shabbat: 5:30 PM

SATURDAY, JANUARY 7, 2023 ★ טבת תשפ"ג ז'

TORAH READING: [Vayechi](#) (Genesis 47:28-50:26) · HAFTORAH: [Kings I](#) (2:1-12)

Shabbat Chazak (-Link) · Shacharit: 9:30 AM · Mincha: 5:00 PM · Shabbat Ends: North Miami: 6:22 PM

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And so too, concerning the *Teshuvah* of Judah and Reuben: (i) Judah said only one time (-Genesis 38:26), "*She* (Tamar) *is right*," and (ii) Judah didn't really have a choice, because three lives (Tamar and her twin unborn children) would have been taken, had Judah not make the admission!! And, (iii) (-Rashi, ibid 38:1), "*You* (Judah) *told* (us; the brothers) *to sell him. Had you told* (us) *to return him, we would have obeyed you.*" Hence, Judah could have stopped them from selling Joseph, which he didn't! While Reuben, (i) nine years later, when Joseph was taken out of the pit and sold, Reuben (-ibid 37:29), "*Returned to the pit* --Rashi: '*But when he* (Joseph) *was sold, he* (Reuben) *was not there, for... He was busy with his sackcloth and his fasting for disarranging his father's bed*'--," (ii) Reuben's *Teshuvah* was of, "*sackcloth and his fasting*" --with no lives at risk were he not to have done his *Teshuvah*. And, (iii) Reuben's entire motive to, "*disarranging his father's bed*," was (-Rashi, ibid 35:22), "*protested his mother's humiliation*," an act of, "*Honor your mother*," and hence (-Rashi, ibid 35:22), "*all of them* (Jacob's sons) *were equal, and all of them were righteous, for Reuben had not sinned*," which therefore (-Rashi, ibid verse 23), "(Scripture) *calls him the firstborn.*" And nevertheless, *Reuben did a copious amount of Teshuvah for this!!*

Hence, the question: *How could it be that because*, "*my son, you withdrew*," is the reason that Judah received the *Kingship*, which was taken away from Reuben, because of Reuben's lack of, "*my son, you withdrew*," from, "*disarranging his father's bed*"?!

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Let us take a more precise look into the reason that Jacob is giving Reuben for losing the *Kingship* (and *Priesthood*): "*Reuben, you are my firstborn, my strength and the first of my might.* (You should have been) *superior in rank and superior in power*; --Rashi: *And what caused you to lose all this?:* (i) (You have) *the restlessness of water* --Rashi: *The restlessness and the haste with which you hastened to display your anger, similar to water which hastens on its course. Therefore--; you shall not have superiority.*" (ii) "*For you ascended upon your father's couch; then you profaned...*" In other words: (i) The punishment for Reuben's "*you ascended upon your father's couch; then you profaned...*" was that Reuben's (-Rashi, ibid), "*birthright was given to Joseph*, --only in respect to the tribes, in that Joseph founded two tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh) [but not, "*in regard to inheritance...*," of which Jacob had the prohibition of (-Deuteronomy 21:16), '*will not be able to give the son of the beloved* (wife) *birthright precedence over the son of the despised* (wife)-*the* (real) *firstborn son*']" (ii) The punishment for Reuben's "(You have) *the restlessness of water*," was, "*you shall not have superiority* (*Kingship* -given to Judah, and *Priesthood* given to Levi's offspring from Aharon)." *Why the two separate punishments for the two different parts of Reuben's shortcoming?*

The virtue of *Kingship* ("*who led Israel out and brought them in*") and of *Priesthood* ("*raising up the hands* (to recite the priestly blessing upon Israel)" and, "*And they shall tell you the law... in accordance to the Torah that I have taught you*," to teach Torah to Israel), is that they are both about caring for and serving others. While *Firstborn-hood* is not about serving the other, but about self. Therefore: (i) The punishment for Reuben's "(You have) *the restlessness of water* --Rashi: *The restlessness and the haste with which you hastened to display your anger* (upon the other)... *ascended upon your father's...*," --Reuben's shortcoming towards others-- was, "*you shall not have superiority* (*Kingship* and *Priesthood*; caring and serving for others)." However, (ii) the actual act of, "*you ascended upon your father's couch; then you profaned...*" which was Reuben's personal mistake --of thinking that Jacob was causing, "*his mother's humiliation. He said, 'If my mother's sister* (Rachel) *was a rival to my mother* (Leah), *should my mother's sister's handmaid* (Bilhah -now also) *be a rival to my mother?*"-- and therefore, Reuben's punishment was concerning his personal status of *Firstborn-hood*. And for this Reuben did a copious amount of *Teshuvah* of, "*sackcloth and fasting*," which accomplished that his loss of *Firstborn-hood* was, "only in respect to the tribes, in that Joseph founded two tribes," but not, "*in regard to inheritance, to perform the service, regarding the counting* (when the names of the tribes were enumerated, Reuben was always counted first)," which remained by Reuben!

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The Lesson: A Jew cannot suffice with just working on the spiritual completion of himself. Rather, a Jew must occupy himself with, "*Love for a fellow Jew*," doing for the wellbeing of the other. Moreover, "*Love for a fellow Jew is the entire Torah!!*" Hence, even if one is personally not in the highest of levels (as Judah, who didn't stop Joseph from being sold, and his *Teshuvah* wasn't as superior as Reuben's), nevertheless, because he is occupied with the wellbeing of others, he is connected to the entire Torah!

And this expresses itself precisely in the actions of Reuben and Judah:

- Reuben: Because, "*He was busy with his sackcloth and his fasting for disarranging his father's bed*," therefore, "*when he* (Joseph) *was sold, he* (Reuben) *was not there*," to save Joseph, which is how the entire exile of Egypt --the head and root of all of Israel's exiles-- began!
- Judah: Because Judah made the simple *Teshuvah* --not as superior as that of Reuben-- of admitting, "*She* (Tamar) *is right*," saving the lives of simple others, among them the unborn son, *Peretz*, from whom comes the King David (a redeemer of Israel) the entire Davidic Dynasty, including *King Moshiach*, final redeemer of Israel, Judah began the ultimate redemption of all exiles!