**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**midrash on the *Parasha*:**

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***Parashat Pinchas***

**The Juxtaposition of *Parashiyot***

**Expounding the Juxtaposition of *Parashiyot***

In the *shiur* for *Parashat Balak*, we dealt with Rabbi Akiva's position concerning the juxtaposition of *parashiyot* as an exceedingly useful exegetical tool for exploring and deepening the meaning of the biblical text.

We also saw there that the juxtaposition of *parashiyot* in the Torah parallels the geographical proximity of Israel to the women of the neighboring idolatrous nations in the sin of Baal Peor.[[1]](#footnote-1) We will elaborate below on the conceptual foundations of this method of exposition, and the manner in which it is accepted by the Tannaim and the Amoraim.

The issue of expounding the juxtaposition of biblical passages (*derishat semukhin*) appears in different places throughout the Gemara, both in the Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud*.* Based on the sources, it appears that Rabbi Akiva's approach is accepted as the main, consensus approach, but not by his disciple Rabbi Yehuda:

But has not Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said:

How do we know that a *ba'al keri* (a man who has had a seminal emission) is forbidden to study the Torah?

Because it is stated: "Make them known to your children and your children's children" (*Devarim* 4:9).

and immediately afterwards [it is stated]: "The day that you stood [before the Lord your God at Chorev]" (*Devarim* 4:10),

implying that just as on that occasion those who had a seminal emission were forbidden, so too here those who have had a seminal emission are forbidden…

As it has been taught: Ben Azzai says:

It is stated: "You shall not suffer a sorceress to live" (*Shemot* 22:17),

and it is stated [immediately afterwards]: "Whoever lies with a beast shall surely be put to death" (*Shemot* 22:18).

The two statements are juxtaposed to tell you that just as one that lies with a beast is executed by stoning, so too a sorceress is executed by stoning.

Rabbi Yehuda said to him:

Because the two statements are juxtaposed, are we to take this one out to be executed by stoning?

Rather [we learn it as follows]: They that divine by a ghost or a familiar spirit fall into the same category as that of the sorceress.

Why then are they mentioned separately? To serve as a basis for comparison:

Just as they that divine by a ghost or familiar spirit are to be executed by stoning, so a sorceress is to be executed by stoning…

But this juxtaposition he requires for the other statement of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi.

For Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says:

If any man teaches his son Torah, the verse accounts it to him as if he had received it from Mount Chorev,

As it is stated: "And you shall make them known to your children and your children's children,"

And immediately afterwards it is written: "The day that you stood before the Lord your God at Chorev." (BT *Berakhot* 21b)

In contrast to Rabbi Yehuda, the Tanna Ben Azzai and the Amora Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi expound the juxtaposition of *parashiyot*. What is more, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi derives two things from the juxtaposition of verses in the Book of *Devarim*: one in the halakhic realm of and another in the aggadic realm.[[2]](#footnote-2)

From the discussion in BT *Berakhot* 10a, it would appear that the third-generation Amora from Eretz Israel, Rabbi Abbahu, a disciple of Rabbi Yochanan, identifies the expounding of the juxtaposition of verses as characteristic of rabbinic study of *Tanakh,* as opposed to the methodology of sectarians:[[3]](#footnote-3)

A certain sectarian said to Rabbi Abbahu:

It is written: "A psalm of David when he fled from Avshalom his son" (*Tehillim* 3:1)

And it is also written: “An epigraph of David when he fled from Shaul in the cave" (*Tehillim* 57:1).

Which event happened first?

Did not the event of Shaul happen first? Then let it be written first!

He said to him:

For you who do not derive interpretations from juxtaposition, there is a difficulty,

But for us who do derive interpretations from juxtaposition there is no difficulty.

For Rabbi Yochanan said:

How do we know from the Torah that juxtapositions (*semukhin*) are significant?

Because it is stated: "They are joined (*semukhim*) forever and ever, they are done in truth and uprightness" (*Tehillim* 111:8).

Why is the chapter of Avshalom juxtaposed to the chapter of Gog and Magog?

So that if one should say to you: Is it possible that a slave should rebel against his master [as in the Gog and Magog prophecy],

You can reply to him: Is it possible that a son should rebel against his father [as Avshalom did against King David]?

Just as this happened;

So too this [will happen]. (*Berakhot* 10a)

The question raised by the sectarian is not about two adjacent verses or two adjacent psalms, but rather it relates to the order of the appearance of two psalms whose headings attest to the fact that they do not appear in chronological order. The first, "when he fled from Avshalom his son," is from the period of Avshalom's rebellion at the end of David’s reign, whereas the second, "when he fled from Shaul in a cave," is from the time of Shaul's persecution of David years earlier, before David was king.

Rabbi Abbahu answers that the order of *Tanakh* has profound meanings beyond what first meets the eye, and therefore chronological arrangement is just one of many possible configurations. Thus, Rabbi Abbahu attributes to the sectarians a one-dimensional reading of *Tanakh*, as opposed to the exposition of the Sages that is built on a conception of the Divine wisdom that is embedded in it. This conception clearly emerges from Rabbi Yochanan's exposition of the verse: "They are joined (*semukhim*) forever and ever, they are done in truth and uprightness" (*Tehillim* 111:8), that the order of *Tanakh* as it appears before us is a precise and well-thought-out achievement.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The contents of Rabbi Yochanan's *derasha* on this verse correspond to the message that emerges from the entire psalm of which it is a part:

*Halleluyah*. I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the council of the upright, and in the congregation.
The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have delight therein.
His work is glory and majesty; and His righteousness endures forever.
He has made a memorial for His wonderful works; the Lord is gracious and full of compassion.
He has given food to them that fear Him; He will ever be mindful of His covenant.
He has declared to His people the power of His works, in giving them the heritage of the nations.
The works of His hands are truth and justice; all His precepts are sure.
They are joined forever and ever, they are done in truth and uprightness.
He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever;

Holy and awesome is His name.
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do thereafter;

His praise endures forever. (*Tehillim* 111)

The psalm is arranged in accordance with the Hebrew alphabet, each verse built of two or three clauses, each clause beginning with a different letter. The psalm describes the works of God, which find expression in five different ways in the created world: miraculous revelation in the world, providing food to all who fear His name, bringing the people of Israel to the Land of Israel, the *mitzvot* of the Torah, and redemption. The Torah's *mitzvot* appear in two verses. In the first, the *mitzvot* given by Him are presented as true and sure,[[5]](#footnote-5) whereas the second Rabbi Yochanan understands as referring to the manner in which the text of *Tanakh* is arranged. If so, this order embodies another dimension of God's works, which requires fear and wisdom — "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" and "a good understanding" — in order to reveal it.

In times when God's deeds are hidden from view, revealing His works through the exposition of the biblical verses takes center stage. Thus, Rabbi Yochanan's reading of the psalm echoes his awareness of the spiritual, and not only halakhic, value of expounding the juxtaposition of verses in a period when there are no overt miracles and there is no manifest process of redemption. In this way, he perpetuates the work of the Sages, the Tannaim and the Amoraim, who enable the entire nation to find the path to God within the words of the Torah.

The source cited above from BT *Berakhot* 10a concludes with an example of the exposition of juxtaposition from Chapters 2 and 3 in the Book of *Tehillim*:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Tehillim* 2 | *Tehillim* 3 |
| Why are the nations in an uproar? And why do the peoples mutter in vain?The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed:Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.He that sits in heaven laughs, the Lord has them in derision.Then will He speak to them in His wrath, and affright them in His sore displeasure:Truly it is I that have established My king upon Zion, My holy mountain.I will tell of the decree: the Lord said to me: You are My son, this day have I begotten you.Ask of Me, and I will give the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession.You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.Now therefore, O you kings, be wise; be admonished, you judges of the earth.Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.Do homage in purity, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when suddenly His wrath is kindled. Happy are all they that take refuge in Him. | A psalm of David, when he fled from Avshalom his son.Lord, how many are my adversaries become! Many are they that rise up against me.Many there are that say of my soul: There is no salvation for him in God. Selah.But You, O Lord, are a shield about me; my glory, He Who lifts up my head.With my voice I call to the Lord, and He answers me out of His holy mountain. Selah.I lay me down, and I sleep; I awake, for the Lord sustains me.I am not afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God; for You have smitten all my enemies upon the cheek. You have broken the teeth of the wicked.Salvation belongs to the Lord; Your blessing be upon Your people. Selah. |

*Tehillim* 2, which is called "the chapter of Gog and Magog," deals with the nations' rebellion against God and with His anointed one who will guide humanity to worship God. *Tehillim* 3 deals with the personal troubles of King David, when his son Avshalom rebels against him. The *derasha* learns about the existence of the first from that of the second; the human reality of a son's rebellion against his father, which has existed throughout history, teaches about the possibility that the nations of the world will in the end rebel against God.[[6]](#footnote-6) If so, the juxtaposition of the two psalms indicates an inner connection between the phenomena described in each of them.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The questions discussed in this source are clearly expressed in *Midrash Tehillim* 3, 2:

Another explanation: "A psalm of David, when he fled" (*Tehillim* 3:1).

This is what is stated in the verse: "Man knows not the price thereof" (*Iyov* 28:13).

Rabbi Elazar said:
The sections of the Torah were not given in order.

For had they been given in order,

Anyone who would read them would be able to resurrect the dead and to perform wonders.

Therefore, the order of the Torah has been concealed,

And it is revealed before the Holy One, blessed be He,

as it is stated: "And who, as I, can proclaim, let him declare it, and set it in order for Me" (*Yeshayahu* 44:7).

Rabbi Ya’akov said in the name of Rabbi Acha:
Why is the chapter of Gog and Magog juxtaposed to the chapter of Avshalom?

To teach you that a son’s evil toward his father is more severe than the wars of Gog and Magog.

Rather than pointing in a general manner to the Divine wisdom concealed in the manner that the *Tanakh* is arranged in one sequence, as in the Babylonian Talmud, this source emphasizes the need to conceal the original order of the Torah, so that someone who is unworthy will not be able to utilize the immense energy contained within it. The question concerning the juxtaposition of the biblical sections is raised in reverse. Instead of asking why the chapter of Avshalom is juxtaposed to the chapter of Gog and Magog, the opposite question is posed: why is the chapter of God and Magog juxtaposed to the chapter of Avshalom? In addition, the answer does not relate to a verification of the belief in the war of Gog and Magog, but rather to the greatness of the difficulty of raising a rebellious child.

### Expounding the juxtaposition of *Parashiyot* in the *Sifrei* on *Pinchas*

Rabbi Akiva's method of "expounding the juxtaposition of *parashiyot*" continues in the *derashot* of the Tannaim in the *Sifrei* on *Pinchas*." There we find four comments about connections between various matters in the *parasha*. Let us examine the four of them:

I.

The first comment appears in *Sifrei Pinchas* 133, between the matter of the apportionment of the tribal territories and the request presented by the daughters of Tzelofchad:

"Then drew near the daughters of Tzelofchad" (*Bamidbar* 27:1).

When the daughters of Tzelofchad heard that the land was to be apportioned by tribes to males and not to females,

They gathered together to take counsel.

They said: Not as the mercies of flesh and blood are the mercies of the Lord.

The mercies of flesh and blood are greater for males than for females.

Not so the mercies of He who spoke and brought the world into being.

His mercies are for males and females [equally].

His mercies are for all!

As it is written: "Who gives food to all flesh" (*Tehillim* 136:25);

"He gives to the beast its food" (*Tehillim* 147:9);

And it is stated: "The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works" (*Tehillim* 145:9).

The *derasha* in the *Sifrei* is puzzling: Do the daughters of Tzelofchad not perceive the apportionment of the tribal territories in the Land of Israel in accordance with families (i.e. the males of the families) as a Divine command?[[8]](#footnote-8) Do they not perceive the decision regarding their request in this manner? If so, what is the relevance of mercy, and the comparison drawn between the mercies of flesh and blood and the mercies of God? It may further be asked: what is the relationship between the statement in the *Sifrei* and their request as it appears in the Torah?

Let us examine the wording of the Torah at the beginning of this section:

Then drew near the daughters of Tzelofchad, the son of Chefer, the son of Gilad, the son of Makhir, the son of Menasheh, of the families of Menasheh the son of Yosef; and these are the names of his daughters: Machla, Noa, and Chogla, and Milka, and Tirtza.

And they stood before Moshe, and before Elazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, at the door of the Tent of Meeting, saying:

Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not among the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korach, but he died in his own sin; and he had no sons.

Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he had no son? Give to us a possession among the brothers of our father.

And Moshe brought their cause before the Lord. (*Bamidbar* 27:1-5)

The *derasha* in the *Sifrei* relates to the first verse, and interprets the act of drawing near — "Then drew near the daughters of Tzelofchad" — as drawing near among themselves: "When the daughters of Tzelofchad heard that the land was to be apportioned by tribes to males and not to females, **they gathered together to take counsel."** In this way, the *Sifrei* severs this verse from the verse that follows, and instead of reading the verses in one continuum, "Then drew near the daughters of Tzelofchad… And they stood before Moshe," it reads each verse as a separate occurrence.[[9]](#footnote-9) First, the daughters of Tzelofchad gather together and discuss the matter among themselves, and afterward they go and stand before Moshe.

In this way the *Sifrei* creates a new space for the Torah's story, which constitutes an intermediate zone "behind the scenes" for the activity that leads to the next stage in the story. This area has different characteristics: it is a feminine area, and the ideas voiced there are not those that would be sounded in public (among males). The *Sifrei* presents us with this area, in which the daughters of Tzelofchad express themselves, their world and their beliefs.

II.

The second connection between two adjacent passages pointed out in the *Sifrei* on *Pinchas* is between the matter of inheritance and the command to Moshe to go up to Mount Nevo:

And you shall speak to the Israelites, saying: If a man die, and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter.

And if he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers.

And if he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers.

And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his kinsman that is next to him of his family, and he shall possess it.

And it shall be to the Israelites a statute of judgment, as the Lord commanded Moshe.

And the Lord said to Moshe: Get you up onto this Avarim Mountain, and behold the land which I has given to the Israelites. And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aharon your brother was gathered. (*Bamidbar* 27:8-14)

In *Bamidbar* we find the command to go up to the Avarim Mountain. The *Sifrei* expounds the parallel verse in *Devarim*, where the mountain is referred to also as Mount Nevo:

"And the Lord spoke to Moshe that selfsame day, saying: Get you up onto this Avarim Mountain, to Mount Nevo" (*Devarim* 32:49).

This is [within] the inheritance of the Reubenites.

When Moshe entered the [prospective] inheritance of the Reubenites and the Gaddites, he rejoiced, thinking:

It seems to me that He has revoked His decree [against my entering Eretz Israel],

Whereupon he poured out supplication before God.

To what may this be likened?

To a king of flesh and blood who decreed against his son that he not enter the doors of his palace.

He came to the gate and left it behind him;

To the courtyard, and left it behind him;

To the reception room, and left it behind him.

As he was about to enter the inner chamber,

He said to him: My son, from here on, you are forbidden.

Likewise, when Moshe entered the inheritance of the Gaddites and the Reubenites, he rejoiced, thinking:

It seems to me that He has revoked His decree,

Whereupon he began to pour out supplication before God.

(*Sifrei Pinchas* 134)

Through the identification of the Avarim Mountain as Mount Nevo, the *Sifrei* establishes that this mountain is in the tribal territory of Reuven and Gad on the east bank of the Jordan. (Specifically, the Reubenites build up Nevo in *Bamidbar* 32:37-38; cf. ibid. 33:47). In this way, Moshe merits arriving in a place located within Israel's tribal territories, but not within the land of Canaan west of the Jordan. The status of the place he arrives at echoes his own situation. Moshe is standing on the threshold — on the threshold of the Land of Israel and on the threshold of parting from the people of Israel with his death — and in this twilight situation, the hope rises within him that the decree that he not enter the land is revoked. The *Sifrei* identifies this "intermediate" situation as a state of prayer, at which time a person is likely to revoke a Divine decree with his supplications.

III.

The third place where we find such a *derasha* in the *Sifrei* on *Pinchas* relates to the juxtaposition of the command to Moshe to go up to Mount Nevo to his request that God appoint a leader in his place:

And the Lord said to Moshe: Get you up onto this Avarim Mountain…

And Moshe spoke to the Lord, saying: Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation,

Who may go out before them, and who may come in before them, and who may lead them out, and who may bring them in;

That the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd. (*Bamidbar* 27:12-17)

"And Moshe spoke to the Lord, saying."

[This is mentioned] to apprise us of the virtues of the righteous,

That when they are about to die they put aside their own concerns and occupy themselves with those of the congregation.

(*Sifrei Pinchas* 138)

This short *derasha* points out the greatness of spiritual power that the righteous need to overcome "their own concerns" as they are facing death and occupy themselves with the needs of the congregation. Upon a simple reading, we might have said that it is almost self-evident that at the time of his death the concerns of a great leader should be directed toward the welfare of his people. However, the *derasha* presents us with the personal, human plane that is found even in the personality of Moshe Rabbeinu.

IV.

The fourth and final such *derasha* in the *Sifrei Pinchas* deals with the juxtaposition of Moshe's appointment of Yehoshua as leader of the people of Israel before his death to the *parasha* dealing with the sacrifices:

And Moshe did as the Lord commanded him; and he took Yehoshua, and set him before Elazar the priest, and before all the congregation.

And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord spoke by the hand of Moshe.

And the Lord spoke to Moshe, saying:

Command the Israelites, and say to them:

My food which is presented to Me for offerings made by fire, of a sweet savor to Me, shall you observe to offer to Me in its due season. (*Bamidbar* 27:22-28:2)

The *Sifrei* reconstructs a conversation relating to the death of Moshe from God's perspective:

"And the Lord spoke to Moshe, saying: Command the Israelites, and say to them:

My food which is presented to Me for offerings made by fire, of a sweet savor to Me, shall you observe to offer to Me in its due season."

Why was this stated?

Because he said: "Who may go out before them, and who may come in before them" (*Bamidbar* 27:17).

To what may this be likened?

To a king whose wife, before her death, charged him over her sons, saying:

I pray you, take care of my sons.

The king said to her: Before you charge me over my sons, charge them over me, that they not rebel against me and not act toward me in a disgraceful manner.

Thus the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe:

Before you charge Me over My sons, charge them over Me,

That they not rebel against Me and that they not exchange My honor for foreign gods.

Thus it is stated:

"For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swore to their fathers, flowing with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten their fill, and waxen fat" (*Devarim* 31:20).

Before you charge Me over My sons, charge them over Me.

The king's greatest concern at the time of his wife's imminent passing is his sons' attitude toward him after her death. Thus, the *Sifrei* expresses the significance of Moshe's death from the perspective of the nature of the people's connection to God. The sacrificial service is a way of establishing a direct long-term connection between God and the people. Here too, as in the other *derashot* relating to the juxtaposition of *parashiyot*, the *derasha* creates an intermediate space between the two *parashiyot*, which not only joins them, but also adds a dimension of transition. In this *derasha*, the transition is from the period of Moshe's leadership to the period that follows.

### Summary

It is possible to point to three characteristics common to all four *derashot* relating to the juxtaposition of *parashiyot* in *Sifrei Pinchas*:

1) All of the *derashot* point to an intermediate state that exists beyond what is related in the Torah.

2) All of them involve struggling with some difficulty.

3) In all of them, there is a dialogue or interaction.

Let us summarize our findings in the following table:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Inheritance: The daughters of Tzelofchad | Inheritance: Mountain of Avarim | Mountain of Avarim: Continuity of leadership | The death of Moshe: The sacrificial service |
| Intermediate state | Feminine space | Mount Nevo | Transition from the personal plane to the congregation | Transition from the leadership of Moshe to the leadership of Yehoshua;God's "concern" on the eve of Moshe's death |
| The difficulty | No inheritance,human mercy as opposed to God's mercy  | God's decree banning Moshe from entering the Land of Israel | Death, overcoming one's personal plane | The death of Moshe; the people of Israel will rebel against God |
| Conversation | The content of the conversation among the daughters themselves | Between Moshe and God | Between Moshe and himself | Between Moshe and God |

None of the *derashot* discussed here are related in the name of Rabbi Akiva, but they follow his exegetical approach that *semukhin* should be expounded.

This approach is further expanded in the *derashot* of the Amoraim of Eretz Israel, as we clearly see from *Shir Ha-shirim Rabba* on the verse: "Your cheeks are comely with circlets, your neck with beads (*charuzim*)" (*Shir Ha-shirim* 1:10):

Rabbi Levi said in the name of Rabbi Chama be-Rabbi Chanina:

These are the sections of the Torah:

They are strung together [*charuzot*], and draw each other, and skip from one to the other, and are similar to each other, and are close to each other.

Rabbi Menachama said: Like this [verse], as it is written: "To these the land shall be divided" (*Bamidbar* 26:53).

What is written there? "Then drew near the daughters of Tzelofchad" (*Bamidbar* 27:1).

"The daughters of Tzelofchad speak right" (*Bamidbar* 27:7).

And it is written afterwards: "Get you up onto this Avarim Mountain" (*Bamidbar* 27:12).

What is the connection between the one and the other?

When the land was divided up,

The daughters of Tzelofchad went to Moshe to take their portion,

And Moshe removed himself from their cause.

This is what is written: "And Moshe brought their cause before the Lord" (*Bamidbar* 27:5).

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him:

Moshe, you remove yourself from their cause, but you do not remove yourself from Me?

"Get you up onto this Avarim Mountain."

He said to Him:

Master of the universe, seeing that You wish to remove me from the world,

Make known to me the leaders that you will stand over Israel.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him:

Moshe, regarding my children you need a commandment, and you command me about My work?

Before you command Me about My children, command My children about Me.

This is what is written: "Command the Israelites, and say to them" (*Bamidbar* 28:2).

(*Shir Ha-shirim Rabba* 1, 3)

This *derasha* strings together not only the adjacent *parashiyot* in *Parashat Pinchas,* but rather all of its *parashiyot* one to the other, and the *derasha* of the *Sifrei* which appears at the end ( "before you command Me about My children") is woven into the *derashot* of the Amoraim. In this way, the *parashiyot* of the Torah "are strung together, and draw each other, and skip from one to the other, and are similar to each other, and are close to each other." Rabbi Akiva's teaching seems to serve as the foundation for a stream of Midrashic creativity that reveals the work of God in the stories of the Torah as they are written.

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. Along this line of thinking, it may be pointed out that certain Hebrew roots denote both geographical and spiritual closeness, e.g., *shin-kaf-nun* and *kuf-reish-bet.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Even according to Rabbi Yehuda, the juxtaposition of *parashiyot* is expounded in the Book of *Devarim*, as Rav Yosef explicitly states in BT *Yevamot* 4a. Based on the question appearing in the Babylonian Talmud, "Because the two statements are juxtaposed, are we to take this one out to be executed by stoning?" a question may be raised regarding Rabbi Yehuda's position about expounding the juxtaposition of *parashiyot* in aggadic matters. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The *minim* (translated here as "sectarians") are generally identified with the early Christians. This dialogue is dated to the third century. Rabbi Abbahu resided in Caesarea, which at the time was a mixed city of Jews and non-Jews of various faiths. During this period, Caesarea was also the home of the Church Father, Origen. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See the Maharsha, *Chiddushei Aggadot* ad loc.: "And he said: Do not criticize [*derashot*] based on the juxtaposition of *parashiyot* such as this, for if you examine them closely, they are always arranged in truth and uprightness." [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. *Tehillim* 19:8-10:

The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true, they are righteous altogether. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In the modern world that emerges from the Enlightenment and the abandonment of religion, the reality of humanity's rebellion against God is a tangible historical fact, as opposed to the ancient and medieval world, in which faith in God takes many forms. The Babylonian Talmud may point to an inner point shared by both. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The *derasha* may relate to the desire to breach the family order and the collective desire to break free from God as stemming from the same root in the human soul. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. And the Lord spoke to Moshe, saying: To these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. To the greater you shall give the greater inheritance, and to the fewer you shall give the lesser inheritance; to each one according to those that were numbered of it shall its inheritance be given. Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot; according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. (*Bamidbar* 26:52-55). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The root *kuf-reish-bet* appears in the Torah in relation to something else: *kareiv el* – "Every one that comes near, that comes near to (*ha-kareiv el*)the tabernacle of the Lord, is to die; shall we wholly perish?" (*Bamidbar* 17:28); *kareiv et —* "Bring the tribe of Levi near )*hakreiv et*(, and set them before Aharon the priest, that they may minister to him" (*Bamidbar* 3:6). In the verse before us, the act of drawing near stands by itself, and the *Sifrei* fills in what is missing. This verb appears throughout the Book of *Bamidbar* in situations in which a person or group takes an initiative with respect to authority, or such authority is bestowed upon him or it. This is true regarding the tribe of Levi (*Bamidbar* 3:5-10; 18:2-7); Korach (*Bamidbar* 16:5-10); the impure people who want to bring the paschal offering (*Bamidbar* 9:6-7); and the daughters of Tzelofchad here. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)