

# PROPHETS

## JOSHUA

We can start our analysis of Joshua by picking up the topic that we discussed in the section on Leviticus and Numbers dealing with the terminology used to refer to someone who is not an Israelite by birth but comes to belong to the tribe. Once again we have a reference in chapter 6:25:

“Only Rahav the harlot and her father’s family were spared by Joshua, along with all that belonged to her, and she dwelt among the Israelites-as is still the case. For she had hidden the messengers that Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.”

The terminology used here is similar to that used to describe the blasphemer in Leviticus 24 and the other examples which you can find under the heading “Leviticus & Numbers” on the Torah page of this site. The Hebrew in this case is “b-kerev Israel” meaning near Israel. What is important is that this terminology is distinct from that used when referring to an Israelite. When identifying an Israelite, it is done by simply giving the name and “son of” someone and sometimes their tribal designation. But when referring to someone not born into the tribe, the phrases “dwell among”, “near” or “with” is used. We know that Rahav is not an Israelite but came to belong to them.

## JUDGES

There are many places in the Prophets and all the biblical writings where the phrase “God of our fathers” or something similar is used and many times when God invokes the covenant “made with your fathers.” I cited many of these instances in my analysis of the Torah. However, I’ll not continue to cite each one, as that would be tedious.

The story of Abimelech in Chapter 9 presents an interesting study in the social structure of a polygamous society, such as the Israelite community was at that time, and the relations between half-siblings. The current leader of Israel, Gideon or Jerubbaal, has died leaving 70 sons. In addition to these 70 “legitimate” sons by his wives, he has a son, Abimelech, by a concubine. This is the only son born to this concubine, apparently. Abimelech has decided that he wants to be the new leader of Israel. The story starts:

“Abimelech son of Jerubaal went to his mother’s brothers in Shechem and spoke to them and to the whole clan of his mother’s family. He said, ‘Put this question to all the citizens of Shechem: Which is better for you, to be ruled by seventy men-by all the sons

of Jerubbaal-or to be ruled by one man? And remember, I am your own flesh and blood.’ His mother’s brothers said all this in his behalf to all the citizen’s of Shechem, and they were won over to Abimelech; for they thought, ‘He is our kinsman.’ They gave him seventy shekels from the temple of Baal-berith; and with this Abimelech hired some worthless and reckless fellows, and they followed him. Then he went to his father’s house in Ophrah and killed his brothers, the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men on one stone. Only Jotham, the youngest son of Jerubbaal, survived, because he went into hiding.”

In the interest of efficiency, I’ll summarize the body of the story. Abimelech is proclaimed king. Then the surviving brother, Jotham, calls out to the people, telling them Abimelech’s power has been misbegotten and that they themselves have acted dishonorably toward the memory of his father, Jerubbaal, who had protected them and led them well. War breaks out and the story ends thus:

“But a woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech’s head and cracked his skull. He immediately cried out to his attendant, his arms-bearer, ‘Draw your dagger and finish me off, that they may not say of me, ‘A woman killed him!’ So his attendant stabbed him, and he died. When the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, everyone went home. Thus God repaid Abimelech for the evil he had done to his father by slaying his seventy brothers; and God likewise repaid the men of Shechem for all their wickedness. And so the curse of Jotham son Jerubbaal was fulfilled upon them.”

This story illustrates the overwhelming importance of the father’s bloodline. Abimelech was trying to please and unite with his mother’s family and had no value for the blood relation with his half-brothers. He was punished for this. Once again, the paternal relations are the predominant relations in the eyes of God.

Another passage worth looking at is chapter 12:8-10:

“After him, Ibzan of Bethlehem led Israel. He had thirty sons, and he married off thirty daughters outside the clan and brought in thirty girls from outside the clan for his sons. He led Israel seven years. Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem.”

It could be that the meaning of “outside the clan” is to another clan of Israel, or it could be to an outside clan, this isn’t clear. Nevertheless, it makes clear that the social structure was such that when a woman was married, she left her clan and became a part of her husband’s.

Judges also contains the story of Samson and Delila. While this certainly is a very bad example of an inter-marriage, there it is, nevertheless.

## **1 & 2 SAMUEL**

1 Samuel introduces us to one of the most famous of biblical characters, King David. Who David’s mother is is never mentioned. His father was Jesse, however the identity of his mother is never revealed. This reiterates

the fact that one's identity was determined by one's father.

Another mention of an apparent intermarriage is in chapter 18:19:

“But at the time that Merab, daughter of Saul, should have been given to David, she was given in marriage to Adriel the Meholathite.”

A Meholathite, as far as I have been able to discern, is not an Israelite tribe. This woman would have then gone to live in her husband's territory.

2 Samuel continues the story of David's Kingship over Israel. He had several wives and one of them was not an Israelite. His sons born to him in Hebron are listed in chapter 3:3:

“...the third was Absalom son of Maacah, daughter of King Talmai of Geshur;...”

In chapter 11, the character of Bathsheeba is introduced. Her husband at the time that David sees her is “Uriah the Hittite.” The Hittites are one of the tribes which are prohibited for the Israelites to marry in Deuteronomy 7. This does not indicate, however, as the Orthodox assert, that this prohibition only applies to male Israelites. Deut. 7 states verbatim that Israelite women are not suppose to marry into these tribes. Furthermore, there are many examples of Israelite men marrying them and the status of the children are not questioned. There is no mention of any offspring from Bathsheeba and the Hittite. At any rate, she becomes David's wife and bears Solomon.

The next important character we come across without an Israelite mother is Tamar. Tamar appears in chapter 13:1-4:

“This happened sometime afterward: Absalom son of David had a beautiful sister named Tamar, and Amnon son of David became infatuated with her. Amnon was so distraught because of his [half (the meaning of the hebrew is uncertain)]-sister Tamar that he became sick; for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. Amnon had a friend named Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimah; Jonadab was a very clever man. He asked him, ‘ Why are you so dejected, O prince, morning after morning? Tell me! ‘ Amnon replied, ‘ I am in love with Tamar, the sister of my brother Absalom! ‘ “

We have already stated that Absalom's mother was not an Israelite, but from a country called Geshur. In this story Tamar is described as the full sister of Absalom and therefore her mother was also not an Israelite. Tamar is, of course one of the most common of Jewish names.

## 1 & 2 KINGS

1 Kings chronicles the reign of King Solomon. He starts off his reign with a BANG by marrying the daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt and bringing her to live with him in Jerusalem. The Egyptians are one of the

“acceptable” foreign tribes listed in Deuteronomy.

In chapter 4 one of Solomon’s twelve prefects, Ben-abinadab, is listed as being married to Solomon’s daughter, Taphath. At this point, we don’t know of any other wife of Solomon other than the Egyptian, so we must assume that she is the mother. So much for matrilineal descent!

In chapter 5 we are introduced to the character of King Hiram of Tyre. Later in chapter 7:14 he is described as the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali and a Tyrian coppersmith. He is clearly not considered an Israelite as he is the King of Tyre, which is not in the Israelite’s territory ( as the IDF could attest to ). He is very friendly with Solomon and helps him build the temple. Solomon in turns gives him some small lands near Tyre in appreciation which Hiram doesn’t care for and apparently gives back. So, I’m sorry to say to you Orthodox Jews who may be reading, despite his Israelite mother, he is most definitely not an Israelite.

Solomon has a enjoyed a great reign, but in chapter 11:1-2 goes astray:

“King Solomon loved many foreign women in addition to Pharaoh’s daughter-Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Phoenician, and Hittite women, from the nations of which the Lord had said to the Israelites, ‘ None of you shall join them and none of them shall join you, lest they turn your heart away to follow their gods.’ Such Solomon clung to and loved.”

At this point God becomes displeased with him. After his death, Israel is again divided into two kingdoms, Judah and Israel. Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, succeeds him. His mother is mentioned in 14:21 as Naamah the Ammonitess, not an Israelite. A servant of Solomon’s of the tribe of Ephraim, named Jeroboam, becomes the King over the territory of Israel, comprising 10 tribes of the Israelites. It is prophesied at this point that these dynasties will die out due to their practice of idol worship, going against the God of the Israelites. Although, it is stated that a small line coming from David will be saved to preserve the memory of David.

As 1 Kings flows into 2 Kings, the narrative turns into a mind-numbing labyrinth dictating the lines of royal succession. In the interest of brevity, I will summarize. Basically, for many generations the kings of Israel and Judah do what is displeasing to the Lord, most of all idolatry. The kings sometimes marry Israelite women, sometimes not and sometimes they are overthrown from within and a new dynasty established. In general, God is less displeased with the kings of Judah and the kings of Judah marry Israelite women more often than the Israelite kings. It would be fair to argue then, at this point, that, if God were less angry at the kings of Judah and they intermarried less than the kings of Israel, doesn’t that prove that intermarrying for men has been prohibited? Well, there is no question that intermarrying is something prohibited to the Israelites, but this has nothing to do with the status of the children produced from such unions. The maternal line of descent in the House of David has already been broken with Rehoboam, who succeeds Solomon and whose mother was not an Israelite. All successive generations are still Israelites. If they weren’t then God wouldn’t be angry with them, because they would not be under any obligation to fulfill the commandments of the Israelite God. He’s angry at them because they ARE Israelites. Also, at this point we must remember Deuteronomy 17:15 which tells the Israelites that they cannot have foreigners as kings.

In 2 Kings, chapter 5, another reference to a union between an Israelite woman and non-Israelite man. The story begins:

“Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was important to his lord and high in his favor, for through him the Lord had granted victory to Aram. But the man, though a great

warrior, was a leper. Once, when the Arameans were out raiding, they carried off a young girl from the land of Israel, and she became an attendant to Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, 'I wish Master could come before the prophet in Samaria; he could cure him of his leprosy.' [Naaman] went and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. And the king of Aram said, 'Go to the king of Israel, and I will send along a letter.'

"Attendant" means that she was also a concubine to her master, of course. The practice of "carrying off" women is common at this time and we have seen the Israelites do this also. The woman has to go live with whatever man is her master or husband. This is simply the social custom and applies to all women. Naaman does go to Israel, is cured and proclaims, "Now I know that there is no God in the whole world except in Israel!..." This is not to be taken as a sort of "conversion" though. As he does return to his land and tells the prophet who has cured him to forgive him for continuing to worship in the temple of Rimmon, which he must continue to do.

As 2 Kings concludes, the Israelites are gradually taken over by the Assyrians and taken out of their homeland to live in territories of Assyria. The territory of Israel falls first. Judah holds out for a while, but eventually falls to the Assyrians and is exiled, although it is stated in 25:12:

"But some of the poorest in the land were left by the chief of the guards, to be vinedressers and field hands."

## ISAIAH

The book of Isaiah is a beautiful piece of poetry that has no real references to our topic. There are a couple of passages in chapter 11 which confirm to us the dominance of the male line. Verse 1 states:

"But a shoot shall grow out of the stump of Jesse,  
A twig shall sprout from his stock."

And verse 10 goes on:

"In that day,  
The stock of Jesse that has remained standing  
Shall become a standard to peoples-  
Nations shall seek his counsel

And his abode shall be honored.”

Note that it is the descendents of Jesse, not Bathsheba or any woman, but the male line. Chapter 58:14 reads:

“...I will set you astride the heights of the earth,  
And let you enjoy the heritage of your father Jacob-”

Not the heritage of your mother, but your father.

## **JEREMIAH & EZEKIEL**

The prophet Jeremiah tells the Israelites when they are in exile in Babylon, Chapter 16:2-4:

“You are not to marry and not to have sons and daughters in this place. For thus said the Lord concerning any sons and daughters that may be born in this place, and concerning the mothers who bear them, and concerning the fathers who beget them in this land: They shall die gruesome deaths...”

This is important because it reiterates that this command is equal for both men and women. The Hebrew is explicit in referring to both sexes. The Talmudic discourse on maternal lineage tries to draw the conclusion that it applies differently to men and women, but we see here and in other passages that is not the case.

There is some discussion of the last kings of Judah which I feel is important to mention. In the books of Kings we discussed the anger of God towards the kings of both Israel and Judah, but that the anger was somewhat greater against the kings of Israel. The kings of Israel had married non-Israelites more often than the kings of Judah and that might lead one who was so inclined to interpret that as a wrath against the intermarriage. However, the last king of Judah is mentioned in Jeremiah:

“Thus said the Lord:  
Record this man as without succession,  
One who shall never be found acceptable;  
For no man of his offspring shall be accepted  
to sit on the throne of David  
And to rule again in Judah.”

This last king, Jehoiakin, had an Israelite mother, Nehushta daughter of Elnatan of Jerusalem, no less. So the issue of intermarriage was not what turned God against the kings of Israel and Judah, but their behavior.

Another citation I would like to make concerns our friend Hiram, King of Tyre, whom we met in chapter 5 of Kings 1. Tyre is listed several times in Jeremiah and Ezekial as a separate nation from the Israelites and Judeans. That would be in chapter 25:22 and 27:3 of Jeremiah and chapters 26, 27 and 28 of Ezekial, which contain a dirge for Tyre. Chapter 28:10 says that the Tyreans will die “The death of the uncircumcised.” King Hiram of Tyre, if we remember, had an Israelite mother but a Tyrean father, and was decidedly NOT an Israelite

as he was the king of another nation.

In continuation, I would like to cite a poetic analogy made in chapter 31. God speaks through His prophet about his intention of one day returning the Israelites to their homeland and former splendor. Verse 9 states:

“For I am ever a Father to Israel,  
Ephraim is my first-born.”  
And continues in verses 18-20:  
“I can hear Ephraim lamenting:  
You have chastised me, and I am chastised  
Like a calf that has been broken.  
Receive me back, let me return,  
For you, O Lord, are my God.  
Now that I have turned back, I am filled with remorse;  
Now that I am made aware, I strike my thigh.  
I am ashamed and humiliated,  
For I bear the disgrace of my youth.

Truly Ephraim is a dear son to Me,  
A child that is dandled!  
Whenever I have turned against him,  
My thoughts would dwell on him still.  
That is why My heart yearns for him;  
I will receive him back in love  
-declares the Lord.”

Ephraim had an Egyptian mother but is, nevertheless, the symbol of the Israelite people.

Lastly, towards the end of Ezekial, in chapter 47:21-23, instructions are given to the Israelites regarding their eventual return to Israel and Judah and how to settle the land:

“This land you shall divide for yourselves among the tribes of Israel. You shall allot it as a heritage for yourselves and for the strangers who reside among you, who have begotten children among you. You shall treat them as Israelite citizens; they shall receive allotments along with you among the tribes of Israel. You shall give the stranger an allotment within the tribe where he resides- declares the Lord.”

The pronoun “you” has both a masculine and feminine form in Hebrew, in both its singular and plural form. The Hebrew form used in these verses is the plural masculine form. The grammatical rule in Hebrew is that when referring to a group of mixedgender, the masculine form is always used, even where there is only one male and many females. There is no gender neutral word. Thus, this can be translated either as “you” referring to only males or both to females and males. In either case, it is quite clear here that males have been commanded to include their children they have sired with non-Israelite women, as well as the mothers of those children as part of their tribe. Whether the Israelite women are required to do the same is open to debate, as the form of the pronoun “you” used here could include females or not. This eradicates any argument that anyone could try to make that men who have children with non-Israelite women are not suppose to include these children within the

Israelite tribe. Point, match, game.

I would like to mention that the Hebrew word used here to refer to the foreigners who would come back with the Israelites is “b-toch” meaning “among.” This is the same word that was used to describe the blasphemer in Leviticus who had an Israelite mother and Egyptian father who some cite as evidence of matrilineal descent. If you view my discussion of this passage on the “Torah” page under the heading “Leviticus & Numbers” you can see how I point out that this word is only used to describe non-native Israelites, thus refuting the argument that this blasphemer is evidence of the Jews use of matrilineal descent.

One last point about the Hebrew in these verses that I would like to make regards the word “stranger.” The Hebrew word used is “ger” which in modern Hebrew means convert. However, this is not the meaning in biblical Hebrew. The word means stranger or sojourner and is used, in addition to referring to non-Israelites living among Israelites, to describe the Israelites when they were living in Egypt. They were definitely not converts to the Egyptian religion at that time and so it is clear that this is not the meaning of the word. It can also be found in Psalms in a literary personification of the Israelites. There was no such thing as a conversion as we understand it today. The only ritual required to gain membership into the Israelite community was circumcision for males. There was no such thing as a mikva conversion and females were not required to do anything. If they were taken possession of by an Israelite then they belonged to him, period.

## **MINOR PROPHETS**

The minor prophets are a series of short writings. They are:

- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
  
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi

I did not find anything of substantive relevance to our topic in these writings.