

Parashat Vayishlach: Timna's Rejection

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Bereishit 36:22	
וַיְהִיו בְּנֵי-לוֹטָן חֹרִי וְהִמָּם וְאָחוֹת לוֹטָן תִּמְנָע:	The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna.

1. Timna Tries to Convert

Bavli Sanhedrin 99b	
אָמַר: וְכִי לֹא הָיָה לוֹ לְמֹשֶׁה לְכַתּוֹב אֶלָּא "וְאָחוֹת לוֹטָן תִּמְנָע", "וְתִמְנָע הָיְתָה פִּילְגֶּשׁ לְאֵלִיפָז", "וַיֵּלֶךְ רְאוּבֵן בְּיָמֵי קִצִּיר חֲטִים וַיִּמָּצֵא דוּדָאִים בַּשָּׂדֶה"? וַיֵּצֵאָה בֵּת קוֹל וְאָמְרָהּ לוֹ: "תֵּשֶׁב בְּאֶחֱיָךְ תְּדַבֵּר בְּבֶן אִמְךָ תִּתֵּן דָּפִי. אֵלֶּה עֲשִׂיתָ וְהִחֲרַשְׁתִּי דְּמִית הָיִיתָ אֶהְיֶה כְּמוֹךָ אוֹכִיחְךָ וְאֶעֱרָכָה לְעֵינֶיךָ..."	Manasseh said: But did Moses need to write only insignificant matters that teach nothing, for example: "And Lotan's sister was Timna" (Genesis 36:22), or: "And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz, son of Esau" (Genesis 36:12), or: "And Reuben went in the days of the wheat harvest and found <i>duda'im</i> in the field" (Genesis 30:14)? A Divine Voice emerged and said to him: "You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son. These things you have done, and should I have kept silence, you would imagine that I was like you, but I will reprove you, and set the matter before your eyes" (Psalms 50:20–21). The verses in the Torah are not empty matters, with regard to which you can decide how they are practically relevant...
דָּעָתָן עָלֶיהָ, מִיָּהֶת, "אָחוֹת לוֹטָן תִּמְנָע" מֵאִי הִיא? תִּמְנָע בֵּת מְלָכִים הָיְתָה, דְּכָתִיב: "אֵלֹהִי לוֹטָן", "אֵלֹהִי תִמְנָע", וְכָל אֵלֹהִי – מְלָכוּתָא בְּלֹא תִּגְמָא הִיא.	Manasseh began by mocking a few verses and ultimately violated the entire Torah. The Gemara asks: With regard to that verse that we came to discuss, in any event, what is the significance of the phrase in the verse "And Lotan's sister was Timna"? The Gemara explains: Timna was the daughter of kings, as it is written: "The chief of Lotan" (Genesis 36:29), and: "The chief of Timna" (Genesis 36:40), and each chief is a member of a monarchy, albeit without a crown. That is why they are called chief and not king.
בְּעֵינֵי לְאִיגִיּוֹרֵי. בְּאִתָּהּ אֶצֶל אַבְרָהָם, יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, וְלֹא קִבְּלוּהָ. הִלְכָה וְהָיְתָה פִּילְגֶּשׁ לְאֵלִיפָז בֶּן עֵשָׂו. אָמְרָהּ: מוֹטֵב תִּהְיֶה שְׂפָחָה לְאוֹמָהּ זוֹ וְלֹא תִּהְיֶה גְבִירָה לְאוֹמָה אֲחֵרָת. נִפְקָ מִיָּנָה עַמְלֵק, דְּצִעֲרִינָהּ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל. מֵאִי טַעְמָא? דְּלֹא אִיבְעִי לָהּ לְרַחֲמֶיהָ.	Timna sought to convert. She came before Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and they did not accept her. She went and became a concubine of Eliphaz, son of Esau, and said, referring to herself: It is preferable that she will be a maidservant for this nation, and she will not be a noblewoman for another nation. Ultimately, Amalek, son of Eliphaz, emerged from her, and that tribe afflicted the Jewish people. What is the reason that the Jewish people

¹ All translations are from Sefaria, unless otherwise noted.

	were punished by suffering at the hand of Amalek? It is due to the fact that they should not have rejected her when she sought to convert. Therefore, the verse is significant.
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Rashi on Bavli Sanhedrin 99b	
לְרַחֵקָהּ: מִתַּחַת כַּנְפֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם שֶׁהִיא לָהֶם לְגִירָה:	"To distance her": from under the wings of the divine presence, as they should have converted her.

2. Timna and Amalek

Ein Yaakov on Sanhedrin 11:57	
<p>ת"ר (במדבר טו ל) והנפש אשר תעשה ביד רמה זה מנשה בן חזקיה שהיה יושב ודורש בהגדות של דפי אמר וכי לא היה לו למשה לכתב אלא (בראשית לו כב) ואחות לוטן תמנע ותמנע היתה פלגש לאליפז (שם ל יד) וילך ראובן בימי קציר חטים וימצא דודאים בשדה יצתה בת קול ואמרה לה (תהלים נ כ) תשב באחיו תדבר בן אמך תתן דפי אלה עשית והחרשתי דמית היות אהיה כמוך וגו' ועליו מפרש בקבלה (ישעיה ה יח) הוי משכי העון בחבלי השוא וכעבות העגלה חטאה מאי כעבות העגלה א"ר אסי יצר הרע בתחלה דומה לחוט של בקיאל ולסוף דומה לעבות העגלה. דאתאן עלה מיהא אחות לוטן תמנע מאי היא תמנע בת מלכים הואי דכתיב (בראשית לו כט) אלוף לוטן אלוף תמנע וכל אלוף מלכותא בלא תאגא היא בעיא לאגיורי באתה אצל אברהם יצחק ויעקב ולא קבלוה הלכה והיתה פלגש לאליפז בן עשו אמרה מוטב תהא שפחה לאמה זו ולא תהא גבירה לאמה אחרת נפק מנה עמלק דצערניהו לישראל מ"ט דלא אבעי להו לרחקה.</p>	<p>Our Rabbis were taught: (Num. 15, 30) "But the person that doth aught with a high hand; this refers to Menasseh b. Hezekiah who sat and lectured on topics with the object of fault-finding," saying, "Could not Moses have found something better than (Gen. 36, 22) "And Lotan's sister was Timna, or, (lb.) she was a concubine of Eliphaz b. Esau," or that of (lb. 13, 14) "And Reuben went in the days of the wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field." A heavenly voice was then heard saying (Ps. 50, 20) "Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother, against thy own mother's sons thou utterest slander, etc." And to him also applies the words of tradition: (Is. 5, 18) Wee unto those that draw iniquity with the cords of falsehood, and as with a wagon-rope, sinfulnesses." What does a wagon-rope mean? A. Assi said: "In the beginning, the evil inclination appears as thin as the thread of a spider's web; and finally he becomes as thick as a wagon rope." Since we have already arrived at it, let us see what does And Lotan's sister was Timna really mean. Timna was a princess, as it is written (Gen. 36, 40) Duke Timna, and dukedom means a kingdom without a crown. She desired to become a proselyte, but Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not accept her. And she went and became the concubine of Eliphaz b. Esau, saying it is better to be a servant in this nation than to be a princess of another. And her offspring was Amalek, who troubled Israel as a punishment to their parents, who ought not to have driven her away.</p>

3. When People Are Rejected

David Brooks, "We Are the Most Rejected Generation," <i>The New York Times</i> (May 2025)
<p>People who have suffered rejections become, on average, more aggressive, less empathetic, have a harder time with self-control. After all, rejection threatens some of our core psychic needs — for belonging, for agency, for competence. People need to feel that they can control their lives, that they are good at performing important tasks, that they are welcomed by others. Constant rejection tells them: No. No. No. Rejection reinforces the dark world mentality that is so prevalent in our culture — the idea that the world is menacing and that people and institutions are untrustworthy.</p>