

Fundamental Issues in the Study of *Tanakh*  
By Rav Amnon Bazak

**Shiur #3b:**  
**Verses Added to the Torah at a Later Date:**  
**The Phenomenon and Its Ramifications (continued)**

Let us examine three instances where Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid attributes verses of the Torah to the Men of the Great Assembly.<sup>[1]</sup>

1. We know that Etzion Gever is situated in the land of Edom (as we are told concerning Shlomo, II *Divrei Ha-yamim* 8:17), and the Children of Israel were not permitted to enter the land of Edom (*Devarim* 2:8). How, then, asks Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid (in his commentary on *Devarim* 2), could be it that the Children of Israel reached Etzion Gever during their travels (*Bamidbar* 33:35)? His solution is that Etzion Gever fell into the hands of Edom only at a later stage, with the marriage of Meheitavel, daughter of Matred, to the king of Edom:

"And he was succeeded by Hadar, and the name of his city was Pa'u, and the name of his wife was Meheitavel, daughter of Matred, daughter of Mei Zahav." (*Bereishit* 36:39)

Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid continues:

"But in the days of Shlomo this had already happened; therefore it (i.e., the verse in *Bereishit*) was written into the *Chumash* in the days of the Great Assembly, so that you will not wonder how Etzion Gever came to belong to Edom, as is written in *Divrei Ha-yamim*."

Therefore, at the time of Israel's travels in the wilderness Etzion Gever was in an area in which they were permitted to travel (i.e., it did not yet belong to Edom). From his words here, it would seem that the entire unit regarding the kings of Edom in *Bereishit* ch. 36 was added at a later stage.<sup>[2]</sup>

It should be pointed out that Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid's approach is far more extreme than the approach of Ibn Ezra discussed in the previous *shiur*. Where the latter suggested that certain verses which themselves seemed out of context were later additions, Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid answers questions on a verse in one book (in our case *Bamidbar*), by positing that verses in another book (*Bereishit* in our case), which until now had presented no problems whatsoever, are in fact later additions.

2. Concerning the verse that describes Yaakov's blessing to Efraim and Menashe: "And he blessed them on that day, saying: 'With you Israel will bless, saying: May God make you like Efraim and Menashe' - and he set Efraim before Menashe" (*Bereishit* 48:20), R. Moshe, son of Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid, wrote:

"My father's explanation [of 'and he set Efraim before Menashe'] was that this is said not of Yaakov, but rather of Moshe: Moshe placed Efraim as the leader of one camp, because Yaakov had said, 'His younger brother will be greater than him.' And Yehoshua wrote this, or the Men of the Great Assembly."

This is a startling interpretation even on the literal level of the text, and it certainly comes as a surprise that Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid sees fit to suggest - specifically concerning this verse, which presents no difficulty in and of itself - that it was a later addition.<sup>[3]</sup>

3. There is an even more startling assertion elsewhere in his commentary, according to which not only were later sections added to the Torah, but sections were also removed. Thus, for example, he writes explicitly concerning the Song of the Well ([Bamidbar 21](#)):

"Then Israel sang this song' – my father and teacher explained this as a reference to the Great *Hallel* ([Tehillim 136](#)) which followed their deliverance from Sichon and Og, and the crossing of Wadi Arnon. Then this song [i.e., psalm 136] was created, and it was [originally] written in the *Chumash*, until David came and removed Moshe's psalm, and included it in *Tehillim*."

The publication of this work aroused great controversy, and some have argued that such things could not possibly have been written by Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid and that they are therefore a forgery.<sup>[4]</sup>

It turns out, however, that the same views are already cited in another work from the Middle Ages, written by Rabbi Menachem Tzioni ben Meir,<sup>[5]</sup> who offers the same commentary concerning the Song of the Well, in the name of Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid. Owing to the surrounding controversy, this book, too, was subject to polemic and debate.<sup>[6]</sup> As a result of this controversy, the first edition of Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid's commentary, from which the above quotations were taken, was set aside; a new edition appeared with most of the controversial excerpts removed.<sup>[7]</sup> The prevailing view among academic scholars is that this is indeed a genuine commentary, and not a forgery. This view is based, *inter alia*, on sources that we shall examine later on.

The approach maintaining that some verses of the Torah were added at a later stage is continued in the writing of a student of Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid, R. Shlomo ben Shmuel.<sup>[8]</sup> As part of his studies on the commentary of Ibn Ezra, R. Shlomo addresses Ibn Ezra's understanding of the word "*Azazel*," which had been expressed as follows:

"If you could understand the secret that lies behind the word '*Azazel*,' you would understand its secret and the secret of its name, for it has parallels in the Torah."

R. Shlomo understood Ibn Ezra's intention here as a hint that this word, too, belongs to the "secret of the twelve." Ibn Ezra, he explained, knew that the word "Azazel" means "wilderness" in Aramaic.<sup>[9]</sup> Therefore, R. Shlomo continued:<sup>[10]</sup>

"Do not be surprised at the fact that he [Moshe] wrote this Aramaic word in the Torah, for it was not he who wrote this verse. And this is the secret that is referred to here – that it was not Moshe who wrote this verse, but rather someone else. And do not be surprised at what I say – that 'someone else wrote it,' for there are other such instances in the Torah. In other words, there are many verses which were not said by Moshe...."<sup>[11]</sup>

The most startling aspect of these latter sources is that while Ibn Ezra wrote his view in very cautious and concealed language, the pietists in Germany expressed the same ideas quite openly and explicitly, and even in places where suggesting such interpretations was not the only way of addressing a textual problem.<sup>[12]</sup> We may therefore state that the assertion that there are later verses in the Torah, based on an objective look at the simple, literal text, has support in the view of some medieval commentators, who did not regard this view as representing any contradiction or denial of faith in the Divine origin of the Torah.

To the verses discussed above we might add several more which seem to feature the same phenomenon alluded to by Ibn Ezra, where the language testifies to the verse having been added after Moshe's time – and in which this conclusion is far more compelling than it seems to be in the verses discussed by the sages of Germany. As an example, we might point to Moshe's words to the nation in the first speech in the book of *Devarim*, which appear to be suddenly interrupted by a parenthetical statement:

"And God said to me: Do not harass Moav, nor goad them into battle, for I shall not give you their land for a possession, since I have given Ar to the children of Lot as a possession. (The Emim had previously lived there – a great and populous and tall people, like the Anakim; they too were considered Refa'im, as were the Anakim, but the Moavim called them 'Emim.' The Chorim had also previously dwelled in Se'ir, but the children of Esav succeeded them, and annihilated them from before them, and dwelled there in their stead – as the Children of Israel did to the land of their possession, which God gave to them.)" ([Devarim 2:9-12](#))

According to Ramban, verses 10-12 do indeed interrupt God's message to Moshe, and their role is to explain why the Children of Israel will not receive the inheritance of the children of Lot and the children of Edom: although these areas belong to the Refaim and the Anakim, who were conquered by Avraham, they are nevertheless destined to belong to the children of Lot and of Esav, owing to their status as descendants of Avraham. For this reason, the children of Esav merit to conquer the Chorim in Se'ir. For the purposes of our discussion, the important point here is to be found at the end of verse 12, according to which the children of Esav conquered the Chorim "as the Children of Israel did [past tense] to the land of their possession, which

God gave to them." On the level of the plain meaning of the text, this is a most surprising statement, since at the time of Moshe's speech, Israel had not yet entered – much less conquered – the land.

The commentators offer different explanations: according to Ramban, this was written as a forecast of future events. Even Ibn Ezra offers a standard interpretation, suggesting that the text means to compare the conquest by the children of Esav to the conquest by the Children of Israel of the areas to the east of the Jordan, which had already been accomplished. However, if we adopt the same logic that Ibn Ezra employs elsewhere, it is not unreasonable to posit that here too these verses might represent a later addition.<sup>[13]</sup>

(to be continued)

Translated by Kaeren Fish

### **Appendix – The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Debate Surrounding the Authenticity of the Commentary of Rabbi Yehuda He-Chassid and Sefer HaTzioni**

The issue was put to a number of authorities, among them Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt"l*. In a letter dated 28 Adar I 5736 (*Iggerot Moshe*, Yoreh De'ah, part III, siman 114) he expressed vehement opposition to the publication of the book, and argued that it was clearly a forgery, since Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid could not have written such things. *Inter alia*, he writes:

"One who suggests that Moshe wrote even a single letter on his own initiative, denies the Torah, and is included in the category of 'he has despised God's word.' And all the more so one who says that there is some matter which was written not even by Moshe, but rather by others, or that others came and removed some matter from the Torah – they deny the Torah and are included in the category of 'he has despised God's word.'"

However, here too we might argue that a careful look at what is actually written in this commentary reveals no hint of the idea that Yehoshua, David or even the Men of the Great Assembly wrote these things on their own initiative; rather, they were written through prophecy and Divine inspiration. Rav Moshe Feinstein also argues that what was written makes no sense even in relation to the text itself, and therefore concludes,

"These wicked heretics forged this within a book that is attributed to Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid, in order to mislead everyone into the heretical view that Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid said this, too. Therefore, it is clear that it is forbidden to print this book; it is even worse than the books of the heretics, which are [at least] attributed to the heretics [themselves], and many among even the least learned Jews will not believe them. But where the name of Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid appears, one has to take into consideration the possibility that it will also lead others astray, to deny the Torah."

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, at the end of his responsum (above), writes:

"We do not have conclusive knowledge of who Rabbi Menachem Tzioni was, and it seems that he copied what he found in some book with Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid's name on it, without paying attention. I would say that it is forbidden to sell or buy *Sefer Tzioni*, too, since it contains this heretical statement, and it would also be proper to write this to the leading authorities in the Land of Israel."

However in the response *Mishneh Halakhot* (part XII, siman 214), Rabbi Menashe Klein (the "Ungvarer Rov") expresses surprise at this questioning of the credentials of Rabbi Menachem Tzioni, and uses the same tactic against Rav Feinstein's response:

"But the truth is I do not believe that this was said by Rabbi Feinstein; rather, it seems to me that some misguided student wrote it, and included it among his letters after his death. And the hands of strangers reigned over him and chose themselves a reputed scholar. For I do not believe that Rav Moshe Feinstein had never seen *Sefer ha-Tzioni*, which is well-known; he must surely have been familiar with it."

Further on in the same responsum he writes:

"In truth, in light of this, the manuscript of Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid should likewise not be hidden away... and thank God I have reviewed what they wrote and I have seen that they should be interpreted in accordance with his approach, in accordance with the Halakha, but this is not their place."

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<sup>[1]</sup> For elaboration on this subject, see G. Brin, "*Kavim le-Perush ha-Torah shel R. Yehuda he-Chasid*," in: *Te'udah 3 – Mechkarim be-Sifrut ha-Talmud, be-Lashon Chazal u-ve-Parshanut ha-Mikra*, Tel Aviv 5743, pp. 223-226.

<sup>[2]</sup> It is possible that Rashbam, too, maintained this position. In a manuscript of *Sefer Moshav Zekenim* (MS Paris, National Library 260 HEB) there is a commentary attributed to Rashbam: "And these are the kings – Rashbam explained that this unit was written in the days of the Judges." This view is, however, immediately rejected: "But this raises a difficulty: can there be a *sefer Torah* that is deficient, and is read with the name of Moshe Rabbeinu, as the *Sifri* asks. But in fact this is not a real question, since there are several verses which Moshe wrote with reference to the future, as Rashi explains in *parashat Bereishit*: Kush and Ashur did not yet exist, but they appear in the text, with reference to the future." As we have seen, these questions are easily addressed. The explanation here contradicts, however, the text of Rashbam's commentary that we have today, based on MS Breslau (which was eventually lost), according to which Rashbam's interpretation accords with that of Ibn Ezra; both agree that the word "*melekh*" (king)

refers to Moshe. Concerning the relationship between MS Breslau and other citations from Rashbam, and the possibility that Rashbam did indeed agree, in other instances, with the view that the Torah does contain later verses, see the article by my friend Y. Jacobs, "*Nussach Perush Rashbam la-Torah al-pi Ketav-Yad Breslau ve-al-pi Mekorot Nosafim*," *Iyyunei Mikra u-Parshanut* 13.

[3] For more on this commentary, see Y. Schwartz, "*Perush Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid le-Bereishit 48:20-22*," *Tarbiz* 80:1 (5772), pp. 29-39.

[4] See appendix.

[5] Rabbi Menachem Tzoni ben Meir lived in Germany, c. 1340-1410. He wrote a kabbalistic commentary on the Torah, called *Sefer Tzoni*, as well as several liturgical poems. For more about this interesting figure, see Y. Peles, "*Rabbenu Menachem Tzion (ha-'Tzoni')*," in *Moriah* 11, 5-6 (125-126), 5742, pp. 9-15; Y. Yuval, *Chakhamim be-Doram*, Jerusalem 5749, pp. 282-310.

[6] See appendix.

[7] Not all were removed. Concerning the verse, "You shall not cause the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your meal offering; with all your sacrifices you shall offer salt" ([Vayikra 2:13](#)), even the new edition included the proposition that this was written after Moshe's time. Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid actually suggests this in view of the Gemara in [Menachot \(21a\)](#), stating that the salt referred to here is "*melach sedomit*" (salt of Sedom). This interpretation is based on the verses in *parashat Nitzavim*: "To cause you to pass into the covenant of the Lord your God and His oath... Brimstone and salt, burning throughout the land, which is not sown, nor does it produce, nor does any grass grow upon it, like the overthrow of Sedom and Amora, Adma and Tzevoyim, which God overthrew in His anger and His wrath" ([Devarim 29:11-22](#)). How, then, could this have appeared earlier in the Torah, in *Sefer Vayikra*? He proposes interpretation here we find, "Perhaps originally the text simply read, 'You shall not cause salt to be lacking from your meal offering,' and after Moshe wrote this in [*parashat*] *Nitzavim*, they then elaborated on this 'salt' – the 'salt of the covenant of your God'" (Commentary of Rabbi Yehuda he-Chasid on [Vayikra 2:13](#)).

[8] R. Shlomo ben R. Shmuel lived in France, c. 1160-1240. His work, *Te'amim shel Chumash*, includes commentary and allegories on the Torah, and is still extant in some manuscripts. Concerning this sage and his approach, see Y. M. Ta-Shma, *Keneset Mechkarim: Iyyunim be-Sifrut ha-Mechkarit bi-Yemei ha-Benayim* 1, Jerusalem 5764, pp. 274-277.

[9] It should be noted that in this specific instance, R. Shlomo did not understand Ibn Ezra correctly. The "secret" that Ibn Ezra refers to here is not related to later additions to the Torah. Rather, it relates to the phenomenon of he-goats (*se'irim*) in the wilderness. Ibn Ezra himself alludes to this, further on: "And I shall reveal to you part of this secret with the hint that when you are 33, you will know." Ramban comments here that Ibn Ezra is hinting to a verse that appears 33 verses hence; see ad loc.

[10] Ta-Shma, see previous mention of his work; pp. 276-277.

[11] Further on, R. Shlomo notes the relevant verses cited by Ibn Ezra, which we discussed in the previous *shiur*. Concerning the verse about Og's bed in the Ammonite city of Rabba, R. Shlomo raises the possibility that Moshe could indeed have written this verse as a prophecy, but then goes on to reject it: "And if you say, Even though Moshe had never been in Rabba of the children of Ammon, he could have prophesied through

his Divine spirit and said, 'is it not in Rabba...', so why say that Moshe did not write it? To this one must answer that he could have prophesied and said something through the Divine spirit, if there was some need for it, but concerning something that need not necessarily be said [since it makes no practical difference], such as this verse, 'Is it not in Rabba...', he would not have received the Divine spirit. And since the Divine spirit did not visit him, and he had never been in Rabba of the children of Ammon, where would he know this from? Hence, it certainly could not have been written by Moshe."

<sup>[12]</sup> To the sources we have cited above we might add many more, and various studies have addressed the scope of this phenomenon. For a summary of these, see Jacobs' article (see footnote 2 above).

<sup>[13]</sup> Two more examples of verses presenting a similar difficulty:

a. [Shemot 16:35](#) – "And the Children of Israel ate the manna for forty years, until they reached inhabited land; they ate the manna until they reached the border of the land of Kena'an." From the formulation of the verse it would seem that it speaks of the arrival of Israel in the land as an event that had already taken place, in the past, as a parallel to what we find in [Yehoshua 5:11-12](#).

b. [Devarim 3:14](#): "Yair ben Menashe took all of the region of Argov, up until the border of the Geshuri and the Ma'akhati, and he named them, i.e., the Bashan, after himself – Chavot Yair – to this day." Here again, the language appears to reflect a description from the perspective of a later period.