

When Hashkafic Worlds Collide: Who's Really Right?

Translation of the Gemara in Sotah 37a

“Shevet Binyamin went into the sea first, like the pasuk says: ‘There is Binyamin, the youngest, ruling them [rodem].’ Do not read it as: ‘Ruling them [rodem].’ Rather, read it as: going down [rad] into the sea [yam]. And the princes of Shevet Yehudah were stoning them [rogmim otam].”

QUESTION: Why were the princes of Shevet Yehudah throwing stones at Shevet Binyamin?

Translation of the First Tosafot in Sotah 37a (V'Hayu)

“And it was that the princes of Yehudah were throwing stones at them [Shevet Binyamin]. This is how the Baraita in the Mechilta explains this: What is this similar to? A king of flesh and blood who had two sons: one older and one younger. He [the king] said to the younger one, ‘Wake me up at Netz.’ He said to the older one, ‘Wake me up at three hours’ [i.e. later than Netz]. The younger one came to wake him up at Netz and would not let him rest. The older one said to him [the younger], ‘He told me only until three hours!’ And the younger one said, ‘He told me only until Netz!’ [A fight broke out between the two brothers.] Their father woke up and said to them, ‘My sons, regardless [of you fighting and trying to do the exact opposite actions of each other], you both only intended [all of this] for my honor. I will not withhold reward from you!’ What reward did Shevet Binyamin receive? They were the first to go down into the sea [during Kriat Yam Suf] and merited to receive the Shechinah as their portion [i.e. part of their territory would be where the Bet HaMikdash stood]. And what reward did Shevet Yehudah receive? They received malchut [kingship]...”

Important Note: This entire peshat does NOT go like those who hold that Nachshon ben Aminadav was the first into the sea. Also, based on the Netziv, this peshat holds that the sea already began splitting before anyone entered. For the more well-known peshat, see the next sugya on the amud beginning with “Amar lo Rebbe Yehudah.”

ANSWER & EXPLANATION: Shevet Yehudah was stoning Shevet Binyamin because they strongly felt that Binyamin was out of line and acting inappropriately. Shevet Binyamin was going in first without any regard to tribal order and without any regard for waiting for the sea to finish splitting. Shevet Yehudah held as their hashkafah that Klal Yisrael could only enter the sea after it finished splitting in order for everyone to go in al pi derech ha'teva.

However, Shevet Binyamin staunchly held as their hashkafah that zerizin makdimin l'mitzvot and displaying bitachon in Hashem trumped tribal order and waiting for the sea to finish splitting.

FOLLOW UP QUESTION: Who was right? Shevet Yehudah or Shevet Binyamin?

TOSAFOT'S ANSWER: BOTH! Based on the Mechilta's mashal, both Shevet Yehudah and Shevet Binyamin were trying to do what they believed Hashem wanted! Both were rewarded! Both were right!

Rabbi Binyamin Luban (the brother of Rabbi Luban of Ohr Torah here in Edison, NJ) said in a shiur to his talmidim that **Rav Simcha Wasserman** told him that this is how to reconcile differing (or even contradictory) hashkafot.

Governing Rule: As long as a hashkafah is: (1) rooted in a genuine Torah mesorah that comes directly from a Gadol b'Yisrael and (2) adheres to halacha, then it is a valid hashkafah that should not be attacked or disparaged.

What if you're not sure if something fits the governing rule? **SEEK DAAT TORAH!**

LEARNING AND GROWING FROM OTHER HASHKAFOT

- 1 - See the good! (i.e. what's GESHMAK about this different approach?)
- 2 - Fill in your gaps! (e.g. Machon guys can learn A LOT from Ohr Somayach guys AND VICE VERSA!)
- 3 - Avoid judging other hashkafot! (like Shevet Binyamin and Shevet Yehudah and the older and younger brothers, we are all just trying to do Hashem's will!)
- 4 - Be confident! (Don't let anyone make you feel like your hashkafah is inferior!)

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בן זומא אומר, איזהו חכם, הלומד מכל אדם, שנאמר (תהלים קיט) 1
מכל מלמדי השכלתי כי עדותיך שיחה לי. איזהו גבור, הכובש את
יצרו, שנאמר (משלי טז) טוב ארך אפים מגבור ומשל ברוחו מלכד
עיר. איזהו עשיר, השמח בחלקו, שנאמר (תהלים קכח) יגיע כפיך
כי תאכל אשריך וטוב לך. אשריך, בעולם הזה. וטוב לך, לעולם
הבא. איזהו מכבד, המכבד את הבריות, שנאמר (שמואל א ב) כי
מכבדי אכבד ובזי יקלו:

Translation of the Mishna in Avot 4:1

“Ben Zoma said: ‘Who is wise? He who learns from every man, as it says in the pasuk: ‘From all my teachers I grew wise for Your testimonies are a discussion for me’ (Psalm 119)...”

FINAL TAKE HOME POINT

Regarding Shlomo HaMelech, the pasuk in Melachim I (5:11) states, “Vayeichkam me’kol ha’adam—he became wiser than all men.” **Rav Elchanon Wasserman** explains that he became wiser ME’kol ha’adam—FROM all men.”

WISDOM COMES WHEN WE LEARN FROM ALL—LEARN FROM OTHER HASHKAFOT