

Olivia : Bat Mitzvah on Shabbat Ba'alotkha.

In Parashat Ba'alotkha, Moshe was ordered on Nissan 1 of the second year of the exodus era, thus almost one year after the date of the exodus, which happened on Nissan 15, that the benei Yisrael should bring on the next Nissan 14, in the afternoon the paschal lamb according to all its regulations. We then learn that some people were not able to bring the paschal lamb because they were defiled for a cause beyond their control. Indeed the seventh day of their purification was exactly Nissan 14 meaning that on the next day they could have fulfilled their obligation but on Nissan 14 they were unfit. Their approaching toward Moshe would lead to the introduction of Pessah sheni on Iyar 15, a second session for people defiled or absent and removed far from Jerusalem.

Now in Sifrei, a collection of Midrashei halakhah on Seder Bamidbar, we find the following Braitah, very similar to a quotation in Babli Sukkah 25.

ויהי אנשים אשר היו טמאים לנפש אדם וכו', מי היו? נושאי ארונו של יוסף היו, דברי רבי ישמעאל. רבי עקיבא אומר: מישאל ואלצפן היו שנטמאו לנדר ואביהו. רבי יצחק אומר, אם נושאי ארונו של יוסף היו, יכולים לטהר ואם מישאל ואלצפן היו יכולים לטהר. מי היו? למת מצווה נטמאו שנאמר "ולא יכלו לעשות הפסח ביום ההוא" לא היו יכולים לעשות בו ביום אבל היו יכולים לעשות ביום שלאחריו. נמצינו למדין שחל ז' שלהם להיות בערב הפסח.

Translation : *there were people who were impure. Who were these people? The bearers of Joseph's coffin said Rabbi Ismael. Rabbi Akiba said: they were Mishael and Elsafan, Aaron's and Moshe's cousins who pulled the corpses of Nadav and Avihu who were burnt in the holy of the holy without them entering it. Rabbi Isaac said, if these men were indeed the bearers of Joseph's coffin they had enough time to purify themselves in time, if they were Michael and Elsafan they had also plenty of time to purify themselves in time. But who were they? They were people who defiled themselves on Nissan 8 for dead people without family in order to bury them.* Such people without any family must have been converts who converted after the miracle of the ten plagues in Egypt. In his commentary, Malbim explains the origin of the odd question about the identity of the defiled people who complained to Moshe about the impossibility for them to bring the paschal lamb. It is generally accepted in the Talmudic literature, including halakhic Midrashim, as Midrash Rabbah and Seder Olam, that at the occasion of the census in Ki Tissa, on the days following Tishri 10, the day of the forgiveness of the sin of the golden calf and of the census of Iyar 1 in the beginning of Bemidar, they counted the men who had reached the age of 20 on the last Tishri 1. This census was thus performed in the same way as the census of the class of military incorporation of all the men reaching the age of 20 at a certain cutting date, generally January 1. This explanation is explicitly mentioned in Rashi, on Ki Tissa, Shemot 30:16 based on Bamidbar Rabbah 1:10. Indeed both censuses gave the same number 603,500 and they thought that only this explanation could justify that coincidence. Now it appears that in both censuses, they counted the same people as both censuses were performed in the same year with regard to Tishri 1: Tishri 11 and Iyar 1. Now if we consider the second census, there was no new incomer, therefore there was also no coming out with regard to the first census. Therefore a direct consequence of the equality of the results of both censuses is that no one died during these six months. This is the implicit assumption underlying the Braitah of Sifrei: as there were no dead persons, who could be then these defiled people. Rabbi Ismael suggested that they were the people of Menashe, the bearers of Joseph's coffin and Rabbi Akiba suggested Mishael and Elsafan the cousins of Aaron and Moshe who had the mission to pull the corpses of Nadav and Avihu, which were lying burnt in the Kodosh ha Kodashim. According to Rabbi Ismael and Akiba, the seventh day of the purification of the concerned was on Nissan 14 meaning that they were defiled on Nissan 8. Thus the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the inauguration, the day when the Mishkan was definitively erected, the day when Nadav and Avihu died and the day when the para aduma was burned was on Nissan 8 and the beginning of the inauguration of the

tabernacle was on Nissan 1, in agreement with Exodus 40: 2 and 17. By contrast Rabbi Isaac certainly considers that the Mishkan was inaugurated between Adar 23 and Nissan 1 as it is generally accepted in the Talmudic literature as we see in the beginning of parashat shemini where Rashi copies the Seder Olam chapter 7. Therefore the people of the tribe of Menashe and Mishael and Elsafan were already purified and the defiled people could only be people defiled because of the death of converts, belonging to the erev rav, the mixed multitude, who had the status of Jews but were not included in the census. Ibn Ezra had already questioned the traditional chronology in his commentary on Pekoudei (Shemot 40:2) and Shemini (Vayikra 9:1) and mentioned in the first reference that there was a discussion on this subject. He was certainly referring to our braitah of Sifrei. We succeeded thus to prove that Rabbi Akiba and Rabbi Ismael, far before Ibn Ezra had questioned the chronology of Seder Olam and considered that the beginning of the erection of the Mishkan was on Nissan 1 and the end of the inauguration was on Nissan 8.

This would also explain why, in the order of the inauguration sacrifices, in parashat Nasso, Ephraïm precedes Manashe. Indeed on Nissan 14, Manashe was still impure and therefore Ephraïm took his place. This point was already mentioned in a derouch for Hanukah by Rabbi Yehonatan Eybeshuts (18<sup>th</sup> century) in Ya'arot Devash. This subject was developed with more details by my daddy on his Shabbat Bar Mitsvah, which was the seventh day of Hanukah. One drawback of this understanding is that the inauguration's sacrifices of parashat Nasso must be split up in two parts: the seven first princes before Pessah, the five others after Pessah as their sacrifices could not be brought on Yom Tov. There is no hint to this split in the text.