

## Stories of Women at the Entrance to the Tent

Minneapolis Jewish Artist Lab

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### Exodus 38:1-8

א וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים חֲמֵשׁ אַמּוֹת אָרְכוֹ וְחֲמֵשׁ־אֲמּוֹת רָחְבוֹ רְבֹוע וְשֵׁלֶשׁ אַמּוֹת קָמְתוֹ:  
ב וַיַּעַשׂ קַרְנֹתָיו עַל אַרְבַּע פְּנֵיתָיו מִמְּנוֹ הָיוּ קַרְנֹתָיו וַיִּצַּף אֹתוֹ נְחֹשֶׁת: ג וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ  
אֶת־הַסִּירֹת וְאֶת־הַיָּעִים וְאֶת־הַמְּזֻרְקוֹת אֶת־הַמְּזֻלְלוֹת וְאֶת־הַמְּחוֹתוֹת כָּל־כְּלֵי עֲשֵׂה נְחֹשֶׁת: ד וַיַּעַשׂ  
לַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִכְּבָר מַעֲשֵׂה רֶשֶׁת נְחֹשֶׁת תַּחַת כַּרְבָּבוֹ מִלְּמַטָּה עַד־חֲצָיו: ה וַיִּצַק אַרְבַּע טַבַּעֹת בְּאַרְבַּע הַקְּצוֹת  
לְמִכְבַּר הַנְּחֹשֶׁת בְּתֵים לְבַדִּים: ו וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־הַבָּדִים עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים וַיִּצַּף אֹתָם נְחֹשֶׁת: ז וַיָּבֵא אֶת־הַבָּדִים  
בְּטַבַּעֹת עַל צִלְעוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְשֵׂאת אֹתוֹ בָּהֶם נְבוֹב לַחַת עֲשֵׂה אֹתוֹ: ח וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת הַכִּיּוֹר נְחֹשֶׁת וְאֶת כַּנּוֹ  
נְחֹשֶׁת בְּמִרְאֵת הַצַּבָּאוֹת אֲשֶׁר צָבְאוּ פָתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:

He made the altar of burnt offering of shittim wood; five cubits was its length, and five cubits its breadth; it was square; and three cubits its height. And he made it horns on its four corners; its horns were of the same; and he overlaid it with bronze. And he made all the utensils of the altar, the pots, and the shovels, and the basins, and the forks, and the firepans; all its utensils made he of bronze. And he made for the altar a bronze grating, a network under its ledge to its middle. And he cast four rings for the four ends of the grating of bronze, to be places for the poles. And he made the poles of shittim wood, and overlaid them with bronze. And he put the carrying poles into the rings on the sides of the altar, he made the altar hollow with boards. **And he made the laver of copper, and its stand of copper, from the mirrors of the women assembling, who assembled at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.**

### 1 Samuel 2:11-12, 22-25

וַיִּלְךְ אֱלִקָנָה הַרְמָתָה עַל־בֵּיתוֹ וְהִנְעֵר הָיָה מְשֻׁרֵת אֶת־הָ' אֶת־פְּנֵי עָלִי הַכְּהֹן: וּבְנֵי עָלִי בְנֵי בְלִיעֵל לֹא יָדְעוּ אֶת־הָ'  
וְעָלִי זָקֵן מְאֹד וְשָׁמַע אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּן בְּנָיו לְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּבּוּ אֶת־הַנְּשִׁים הַצַּבָּאוֹת  
פָּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד. וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם לָמָּה תַעֲשׂוּן כַּדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי שֹׁמֵעַ אֶת־דְּבָרֵיכֶם רָעִים מְאֹד  
כָּל־הָעַם אֵלֶּה. אֵל בְּנֵי כִי לֹא־טוֹבָה הַשְּׁמֵעָה אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי שֹׁמֵעַ מֵעֹבְרִים עִם־הָ'. אִם־יִחְטָא אִישׁ לְאִישׁ  
וּפְלָלוּ אֶ־לֵהִים וְאִם לֵה' יִחְטָא־אִישׁ מִי יִתְפַּלֵּל־לוֹ וְלֹא יִשְׁמָעוּ לְקוֹל אֲבִיהֶם כִּי־חָפַץ ה' לְהַמִּיתָם.

Elkana went to Ramah to his house. And the child ministered to the Lord before Eli the priest. **And the sons of Eli were lawless men; they knew not the Lord...**

**Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did to all Israel; and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.** And he said to them, Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all this people. No, my sons; it is not a good report what I hear; you make the Lord's people transgress. If one man sins against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who shall entreat for him? However they listened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord intended to slay them.

***The Women's Torah Commentary, Rabbi Elyse Goldstein, p. 177***

The explicit inclusion of women in this week's portion is like a blast on the shofar. It stands in stark contrast to the deafening silence that pervades most of the Torah. This portion makes us wonder about the many ways that women's experiences were written out of our people's collective memory and history. It encourages us to seek out hints of the ways that women contributed to an participated in the life of our people. And it reminds us of how communal leaders often value the actions and lives only of those most like themselves.

***The Particulars of Rapture: Reflections on Exodus, Aviva Gottlieb Zornberg, p. 3***

Adopting the psychoanalytic model, I suggest that the peshat, or plain meaning of the text, functions as the conscious layer of meaning; while the midrashic stories and exegesis intimate unconscious layers, encrypted traces of more complex meaning. The public, overt, triumphal narrative of redemption is therefore diffracted in the midrashic texts into multiple, contradictory, unofficial narratives which, like the unconscious, undercut, destabilize the public narrative.

## The Voice of History: Generous Women

### Exodus 38:1-8

א וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים חֲמֵשׁ אַמּוֹת אָרְפוֹ וְחֲמֵשׁ־אַמּוֹת רָחְבוֹ רְבוּעַ וְשָׁלֹשׁ אַמּוֹת קָמְתוֹ:  
ב וַיַּעַשׂ קַרְנָתָיו עַל אַרְבַּע פְּנֵיתָיו מִמְּנוֹ הָיוּ קַרְנָתָיו וַיִּצַּף אֹתוֹ נְחֹשֶׁת: ג וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ  
אֶת־הַסִּירֹת וְאֶת־הַיָּעִים וְאֶת־הַמְּזָרְקוֹת אֶת־הַמְּזַלְגוֹת וְאֶת־הַמַּחְתָּת כָּל־כְּלָיו עָשָׂה נְחֹשֶׁת: ד וַיַּעַשׂ  
לַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִקְבָּר מַעֲשֵׂה רִשֶׁת נְחֹשֶׁת תַּחַת פְּרָכְבוֹ מִלְמַטָּה עַד־חֻצְיוֹ: ה וַיִּצַק אַרְבַּע טַבַּעַת בְּאַרְבַּע הַקְּצוֹת  
לְמִקְבַר הַנְּחֹשֶׁת בְּתַיִם לַבַּדִּים: ו וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־הַבַּדִּים עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים וַיִּצַּף אֹתָם נְחֹשֶׁת: ז וַיָּבֵא אֶת־הַבַּדִּים  
בְּטַבַּעַת עַל צְלַעַת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְשֵׂאת אֹתוֹ בְּהֵם נְבוֹב לְחֹת עָשָׂה אֹתוֹ: ח וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת הַכִּיּוֹר נְחֹשֶׁת וְאֶת כְּנוֹ  
נְחֹשֶׁת בְּמִרְאֵת הַצַּבָּאוֹת אֲשֶׁר צָבְאוּ פָתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:

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### JPS Torah Commentary, ad loc

*the women who performed tasks* Hebrew *hatsove'ot*. Nothing is known about this class, which is otherwise mentioned only in 1 Samuel 2:22. The Hebrew idiom *tsavo' tsava'* is also used of the Levites and means "qualified to serve in the work force," so that it is likely that these women performed menial work. None of the evidence supports the notion that they exercised any ritual or cultic function. The idea here is that even these women at the bottom of the occupational and social scale displayed unselfish generosity and sacrificial devotion in donating their valuable bronze mirrors.

### Commentary on the Torah, Richard Elliott Friedman, ad loc

The temptation of males in power to take advantage of their high position in the eyes of women who work under them has persisted for centuries. It is criticized in the *Tenak*. In the case of Shiloh priests, it is one of the acts that leads to the downfall of that priestly house and its replacement by Samuel (1 Sam 2:22-26).

### Question:

- Why did women go to the entrance of the tent?
- What was their experience their like?
- How do you think Moshe, other men, and God looked at them?

## Rashi: Seductive Women

### Exodus 38:1-8

א וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים חֲמֵשׁ אַמּוֹת אָרְפוֹ וְחֲמֵשׁ־אַמּוֹת רָחְבוֹ רְבֹעַ וְשֵׁלֶשׁ אַמּוֹת קִמְתּוֹ:  
ב וַיַּעַשׂ קַרְנֹתָיו עַל אַרְבַּע פְּנֵיתָיו מִמֶּנּוּ הָיוּ קַרְנֹתָיו וַיִּצַּף אוֹתוֹ נְחֹשֶׁת: ג וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ  
אֶת־הַסִּירֹת וְאֶת־הַיָּעִים וְאֶת־הַמְזַרְקוֹת וְאֶת־הַמְזֻלְגֹת וְאֶת־הַמְחֹתֶת כָּל־כְּלָיו עָשָׂה נְחֹשֶׁת: ד וַיַּעַשׂ  
לַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִכְבָּר מֵעֵשָׂה רֶשֶׁת נְחֹשֶׁת תַּחַת כַּרְכָּבוֹ מִלְמַטָּה עַד־חֲצִיּוֹ: ה וַיִּצַק אַרְבַּע טַבַּעַת בְּאַרְבַּע הַקְּצוֹת  
לְמִכְבָּר הַנְּחֹשֶׁת בְּתַיִם לְבָדִים: ו וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־הַבְּדִים עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים וַיִּצַּף אוֹתָם נְחֹשֶׁת: ז וַיָּבֵא אֶת־הַבְּדִים  
בְּטַבַּעַת עַל צִלְעוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְשֵׂאת אוֹתוֹ בְּהֵם נָבוֹב לְחֹת עָשָׂה אוֹתוֹ: ח וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת הַפִּיּוֹר נְחֹשֶׁת וְאֶת כְּנֹ  
נְחֹשֶׁת בְּמִרְאֵת הַצַּבָּאוֹת אֲשֶׁר צָבְאוּ פְתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:

He made the altar of burnt offering of shittim wood; five cubits was its length, and five cubits its breadth; it was square; and three cubits its height. And he made it horns on its four corners; its horns were of the same; and he overlaid it with bronze. And he made all the utensils of the altar, the pots, and the shovels, and the basins, and the forks, and the firepans; all its utensils made he of bronze. And he made for the altar a bronze grating, a network under its ledge to its middle. And he cast four rings for the four ends of the grating of bronze, to be places for the poles. And he made the poles of shittim wood, and overlaid them with bronze. And he put the carrying poles into the rings on the sides of the altar, he made the altar hollow with boards. **And he made the laver of copper, and its stand of copper, from the mirrors of the women assembling, who assembled at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.**

### Rashi (11th C. France), ad loc

The Israelite women had mirrors that they used when they were adorning themselves. But they did not hesitate to bring even these as contributions to the Tabernacle. Moses spurned them as having been made for the purposes of the evil inclination. The Holy One told him: "Accept them! They are more precious to Me than all the rest. For by means of them the women produced vast armies of Israelites in Egypt."

When their husbands were exhausted from the ruthless toil imposed on them by the Egyptians, the women would take them something to eat and drink, and would bring along the mirrors. Each of them would look at herself and her husband in the mirror, and entice him saying, "I'm better looking than you are!" In this way, they would arouse their husbands' desire and have relations with them, conceive and bear children. So the verse can be translated, "by means of the mirrors, the women made armies!"

### Questions:

- What did the mirrors symbolize to the women? Moshe? God?
- What was the experience at the entrance of the tent like for these women? For Moshe? Men? God?

## Ibn Ezra: Pious Women

### Exodus 38:1-8

א וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים חֲמֵשׁ אַמּוֹת אָרְפוֹ וְחֲמֵשׁ־אַמּוֹת רָחְבוֹ רְבוּעַ וְשִׁלֵּשׁ אַמּוֹת קָמְתּוֹ:  
ב וַיַּעַשׂ קַרְנָתָיו עַל אַרְבַּע פְּנֵיתָיו מִמֶּנּוּ הָיוּ קַרְנָתָיו וַיִּצַּף אוֹתוֹ נְחֹשֶׁת: ג וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ  
אֶת־הַסִּירֹת וְאֶת־הַיָּעִים וְאֶת־הַמְּזַרְקוֹת אֶת־הַמְּזֻלְגֹת וְאֶת־הַמַּחְתֹּת כָּל־כְּלֵי עֲשֵׂה נְחֹשֶׁת: ד וַיַּעַשׂ  
לַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִקְבָּר מַעֲשֵׂה רֶשֶׁת נְחֹשֶׁת תַּחַת פְּרָכָבוֹ מִלְמַטָּה עַד־חֲצִי: ה וַיִּצַק אַרְבַּע טַבַּעַת בְּאַרְבַּע הַקְּצוֹת  
לַמִּקְבָּר הַנְּחֹשֶׁת בְּתַיִם לְבַדִּים: ו וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־הַבְּדִים עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים וַיִּצַּף אוֹתָם נְחֹשֶׁת: ז וַיָּבֵא אֶת־הַבְּדִים  
בְּטַבַּעַת עַל צִלְעוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְשֵׂאת אוֹתוֹ בְּהֵם נָבוֹב לְחַת עֲשֵׂה אוֹתוֹ: ח וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת הַכִּיּוֹר נְחֹשֶׁת וְאֶת כְּנוֹ  
נְחֹשֶׁת בְּמִרְאֵת הַצַּבָּאוֹת אֲשֶׁר צָבְאוּ פָּתַח אֵהָל מוֹעֵד:

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### Ibn Ezra (12th C. Spain), ad loc

It may refer to the women who came regularly to pray at the tent and to study the commandments. They had abandoned all the vanities of the world; hence, they gave up their mirrors, which they no longer needed. For ordinarily women have no other occupation than to beautify their faces every morning in copper or glass mirrors, and to arrange their hats. For the customs of Israel were the same as those preserved to this day in Islamic countries.

### Question:

- How does Ibn Ezra explain the motivation of women to come to the entrance of the tent?
- What do you imagine it was like to be there according to this explanation?
- How do you think they were viewed by Moshe, God, and other men?

## Ramban: An Army of Women

### Exodus 38:1-8

א וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים חֲמֵשׁ אַמּוֹת אָרְכוֹ וְחֲמֵשׁ־אֲמוֹת רָחְבוֹ רְבֹעַ וְשֵׁלֶשׁ אֲמוֹת קָמְתוֹ:  
ב וַיַּעַשׂ קַרְנֹתָיו עַל אַרְבַּע פְּנֵיתָיו מִמָּנֹה הָיוּ קַרְנֹתָיו וַיִּצַף אֹתוֹ נְחֹשֶׁת: ג וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ  
אֶת־הַסִּירֹת וְאֶת־הַיָּעִים וְאֶת־הַמְּזֻרְקוֹת אֶת־הַמְּזֻלְגוֹת וְאֶת־הַמְּחַתּוֹת כָּל־כְּלָיו עָשָׂה נְחֹשֶׁת: ד וַיַּעַשׂ  
לְמִזְבֵּחַ מִכָּבֶד מַעֲשֵׂה רָשֶׁת נְחֹשֶׁת תַּחַת כָּרְבָבוֹ מִלְמָטָה עַד־חֲצָיו: ה וַיַּצַּק אַרְבַּע טַבַּעֲוֹת בְּאַרְבַּע הַקְּצוֹת  
לְמִכָּבֶד הַנְּחֹשֶׁת בְּתֵים לְבַדִּים: ו וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־הַבְּדִים עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים וַיִּצַף אֹתָם נְחֹשֶׁת: ז וַיָּבֵא אֶת־הַבְּדִים  
בְּטַבַּעֲוֹת עַל צִלְעוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְשֵׂאת אֹתוֹ בָּהֶם נְבוּב לְחֹת עָשָׂה אֹתוֹ: ח וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת הַפִּיּוֹר נְחֹשֶׁת וְאֶת כְּנֹ  
נְחֹשֶׁת בְּמִרְאֹת הַצַּבָּאוֹת אֲשֶׁר צָבְאוּ פָתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:

He made the altar of burnt offering of shittim wood; five cubits was its length, and five cubits its breadth; it was square; and three cubits its height. And he made it horns on its four corners; its horns were of the same; and he overlaid it with bronze. And he made all the utensils of the altar, the pots, and the shovels, and the basins, and the forks, and the firepans; all its utensils made he of bronze. And he made for the altar a bronze grating, a network under its ledge to its middle. And he cast four rings for the four ends of the grating of bronze, to be places for the poles. And he made the poles of shittim wood, and overlaid them with bronze. And he put the carrying poles into the rings on the sides of the altar, he made the altar hollow with boards. **And he made the laver of copper, and its stand of copper, from the mirrors of the women assembling, who assembled at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.**

### Ramban (13th C, Spain), ad loc

A vast "army" of women gathered at the tent to give their mirrors, voluntarily. The copper of the mirrors was burnished and quite lovely, which was why it was specially set aside right from the start for the laver and its stand. When the women saw this, they trooped in army after army, so that all of them could have their mirrors made into the laver and the stand.

### Questions:

- How does Ramban explain the motivation of women who came to the entrance of the tent?
- What do you imagine their experience there was like according to this explanation?
- How do you think they were viewed by Moshe, God, and other men?

## Malbim: Women who are Raped

### 1 Samuel 2:11-12, 22-25

וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶלְקָנָה הַרְמַתָּה עַל-בֵּיתוֹ וְהִנְעֵר הָיָה מְשֻׁרֵת אֶת-ה' אֶת-פְּנֵי עַלֵי הַכֹּהֵן: וּבְנֵי עַלֵי בְּנֵי בְלִיעֵל לֹא יָדְעוּ אֶת-ה'.

וְעַלֵי זָקֵן מְאֹד וְשָׁמַע אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּן בְּנָיו לְכָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-יִשְׁכְּבוּ אֶת-הַנְּשִׁים הַצֹּבְאוֹת פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד. וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם לָמָּה תַעֲשׂוּן בְּדַבְרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי שֹׁמֵעַ אֶת-דְּבָרֵיכֶם רָעִים מֵאֵת כָּל-הָעָם אֵלֶּה. אֵל בְּנֵי כִי לֹא-טוֹבָה הַשְׁמָעָה אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי שֹׁמֵעַ מֵעֲבָרִים עִם-ה'. אִם-יִחַטָּא אִישׁ לְאִישׁ וּפְלָלוּ אֶ-לֹהִים וְאִם לֹה' יִחַטָּא אִישׁ מִי יִתְפַּלֵּל-לוֹ וְלֹא יִשְׁמָעוּ לְקוֹל אֲבֵיהֶם כִּי-חָפַץ ה' לְהַמְיֹתָם.

Elkana went to Ramah to his house. And the child ministered to the Lord before Eli the priest. And the sons of Eli were lawless men; they knew not the Lord.

Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did to all Israel; and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said to them, Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all this people. No, my sons; it is not a good report what I hear; you make the Lord's people transgress. If one man sins against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who shall entreat for him? However they listened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord intended to slay them.

**Malbim (Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Wisser, 19th C., Ukraine), ad. loc.**

הנשים הצובאות, שמתוך שבזו קדשי שמים וגם השהו את קני הנשים מהקריבם, והיו צובאות, רצה לומר מתאספות צבא רב בפתח אהל מועד שלשם הביאו קניהם, ולא היה להם מלון ושכבו אנשים ונשים לפני חצר המשכן ביחד ועל ידי כן הגיעו לפעמים לדבר עבירה, בפרט כי הכהנים לא השגיחו על העם לקדשם ולשמרם כראוי.

Since the priests scorned their sacrifices and delayed to offer the women's bird offerings, the women gathered at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting where they had come to make the bird offering. And since there was no place for them to sleep, the men and women lay before the courtyard of the Tabernacle together. In that way, they came occasionally to transgress. For the Kohanim were not attending to the people to sanctify them as necessary.

### Questions:

- According to the Malbim, what was the lawlessness of Eli's sons?
- Why did women go to the tent?
- What was the experience of women at the entrance of the tent like?
- How do you think they were viewed by Moshe, God, and other men?

## Rav: Women Inconvenienced

### 1 Samuel 2:11-12, 22-25

וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶלְקָנָה הַרְמְתָהּ עַל-בֵּיתוֹ וְהִנְעֵר הִיָּה מִשְׁרַת אֶת-ה' אֶת-פְּנֵי עַלֵי הַפֶּהוּ; וּבְנֵי עַלֵי בְנֵי בְלִעַל לֹא יָדְעוּ אֶת-ה'.

וְעַלֵי זָקֵן מְאֹד וְשָׁמַע אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּן בְּנָיו לְכָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר-יִשְׁכְּבוּן אֶת-הַנְּשִׁים הַצֹּבְאוֹת פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד. וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם לָמָּה תַעֲשׂוּן כַּדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי שֹׁמֵעַ אֶת-דְּבָרֵיכֶם רָעִים מֵאֵת כָּל-הָעָם אֵלֶּה. אֵל בְּנֵי כִי לֹא-טוֹבָה הַשְׁמָעָה אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי שֹׁמֵעַ מֵעֲבָרִים עִם-ה'. אִם-יִחַטָּא אִישׁ לְאִישׁ וַיִּפְּלוּ אֵי-לֵהִים וְאִם לֹה' יִחַטָּא-אִישׁ מִי יִתְפַּלֵּל-לוֹ וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ לְקוֹל אֲבִיהֶם כִּי-חָפָץ ה' לְהַמִּיתָם.

Elkana went to Ramah to his house. And the child ministered to the Lord before Eli the priest. And the sons of Eli were lawless men; they knew not the Lord.

Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did to all Israel; and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said to them, Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all this people. No, my sons; it is not a good report what I hear; you make the Lord's people transgress. If one man sins against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who shall entreat for him? However they listened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord intended to slay them.

### Shabbat 55b

סבר לה כרב דאמר רב פנחס לא חטא מקיש חפני לפנחס מה פנחס לא חטא אף חפני לא חטא אלא מה אני מקיים אשר ישכבון את הנשים מתוך ששהו את קיניהן שלא הלכו אצל בעליהן מעלה עליהן הכתוב כאילו שכבום

The Gemara explains: Rabbi Yonatan holds in accordance with the opinion of Rav, as Rav said: **Pinchas did not sin.** And the verse juxtaposes **Chophni to Pinchas; just as Pinchas did not sin, so too Chophni did not sin.** The Gemara asks: **How, then, do I establish** the meaning of the verse: "Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did to all Israel; and **how they lay with the women** that assembled at the door of the Tent of Meeting" (I Samuel 2:22), which indicates otherwise? The Gemara answers: **Since** the sons of Eli **delayed** sacrificing the **bird-offerings** of women who had given birth, a pair of doves brought as part of the purification process, and this delay caused the women **not to go to their husbands** in timely fashion, **the verse ascribes to Chophni and Pinchas liability as if they had lain with them.** They were guilty of nothing more than negligence and carelessness.

### Questions:

- According to Rav, what was the lawlessness of the sons of Eli, Pinchas and Chophni?
- How do you evaluate Rav's interpretation?
- What was the experience like for women at the entrance of the tent?
- How do you think they were viewed by Eli, Eli's sons, God?



