

RuthR proem 2:

AND IT CAME TO PASS, IN THE DAYS THAT THE JUDGES JUDGED: Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep (Prov. XIX, 15). Israel was cast into a deep sleep in that they were negligent in paying the appropriate honours to Joshua after his death. That is the meaning of the verse And they buried him in the border of his inheritance... on the north of the mountain of Gaash [געעש] (Josh. XXIV, 30). R. Berekiah said: We have examined the whole of Scripture and we have not found mention of a place called Gaash. What then is the meaning of ' the mountain of Gaash ' ? That Israel were too much preoccupied (nith-gaashu [נתגעשן]) to pay proper honour to Joshua after his death. The land of Israel was divided up at that time, and they became unduly absorbed in the division. Israel were all occupied with their tasks. One was occupied with his field, the other with his vineyard, yet another with his olive trees, and a fourth with quarrying stones, thus exemplifying the words, And the idle soul shall suffer hunger (Prov. loc. cit.). They therefore neglected to show honour to Joshua after his death, and the Holy One, blessed be He, sought to bring an earthquake upon the inhabitants of the world, as it is said, Then the earth did shake (wa-tig'ash [והתגעש]) and quake (Ps. XVIII, 8). 'And the idle soul shall suffer hunger.' In that there were among them those who deceived God by idolatry; he therefore starved them of the Holy Spirit, as it is written, And the word of the Lord was precious in those days (I Sam. III, 1). Another interpretation of ' Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep' is that Israel were neglectful in doing repentance during the days of Elijah, and 'a deep sleep was cast', i.e. prophecy increased. Increased? But the verse says 'casteth'. It is as one says, ' the market for fruit has fallen. R. Simon says: It is as if a man were to say to his fellow, ' Here is the bag, and here the money, and here the measure. Arise and eat.' For R. Derusa said: Sixty myriads of prophets arose in Israel during the days of Elijah. R. Jacob said: One hundred and twenty myriads. R. Johanan said: Between Gabbath and Antipatris there were sixty myriads of townships and none were more corrupt than Jericho and Beth-el, Jericho because Joshua cursed it, and Beth-el because the Golden Calf of Jeroboam was set up there, and yet it is written, And the sons of the prophets who were at Beth-el came forth to Elishah (II Kings II, 3). The verse says 'prophets', which signifies a minimum of two. For what reasons were not their prophecies made public? Because they had no permanent value for future generations. Deduce from this that a prophecy of which there

is no need for future generations is not published. But in the time to come the Holy One, blessed be He, will come and bring them with Him and their prophecies will be published. That is the meaning of, And the Lord my God shall come, and all the holy ones with Thee (Zech. XIV, 5). 'And the idle soul shall suffer hunger.' They deceived God in that some of them worshipped idols, and others worshipped the Holy One, blessed be He. That is the meaning of what Elijah said to them, How long halt ye between two opinions (I Kings XVIII, 21). 'Shall suffer hunger,' in that the Lord brought a famine in the days of Elijah, as it is said As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, etc. (ib. 15). Another interpretation of 'slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep', is that, because Israel was neglectful in doing repentance in the days of the Judges, they were cast into a deep sleep. 'And the idle soul shall suffer hunger'; because they sought to deceive the Holy One, blessed be He, some serving idols and others serving God, the Holy One, blessed be He, caused them to suffer hunger in the famine of the days of the Judges: AND IT CAME TO PASS, IN THE DAYS WHEN THE JUDGES JUDGED, THAT THERE WAS A FAMINE.

RuthR proem 3:

AND IT CAME TO PASS, IN THE DAYS WHEN THE JUDGES JUDGED, THAT THERE WAS A FAMINE. The way of man is froward and strange (Prov. XXI, 8). This refers to Esau who is constantly planning evil decrees wherewith to assail Israel. Thus they accuse them: 'Ye have stolen'; [and they answer] 'We have not stolen'; 'ye have been guilty of murder?' [and they answer] 'We have not been guilty of murder'. 'You have not stolen? Who stole with you? ' ' You have not been guilty of murder? Who murdered with you?' He thereupon fines them on false charges [saying], bring your annona, bring your poll-tax, bring your state-tax. ' A man ' refers to the wicked Esau, as it is said, And Esau was a man, a cunning hunter (Gen. XXV, 27), 'And strange,' because he estranged himself from circumcision and from the commandments of the Torah. But as for the pure, his work is right (Prov. Ib.). ' The pure' refers to the Holy One, blessed be He, who deals with him uprightly and gives him his reward in this world, as a labourer who does work for his employer faithfully. Another interpretation of, 'The way of man is froward and strange.' This refers to the nations of the world who constantly scheme evil decrees wherewith to come against Israel. [They are called] 'a

man', since they are descended from Noah who is called 'a man'; 'and strange,' for they serve strange gods. 'But as for the pure, his work is right,' refers to the Holy One, blessed be He, who deals with them with uprightness. R. Aha said: 'The way... is froward' refers to Israel, as it is said, For they are a very froward generation (Deut. XXXII, 20). 'A man,' [as it is said] Now the men of Israel had sworn (Judg. XXI, 1), 'And strange,' in that they made themselves as strangers to the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is said, They have dealt treacherously against the Lord, for they have begotten strange children (Hos. V, 7). 'But as for the pure, etc.,' refers to the Holy One, blessed be He, who deals with them with uprightness in this world and yet gives them their full reward in the future, like a craftsman who works faithfully for his employer. At that moment the Holy One, blessed be He, says, 'My children are rebellious; yet to destroy them is impossible, to take them back to Egypt is impossible, change them for another people I cannot; what then shall I do to them? I will chastise them with suffering and try them with famine in the days when the judges judge.' That is the meaning of the verse, AND IT CAME TO PASS IN THE DAYS WHEN THE JUDGES JUDGED THAT THERE WAS A FAMINE IN THE LAND.

RuthR proem 5:

R. Nehemiah introduced his exposition with the verse, O Israel, thy prophets have been like foxes in ruins (Ezek. XIII, 4). Just as the fox looks about in the ruins to see where it can escape if it sees men coming, so were thy prophets in the ruins. Ye have not gone up in the breaches (ib.) like Moses. To whom can Moses be compared? To a faithful shepherd whose fence fell down in the twilight. He arose and repaired it from three sides, but a breach remained on the fourth side, and having no time to erect the fence, he stood in the breach himself. A lion came, he boldly withstood it; a wolf came and still he stood against it. But ye! Ye did not stand in the breach as Moses did. Had ye stood in the breach like Moses, ye would have been able to stand in the battle in the day of God's anger: AND IT CAME TO PASS IN THE DAYS WHEN THE JUDGES JUDGED THAT THERE WAS A FAMINE IN THE LAND.

RuthR – Prologue:

R. Tanhuma in the name of R. Hiyya Rabbah and R. Berekiah in the name of R. Eliezer said: The following exposition has been transmitted to us from the Exile; wherever it is said wayyehi [וַיְהִי] (and it came to pass), it denotes trouble. R. Hiyya Rabbah said: Wherever it is said 'and it came to pass', it may denote either trouble or joy; if trouble, unprecedented trouble, if joy, unprecedented joy. R. Samuel said: There are five verses [beginning 'and it came to pass'] in the days of [וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם].

(i) And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel (Gen. XIV, 1). What trouble was there in that case? That they made war (ib.). A parable. A king's friend dwelt in a certain region, and for his sake the king was attached to that region. On a certain occasion barbarians came and attacked him, whereupon [the inhabitants] said, 'Woe unto us, that the king is not attached to us as he used to be.' So in this case. The whole world was created only for the merit of our father Abraham; for so it says, And they turned back, and came to En-mishpat [עֵין מִשְׁפָּט]-the same is Kadesh (ib. 7), on which R. Aha said: They came to attack the eyeball of the world; that eye which brought the Attribute of Justice to the world, ye wish to blind? 'The same is Kadesh.' R. Aha said: 'He is Kadesh,' meaning, that is our father Abraham who sanctified His Name in the fiery furnace. And when those kings came and attacked him, all cried out, Woe! That is the meaning of 'and it came to pass in the days of Amraphel'.

(ii) And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz (Isa. VII, 1). What trouble was there in that case? Syria from before and Philistia from behind. A parable. There was a prince whose tutor wished to slay him. He said: 'If I kill him myself, I will forfeit my life. I will therefore deprive him of his wetnurse, and he will die of himself.' So did Ahaz say: 'If there are no kids, there can be no goats. If there are no goats, there is no flock. If there is no flock, there is no shepherd!' So did Ahaz calculate: 'If there are no children, there will be no adults. If there are no adults, there are no disciples. If there are no disciples, there are no sages, if there are no sages, there will be no synagogues or schools, and if there are no synagogues or schools, the Holy One, blessed be He, so to speak, cannot make His Spirit rest upon the world. I will therefore seize the synagogues and schools'; and of him Scripture says, Shut up the testimony,¹ seal the instruction among My disciples (Isa. VIII, 16). R. Hanina said: Why was he called Ahaz? Because he seized (אָזַח) the synagogues and schools. [...] And when Ahaz seized the synagogues and

schools, they began to cry out, ' Woe! ' That is the meaning of 'And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz'.

(iii) And it came to pass in the days of Jehoiakim (Jer. I, 3). What trouble was there in that case? I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was waste and void; and the heavens, and they had no light (ib. IV, 23). A parable. A king sent a proclamation to his country. What did the inhabitants of the country do with it? They took it, tore it up, and burnt it. They then said, ' Woe unto us when the king hears of this!' Thus it is written, And it came to pass, when Jehudi had read three or four columns (Jer. XXXVI, 2). It means three or four verses. When he came to the fifth verse, Her adversaries are become the head (Lam. I, 5), he immediately cut it with a penknife and cast it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the toll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier (Jer. loc. cit.). When they saw this, they began to cry out, 'Woe!' That is the meaning of, ' And it came to pass in the days of Jehoiakim.'

(iv) And it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus. What was the trouble in that case? [The decree] To slay, and to cause to perish, all the Jews (Est. III, 13). A parable. A king had a vineyard, and three enemies came and attacked it. One proceeded to cut down the bunches of grapes, the second to lop off the clusters, and the third sought to uproot the vines themselves. So Pharaoh the wicked began to cut off the children, as it is said, Every son that is born, ye shall cast into the river (Ex. 1, 22). Nebuchadnezzar proceeded to thin the clusters, as it is said, And the craftsmen and the smiths, a thousand (II Kings, XXIV, 16). R. Berekiah said in the name of R. Judah: It means a thousand craftsmen and a thousand smiths. R. Johanan said: A thousand in all. R. Samuel said: It refers to the men of the council. R. Jose b. R. Simon said: It refers to the scholars. Haman the wicked, however, sought to tear out the very root, as they say, to ' buy the hen with all the eggs', [as it is written,] ' To destroy, to slay and to cause to perish': and when they saw this, they began to cry out 'Woe!' That is the meaning of, 'And it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus.'

(v) AND IT CAME TO PASS IN THE DAYS WHEN THE JUDGES JUDGED. What was the trouble in this case? THAT THERE WAS A FAMINE IN THE LAND. A parable. A province owed taxes to the king. What did the king do? He sent a tax-collector to collect them. What did the people of the region do? They seized him, assaulted him, and made him pay taxes,⁴ saying, 'We have done to him what he sought to do to us.' So in the days when the judges judged, when a man had been guilty of idolatry and the judge wished to pass judgment on him, he came and flogged the judge,

saying, 'I have done to him what he wanted to do to me.' Woe unto the generation whose judges are judged! That is the meaning of the verse: AND IT CAME TO PASS IN THE DAYS OF THE JUDGING OF THE JUDGES.