

HOW GOD'S JEALOUSY DEFINES THE ESSENCE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A JEW

PARASHAT YITRO · RABBI MARK GLASS

I. WAIT, GOD IS JEALOUS?!

1. ספר שמות פרק ב' (פרשת יתרו)

בָּנְכִי הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר הַוֹּצָאָתָּה מִאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם
מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים:

א. ספר בראשית פרק ט"ו (פרשת לך לך)
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֲנִי הָאֲשֶׁר הַוֹּצָאָתָּה מִאֶרֶץ
בָּשָׂדִים לְתֵת לְךָ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְרֶשֶׁתְּהָ:

ב. ספר בראשית פרק ל"א (פרשת ויצא)
יְאַנְכִי הָקֵל בֵּית-קֶל אֲשֶׁר מִשְׁחַת שֵׁם מִצְבָּה
אֲשֶׁר נִדְרָת לֵי שֶׁם נִדְרָ עַתָּה קָוָם צָא מִזְרָחָה
הַזֹּאת וְשׁוֹב אֶל-אָרֶץ מַלְדָּתָה:

2. ספר שמות פרק ב' (פרשת יתרו)

לֹא-יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֶחָרִים עַל-פָּנֶיךָ:

לֹא-תַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ פֶּסֶל וְכָל-תָּמֹנוֹה אֲשֶׁר בְּשָׁמִים
מִפְּעָל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתְּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בְּמִים מִתְּחַת
לְאָרֶץ:

לֹא-תִשְׁתַּחַוו לְהַם וְלֹא תִּעֲבֹדֵם כִּי אַنְכִי הָ
אֱלֹהִים קָל קָנָא פָּקֵד עַלְן אֶבֶת עַל-בָּנִים עַל-
שְׁלֹשִׁים וְעַל-רַבָּעִים לְשָׁנָה:

וְעַשֵּׂה חֲסִד לְאַלְפִים לְאַהֲבֵי וְלִשְׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתִי:

1. Exodus 20 (Parashat Yitro)

²I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt,
the house of slavery.

A. Genesis 15 (Parashat Lekh Lekha)

⁷Then [God] said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out from
Ur of the Chaldeans to assign this land to you as a possession.”

B. Genesis 31 (Parashat Vayeitzei)

¹³I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you
made a vow to Me. Now, arise and leave this land and return to your
native land.”

2. Exodus 20 (Parashat Yitro)

³You shall have no other gods besides Me.

⁴You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness
of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters
under the earth.

⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I the LORD your
God **am a jealous God**, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the chil-
dren, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who
reject Me,

⁶but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who
love Me and keep My commandments.

ג. משנה אבות פרק ד' משנה ב"א
רבי אלעזר הקפר אומר: הַקְנָאתָה וַהֲתָאָה
וְהַכְבּוֹד, מוציאין את האדם מן העולם:

ד. משנה תורה, הלכות דעתך פרק ב' הלכה ז'
ולא [יהא אָרֶם] **בַּעַל קָטְטָה** **וְלֹא בַּעַל קְנָאתָה** **וְלֹא**
בַּעַל תָּאָהָה **וְלֹא רֹזֶף** **אַחֲר הַכְבּוֹד.**

C. Mishnah, Avot 4:21

R. Elazar Ha-Kappar said: jealousy, lust and [the desire for] honor put a man out of the world.

D. Mishneh Torah, Laws of Human Dispositions 2:7

[One] should not be quarrelsome, of envious temperament, full of desires, nor pursue honor.

II. THE ANSWER I DON'T LIKE

3. תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף ל"א:
דברה תורה בלאשון בני אדם.
... The Torah spoke in the language of people.

4. ספר בראשית פרק ו' (פרשת בראשית)
**וַיְהִי בִּידְחַל הָאָדָם לְרַב עַל-פִּנֵּי הָאָדָמָה וּבְנֹתֶר
יָלֹדוֹ לְהָמָם:** <sup>בַּזְרָאָיו בְּנֵי-הָאֱלֹהִים אֲתִיבְנֹתֶר הָאָדָם
כִּי טְבַת הָנָה וַיִּקְחָו לְהָמָם נְשָׁים מִכֶּל אֲשֶׁר בְּחָרוּ:</sup>

5. ספר תהילים פרק ע"ד
**יְאַתָּה פּוֹרֵת בְּעֵזֶךְ יְמִם שְׁבָרֶת רָאשֵׁי תְּנִינִים
עַל-הַמְּמִימִים:**

6. ספר תהילים פרק פ"ז
לֹא-יְהִי כָּמוֹךְ בְּאֱלֹהִים אֲדוֹשָׁם וְאֵין בְּמַעַשְׂיךָ:

7. עמוס חכם, דעת מקראית ספר שמות, עמי ש"פ
**"כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהִים כָּל קָנָא" – וְאֵין אֲנִי כְּאֱלֹהִים
אֲשֶׁר הָגּוּיִם עֹבְדִים אֹתוֹתָם, וְהֵם סְבּוּרִים,
שְׁחָאָלִים מְנִיחִים (וּלְעֹתִים אֶפְמַצְעִים) עַל
עֹבְדֵיכֶם לְעַבֵּד אֶלְيָם אֶחָרִים בְּצֵד עַבְדָּת הָאֱלֹהִים
אֲשֶׁר קְבָלוּ עֲלֵיכֶם בְּאֵל רָאשֵׁי.**

3. Berakhot 31b

... The Torah spoke in the language of people.

4. Genesis 6 (Parashat Bereishit)

¹When humankind began to increase on earth and daughters were born to them, ²the **divine beings** saw how pleasing the human women were and took wives from among those who delighted them.

Psalms 74

¹³It was You who drove back the sea with Your might, who smashed the heads of the monsters in the waters.

Psalms 86

⁸There is none like You among **the gods**, O LORD, and there are no deeds like Yours.

7. Amos Ḥakham, Da'at Mikra Sefer Shemot, p. 380

"For I the LORD your God am a jealous God" – I am not like the gods that the other nations worship; for they believe that the gods permit (and at times even command) their worshipers to serve other gods alongside the worship of the god they have accepted as their chief deity.

8. Sir Terry Pratchett, *Going Postal* (2004)

There was a certain spring in his step as Moist walked back to the ruin of the Post Office. He'd sent letters to Offler, Om, and Blind Io, all important gods, and also to Anoia, a minor goddess of Things That Stick In Drawers.* She had no temple and was handled by a jobbing priestess in Cable Street, but Moist had a feeling that by the end of the day Anoia was destined for higher things. He only picked her because he liked the name.

*Often, but not uniquely, a ladle, but sometimes a metal spatula or, rarely, a mechanical egg-whisk that nobody in the house admits to ever buying. The desperate, mad rattling and cries of "How can it close on the damn thing but not open with it? Who bought this? Do we ever use it?" is as praise unto Anoia. She also eats corkscrews.

III. WHAT *KINNA'* MEANS



גָּנָב | | חַטָּא | | צִדְקָה

9. ספר במדבר פרק כ"ה (פרשת פינחס)

וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֱלֹהִים לְאֹמֶר: ^{יְהוָה} פִּנְחָס בֶּן-אֱלֹעֶזֶר בֶּן-אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהן הַשֵּׁב אֶת-חִמְתִּי מִעַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקָנָא אֶת-קָנָא תִּבְהֹכֶם וְלֹא-כְלִיתִי אֶת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקָנָא תִּי: ^{יְהוָה} אָמַר הָנָנִי נָתַן לוֹ אֶת-בְּרִיתִי שָׁלוֹם: ^{יְהוָה} יְהִי תְּהִלָּה לוֹ וְלֹרְעֹו אֶת-חֲרִיוֹתִי כְּרִיתִתְהָנֵת עַולְם תְּחַת אֲשֶׁר קָנָא לְאַלְקִי וַיַּכְפֵּר עַל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

10. ספר מלכים א' פרק י"ט

וַיֹּאֲחַר הַרְעֵשׁ אָשׁ לֹא בְּאָשׁ הָ וְאַחֲרַ הָאָשׁ קָוְלָה דְמָמָה דָקָה: ^{יְהוָה} בָשְׁמָעָ אֶלְיוֹהוּ וַיָּלֶט פְנֵיו בְאֲדָרָתוֹ וַיֵּצֵא וַיַּעֲמֹד פָתֵח הַמִּעֵרָה וְהַנֵּה אֶלְיוֹן קָוְל וַיֹּאמֶר מַה-לְךָ פֶה אֶלְיוֹהוּ: ^{יְהוָה} וַיֹּאמֶר קָנָא קָפְאָתִי לְהָיָה אֶלְקִי צְבָאֹת כִּי-עָזָבו בְּרִיתְךָ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-מִזְבְּחֹתֶיךָ הָרָסָו וְאֶת-נִגְבִּיאָיךָ הָרָנוּ בְּחַרְבָּה וְאַוְתָרָה אָנָי לְבָרֵי וְלִבְקָשׁו אֶת-נְפָשָׁי לְקַחְתָּה:

9. Numbers 25 (Parashat Pinhas)

¹⁰The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹¹"Phinehas, son of Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the Israelites in his **becoming jealous** with My **jealousy** among them, so that I did not wipe out the Israelite people in My **jealousy**. ¹²Say, therefore, 'I grant him My pact of friendship. ¹³It shall be for him and his descendants after him a pact of priesthood for all time, because he took **jealous**ous action for his God, thus making expiation for the Israelites.'"

10. I Kings 19

¹²After the earthquake – fire; but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire – a soft murmuring sound. ¹³When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his mantle about his face and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then a voice addressed him: "Why are you here, Elijah?" ¹⁴He answered, "I am **jealous** with my **jealousy** for the LORD, the God of Hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and have put Your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they are out to take my life."

11. Rambam, *The Guide to the Perplexed* (trans. Lenn E. Goodman & Phillip I. Liberman) Part I

[§36] If you survey the entire Torah and all the Prophets, you will find the expressions “kindling of wrath,” “anger,” or “jealousy” applied only to idolatry. Only an idolater, you see, is called the LORD’s foe or adversary, or hateful to God.

[§54] We find, likewise, that some of the actions that issue from Him and affect human beings are terribly harmful ... that no human would commit against another unless moved by fierce anger, deep malice, or implacable vengeance. It is by reference to such acts that He is called “jealous, avenger, angry, wrathful” (Nahum 1:2), suggesting acts like those expressing human jealousy, ire, spite, or vindictiveness. The acts, in His case, regard the deserts of those punished. They involve no passion whatever on His part. (Exalted be He above all Imperfection!)

12. ספר במדבר פרק ה' (פרשת נשא)

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לְאֹמֶר: יְדַבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֹמֶרֶת אֲלֵיכֶם אֵישׁ אֲישׁ פִּתְחָשָׁתָה אֲשֶׁר-בָּו מַעַלָּה: יְשַׁבֵּב אֲישׁ אֲתֶה שְׁכַבְתִּזְרָעַ וְנַעַלְתִּמְעִינִי אִישָׁה וְגַסְתָּרָה וְהַיָּא נְטָמָה וְעָלָא אֵין בָּהּ וְהַוָּא לֹא נְתַפְּשָׁה: וְעַבְרָעַלְיוּ רְוַחְקָנָה וְקָנָא אֶת-אֲשָׁתוֹ וְהַוָּא נְטָמָה אָוּבָר עַלְיוּ רְוַחְקָנָה וְקָנָא אֶת-אֲשָׁתוֹ וְהַיָּא לֹא נְטָמָה: שְׁוֹהָבִיא הָאִישׁ אֶת-אֲשָׁתוֹ אֶל-הַכְּהֻן וְהַבִּיא אֶת-קָרְבָּנָה עַלְיהָ עַשְׁירָת הָאִיפָּה קָמָח שְׁעָרִים לְאִיצָּק עַלְיוּ שָׁמָן וְלְאִיתָן עַלְיוּ לְבָנָה כִּימָנָחַת קָנָאת הָוּא מְנָחַת זְבּוּן מִזְבְּחָת עַזְנָ: ... וְזַהֲעִמִּיד חַבְתָּן אֶת-דָּאשָׁה לִפְנֵי הָעָזָב וְפָרָע אֶת-רַאשֵּׁה הָאָשָׁה וְנַתֵּן עַל-כְּפָרִיהָ אֶת-מְנָחַת הַזְּבּוּן מְנָחַת קָנָאת הָוּא וּבִידָה הַכְּהֻן יְהֹוָה מִן הַמְּרִירִים הַמְּאָרְרִים: ... כִּי-וְלֹקֵח הַכְּהֻן מִינֵּי הָאָשָׁה אֶת-מְנָחַת הַקָּנָאת וְהַנִּינָּפָא אֶת-הַמְּנָחָה לִפְנֵי הָהָרָקִיב אֶתְתָּה אֶל-הַמְּזֹבֵחַ: ...

12. Numbers 5

¹¹The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ¹²Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: Regarding anyone whose wife has gone astray and broken faith with him, ¹³in that another man has had carnal relations with her unbeknown to her husband, and she has kept secret the fact that she defiled herself without being forced, and there is no witness against her – ¹⁴but a fit of jealousy has come over him and he is wrought up about the wife who has defiled herself; or if a fit of jealousy has come over him and he is wrought up about his wife although she has not defiled herself: ¹⁵That man shall bring his wife to the priest. And he shall bring as an offering for her one-tenth of an *ephah* of barley flour. No oil shall be poured upon it and no frankincense shall be laid on it, for it is a **grain offering of jealousy**, a grain offering of remembrance that recalls wrongdoing. ... ¹⁸After he has made the woman stand before the LORD, the priest shall bare the woman's head and place upon her hands the grain offering of remembrance, which is a **grain offering of jealousy**. And in the priest's hands shall be the water of bitterness that induces the spell. ... ²⁵Then the priest shall take from the woman's hand the **grain offering of jealousy**, elevate the grain offering before the LORD, and present it on the altar. ...

כִּי־זֹאת תֹּרַת הַקָּנָאת אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁטֹּה אֲשֶׁר תִּתְּחַת אִשָּׁה וְנִתְּמַמָּאָה: ^ל אָוֹ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר תִּעַבֵּר עַלְיוֹ רְוֵחַ קָנָאת וְקָפָא אֲתִידָשְׁתָו וְהַעֲמִיד אֲתִידָהָשָׁה לִפְנֵי הָר וְעַשֵּׂה לְלֹה הַכְּפֹן אֵת כָּל־הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת: לְוַנְקָה הָאִישׁ מַעֲןָן וְהָאִשָּׁה הַהוּא תִּשְׁאַא אֶת עֲוֹנָה:

13. ספר משללי פרק ו'

לְכִיקְנָאָה חַמְתָּגָבָר וְלֹא־יְחַמּוֹל בַּיּוֹם נִקְמָה: לְלֹא־יְשָׁא פָּנִי כָּל־כְּפֹר וְלֹא־יְאָבָה כִּי תַּרְבָּה שְׁחָד:

14. תלמוד בבלי מסכת תענית דף כ"ו:

וְכֵן הוּא אָוּמָר: "צָאִנָּה וּרְאִנָּה בְּנֹות צִיּוֹן בְּמֶלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה בְּעַטְרָה שְׁעַטְרָה לוֹ אָמוֹן בַּיּוֹם חַתְּבָתוֹ וּבַיּוֹם שְׁמָחָת לְבָוּ" (שיר השירים ג' י"א). "בַּיּוֹם חַתְּבָתוֹ" – זה מיטן תורה, "זָבוֹיָם שְׁמָחָת לְבָוּ" – זה בְּנִין בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, שִׁיבָּנוּה בְּמִזְבֵּחַ בִּימֵינוּ.

15. ספר הושע פרק א'

בְּתִחְלַת דְּבָרָיה' בְּהַוּשׁ וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־הַוּשׁ עֲלֵךְ קְחֵלֶךְ אֶשְׁתְּ זָנוֹנִים וְיַלְדֵי זָנוֹנִים כִּי־זָנָה תִּזְנַח הָאָרֶץ מַאֲחַרְיָה:

16. ספר הושע פרק ב'

לְרִיבּוּ בְּאַמְכַט רִיבּוּ בְּיִהְיָא לֹא אֲשָׁתִי וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא אִישָׁה וְתִסְרֵר זָנוֹנִיתִי מִפְנֵיָה וְנִאֲפֹפִיהָ מִבֵּין שְׁדֵרוֹתָה: ^{וְפָנִים} אֲפָשִׁיטָנָה עַרְמָה וְהַצְגָּתָה כִּי־יּוֹם הַוּלָדָה וְשְׁמַתִּיהָ כְּמַדְבָּר וְשַׁתָּה בָּאָרֶץ צְלָה וְהַמְתִיכָה בָּצָמָא: ^{וְבְּיִרְבָּנִיתָה} לֹא אַרְחֵם קִיבְנֵי זָנוֹנִים הַמְּפֹהָה: ^{וְבְּיִזְנְתָה} אָמָם הַבִּישָה הַוּרָתָם כִּי אָמָלה אֶלְכָה אֲחָרִי מַאֲהָבָל נִתְנַחֲנֵי לְחַמְלִי וּמִימִי צָמְרִי וּפְשָׁתִי שְׁמָנִי וּשְׁקוּוִי:

²⁹This is the law of jealousy, when a woman goes astray while in her husband's household and defiles herself, ³⁰or when a man, overtaken by a fit of jealousy, is wrought up over his wife: the woman shall be made to stand before the LORD and the priest shall carry out all this ritual with her. ³¹The man shall be clear of guilt; but that woman shall suffer for her guilt.

13. Proverbs 6

³⁴For jealousy shall drive the fury of the husband; he will show no pity on his day of vengeance. ³⁵He will not have regard for any ransom; he will refuse your bribe, however great.

14. Ta'anit 26b

And similarly, it says: "Go forth, daughters of Zion, and gaze upon King Solomon, upon the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, and on the day of the gladness of his heart" (Songs 3:11). "On the day of his wedding" – this is the giving of the Torah, "And on the day of the gladness of his heart" – this is the building of the Temple, may it be rebuilt speedily in our days.

15. Hosea 1

²When the LORD first spoke to Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, get yourself a wife of *zenunim* and children of *zenunim*; for the land has 'zenut-ed' itself from following the LORD."

16. Hosea 2

⁴Remonstrate your mother, remonstrate her – for she is not My wife and I am not her husband – and let her put away her *zenut* from her face and her adultery from between her breasts. ⁵Else will I strip her naked and leave her as on the day she was born: And I will make her like a wilderness, render her like desert land, and let her die of thirst. ⁶I will also disown her children for they are now the brood of a *zonah*, ⁷In that their mother has played the *zonah*, she that conceived them has acted shamelessly – because she thought, "I will go after my lovers, who supply my bread and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink."