

What are all these women doing in my Succah?!

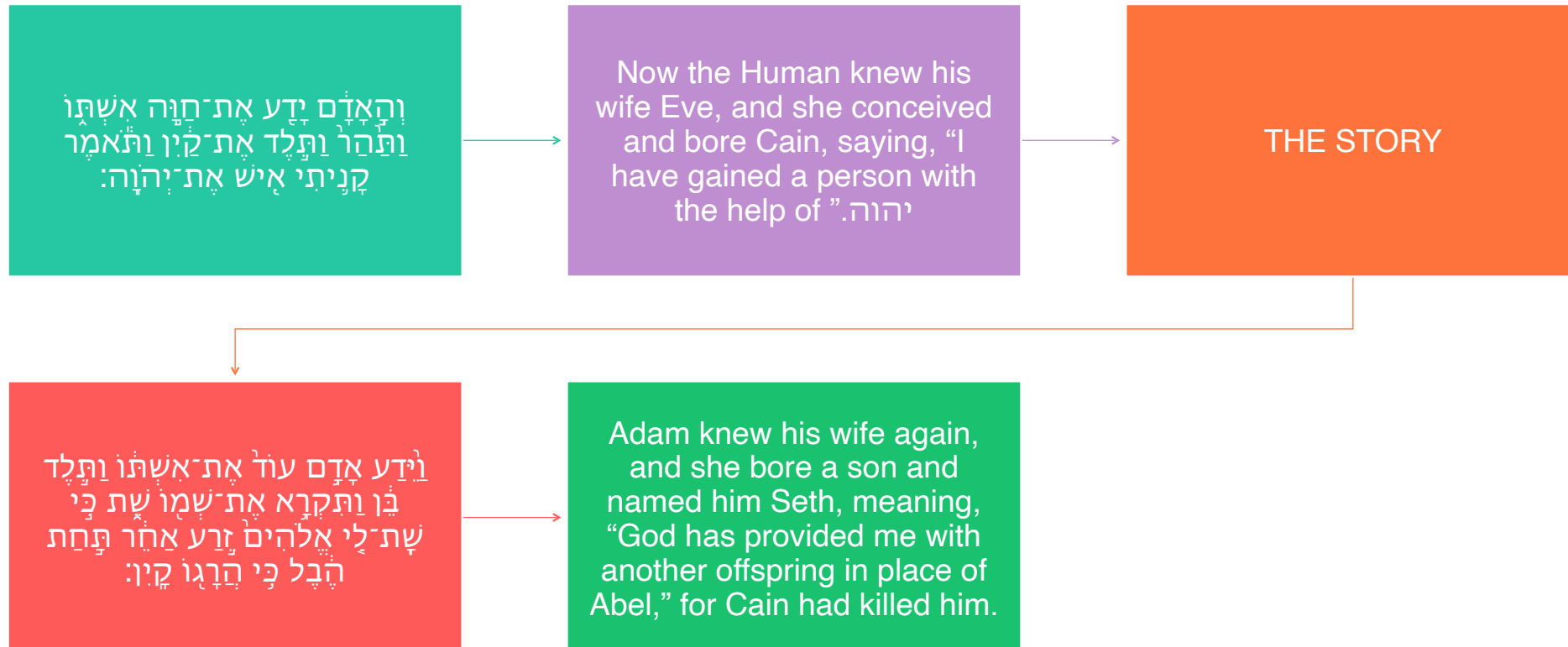
REBECCA WINTER FOR
TORAH IN MOTION
TISHREI 5786

Bookends in Tanach

1. Birth of Kayin ---- Birth of Shet (Breishit 4) (Kayin and Hevel)
2. Korbanot (Vayikra 1-7) ---- Korbanot (Vayikra 23 – 27) (Sefer Vayikra)

The bookends create a frame for the story,
that would not have been immediately obvious to the reader ...

Bookends – Kayin and Hevel





Masechet Succah

Avraham Walfish – The Literary Editing Method in the Mishna (dissertation)

Sara Ronis: ***A Woman Gone Wild: Miriam bat Bilgah in the Tosefta and the Babylonian Talmud (2007)***

“Avraham Walfish notes that in the Mishnah and the Tosefta, the beginning of a tractate often displays a unity with its ending.³² The same is often true of the Talmud...”

Queen Helene

- אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוּדָה: מַעֲשֵׂה בְהִילָנִי הַמְּלָכָה בְּלוֹד שֶׁהִיְתָה סוּכָּתָה גְּבוּהָה מִמַּעֲשָׂרִים אַמָּה, וְהָיוּ זִקְנִים נִכְנָסִין וְיוֹצְאִין לְשָׁם וְלֹא אָמְרוּ לָהּ דָּבָר. אָמְרוּ לוֹ: מִשָּׁם רְאִייהָ? אִשָּׁה הִיְתָה וּפְטוּרָה מִן הַסּוּכָּה. אָמַר לָהּ: וְהֵלֹא שִׁבְעָה בָּנִים הָיוּ לָהּ, וְעוֹד: כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיהָ לֹא עָשְׂתָה אֶלָּא עַל פִּי חֲכָמִים.

Rabbi Yehuda said: There was an incident involving Queen Helene in Lod where her *sukka* was more than twenty cubits high, and the Elders were entering and exiting the *sukka* and did not say anything to her about the *sukka* not being fit.

The Rabbis **said to him:** Is there **proof from there?** **She was**, after all, **a woman and** therefore **exempt from the** mitzva of ***sukka***. Consequently, the fact that her *sukka* was not fit did not warrant a comment from the Elders. Rabbi Yehuda **said to them** in response: **Didn't she have seven sons** and therefore require a fit *sukka*? **And furthermore, she performed all of her actions only in accordance with the directives of the Sages.**

Masechet Succah 2b

Miriam Bat Bilga

- בִּילְגָה לְעוֹלָם חוֹלֶקֶת בְּדָרוֹם. תָּנּוּ רַבָּנָן: מַעֲשֵׂה בְּמַרִּים בֵּת בִּילְגָה שֶׁהַמִּירָה דָּתָהּ, וְהָלַכָה וְנִשְׂאָת לְסַרְדֵּיּוֹט אֶחָד מִמַּלְכֵי יוֹוִנִים. כְּשֶׁנִּכְנְסוּ יוֹוִנִים לְהִיכָל, הָיְתָה מִבְּעֻטָּת בְּסִנְדָּלָה עַל גְּבִי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, וְאָמְרָה: לֹקוֹס לֹקוֹס! עַד מָתִי אַתָּה מְכַלָּה מָמוֹנִי שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִי אַתָּה עוֹמֵד עָלֵיהֶם בְּשַׁעַת הַדָּחָק! וְכִשְׁשָׁמְעוּ חֲכָמִים בְּדָבָר, קִבְּעוּ אֶת טַבַּעְתָּהּ וְסָתְמוּ אֶת חִלּוֹנָהּ.

We learned in the mishna that **Bilga always divides** the shewbread **in the south**, even when it is the incoming watch. The Gemara elaborates: **The Sages taught** in a *baraita*: There was an **incident involving Miriam, the daughter** of a member of the **Bilga** watch, **who apostatized and went and married a soldier [sardeyot]** serving in the army **of the Greek kings. When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary**, she entered with them and **was kicking with her sandal on the altar and said: Wolf, wolf [lokos], until when will you consume the property of the Jewish people, and yet you do not stand with them when they face exigent circumstances? And** after the victory of the Hasmoneans over the Greeks, **when the Sages heard about this matter** and how she denigrated the altar, **they fixed the ring** of the Bilga watch in place, rendering it nonfunctional, **and sealed its niche.**

Succah 56b

Bookends?

Helene Hamalka (Succah 2b)

Miriam Bat Bilga (Succah 56b)

Chiasm

A. Sacrifices & Access to God (Chs. 1–7)

- Korbanot of individuals and community.

B. Kohanim (Chs. 8–10)

- Consecration of kohanim, Nadav & Avihu.

C. Purity Laws (Chs. 11–15)

- Kashrut, tumah/taharah (childbirth, tzara'at, bodily emissions).

D. CENTER: Yom Kippur Ritual (Ch. 16)

- **Atonement for the Mishkan and Israel; entry into the Holy of Holies.**

C'. Holiness & Purity Laws (Chs. 17–22)

- Kashrut revisited, prohibited relationships, holiness code, priestly regulations.

B'. Kohanim & Festivals (Chs. 23–25)

- Mo'adim (festivals), priestly roles, sanctity of Mishkan and land (Shemitah/Yovel).

A'. Covenant & Korbanot (Chs. 26–27)

- Blessings & curses, vows, sanctified gifts.

Mini Chiasm in Succah

Queen Helene ----- Miriam Bat Bilga

Midpoint of Succah – 28a:

• הִי קָרָא וְהִי הִלְכְּתָא? וְתוֹ: קָרָא לָמָּה לִּי, הִלְכְּתָא לָמָּה לִּי? הֲאֵסוּפָה מִצּוֹת עֹשֶׂה שֶׁהַזְמַן גֶּרְמָא, וְכָל מִצּוֹת עֹשֶׂה שֶׁהַזְמַן גֶּרְמָא נָשִׁים פְּטוּרוֹת.

• The Gemara asks: **Which** of them **is** derived from **the verse** and **which is a halakha** transmitted to Moses from Sinai and merely supported by a verse? **And furthermore, why do I need the verse and why do I need the halakha?** Isn't *sukka* a positive, time-bound mitzva, and the principle is that **women are exempt from all positive, time-bound mitzvot**? There is no need for a special derivation to exempt women from the mitzva of *sukka*.

Mini Chiasm?

- A. Story of Woman – Halachik influence (Queen Helene)
- **B. Exemption of women in the Mitzvah of Succah**
- A. Story of Woman – Halachik Influence (Miriam bat Bilga)

• **אמר אביי:** לעולם סוכה הלכתא, ואיצטריך. סלקא דעתך אמינא "תשבו" – כעין תדורו, מה דירה – איש ואשתו, אף סוכה – איש ואשתו, קא משמע לן.

• **Abaye said: Actually, *sukka* is a *halakha*** transmitted to Moses from Sinai. Nevertheless, it **was necessary** to teach that a woman is exempt from the mitzva of *sukka*, as **it might enter your mind to say: "Shall you reside"** (Leviticus 23:42) indicates that you reside in the *sukka* **as you dwell; just as dwelling** is typically performed by a **man and his wife, so too**, the mitzva of *sukka* is performed by both **a man and his wife**. Therefore, **it teaches us** that women are exempt.

רבא אמר: איצטריך, סלקא דעתך אמינא יליף "חמשה עשר" "חמשה עשר" מחג המצות. מה להלן – נשים חייבות, אף כאן – נשים חייבות. קא משמע לן.

Rava said a different reason: A *halakha* transmitted to Moses from Sinai **was necessary** to teach that a woman is exempt from the mitzva of *sukka*, as **it might enter your mind to say: Derive** a verbal analogy with regard to *Sukkot*, about which it is written: "On the **fifteenth** day of this seventh month is the festival of *Sukkot*" (Leviticus 23:34), **from** Passover, about which it is written: "And on the **fifteenth** day of the same month is the **festival of *matzot***" (Leviticus 23:6). **Just as there, women are obligated** to eat *matza* on Passover even though it is a time-bound mitzva, **so too here**, with regard to the mitzva of *sukka*, **women are obligated**. Therefore, the *halakha* transmitted to Moses from Sinai **teaches us** that they are exempt.



Abaye



Teishvu k'ein taduru

Rava



Matza

Abaye

Teishvu k'ein
taduru

הגה ומה שנוהגין להקל עכשיו בשינה שאין ישנים בסוכה רק המדקדקין
במצות יש אומרים משום צינה דיש צער לישן במקומות הקרים [מרדכי פ'
הישן] ולי נראה משום דמצות סוכה איש וביתו איש ואשתו כדרך שהוא דר
כל השנה ובמקום שלא יכול לישן עם אשתו שאין לו סוכה מיוחדת פטור
וטוב להחמיר ולהיות שם עם אשתו כמו שהוא דר כל השנה אם אפשר
להיות לו סוכה מיוחדת:

Rem"a: And nowadays what is practiced to be lenient in the Sukkah,
such that only the scrupulously observant sleep in the Sukkah; there are
those who say that it is because of the cold, for it is uncomfortable to
sleep in the cold places, and it seems to me that this is because the
Mitzvah of Sukkah is a man and his household, a man and his wife, and
in a place where he cannot sleep with his wife, that he does not have a
suitable Sukkah, he is exempt; and it is good to be stringent, and to be
there with his wife, just as he resides all year, if he can have a suitable
Sukkah. *Rema SA OC 639:2)



Rava



Matza

- Why would I draw the conclusion specifically to the mitzvah of succah, and not another mitzvah pertaining to succot?

1. Mitzvot that are expressions of the unique quality of the day

2. Mitzvot the fashion the unique quality of the day


- (Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, *Minchat Aviv*)

ד) שם. פטורים מן הסוכה. ומ"מ יש להם שכר לנשים כשמקיימים מ"ע שהזמן גרמא כמ"ש לעיל סי' תקפ"ט או כ"ג ולענין ברכה אם יכולין הנשים לברך על מ"ע שהזמן גרמא עיין לעיל סי' תקפ"ט סעי' ו' ובדברינו לשם או כ"ג אבל אחרים לא יברכו להם אלא א"כ מברך לעצמו כמ"ש שם סעי' ו' בהגה וכ"כ מ"א סי' זה סק"א:

(4) There — [regarding women:] *they are exempt from the sukkah.*

Nevertheless, they receive reward when they fulfill a **positive time-bound commandment (mitzvat aseh she'hazman gerama)**, as was explained above in *Siman* 589, paragraph 23. And regarding the **blessing** — whether women may recite a blessing over a positive time-bound mitzvah — see above in *Siman* 589, section 6, and in our words there, paragraph 23. However, **others should not recite the blessing for them**, unless the person is also reciting the blessing for himself — as was stated there, section 6, in the *gloss* (the Rema). And so too wrote the **Magen Avraham** in this *Siman*, subparagraph 1.

Kaf HaChayim 640:4



ה) שם. פטורים מן הסוכה. ומיהו מצוה על כל איש ישראל להושיב אשתו ובני ביתו עמו בסוכה להיותם מסתופפים בצלא דמהימנותא לטהר את נפשותם ולהודיע אליהם חסדי ה' עם ישראל עמו ונחלתו תמיד כל הימים בעבור תהיה יראתו ואהבתו על פניהם לבלתי תחטאו. יפ"ל ח"ב אות א':

Nevertheless, it is a **mitzvah upon every Jewish man** that his **wife, children, and household** be with him in the sukkah, **in order to increase joy**, for the sukkah is the “**shade of faith**”, and in the World to Come, the **righteous will sit in their sukkot**, their **crowns upon their heads**, and they will **delight in the radiance of the Shechinah (Divine Presence)**.

Kaf HaChayim 640:5 (Rav Yaakov Chayim Sofer; 20th century)

Back to Miriam and Helene

Helene (2b) — Constructive female presence in sacred space



Women & halacha l'Moshe miSinai (28a)



Miriam bat Bilga (56b) — Destructive female presence in sacred space



On Yom Kippur, man purifies his soul; on Sukkot, he sanctifies his environment.

Rav Kook

Olat Reiya: Succot

“*Sukka* and the other commandments of the festival are an expression of the spread of the *Shekhina* during Sukkot even beyond the outer Temple precincts, all the way – as it were – to the home (or *sukka*) of every individual in Israel.”

Rav Dr. Yonatan Feintuch “*From Inside to Outside: Yom Kippur and Sukkot*”

Chag Sameach!

