

Pesikta De-Rab Kahana, Piska 1:2

Commentary to Numbers 7:89

King Solomon made himself a palanquin (Song 3:9). Palanquin - this is the Tabernacle; King Solomon made himself - the King who has his peace.

In explanation of the verse, R. Judah bar Ilai told the parable of a king who had a young daughter. Before she was old enough to show the signs of puberty, he felt free to talk to her wherever he saw her - whether in the market, in alleys or in lanes, he felt free to talk to her. But after she came of age and showed the signs of puberty, he said: It does not suit the deference owed to my daughter that I speak to her in public. Make a palanquin for her, and I will speak to her in privacy within the palanquin.

So [was it between God and Israel]. At the beginning *When Israel was a child in Egypt, then in My love of him, I used to cry out [wherever I saw him], "O son of Mine" (Hos. 11:1)*. Thus it came about that the children of Israel saw Me in Egypt when I said *I will go through the land of Egypt (Exod. 12:12)*; they saw Me at the Red Sea, *when Israel saw the great Hand (Exod. 14:31)*; they saw Me at Sinai when, according to Scripture, *The Lord spoke with you face to face (Deut. 5:4)*. But once they accepted the Torah and hence were regarded by Me as a people come of age, I said, It no longer suits the deference owed to My children that I speak to them in public. Make the Tabernacle for Me, and then I shall speak to them [in privacy] from within the Tabernacle. Thus Scripture: *When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him (Num. 7:89)*.

Analysis of Pesikta De-Rab Kahana, Piska 1:2

Opening with a brief association of King Solomon and his palanquin to God and the Tent of Meeting, the midrash relates the story of a king who chose to meet with his daughter within a palanquin rather than in public. The king realized that his daughter had come of age, and therefore, she merited the dignity of a less public meeting place. So too, God decided to meet with Israel within the confines of the Tent of Meeting after Israel, by virtue of accepting the Torah, had come of age.

Rabbi Judah bar Ilai's comment takes us from the opening proem definition of the palanquin as Tent of Meeting and King Solomon as God, to the example of the king and his daughter. Then the story of the king is related to Israel through a series of proof texts depicting a pre-adult Israel. The proem verse receives its greater meaning when interpreted through the *nimshal* of God establishing the Tent of Meeting on account of Israel's acceptance of the Torah and associated ascendancy to adulthood. God acts as a father figure leading a youthful Israel through adolescence.

The connection between the palanquin and the Tent of Meeting is further stressed by the ambiguous reference as to what King Solomon made for himself: "King Solomon made a ... for himself." This phrase occurs after the palanquin is defined as the Tent of Meeting, but just prior to King Solomon being described as God. The phrase's ambiguity and clever placement aid our transition from the proem verse to the main idea of the midrash. At first, we assume that the king refers to King Solomon, and the missing reference is the palanquin that he made for his daughter. But suddenly the midrash instructs us that the king refers to God, and the missing statement is the Tent of Meeting, constructed on account of Israel's maturity. In addition, this incomplete phrase hints at the *lexion* verse (which is not mentioned until the end of the midrash) by catching us just before we associate King Solomon with God, and discover that God's palanquin is the Tent of Meeting.

At the end of the section, the presentation of the *lexion* verse reminds us that the midrash serves to modify Numbers 7:89. The *lexion* verse, although hinted to at the beginning of the midrash, is not brought into the discussion until the end. At this point, the *lexion* verse appears to be tacked on for no reason other than as a connection to the larger context of Piska One and to conclude the present discussion. The proem verse, translated in light of the midrash should read, "God instructed the Israelites to make the Tent of Meeting for Israel (by virtue of Israel's acceptance of the Torah and ascendancy to adulthood)."