An Unlikely Biblical Commentator: The Saga of Micah 1:7

Adam Mintz

Michah 1:7

And all her idols shall be shattered, and all her whore’s pay burned in fire and all her icons I will make a desolation. For from a whore’s pay she amassed it, and to a whore’s pay it shall revert.

Devarim 23:19

You shall not bring a whore’s pay nor a dog’s price to the house of the Lord your God for any votive offering, for both of them are the abhorrence of the Lord your God.

Kohelet Rabba 1:8

Another interpretation of “All things toil to weariness” (Kohelet 1:8): Words of heresy (דברי מינות) weary man. Rabbi Eliezer was once arrested because of heresy. The hegemon took him and brought him up to the bema to be tried. He said to him: Can a great man like you engage in these senseless matters (heresy)? He answered: Faithful is the Judge concerning me. He (hegemon) thought that he (Rabbi Eliezer) was alluding to him - though he only spoke in reference to God. He (hegemon) said to him: Because I have been deemed reliable by you, I considered the matter and thought: Would these grey hairs err in these senseless matters? Dimissus! You are released.

After Rabbi Eliezer had left the court, he was distressed to have been arrested for matters of heresy. His disciples came to him to comfort him, but he refused to accept.

Rabbi Akiva came to him and said: Rabbi, perhaps one of the heretics explained something to you that was agreeable to you?

He said: Yes, by Heaven! You have reminded me.
Once I went along the paved road of Sepphoris where there came up to me a man named Yaakov from Kfar Sekhnia, who told me something in the name of Jesus Ben Pandera which pleased me.

This is what he told me: It is is written in your Torah: “You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog ... “ (Devarim 23:19) - what is to be done with them? I said to him: They are forbidden. He said to me: They are forbidden for offerings but might they be allowed for disposal? I asked: Then what can they be used for? He said to me: They can be used to make bath-houses and privies. I said: You have spoken well, and the law escaped my memory at that time.

When he saw that I acknowledged his explanation, he added: Thus said Ben Pandera: From the disgusting places did they come, to the disgusting places let them go as it is said: “From the hire of a harlot she gathered them, and to the hire of a harlot they shall return” (Michah 1:7) - let them be used to make privies for the public - and the thought pleased me. On that account I was arrested for heresy. And, moreover I have transgressed what is stated in the Torah: “Remove your way far from her,” i.e. heresy “and do not go near the door of her house” (Mishlei 5:8).

Mishna Parah 2:3

A whore’s pay and dog’s price are not allowed (to be used as a red heifer). Rabbi Eliezer permits it as it says: You shall not bring a whore’s pay nor a dog’s price to the house of the Lord your God - and this is not considered “bringing into God’s house”.

A whore’s pay and dog’s price are not allowed (to be used as a red heifer). Rabbi Eliezer permits it as it says: You shall not bring a whore’s pay nor a dog’s price to the house of the Lord your God - and this is not considered “bringing into God’s house”.

A whore’s pay and dog’s price are not allowed (to be used as a red heifer). Rabbi Eliezer permits it as it says: You shall not bring a whore’s pay nor a dog’s price to the house of the Lord your God - and this is not considered “bringing into God’s house”.