



A POSSIBLE EROTIC READING OF THE PARDES NARRATIVE

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- The discussion in Tosephta begins with אין דורשין בעריות בשלשה (“sexual prohibitions may not be expounded by three”), thus framing the discussion with a sexual tone.
- The word *Parades* appears three times in the Bible, always referring to a garden. That one of the three references is from Canticles 4:13 and is about the feminine is particularly interesting.

Canticles 1:4

Your plants (thighs) are an orchard
of pomegranates with choice fruits,
with henna and nard.

ספר שיר השירים א:ד

שְׁלַחֲךָ פְּרָדִים רְמוּנִים עִם פְּרֵי מִגְדִּים
כְּפָרִים עִם נָרְדִים:

- This would make us rethink the meaning of ארבעה נכנסו (“four entered.”)
- The three who gaze do not fair well. This would correspond to the Talmudic suggestion that gazing during intercourse is forbidden. See B. Talmud Nedarim 20a:

Rabbi Aḥa, son of Rabbi Yoshiya, says: Anyone who watches women will ultimately come to sin, and anyone who looks at the heel of a woman will have indecent children as a punishment. Rav Yosef said: And this relates to all women, including his wife when she has the status of a menstruating woman. Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: The heel of a woman that is mentioned is not the heel of the foot, but the place of uncleanness, i.e., the genitalia, and it is called a heel as a euphemism, as it is situated opposite the heel.

רבי אחא ברבי יאשיה אומר כל
הצופה בנשים סופו בא לידי עבירה
וכל המסתכל בעקבה של אשה הויין
לו בנים שאינן מהוגנין אמר רב יוסף
ובאשתו נדה אמר רבי שמעון בן
לקיש עקבה דקתני במקום הטינופת
שהוא מכוון כנגד העקב

Rabbi Yohanan ben Dehavai said: The ministering angels told me four matters: For what reason do lame people come into existence? It is because their fathers overturn their tables, i.e., they engage in sexual intercourse in an atypical way. For what reason do mute people come into existence? It is because their fathers kiss that place of nakedness. For what reason do deaf people come into existence? It is because their parents converse while engaging in sexual intercourse. For what reason do blind people come into existence? It is because their fathers stare at that place.

אמר רבי יוחנן בן דהבאי ארבעה דברים סחו לי מלאכי השרת חגירין מפני מה הויין מפני שהופכים את שולחנם אילמים מפני מה הויין מפני שמונשים על אותו מקום חרשים מפני מה הויין מפני שמספרים בשעת תשמיש סומין מפני מה הויין מפני שמסתכלים באותו מקום

- Three out of the four proof verses can easily be associated with sexuality.

Proverbs 25:16

If you have found honey, eat only enough for you, lest you have your fill of it and vomit it.

ספר משלי כה:טז

דַּבֵּשׁ מִצֵּאתָ אֲכַל דִּיָּךְ פֶּן תִּשְׂבָּעוּ וְהִקֵּאתוּ:

Ecclesiastes 5:5

Do not allow your mouth to cause sin to your flesh, and say not before the messenger that it is an error; why should God be wroth with your voice and destroy the work of your hands?

ספר קהלת ה:ה

אֵל תִּתֵּן אֶת פִּיךָ לַחֲטִיא אֶת בִּשְׁרֶךָ וְאֵל תֹּאמֶר לִפְנֵי הַמַּלְאָךְ כִּי שָׁגָגָה הִיא לָמָּה יִקְצֹף הָאֱלֹהִים עַל קוֹלְךָ וְחִבַּל אֶת מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ:

Canticles 1:4

Take me away with you—let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers. We rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more than wine.

ספר שיר השירים א:ד

מִשְׁכְּנֵי אַחֲרֶיךָ נְרוּצָה הֵבִיאֵנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ חֲדָרָיו נְגִילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה בָּךְ נִזְכִּירָה דְדִיךָ מִיַּיִן מִיִּשְׁרִים אֶהְבֹּדְךָ:

- Manuscript that uses יזין (to satisfy) as opposed to יזוז (to move).