

פחז כמים אל תותר

אבנר רמו



Ruben, from the Twelve sons of Jacob, c. 1590 by Jacques de Gheyn II (1565-1629)
Antwerp. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In the Book of Genesis we read:

ויהי בשכן ישראל בארץ ההוא, וילך ראובן וישכב את-בלהה פילגש אביו, וישמע ישראל;
“And it came to pass, while Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard of it” (Gen 35:22).

We read in the Book of Numbers:

ועתה לכה-נא ארה-לי את-העם הזה כי-עצום הוא ממני-אולי אוכל נכה-בו ואגרשנו מן-
הארץ: כי ידעתי, את אשר-תברך מברך, ואשר תאר יואר.
“Come now therefore, I pray you, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me;
peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I will drive them out of the
land; for I know that he whom you blesses is blessed, and he whom you curses is cursed”
(Num 22:6).

In the Book of Deuteronomy we read: **ארור שכב עם-אשת אביו** - "Cursed be he that lies with his father's wife" (Deu 27:20).

In the Book of Zephaniah we read: **נביאיה פחזים, אנשי בגדות; כהניה חללו-קדש** - "Her prophets are wanton and treacherous persons; her priests have defiled that which is holy" (Zep 3:4).

Now we find in the Book of Genesis:

ראובן בכרי אתה, כחי וראשית אוני-יתר שאת ויתר עז. פחז כמים אל-תותר, כי עלית משכבי אביך; אז חללת יצועי עלה.

"Reuben, you are my first-born, my might, and the first [fruits] of my strength; the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power.

Unstable as water, have not you the excellency; because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it. my couch went up" (Gen 49:3-4).

The Greeks translated the Hapax legomenon **פחז** to: "you became wanton" which suggests the possibility that **פחז כמים** is a letter-insertion and order-type error, and mis-division of **כפחזים** - "like wantons." If this understanding is correct, then the logic of this verse and the comparison between these verses suggest that **אל-תותר** is a letter-deletion and letter-substitution error of: **ארור תואר** *aror thuar* - "you will surely be cursed" (e.g. Gen 27:29; Num 24:9; Jud 5:23).