

# SEVENTY

## Ramban on Parashat Behaalosecha

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### Numbers 11

16 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Gather unto Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with thee.

### ספר במדבר פרק י"א

(טז) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה אֲסַפֶּה לִּי שִׁבְעִים  
אִישׁ מִזְקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִדְעַתָּ כִּי הֵם זְקֵנֵי  
הָעָם וְשׁוֹטְרֵיוֹ וְלִקְחָתָ אִתָּם אֶל אֵל הֵל מוֹעֵד  
וְהִתְיַצְּבוּ שָׁם עִמָּךְ:

### Ramban on Numbers 11:16

16. AND THE ETERNAL SAID UNTO MOSES: GATHER UNTO ME SEVENTY MEN OF THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL. Our Rabbis have already mentioned that there are seventy nations with seventy languages, each one having a constellation in the heavens with a prince above it, as it is said in the Book of Daniel, *and the prince of the kingdom of Persia*, and it is [further] written with reference to the kings of Greece, lo, *the Prince of Greece shall come*; and it is about this that Scripture states, *And the Eternal will punish the host of the high heaven on high*. The Rabbis have also said that the [seventy] bullocks [brought as offerings on the seven days] of the Festival of Tabernacles allude to them. [A similar reference to the seventy princes we find, in connection with the Tower of Babel] in the Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer: Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to the seventy kings that surround the throne of His Glory: Let us come and confound their language. It was for this reason that the number of those who went down to Egypt was seventy, and that He commanded that there should be this number of judges in Israel [as is stated in the verse before us], for this number includes all opinions [that are possible in a given case] since it comprises all powers, and *there will not be anything too hard* for them.

### רמב"ן במדבר פרק י"א פסוק ט"ז

(טז) אֲסַפֶּה לִּי שִׁבְעִים אִישׁ מִזְקְנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל. כָּכָר הַזְּכִירוּ  
רְבוּתֵינוּ, כִּי שִׁבְעִים אַמּוֹת הֵן בְּשִׁבְעִים  
לְשׁוֹן, וַיֵּשׁ לְכָל אַחַת וְאַחַת מִזֵּל בְּרַקִּיעַ  
יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמַעַלָּה כְּעֵנִין שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בְּדִנְיָאֵל (י יג)  
יִשְׂרָאֵל מְלָכוֹת פָּרַס, וּכְתִיב (שם) אֶצֶל מְלָכֵי  
(י"ז) [פָּרַס, וְכֵן] וְהִנֵּה שָׁר יְיָן בָּא (שם)  
פְּסוּק (כ), וְהוּא שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (ישעיה כד כא) יִפְקֹד  
ה' עַל צָבָא הַמְּרוֹם בְּמְרוֹם (מכילתא שירה  
ב). וְאָמְרוּ (סוכה נה:) כִּי פָּרִי הַחַג יִרְמְזוּ  
בָּהֶם: וּבְפָרְקֵי רַבֵּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר (פרק כד) אָמַר  
הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְשִׁבְעִים מְלָאכִים  
הַסּוֹבְבִים כְּסָא כְבוֹדוֹ, בּוֹאוּ וּנְבַלְבַל  
לְשׁוֹנָם. וְלִכְּן הִיָּה הַמְּסַפֵּר בִּיּוֹרְדֵי מִצְרַיִם  
שִׁבְעִים. וְצִוָּה הַמְּסַפֵּר הַזֶּה בְּשׁוֹפְטֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל, כִּי הַמְּסַפֵּר הַזֶּה יְכַלֵּל כָּל הַדְּעוֹת  
בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ כּוֹלֵל כָּל הַכּוֹחוֹת, וְלֹא יִפְּלֵא מֵהֶם  
כָּל דְּבָר:

Similarly at the Giving of the Torah [special prominence was given to] *seventy elders of Israel*, and it is fitting that the Glory of the Divine Presence should rest upon [a group of] this perfect number, since it is [comparable to] the camp on high, for Israel are *the hosts of the Eternal* on earth, just as the ark and its cover and the Tabernacle were all made in the likeness of those that minister [before Him] on high. So also were the [four] standards made in the image of the Divine Chariot which Ezekiel saw, in order that the Divine Presence should rest upon them on earth as it is present in the heavens.

Now Moses was above the seventy elders [in authority], thus alluding to Israel, *a nation one in the earth*. 103 And our Rabbis have received by tradition that every Sanhedrin (Great Court) that sits in G-d's House in the place which He shall choose on which to rest His Presence, should consist of this number, seventy, with the head [of the Court] above them [in authority] like Moses our teacher, and thus they comprise [a Court] a seventy-one budes, and with the Divine Presence in their midst they are seventy-two]. Similarly the letters in the Great Ineffable Divine Name are seventy-two, corresponding to the seventy princes and the One G-d who is the sole Master over all.

It is to this that Scripture hints in saying, *G-d standeth in the congregation of G- d; in the midst of the judges He judgeth*, for the Divine Presence is with them to assent to their judgment. And Scripture further states, *How long will ye judge unjustly?* Thus admonishing [and saying] that since *the Glorious Name is with them in giving judgment*, how can you not be fearful of Him when you pervert justice, as in the expression, *the people that provoke Me to My face continually*. And it states furthermore [in that psalm], "I said: *Ye are godlike beings, and all of you sons of the Most High* for your number is the same as the number of the princes above and the One Master, and so I said that you will sit *in the seat of G-d* on earth. But *Vadam 'ye shall die'* - like the first man [Adam] who was driven from his glorious place [in the Garden of Eden] and died, so will you [who judge unjustly] be driven out of the House of G-d and die. *And like one of the princes* on high you were, but you fell from that high position. I have already mentioned something of this matter in *Seder V'eileh Hamishpatim*.

וְכֵן בְּמַתַּן תּוֹרָה וְשִׁבְעִים מְזַקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (שמות כד א), כִּי רָאוּ בַמִּסְפָּר הַשְּׁלֵם הַזֶּה שְׂיִשְׁרָה עֲלֵיהֶם כְּבוֹד הַשְּׂכִינָה כַּאֲשֶׁר הִיא הַמַּחֲנֶה הָעֲלִיּוֹן, כִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל צְבָאוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּאֶרֶץ, כְּמוֹ שְׁנַעֲשֶׂה אֲרוֹן וְכַפֶּרֶת וּמִשְׁכַּן בְּדַמּוֹת הַמְּשַׁמְשִׁין בְּמִרוֹם, וְנִעֲשׂוּ הַדְּגָלִים בְּדַמְיוֹן הַמְּרַכְבָּה אֲשֶׁר רָאָה יְחִזְקֵאל לְהַשְׁרוֹת שְׂכִינָה עֲלֵיהֶם בְּאֶרֶץ כַּאֲשֶׁר הִיא שְׂכִינָה בַּשָּׁמַיִם:

וְהִנֵּה מֹשֶׁה עַל גְּבֵי שִׁבְעִים זְקֵנִים, רְמָז לְיִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁהוּא גּוֹי אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ: וְקִבְּלוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ (סנהדרין ב.) כִּי כָּל סִנְהֶדְרֵי גְדוֹלָה הַיּוֹשֶׁבֶת בְּבֵית הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּמִקּוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחָר לְשִׁכְנוֹ שָׁם, כֵּן יִהְיֶה מְנִינָם שִׁבְעִים, וְהַנְּשִׂיא עַל גְּבֵיהֶם כְּמֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ, וְהִנֵּה הֵם שִׁבְעִים וְאֶחָד. וְכֵן הָאוֹתִיּוֹת בַּשֵּׁם הַגְּדוֹל הַמְּפָרֵשׁ שִׁבְעִים וּשְׁתַּיִם, כְּנֶגֶד הַשְּׂרִים וְהַשֵּׁם הַמְּיַחֵד שֶׁהוּא אֲדוֹן יַחִיד עַל כָּלֵם:

וְלָזֶה יִרְמָז הַפְּתוּב בְּאִמְרוֹ (תהלים פב א) אֱלֹהִים נִצַּב בְּעֵדַת אֵל בְּקֶרֶב אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט, כִּי הַשְּׂכִינָה עִמָּהֶם לְהַסְכִּים עַל יָדָם. וְאָמַר הַפְּתוּב (שם פסוק ב) עַד מָתִי תִשְׁפָּטוּ עוֹל, יִזְהִיר בָּהֶם אַחֲרֵי שֶׁהֵשֵׁם הַנִּכְבָּד עִמָּהֶם בְּדַבַּר הַמְּשַׁפֵּט אֵיךְ לֹא תֵרְאוּ מִמֶּנּוּ לְהַטּוֹת הַמְּשַׁפֵּט, כְּטַעַם הָעַם הַמְּכַעֲסִים אוֹתִי עַל פְּנֵי (ישעיה סה ג). וְאוֹמֵר עוֹד (תהלים פב ו), אֲנִי אֲמַרְתִּי אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם וּבְנֵי עֲלִיּוֹן כָּלְכֶם, כִּי מִסְפָּרְכֶם כְּמִסְפָּר שְׂרֵי מַעְלָה וְאֲדוֹן הַיְחִיד, כְּאִדָּם תְּמוֹתוֹן, כְּאִדָּם הָרֵאשׁוֹן שֶׁגָּרַשׁ מִמִּקּוֹמוֹ הַנִּכְבָּד וְמַת, כֵּן תִּתְגַּרְשׁוּ מִבֵּית הַשָּׁמַיִם וְתְמוֹתוֹ, וְכֹאחַד הַשְּׂרִים שֶׁל מַעְלָה הֵייתֶם, וְתִפְּלוּ מִן הַמַּעְלָה הַזֶּה. וְכִבְּר הַזְּכוּתִי מִן הָעֲנִיָּן הַזֶּה בְּסִדְר וְאֵלֶּה הַמְּשַׁפָּטִים (שמות כא ו):