Teachings of the Maharal

Birth Order Relates to Modesty

D'varim 2:9 - Hashem said to me. "Do not besiege Moav and do not provoke war with them..."

Rashi - He forbade only war with Moav, but they could frighten them and appear armed. Therefore, Moav was afraid of the nation [Bamidbar 22:3], for they would loot and plunder them. But with Amon it says, "do not provoke them" [2:19] - any provocation. This was a reward for the modesty of their mother, who did not publicize her father's sin as her sister did by calling her son Moav.

Gur Arye - With respect to Moav, Moshe is told, "Do not provoke war", and by Amon, "do not provoke them." The fact of their mother’s modesty made them closer to Israel, whose attribute is modesty in a world where the other nations are immodest. Not only was their mother modest but the nation of Amon as a whole was. If you understand this, you will understand the words of the sages, that as a reward for Rachel’s modesty she merited Shaul among her descendants [Megila 13b]. Note that the younger one is modest and inwardly directed, coming from a more modest and internal origin.

How do we know of Rachel’s modesty? She was the younger, born later, more hidden. Likewise, Lot’s younger daughter was prepared for a more modest role, and her seed came from a more modest, internal place, and like begets like, resulting in a nation of modesty. Therefore, Amon was worthy of Hashem’s protection.

Hashem commanded Moshe to circumvent their land, which He had earlier given them as an inheritance. In fact, you will find that Moav, Amon and Edom were all nations before Israel, who became a nation only upon emerging from Egypt, after the others were residing on their land.

Physicality comes first and spirituality last. This applies to man just as it applies to Israel. Spirituality perfects and completes. Therefore, man was created last of all creation. Similarly, all the other nations were created before Israel. There were seventy nations in the generation of dispersion, and four subsequent Abrahamic nations - Amon, Moav, Yishmael and Edom. Then the spiritual nation, Israel, emerged from Egypt and brought hashlama [completion, perfection] to the world.

Column prepared by Dr. Moshe Kuhr