

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter I: Bereisheet (Gen. 1:1-6:8)

Essay 4. Bathsheba was ordained for David from Creation

מדרש בשם ספר הפליאה הובא בפסוק נבחר, פְּרַשְׁתַּת תְּצַוֶּה, וז"ל, דוד הנה מצטער על מעשה בת־שבע ולא נתקרה דעתו עד שהגיע לפרק בתולה נשאת ליום הרביעי עכ"ל. והוא תמוה מה ענין בת־שבע לפרק בתולה נשאת.

A midrash in the name of the Sefer haPliah [sic] is brought in Kesef Nivchar, in the section on parshat Tetzaveh, and this is his language, “that David was sorry about the incident with Bathsheba (II Sam. 11), and his mind wasn’t settled until he reached the section in Mishnah Ketubot 1:1 that ‘a virgin should get married on a Wednesday.’”¹ This is strange, for what connection is there between Bathsheba and the section “a virgin should get married on a Wednesday?”

ונראה לדקדק מתחלה מהו זה הצער שהנה לדוד על מעשה בת־שבע? דליכא למימר שהוא מחמת העון שעשה שהרי כתיב, כִּי־פָשַׁעִי אָנֹכִי אֲדַע, וְחַטָּאתִי נִגְדִי תָמִיד, וְאִם כֵּן, לֹא שָׁיִף נִתְקַרְרָה דַעְתּוֹ. וְלֹא שָׁיִף נְמִי הַלְשׁוֹן שֶׁל מִצְטַעֵר, שֶׁהֵנָּה לוֹ לומר מתחרט, אלא נדאי שנה הוא צער אחר, מלבד אותו שהנה לו מחמת העבירה.

It appears necessary to scrutinize the introduction: What was this sorrow that David had over the incident with Bathsheba? One cannot say that it was because of the sin that he committed, for it is written, “for I recognize my transgressions, and am ever conscious of my sin” (Ps. 51:5), and if so, if he remains ever conscious of it, then it’s not fitting to say that his mind was settled. Also, the language of “being sorry” isn’t fitting, for it should have said that “he regretted” the incident. Rather, it is certain that this was a different sorrow, apart from the one he had regarding the sin.

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¹ Kesef Nivchar, by Zelig ben Isaac Margolios (published in Amsterdam in 1712). On page 31a, Kesef Nivchar incorrectly refers to Sefer haPliah (a 14th or early 15th century composition on parshat Bereisheet in which the anonymous author collected interpretations of early Kabbalists). It should instead refer to “midrash pliah” [a midrash of wonder], a practice of some preachers in the 16th and 17th centuries to invent a riddle upon which they would base sermons. This was a controversial practice, as the term misled many to believe that the riddle was a midrash of ancient origin. [An earlier source is Nachalat Binyamin, by Yitzchak Binyamin Wolf Ashkenazi (published in Amsterdam in 1682). Page 79b, title in right column: “An explanation of the midrash pliah: David was sorry all his days about the incident with Bathsheba, until he reached the section ‘a virgin should get married on a Wednesday.’”]

והינינו והוא דאמרינו בפרק י"א דסנהדרין, דרש רבא מאי דכתיב, כִּי־אֲנִי לְצַלַּע נָכוֹן וּמִכְאוּבֵי נִגְדֵי תְּמִיד? רְאוּנָה הַיְתָה בַת־שֶׁבַע לְדָוִד מִשִּׁשֶּׁת יָמֵי בְרָאשִׁית, אֲלֵא שֶׁבָּאָה עָלָיו בְּמִכְאוּב. וּפִירֵשׁ מִהֲרֵשׁ"א כִּי־אֲנִי לְצַלַּע נָכוֹן, לְפִי שְׂרָאוֹי וְנִכּוֹן הַיְתָה לוֹ מִשִּׁשֶּׁת יָמֵי בְרָאשִׁית, לְכֹד קָרְאָה צַלַּע, שֶׁהָאִשָּׁה בִּימֵי בְרָאשִׁית נִבְרְאָת מִן הַצַּלַּע, אֲלֵא שֶׁבָּאָה עָלָיו בְּמִכְאוּב עַל יְדֵי נִסְיוֹן, וְזֵהוּ וּמִכְאוּבֵי נִגְדֵי תְּמִיד עכ"ל.

That is what is said in the 11th chapter of Sanhedrin (107a): “Rava taught: What is the meaning of that which is written: ‘For I am about to fall; my pain is always with me’ (Ps. 38:18)? Bathsheba . . . was fit for David from the six days of Creation, but she came to him through pain.” The Maharsha² explains the text “‘for I am about to fall (לצלע) (*letzela*),’ since she was fitting and proper for him from the six days of Creation, therefore she’s called “a rib” (צלע) (*tzela*). As the woman in the days of Creation was created from the rib, she came to him through man’s pain because of the experience, and this is the meaning of ‘my pain is always with me.’” I.e., the word לצלע (*letzela*), meaning to fall (to the side), is derived from the word צלע “rib or side.” Rava draws a parallel between Eve, who was taken from Adam’s rib and destined for him, and he concludes that Bathsheba was similarly predestined for David.

ואם כן, הצער שהיה לו לדוד הוא מפני שהדבר שהיה מוכן לו שהיתה צלעו. לא באה אליו בדרך פשוט בדרך העולם, וקעולם היה מצטער על דבר זה. אבל כשהגיע לפרק בתולה נשאת ליום הרביעי, נתקרה דעתו.

If so, the sorrow that David had was because of the fact that it was predestined for him that she was his “rib.” She didn’t come to him in a simple way like the normal course of affairs, and he was always sorry about this. But when he arrived to the section “a virgin should get married on a Wednesday,” his mind was settled.

דבריש כתובות, מקשינו ותנשא באחד בשבת, ואם היה לו טענת בתולים, היה משכים לבית דין בשני. שקדו חכמים על תקנת בנות ישראל שיהא טורח בסעודה שלשה ימים, אחד בשבת, שני בשבת, שלישי בשבת, וברביעי פונסה. וכתבו התוספות ו"ל טעם דשקדו תיפוק ליה משום ברכה דאמרינו לקמן, אשה נשאת ברביעי ונבעלת בתמישי, לפי שנאמר בו ברכה לדגים? ואומר ר' יהודה דטעם דברכה אינו אלא עצה טובה, ולא מקרי עבריןא. אבל משום שקדו מקרי עבריןא. וכן כתבו התם (דף ג') דמשום ברכה לא היו קובעים יום וכו' ועיי"ש עכ"ל.

At the beginning of Ketubot (3b), a Baraita asks why the Mishna says that a virgin should be married on a Wednesday? It is so that if the husband had a claim concerning the bride’s virginity, he could go early the next day to court and make his claim. If so, “it questions, let her marry on Sunday, and if [the husband] had a claim concerning virginity, he could arise early to the court on Monday. The Gemara answers: [The rabbis] were assiduous regarding the ordinance enacted for the well-being of Jewish women, so that [the husband] would exert himself in arranging the wedding feast for three days: Sunday, Monday and Tuesday—and on Wednesday, he marries her.” Tosafot (2a) asks: “Can the reason that they were assiduous be

² Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Eidels (1555–1631), Polish rabbi famous for his Talmud commentaries, Chiddushei Halachot and Chiddushei Agadot.

derived from the blessing” that is mentioned later in Ketubot 5a, that “a woman who is a virgin is married on a Wednesday and engages in intercourse on Thursday, since on that day the blessing to the fish to be fruitful and multiply was stated?” Tosafot answers, that “Rabbi Yehuda says that the identification of the blessing as being the reason of why Wednesday weddings are preferred is only a good suggestion, but it isn’t the real reason, and one who marries on a different day isn’t called a transgressor for missing out on the blessing to the fish. Rather, it is because of [the rabbis] being assiduous, that one is called a transgressor if he fails to exert himself in arranging a three-day wedding feast.” Similarly, it is written there in Tosafot on page 3a “that they didn’t fix the day on account of the blessing.”

והתם נמי אַמרינוּ בְּמִקְרָא דְקוּדָם תְּקַנְתָּ עֲזָרָא, אִשָּׁה נִשְׂאָת בְּכָל יוֹם, וְהָא בְּעֵינֵי שְׁקִדּוֹ? דְּטָרִיחַ לִיהּ. וְכָל הַיְכָא דְאִיכָא בְּתַי דִּינִין הַקְּבוּעִים בְּכָל יוֹם הָאִידְנָא כְּקוּדָם תְּקַנְתָּ עֲזָרָא, אִשָּׁה נִשְׂאָת בְּכָל יוֹם ע"כ.

It also says there in the Gemara (3a), that “prior to the institution of the ordinance of Ezra,” who established that courts would meet on Monday and Thursday, “a woman was married on any day of the week. But don’t we require a wedding on Wednesday because the rabbis were assiduous in making sure that the groom had several days to prepare for the wedding feast? He can be married even on a Sunday or Monday where he already exerted himself and prepared for the wedding before the Sabbath.” Furthermore, “if there are courts in regular daily session today, as there were prior to the ordinance of Ezra, a woman can be married on any day of the week.”

וְצָרִיד עֵיוֹן בְּזָה אִיד אֶפְשָׁר דְּמִקְרֵי עֲבֵרְיָנָא מִי שְׂאִינוּ נוֹשָׂא בְּרַבִּיעֵי מִפְּנֵי שְׁעוֹבְרָא עַל תְּקַנְתָּ שְׁקִדּוֹ, וְהָא קוּדָם תְּקַנְתָּ עֲזָרָא, וְהַיְכָא דְאִיכָא בֵּית דִּין קְבוּעָא בְּכָל יוֹם, מוֹתֵר לוֹ לְכַתְחֻלָּהּ. וְאִם תֹּאמַר שְׁגַם בְּמִקְוֹם דְּאִיכָא בֵּית דִּין, אִם לֹא יִטְרַח בְּסַעוּדָה קוּדָם יִהְיֶה עֲבֵרְיָין, אִם כֵּן קִשְׁיָה לְמָה לֹא אִמְרוּ חֻקִּים זֶה בְּפִירוּשׁ, שְׁמִי שְׁלֹא יִטְרַח בְּסַעוּדָה קוּדָם הַגִּישׁוּאִין יִהְיֶה עֲבֵרְיָין. וְלָמָּה לָהֶם לְקַבּוּעַ יוֹם אֶחָד מִיּוֹדֵד כְּדֵי שְׂיִחְיֶה נִשְׁמַע מִמֶּנּוּ עֲבִירָה זֶה, יוֹתֵר טוֹב הָיָה לוֹמַר בְּפִשְׁיטוּת חַיִּיב הַסַּעוּדָה, וְנָה הָיָה חָל בֵּין דְּאִיכָא בֵּית דִּין בֵּין דְּלִיכָא. וְאִזּוּ הָיְתָה יְכוּלָה לְהַנְשֵׂא אַף בְּאֶחָד בַּשַּׁבָּת, וְהָיָה יְכוּל לְהַזְדַּרְזוּ יוֹתֵר בְּמִצְוֹת פְּרִיָה וְרַבִּיָה, מִה שְׂאִין כֵּן עֲתָה שְׁצָרִיד לְהַמְתִּין עַד יוֹם רַבִּיעֵי. כְּדָאִמְרִינוּ הַתָּם עַל הַגִּיעַ זְמַן וְלֹא נִשְׂאוּ, הַגִּיעַ זְמַן בְּאֶחָד בַּשַּׁבָּת וְכוּ'.

It requires examination how it’s possible to label as a transgressor one who marries on a day other than Wednesday because of the fact that he violates the ordinance of [the rabbis] being assiduous in seeing to the well-being of Jewish women, when prior to the ordinance of Ezra—and even afterwards in places where there is a regular court every day—it would be permissible for him to marry on a day other than Wednesday. If you’ll say that even in a place where there is a regular daily court, if he doesn’t exert himself in arranging the wedding feast first he will be a transgressor, then it is difficult to understand why the rabbis didn’t simply say that one who doesn’t exert himself in arranging the wedding feast before the wedding will be a transgressor. It would also be difficult to understand why they fixed one special day, in order that this violation will be determined from [not marrying then]. It would have been better to simply state the obligation of the wedding meal, which applies whether there is a court in daily session or not. Then it would be possible to marry even on Sunday,

and it would be possible to hasten in the mitzvah of being fruitful and multiplying, unlike now when one needs to wait until Wednesday. As it says there:

If the time that the groom designated for the wedding arrived, but the wedding was postponed and they were not married, the bride is entitled to eat from his food . . . One might think that if the designated time arrived on Sunday, but the wedding was postponed, he would provide her sustenance beginning on Sunday. Therefore, we learned: A virgin is married on a Wednesday. In other words, until Wednesday, the designated time is not considered to have arrived, even if the original date was earlier in the week.

- (Ketubot 2a)

אָלאַ ונדאי צָרִיף לומר שְׂדַעַת אַחֲרַת הַיְתָה לָהֶם לר"ל בְּתַקְנָה זוֹ, שְׁפָשְׁהוּא טוֹרֵחַ בְּסַעוּדָה, מוֹכָח שָׂאִין שׁוּם טֵינָא בְּלַבּוֹ עִם אַרוֹסְתּוֹ, וְכַשִּׁיטְעוֹן טַעֲנַת בְּתוּלִים תְּהִיָּה טַעֲנַת אֲמַת לְאִמְתּוֹ. וּמִשׁוּם הַכִּי, הוּא נֶאֱמָר, מִטַּעַם חֻזְקָה אֵין אָדָם טוֹרֵחַ בְּסַעוּדָה וּמְפֻסְדָּה, מַה שָׂאִין כֵּן אִם לֹא הָיָה טוֹרֵחַ בְּסַעוּדָה, אֲפָשֶׁר שְׂמַחְמַת טֵינָא שְׁהֵיָתָה כְּכַר בְּלַבּוֹ מוֹצִיא עֲלֶיהָ שָׁם רַע, וְאִינוּ נֶאֱמָר, לְפִי שָׂאִין לוֹ חֻזְקָה כְּמוֹ שְׁכַתְּבוּ הַפּוֹסְקִים, וְיִתְגַּבֵּר הַמַּחְלֻקָּת וְהַשְּׂנְאָה בֵּינֵיהֶם. וּמִשׁוּם הַכִּי מְקַרֵי עֲבָרֵינָא, שְׁנוֹתָן מְקוּם לִיצְרוֹ לְהִתְגַּבֵּר עָלָיו בְּעִנְיָן מָסָה וּמְרִיבָה וּקְטָטָה.

Rather, it is certain that it is necessary to say that the rabbis had another idea in this ordinance, that when he exerted himself in arranging a wedding feast, it proves that there's no grievance in his heart regarding his fiancée, and that when he makes a claim concerning virginity, it will be a truthful claim. Because of this, he will be believed, from a strong presumption that a man will not exert himself in arranging a wedding feast and forfeiting it. That's something that is not the case if he had not exerted himself in arranging a wedding feast, in which case it's possible that because of a grievance already in his heart that he would bear false testimony against her. In such a case where he hadn't arranged a wedding feast, he would not be believed if he made a claim concerning virginity, as he had no presumption as the *poskim* (decisors) wrote, and the conflict and hatred between them would grow stronger. Because of this, he'd be called a transgressor, in that he allowed his inclination to get the best of him in a matter of great quarrelling.³

וּמַעֲתָה אִם יַעֲשֶׂה הַנִּישׁוּאִין בְּאַחַד בְּשַׁבָּת, אִף אִם כְּכַר טַרַח בְּסַעוּדָה, נוֹתֵן מְקוּם לִיצְרוֹ לְהִתְגַּבֵּר, שְׂאִמְרוּ רַז"ל לְמָה לֹא נֶאֱמַר כִּי־טוֹב בְּשַׁנִּי, מִפְּנֵי שְׁנִבְרָא בּוֹ מַחְלֻקָּת. וְהוֹאִיל דְּלִיכָא כְּתוּבָה דְּלֹא רָמוּ בָּהּ תִּיגְרָא, אִם הָיְתָה נִשְׂאָת בְּרֵאשׁוֹן וְנִבְעֵלָת בְּשַׁנִּי, הָיָה מְתַרְבֵּה חֵס וְשְׁלוֹם הַמַּחְלֻקָּת. אֲבָל כְּפִישׁ בְּתֵי דִינִין קְבוּעִים בְּכָל יוֹם וְעוֹשִׂים דִּין וּמִשְׁפָּט, אִזּוּ יֵשׁ שְׁלוֹם וְאַמַּת בְּעוֹלָם וְאֵין לַחֲוֹשׁ לְמַחְלֻקָּת, כְּדִאֲמַרִּינָן בִּירוּשְׁלַמִּי (סוֹף שְׁקָלִים), נַעֲשֶׂה הַדִּין נַעֲשֶׂה הָאֲמַת נַעֲשֶׂה הַשְּׁלוֹם. שְׁנִאֲמַר אֲמַת וּמִשְׁפָּט שְׁלוֹם שְׁפָטוּ בְּשַׁעֲרֵיכֶם.

From now, if he would make a wedding on a Sunday, even if he had already exerted himself in arranging a wedding feast, he would be allowing his inclination to get the best of

³ The Hebrew text, *masah u' merivah v' ketata*, presents three words for "strife." The first two words appear together in Ex. 17:7 ("The place was named Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled").

him, as the rabbis of blessed memory said, “Why wasn’t it said ‘G-d saw that this was good’ on the second day of Creation (Gen. 1:6–8)? Because discord was created on that day.” (Gen. Rabbah 4:6). Since “there is no marriage contract and wedding in which contentiousness does not arise” (Shabbat 130a), if he would have married on Sunday and consummated on Monday and had a claim concerning the bride’s virginity, the controversy would have grown, G-d forbid. But when there are courts in daily session engaged in judging and justice, thus there is peace and truth in the world and there is no sense of controversy, as it says in the Yerushalmi at the end of Shekalim [sic], “the making of justice is the making of truth is the making of peace, and Rabbi Mana said, all three are in one verse, ‘These are the things that you shall do: Speak every man the truth with his neighbor, and render truth and justice of peace at your gates’ (Zech. 8:16).”⁴

ועוד קנימא לו, כל מקום שיש דין למטה, אין דין למעלה. ומשום הכי, תיקנו דוקא בתולה נשאת ליום הרביעי, ולא באחד בשבת היכא דליכא בית דין בכל יום, וממילא שפענו נמי טעם דשקדו.

We also know, “everywhere there is justice below, there is no need for justice above.”⁵ Because of this, it was specifically enacted that a virgin should marry on a Wednesday, and not on Sunday where there are no courts in daily session, and of itself (i.e., considering the matter narrowly), we have also heard the reason that he was diligent.

וכתוב בכתבי הארי זכרוננו לוי העולם הבא, שקודם חרבן הבית היו יורדות נשמות קדשות, והיה שלום בעולם, ואז זיוגן בלי טורח ויגיעה ברגע אחד. אבל אחר שנחרב הבית, נתרבה המחלוקת ואין יורדות נשמות קדשות, ומשום הכי זיוגן בטורח גדול ועמל וקטטות ומריבות.

It is written in the writings of the Ari, may he be remembered for life in the World-to-Come, that before the destruction of the Temple, new souls were descending from Heaven, and there was peace in the world, and then there were matches made without exertion, arriving in a moment. But after the Temple was destroyed, the discord grew and there were no more new souls descending and because of this their matches were made only in great struggle and toil and quarrels and fights.⁶

⁴ The text actually appears at Yerushalmi Taanit 21a, and also slightly altered at Yerushalmi Megillah 26a.
⁵ Gen. Rabbah 26:6, “Rabbi Elazar said, ‘In every place where there is no justice [i.e., from man], there is justice [i.e., from G-d].’”
⁶ Sefer Etz Chaim 15:1, and Sefer haGilgulim (section 13).

והנה בימי דוד הנה מחלוקת ביניהם, כדאמרין שמשום זה היו יוצאים למלחמה ונופלין, ומשום הכי כשהגיע לפרק בתולה נשאת נתקרה דעתו, ושראה הטעם שתיקנו דוקא ברביעי משום שלא יתרבה המחלוקת דליכא פתובה וכו'. וממילא נתברר לו שפשיש מחלוקת הזיווגים הם בטורח וביגיעה רבה, ולכן אף על פי שבת-שבע היתה ראויה לו לא יכלה להנשא לו אלא במקאוב, ועוד שצדין לא הנה בית המקדש בעולם.

Behold that in the days of David there was a dispute between [the people], as it says that because of this, men were going out to war and falling in battle.⁷ Because of this, when [David] arrived at the section in Mishnah Ketubot 1:1 “a virgin should get married on a Wednesday,” his mind was settled, that he saw the concept that the rabbis specifically enacted marriage to a virgin on a Wednesday so that discord would not grow and cause the situation to arise that “that there is no marriage contract in which contentiousness does not arise.” By itself, it became clear to him that when there is discord, the matches are burdened and very strained. Therefore, even though Bathsheba was fit for [David], she was not able to marry him without pain, and further at this time there was still no Temple in the world.

אי נמי בדרך אחר, רש"י עליו השלום פירש על פסוק יהי מארת, חסר ניו כתיב על שהוא יום מארה ליפול אספרה בתינוקות וכו'. ואיתה בתולעת יעקב שבמדרשו של רבי שמעון בן יוחאי הקשו על בתולה נשאת ליום הרביעי שביום רביעי שהוא יום חסרונה של בתולת ישראל שבו נתמעט הגרם לא הנה ראוי שבו הנה שלימות לבתולה אחרת, והשיבו כי נתקנו נישואי בתולה ברביעי להראות קיום ומעלה בבתולת ישראל, שאף כי נתמעטה ביום ההוא יש לה נחת רוח למטה בנשואי בתולה ביום ההוא, ונה סוד אל-תשמיחי איבתי לי כי נפלת קמתי וכו', ובכל נישואי בתולה יש תיקון למעלה.

In another manner, Rashi, peace be upon him, explained on the verse, “Let there be lights⁸ in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night” (Gen. 1:14), that the word “lights” is spelled deficiently, “missing a letter vav, so that it will appear to be the word ‘cursed,’ because [Wednesday] is a cursed day when children are liable to suffer from croup.”⁹ It is brought in Tola’at Ya’akov:¹⁰

We learned that a virgin is married on a Wednesday, and they stated a reason: that in case he had a claim against her virginity, he could rise up early in the morning and go to a court. **In the midrash of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai,¹¹ of blessed memory, they raised a difficulty [about a virgin marrying on a Wednesday], because [Wednesday] was a day of disadvantage for the Virgin of Israel [a**

⁷ Yerushalmi Peah 4b and Midrash Tehillim (Shocher Tov) on Ps. 7:8 explain that while most of David’s generation were righteous, there were some informants amongst the people, which resulted in losses during battle. In contrast, during Ahab’s time, the people were idol worshippers, but did not have informants.

⁸ While Rabbi Nachmani gives the spelling מארת (*me’orot*) (lights), Scripture spells it without the vav, as מארת (*me’eivot*) (curses). This is still pronounced מארת (*me’orot*) in reading the Torah, but it appears to be the word מארת (*me’eivot*) (curses).

⁹ Rashi continues, “In reference to this we read, ‘On Wednesday [they would fast] on account of croup, that it should not befall the children’ [Ta’anit 27b].”

¹⁰ Meir ben Ezekiel ibn Gabbai (1480–?) (Spanish kabbalist), who in 1507 wrote Tola’at Ya’akov, a Kabbalistic interpretation of the prayer ritual. The essay “Secret of the Wedding Blessings” was adapted by Isaiah HaLevi Horovitz (c.1565–1630) (Polish rabbi and Kabbalist, the “Shl’a”) in Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Shaar HaOtiyot, Hilchot Biah 3:6.

¹¹ Referring to Zohar Chadash, Shir ha Shirim 69b.

Kabbalistic reference to the Sefira of Malchut],¹² as Wednesday is **the day in which the moon was reduced in size** [a Kabbalistic reference meaning that in Atzilut (the world of emanation that emerges directly from G-d's infinite light), the Sefira of Malchut is incapable of receiving lights, due to a lack of *tikkunim*, corrections].¹³ Thus, **it would not be proper for it to be a day of completion** [i.e., marriage] **for another virgin**.¹⁴ They answered that the marriage of a virgin was fixed on a Wednesday to show the existence and standing of the Virgin of Israel [i.e., the Sefira of Malchut], that even though the diminishment of the moon was on that day of the week, there was the satisfaction below of seeing the marriage of a virgin on that day. This is the secret [reason] a Heavenly voice said, “Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy! Though I have fallen, I rise again . . .” (Micah 7:8), and for this reason a virgin is married on a Wednesday.

It is necessary to fix the wedding canopy from valuable components, to honor the bride who is mentioned in the Song of Songs,¹⁵ who enables with joy the lower [i.e., human] bride who is an example. [The wedding canopy] contains beauty from several precious shades of color, because the upper bride and the lower bride stand as one example, who is blessed with seven blessings, a hidden meaning [allegorically] anointing her from seven rivers with good oil, and [thus] she is blessed with seven blessings, such as the upper seven [i.e., blessings from the lowest seven Sefirot].

– Tola’at Ya’akov, Secret of the Wedding Blessings¹⁶

In every marriage of a virgin there is a *tikkun* [repair] above, i.e., in the Upper Sefirot.

¹² When Scripture uses the term “Virgin of Israel” and is not referring to an individual, the rabbis typically consider it a euphemism for the Nation of Israel, such as in Jer. 31:4. However, the term is used in the Zohar to represent the Sefira of Malchut.

¹³ Gen. 1:16 states that “G-d made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night . . .” Thus, both the sun and the moon are first identified as “great,” i.e., large in size, but then the moon is referred to as being small. A midrash, Gen. Rabbah 6:4 explains that the sun and moon were originally the same size, but that the moon complained it wouldn’t be proper to have two equal entities, and thus G-d reduced the moon in size. In a Kabbalistic interpretation, the diminution of the moon refers to the fact that in Atzilut (the world of emanation that emerges directly from G-d’s infinite light), the Sefira of Malchut is incapable of receiving lights, due to a lack of *tikkunim*.

¹⁴ I.e., a single person is considered incomplete.

¹⁵ The traditional rabbinic view is that the female figure in the Song of Songs represents Israel. Among later Kabbalistic views are that she represents the human soul yearning for union with the Divine, or even the Shechinah seeking to reunite with the upper Sefirot.

¹⁶ Meir ben Ezekiel ibn Gabbai (1480–?) (Spanish kabbalist), who in 1507 wrote Tola’at Ya’akov, a Kabbalistic interpretation of the prayer ritual. The section quoted was also copied verbatim by Isaiah HaLevi Horovitz (c.1565–1630) (Polish rabbi and Kabbalist, the “Shl’a”) in Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Shaar HaOtiyot, Hilchot Biah 3:6.

ולכו בברכה השביעית דהיינו אשר ברא, יש שמנה מיני שמחה: גילה רנה וכו', כנגד שבעה מיני שמחות שיש לאדם עם אשתו שאז יש לו חומה ושלום וכו', והשמינית היא נגד תכלית הזיווג והשמחה, זיווג ישראל לאי ולשכינה על ידי זיווג המתהוון, ונהו ריעות דהיינו שלנה וריעות.

Therefore, in the seventh blessing, which is: “Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, Who created joy and happiness, groom and bride, gladness, jubilation, cheer and delight, love, friendship, harmony and fellowship. . . .”¹⁷ there are listed eight types of happiness, gladness, jubilation, etc.,¹⁸ corresponding to the seven types of happiness that a man has with his wife, as thanks to her he has a wall, and peace, etc.¹⁹ The eighth type of happiness listed in the last of the wedding blessings corresponds to the purpose of the match and the happiness, a match of Israel precisely,²⁰ and for the Shechinah on account of the lower match,²¹ and this is fellowship, which is peace and fellowship.

¹⁷ Ketubot 8a: ששון ושמחה חתן וכלה גילה רינה דיצה חדוה אהבה ואחווה ושלום וריעות (*sason, v'simcha, chatan, v'kalla, gila, rina, ditza, chedva, ahava, v'achva, v'shalom, v'reiut*). Many of the Hebrew words are synonymous, and therefore translations vary as to which English word should be assigned to a particular Hebrew word.

¹⁸ Zohar II:169b: “The seventh [blessing] sustains everything, and from this seventh [blessing] everything is blessed [and this is the Sefira of binah (intellect)]. And it’s sufficient that it includes ten sayings [by which the world was created], which represent the ten Sefirot, which includes everything above and below. And if so, this includes ten types of חדוה (*chedva*) (delight): *sason, v'simcha, chatan, v'kalla, gila, ditza, ahava, v'achva, v'shalom, v'reiut*.” The translator notes that רינה (*rina*) (jubilation) is omitted from the list, and חדוה (*chedva*) (delight) is used to introduce the list, but is not included as an element. Rabbi Nachmani refers to eight elements (instead of ten), and of the three he mentions, he includes *simcha* and *gila*, as well as *rina*, which had been omitted from the Zohar’s list. Thus, it is unclear exactly which eight elements Rabbi Nachmani intended, and why some elements are excluded from his list.

¹⁹ Yevamot 62b lists six items. “Rabbi Tanchum said that Rabbi Hanilai said: Any man who does not have a wife is left without joy, without blessing, without goodness. Without joy, as it is written: ‘And you shall rejoice, you and your household’ (Deut. 14:26). Without blessing, as it is written: ‘To cause a blessing to rest in your house’ (Ezek. 44:30). Without goodness, as it is written: ‘It is not good that man should be alone’ (Gen. 2:18). In the West, [i.e., the Land of Israel,] they say: Without Torah, [and] without a wall [of protection]. Without Torah, as it is written: ‘Is it that I have no help in me, and that sound wisdom is driven from me?’ (Job 6:13). Without a wall, as it is written: ‘A woman shall go around a man’ (Jer. 31:21), similar to a protective wall. Rava bar Ulla said: Without peace, as it is written: ‘And you shall know that your tent is in peace; and you shall visit your habitation and shall miss nothing’ (Job 5:24).” Other lists vary, such as the Tur, Even HaEzer 1:1 (who also lists six items): “Whoever lives without a wife lives without goodness, without blessing, without an apartment, without Torah, without a wall, without peace.”

²⁰ Each of the Sefirot includes a subset of the ten Sefirot, each of which subset includes ten more, and so on ad infinitum. Each Sefira is a receptacle for light, which may or may not be present. There are therefore an infinite number of combinations of these Sefirot and their subsets with their lights. These combinations are known as *partzufim*. A *zivug* (match) can exist between two of these *partzufim*. A “match of Israel” is one such match, which can influence a soul on earth.

²¹ “*Zivug hatachton*” (a lower match) is the bond between man and wife, and if they maintain moral standards, the Shechinah will dwell amongst them.

ונודע שפנונת דוד היתה שׂיבא תיקון העולם בנמיו כמו בימי משיח שׂהרי הוא דוד בעצמו, כמו שפירש האלשיך על פסוק ארדוף אויבי ואשיגם ולא־אשוב עד־כלותם, וכמו שאמרו במדרש על פסוק וישוב אתם אברם בקש דוד לכלות כל האומות וכו', ובת־שבע נקראת המלכות העליונה כשאונה מתוקנת, ודוד הנה רוצה ליקח בת־שבע בתולה ולתקן אותה לגמרי, ומכל שפן שׂהיתה מזומנת לו משׂשת ימי בראשית שׂהיתה צלעו, אבל בהיות שׂעדיין לא בא זמן התיקון. משום הני, אף כשנשאה לאחר מיתת אוריה, נקרא שאכלה פגה, דהיינו כמו פרי שאינו מבושל, ומתקן כל צרכו.

It is known that the intention of David was that Tikun Olam [a mending of the world] would come in his days as in the days of the Messiah, who is David himself, as explained by the Alshich on the verse, “I pursued my enemies and overtook them; I did not turn back until I destroyed them” (Ps. 18:38).²² As we said in the midrash on the verse, “Birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away” (Gen. 15:11),²³ “David requested to destroy all the nations etc.”²⁴ Bathsheba is referred to as the uppermost kingdom when it is not corrected.²⁵ David wanted to take Bathsheba as a virgin and to correct her completely, and all the more so, as she was prepared for him from the six days of Creation as his “rib.” But the time of correction had not yet come, so he was not able to be her first husband. Because of David’s feelings, he acted as he did toward Bathsheba. Although she was ultimately married to him in a permitted manner after the death of Uriah, it’s said that “he ate her like a fig,” that is like an uncooked fruit, i.e., he partook of her before the appointed time,²⁶ and everything was corrected as required.

וזהו פיראני לצלע, נכון אני, שאני דוד ומשיח, הנה נכון לי הצלע דהיינו בת־שבע. והנה מצטער על אורך הגלות כי מי יודע עת בא דבר השן, כמו שאמר בפסוק אחר עד־אנה ה' תשפחני נצח וכו'. ומי יודע עד מתי רצונו של הקב"ה שתתקנה מלכות שמים חסירה, כדכתיב יהי מארת חסר בבריאת העולם. והואיל שלא נתנה בת־שבע לדוד מתחלה, אם כן יקנה נראה תמיד חסרונה של בתולת ישראל, וכמו שהקשו במדרשו של רבי שמעון בן יוחאי.

This is the meaning of the verse, “For I am about to fall (כִּי־אני לצלע) (Ps. 38:18): the words אני לצלע (*ani letzela*) can also be interpreted as “I am [a match] for the rib,” and therefore it is correct to say אני (*ani*) “I,” for I am David and the Messiah, and so the “rib” (*tzela*), which is Bathsheba, is correct for me. Therefore, when the midrash pliah says he was sorry about the incident with Bathsheba, it doesn’t mean that he was sorry about his sin, but rather he was sorry about the length of the exile, because who knows when its end will arrive, as it says in another verse, “How long, O L-rd; will You ignore me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?” (Ps. 13:2). Who knows for how long the Holy One, Blessed be He, will desire the kingdom of Heaven, i.e., the Sefira of Malchut, to be lacking, as the verse, “let there be

²² Rabbi Moshe Alshich (1508–93), Rabbi and Kabbalist in Safed, author of many works, including Romemot E-l (Venice 1605) on Psalms, in which he commented on Ps. 18:36 that David will be reincarnated as the Messiah.

²³ Rashi on Gen. 15:11: “This is a hint that David the son of Jesse will come to destroy [the nations], but that he won’t be permitted to do so until the king Messiah comes.” This is based on Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 28.

²⁴ Romemot E-l on Ps. 18:36, paraphrasing Rashi’s words on Gen. 15:11 (provided in the preceding note).

²⁵ I.e., the Kabbalists use the name Bathsheba to refer to the Sefira of Malchut. Zohar III:37a.

²⁶ Sanhedrin 107a: “The school of Rabbi Yishmael taught, ‘Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam, was designated as fit for David, but he ate her like a fig,’ ” i.e., partook of her unripe, before the appointed time.

lights” (Gen. 1:14), is written with “lights” spelled deficiently in the Torah’s description of the Creation of the world. Since Bathsheba wasn’t given to David from the beginning, if so, a deficiency in the Virgin of Israel, i.e., the Sefira of Malchut, would always appear, as was questioned in the midrash of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, as discussed above.

וכיון שֶהִגִּיעַ לְפָרֵק בְּתוּלָה נִשְׂאָת לַיּוֹם הַרְבִּיעִי נִתְקַרְרָה דַּעְתּוֹ, כְּתִירוּץ רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹסֵאי הֵנַ"ל שֶבְכָל זַיּוּג וְזַיּוּג יֵשׁ אֵיזָה תִּיקוּן גּוֹסֵף לְבְתוּלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְזֶהוּ שֶפְתוּב אֶל־תְּשֻׁמְחֵי אֲנִיבְתִּי לִי וְכוּ', וְהֵהוּנְאָה וְהִשְׁחֹק שְׁעוֹשִׂים לְגוֹ הָאוֹמֹת בְּחִסְרוֹנָנּוּ וּבְגִלוֹתָנּוּ זֶה הוּא לְגוֹ לִישׁוּעָה שֶמִּקְרַב אֶת הַגְּאוּלָּה, וְכִמוֹ שֶאָמְרוּ ז"ל עַל פְּסוּק ה' עֲשֵׂה־לִּי עֲרַבְנִי.

When [David] arrived at the section in Mishnah Ketubot 1:1, “a virgin should get married on a Wednesday,” his mind was settled, as Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai solved above that in each and every match there is some additional correction for the Virgin of Israel, i.e., the Sefira of Malchut. This is what is written, “Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy! Though I have fallen, I rise again . . .” (Micah 7:8), and the deception and derision imposed upon us by the nations in our absence and in our exile is to us the salvation that brings redemption closer, and as the [rabbis] of blessed memory said on the verse, “My L-rd, I am in straits; Be my surety!” (Isaiah 38:14).

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