

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter VII: Vavetzei (Gen. 28:10-32:3)

### Essay 16. Accepting Manasseh's false regret

*Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray into evil greater than that done by the nations that the L-rd had destroyed before the Israelites. The L-rd spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not pay heed, so the L-rd brought against them the officers of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh captive in manacles, and bound him in chains of bronze, and led him off to Babylon. In his distress, he entreated the L-rd his G-d and humbled himself greatly before the G-d of his fathers. He prayed to Him, and He granted his prayer, heard his plea, and returned him to Jerusalem to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the L-rd alone was G-d.*

- II Chron. 33:9–13

**מדרש** ילקוט על פסוק "ויאסרהו בנחשתיים", מה עשה הקב"ה כמין מהתרת חתר לו תחת כסא הכבוד ושמע תחנונו. תימה מאי חתירה זו שחתר.

There is a **Midrash Yalkut Shimoni on the verse “and bound him with chains of bronze”**: **“What did the Holy One, Blessed be He, do? He made a kind of tunnel, digging for him beneath the Throne of Glory, and He heard his supplication.”**<sup>1</sup>

**This is astonishing: What is this “tunnel” that He dug?**

ונראה לפרשו במאי דאיתא בשלחן ערוך יורה דעה (סימן שכ"ג) גבי מי שנת[ע]רבה לו חלה בעיסה דהאריף שם הט"ז והעלה דחרטה מפני יראת העונש לא שמה חרטה ולא מהגנא, דאי לא תימא הכי היכן מצינו פרת באוכל קדשים בחוץ או מיתה בידי שמים בתרומה, דודאי מיראת העונש יתחרט וישאל לחכם וכו' ועיי"ש. והכא נמי חרטה זו של מנשה הווא חרטה מיראת העונש, ולא מהגנא דאם כן בטלת וכו', ובזה אתי שפיר מדוייק לשון חתירה, דכפיכול בקבלו תשובת מנשה עשה ממש חתירה ברקיע, דסתר כמה דינים דאם כן בטלת פרת וכו'.

**It appears that it may be explained based on what is stated in the Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah (siman 323), regarding one whose challah became mixed into dough. I.e., when baking, one is required to “take challah,” separating a portion of the dough to give to the priests when the Temple was standing, or nowadays to burn it. If someone erred and mixed it with other**

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<sup>1</sup> Yalkut Shimoni on Writings, remez 246.

dough, he should not be able to eat any of it. However, the rabbis say that one can annul the consecration of the challah, if he has regret. However, in a commentary there, **the Taz** (*se'if katan* 2) **elaborates and concludes that regret out of fear of punishment is not considered regret and does not take effect. For if you do not say this, where do we find *karet*, i.e., spiritual excision, or premature death, taking effect for one who eats sacred offerings outside of the Temple, or death at the hands of Heaven for one who improperly eats *terumah*, the priestly dues? For certainly out of fear of punishment, one would regret and ask a sage to release him from such punishment, etc.; and see there.** But in fact, regret that is only out of fear of punishment is not effective, and thus one can be punished by *karet* or death for such violations.

**Here also, this regret of Manasseh was regret out of fear of punishment, i.e., torture at the hands of the king of Assyria, and [this regret] would seem to not be effective, for if so, you would nullify the entire halachic structure of Divine punishments. With this understanding, the expression “tunnel” is precise: for so to speak, by accepting Manasseh’s repentance, [G-d] made an actual tunnel in the Heavens, for He overturned several laws, for if not, *karet*, etc., would be nullified.**

עוד בדרך אחר על דאמרינו התם באותה שעה אמר מנשה אית דין ואית דיין, שְׁהִיָּה לֹו לֹוּמֵר אֵית "רְחוּם וְחַנוּן" כְּנִפְךָ לְעִיל בְּסֻמוּךְ. דְּאִיתָא בְּגִמְרָא דְרֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה (דף י"ח) וְגַזַּר דִּין דְּנִחִיד תְּנַאי הוּא, וְהַטְעַם דְּמֵאן דְּאָמַר דְּגַזַּר דִּין דְּנִחִיד לֹא מִקְרַע, כְּתָבוּ הַמְּפָרְשִׁים מִשּׁוּם דְּהוּיָא דּוּמְיָא דְּבֵית דִּין שֶׁל מִטָּה, דְּכִי הֵיכִי דְלִגְבִיָּיהוּ לֹא מוֹעֵלֶת הַתְּשׁוּבָה אֶף בְּבֵית דִּין שֶׁל מְעָלָה אִין לְאַחַר גְּזַר דִּין כְּלוּם, וְלֹא מוֹעֵלֶת הַתְּשׁוּבָה דְּנִחִיד, דְּהִנְחִיד גְּדוֹן בְּבֵית דִּין שֶׁל מְעָלָה וְהַצְּבוּר גִּידוּגִין מִהַקָּב"ה. וּמִשּׁוּם הֵכִי גְזַר דִּין דְּנִחִיד לֹא מִקְרַע מִשּׁוּם דְּאִיכָּא זִילוּתָא אַבִּי דִּינָא, וְגַזַּר דִּין דְּצְבוּר מִקְרַע אֶף לְאַחַר הַגְּזַר דִּין.

**Another explanation: regarding what we say there in our Midrash, that at that moment Manasseh said, “There is justice and there is a Judge.”<sup>2</sup> He should have said, “He is merciful and gracious,”<sup>3</sup> as stated earlier in Note 15.**

**In the Gemara, Rosh Hashanah (page 18a), it is stated that a Heavenly decree of judgment of an individual is subject to a dispute from the Sages as to whether it can be overturned. I.e., a Heavenly decree is made by the Heavenly court, which is composed of angels, and some also say that the souls of the righteous serve on the Heavenly court. The reason for the view that the decree of an individual is not torn up is that the commentators wrote it is comparable to a human court: just as for them repentance does not help, so too in the Heavenly court, after the decree, repentance of an individual does not avail. For the individual is judged by the Heavenly court, which does not overturn its final rulings.**

**In contrast, a community is judged by the Holy One, Blessed be He, Who may decide to grant mercy to the community, based on a new state of affairs.**

**Therefore, the decree of an individual is not torn up, because there would be disgrace to the Heavenly court; whereas the decree by G-d against a community may be torn up even after the decree, if appropriate based on a new spiritual condition of the community.**

<sup>2</sup> In addition to appearing in Yalkut Shimoni on Writings, remez 246, the quotation also appears in Jerusalem Talmud Sanhedrin 10:2

<sup>3</sup> Ex. 34:6; Ps. 86:15, 103:8.

והשפּתא שפּיר קאמר אית דין ואית דיינו, הגם שפּכר נעשה הגזר דין וגזר דין דתיחיד לא מיקרע, אם הקב"ה לא הנה מקבּלו הנה לו מקום לומר דגם הוא כאחד מהבית דין, דכי היכי דאינהו אינם יכולים לקרוע הגזר דין אוף הכי איהו כבכול אינו יכול לקרוע. אבּל אם יהנה מקבּלו נראה מזה שהיא אדון הכל ובגדו לעשות פּרצונו, ולכן אמר אית דין ואית דיינו לבדו ובגדו הכל.

Now he properly said, “There is justice and there is a Judge.” Although the decree had already been made, and the decree of an individual is not torn up, Manasseh thought: If the Holy One, Blessed be He, were not to accept [his repentance], there would be room to say that He too is like one of the judges of the Heavenly Court, and just as they cannot tear up the decree, so too, [G-d], as it were, cannot tear it up.

But if He would accept [his repentance], this shows that He is Master of all and can act according to His will. Therefore, he said, “There is justice and there is a Judge,” He alone, and everything is in His hand.

ואתמי שפּיר נמי שהמלאכים היו רוצים למחות בדבר, משום דאינהו כּכר עשו הגזר דין וגזר דין דתיחיד לא מיקרע, וליכא למימר שהואיל שמונשה הנה מלך דינו כצבור, דהשפּתא מיהא עבד הוא, שְהרי גשבה בּינּו [סנחריב]. וענין לקמן פּרשת קרח "ס'טאים תרדף רעה" ראשי תבות חת"ר נכו' ועיי"ש.

Now it's also fine that the angels wanted to protest this matter, because they had already issued the decree, and the decree of the Heavenly Court against an individual is not torn up. One cannot say that since Manasseh was a king, his status is like that of a community, for now he is no longer in that status, for he had already been captured by [Sennacherib].<sup>4</sup> That is why the Midrash says that G-d made a tunnel for Manasseh, allowing him to “escape” the judgment of the Heavenly Court.

See below in Parashat Korach, end of Essay 6, on the text “Misfortune pursues sinners,”<sup>5</sup> which suggests that Manasseh should have been punished by the Heavenly Court, and yet the initial letters of חָתַר [hatar] [“He dug”], and see there.

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<sup>4</sup> The first edition incorrectly references Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled Babylon a century after Sennacherib ruled Assyria.

<sup>5</sup> Prov. 13:21.