

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter X: Mikeitz (Gen. 41:1–44:17)

Essay 13. Jacob was angry that the brothers told the Egyptians about Benjamin

**מִדְרָשׁ** וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל "לָמָּה הִרְעַתֶּם לִי," אָמַר ר' לוי אָמַר ר' חֲמַא בַּר חֲנִינְא מְעוּלָם לֹא יֵצֵא דְבַר שְׁל בִּטְלָה מִפִּי אָבִינוּ יַעֲקֹב, אֲלֵא כִּן אָמַר הַקָּב"ה אֲנִי עוֹסֵק לְהַמְלִיךְ בְּנֵי בְּמִצְרַיִם וְהוּא אֹמֵר "לָמָּה הִרְעַתֶּם לִי," הוּא דָּאֵת אָמַר, "לָמָּה תֹאמַר יַעֲקֹב" וְכוּ' "נִסְתְּרָה דְרַפִּי מֵה' " וְכוּ' עכ"ל.

**There is a Midrash:**

**“And Israel said, “Why did you bring this trouble upon me by telling the man that you had another brother?” (Gen 43:6). Rabbi Levy said Rabbi Chama Bar Chanina said: Nothing pointless ever came out of the mouth of our father Jacob, but when the Holy One, Blessed be He, said: I am busy making your son into a king in Egypt, then [Jacob] said, “Why did you bring this trouble on me?” This is as you say, “Why do you say, O Jacob, why declare, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the L-rd, my cause is ignored by my G-d’? (Isaiah 40:27).”**

- Gen. Rabbah 91:10

כְּוֹנֵת הַמִּדְרָשׁ הַזֶּה לְכַאוֹרָה נִסְתְּרָת, שְׂאֵם בָּא לֹמַר שְׂאֵף בְּפַעַם הַזֹּאת לֹא יֵצֵא דְבַר לְבִטְלָה, הֲלֵא מִפְּשֻׁטָן שְׁל דְבַרְיוּ נִרְאָה שְׂטֵעָה שְׂתִלָּה הִרְעָה הַזֹּאת עַל צַד הַמִּקְרָה וְלֹא תִלָּה לֹמַר שְׂבָאָה לֹ מֵאֵת הַמְּקוֹם? וְעוֹד שְׂהַנְבִיא מוֹכִיחוֹ "לָמָּה תֹאמַר יַעֲקֹב" וְכוּ', וְאֵם נְאֻמַּר שְׂלֵא טֵעָה, לָמָּה הַנְּבִיא מוֹכִיחוֹ.

**The intent of this midrash is seemingly hidden, if it came to say that even at this time nothing pointless came out from Jacob’s mouth. For doesn’t the straightening out of his words, i.e., equating Israel’s complaint of Gen. 43:6 to the complaint of [the Children of] Israel in Isaiah 40:27, make it appear that he erred in that he attributed this trouble to fate, i.e., brought about solely due to human action, and didn’t attribute it as coming from G-d? Furthermore, the prophet reproved him, “Why do you say, O Jacob . . . ,” which further suggests that Jacob was wrong—and if it is said that [Jacob] didn’t err, why did the prophet reprove him?**

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וְנִשְׁלַח לְדָוִד הַכִּי נָמִי נִשְׁלַח נְצִיא דְבָר שֶׁל בִּטְלָה מִפִּי כְּלוֹמֵר שֶׁלֹּא טָעָה וְלֹא תָלָה דְבָרָיו עַל צַד הַמִּקְרָה רַק חֲלָה הַכֵּל מִיָּדוֹ שֶׁל הַקֵּב"ה. וְכַנּוּחַת יַעֲקֹב הִיְתָה כֹּה, שֶׁאָמְרוּ ו"ל עַל פְּסוּק "כִּי־פֶלֶל הַנֶּפֶל מִמֶּנּוּ," מִמֶּנּוּ רָאוּי זֶה לִיפּוֹל אֲלֵא שֶׁמְגַלְגְּלִין חוֹבָה עַל יְדֵי חַיִּיב. וְאָמַר יַעֲקֹב יְדַעְתִּי כִּי בְּנֻדְאֵי הַקֵּב"ה גִּזַּר הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת, אֲמַנְם לְכִי שְׁנַתְּגַלְגְּלָה עַל יְדֵכֶם צָרִיךְ לִזְמַר שְׁגַם אַתֶּם חַיִּיבִים.

**And it must be said that indeed, nothing pointless came out of his mouth, that is, that he did not err and that he did not attribute his words upon fate, rather he indeed recognized that everything fell from the hand of G-d. Jacob's intent was thus: As the rabbis of blessed memory said on the verse "When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you do not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone should fall from it," (Deut. 22:8), the rabbis say "from it" he was destined to fall, for guilt is brought about by the guilty.<sup>1</sup> Jacob said, I knew that surely the Holy One, Blessed be He, decreed this trouble, though according to the fact that it was brought about by you, it must be said that you are also guilty.**

וְזוֹהוּ, "לְמָה הִרְעַתְתֶּם לִי," לְמָה גַם אַתֶּם חַיִּיבֵתֶם עֲצָמְכֶם לְמָקוֹם, כִּי בְשִׁבִיל זֶה נִתְגַּלְגְּלָה עַל יְדֵכֶם הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת. וְאִין הִכִּי נָמִי שֶׁהִיָּה מוֹדָה שֶׁהַכֵּל בָּא מִן הַקֵּב"ה, רַק הִיָּה סוֹבֵר שֶׁהַגְּלוּת יָבֵא מִחַמַּת עוֹנֵשׁ, וְאִינוּ כֵּן שֶׁאֲדַרְבָּא הַגְּלוּת הִיָּה לְטוֹב לְהֵם כְּדֵי שִׁיְנַדְכּוּ בְּכוֹר הַבְּרִזָּל כְּמוֹ שֶׁפְּתַבְּנוּ לְעֵיל בְּסֻמוּךְ.

**This is why he said, "Why did you bring this trouble upon me," i.e., why did you also make yourselves guilty before the L-rd, for because of this fact that you told the Egyptians that you had a younger brother at home, this trouble was also partially caused by you. Indeed, he acknowledged that everything ultimately comes from the Holy One, Blessed be He, but he was only giving the opinion that the Exile would come because of punishment, and in his opinion, it's not true that to the contrary, the Exile was for their best, in order that they be cleansed in an iron blast furnace,<sup>2</sup> as we have written above in Essay 10.**

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<sup>1</sup> Shabbat 32a: "Rav Yitzchak, son of Rav Yehuda, said: A person should always pray that he will not become ill, as if he becomes ill they say to him: Bring [proof of your] virtue and exempt yourself. [I.e., it is better for a person not to be forced to prove that he merits staying alive, as he might not be able to prove it.] Mar Ukva said: What is the verse [that alludes to this]? '[When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you bring not blood upon your house,] if the fallen falls from it' (Deut. 22:8). The school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: [What is the meaning of the phrase:] If the fallen falls from it? He was destined to fall from the six days of Creation, for [while] he did not [yet] fall, the verse calls him fallen. Nevertheless, [the owner of the house is indicted for this, as] merit is engendered by means of the innocent and guilt by means of the guilty."

<sup>2</sup> Deut. 4:20: "But you the L-rd took and brought out of Egypt, that iron blast furnace, to be His very own people, as is now the case."

וְאִם הַשְּׂבָטִים גִּלְגְּלוּ הַגְּלוֹת אֵינּוּ סִימָן שֶׁהֵם חַיִּיבִים כְּמוֹ שֶׁסָּבַר יַעֲקֹב. וְעַל זֶה הִנְבִּיא מֹכִיחֹו, שֶׁהוֹאִיל דְּאֲמַרִּינָן בְּמִדְרָשׁ רַבָּה עַל פְּסוּק "נִיְהִי הַשָּׁמֶשׁ בָּאָה," שֶׁהַקַּב"ה נָתַן עֲצָה לְאַבְרָהָם שֶׁיִּבְרַר הַגְּלוֹת לְטוֹבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, לֹא הָיָה לוֹ לְחַוֵּשׁ כְּלָל שֶׁהַגְּלוֹת יִהְיֶה לְרַע לָהֶם. אָמַר הַקַּב"ה [אֲנִי] עוֹסֵק לְהַמְלִיךְ בְּנֹו בְּמִצְרַיִם כְּדִי שֶׁיִּהְיֶה סִימָן לְיִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁהַגְּלוֹת הוּא לְטוֹבַתְּם כְּדִלְעִיל בְּסִמוּךְ, וְהוּא אֹמֵר "נִסְתַּרְהָ דַּרְכֵי" שֶׁסּוֹבֵר שֶׁהוּא לְרַעָה.

**But even if the tribes caused the Exile, it is not a sign that they are guilty, as Jacob contended. For this reason, the prophet reproved him, for it says in Midrash Gen. Rabbah 44:21 on the verse, “When the sun set and it was very dark, there appeared a smoking oven, and a flaming torch which passed between those pieces” (Gen. 15:17), that the Holy One, Blessed be He, gave Abraham advice to clarify that the Exiles would benefit Israel, so [Jacob] had no reason to feel that the Exile would be to their detriment. So when the Holy One, Blessed be He, said I am<sup>3</sup> busy making your son king in Egypt, He meant in order that there should be a sign to Israel that the Exile is for their benefit, as explained above. That is why, when [Jacob] said, “Why did you bring this trouble upon me?”—which the Midrash equates to Israel’s complaint in Isaiah 40:27 that, “my way is hidden from the L-rd, my cause is ignored by my G-d,” which means that [Jacob] contends the Exile is for the detriment of the Jewish people—the prophet reproved Jacob.**

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<sup>3</sup> The first edition had איני (“I am not”), which the translator has corrected to אני (“I am”).