

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XIII: Shemot (Ex. 1:1–6:1)

Essay 5. The Egyptians wanted to convert Israel's holiness to impurity

פסוק "הִבֵּה נְתַחֲמָהּ לוֹ", אָמְרוּ ז"ל בְּקִדְרָה שֶׁבִשְׁלוֹ, בָּה נְתַבְּשְׁלוּ. הַטַּעַם עַל הָאֵי לִישָׁנָא דְקִדְרָה יֵשׁ לוֹמֵר, שֶׁהַמְצָרִים חָשְׁבוּ לְבָלוֹעַ חֵס וְשָׁלוֹם יִשְׂרָאֵל בֵּינֵיהֶם וְלִהְיוֹסִיף כַּח בְּטוּמְאָת קְלִיפָתָם, שֶׁכֵּל הַנִּיצוּצוֹת טוֹבוֹת שֶׁהָיוּ בְּשָׂרָשָׁי נְשָׁמוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל יִהְיוּ חֵס וְשָׁלוֹם נִבְלָעִים בְּטוּמְאָה, כְּדִי לְהוֹסִיף טוּמְאָה עַל טוּמְאָתָם.

There is a verse: **“Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase; otherwise in the event of war they may join our enemies in fighting against us and rise from the ground”** (Ex. 1:10). **[The rabbis] of blessed memory said, “In the pot in which they cooked, they [themselves] were cooked [as they were punished through drowning, measure for measure, for drowning the Jewish babies]”** (Sotah 11a). **The sense of this language of “the pot” is, as if to say, that the Egyptians thought, G-d forbid, to swallow Israel and to strengthen the impurity of their *klipot*, i.e., the husks or shells of impurity, such that all of the good sparks of Holiness in the roots of the souls of Israel would, G-d forbid, be swallowed in impurity, in order to add impurity to their impurity.**

כִּי "הַכְּפִירִים שֶׁאֲגִים לְטָרֵף" כִּדּוּעַ לִיּוֹדְעֵי ח"ן [חִקְמַת הַנְּסֻתָר]. אָמְנָם מֵה שֶׁבִּיָּדָם נִיטֵל מֵהֶם, שְׂאוֹתוֹ מְעַט שֶׁל טוֹב שֶׁהָיָה בְּקְלִיפַת מְצָרִים נִבְרָרָה מֵהֶם, שֶׁגַם עָרַב רַב עִלּוֹ עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנִשְׁאַרוּ הֵם כְּקְלִיפַת אֶגְזוֹ בְּלֵי אוֹכֵל.

But “the young lions roar for prey” (Ps. 104:21), **as is known to those who know the hidden wisdom, i.e., Kabbalah. Just as lions roar, asking G-d to provide their sustenance, Israel cries out to G-d begging for survival, and He answers.¹ Indeed, what was in their hands was taken from them, that the little bit of good that was in the *klipa* of Egypt was cleared away from them, for even the mixed multitude, i.e., a mingling of various nations who had converted to Judaism, went up out of Egypt with Israel,² and [the Egyptians] remained as the *klipa* (shell) of a nut without any meat, i.e., with no good elements remaining to them.**

At first glance it appears that the Egyptians got what they wanted. They wanted an idolatrous society, and the archaeologists also tell us that the pharaohs would marry their own half-

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¹ Zohar III:191a: “Out of the sounds and the roaring that they roar, as strong and mighty as powerful lions, her Lover above hears, and He knows that His love is in love with Him, as He is with her.”

² Ex. 12:38: “Moreover, a mixed multitude went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds.”

sisters, full sisters, or even their daughters. They wanted to destroy the spark of holiness that was maintained by the descendants of Jacob and by the converts of the mixed multitude (“eruv rav”), and indeed, that holiness was removed from their midst. But it wasn’t removed by being absorbed into Egyptian society, and by strengthening their impurity, as they had wanted. Instead, the sparks of holiness were removed by the Jews fleeing during the Exodus.

Nor did G-d allow the Egyptians to continue unpunished for their evil actions against Him and against Israel, but He punished the Egyptians by the plagues, by the despoilment by the fleeing Jews, and by the drowning of the Egyptian army in the sea.

וְזָהוּ "וַיִּנְעַר ה' אֶת־מִצְרַיִם בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם", שְׂדָנָם בְּכָל תּוֹקֵף הַדִּין כְּנֹדָע, וְהוֹרִידָם בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם, רָצָה לוֹמַר לְעוֹמְקָא דְתַהוֹמָא רַבָּה. וּמַעַתָּה הָיוּ רוֹצִים לְבַטֵּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, שֶׁהֵם זָרַע קְדוֹשִׁים וְכֹלֹי טוֹב, בְּקִדְרָתָם דְּהֵיִינוּ בְּקִלְיָתָם, כְּדֵי שְׂקִלְיָתָם הֵיִינוּ קִדְרָתָם תְּבַלַּע הַטַּעַם הַהוּא. וְהַקֵּב"ה הוֹצִיא מִהַקִּדְרָה מַעַט הַטַּעַם שֶׁהָיָה בָּהּ מִחֶלֶק הַטוֹב וְהִשְׁלִיךְ בְּמַצּוּלוֹת יָם כֹּל נַפְשׁוֹתָם, וְזָהוּ שֶׁאָמַר "וַיִּנְצְלוּ אֶת־מִצְרַיִם".

This is the meaning of the verse, “The L-rd hurled the Egyptians into the sea” (Ex. 14:27), that they were judged harshly, as is known, and they were brought down into the sea, meaning to say to the very great depths. At this point, we see that they had wanted to abolish Israel—who are holy offspring, and all of them are good—in their pot, which is their *klipa*, in order that their *klipa*, which is their pot, would absorb that taste. But the Holy One, Blessed be He, removed from the pot a bit of the taste of the good portion and threw all their souls into the depths of the sea, and this is what is written, “thus they stripped the Egyptians” (Ex. 12:36).

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