

# Zera Shimshon

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Published Mantua 1778\*

## Chapter XIII: Shemot (Ex. 1:1–6:1)

### Essay 9. The burning bush and the Egyptian Exile

**מדרש ילקוט** "והנה הסנה בער באש" אמר הקב"ה על ידי שנאה ששנאו אחיו ליוסף ירדו למצרים ובשבילו אני נגלה בסנה ואגאל אותם שנאמר "גאלת בזרוע עמך בני-יעקב ויוסף סלה" עכ"ל.

There is a **midrash Yalkut** (Shimoni Exodus remez 169:11): “ ‘An angel of the L-rd appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a bush; he gazed, **and there was a bush all aflame**, yet the bush was not consumed’ (Ex. 3:2). **The Holy One, Blessed be He, said, ‘It is on account of the hatred with which Joseph’s brothers hated him that they descended to Egypt. Because of him, I reveal myself in the bush, and I will redeem them, as it is said, “By Your arm You redeemed Your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph; selah** (Ps. 77:16).” ’ ”

והוא תמוז מה ענין זה לזה, ועוד מאי מיתת ראה מקרא ד"גאלת בזרוע עמך" שנגאלו בזכות יוסף, והלא בקרא פתיב "בני-יעקב ויוסף סלה" ואם פן לא היה זכות יוסף לחודיה, ועוד מה ענין זה עם פסוק "והנה הסנה בער באש"?

#### **This is strange, for:**

Question 1: **What relation is there between this and that**, the burning bush and the Egyptian Exile being caused by the brothers’ hatred for Joseph?

Question 2: **Also, what proof is being brought by the verse that “By Your arm You redeemed Your people,” that they were redeemed in the merit of Joseph, for doesn’t the verse write “the children of Jacob and Joseph; selah”?** If so, it was not by the merit of Joseph alone!

Question 3: **Also, what relation is there between the verse, “and there was a bush all aflame” and the redemption from the Egyptian Exile?**

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וגיש לומר דכוננת המדרש היא לתרץ למה דנקא נגלה הקב"ה למשה בסנה ולא במקום אחר, ומתחלה מתרץ דהסנה הוא לשון שנאה, ששם שגלות מצרים בא בעון מכירת יוסף, כמו שכתב בעל מגלה עמוקות לפי שהשכטים גרמו לאביהם להתאבל כ"ב שנים משום הכי נתחייבו גלות כ"ב שנה לכל אחד מהיו"ד שכבטים דהינו ר"ך שנה. אלא שלפי שמתו בחוץ לארץ כל העשרה נתמעטו י' שנים ולא נשתהו בגלות פי אם רד"ו שנה, משום הכי נגלה בסנה לרמוז שטעם הגלות הנה בשביל השנאה ועתה שנשלמו רד"ו שנה ראויים להגאל.

**Answer 1: It can be said that the intention of the midrash is to solve why the Holy One, Blessed be He, specifically revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush and not in another place. From the start, the solution offered is that the bush [s'neh] [שנָה] is symbolic of the language of "hatred" [sinah] [שנָאָה]. The Egyptian Exile came about because of the sin of the sale of Joseph, as the author of *Megaleh Amukot*<sup>2</sup> wrote, since the tribes, i.e., the ten brothers, caused their father, Jacob, to mourn Joseph's presumed death for 22 years, because of this, they were obligated to an exile of 22 years for each of the ten tribes involved, which is 220 years. But since all ten of the brothers who had sold Joseph died outside of the Land of Israel, there was a reduction of ten years, and they only stayed in exile for 210 years. Because of that, [G-d] was revealed in the bush to hint that the reason for the Egyptian Exile was because of the hatred, and now that they have completed 210 years, they are worthy to be redeemed from exile. Thus, we see that the connection the burning bush and the Egyptian Exile being caused by the brothers' hatred for Joseph was the fact that the Hebrew term for bush, *s'neh*, is similar to the term for hatred, *sinah*.**

אבל על זה קשה דדילמא הגלות הוא מטעם אחר, דכתב הלב אריה (ריש פרשת שמות) בשם גלי רינא שבשביל שהביא יעקב אבינו לשון תרגום בתורה "ויקרא-לו לבן יגר שהדוּתא ויעקב קרא לו גלעד", ויעקב גרם זה שאמר "לאחיו לקטו אבנים ויקחו אבנים ויעשו-גל", בשביל זה באו ישראל בגלות מצרים, וזהו מה שכתוב "וישאו עיניהם ויראו והנה ארסת ישמעאלים באה מגלעד", דהינו "גלעד" שקראו יעקב. למה? שקרא לבן יגר שהדוּתא וזהו "ארמי אבד אבי" ארמי דנקא דהינו לשון ארמי, "ויגרד מצרימה אנוס על פי הדיבור" דהינו הדיבור של ארמי שהביא בתורה. והטעם הוא לפי שלשון תרגום הוא מיוחד לחיצונים, וזהו דאמרין שאין מלאכי השרת מפירין בלשון ארמי. ואם כן לפי טעם זה הדרא קושין לדוכתה למה נגלה הקב"ה בסנה.

**But regarding this, it is difficult, for perhaps the Egyptian Exile was due to another reason. As the Lev Aryeh<sup>3</sup> wrote (at the beginning of parshat Shemot) in the name of Gali Razia,<sup>4</sup> that it was because our patriarch Jacob brought the language of the Targum,**

<sup>1</sup> The period of the 210 years of the Egyptian Exile is represented with a Gematria not as ר"י (200+10), but as רד"ו (200+6+4), referring to the imperative word רדו ["Go down!"] [redu] found in Gen. 42:2, where Jacob told his sons, "Now I hear," he went on, "that there are rations to be had in Egypt; Go down and procure rations for us there, that we may live and not die." Gen. Rabbah 92:1.

<sup>2</sup> Nathan Nata Spira (1585–1633), Polish rabbi and kabbalist; Chief Rabbi of Kraków, author of *Megaleh Amukot* ["Revelation of Deep [Secrets]"] (1637).

<sup>3</sup> Yehuda Aryeh Leib ben Yehoshua Choshki, author of *Lev Aryeh* (Wilhermsdorf 1674).

<sup>4</sup> The translator believes this was a manuscript, written by Rabbi Abraham, a student of the Ari z"l.

Aramaic, to the Torah. “Laban named it Yegar-sahadutha,<sup>5</sup> but Jacob named it Gal-ed”<sup>6</sup> (Gen. 31:47), and Jacob caused this incident to happen, as he said “to his kinsmen, ‘Gather stones,’ so they took stones and made a mound” (Gen. 31:46). I.e., even though Laban was the one quoted as speaking Aramaic, Jacob was blamed because he had instructed them to make the mound. Because of this, Israel came to the Egyptian Exile, and this is what is written, “Looking up, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead” (Gen. 37:25). That is Gal-ed, as Jacob called it. Why? For Laban named it Yegar-sahadutha, and this is the meaning of “My father was a wandering Aramean” (Deut. 26:5), precisely an Aramean, for this is the Aramaic language, “ ‘And he went down to Egypt’ (Deut. 26:5), helpless on account of the speech,”<sup>7</sup> which is the speech of Aramaic that [Jacob] brought into the Torah. In the Passover Hagaddah, we understand “helpless on account of the speech” to refer to the speech in which G-d told Abraham that his descendants would have to go into exile. However, the Zera Shimshon here says that “the speech” refers to Laban’s words in Aramaic. **The reason is that the language of the Targum is specifically used for external [forces], i.e., impure matters, and this is what it says, “that the ministering angels are not familiar with the Aramaic language.”**<sup>8</sup>

**If so, that the Egyptian Exile was due to Jacob’s actions bringing Aramaic into the Torah, and it was not due to the brothers’ hatred of Joseph, then according to this reason, then our difficulty is restored to its place: why did the Holy One, Blessed be He, reveal himself in the bush?**

משום הכי סיים המדרש ובשבילי אני נגלה בסנה, פלומר אף אם תאמר טעם אחר, עם כל זה יובן טעם למה נגלה בסנה, לפי שבזכות יוסף נגאלו שיוסף לא רצה לדבר מעולם בלשון מצרי, שאשת פוטיפר אמרה "הביא לנו איש עברי", ושר המשקים אמר "ושם אתנו נער עברי" שאפילו לשוננו אינו מפיר. ועוד בא גבריאל ולמדו שבועים לשון כדי שיהיה יכול לדבר בפני פרעה, אבל חוץ מאותה הפעם לא דבר, אי נמי חוץ מלפני פרעה לא היה מדבר.

**Because of this possibility, the Midrash concluded, “Because of him, I reveal myself in the bush,” as if to say, “Even if you will say a different reason for the Egyptian Exile, with all this, the reason will be understood why I revealed myself in the bush. It is because in the merit of Joseph, they will be redeemed, for Joseph didn’t want to ever speak in the Egyptian language. For Potiphar’s wife said, “Look, he had to bring us a Hebrew man to dally with us!” (Gen. 39:14), and the chief wine steward said, “A Hebrew youth was there with us” (Gen. 41:12), which Rashi interpreted as, “that even our language he did not recognize.” Furthermore, the angel Gabriel came and taught him seventy languages<sup>9</sup> so that he would be able to speak before Pharaoh. But other than that time when he was called to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams, he did not speak Egyptian; or alternatively, outside of Pharaoh’s presence, he would not speak Egyptian.**

<sup>5</sup> Aramaic for “the mound of witness.”

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew for “the mound of witness.”

<sup>7</sup> Passover Haggadah, Magid, First Fruits Declaration 3.

<sup>8</sup> Shabbat 12b.

<sup>9</sup> Sotah 33a. While most angels only know Hebrew, Gabriel knows the other languages.

וְזָהוּ "נִיאֵמַר יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו אֲנִי יוֹסֵף", כְּלוֹמַר יוֹסֵף דְּנֻקָּא, וְכַתִּיב "וְהִנֵּה עֵינֵיכֶם רְאוּת . . . כִּי־פִי הַמְדַבֵּר אֵלֵיכֶם" בְּלִשׁוֹן הַקִּדְשׁ. וְלִכּוֹן "וְהִגַּדְתֶּם לְאָבִי אֶת-כָּל-כְּבוֹדִי" וְכוּ' "וּמְהֵרָתֶם וְהוֹרַדְתֶּם אֶת-אָבִי הֵנָּה", כְּלוֹמַר אֵל יִצְטַעַר מִהִגְלוֹת שְׁגָרָם הוּא שְׁהִבִיא לְשׁוֹן אַרְמִי בְּתוֹרָה, שְׁחַס וְשָׁלוֹם לֹא תִהְיֶה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל גְּאוּלָּה, שְׁהָרִי אֲנִי תִקְנָתִי הַפְּגָם בְּמָה שְׁלֹא שְׁנִיתִי אֶת לְשׁוֹנֵי אָף עַל פִּי שְׁהִייתִי עוֹמֵד בְּתוֹךְ הַמְצָרִים וְשָׁר וּמְלֻךְ עֲלֵיהֶם לֹא רְצִיתִי לְדַבֵּר בְּלִשׁוֹנָם.

**This is the meaning of “Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am Joseph’ ” (Gen. 45:3), as if to say, specifically “Joseph,” that he identified by the Hebrew name he was given at birth, and not by the name he was given in Egypt, Zaphnath-Paaneah. And it is written, “You can see for yourselves . . . that it is indeed I who am speaking to you” (Gen. 45:12), i.e., speaking in the holy language, Hebrew.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, “And you must tell my father everything about my honor in Egypt and all that you have seen; and bring my father here with all speed” (Gen. 45:13). That’s as if to say, “Don’t be sorry about the Exile that was caused by he who brought the Aramaic language into the Torah, that from this Exile G-d forbid Israel might not have a redemption.” For I corrected the damage caused by the introduction of the Aramaic language into the Torah, in that I did not change my native language, even though I was standing amongst the Egyptians and was a minister and king over them, I did not want to speak in their language.**

וְזָהוּ וּבְשִׁבִילֹו אֲנִי נִגְלָה בְּסִנְיָה וְאֶגְאֵל אוֹתָם שְׁנֵאמַר "גְּאֵלְתָּ בְּזִרְעִי" וְכוּ' "בְּגִי־יַעֲקֹב וְיוֹסֵף סָלָה", כְּלוֹמַר לְפִי שְׁהֵם בְּגִי יַעֲקֹב נִתְחַיְיְבוּ גְלוֹת וְיוֹסֵף תִּיקַן וּבִזְכוּתוֹ נִגְאָלוּ וְזָהוּ "בְּגִי־יַעֲקֹב וְיוֹסֵף סָלָה". וְכִמוֹ שְׁפָרַשׁ רַש"י, כְּשֵׁם שְׁרָאִית הַסִּנְיָה עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלִיחוֹתֵי וְאֵינְנוּ אוֹפְלִי, כִּי תִלְךָ בְּשְׁלִיחוֹתֵי וְאֵינְךָ נִיזְזֹק עַכ"ל. אֵף אֲנִי נֵאמַר לְפִי שְׁיוֹסֵף הִנֵּה בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּמָקוֹם טוֹמְאָה וְשָׁמַר אֶת עֲצָמוֹ מִלְהִיּוֹת נִיזְזֹק וְלֹא שִׁינָה אֶת שְׁמוֹ וְאֶת לְשׁוֹנוֹ, מִשּׁוּם הִכִּי בְּשִׁבִילֹו נִגְלָה הַקַּב"ה בְּסִנְיָה שְׁאָף כִּי הִנֵּה שֵׁם הָאֵשׁ הַסִּנְיָה אֵינְנוּ אוֹפְלִי.

**Answer 2: This is the meaning of, “I reveal myself in the bush” and I will redeem them, as it is said, “By Your arm You redeemed Your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph; selah.” This is as if to say that these children of Jacob were obligated to be exiled, and Joseph repaired the effect of their sin by minimizing his speech of Egyptian, and in his merit they were redeemed, and this is the meaning of “the children of Jacob and Joseph.”**

**Answer 3: As Rashi interpreted, “Just as you have seen the bush carrying out the mission I laid upon it, and it was not consumed, so you shall go on the mission I entrust to you, and you shall suffer no harm.”<sup>11</sup> We too will say that since Joseph was in Egypt in a place of impurity, but kept himself from being harmed and did not change his name or his language, because of this, it was for his sake that the Holy One, Blessed be He, was revealed in the bush, for even though there was fire there, the bush was not consumed.**

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<sup>10</sup> Gen. Rabbah 93:10.  
<sup>11</sup> Rashi on Ex. 3:12.