

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XXI: Ki Tisa (Ex. 30:11–34:35)

Essay 18. A promise and forgiveness

“Let not the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he delivered them, only to kill them off in the mountains and annihilate them from the face of the earth.’ Turn from Your blazing anger, and renounce the plan to punish Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, how You swore to them by Yourself and said to them: I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and this whole Land of which I spoke, I will give to your offspring, to possess forever. And the L-rd renounced the punishment planned for G-d’s people.”

- Ex. 32:12–14

פְּסוּק "זָכַר לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק" וְכוּ' קָשָׁה בְּשִׁלְמָא "אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לָהֶם בְּךָ" שֶׁפִּיר דְּבִשְׁבִּיל זֶה אֵינוֹ יָכוֹל לְכַלּוֹתָם. אָבֵל "וְכָל-הָאָרֶץ" וְכוּ' מַה הִכְרַם הוּא זֶה שֶׁיִּמְחֹל לָהֶם אִם אֶדְרָבָא מִתַּנַּת הָאָרֶץ אֵינָה אֵלָא "בְּעֵבֹר יִשְׁמְרוּ חֻקָּיו וְתוֹרֹתָיו יִנְצְרוּ" וְכוּ'.

There is a verse, “Remember Abraham, Isaac” etc. The question is: **Granted, it’s fine** that Moses said, “**how You swore to them by Yourself,**” for because of this reminder, **it is not possible** for G-d to annihilate them from the face of the earth. **But** how could Moses remind G-d that He promised, “**and this whole Land . . . I will give**”? **What compulsion is there that He would forgive them, if—to the contrary—the giving of the Land was for no other reason but “that they might keep His laws and observe His teachings”** (Ps. 105:45).

וְיֵשׁ לוֹמַר דְּתַנּוּ בְּקִידוּשֵׁין פְּרָק ג' הָאוֹמֵר לְאִשָּׁה הָרִי אֶת מְקוּדְשֵׁי לִי עַל מְנַת שְׂאֵתָן לָךְ מֵאֲתִים זֵוּז, רַב הוֹנָא אָמַר וְהוּא יִתְּנָה, רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר לְכַשֵּׁיתָן. וְאֵיבַעֲנָא הֵתָם מֵאֵי בִּינְיָיָהוּ, וּמִשְׁנֵי אֵיבָא בִּינְיָיָהוּ פְּשֻטָה יְדָה וְקַבְלָה קִידוּשֵׁין מֵאַחַר, לְרַב הוֹנָא לֹא הוּוּ קִידוּשֵׁין מִשְׁנֵי, וְלְרַב יְהוּדָה הוּוּ.

It can be said that it was taught in a Mishnah in the third chapter of tractate **Kiddushin**, “[Regarding] **one who says to a woman: You are hereby betrothed to me** [with this *peruta*] **on**

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the condition that I will give you two hundred dinars, she is betrothed and he shall give [her the money].”¹

The Gemara reflects a disagreement about the correct text of the Mishnah:

Rav Huna says [that the version of the Mishnah that we have is correct; i.e., that it should read]: **And he shall give. Rav Yehuda says** [that it should read]: **When he gives. A dilemma there is what is [the difference] between them** [as both agree that if he does not give her the money she is not betrothed.] **The difference between them is where she extended her hand and accepted betrothal from another** [man during the period between the initial betrothal and the delivery of the money]. **According to Rav Huna, [the betrothal] [of the second man] is not [a valid] betrothal** [as he maintains that she is betrothed immediately upon receipt of the *peruta* and the promise from the first man]. **According to Rav Yehuda, [the betrothal] [of the second man] is [a valid] betrothal** [as he maintains that the betrothal of the first man does not take effect until after he actually gives her the money].

- Kiddushin 60a

וכך היתה פנונת משה, אפה נמס תורה לישראל לשם קידושין על מנת ליתן להם הארץ, כמו הרי אף מקודשת לי על מנת שאמתן לה מאמנים זו. ואם כן לרב יהודה לא הוי קידושין אלא לכשתתן, ואין לה לכעוס עליהם שהרי הם פסקו כרב יהודה, ולכשתתן יהיו קידושין ואין להם שום עון.

This was the intent of Moses: “You gave the Torah to Israel for the sake of betrothal, on the condition to give them the Land of Israel. This is as the man who says, ‘You are hereby betrothed to me on the condition that I will give you two hundred dinars.’ ” If so, according to Rav Yehuda, there will be no betrothal until You give it to them, and there’s no reason for You to be angry upon them, for they rule like Rav Yehuda. When You will give it to them, there will be a betrothal, and they won’t have any guilt.

ואם תאמר והלא מה שעשו העגל הוי כמו שפשטה ידה וקבלה קידושין מאחר, דמקודשת לשני, ואינם עוד ראויים להתקדש לה אפילו כשתתן להם את הארץ. זה אינו, חדא דקידושי שני הם בטעות, שהיו סבורים שמושה כבר מת, ועכשיו שפא נתבטלו מעשיהם.

Maybe you will say, “Isn’t what they did when they made the Golden Calf similar to [a woman] who stretched out her hand and who took a betrothal from another? I.e., that she’s betrothed to the second, and thus they are no longer suitable to be betrothed to You, even when You will give them the Land?” That’s not so, the first was a legitimate betrothal, the second was in error, for when they made the Golden Calf, they had thought that Moses had

¹ Mishnah Kiddushin 3:2.

already died, and now that he came back from his ascent of Sinai, they invalidated their actions regarding the “second betrothal,” i.e., regarding the Golden Calf.

ועוד דקבר איפסיקא הלכתא פרב הונא. ולסברת רב הונא דהווי קידושין פבר אתה מחוייב ליתן להם את הארץ, וכשתתן להם הארץ, זכות ישיבת הארץ מכפרת על העון שלקהם, דכתיב "העם הישב בה נשא עון", ועוד כתיב "וכפר אדמתו עמו", ונהו דסמיה ליה "וכל-הארץ הזאת אשר אמרתי" ומיד "וינחם ה'".

Furthermore, the halacha has already been determined to be like Rav Huna, not like Rav Yehuda. For according to the opinion of Rav Huna that they were already betrothed, You are obligated to give them the Land. When You will give them the land, the merit of the settling of the Land will atone for all of their guilt. As it is written, “It shall be inhabited by folk whose sin has been forgiven,”² and it is further written, “and cleanse His people’s land,”³ and this is juxtaposed to “and this whole Land of which I spoke”⁴ and immediately after, “And the L-rd renounced the punishment planned.”⁵

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² Isaiah 33:24.

³ Deut. 32:43.

⁴ Ex. 32:13.

⁵ Ex. 32:14.