

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XXVI: Shemini (Lev. 9:1–11:47)

Essay 6. Relationships between distinctions

מדרש ילקוט, מנגיד סדר הבדלות פיצד? המבדיל בין קודש לחול, בין אור לחושך, בין ישראל לעמים, בין יום השביעי לששת ימי המעשה, בין טמא לטהור, בין מים העליונים לתחתונים, בין פהגים ללויים וישראל עכ"ל.

Midrash Yalkut Shimoni:

It's taught in a Baraita: How [does one recite] the order of the distinctions [in the Havdalah ceremony at the conclusion of a Sabbath or festival]? [One recites:] Who distinguishes between sacred and profane: Between light and darkness; between Israel and the nations; and between the seventh day and the six days of work; between the ritually impure and the ritually pure; between the upper waters above the firmament and the lower waters below the firmament; and between priests, Levites, and Israelites.

- Yalkut Shimoni 530:2 ¹

סגנון המדרש כזה הוא, השתא דחזינו הבדלה בין קודש לחול, על פרחי צריך להיות גם הבדלה בין אור לחושך, וכל המדרש סובב והולך על סדר זה. והיינו דמתחילה הבדיל הקב"ה בין קודש לחול כדאמרין מתחלת ברייתו של עולם צפה הקב"ה מעשיהם של צדיקים ורשעים. ומשום הכי פרא שתי עולמות: לצדיקים העולם הבא ולרשעים העולם הזה. וכיון דאיפא צדיקים ורשעים על פרחי צריך הבדלה בין אור לחושך, כדאמרין במדרש ראה שאין העולם ראוי להשתמש לאורו עמד וגנזו לצדיקים לעתיד לבא, וזהו "וירא אלהים את האור כי טוב ויבדל אלהים בין האור ובין החושך". וכיון דאיפא הבדלה בין אור לחושך על פרחי צריך להיות שמש וירח, כדאמר הכתוב "לך יום אפלה לילה", מפני שגזר הקב"ה שיהיה יום ולילה דהיינו אור וחושך משום הכי צריך להיות נמי "מאור ושמש". וכשיש ירח ושמש יש הבדל בין ישראל לאומות דאמרין במדרש ילקוט על פסוק "ולמשל ביום ובלילה", דרך ארץ גדול מונה לגדול וקטן מונה לקטן, מה חסד זה שולטת ביום ולא בלילה, כך עשו יש לו חלק בעולם הזה ואין לו חלק בעולם הבא, ומה הלבנה שולטת ביום ובלילה כך ישראל יש להם חלק בעולם הזה ובעולם הבא, וזהו, בין ישראל לעמים.

The style of the Midrash is like this: now that we see a distinction between holy and profane, there necessarily needs to also be a distinction between light and darkness, and the entire Midrash continues to proceed in this manner. That is, initially, the Holy One, Blessed be He, distinguishes between holy and profane, as it is said, "From the beginning of the

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¹ This is discussed in Pesachim 104a, which lists these distinctions, as well as one between the sea and dry land.

creation of the world, the Holy One, Blessed be He, watched the actions of righteous and wicked,”² and because of this, He created two worlds: for the righteous, the World-to-Come, and for the wicked, this world.

Since there are righteous and wicked, there must necessarily be a distinction between light and darkness, as it is said in the Midrash,³ He saw that the world was not fit to use His light for mundane purposes. He stood and concealed it for the righteous for the future to come. This is [the meaning of] “G-d saw that the light was good, and G-d separated the light from the darkness.”⁴

Since there is a distinction between light and darkness, there must necessarily be a sun and a moon, as Scripture said, “the day is Yours, the night also;”⁵ because the Holy One, Blessed be He, decreed that there would be day and night, which is light and day, because of this, there also needs to be “the orb of the sun.”⁶

Just as there is a moon and a sun, there is a difference between Israel and the nations, as it says in Midrash Yalkut on the verse, “And G-d set them in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth, to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness”⁷: It is proper behavior for the great to count by the great, and the small to count by the small. Thus, Esau counts [time] by the sun, which is large, and Jacob by the moon, which is small. Just as the sun rules by day but not at night, so too Esau has a portion in this world and not in the World-to-Come, and just as the moon rules [i.e., appears] both by day and at night, so too Israel has a portion in this world and in the World-to-Come, and this is [the distinction] “between Israel and the nations.”⁸

וְהַבְדֵּל זֶה דְּבִין יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאוֹמוֹת מִבֵּיא הַבְּדֵל בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לַשֵּׁשֶׁת יָמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה, דְּאֶמְרִינוּ בְּסִנְהֶדְרִין פֶּרֶק ז' דְּבִין נֵם שְׁשֶׁבֶת מִמְּלָאכָה חֵיִיב מִיתָה וְאִזְהָרְתָּן זֹו הִיא מִיתָתָן, וְלִבְנֵי נֵם אֵין הַבְּדֵל בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לַשֵּׁשֶׁת יָמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה, וְאֵתִי שְׁפִיר דְּדִיִּיק לִזְמַר יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לַשֵּׁשֶׁת יָמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה וְלֹא קָאָמַר בֵּין שְׁבֶת לַחֹל. וְהָשְׁתָּא דְּאִיכָא חִילּוּק בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְכוּ', יֵשׁ הַבְּדֵל נָמִי בֵּין טָמֵא לְטָהוֹר, דְּכָל מִינֵי רוּחוֹת הַטּוֹמְאָה נִטְמָרִין בְּשֶׁבֶת. וְעוֹד דְּאֶמְרִינוּ בְּסוּטָה הַטְּהָרָה נִטְלָה טַעַם הַפִּירוֹת וְאֵת הָרִים. וּבְמַסְקָת שְׁבֶת אֶמְרִינוּ תְּבִלִין אֶחָד יֵשׁ לָנוּ וְשֶׁבֶת שְׁמָה כָּל הַמַּשְׁמֵר אֵת הַשְּׁבֶת נִהְיָה מְמַנּוּ. וְתְּבִלִין שֶׁל שְׁבֶת רִיחוֹ נִזְדַּף מִפְּנֵי שְׁבוּ בְּיוֹם שְׁבֶתוֹ הַמְּזִיקִין מִן הָעוֹלָם, וְהַטַּעַם שֶׁהַטְּהָרָה נִטְלָה הַטַּעַם וְהָרִים, מִפְּנֵי שְׁבִהּוֹתֵנוּ טָמְאִים יֵשׁ כָּח לְרוּחַ הַטּוֹמְאָה לִישְׁלוֹט בְּעוֹלָם. וּמַעֲתָה שְׁיֵשׁ הַבְּדֵל בֵּין שְׁבֶת לַחֹל בְּמִינֵי תְּבִשְׁלִיל בְּרִיחָא וְטַעְמָא, יִדְעָנוּ כִּמְהַ הַבְּדֵל יֵשׁ בֵּין טוֹמְאָה לְטְהָרָה, שְׁאֵבְדָנוּ בְּשִׁבִיל טוֹמְאָתֵינוּ טַעַם הַפִּירוֹת.

This distinction between Israel and the nations brings a distinction between the seventh day and the six working days, as it is said in the seventh chapter of tractate Sanhedrin, that a son of Noah, i.e., a gentile. who ceased from his work on the Sabbath is liable to the

² Gen. Rabbah 2:5.

³ Chagigah 12a.

⁴ Gen. 1:4.

⁵ Ps. 74:16.

⁶ Id.

⁷ Gen. 1:17-18.

⁸ Yalkut Shimoni on Torah 8:10; see also Gen. Rabbah 6:3.

death penalty, and their prohibition is their death.⁹ For the sons of Noah there is no distinction between the seventh day and the six working days, and it is fine that it is precise to say “[between] the seventh day and the six working days,” and doesn’t say “between the Sabbath and the profane.”

Now that there is a distinction between the seventh day and the six working days, there is also a distinction between impurity and purity, for all types of spiritual impurity are hidden on the Sabbath. Also, it is said in tractate Sotah (48a), “Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: [Since the destruction of the Temple], the [lost] purity has removed the taste and the aroma [from fruit].” Also, in tractate Shabbat (119a), it is said:

[The Roman] emperor said to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya: Why does the fragrance of a cooked Sabbath dish spread out? He said to him: **We have a certain spice called dill** [*shevet*] [שֶׁבֶת],¹⁰ which we place in [the cooked dishes] and its fragrance spreads out. [The emperor] said to him: Give us [some] of it. He said to him: **For anyone who observes the Sabbath, he enjoys it**, but for one who does not observe the Sabbath, it is not effective.

- Shabbat 119a

The fragrance of the Sabbath is an aroma that spreads out, because on His Sabbath day, the damaging forces cease from the world. The reason that the lost purity has removed the taste and the aroma is because by our being impure, there is a strength for the unclean spirit to rule the world. Now that there is a distinction between the Sabbath and the profane for the types of cooked foods in their aroma and taste, we know what distinction there was between impurity and purity, that because of our impurity, we lost the taste of fruit.

וכיון דאיכא הבדל בין טמא לטהור איכא הבדל בין מים העליונים למים התחתונים, שהשמים הוא פלו מקום טהרה והארץ הוא מקום טמא וטומאה, והנה קילוסו של הקב"ה עולה בין ממים התחתונים ובין ממים העליונים, כדכתיב "מקלות מים רבים" וכו', ונודע שהמים התחתונים לא פירשו ממים העליונים אלא מתוך בקיה שנגאמר "מבכי נהרות חבש" כדאיתא בבראשית רבה על פסוק "יקוו המים" וכו', שהיו מתפחדים לרדת במקום טומאה פן לא יוכלו עוד לקלס להקב"ה כמו שעושים המים העליונים שהם במקום קדושה, וקילוסו של הקב"ה אינו עולה אלא ממקום טהרה, וכיון שהבטים להם הקב"ה שלעולם ימתקו ויתנו טעם בבשר, ועוד שיהיו קרבים על כל הקרפנות והוא הברית מלח האמור בתורה אז נתרצו וקשה היאך מפני זה לבד נתרצו לפרוש ממקום העליון. אלא לפי שכל פחד שלהם היה פן יתטמאו אף הם כמו הארץ, ויאבדו זכותם לומר להקב"ה. לכן פשטמנו שלעולם ימתקו ויתנו טעם בבשר אז פירשו, שנה להם לאות אמת שלא יתטמאו, דכשיש הטהרה יש טעם בפירות. וזהו דתנינן כל שבגים טהור, ועוד שאדברא המים מטהרים את הטמאים, ומשום הכי יכולים לקלס גם הם.

Since there is a difference between impure and pure, there is a difference between the upper waters and the lower waters, that the Heavens are entirely a place of purity and the

⁹ Sanhedrin 58b: “And Reish Lakish says: A gentile who observed the Sabbath is liable [to receive the] death [penalty], as it is stated: ‘And day and night shall not cease’ (Gen. 8:23). And the Master said their prohibition is their death [penalty, i.e., the punishment for any prohibition regarding descendants of Noah is execution]. Ravina says: [If a descendant of Noah observes a day of rest on any day of the week], even [one not set aside for religious worship, e.g.], on a Monday[, he is liable].”

¹⁰ Having the same consonants as the word שֶׁבֶת, Sabbath, though pronounced differently.

earth is a place of sin and impurity, and here the praise of the Holy One, Blessed be He, rises between the lower waters and the upper waters. This is as it is written, “Above the thunder of the mighty waters, more majestic than the breakers of the sea is the L-rd, majestic on high.”¹¹ It is known that the lower waters only spread out from the upper waters through crying, as it is said, “He dams up the rivers from weeping,”¹² as it is brought in Gen. Rabbah 5:4 on the verse, “Let the water be gathered below the Heavens into one area, that the dry land may appear.”¹³ This is because the waters were afraid lest they not be able to again praise the Holy One, Blessed be He, as the upper waters do, as they are in a place of Holiness, and the praise of the Holy One, Blessed be He, only appears in a place of purity. However, as the Holy One, Blessed be He, promised them that they would always be sweet and impart a taste to meat, and also that they would be near to every sacrifice which is the covenant of salt¹⁴ spoken of in the Torah, then they were satisfied.¹⁵

It is difficult to understand how because of this promise alone they were satisfied to spread out from the upper place to the lower place. Rather, it was because every fear they had was lest they become impure even as was the land, and through that impurity they would lose their privilege to praise the Holy One, Blessed be He. Therefore, when they heard the promise that they would forever be sweet and give taste to meat, then they spread out, for this was for them as a true sign that they wouldn’t become impure, that when there is purity, there is a taste of fruit. This is as it was stated: “everything in the sea is clean,”¹⁶ and also to the contrary, the water purifies that which is impure, and because of this, even they are able to praise G-d.

וְהִשְׁתָּא דְחִינָן דְּאִין קִילֻסֵּי שֶׁל מְקוֹם עוֹלָה אֵלָּא מִמְּקוֹם טְהוֹרָה, עַל כִּרְחֻק צָרִיף לֹאמַר שְׁמִשְׁמִשְׁיוּ צָרִיכִים לִהְיוֹת טְהוֹרִים וְנִבְדָּלִים מִכָּל טוּמְאָה, דְּהִפְתָּנִים שִׁילּוּחֵי דְרַחֲמָנָא, וְכַשֵּׁם שֶׁהִפְתָּנִים הֵם מוֹבְדָּלִים מִחֶמֶת עֲבוּדָתָם כִּי הִלּוּיִים צָרִיכִים לִהְיוֹת מוֹבְדָּלִים מִחֶמֶת דּוּכָנָם, וְאֵלּוֹ אוֹכְלִים תְּרוּמָה וְאֵלּוֹ מַעֲשֵׂר וְכֵלֵהוּ מִשְׁלַחַן גְּבוּסָה זָכוּ.

Now that we see that praise of the Omnipresent only rises in a place of purity, you must necessarily need to say that His servants need to be pure and separated from all impurity. That is, the priests are representatives of the Merciful One, and just as the priests are distinguished by their service in the Temple, thus the Levites need to be distinguished by their platform on which they stood to sing, and these eat the Terumah heave offering and these eat the Ma’aser tithe, and they merited from the table of the Most High.¹⁷

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¹¹ Ps. 93:4.

¹² Job 28:11.

¹³ Gen. 1:9.

¹⁴ Lev. 2:13: “You shall season your every offering of meal with salt; you shall not omit from your meal offering the salt of your covenant with G-d; with all your offerings you must offer salt.”

¹⁵ Rashi on Lev. 2:13: “Because a covenant was established with the salt as far back as the six days of Creation when the lower waters [those of the oceans] received an assurance that they would be offered on the altar in the form of salt and also as water in the ceremony of ‘the libation of water’ [on the Feast of Tabernacles].”

¹⁶ Mishnah Kelim 17:13.

¹⁷ Bava Kamma 12b, 13a; Chullin 120a.