

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XXVII: Tazria (Lev. 12:1–13:59)

Essay 4. Eat, drink, and be happy

מדרש רבה על פסוק "אדם פיי־הנה בעור־בשרו", הדא הוא דכתיב "נכוננו ללצים שפטים" וכו', פיון ששמעו ישראל פֿרשת נגעים נתייראו, אמר להם משה אל תתייראו, אלו לאומות העולם, אכל אתם לאכול ולשתות ולשמוח עכ"ל.

There is a **Midrash Rabbah** (Lev. 15:4) on the verse, “When a person has on the skin of the body a swelling, a rash, or a discoloration, and it develops into a scaly affection on the skin of the body, it shall be reported to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons, the priests.” “**This is as it is written: ‘Punishments are in store for scoffers . . .’¹ When Israel heard the section on leprosy-type diseases, they were afraid. Moses said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. These are for the nations of the world, but you should eat and drink and be happy.’**”

מקשים מה ענין לאכול ולשתות לכאן, ומה ענין המורא שנהיה להם. ועוד יש להקשות מאי קשיא על פסוק "אדם פיי־הנה בעור־בשרו" שיהביא עליו הפסוק "נכוננו ללצים שפטים".

People question how eating and drinking relates to this, and how their fear was relevant to this. Also, we can question what difficulty there was for the verse, “When a person has on the skin of the body . . .” that [the Midrash] brought the verse “Punishments are in store for scoffers” in response.

ויש לומר דקשיא ליה על פסוק זה שנהיה לו לכתוב "אדם אפ־הנה", וכתב "פיי־הנה" דמשמע שמן הראוי הוא שיהיה להם נגעים כמו שכתוב "נכוננו ללצים שפטים", ומשום "פיי־הנה" נתייראו, דמשמע שהם לצים ונכוננו להם השפטים, ומפל שפן שכתב הזוהר על פסוק "אדם פיי־הנה בעור־בשרו" וכו', ור' חניא ור' יוסי הוו אולי בארקה וכו' עד דהו אולי, אערעו בחד בר נש, ואפוהי מליין מכתישין. אמר רבי יוסי ודאי תטאה הוא דאי לאו הכי לא איתרשימו אנפוהי באילין מרעין בישין, ואילין לא איקרין יסורין דאהבה. עכ"ל.

It can be said that there is a question on the verse, that it should be written, “If a person has on the skin of the body a swelling, a rash, etc.” But it is written, “When a person has . . .,” which has the meaning that it is appropriate that they should have leprosy-type diseases. This is as it is written, “Punishments are in store for scoffers.” Because of the term “when a person has,” they were afraid. This has the meaning that they are scoffers, and that

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¹ Prov. 19:29.

punishments are in store for them, and of course the Zohar writes on the verse, “When a person has on the skin of his body . . .”:

Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Yosi were going on the path. While they were walking they chanced upon a man, whose face was full of wounds, who rose from underneath a tree. They looked at him and saw his face red because of the wounds. Rabbi Chiya said to him, Who are you? He said, I am a Jew. Rabbi Yosi said, He is certainly a sinner, for otherwise those evil wounds would not be marked on his face, and these are not considered sufferings of love. Rabbi Chiya said, It is surely so, because sufferings of love are hidden from people.

- Zohar III:45b

ואם כן תגלה קלוננו לכל ואפילו חיות השדה יכולות אז לשלוט בנו, ומשום הכי אמר להם אף על פי שבעולם הזה אינו נוהג דין נגעים באומות, מפל מקום כתב קרא על שם העתיד שעתידין האומות ללקות בנגעים ויתגלה קלונם.

If so, our disgrace will be revealed to all, and even the beasts of the field will be able to rule over us. That is why [Moses] said to them that even though in this world, there is no judgment of leprosy-type diseases on the nations, in any case Scripture is writing that in the future, the nations will be afflicted with leprosy-type diseases and their disgrace will be revealed.

אבל ישראל לאכול ולשתות ולשמוח דאמרין בכתובות פרק אף על פי אמר וזוטר ארבע אשי הווי יתבי אפתחא דבי אזגור מלפא. חליף ואזיל אטורנגא דמלפא. חזייה רב אשי למר זוטר ארבע אפיה, שקל באצבעתיה אנה ליה בפומיה וכו'. אמרו ליה, מאי טעמא סמכת אניסא? אמר להו: חזאי רוח צרעת דקא פרח עלניה. ופרש רש"י עלניה דמר זוטר ארבע עכ"ל. והכי נמי כתיב "הנה עבדי יאכלו ואתם תרעבו" וכו'. ומי שרואה מאכלים ואינו אוכל הוא בספנה להיות מצורע, אבל מי שאוכל ושותה ושם אין לו סיבה להיות מצורע, ומשום הכי אמר להם אל תתיראו אלו וכו'.

But Israel should eat and drink and be happy, as it is said in tractate Ketubot, the fifth chapter entitled “Although”:

Ameimar and Mar Zutra and Rav Ashi were sitting at the entrance to the house of King Izgur. The king’s chief butler was passing by [with various foods]. Rav Ashi saw Mar Zutra’s face blanch [because he craved the food, so he] took [some of the food] with his finger and put it in [Mar Zutra’s] mouth. [The chief butler] said to him: You have spoiled the king’s meal. [The soldiers] said to him: Why did you do this? He said to them: The one who makes such [meals is the one who] spoiled the king’s food. They said to him: Why? He said to them: I saw something else in this [food]. They checked and didn’t find anything. He took his finger and placed it on [the food and] said to them: Did you check here? They then checked [that spot and] found [some contaminant]. [The rabbis] said to [Rav Ashi]: What is the reason that you relied on a miracle? He said to them: I saw a leprous spirit hovering over this.

- Ketubot 61a

“Over this” is understood by many commentators to refer to the food, but **Rashi interprets “over this”** as referring to **Mar Zutra**.

Thus, it is also written, “Assuredly, thus said the L-rd G-d, My servants shall eat, and you shall hunger; My servants shall drink, and you shall thirst; My servants shall rejoice, and you shall be shamed.”² One who sees food and doesn’t eat is in danger of becoming a leper, but one who eats and drinks and is happy has no reason to be a leper. Because of this, [Moses] said to them, “Don’t be afraid. These are for the nations of the world, but you should eat and drink and be happy.” Thus, according to Rashi and the Zera Shimshon, Rav Ashi feared that Mar Zutra would fall ill if he didn’t have some of the king’s food, which is why he acted as he did.

ועוד יש לומר דאין הכי נמי דמירי קרא אף בעולם הזה, לפי שיש נגעים הבאים דרך טבע למי שאוכל שקצים ורמשים כמו שנקתוב לקמן בסמוד ועיי"ש. ואלו יבאו דוקא לנכרים ועליהם אמר הכתוב "כיי"היה", אמנם ישראל שאינם אוכלים שקצים יכולים לאכול כל מאכלם בלי פחד וחסש, שלא יביא להם הנגעים.

Also, it can be said that it’s indeed so that the verse is also speaking of this world, because there are leprosy-type diseases that come through natural means to one who eats loathsome things and creeping animals, as we will write in the adjoining essay, Essay 5, and see there. These are brought specifically to the gentiles, and about them Scripture says “When a person has on the skin of the body a swelling.” Indeed, regarding Israel, who do not eat loathsome things, they are able to eat all foods without fear and worry, for the leprosy-type diseases won’t come upon them.

ולפי שיש מין אחר של נגעים שבאים מחמת איזה חטא פרטי, משום הכי ניתן דין הנגעים לישראל ולא לאומות, כדי שיתכפרו בהם אם יעשו מה שכתוב בפ"שה, כדאמרינן בפ"ק קמא דברכות דנגעים הוו מנבח פפ"ה, וכן הוא עובדא של הזוהר הנ"ל ה"ה אדם חשוב שלקה פנגעים לכפרת חטאו ועיי"ש.

Because there is a different type of leprosy-type diseases that comes because of some personal sin, and because of this, the law of leprosy-type diseases was given to Israel and not to the nations, in order they should be cleansed of them if they do what was written in the *parasha*. This is as it is said in the first chapter of tractate Berachot (5b) that “[the signs of leprosy] are an altar of atonement [for one’s transgressions],” and similarly we have the incident of the Zohar above that an important man was struck with leprosy-type diseases as an atonement for his sin, and see there.

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² Isaiah 65:13.