Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XXX: Kedoshim (Lev. 19:1-20:27)

Essay 6. Death between age 50 and 60

מוֹעֵד קַטָּן פֶּרֶק ג' מֵת בַּחֲמִישִׁים וּשְׁמִּים שָׁנָה זוֹ מִיתָתוֹ שֶׁל שְׁמוּאֵל הָרָמָתִי. אָם הַמַּנָּא סוֹבֵר דְמֵחֲמִישִׁים עד שִׁשִּׁים הִיא מָתַת כָּרֵת כִּדְמָסִיק רָבָא הַתָּם. קַשֶּׁה דְּמַאי קָא מַשְׁמֵע לַן בְּהָא דְּמֵת בַּחְמִישִׁים וּשְׁמַיִם שָׁנָה זוֹ הִיא מִיתָתוֹ שֶׁל שְׁמוּאֵל הָרָמָתִי וּשְׁמוּאֵל גּוּפִיָּה אֵיךְ מֵת בַּשְׁנֵי דְּכָרַת. וּשְׁאֵר כֹּל אָדָם נָמֵי אָם הֵם שְׁנֵי כָּרַת מַהוּ הַשְּׁבַח שֵׁיָּהְיֵה כְּמִיתַתוֹ שֵׁל שְׁמוּאֵל הַרָּמַתִי.

Moed Katan, chapter 3:

[If one] dies when [he is] 50 years [old], this is death through *karet* [death imposed by Heaven for serious transgressions]. [If he dies when he is] **52 years** [old], **this is the death of Samuel from Ramah.** [If he dies at the age of] 60, this is death at the hand of Heaven.

... Rava said: [Even death] from 50 to 60 years is death by *karet*. But all of these years were not [explicitly] counted [as *karet*] due to the honor of Samuel from Ramah [who died at 52].

- Moed Katan 28a

If the Tanna is of the opinion that from 50 until 60 is a death of *karet*, as Rava concludes there, a difficulty is what is it coming to teach us that one who dies at 52 years has a death of Samuel, the prophet from Ramah. As for Samuel himself, how could he die in the years of *karet*, when he was not a sinner? As for the other people who also die at age 52, if this is the years of *karet*, what is the praise that their death will be like that of Samuel from Ramah?

ְּוָשׁ לוֹמֵר דְּוַדָּאי הַטַּעַם שֶׁל "יְמֵי־שְׁנוֹתִינוּ בָהָם שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה" דַּל עֲשְׂרִים דְּלֹא מִיעְנַשׁ עֲלֵיהֶם נְשְׁהַיִּירוּ חֲמִישִׁים, כְּמוֹ שֶׁבָּרֵים שְׁנָתְירּוּ בָהֶם שִׁין אָדָם עוֹשֶׂה תִּיקּוּן לְנַפְשׁוֹ. אָמְנָם שְׁמוּאֵל שֶׁתַּכֶף שֶׁגְּמֶלְתּוּ מהרש"א שֶׁם שֶׁהָעֶשְׁרִים הָבְי בְּעוּרָיו יַעֲשֶׂה תִּיקּוּן לְנַפְשׁוֹ וְיִהְיָה פָּרוּשׁ וּמוּבְדָּל מִשְׁאַר בְּנֵי אָדָם. אִם כֵּן יְמֵי נְעוּרָיו עִעְשֶׁה תִּיקוּן לְנַפְשׁוֹ וְיִהְיָה בְּרוּשׁ וּמוּבְדָּל מִשְׁאַר בְּנֵי אָדָם. אִם כֵּן יְמֵי נְעוּרִיו עִעְשֶׁה תִּיקוּן לְנַפְשׁוֹ וְיִהְיִה לְּמָקוֹ עָשֶׁה הָאָל שָׁמָת בָּמְישִׁים שָׁנָה לְתַקּן נָפֶשׁ רוּח נְשָׁמִה חַיָּה יְחִידָה וְכָל אֶחָד בָּלוּל מֵעֶשֶׂר הָרֵי חָמִישִׁים שָׁנִים שָׁנִים לְּהָבּי בְּעָתְר הִי עֲנִים שְׁבִי שְׁנִים הְּמִבְּיִם שְׁנִים הְּמִבְיּ שְׁנִים הָּבְּבְית הִיקּוּן בְּבָית הִי שְׁמָת בִּשְׁבִים לְּבָּית וְמִישִׁים שְׁנִים וּשְׁמִים וּשְׁמִים הִּשְׁבִים הִּנִים הוּא סִימָן שֶׁבְּבָר תִּיקּן מֵה שֶׁהָיָה צָּרִיךְ לְתַקּן אַף בִּימִי וּלְבָּת הִישְׁבִי דְּכָרַת, וּמִי שֶׁמֵת בַּחְּמִישִׁים וּשְׁנִים וּשְׁנִים וּשְנִים הוּא סִימָן שְׁבָּבְר תִּיקּן מֵה שְּׁהָיה צְּרִיךְ לְמַקּן אַבְּיִים וּשְׁנִים וּשְׁבָּים וּמְמִישׁם וּשְׁבִים וְּמִבּים הָּאָנִים הָּמִישִׁים וּשְׁבִים וּמְמִישִׁים וּשְׁנִים וּשְׁנִים וּמְבִים וּמְבִים וּיִשְׁבָּים וּיִּישִׁים וּשְׁבִים הִיּבְּים וְבִּבְים וּבְּבָּית וּשְׁבָּים וּנְיִבְּים וּיִבּים וּמִישִׁים וּיִבּים בְּיִבּים וְמִישִׁים וּיִבּים בְּיִבּים וְמִישִׁים וּיִבְּים בְּיִבּים בְּיִם בְּיִבְּים בְּיִבּים בְּיִים בְּיִבּים בְּיִבּים בְּיִבּים בְּעִּבִים בְּיִבְּים בְּיִבְּים בְּתִים בְּבְּים שִׁרְיבִּן בְּמְישִׁים בְּעְבִים בְּיִבְּים בְּיִם בְּיִים בְּנִבּים בְּעְּבִים בְּים בְּישׁים בְּבִים בְּבְּבִים בְּבְּבְים בְּבְּים בְּיִים בְּיִבְּישׁוּ בְּבְים שְׁבִּים בְּבְּישׁים בְּבְים שְּבִּים בְּישְׁבְּישׁים בְּיבְים בְּישְׁבְּישׁים בְּבְים בְּעְבְים בְּנִים בְּעְבִּים בְּעִיבְים בְּבְּבְישׁוּים בְּבְּבְישׁים בְּבְבִים בְּבְּם מְיוּבְים בְּעִים בְּבְישְׁבְּבְּים בְּישׁיבְּבְישׁים בְּבְים בְּבְּם בְּבְּישׁים בְּבְּחְיבְּבְים בְּבְישִׁים

It can be said that certainly the reason that the verse says "the days of our lives are 70 years," is that subtracting the first 20 years for which one is not punished, leaves 50 years.

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¹ Ps. 90:10.

This is as the Maharsha explained there, Shabbat 89b, that the first 20 are the days of youth, during which a man does not generally make a correction for his soul.

However, for Samuel, after his mother weaned him, she brought him to the House of G-d² in order that even in the days of his youth, he would perform correction for his soul, and he would be separate and different from other people. If so, the days of his youth, after the 2 years during which he was weaned, are taken into account, that his 50 years are like 70 for others. For the main part of a person's life is the 50 years in which one corrects his soul. This is as the Kabbalists wrote that after the days of youth, there are 50 years to amend the five aspects of the soul: nefesh, ruach, neshama, chaya, and yechida, and each of those accounts for 10 years, which is thus totaling 50 years.

Because of this, when she took him to the Temple, his mother requested only that, "he must remain there forever." If so, 52 years are 2 years of being weaned, and 50 years in which he sat in the House of G-d. Thus, he had corrected his soul by age 52, whereas others don't correct their souls until age 70. Thus, even though he died between 50 and 60, it isn't considered that he died in the years of *karet*, because he was able to correct his soul 18 years earlier than most people.

Therefore, the Tanna states that **one who dies at 52 years is a sign that he already** repaired what was necessary to correct, even in the days of youth, and they are for him like the years of those who live to be 70. Thus, it is not a sign of *karet* that they die at 52, and it is not a sign of *karet* since he died especially at 52 years.

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וְאַגַּב אָרְחִין נְהִירָן לְעֵיינִין מַה שֶׁהָקְשָׁה אֲדוֹנִי אָבִי זלה"ה עַל הָיְרוּשֵׁלְמִי דְּאָמְרִינַן עַל כָּסוּק "מִכָּל־מִשְׁמָר נְצֹר לֹבֶּךּ כִּי־מִמֶּנוּ תּוֹצְאוֹת חַיִּים", מִכָּל מַה שֵׁאָמַרְתִּי לְךָּ הִשָּׁמֵר שֵׁאֵין אַתָּה יוֹדַעַ מֵאֵיזוֹ מִצְנָה יַצַא לְדָּ חַיִּים.

Incidentally, our eyes are illuminated by what my master, my father, may he be remembered for life in the World-to-Come, asked about the Jerusalem Talmud. For it is said on the verse, "More than all that you guard, guard your mind, for it is the source [אַנְאָאוֹת] [totzaot] of life," "from everything that I said to you, beware, for you don't know from which commandment you derive your life." 5

ְוָהָקְשָׁה הוּא זַ"ל וַהָלֹא כָּל מִצְוָה וּמִצְוָה מַתָּן שָׁכְרָה אֲריכוּת יָמִים. וְאֵיךּ קָאָמֵר שֶׁאֵין אַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ מֵאֵיזֶה מֵהֶן וְכוּ', וְהָכִי נָמִי אָמְרינַן שָׁקַל הַכָּתוּב חֲמוּרָה שֶׁבַּחֲמוּרוֹת וְקַלָּה שֶׁבַּקּלוּת לוֹמֵר שֶׁכָּל הַמִּצְוֹת מַתָּן שְׂכָרָן אֲרִיכוּת יָמִים. וְעוֹד קַשֶּׁה עַל הַפָּסוּק מַהוּ לְשׁוֹן "תּוֹצְאוֹת חַיִּים".

[My father] of blessed memory asked rhetorically, "Doesn't each and every mitzvah give the gift of long life?" How is [the Jerusalem Talmud] saying that we don't know from

² I Sam. 1:24.

³ I Sam. 1:22.

⁴ Prov. 4:23.

⁵ Jerusalem Talmud Peah 1:1.

which mitzvah life will come?⁶ Also, it is said that the verse equates the most difficult commandment, honoring one's parents⁷ with the easiest one, sending a mother bird away from her nest,⁸ teaching that all of the mitzvot have a reward of long days.⁹ Another difficulty on the verse is what is this language "the source of life"?

ְתַּירֵץ בְּמַה שֶׁאָמְרוּ זַ"ל עַל פָּסוּק "לַמָּנֶת תּוֹצָאוֹת", תתק"ג מִינֵי מִיתָה נִבְרְאוּ בָּעוֹלֶם כְּמְנְיָן תּוֹצָאוֹ"ת. וְאָם כֵּן בִּשְׁמִירַת כָּל הַמְּצְוֹת יְנַצֵּל הָאָדָם מִכָּל אֵלוּ מִינֵי מִיתוֹת, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁכֹּל מִין מִיתָה הִיא מְכֵוּנֶגֶת לְאֵיזוֹ עֲבֵירָה, שֻׁמִּי שֻׁיַּעֲבוֹר עָלֶיהָ יִהְיָה גִּעֲנְשׁ בְּאוֹתוֹ מִין מִיתָה, וְכֵן לְהָיפֶּך אִם לֹא יַעֲבוֹר אוֹתָה הָעֲבֵירָה אוֹ שֻׁיַּעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָה הַמְּצְוָה הַמְּכְוֹנָּנֶת וְהַמְּסוּגֶּלֶת לְהַצִּיל מֵאוֹתוֹ מִין מִיתָה יְנַצֵּל מִמֶּנָה, אֲבָל לְפִי שֻׁאֵין אָנוּ יוֹדְעִים מִינֵי הַמִּיתוֹת לְאֵיזוֹ מִצְוֹת מְכַוּנְוֹת בְּפְרָטוּת, וְגַם אֵין אָדָם יוֹדַע הַמִּיתָה שֻׁנְּוֹלְ מְצְיִם דְּמִשְׁמַע כָּל מִינִי מִיתָה יְבוּשְּלוּ מַחְמַת שְׁמִירָת הַמְּצוֹת שְׁמִירָת הַמְּצוֹת שְׁמִירָת הַמְּצוֹת מְבִּילְ מָאוֹתוֹ מֵעְנִה שָׁבְּיוֹ וְנִם הָיָה יוֹדַע אָיזוֹ מִצְנָה לְהָנָּצֵל מֵאוֹתוֹ מֵעְהָה שָׁאֵינוֹ יוֹדֵע הֹאִיל הְאָבָה יִבְּיָב מִין מִיתָה שָׁנְּנְוֹן וְנִם הָיָה יוֹדַע אֵיזוֹ מִצְוָה מְסוּגֶּלֶת לְהָנָצֵל מֵאוֹתוֹ מֵין מִיתָה הָיָה דִּי לוֹ לְשָׁמוֹר אוֹתָה מִצְנָה, וְשַׁהָּה שָׁאֵינוֹ יוֹדֵע הֹאִינוֹ יוֹדֵע לֹא זָה וְרֹא לָהְיָבְרְ לְהָּלָּם.

This is solved by what [the rabbis] of blessed memory said on the verse, "the L-rd G-d provides an escape [תוצאות] [totzaot] from death,"10 that "903 types of death were revealed in the world, according to the Gematria count of the word הוצאו"ה."11 If so, by guarding all of the commandments, the man will be saved from all of these types of death, because every type of death is directed to some sin. For one who violates it will be punished by some type of death, and conversely, if one will not violate the sin, or if he will uphold the positive commandment that is directed and that is a merit to save from that type of death, he will be saved from it. But since we don't know the types of death associated with the particular mitzvot with detail, and also because man doesn't know the death decreed upon him, because of this the Jerusalem Talmud says that since the verse said "the source of life," for which the meaning is that every type of death is imposed because of the failure in the observance of the mitzvah, now it is necessary to be careful of all of them. For if a man would know the type of death that is imposed upon him, and also if he would know which commandment is a merit to save from that type of death, it would be enough for him to observe that commandment. Now, that he does not know this type of death decreed upon him or that mitzvah that would save him from that death, he needs to observe all of the [mitzvot].

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⁶ Jerusalem Talmud Peah 1:1.

⁷ Ex. 20:12.

⁸ Deut. 22:6–7.

⁹ Jerusalem Talmud Peah 1:1; Midrash Rabbah Deut. 6:2.

¹⁰ Ps. 68:21. The word הצאות could mean "source," as in Prov. 4:23 cited above, or "escape," as in Ps. 68:21.

¹¹ Berachot 8a.