

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter XXXI: Emor (Lev. 21:1–24:23)

### Essay 9. Rosh Hashanah and the power of the individual

**ירושלמי** דראש השנה "כי מייגוי גדול" וכו' איזו אומה פאומה זו וכו' בנוהג שבעולם אדם יש לו דין לובש שחורים וכו' שאינו יודע היאך דינו יוצא. אבל ישראל אינן כן, אלא לובשים לבנים, ומתעטפים לבנים, ומגלחים זקנם, ואוכלים ושותים ושמים ויודעים שהקב"ה עושה להם נסים עכ"ל.

The Yerushalmi of tractate **Rosh Hashanah** states:

**“For what great nation is there that has a god so close at hand as is the L-rd our G-d, whenever we call?”<sup>1</sup> One said, Which people is like this people? Usually in the world a person who knows that he will stand in trial dresses in black, wears black headdress, and lets his beard grow, since he does not know how his trial will end. But Israel are not so, but [in preparing for Rosh Hashanah] they wear white, wear white headdress, shave their beards, eat, and drink, and are happy. They know that the Holy One, praise to Him, will perform wonders for them.**

- Yerushalmi Rosh Hashana 1:3

קשה דמה ענין חילוק האומות לענין זה, הלא הנה די לומר כמה חבב הקב"ה את ישראל. ובפרק א' דיומא אמרו נ"ל גדולה תשובה שאפילו יחיד שעשה תשובה מוחליו לו ולכל העולם. והוא דבר תימא שהיחיד כשעשה תשובה ומחלו לכל העולם נהלא מדת הדין לוקה, ואף שמצינו שבשביל ייסורין של רבי אלעזר בן ר' שמעון ושל רבינו הקדוש הנה רינח גדול בעולם. דילמא ייסורין שאני אבל בתשובה לחודא אין טעם וסבבא למה הוא כד.

**A difficulty is what connection is the distinction of the nations to this matter? Isn't it enough to say how much the Holy One, Blessed be He, loves Israel? Why reference others?**

**Also, in the first chapter of tractate Yoma, the [rabbis] of blessed memory said: Repentance is great, that even if an individual repents, he is forgiven and the entire world is forgiven.**

**This is something amazing, that if an individual repents, the entire world is forgiven, for is justice nullified? We even find that because of the sufferings of Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi**

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<sup>1</sup> Deut. 4:7.

**Shimon and those of Rabbeinu haKadosh, there was relief in the world.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps sufferings are different, but repentance alone has no reason and explanation why this is so, i.e., why the repentance of one person would result in the entire world being forgiven.**

וְנִשְׁלַח לְדָוִד וְלְבָנָיו וְלְכָל הַיְהוּדִים וְלְכָל הָעוֹלָם דְּהֵיִנוּ לְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְהוֹאִיל שְׁכָל אֶחָד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל הוּא אֶבְרָה אֶחָד לְכֹן כְּשֶׁהִתְחַיֵּד עָשָׂה תְּשׁוּבָה, מוֹחֲלִין לְכָל הָעוֹלָם דְּהֵיִנוּ לְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל.

**It can be said that it's known that Israel is one nation in the world, and all Israel is one body, and each one of Israel is one limb of that body. With Jacob, Scripture referred to his offspring as “a soul,”<sup>3</sup> but with Esau, Scripture referred to his offspring as “souls.”<sup>4</sup> That is because each one of Israel is one limb, therefore when an individual repents, the entire world is forgiven, which means all Israel. I.e., when the Gemara says the entire world, it means the entire Jewish world, and since the Jews are all one body, when one repents, it can have a profound effect on the entire body.**

דְּבִפְרָק קָמָא דְתַמּוּרָה (דף י"א ע"ב) אָמְרִינוּ ר' יוֹסִי וְר' שְׁמֵעוֹן אוֹמְרִים מְנִין לְאוֹמֵר רַגְלָה שֶׁל זוּ עוֹלָה שְׁכוּלָה עוֹלָה שְׁנֵאָמַר "כֹּל אֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן מִמֶּנּוּ לָהּ" כְּשֶׁהוּא אוֹמֵר "הֲיֵהָקֵדֵשׁ" לְרִבּוּת אֵת כְּלָה עכ"ל.

**In the first chapter of tractate Temura (page 11b), we read:**

**But Rabbi Yossi and Rabbi Shimon say: From where [is it derived in the case of] one who says: The leg of this [animal] is a burnt offering, that all of it becomes a burnt offering [and not just that limb]? Since it is stated: “All that any man give of such to the Lord [shall be sacred].”<sup>5</sup> When it says: “Shall be sacred,” [this phrase serves] to include all of [the animal, indicating that it all becomes sacred.]**

- Temura 11b<sup>6</sup>

וְאוֹמְרִינוּ הֵתֵם דְּאֵי מִקְדִּישׁ אֶבְרָה אֶחָד מִן הַבְּהֵמָה אִיבְעִינָא וְלֹא אִיפְשִׁיטָא אִי אִסְרִיא כְּלָה בְּגִינָה וְעִבּוּדָה, וּפְסָקָה הֵרַמְבַּ"ם בְּפָרָק א' מֵהַלְכוֹת מַעֲלָה לְחוּמְרָא.

**They say there that if one limb of the animal was sanctified, a dilemma was raised and not resolved if all of [the animal] is forbidden from shearing and working it. The**

<sup>2</sup> Bava Metzia 85a.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 46:26, “Every soul belonging to Jacob who came to Egypt—his own issue, aside from the wives of Jacob’s sons—all these persons numbered 66.”

<sup>4</sup> Gen. 36:6, “Esau took his wives, his sons and daughters, and all the souls of his household, his cattle and all his livestock, and all the property that he had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to another land because of his brother Jacob.”

<sup>5</sup> Lev. 27:9.

<sup>6</sup> This teaching also appears in Arachin 5a.

**Rambam rules strictly in the first chapter of the Laws of Trespass, halacha 13, i.e., that one is forbidden.<sup>7</sup>**

ואם פן פִּשְׁתֵּי־יָחִיד עֲשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה הֲלֵא נִתְקַדַּשׁ אֶבֶר אֶחָד מִכָּל הַגּוֹף, וְהִמְקַטְרְגִים אֵינָם יְכוּלִים לְהִתְקַרֵּב עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לְפִי שְׂכַל הַגּוֹף אֲסוּר בְּגִיזָה וְעִבּוּדָה. וּמִכָּל שֵׁפֶן אֵם נֹאמַר כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ ו'ל על פְּסוּק "וְנִפְל מִמֶּנּוּ רַב" שֶׁאֲפִילוֹ יָחִיד נִחְשָׁב בְּעֵינָיו רַב וְכוּ', שֶׁאֵף כָּאֵן כֹּל יָחִיד וְיָחִיד נִקְרָא אֶבֶר שֶׁהִנְשַׁמָּה תְּלוּיָהּ בּוֹ. וּבְנֻדָּא דְאֵלִיבָא דְכוּלֵי עֲלָמָא פְּשֻׁטָה הַקְדוּשָׁה בְּכָלָהּ. וְהִשְׁתָּא דְנֵיק שְׁפִיר הִירוּשְׁלָמִי לֹמַר אֵיזוֹ אוּמָה כְּאוּמָה זֹ, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁנֶּה הִתְעַלָּת נִמְשַׁד לְנֹו דְנִקָּא מִחֲמַת הָאוּמָה שֶׁהִיא כְּלָה גוֹי אֶחָד וְגוּף אֶחָד.

**If so, when the individual repents, isn't one limb from each body sanctified, and the prosecuting angels can no longer approach Israel, because the entire body is forbidden for shearing and working. Even more so if it is said as the [rabbi] of blessed memory said in the Mechilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 19:21 on the verse, "lest many of them perish,"<sup>8</sup> that even an individual is considered in his eyes as "many," that even here each and every individual is considered a limb on which the soul depends. Certainly, according to the entire world, the holiness spreads throughout [the entire nations]. Now, the Yerushalmi was nicely precise to say, "Which people is like this people," because this benefit is drawn to us precisely because of the nation, which is all one nation and one body.**

Thus we recognize the importance of the unity of the Jewish people, while also recognizing the importance of each individual.

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<sup>7</sup> Our text of the Mishneh Torah suggests that the Rambam actually takes a lenient view: "When one consecrates one limb of an animal—whether for the improvement of the Temple or for the altar—there is an unresolved doubt whether or not the entire animal is forbidden to be sheared or for work to be performed with it. Therefore, if one performs such an activity, he is not liable for lashes."

<sup>8</sup> Ex. 19:21.