

Zera Shimshon

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Published Mantua 1778*

Chapter XXXII: Behar (Lev. 25:1–26:2)

Essay 3. Sin and repentance

פסוק "שובו בנים שובבים". מלת "שובבים" משמע לשון תשובה ומשמע לשון רשעים, וכאן לא יתכן לשון תשובה שאם כבר הם שובבים דהיינו שעשו תשובה, מה צורך לומר "שובו" וכו'. ואם נאמר שפירושו לשון רשעים גם זה קשה למה קרא אותם בלשון הנה ולא אמר "רשעים".

There is a verse, **“Turn back, rebellious [*shovavim*] children.”**¹ The word **“*shovavim*”** has two meanings, **the meaning of the language of repentance, and the meaning of the language of wicked. Here, the language of repentance does not fit, for if they have already repented, that is, that they have turned back from sin, then what need is there to say “turn back” in the verse? But if it is said that the explanation of the language is wicked, this is also difficult, for why did it refer to them by this language of *shovavim* and not plainly say “wicked”?**

אלא דאמרינו בפרק ד' דגיטין מנין לנכרי שקונה לנכרי למעשה ידיו, שנאמר "וגם מבני התושבים הגרים עמכם מהם תקנו" אתם קונים מהם ולא הם קונים מהם ולא הם קונים זה לזה לגופו, יכול לא יקנו זה את זה למעשה ידיו אמרת קל וחומר נכרי ישראל קונה, נכרי בנכרי לא כל שכן, ואימא הני מילי בכספא אכל בתזקה לא. אמר ר' פפא עמון ומואב טהרו בסיחון, אשפסון נכרי נכרי, נכרי ישראל מנין, דכתיב "נישב ממנו שבי" ע"כ.

Rather, we say in the fourth chapter of tractate Gittin:

Reish Lakish says: **From where [is it derived] that a foreigner can acquire [another] foreigner [as a slave] with regard to his labor? As it is stated: “Moreover, of the children of the strangers who sojourn among you, of them you may acquire.”**² [This indicates that] **you, [Jews, can] acquire [slaves] from them, but the foreigners cannot acquire one of you, as they do not have the ability to acquire a Jew as a slave, and they cannot acquire each other as slaves. . . .**

[In addition to not being able to acquire each other completely, one] **might [have thought that] they shall not [be able to] acquire each other [even] for [the rights to] his labor. You can say by *a fortiori*: If a foreigner [can] acquire a Jew**

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¹ Jer. 3:14.

² Lev. 25:45.

[for the rights to his labor, as stated explicitly in the Torah],³ **all the more so** [is it] **not** [clear that] **a foreigner** [can acquire] **a foreigner**?

But I [could] **say** [that] **this** [*halacha*, that a foreigner can acquire a foreigner as a slave for the rights to his labor,] **applies** [only to acquisition] **via money**. **However, via** [an act of] **possession**, [by taking him captive, he does] **not** [acquire him]. **Rav Pappa says** [in response:] **Ammon and Moab became purified through** [the conquest of] **Sichon**. [I.e., initially, the Israelites were forbidden from conquering Ammon and Moab, until after Sichon conquered them. Then they were considered to belong to Sichon and became permitted for the Israelites to conquer. Similarly, a foreigner can acquire a slave by taking possession of him as a captive.]

We found [a source for] **a foreigner** [acquiring] **a foreigner** [through conquest], [which is an act of taking possession]; **from where do we** [derive that] **a foreigner** [can also acquire] **a Jew** [through the act of possession such as conquest]? **As it is written**: “And the Canaanites, who dwelt in the South, heard tell that Israel came by the way of Atharim; and he fought against Israel, **and took of them captive.**”⁴ [Thus, a Jew is acquired by a foreigner through the act of possession, such as conquest in war.]

- Gittin 37b–38a

וְנוֹדַע שֶׁיֵּצֵר הָרַע נִקְרָא נִכְרִי שֶׁהָרִי פְתִיב "לֹא־יִהְיֶה בְּךָ אֵל זָר וְלֹא תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְאֵל נִכְרִי", וְאָמְרוּ ו"ל אֵיזֶהוּ "אֵל זָר" שֶׁהוּא בְּגוֹפוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם? הֲגוֹי אֹמֵר זֶה יֵצֵר הָרַע. וְכֵשֶׁם שֶׁנִּכְרִי קוֹנֶה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו כִּף הַיֵּצֵר הָרַע שֶׁנִּקְרָא נִכְרִי קוֹנֶה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו בֵּין בְּכֶסֶף בֵּין בְּחֻזְקָה, וְהַכֶּסֶף הַיְיָנוּ כֹּל תַּאֲנוּת הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְהַחֻזְקָה כִּינּוֹן שֶׁעֵבֶר אָדָם עֲבִירָה וְשָׂנֵה בָּהּ, הַחֻזְקָה לִּי.

It is known that the evil inclination is called “a foreigner,” for it is written, “There shall not be a strange god within you, and you shall not bow to a foreign god.”⁵ [The rabbis,] of blessed memory, said, “What is the strange god within a man’s body? The evil inclination.”⁶ Just as a foreigner can acquire a Jew for the rights to his labor, so too can the evil inclination, which is called “a foreigner,” acquire a Jew for the rights to his labor, either **via money or via** an act of **possession**. “The money” by which the evil inclination acquires a Jewish soul means **all the lust of this world**, and “the act of **possession**” by which the evil inclination acquires a Jewish soul means **that**, as Rav Huna said, “**When a person commits a transgression and repeats it, it is** [in his mind] **as though it is permitted to him.**”⁷

³ Lev. 25:47.

⁴ Num. 21:1.

⁵ Ps. 81:10.

⁶ Shabbat 105b.

⁷ Yoma 86b, 87a; Moed Katan 27b; Sotah 22a; Kiddushin 20a, 40a; Arakhin 30b.

ועוד אמרו ו"ל רשעים יצרן שופטן שמוחזקים הם לחטוא, אבל אינו קונה אותו אלא למעשה נדיו, שהאדם על פרחו צריך ליתן דין וחסבון לפני מלך המלכים הקב"ה. וזה שאמר הכתוב "כי־עבדי הם" וכו' "לא ימכרו ממכרת עבד", שהקב"ה אינו רוצה שהנכרי יקנה ישראל לגופו שהרי עבדו הוא, ואף היצר הרע אינו אלא כמו שבאי כדכתיב "וישׁב ממנו שבי".

Also, [the rabbis] of blessed memory said the wicked are governed by their evil inclination, that they are compelled to sin.⁸ But [the evil inclination] only acquires [the wicked man] for the rights to his labor, for the man necessarily needs to give an account and a reckoning before the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He. This is why Scripture said, “For they are My servants, whom I freed from the land of Egypt; they may not give themselves over into servitude,”⁹ for the Holy One, Blessed be He, does not want the foreigner to acquire a Jew for his body, as he is His servant. Even the evil inclination is only like a captor, as it is written, “and he fought against Israel and took of them captive.”¹⁰

ושפיר קאמר הכתוב "שובו בנים שובבים" כלומר אל תחשבו להיות קנויים בידי היצר הרע קנן עולם ולהיות חס ושלום מטומעים בידו, שזה אינו אלא אתם כמו שבוניים מלשון "וישב ממנו שבי", וזהו לשון שובבים דנקט, ולכן חישו נא לעצמכם לפדות עצמכם מיד שונא כי הבא ליטהר מסייעין אותו, וסייעו אתכם מן השמים ותוכלו להנצל ממנו ולהגאל.

It's fine that Scripture says, “Turn back, rebellious children,” as if to say, don't think to be acquired by the hand of the evil inclination as an eternal purchase and to be, G-d forbid, assimilated within it. For this is nothing other than you being captives, according to the language “and took of them captive,” and this the language of “*shovavim*” that was used, i.e., the meaning of wicked, and therefore please feel free to redeem yourselves from the hand of the foe. For “if he comes [in order] to become purified, [not only is he allowed to do so, but] they, [in Heaven], assist him.”¹¹ They will assist them from Heaven, and they will be able to be saved from [the evil inclination] and to be redeemed.

ועוד כתיב "הן־כל־אלה יפעל־אל פעמים שלוש עם־גבר", וקשה מהו "יפעל־אל", ועוד למה דוקא "פעמים שלוש".

It is also written, “Truly, G-d works [*yifal El*] [יפעל־אל] all these things two or three times to a man, to bring him back from the Pit, that he may bask in the light of life.”¹² It is difficult to understand what is this “*yifal El*,” and also why does it specifically say “two or three times”?

⁸ Berachot 61b: “It was taught [in a *Baraita* that] Rabbi Yosei haGalili says: The good inclination rules the righteous, as it is stated: ‘And my heart is dead within me’ (Ps. 109:22); [i.e., the evil inclination has been completely banished from his heart]. The evil inclination rules the wicked, as it is stated: ‘Transgression speaks to the wicked, there is no fear of G-d before his eyes’ (Ps. 36:2). Middling people are ruled by both [the good and evil inclinations], as it is stated: ‘Because He stands at the right hand of the needy, to save him from them that rule his soul’ (Ps. 109:31).”

⁹ Lev. 25:42.

¹⁰ Num. 21:1.

¹¹ Shabbat 104a.

¹² Job 33:29.

משום דאמרין בפרק ד' דגיטין המוכר עצמו ואת בנו לגוי אין פודין אותו, ובגמרא אמר ר' אסי והוא שמכר וישנה ושלש. ואם כן עד שלשה פעמים מן השמים יסייעוהו לפדות עצמו אבל לאחר שלשה פעמים לא יסייעוהו מן השמים עד שייעשה כל מאמצי פחו לשוב בתשובה שלימה.

This is **because**, as it says in the fourth chapter of tractate **Gittin**, regarding **one who sells himself and his son to a gentile, we do not redeem him. In the Gemara, Rav Asi says that this halacha applies only when he sold [himself for a first time and was redeemed], and repeated [his action by selling himself] a second time [and was redeemed], and repeated [his action by selling himself] a third time.**¹³ **If so, until three times, they will assist him from Heaven to redeem himself, but after three times, they won't assist him from Heaven until he will make "the utmost efforts"**¹⁴ **to return in complete repentance.**

The Zera Shimshon now interprets Ex. 21:7–11 in light of one who succumbs to the evil inclination and then repents.

ומכל מקום "לא תצא כצאת העבדים" וכו', זה שמכר נשמתו כמו שכתב הזוהר הקדוש לא תצא מן העולם נשמה הזו כצאת העבדים של אל זר בר מינו, רק צריך לפדותה ולהוציאה לחירות.

In any case, "When a parent sells a daughter as a slave, she shall not go free as other slaves do."¹⁵ **This is referring to one who sells his soul, as the holy Zohar writes.**¹⁶ **This soul will not leave the world, as slaves of a strange god outside of us leave. It is only necessary to redeem it and set it free.**

אמנם "אם רעה בעיני אדנייה אשר לא [לו] יעדה והפדה", כלומר שנחשבת רעה בעיניו שפכר חטא הרבה ונפל בדיוטא הסתתונה עד שאין תקומה למפלתו וחושב שאבד סברו ותוהלתו.

Indeed, "If she proves to be displeasing to her master, who designated her for himself, he must let her be redeemed; he shall not have the right to sell her to outsiders, since he broke faith with her."¹⁷ **This is as if to say that she is considered bad in his eyes, that he already sinned much and fell to the lowest floor, such that there is no recovery to his downfall, and he thinks he has lost his hope and aspiration.**

¹³ Gittin 46b.

¹⁴ Cf. Job 36:19.

¹⁵ Ex. 21:7.

¹⁶ Zohar II:94b.

¹⁷ Ex. 21:8.

"לעם נכרי לא ימשל למכרה בבגדו־בה", לא יוסיף חטא על פשע ונדון על רשע להדבק באומות ולעשות כמעשיהם, בשוביל שפגד בה שחטא כָּבֵר.

“He shall not have the right to sell her to outsiders, since he broke faith with her.” He shall not add a *chet*, an unintentional sin, to a *pesha*, an intentional rebellious act, and a *zadon*, a premeditated conscious sin, to *resha*, wickedness, in order to cling to nations and to act as they do, for he has betrayed her in that he has already sinned.

משום ש"אם-לכנו ייעדנה כמשפט הבנות יעשה-לה", שאם יתחיל לשוב בתשובה אפטר שיהיה לו בן עוסק בתורה וברא מזכי אבא ו"גיל גיל אבי צדיק" וכו', שלא תהיה עוד כמו אמה רק כמו בת.

Because “if the master designated her for a son, he shall deal with her as is the practice with free maidens.”¹⁸ The meaning is that if he will begin to turn in repentance, it is possible that he will have a son who engages in Torah, and “the son confers merit upon the father,”¹⁹ and “the father of a righteous man will exult; he who begets a wise son will rejoice in him,”²⁰ for she will no longer be as a maidservant, but as a daughter.

"אם-אחרת קח-לו", ואם ישוב בתשובה שלימה ויחל לשוב בתשובה ויטהור ויטהר לתקן אף הראשונה, "שארה כסותה וענתה לא יגרע". "שארה" הינו מזון הנפש, שהיא תלמוד תורה ומעשים טובים. "כסותה" הוא הלבוש, שמתלבש בו האדם בסוד חלוקת דרבנן. "וענתה" לקבע עצמו בקביעות גמור בדרך הטובה כדי לתקן את המעוות ולא ישאר בו גריעות וקלקול, ולא יגרע מאלו על כל פנים.

“If he takes another [into the household as his wife],”²¹ and if he will turn in complete repentance and will take another holy and pure soul for himself, he will be careful to correct even the first soul, for “her food, her clothing, and her conjugal rights, he must not withhold.”²² “Her food”—this is the food of the soul, which is the study of Torah and good deeds. “Her clothing”—this is the clothing, with which a man dresses in the esoteric secret of the “robe of the sages” which is worn in the World of Truth.²³ And “her conjugal rights”—this is to establish himself permanently in the good path, in order to repair the distortions and not to leave within himself inferiority or spoilage, and in any case, not to detract from these things.

¹⁸ Ex. 21:9.

¹⁹ Sanhedrin 104a.

²⁰ Prov. 23:24.

²¹ Ex. 21:10.

²² Ibid.

²³ Zohar I:66a.

"ואם-שקלש-אלה לא יעשה לה", שלא הנה לו בן תלמיד חכם וצדיק וגם לא זכה שתבא לו נשמה אחרת קדושה לסייעו וגם לא קבע עצמו בדרך הטובה בקביעות גמור, והגיעו הסימנים שצריך לצאת מן העולם שהגיע קיצו או שנת היובל שהוא סוף העולם ואין בידו אלא תשובה בלבד.

“If he fails her in these three ways, she shall go free, without payment.”²⁴ “If he fails her in these three ways,” means that he did not have a son who was a wise and righteous Torah scholar, and he did not merit for another holy soul to come and assist him, and he did not establish himself permanently in the good path. These things did not happen, and the signs of have arrived that the soul needs to leave the world, for the end has arrived, or the Jubilee year, which is the end of the world, and he has no other [remedy] at hand other than repentance alone.

עם כל זה תועיל תשובתו שתצא הנם מדין גהינם, אלא שלא יהיו לו ארבע מאות עלמין דכיסופא דגרתין צדיקיא, וזהו
"ויצאה הנם אין כסף".

Despite all this, his repentance will avail him, such that he will go free, without payment, from the judgment of Gehenna, rather he won't receive the four hundred worlds of reward that the righteous will inherit in the World to Come,²⁵ and this is the meaning of “she shall go free, without payment.”

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²⁴ Ex. 21:11.

²⁵ Zohar I:123b.