

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XLI: Pinchas (Num. 25:10–30:1)

Essay 6. Rejoicing and Exulting in G-d is not limited to prayer and learning

יְלִקוּט על פסוק "זה-היום עשה ה' נגילה ונשמחה בו", אמר רבי אבין אין אנו יודעין במה לשמוח, אם ביום אם בהקב"ה, בא שלמה ופירש "נגילה ונשמחה בך", בך בישועתך, בך ביראתך, בך בתורתך. אמר רבי יצחק, בך, בכ"ב אותיות שכתבת לנו בתורה, בי"ת שנים, כ"ף עשרים, הרי כ"ף עכ"ל.

There is a **Yalkut Shimoni** on Nach 876 on the verse, **“This is the day that the L-rd has made; let us exult and rejoice *vo* [בו] [which could mean ‘in it,’ or ‘in Him’]”** (Ps. 118:24). **Rabbi Avin** said, **“We didn’t know in what to rejoice: perhaps it meant to exult and rejoice in the day, or perhaps it meant to exult and rejoice in the Holy One, Blessed be He. Solomon came and explained, ‘Let us exult and rejoice in You’** (Song of Songs 1:4), **in You, [meaning] in Your salvation; in You, [meaning] in the fear of You; in You, [meaning] in Your Torah.”** **Rabbi Yitzchak** said, **“In You (בך) (*bach*), in the 22 (כ"ב) letters of the Hebrew alphabet, by which You wrote the Torah for us.** That is, in the word *bach* (in You) (בך), the letter *bet* [represents] the Gematria of **two**, and the letter *caf* [represents] the Gematria of **twenty**, this is *bach* (בך) (“in You”), having a total Gematria of 22, which corresponds to the number of letters of the Hebrew alphabet.”^{1,2}

קשה מהו הספק שנוגד לו בפסוק זה והלא גם בלא פסוק זה יש לנו הספק, משום דתרי קראי קתיבי, "עצרת לה' אלהיך", "עצרת תהיה לכם"? ועל פרקך צריך לתרץ בדאמרינו בריש פרק ב' דמסכת יום טוב אי כרבי אליעזר, פלו לה', או פלו לכם? אי כרבי יהושע, חלקהו חציו לה' וחציו לכם. והכי נמי בפסוק הנה יכול לתרץ כך, דהואיל דמפשטיה דקרא לא מוכח אם ביום אם בהקב"ה. אם כן שקולים הם ונבאו שניהם, דהי מנייהו מפקת, או פסברת רבי אליעזר או פסברת רבי יהושע ומאי מספקא ליה.

It is difficult to understand the doubt that was born within [Rabbi Avin] from this verse. Even without this verse, wouldn't we have a doubt, because of two verses that are written: “a gathering for the L-rd, your G-d” (Deut. 16:8) **and “a gathering there shall be for**

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¹ This is according to the standard *mispār hechrachi* Gematria method, in which the standard and final form of the *caf* each have the same value of 20.

² Our version of Yalkut Shimoni on Nach 876 does not include the explanation after “the 22 letters by which You wrote the Torah.” That is found in Song of Songs Rabbah 1:4:9.

you” (Num. 29:35)?³ Are we to gather for the L-rd, which would imply spending the day in prayer and learning Torah, or are we to gather for ourselves, which would imply spending the day enjoying good food and the company of relatives and friends? **You must necessarily need to solve this as it is written at the beginning of the second chapter of tractate Yom Tov, i.e., tractate Beitzah:**⁴ **“Rabbi Eliezer holds** [that these two verses should be understood as offering a choice: The day is to be] **either entirely for G-d or entirely for you. And Rabbi Yehoshua holds** [that it is possible to fulfill both verses]: **Split** [the day into two], **half of it for G-d and half of it for you.”**⁵ I.e., part of the day should be spent in prayer and learning Torah, but part of the day should also be spent in enjoying good food and company. **Indeed, in this verse we are considering, Ps. 118:24, it is possible to solve thus, for since from the plain meaning of the verse it’s not proven “if in the day,” or “if in the Holy One.” If so, “they are of equal [validity], let both of them come** [and be derived from the verse], **as which of them would you exclude?”**⁶ **It’s either according to the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer or according to the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua, and which is the correct one is uncertain to [Rabbi Avin].**

וגם לאסר שתיִרְץ "בְּךָ בִּישׁוּעָתְךָ, בְּךָ" וְכו' דְּמִשְׁמַע שְׁכַל הַשְּׁמִתָּה צְרִיכָה לִהְיוֹת בְּהַקְב"ה, קִשְׁיָא בֵּין לַרְבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֵּין לַרְבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, וְגַם עַל הַפְּסוּק עֲצָמוּ קִשְׁיָה לְמָה פְּתִיב "לְכֶם", דְּמִשְׁמַע נְמִי לְכֶם, אוּ פְּלוּ, אוּ חֲצִיּוֹ. לְמַר בְּדִאִית לִיהּ וּלְמַר בְּדִאִית לִיהּ.

Even after [the Midrash on Ps. 118:24] solved, “In Your salvation, in the fear of You, in Your Torah,” for which the meaning is that the entire rejoicing needs to be in the Holy One, Blessed be He, there remains a question between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua on Num. 29:35 versus Deut. 16:8, and also on the verse Num. 29:35 itself. That is, the Midrash says that Solomon’s verse, “Let us exult and rejoice in You” (Song of Songs 1:4), was meant as an answer to our question on Ps. 118:24; it doesn’t say that Solomon’s verse in Song of Songs was an answer to the dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua regarding the verses “a gathering there shall be for you” (Num. 29:35) and “a gathering for the L-rd, your G-d” (Deut. 16:8). **Also, on the verse Num. 29:35 itself, there is still a question why it is written “a gathering there shall be for you,” which has the meaning both “for you,” either “for you entirely,” or “half of it for G-d and half for you.”** That is, if the law was meant to be that the entire rejoicing is for G-d, then why does Num. 29:35 add “for you”? One **Sage, Rabbi Eliezer, rules in accordance with what he holds, i.e., either entirely for G-d or entirely for you, and one Sage, Rabbi Yehoshua, rules in accordance with what he holds, i.e., half of it for G-d and half of it for you.**⁷

³ Both verses refer to the holiday of Shemini Atzeret, which follows the day after the end of Sukkot.

⁴ The second chapter of tractate Beitzah is also called Yom Tov, so it’s uncertain if the text means to give the name of the second chapter or the nickname of the tractate.

⁵ Beitzah 15b. This quotation also appears in Pesachim 68b.

⁶ Bava Kamma 3a.

⁷ This formulation “One sage in accordance with what he holds, and one sage in accordance with what he holds,” appears in several places in the Talmud: Yoma 6a; Sukkah 32b; Sotah 15a; Sanhedrin 90a; and Arakhin 17b.

וגיש לומר, דבשלקמא אם לא הנה פתיב "בו" אלא "זה היום עשה ה' נגילה ונשמחה", ותו לא, שפיר מצינו לקרש "נגילה ונשמחה" אי כרבי אליעזר או כרבי יהושע. אבל הספק של ר' אבין הוא משום דכתיב "בו", דמשמע מיעוטא, בו ולא באחר.

Focusing once again on Ps. 118:24, it can be said, that indeed, if the final word, “*vo*” [“in it” or “in Him”], had not been written, but rather only, “This is the day that the L-rd has made; let us exult and rejoice,” and nothing more, it would be fine to be able to explain “exult and rejoice” as in Beitzah, i.e., either like Rabbi Eliezer or like Rabbi Yehoshua. But the doubt of Rabbi Avin regarding Ps. 118:24 is because it is written “*vo*.” This appears to be an extra word, and Rabbi Avin considers that the meaning is restrictive, that it means “in Him” and not “in another.”

ותירץ שבה שלמה ופירש וכו' כלומר דהאי "בו" אינו למעט אלא לרמוז שהפל יהנה ביראת ה', שאפילו האכילה והנאת הגוף תהנה ביראתו, דהואיל שאף מי שאוכל בהנאת גופו לשם שמים נקרא דבוק בהקב"ה אם כן האי קרא ד-"נגילה ונשמחה בך", אין לנו החרס לומר שפך רצה לומר דוקא בהקב"ה ולא באכילה ושתיה, אלא משמע נמי בך ביראתך כמו שמשמע נמי בך בתורתך, ומשום הכי הוסיף רבי יצחק בך בכ"ב אותיות שכתבת וכו' לומר שאינו אלא רמז בעלמא.

The solution is that Solomon came and interpreted, etc., as if to say, that this word *vo* [“in it” or “in Him”] is not to restrict, i.e., not to mean “in Him” as opposed to “in another god,” but rather to hint that everything should be done with the fear of the One True G-d, that even eating and an action of benefit to the body should be done with the fear of Him. For even when one eats to benefit his body, but he does so for the sake of Heaven, he is called “attached to the Holy One, Blessed be He.” If so, regarding this verse from Song of Songs of “Let us exult and rejoice in You,” we have no compulsion to say that it wanted to say specifically in the Holy One, Blessed be He, and that it did not want to say, “in eating and drinking.” So perhaps it could be interpreted as “Let us exult and rejoice in the day, through eating and drinking, as long as we have the fear of G-d, by which we will also be exulting and rejoicing in You.” Rather, the meaning is also, in You, i.e., in the fear of You; just as the meaning is also, in You, i.e., in Your Torah, and therefore Rabbi Yitzchak adds, in You, in the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, by which You wrote the Torah, to say that it is only a hint to teach us something.

ומעתה יצא לנו טעם הגון למה דוקא שלמה פירש הדבר ולא שום אחר, שהואיל שמינו שבעת בנין בית המקדש עשה שלמה את הטג בשמחה גדולה ובמשמאות גדולות שנגמר "שבעת ימים ושבעת ימים ארבעה עשר יום" וכו'. ונתירא שלמה פן ילמדו ממנו בני אדם להיות כל היום אוכלים ושותים ולא להיות כלל יושבים ושונים, ומשום הכי קאמר "נגילה ונשמחה בך", שאף שבאותו הפעם אכלו ושתו כל היום מכל מקום בפעם אחרת יכול לעשותו כלו לה' כדעת רבי אליעזר או אוכל ושותה או יושב ושונה, אבל אף בשאוכל ושותה יהנה ביראת השם ולשם מצנה, כמו שעשו בימי שלמה, שעשו אותן הסעודות לשם שמחת מצנה דוקא.

Now we have a good reason why Solomon explained this and not someone else, since we found at the time of the building of the Temple, Solomon observed the Feast of Tabernacles,

i.e., Sukkot, with great joy and with great preparations, as it is said, “seven days and again seven days, fourteen days in all” (I Kings 8:65).⁸ Solomon was afraid lest people would learn from him to spend all day eating and drinking and not at all to be sitting and learning Torah, and because of this, this is why it says, “Let us exult and rejoice in You.” For even at the same time that they are eating and drinking all day, in any regard, on a different time it will be possible to do this entirely for G-d, in accordance with Rabbi Eliezer, either eating and drinking, or sitting and learning Torah. But that’s only when the eating and drinking will be done with the fear of G-d and for the sake of performing a mitzvah, as they did in the days of Solomon, when they observed the feasts precisely for the sake of the joy of the mitzvah.

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⁸ Rashi explains that this was 7 days of inauguration of the Temple, followed by 7 days of Sukkot. (One of the days of inauguration was Yom Kippur, and the Jews did not fast that year! *See* Moed Katan 9a.)