

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter XLIII: Masei (Num. 33:1–36:13)

### Essay 3. The betrothal between G-d and Israel

**"מה-מצאו אבותיכם בי עול פי רחוקו מעלי" וכו'. קשה אף סלקא דעתך לומר שבהקב"ה יש עול חס ושלום.**

**"Thus said the L-rd: What wrong did your ancestors find in Me that they abandoned Me and went after delusion and were deluded?"<sup>1</sup> A question is how would it enter your mind to say that there is wrong within the Holy One, Blessed be He, G-d forbid?**

ונש לומר דמציינו בשלחן ערוך יורה דעה (סימן רל"ו סעיף ו') שנים שנשבעו לעשות דבר אחד ועבר אחד מהם על השבועה, השני פטור ואינו צריך התרה, לפיכך איש ואשה שנשמתדכו זה לזה, וקבלו חרם לינשא לזמן קבוע, מי שעבר והעביר המועד, אסור לינשא לאחר. והלה מותר ואינו צריך התרה. וגם המעכב עצמו מותר לאחר שנשא כנגדו. ומכל מקום זה שכנגדו אם רוצה לפטור עצמו משבועתו לך אצל חכם ויתיר לו, שמא זה שהעביר המועד ועכב יביא עדים שהיה באונס ונמצא זה שכנגדו עבר על שבועתו עכ"ל. ועיין עוד לקמן בפרשת וילך. וכבר ישראל נשבעו להקב"ה לקיים מצותיו ושלם לעבוד עבודה זרה ואף הקב"ה נשבע להם שלא יחליפם באומה אחרת ולא יניח את ישראל לעולם.

**It can be said that in the Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah (siman 236, se'if 6):**

**Two that vowed to do one thing and one of them violated the oath, the other is exempt and does not need an annulment [of the oath by a distinguished sage]. Therefore, regarding a man and a woman who became betrothed to each other and accepted [upon themselves] a ban [if they failed] to marry during a fixed period of time, for one who violated [this oath] and the time period passed, it is forbidden [for that party] to marry another. But [the jilted party] is [then] permitted [to marry another], and does not need an annulment. Also, the one who delayed is permitted to marry after [the jilted party] marries.**

The Rema's gloss adds: **In any case, if [the jilted party] wants to exempt himself from his oath, he should go to a sage and he should release him. [Why would he need to do so?] Lest the one who let the time pass and who delayed will bring witnesses that the inaction was due to compulsion [by factors beyond**

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<sup>1</sup> Jer. 2:5, from the Haftorah for this parashah.

his or her control], and it will be found that the other party was the one who violated his oath.

- Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 236:6

See further below for parashat Eikev, essay 3. **Israel had already vowed to the Holy One, Blessed be He, to fulfil His commandments and not to worship idolatry. Even the Holy One, Blessed be He, had vowed that He wouldn't exchange them for another people and would never abandon Israel.**<sup>2</sup>

וְזוֹ הִיא פְּוֹנַת הַכְּתוּב, בְּשִׁלְמָא אִם כְּשִׁנְתַּרְסַקְתֶּם מִמֶּנּוּ וְעִבְרַתֶּם עַל הַשְּׁבוּעָה הִיא גַם הוּא מִתְרַסַּק מִכֶּם כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִדִּין נוֹתֵן שֶׁהִלָּה מוֹתֵר וְאִיגוֹ צָרִיד הַתְּרָה, אִזְ הִיא מוֹתֵר לְכֶם לְהוֹסִיף וּלְהַתְרַסַּק מִמֶּנּוּ, שֶׁהָרִי אֵף הַמַּעֲכָב עֲצָמוֹ מוֹתֵר לְאַחַר שֶׁנִּשְׂאָ זֶה שֶׁכִּנְגְדוּ, אֲבָל עֲכָשְׁיוֹ שֶׁהִקֵּב"ה קִיָּים שְׁבוּעָתוֹ כְּדֹאִיתָא בְּמִדְרָשׁ פְּרֻשַׁת רָאָה כָּל מָה שֶׁנִּשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבוֹתֵיכֶם לֹא קִיָּמַתִּיהָ, נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לָהֶם שֶׁאֲנִי מְבַרְךְ בְּנֵיהֶם שֶׁאֲנִי מוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם בְּרִכּוּשׁ גָּדוֹל לֹא קִיָּמַתִּי וְכוּ', "מִה־מִּצְאוֹ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם בִּי עֹנֵל כִּי רָחַקוּ מֵעָלַי".

**This is the intention of the Scripture: Granted, if when you distanced yourself from Him and violated the oath, He would also distance Himself from you, as the law provides, he is permitted to do so, and does not need an annulment. Then, it would be permitted for you to distance yourselves further from Him, for even the one who himself delays is permitted to marry after [the jilted party] marries. But now that the Holy One, Blessed be He, fulfilled His oath, as is written in Midrash Rabbah 3:3 for parashat Re'eh [sic],<sup>3</sup> “Have I not fulfilled everything that I vowed to your fathers? I vowed to them that I would bless their children, [and] that I would bring them out [from Egypt] with great wealth. Have I not done so? ‘What wrong did your ancestors find in Me that they abandoned Me.’ ”**

וְזוֹה שֶׁאָמַר הַכְּתוּב "כִּי־כֹאֲשֶׁה עֲזוּבָה וְעֲצוּבַת רוּחַ קָרָאָהּ ה'", וּמֵהוּ לְשׁוֹן "עֲזוּבָה וְעֲצוּבַת רוּחַ". אֲלֵא לִפִּי שֶׁמֶן הַדִּין אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה שֶׁנִּשְׁבְּעוּ זֶה לְזֶה מִי שֶׁעֲכָב אָסוּר לִינִשְׂא לְאַחַר אֲבָל שֶׁכִּנְגְדוּ מוֹתֵר אֲפִילוּ בְּלֹא הַתְּרָה, וְאִם כֵּן הָאִישׁ זֶה הִקֵּב"ה וְהָאִשָּׁה הֵם וְיִשְׂרָאֵל, וְיִשְׂרָאֵל עֲכָבוּ שֶׁסָּרוּ מֵאֲחֵרֵי ה' וְלֹא הִלְכוּ בְּדַרְכָיו וְהֵם הָאָסוּרִים לִינִשְׂא לְאַחַר אֲבָל הִקֵּב"ה מוֹתֵר שֶׁיִּחְלִיפֵם.

**This is what the Scripture said, “As a wife forlorn and forsaken, the L-rd has called you back. Can one cast off the wife of his youth, said your G-d?”<sup>4</sup> Rather, according to the law, if a man and a woman vowed to each other that the one who delayed their marriage is forbidden to marry another, [the jilted party] is permitted to marry another even without annulment of the oath by a sage. If so, the man is representative of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and the woman is representative of Israel. Israel delayed because they turned away from G-d and didn't walk in His ways, and they are the ones who are forbidden to marry another, but G-d is allowed to replace them.**

<sup>2</sup> Deut. 29:11–12.

<sup>3</sup> This is actually the Midrash Rabbah for parashat Ekev.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 54:6.

וזהו שאמר "כִּי־כִאֲשֶׁה עֲזוּבָה", שהאיש כשראה שהיא עכבה הניחה ולא נשא עוד פניו ולבו אליה ולכן נקראת "עזובה", ועוד היא "עצובת רוח" שאינה יכולה לינשא לאחר שעדיין היא בשבועה, שאף על פי שחטא ישראל הוא. ועל זה סיים ואמר "ואשת נעורים כי תמאס", כי מן הדין אם היית שומרת השבועה לא היה לי למאוס בך, אבל עם כל זה לא הנחתי אותך והתליפתך באומה אחרת שאז היית פטורה אף את משבועתך, שלאחר שנשא זה שכנגדו אף המעכב עצמו מותר, אלא "ברגע קטן עזבתיו" ומיד "וברחמים גדלים אקבצך".

**This is why [Scripture] said: “As a wife forlorn,” that the man who saw that she delayed, left her and did not raise his face and heart toward her, and therefore she is called “forlorn.” Also, she is “forsaken,” that she is not able to marry another, for she is still under oath. “Even though [the nation] has sinned, it is [still] Israel.”<sup>5</sup> About this, [Scripture] concluded and said, “Can one cast off the wife of his youth?” for according to the law, “if you had observed your oath, I would not have cast you off.” But with all this, “I didn’t leave you and exchange you for another nation, that now you are exempt even from your servitude, that after [the jilted party] marries, even the one who herself delayed is exempt [and can marry another]. Rather, ‘For a little while I forsook you, but’—immediately—‘with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you.’”<sup>6</sup>**

ולמה הקב"ה לא התליפם, מפני שהדין נותן שאם האשה דהיינו המעכב יביא עדים דאנוס הוא אז אינו מותר לשכנגדו לעבור על השבועה, ועל זה "בשצף קצף הסתרת פני רגע ממך", כלומר רק רגע לבד, ומיד "בחסד עולם רחמתיו", וקשה למה אמר "בחסד עולם", ועוד מה שיידך הכא שבועת המבול "כִּי־מִי נָח זֹאת לִי".

**Why didn’t the Holy One, Blessed be He, replace them, as the law provides that if the woman—that is, if the one who delayed brings witnesses that [the inaction] was due to compulsion—then the [other party] is not permitted to violate the oath. About this, it is said, “In slight anger, for a moment, I hid My face from you,”<sup>7</sup> as if to say, “only for a moment, and then immediately, ‘with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you.’” A difficulty is why did He say, “with everlasting kindness”? Also, what is the relevance here of the oath of the Flood, for the next verse states, “For this to Me is like the waters of Noah: As I vowed that the waters of Noah nevermore would flood the earth, so I swear that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you.”<sup>8</sup>**

<sup>5</sup> Sanhedrin 44a.

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 54:7.

<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 54:8.

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 54:9.

וַיִּשׁ לֵאמֹר דְּבַפְרָשׁת נח כְּתִיב "כִּי יֵצֵר לֵב הָאָדָם רַע מִנְעֻרָיו", וּבְשִׁבִיל זֶה כָּדֵי שְׁלֵא לְהַחְרִיב הָעוֹלָם כַּמָּה פְּעָמִים נִשְׁבַּע הַקֹּב"ה שְׁלֵא יָבִיא עוֹד מַבּוּל, יַעַן כִּנְי אָדָם אֲנוּסִים הֵם מִיֵּצָרָם דְּאִיְהוּ דְּנוּרָא וְאֲנִן דְּבִשְׂרָא, וְאִף כָּאֵן יֵאמְרוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנוּסִים הָיִינוּ בְּיֵצָרְנוּ וּמָה שְׁעַפְכְּנוּ אֵינּוּ כְּלוּם וְאִי אַתָּה יָכוֹל לְהַחְלִיפֵנוּ. וְעַל זֶה "בְּחֶסֶד עוֹלָם רַחֲמֶיךָ", כְּשֵׁם שְׁקִימְתִי הָעוֹלָם בְּטַעֲנַת אוֹנָס דְּיֵצָר, "כִּי־מִי נח זֹאת לִי" וְכוּ', "כִּן נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי מִקִּצְף עֲלֶיךָ וּמִגְעַר־בְּךָ" יַעַן אֲנוּסָה אַתָּה בְּיֵצָרְךָ.

**It can be said that in parashat Noach, it is written, “since the inclinations of the human heart are evil from youth.”<sup>9</sup> Because of this, in order that He wouldn’t destroy the world several times, the Holy One, Blessed be He, vowed that He would not bring another Flood, because mankind are compelled from their creation. That is, He is fire, but we are mere flesh.<sup>10</sup> Even here, Israel would say, “we were compelled by our suffering, and the fact that we delayed is nothing, and You are not able to exchange us.” About this, He said, “with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,” just as I sustained the world because it was created with compulsion, “For this to Me is like the waters of Noah: As I vowed that the waters of Noah nevermore would flood the earth, so I swear that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you,” because you were compelled by your creation.**

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<sup>9</sup> Gen. 8:21.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Kiddushin 81a, where Amram said to his evil inclination, you are fire, and I am mere flesh.