

Zera Shimshon

by Rabbi Shimshon Chaim Nachmani zt"l

Published Mantua 1778*

Chapter XLVI: Ekev (Deut. 7:12–11:25)

Essay 9. G-d has compassion for us

"וַתֹּאמֶר צִיּוֹן עֲזַבְנִי ה' וְכוּ' הַתְּשַׁכַּח אֱשֶׁה עוֹלָה וְכוּ' הֵן עַל-כַּפַּיִם" וְכוּ'. הַקְּשָׁה הַזֵּרָע בְּרַךְ ד' הַתְּשַׁכַּח אֱשֶׁה עוֹלָה" מִשְׁמַע שֶׁהוּא מִן הַנְּמֻנֶע וְיוֹצֵא חוּץ לְטִבְעוֹ, וְאַחַר כֵּן אָמַר "גַּם-אֵלֶּה תִשְׁכַּחְנָה" וְכוּ' הָרִי הוּא דָבָר בְּלִתי אֲפֹשֶׁר וּלְמָה יִדְבַר דָּבָר שֶׁאֵינּוּ עִב"ל.

“Zion says, ‘The L-rd has forsaken me, My L-rd has forgotten me.’ Can a woman forget her baby, [or forget] compassion for the child of her womb? Even these might forget, but I could never forget you. See, on the palms of My hands I have engraved you, your walls are ever before Me.”¹ The Zera Berach² questioned that “can a woman forget her baby” means something impossible and that is outside of nature, and afterwards it says, “even these might forget,” which is something impossible, and why does it say something not possible?

וּלְדִידוֹן לֹא קִשְׁיָא כָּלֵל דִּישׁ לְדַקְדַּק הַכֶּפֶל שֶׁל "אֱשֶׁה עוֹלָה" וְאַחַר כֵּן "בְּוִבְטָנָה" שֶׁלְכַאוֹרָה הַכֵּל אַחַד, וַיֵּשׁ לוֹמַר ד' "עוֹלָה" רָצָה לוֹמַר גַּעַר קִטּוֹן שֶׁעֲנִיִּין הוּא יוֹגֵק וְכֵן הִבִּיאוּ הַרְד"ק בְּסִפְרֵי הַשְּׂרָשִׁים עִם "הַצֵּאֵן וְהַבְּקָר עֲלוֹת עֲלֵי", כְּלוּמַר שֶׁהוּא קִטּוֹן וְצָרִיךְ לְמִזּוֹנוֹת וְאִמּוֹ לְעוֹלָם לֹא תִשְׁכַּח לְהַמְצִיא לוֹ הַמְּזוֹן אוֹ חֵלֶב בְּכֹל עֵת הַצָּרִיךְ לוֹ, וְנָה לֹא תִשְׁכַּח לְעוֹלָם אֲפִילוֹ בְּזָמַן שֶׁהִיא מְטוּפֶלֶת בְּהַרְבֵּה עֶסְקִים. וְעוֹד לֹא "תִשְׁכַּח" . . . מֵרַחֵם בְּוִבְטָנָה" כְּשִׁיחֵינָה גְדוֹל שֶׁאֵז אֵין לוֹ עוֹד צוֹרֵךְ לְמִזּוֹנוֹת וְאִם תִּהְיֶה לָּהּ כְּעַם עֲמוֹ אֲפִילוֹ הִכִּי לֹא תִשְׁכַּח לְרַחֵם עָלֶיהָ וּלְהַקְלֵהּ מִעֲלֵיהָ הַיִּיסוּרִין.

For us, it is not difficult at all, that we need to check this duplication of “can a woman forget her baby,” and afterward “the child of her womb,” for apparently this is the same. It can be said that for the first term, the word “baby” [ulah] [עוֹלָה] has the intent of a small youth that is still nursing, and thus brings the Radak³ in the *Sefer HaShorashim* on the verse, “My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds, which are nursing, are a care to me; if they are driven hard a single day, all the flocks will die.”⁴ This is as if to say that

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¹ Isaiah 49:14–16.

² Rabbi Berachia Berech ben R' Yitzchak Izaak Shapiro, Zera Berech (Krakow 1646), commentary on the Torah.

³ Rabbi David Kimchi (1160–1235) (“RaDaK”), medieval rabbi, Biblical commentator, philosopher, and grammarian.

⁴ Gen. 33:13.

he is small and needs sustenance and his mother will never forget to provide him with food or milk whenever he needs it, and she will never forget even while she is taking care of a lot of business.

For the second term, **she still won't "forget . . . compassion for the child of her womb" when he will be grown, when he no longer has need from her for sustenance, and if she will be angry with him, even so, she won't forget compassion for him and forget to ease his suffering.**

ואומר הכתוב כשם שהאשה לא תשכח מלרחם על בן גדול שהכעיסה להקל מעליו הסורין "גם-אלה תשכחנה" העבירות "ואנכי לא אשכחך" הרחמים. ונהו נגד המשל השני של "מרחם בן-בטנה" דפתח במאי דסליק. וכןגד המשל האחד של "התשכח אשה עולה" כנגד זה אמר "הן על-פנים חקתיך" וכו', שהקב"ה שם את ישראל כחותם על זרועו כדי לזכור תמיד מהם לפשוט את ידיו לשלוח להם עזרם מקדש כדי שישובו בתשובה שלימה וליתן להם כל הצריך אפילו כשהם בגלות.

Scripture says that just as a woman will not forget to have compassion on a grown son who angered her, to relieve him of his torments, "even these might forget" the transgressions with which he angered her, and the same way, G-d says, "I will not forget you" for compassion. This corresponds to the second analogy of "or forget compassion for the child of her womb."

Corresponding to the first analogy of "can a woman forget her baby," corresponding to this it's said, "see, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands." That that the Holy One, Blessed be He, placed Israel as a seal on His arm⁵ to always remember them, to open His hands to send them a holy gift so that they will return in complete repentance, and to give them everything they need, even when they are in exile.

והראיה על זה ש"חומתך נגדי תמיד" כדאיתא בפרק קמא דסוטה אלו משה ודוד שלא שלטו שונאייהם במעשה ידיהם, דוד דכתיב טבעו בארץ שעריה, ופרש רש"י לעיל מיניה כתיב "חשב ה' להשחית חומת בת-ציון" ועלה כתיב "טבעו בארץ שעריה". ואף כאן הכתוב מדבר עם ציון דכתיב "ותאמר ציון" והקב"ה משיב "חומתך נגדי תמיד", דהואיל שהשארתי החומות בהנתינתן זהו סימן ומופת שאני רוצה לרחם עליה.

And the proof for this, that "your walls are ever before Me," as is brought in the first chapter of tractate Sotah, "This is [referring to] Moses and David, whose enemies did not rule over their achievements."⁶ Rashi explained the above by what is written, "The L-rd resolved

⁵ Song of Songs 8:6.

⁶ Sotah 9a: "[With regard to] David, [the citadel that housed his home and city, was not destroyed,] as it is written: 'Her gates have sunk into the earth' (Lam. 2:9), [as the gates of Jerusalem built by David were not destroyed by enemies, but sunk into the earth and were buried there. This is also so with regard to] Moses, as the master said: When

to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion,”⁷ and about this it’s written, “her gates have sunk into the ground.”⁸ Even here, the Scripture speaks with the term “Zion,” as it is written, “Zion says, ‘The L-rd has forsaken me,’ ” and the Holy One, Blessed be He, responds, “your walls are ever before Me,” as if to say that “since I left the walls as they always were, this is a sign and confirmation that I want to have compassion for you.”

* * *

the first Temple was built, the Tabernacle was hidden, [including] its boards, its clasps, and its bars, and its pillars, and its sockets. Where is it hidden? Rav Chisda says that Avimi says: Beneath the tunnels of the Sanctuary.”

⁷ Lam. 2:8.

⁸ Lam. 2:9.