

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter L: Ki Tavo (Deut. 26:1–29:8)

Essay 3. The prerequisite to receiving the Land

“The L-rd freed us from Egypt by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and awesome power, and by signs and wonders, and He brought us to this place and He gave us this Land, a land flowing with milk and honey.” - Deut. 26:8–9.

מדרש ילקוט, "וניבאנו אל-המקום הזה" זה בית המקדש או אינו אלא ארץ ישראל, כשהוא אומר "ניתן לנו את-הארץ הזאת" הרי ארץ ישראל אמור, ומהו "וניבאנו אל-המקום הזה" בשכר ביאתנו אל המקום הזה נתן לנו את הארץ הזאת עכ"ל.

There is a Midrash Yalkut Shimoni 938: “ ‘and He brought us to this place’: This is the Temple, or is none other than the Land of Israel. When it says ‘and He gave us this Land,’ this is the Land of Israel about which it is speaking. What is [the meaning of] this, “and He brought us to this place”? [It means that] as a reward for our coming to this place, He gave us this Land.”

לכאורה משמע דיוקו של המדרש מדהקדים קרא "וניבאנו אל-המקום הזה" ואחר כך "ניתן לנו את-הארץ" וכיו, והוא תמוה, שהרי הארץ כבר נתנה לנו בימי האבות. ועוד קשה שלפי מה שתרגם יונתן בן עוזיאל על פסוק "ואשא אתכם על-כנפי נשרים" דבשעת פסח מצרים נשאן הענן למקום המקדש ושהטו שם את פסחיהם. לפי זה הייתה ביאתו למקדש קודם ביאתו לארץ ישראל, ולרמוז על זה אפשר שהקדים הפתוב "וניבאנו אל-המקום הזה" ואין עוד הכרח לפירושו של המדרש הנ"ל.

Presumably the precise meaning of the Midrash is because Scripture starts with “and He brought us to this place” and afterward says “and He gave us this Land.” This Midrashic interpretation that “as a reward for our coming to this place, He gave us this Land,” is strange, for the Land was already given to us in the days of the Patriarchs.

Also, it is difficult to understand, for according to what Yonatan ben Uziel interpreted in the Targum, on the verse, “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Me,”¹ that at the time of the Paschal lamb offering, “the cloud

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¹ Ex. 19:4.

will carry you to the place of the Temple, and you will slaughter your Paschal lambs there.” Rashi says that this verse, Ex. 19:4, refers to the first Paschal offering, immediately prior to leaving Egypt.² Thus, **according to this Targum, their coming to the Temple was forty years before they came to the Land of Israel. To hint at this, it’s possible that the Scripture preceded “and He brought us to this place” before saying, “and He gave us this Land,” and there is no other need for the interpretation of the midrash as above.**

אָבֵל לְפִי הָאֱמֶת לֹא קָשִׁי מִיַּדֵּי דְאִין הִכִּי נְמִי דְמִדְכָתִיב בְּרִישָׁא "וַיִּבְאֵנוּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה" דְּנִיִּק הַתְּרַגּוּם שְׂפָאוּ שָׁם לְאָכּוּל הַפֶּסַח. אָבֵל לְפִי זֶה לֹא שְׁנִיף לֹדְמֵר "וַיִּבְאֵנוּ" אֶלֶּא "וַיִּנְשָׂאנוּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה" שְׁהֵרִי נִשָּׂא אוֹתָם עַל כַּנְּפֵי נְשָׂרִים. וְעוֹד דְּהִנֵּה לֹדְמֵר "אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֶל הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת". וּמִדְקָאֲמַר אַחֵר "וַיִּבְאֵנוּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה" "וַיִּתְּנוּ־לָנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת", שְׁמַע מִיַּנְיָה שְׁהַמָּקוֹם לֹא נָתַן לָנוּ וְהָאָרֶץ נָתַן לָנוּ, וְאִיךָ יִתְכַן זֶה, וְהִלֵּא כְּשֶׁנָּתַן לָנוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ, נָתַן גַּם אֶת הַמָּקוֹם?

But truthfully, [the Midrash] is not difficult at all. It is indeed so that from what is written at the beginning, “and He brought us to this place,” the Targum is precise that they came there to eat the Paschal lamb. But according to this, it is not appropriate to say that “He brought us”, but that “He carried us” to this place, for He carried them on the wings of eagles. I.e., the verb of Deut. 26:9, “brought,” does not agree with the verb of Ex. 19:4, “carried.”

Also, it should have said that He brought us (or carried us) “to this place and to this Land.” From the fact that after it is said, “and He brought us to this place,” it is said, “and He gave us this Land,” we hear from that a distinction, that the place was not given to us, but only the Land was given to us. How is this possible, for when He gave us the Land, didn’t He also give us the place, which is within the borders of the Land?

אֶלֶּא וְדֹאֵי שְׂפָא לְהַשְׁמִיעֵנוּ שְׂבִשְׂכַר בִּיאָתָנוּ וְכוּ' נָתַן לָנוּ וְכוּ'. תַּרְתִּי שְׁמַעְתָּ מִיַּנְיָה, וְאִי כּוֹלִיָּה קָרָא לְהִכִּי הוּא דְאָתָא הִנֵּה לֹדְמֵר "וַיִּבְאֵנוּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה" וְהִינֵנוּ שׁוֹמְעִים בְּשִׂכְרָא בִּיאָתָנוּ אָבֵל "וַיִּבְאֵנוּ" מִשְׁמַע שְׁהַקֵּב"ה הִבִּיא אוֹתָנוּ, אֶלֶּא וְדֹאֵי שְׂפָא לְרַמּוּז נְמִי לְפִירוּשׁוֹ שֶׁל הַתְּרַגּוּם.

Rather, certainly this came to inform us that as the reward for our coming to this place, He gave us this Land, as the Midrash states.

We learn two things from this, but if the entire verse came for this reason, it should have said “and we came to this place,” and we would hear that as a reward for our coming. I.e., a reward for an action that we undertook. But as it instead says “and He brought us,” we hear from this that the Holy One, Blessed be He, brought us. So why did we receive a reward, if we were only passive participants? Rather, it’s certain that this verse came to hint to us also at the explanation of the Targum, that G-d brought us (on eagles’ wings) to the Temple.

² Apparently, there was only one other Paschal offering in the wilderness, on the first anniversary of the Exodus. For the next 39 years in the wilderness, there was no Paschal offering.

ועל שהקשינו שפבר נתנה לנו בימי האבות, הענין הוא כך, שהמקום לא רצה הקב"ה ליתנו לנו אלא אדרבא רצה שיקחו אותו כל הצבור משלהם. וזהו מה שאמר דוד לארונה "לא פייקנו אקנה מאתך במחיר ולא אעלה ליהנה אלהי עלות חנם". וכן הוא במסכת זבחים פתוב אהד אומר "בכסף שקלים חמשים" וכתוב אהד אומר בפש מאות שקלים. הא כיצד גבה מפל שבט ושבת חמשים שקלים.

Regarding the difficulty that [the Land] had already been given to us in the days of the patriarchs, the point is thus, that the Holy One, Blessed be He, hadn't wanted to give the place to us, but rather He had wanted the entire community to take it for themselves.

This is what David said to Araunah, " 'No, I will buy them from you at a price. I cannot sacrifice to the L-rd my G-d burnt offerings that have cost me nothing.' So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver."³

Similarly, this is in tractate Zevachim 116b, "One verse says, 'for fifty shekels of silver,'"⁴ and one verse says, 600 shekels.⁵ How is this possible? It's the sum of fifty shekels from each and every tribe.⁶

והטעם מדאמרין במנחות פרק הקומץ רבה יכול האומר הרי עלי עולה וביא עצים מתוך ביתו פשם שמביא נסכים מתוך ביתו תלמוד לומר על העצים אשר על האש אשר על המזבח, מה מזבח משל צבור אף עצים משל צבור ע"כ. ומזה משמע שבמקום המקדש לא שייך בו נתינה, ואם כבר נתן לנו את הארץ פשיטא שגם המקום הנה בכלל, אלא נדאי צריך לומר שמתנת הארץ לא באה לנו אלא לאסור ופנינו ובנינו המקדש, וזהו הכרח אחר לדברי המדרש הנ"ל.

The reason from the fact that it is said in tractate Menachot, in the third chapter, entitled "One who removes a handful":

[One] might [have thought that] **one who says: "It [is incumbent] upon me [to bring] a burnt offering," must bring wood from his home** [on which the burnt offering will be sacrificed], **just as he brings libations from his home** [along with a burnt offering] (Num. chapter 15). [Therefore,] **the verse states** [with regard to the burnt offering:] **"On the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar"** (Lev. 1:12). [The Torah juxtaposes the wood to the altar, teaching that] **just as the altar [was built] from communal [funds], so too, the wood and fire [are brought] from communal [supplies].**

- Menachot 22a

From this, the meaning is that in the place of the Temple, "giving" is not relevant, and if He already gave to us the Land, it is obvious that also the place was included. Rather, it is certainly necessary to say that the gift of the Land only came to us after we purchased and built the Temple, and this is a necessity according to the words of the Midrash above.

³ II Sam. 24:24.

⁴ Id.

⁵ I Chron. 21:25.

⁶ Rashi on II Sam. 24:24.

וכן מצינו כְּשֶׁנִּתְבַּשֵּׂר אַבְרָהָם מִמִּתְנַת הָאָרֶץ "לְזַרְעֲךָ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת", מִיָּד "וַיִּבֶן שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לַה'" על בְּשׂוֹרֵת הָאָרֶץ, לְהַשְׁמִיעֵנו שְׂוֹאֵת הַמִּתְנָה לֹא תִהְיֶה אֲלֵא לְאַחַר שֶׁיִּבְנוּ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְהַמִּקְדָּשׁ, וְלִכֵּן כְּשֶׁבִטְלוּ הַתְּמִיד, נִחְרַב הַבַּיִת וְגָלוּ מֵאֶרֶץ־עַם.

For thus we find that when Abraham received the good tidings of the gift of the Land, viz, "I will assign this land to your offspring,"⁷ Scripture immediately adds, "And he built an altar there to the L-rd who had appeared to him," for the good tidings of the Land. This is to inform us that this gift would only be actualized after they built the Altar and the Temple. Therefore, when [the Romans] cancelled the daily offering, the Temple was destroyed and they were exiled from their Land.

וְהִטְעַם שְׁנֵתִינַת הָאָרֶץ תְּלוּיָהּ בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ יוֹבֵן בְּמָה שֶׁהַקִּשָּׁה הַכְּלִי יִקַּר בְּסוּף סֶפֶר שְׁמוֹאֵל עַל פְּסוּק "וַיִּבֶן שָׁם דָּוִד מִזְבֵּחַ לַה'" וְכוּ' דְהִפְתִּיב אוֹמֵר "אָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה דְרַשׁ אֶת־הַתְּמִיד עֵינֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בָּהּ". וְאִיךָ יִתְכַּן שֶׁיִּהְיֶה לָהּ יִתְבַּרַּךְ עַן עַל מְקוֹם אֶחָד וְחִבָּה יִתִּירָה עַל זֹולָתוֹ, כִּי זֶה לֹא יֵאוֹת כִּי אִם בְּבִן אָדָם אֲשֶׁר יִמְצָא נֶחֱסֵת רוּחַ מִצַּד זְכוּת אֲוִיר הַמְּקוֹם אוֹ לְרִיבּוּי מַעֲדָנָיו וְכוּצָא, חֲלִילָה לְיוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית שְׁמַאחַר שְׁכוּלָם מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו אֲשֶׁר בְּחֻכְמָה עָשָׂה. אִם כֵּן לָמָּה יִהְיֶה לוֹ עַן בְּמְקוֹם עַל זֹולָת מְקוֹם.

The reason that the giving of the Land depends on the Temple will be understood by what the *Keli Yekar* questioned at the end of the Book of Samuel on the verse, "And David built there an altar to the L-rd and sacrificed burnt offerings and offerings of well-being. The L-rd responded to the plea for the Land, and the plague against Israel was checked."⁸ For the Scripture says, "It is a Land which the L-rd, your G-d, looks after, on which the L-rd, your G-d, always keeps an eye."⁹

How is it possible that the L-rd, Blessed be He, will have favor on one place and an excessive obligation on another, as this would properly only be said about a human being, who finds pleasure in the right air of the place or in the abundance of its delicacies and the like. G-d forbid such a need should be thought of the Creator of the Creation, since everything is the work of His hands, which He wisely made. So why would He be pleased with one place over another?¹⁰

וְתִירֵץ שְׁלִפֵי שְׁבִיִּת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ שֶׁל מִטָּה מְכוּוֹנָן נִגָּד שֶׁל מַעְלָה וּמַפְאֵת הַקְּדוּשָׁה שֶׁל הַכֶּסֶף הָעוֹמֵד לְמַעְלָה מְאוֹתוֹ מְקוֹם וְאוֹתוֹ הַמְּקוֹם הוּא הַדּוֹם רַגְלָיו מִשׁוּם הֵכִי נִמְשָׁכָה הַקְּדוּשָׁה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם וּבְכָל אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאִם כֵּן אִם הִיָּה נוֹתֵן לָנוּ הָאָרֶץ קוֹדֵם בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ הִיָּה מְקוֹם קוֹשֵׁיָא מֵאֵי אוֹלָמִיָּה דְזֵה הַמְּקוֹם מִשְׁאֵר הַמְּקוֹמוֹת, אֲבָל לְאַחַר שֶׁנִּבְנְהָ בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ אֵץ נוֹדַע הִטְעַם שֶׁל הַחֲבָה יִתִּירָה הַנוֹדַעַת בְּזֹאת הָאָרֶץ.

The solution is because the Temple below, i.e., in Jerusalem, is positioned opposite the Temple above, i.e., in Heaven, and because of the holiness of the Throne of Glory standing

⁷ Gen.12:7.

⁸ II Sam. 24:25.

⁹ Deut. 11:12.

¹⁰ This is not the more famous *Keli Yekar* commentary on Torah, authored by Shlomo Ephraim ben Aaron Luntschitz (Lublin 1602), but rather the commentary on Prophets by Samuel ben Abraham Laniado (Venice 1603).

above that same place in Jerusalem and the same place in Jerusalem is His footstool, because of this, the holiness continued in Jerusalem and in all the Land of Israel. If so, if He had given the Land to us before the Temple, there would be room for a question of “In what way is this place better than the remainder of places.” But after the Temple was built, then the reason of the deep love known for the Land became known.

ועוד מטעם אחר שְהָרִי פְתָבוּ הַמְקוּבָּלִים וְאִתָּא בְּזוּהַר פְּרָשַׁת וַיִּקְהַל שְׁנֵי מַחֲצוֹת הַמִּבְדִּילוֹת בֵּין אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבֵין אֶרֶץ הָעַמִּים וּבֵין רְקִיעַ הַנִּרְקָע בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבֵין רְקִיעַ שְׁעַל אֲוִיר אֶרֶץ הָעַמִּים. וּמַחֲצוֹת אֱלֹהִים עוֹלָם עַד כְּפֶסֶת הַכְּבוֹד, וְהַשְׂבָּעִים שָׂרִים שֶׁל הָאוֹמוֹת עוֹמְדִים מִרְחוֹק אֲלֵפִים אָמָּה וְאִין לָהֶם רְשׁוּת לִיכָנֵס שָׁם. וּכְשֶׁנִּגְזַר גְּזֵירַת הַחֲוָרְבָן נִימְן רְשׁוּת לְשַׂר פָּרַס וַיִּנָּן לִיכָנֵס תוֹךְ הַתְּחוּם וְאִזּוּ יָכְלוּ הָאוֹמוֹת לְמַטָּה לִיכָנֵס תוֹךְ אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכוּ' עכ"ל.

Also, for another reason, that the Kabbalists wrote,¹¹ and it's brought in the Zohar, parashat Vayakhel (209b) that there are partitions that separate between the Land of Israel and the land of the nations, and between the firmament that rests upon the Land of Israel and the firmament above the air of the land of the nations. These partitions rise to the Throne of Glory, and the 70 ministering angels of the nations stand at a distance of 1,000 *amot* and have no permission to enter there. When the decree of the destruction of the Temple was decreed, permission was granted to the minister of Persia and to the minister of Greece to enter within the domain, and the nations below could then enter within the Land of Israel, etc.

וְאִם כֵּן כְּשֶׁהָיָה הַמִּקְדָּשׁ אִזּוּ הָיוּ אֱלֹהֵי מַחֲצוֹת וְאִין שׁוּם שָׂר וְאוֹמָה יָכוֹל לִיכָנֵס בְּתְחוּם שְׁלֵנוּ, אֲמַנָּם כְּשֶׁאִין בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ אִזּוּ יְכוּלִים זָרִים לִיכָנֵס בְּתְחוּמֵנוּ לְכִי שְׂאִין מַחֲצוֹת. וְהַשְׂתָּא יְבוֹאֵר הַכְּתוּב "וַיִּתְּן־לָנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת", דְּהֵינּוּ לָנוּ מִמֶּשׁ שְׂתִתֵּהּ כְּלָה שְׁלָנוּ לְבַד וְלֹא לְזָרִים, אֲבָל זֶה לֹא הָיָה אֱלֹא לְאַחַר שֶׁ"וַיִּבְאֵנוּ אֶל־הַמְּקוֹם הַזֶּה" דְּהֵינּוּ בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ שְׂאִזּוּ יִשׁ מַחֲצוֹת הַנִּ"ל.

If so, when the Temple existed, then there were partitions, and no minister or nation was able to enter our domain. However, when there is no Temple, then the foreigners are able to enter within our domain, because there are no partitions. Now we will understand that Scripture, “and He gave us this Land,” that is, precisely to us, that will be all of us alone, and not to the nations. But this was only after that it is said, “and He brought us to this place,” which is the Temple, that now there are partitions, as above.

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¹¹ Abraham Azulai (1570–1643), *Chesed Le'Avraham*, ma'ayan 3, nahar 3 (c. 1618-22).