

Zera Shimshon

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Published Mantua 1778*

Chapter L: Ki Tavo (Deut. 26:1–29:8)

Essay 7. A blessing on merchandise

מדרש, "ברוך אתה בבלא" בפרגמטא שלך וברוך אתה בצאתך" בפרגמטא שלך, ונדוד מפרשה "ה' ישמר-צאתך ובוואך מעתה ועד-עולם" עכ"ל. והוא תמוה וכמה קולמוסים גשמתברו בו.

There is a **Midrash**:

“Blessed shall you be when you come in,”¹ in your merchandise, “and blessed shall you be when you go out,”² in your merchandise. David explained it: “The L-rd shall guard your going and coming, now and forever.”³

- Deut. Rabbah 7:5

This connection between the verses of Deuteronomy and Psalms is puzzling, especially as the order of coming in and going out is reversed, and many pens have been broken over it.

ואפשר לומר שלפי שהרגיש קושיא על הפירוש שפירש "ברוך אתה בבלא" לכן אמר ונדוד מפרשה, דבמדרש איתא שם פירוש אחר על פסוק זה, "ברוך אתה בבלא" בביאתך לעולם וברוך אתה בצאתך ביציאתך מן העולם. ופירוש זה עולה יפה שהקדים "בלא" ל"צאתך" כמו שאדם בא לעולם קודם צאתו, אמנם למה שפירש בפרגמטא שלך קשה שהיה לו להקדים היציאה לביאה, כמו שהאדם יצא לקנות קודם בואו למכור. והספינות בתחלה פורשות ואחר כך חוזרות, כמו שאמר המדרש על פסוק "יום המנוח מיום הנולדו", וכן האדם מתחלה יוצא מביתו ואחר כך בא. ולכן הייתי אומר שהפירוש הזה של פרגמטא שלך אינו נכון, לכן אמר ונדוד מפרשה שהקדים יציאה לביאה. ועל כרחק שאף הפסוק הזה מיירי בכך דהא ליכא מידי בכתובים דלא רמיזא באורייתא, שהרי בכאן אי אפשר לפרש ביאתו לעולם הואיל שהקדים יציאה לביאה, ועל כרחק צריך לומר בפרקמטא שלך.

It is possible to say that since [the author of the Midrash] sensed a difficulty in the explanation that interpreted “Blessed shall you be when you come in” as pertaining to merchandise, therefore he said “And David explained it” in the reverse order.

For in the Midrash there is found there another explanation of this verse: “ ‘Blessed shall you be when you come in,’ when you come into the world, i.e., at birth, ‘and blessed shall you be when you go out,’ when you go out from the world,” i.e., at death. This second explanation fits well with the verse of Deuteronomy, for [Scripture] there advanced “coming” to “going,” just as a person comes into the world before going out.

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¹ Deut. 28:6.

² Ibid.

³ Ps. 121:8.

But according to what was first explained, that “Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out” both relate to “in your merchandise,” this is difficult, for perhaps he should have preceded the “going” to the “coming,” just as a person goes out to purchase merchandise from a supplier before he comes to sell it to consumers. Also, ships at first set out and afterward return, as the Midrash Ex. Rabbah 48:1 says on the verse, “And the day of death [is better] than the day of birth,”⁴ as the success or failure of a ship’s voyage or person’s life isn’t known until the end. So too a person: at first he goes out from his house and afterward he comes into the house.

Therefore, I might say that this explanation of “in your merchandise” is not correct with regard to the verse from Deuteronomy that has coming before going. Therefore, he said, “And David explained it,” presenting the verse from Psalms, where he advanced “going” to “coming.” Even this verse from Psalms necessarily speaks of that concept of merchandise, for there is nothing in the Writings of the Torah, i.e., the section after the Prophets, that is not hinted at in the Five Books of the Torah.⁵ For here it is impossible to interpret his coming into the world, since he advanced “going” to “coming,” and necessarily one must say [it is] “in your merchandise.”

וְשִׁנּוּי הַכְּתוּבִים הֵינּוּ מְשׁוּם שְׁלִפְעָמִים אָדָם יוֹצֵא לְקִנּוּת וְלִפְעָמִים יוֹצֵא לְמַכּוֹר, וּמִשְׁמַעוֹת הַכְּתוּבִים הוּא כָּהֵן, כְּשֶׁתִּתְקַנְיִים
"כְּרוּךְ אַתָּה בְּצֵאתְךָ" בְּפִרְקַמְטָיָא שְׁלֵף שֶׁתִּהְיֶה לָּהּ הַבְּרָכָה בִּיצֵא[י] אֶתְךָ, תִּהְיֶה מוּבְטָח שֶׁתִּהְיֶה לָּהּ אִף בְּבִיאָתְךָ כְּאִילוּ כְּבָר
חֲזָרָה וּבָאָה לְבֵיתְךָ פְּרַקְמְטָיָא אַחֲרַת עִם הַבְּרָכָה.

So how do we understand the verse from Deuteronomy as relating to merchandise? **The change in the order of action presented in the two verses is because sometimes a person goes out to buy merchandise from a supplier to sell to a consumer, but sometimes he goes out to sell goods he already had from the day before, and then to acquire new goods. The meaning of the verse is thus: when “ ‘Blessed shall you be when you go out’ with your merchandise” will be fulfilled—that you will have blessing in your going out to sell merchandise from a previous day—you may be assured that you will also have [a blessing] in your coming in, as though other merchandise purchased for future sale had already returned and come into your house with the blessing.**

וּמִשׁוּם הֵכִי הַקְּדִים "כְּרוּךְ אַתָּה בְּבָאָךְ" שֶׁזוֹ הִיא הַתְּכִלִּית הַמְּתַבְּקֶשֶׁת מִן הַבְּרָכָה שֶׁתִּתְקַנְיִים הַבְּרָכָה בְּבֵיתוֹ, עַל דְּרוּךְ מֵה
שֶׁאָמַר הַכְּתוּב "אֲשֶׁר הִמְתַּבְּרָךְ בְּאֶרֶץ יִתְבָּרַךְ בְּאֱלֹהֵי אֲמֹן", דְּקָשָׁה מֵהוּ "בְּאֱלֹהֵי אֲמֹן". וְאֵיחָא בְּמִדְרַשׁ עַל פְּסוּק "לֹא אִישׁ
אֵל וַיִּכְוֹב" בְּטוּבָה, אֲבָל בְּרַעַה הֵהוּא אָמַר "וְלֹא יַעֲשֶׂה". וְלָכֵן אָמַר הַכְּתוּב "אֲשֶׁר הִמְתַּבְּרָךְ בְּאֶרֶץ יִתְבָּרַךְ בְּאֱלֹהֵי אֲמֹן",
שֶׁיִּהְיֶה תְּמִיד בְּאֲמֹן עַד בְּלִי קֶץ וְלֹא יָשׁוּב דְּכָרוּ אַחֲזֹר, וְאִף כָּאֵן כְּשֶׁהִתְחִילָה הַבְּרָכָה בִּיצֵאתָ לֹא יָשׁוּב דְּכָרוּ אַחֲזֹר וַיִּהְיֶה
מוּבְטָח כְּאִילוּ כְּבָר חֲזָרָה וּבָאָה לְבֵיתוֹ.

Therefore, [the author of the Midrash] advanced “Blessed shall you be when you come in,” for this is the desired purpose of the blessing: that the blessing should be fulfilled in his house, in the manner of what the verse says, “For whoever blesses themselves in the Land

⁴ Eccl. 7:1.

⁵ Ta’anit 9a.

shall bless themselves by the G-d of Truth [אָמֵן] [amen].”⁶ A difficulty is what is meant by “by the G-d of Truth”?

It is brought in the Midrash on the verse, “G-d is not human, that He should lie, or mortal to have a change of heart; would He speak and not act, promise and not fulfill?”⁷ He would not lie with regard to good, but with regard to evil, “He would speak and not act.”⁸ Therefore the verse says, “For whoever blesses themselves in the Land shall bless themselves by the G-d of Amen,” that He will always be true [נְאֻמָּן] [ne’eman] without end, and His word will not turn back. So too here: when the blessing begins with the going out, His word will not turn back, and one may be assured as though it had already returned and come into his house.

וְעוֹד עַל הַדְרָשָׁה שֶׁל בִּיאָתָהּ לְעוֹלָם קִשָּׁה דְמָה עֲנִיָּן בְּרִכָּה זֹו וְהֵלֵא מֵאֵי דְהִנְהוּ הֵנָּה, וְעוֹד דְּבִרְכוֹת אֱלֹוֵי הֵם דְּנִקְא אָם יִזְכוּ וּבִבְיָאָתוֹ לְעוֹלָם אֵינן לֹו שׁוּם זְכוּת. וְאֵינן לְתַרְזֵן עַל דְּרָךְ "וּבִטְטָרָם תִּצְאָ מִרְחֹם הַקִּדְשִׁיתִיךָ", שְׁהָרִי אֱלֹוֵי הַבְּרִכוֹת נִאֲמָרוּ עַל תְּנַאי שְׁיִזְכוּ.

Furthermore, regarding the interpretation of “when you come into the world,” it is difficult: what is the meaning of this blessing? For what has already happened has happened. Also, these blessings are only if they merit them, and at his coming into the world he has no merit. This cannot be answered in the manner of, “and before you came forth from the womb, I sanctified you,”⁹ for these blessings were said on condition that they will have merit.

וְיֵשׁ לֹזְמֵר דְּבִיבְמוֹת אֶפְלִיגוּ רַבֵּי עֲקִיבָא וְחִכְמֵי אִם מְשִׁלִּימֵי הַשָּׁנִים לְמִי שְׁזָכָה, אִו מוֹסִיפִים, אָבֵל לְמִי שְׁלֹא זָכָה לְכַלֵּי עֲלָמָא פּוֹתְתִין. וְכִתְבוּ שֵׁם הַתּוֹסְפוֹת שְׁהַשָּׁנִים שְׁקָבֵר נִגְזְרוּ לְשׁוּם אָדָם אֶפְיֵלוּ לֵר' עֲקִיבָא מוֹסִיפִים לְמִי שְׁזָכָה וְעֵי"ש, וּמִשׁוּם הֵכִי קֵאָמַר "בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה בְּבֹאֶךָ" בְּבִיאָתָהּ לְעוֹלָם, שְׁאָם נוֹלַד בְּמִזְלֵ שֶׁל אַרְיִכוֹת יָמִים בְּנֹדָאֵי שְׁיִתְקַיֵּים וְיִשְׁלִימוּ לָךְ אִם תִּזְכָּה, וְאִף אִם לֹא נוֹלַד בְּמִזְלֵ זֶה תִּהְיֶה "בְּרוּךְ . . . בְּצֵאתָהּ" שְׁיִוִּסִיפוּ לָךְ הַשָּׁנִים, לְמֵר פְּדָאֵית לִיָּה וּלְמֵר פְּדָאֵית לִיָּה.

One may say that in Yevamot (50a), Rabbi Akiva and the Sages disagreed whether the years are completed for one who has merited, or whether they are added; but for one who has not merited, according to all, they are reduced.

Tosafot wrote there that the years already decreed for a person—even according to Rabbi Akiva—are added to one who has merited; see there.

Therefore, it says, “Blessed shall you be when you come in”—in your coming into the world—that if one was born under the fortune of long life, it will certainly be fulfilled and completed for you if you merit. Even if he was not born under this fortune, “Blessed shall you be in your going out,” for years will be added to you, each according to his position.

* * *

⁶ Isaiah 65:16.
⁷ Num. 23:19.
⁸ Gen. Rabbah 20:17.
⁹ Jer. 1:5.