

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter LI: Nitzavim (Deut. 29:9–30:20)

Essay 2. Unity is an essential part of redemption

**"אם-יִהְיֶה גְדָחְךָ בְּקִצָּה הַשָּׁמַיִם מִשָּׁם יִקְבְּצֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ [וּמִשָּׁם יִקְחֶךָ]."** יֵשׁ לְדַקְדָּק שְׁתִּיבַת "מִשָּׁם" מִיּוֹתֶרֶת, שְׂדֵי הַיָּה לֹא מֵ"אם-יִהְיֶה גְדָחְךָ בְּקִצָּה הַשָּׁמַיִם יִקְבְּצֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ". וְעוֹד מֵהוּ הַכֶּפֶל "וּמִשָּׁם יִקְחֶךָ"?

**“Even if you have been banished to the edge of the earth,<sup>1</sup> from there the L-rd your G-d will gather you [and from there He will fetch you]” (Deut. 30:4). We should scrutinize this, for the word “from there” is unnecessary, as it would have been sufficient to say, “If any of your outcasts are at the edge of heaven, the L-rd your G-d will gather you . . .” Also, what is the duplication at the end of the verse, “and from there He will fetch you”?**

וְיֵשׁ לֹא מֵ"אם-יִהְיֶה גְדָחְךָ בְּקִצָּה הַשָּׁמַיִם יִקְבְּצֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ" כִּי-נִפְוֹל תִּפְוֹל לְפָנָיו" שְׁתִּיבַת נְפִילוֹת אֵלּוּ לְמָה? דָּרַשׁ ר' יְהוּדָה בַּר אֵילְעָאִי: מִלְּמַד שְׂאֵמְרָה לּוֹ, אִוְמָה זֹאת מִשְׁוֹלָה לְעַפְרָה וּמִשְׁוֹלָה לְפֹכְכַיִם, כְּשֵׁהֶם יוֹרְדִין, יוֹרְדִין עַד עַפְרָה, וּכְשֵׁהֶם עוֹלִין, עוֹלִין לְרִקִיעַ. וְכֵן בְּפֶתַח קְמָא דְבְּרַכּוֹת בְּמַעְרָבָא מְתַרְצִי לֵהּ הַכִּי: "נִפְוֹלָה וְלֹא תוֹסִיף לְנַפֵּל עוֹד, קוּם בְּתוֹלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל".

**It can be said that it says in the first chapter of tractate Megillah (16a), “There Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had befallen him; his advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, if Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not overcome him; you will surely fall [נְפֹל תִּפּוֹל] [*nafol tipol*] before him’ (Esther 6:13). Why are there two “fallings” at the end of the verse, “*nafol*” and “*tipol*”? Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai interpreted homiletically: This teaches that [Zeresh] said to [Haman], ‘This [Jewish] nation is compared to the dust [of the earth]<sup>2</sup> and it is compared to the stars.<sup>3</sup> When they descend, they descend to the dust, and when they arise, they rise to the sky.’” Similarly in the first chapter of tractate Berachot (4b): Regarding the verse, “The virgin of Israel has fallen and she will rise no more” (Amos 5:2), “In the West [i.e., in the Land of Israel], they interpreted it [with a slight adjustment]: ‘She has fallen but she shall fall no more; rise, virgin of Israel.’”**

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<sup>1</sup> Lit., the edge of Heaven.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 28:14.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. 1:10.

ונָהוּ שְׂאֵמֶר הַכְּתוּב "אִם־יִהְיֶה נִדְחָךְ בְּקִצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם" דְּהֵיִינוּ קִצָּה הָאֲחֵרוֹן שְׂאִין עוֹד מְקוּם לְהִדְיָחָךְ שְׂכָבָר בְּרִדְתָּ עַד עֶפְרָיִם דְּהֵיִינוּ בְּדִיּוּטָא הַמִּתְחַתְּוֵנָה שְׁלֵא תוֹסִיף לְנַפּוֹל עוֹד. "מִשָּׁם" בְּנִקְיָא "מִקְבָּצָךְ", שְׂהָרִי אֲזִי נְאָמֶר "קוּם בְּתוֹלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל", שְׁשִׁירִידָה הַמִּתְחַתְּוֵנָה הִיא סִיבָה לְעֵלוֹת עַד לְרִקִיעַ.

**This is why the verse said, “Even if you have been banished to the edge of the earth,” which is the furthest edge, from which there’s no further room to be banished further, for you have already fallen to the dust, which is to the bottom floor, from which one cannot fall further. “From there” specifically “He will gather you,” for thus is it written, “rise, virgin of Israel,” for the falling to the lowest floor is a reason to rise to the Heaven. Thus, “from there” is not unnecessary, but rather teaches that when Israel hits the bottom during exile, they immediately begin to rise.<sup>4</sup>**

וּלְפִי שְׂשִׁירָאֵל לֹא גָלוּ אֶלָּא מִחֻמַּת שְׁנֵאת חַיִּים וְאִי אֶפְשָׁר לָהֶם לְהִגָּאֵל אֶלָּא כְּשִׂיְהִיָּה שְׁלוֹם בֵּינֵיהֶם כְּדִכְתִּיב "חֲבוּר עֲצָבִים אֶפְרַיִם הִנְחִילוֹ", וְכִתִּיב "חֲלַק לִבָּם עֲתָה יִאֲשָׁמוּ", מִשׁוּם הֵכִי אָמַר מִתְחִלָּה "מִשָּׁם מִקְבָּצָךְ", וְכִי אֲוִתָּךְ בְּשְׁלוֹם וְתִהְיִי כְּלִכְּמִן מְקוּבָצִים כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד, וּמִזֵּה הַקְּבוּץ וְהַשְׁלוֹם יִקְטָךְ מִן הַגְּלוּת, וְנָהוּ "וּמִשָּׁם יִקְטָךְ".

**Israel was only exiled because of baseless hatred,<sup>5</sup> and it’s only possible for them to be redeemed when there will be peace between them, as it is written, “Ephraim is joined to idols, leave him alone” (Hosea 4:17), also, it is written, “their heart is divided, now they will bear their guilt” (Hosea 10:2). I.e., when divided, Israel can fall to the lowest level. Because of this, it initially says, “from there, He will gather you,” meaning He will bless you with peace, and all of you will be gathered together as one person. From this gathering together and peace, He will fetch you from the exile, and this is the meaning of “and from there He will fetch you.” Thus, “and from there He will fetch you” is intended to point out that the unification of the Jewish people, thanks to the step of “gathering together,” is a necessary prelude to redemption from exile.**

וְזוּהִי כְּפִיּוּת הַמְדַרְשׁ בְּשִׁמּוֹת רַבָּה עַל פְּסוּק "וּמִשָּׁה הָיָה רָעָה" רַבֵּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אָמַר מֵהַסָּפָה שְׂפָל מְכַל הָאֵילָנוֹת שְׂבַעֲוֹלָם, כִּי הָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂפָלִים יְרוּדִים בְּמִצְרַיִם, לְפִיכָךְ נִגְלָה עֲלֵיהֶם הַקֶּב"ה וּגְאָלָם, וְכִי. וְלִכְאוּרָה תְּמוּדָה מֵהַ טַעַם הוּא זֶה, וּבְמָה שְׂאֵמֶרְנוּ אֲתִי שְׂפִיר שְׂלָפִי שְׂהִיּוּ שְׂפָלִים בְּתַכְלִית הַשְׁפָּלוֹת הוֹצֵרָךְ מִיַּד לְגְאָלָם.

**This was the intent of the midrash Shemot Rabbah (2:5) on the verse, “Now Moses, shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove the flock into the**

<sup>4</sup> Zohar Chadash, at the beginning of Yitro, explains that Israel had already fallen to the 49th level of impurity in Egypt, and G-d had to rescue us before we fell to the 50th level of impurity, from which there is no return. Therefore, He therefore cut short our time in Egypt. Zera Shimshon has discussed this previously (for example: essay of Bereisheet; essay 11 of Beshalach; essay 8 of Re'eh).

<sup>5</sup> Yoma 9b: “However, [people] of the Second Temple [period] were engaged in Torah, mitzvot, and acts of kindness. Why was [the Second Temple] destroyed? Because there was baseless hatred. [This comes] to teach you that baseless hatred is equivalent to the three [severe] transgressions: Idol worship, forbidden sexual relations and bloodshed.”

wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of G-d” (Ex. 3:1). In the midrash, **Rabbi Eliezer said, “Just as the thorn bush is the lowliest of all the trees in the world, similarly was Israel lowly and downtrodden in Egypt. Therefore, the Holy One, Blessed be He, revealed Himself to them, and redeemed them,** as it says, ‘And I will go down and save them from Egypt’ (Ex. 3:8).” **It seems puzzling what the point of this is, but from what we have said above it makes sense, that according to the fact that [Israel] was lowly, at the lowest limit, [G-d] needed to immediately redeem them.**

**וּבְדֵרָךְ זֶה יוֹבֵן הַפְּתוּב "גֹּאֲלֶתָ בְּזֵרוּעַ עַמֶּךָ" וְכוּ', דְּנִישׁ לְדַקְדָּק דְּבִזְרוּעַ מִשְׁמַע שְׁגֹאֲלֶם מִכֶּחַ הַדִּין וּמֵה עֲנִין זֶה עִם סוּף הַפְּסוּק "בְּנִי יַעֲקֹב וְיוֹסֵף סֵלָה", וְלִמָּה הַזְכִּיר יוֹסֵף וְהֵלֵא הוּא בְּכֹלֵל בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב?**

**In this way, the Scripture, “By Your arm, You redeemed Your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph, selah” (Ps. 27:16), will be understood. We need to investigate, for “by Your arm” means that He redeemed them by the letter of the law. How do we understand that? Also, what is the relevance of this with the end of the verse, “the children of Jacob and Joseph, selah”? Also, why is Joseph mentioned separately, for isn’t he included in the category of the children of Jacob?**

וְנִישׁ לֹאמַר שֶׁפְּתוּבו הַמְּקוּוּבָלִים שְׁאִילוּלֵי שְׁשֵׁלְטוֹ הַשְּׁבָטִים עַל יוֹסֵף קוּדָם שְׁיִרְד לְמִצְרַיִם הָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מְשׁוֹקְעִים שָׁם לְעוֹלָם. אֲבָל עַל יְדֵי שְׁשֵׁלְטוֹ הַשְּׁבָטִים בְּיוֹסֵף תְּחִלָּה וְאַחַר כֵּן מְלֶכֶּךְ עַל מִצְרַיִם נִמְצָא שֶׁהַמִּצְרַיִם הָיוּ עֲבָדִים לְכֹל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְעַיִן עוֹד בְּעֵשְׂרֵה מֵאֲמָרוֹת (מֵאֲמָר אֵם כָּל חַי חַ"א סִימָן ח). וְזֶהוּ שְׁאֲמַר הַפְּתוּב "גֹּאֲלֶתָ בְּזֵרוּעַ" דְּהִיְיָנוּ בְּכֶחַ הַדִּין, שְׁמָה שְׁקִנְהָ עֲבָד קִנְהָ רַבּוֹ!

**It can be said that the kabbalists wrote that if the tribes had not ruled over Joseph before he went down to Egypt, Israel would have been sunk there forever. But since the tribes ruled over Joseph first, and afterward he ruled over Egypt, we find that the Egyptians were servants to all of Israel, and see also in Asara Ma’amarot (the article Em Cal Chai, the first section, siman 8).<sup>6</sup> This is what the verse is saying, “By Your arm, You redeemed,” which is by the letter of the law, for what a slave acquires, his master acquires!<sup>7</sup> That is, as the brothers had sold Joseph into slavery, they were his masters, and when he acquired control over all of Egypt, it was as if his brothers had acquired control.**

<sup>6</sup> Rabbi Menachem Azaria da Fano (“Rema M’Pano”) (1548–1620), Italian Kabbalist and commentator on the Talmud. Asara Ma’amarot (“Ten Utterances”) was published in Venice in 1597.

<sup>7</sup> Pesachim 88b.

וְזֶה הָיָה מִשּׁוּם "בְּנֵי־יַעֲקֹב וַיּוֹסֶף", כְּלוּמַר בְּשִׁבִיל הַשְׁנָאָה שֶׁהִנָּחָה בֵּינֵיהֶם וּמִתּוֹךְ כֶּף מְכַרְוֵהוּ לְעַבְדּוֹ. וְאִם תֹּאמַר וּמֵה צוּרָךְ הָיָה שִׁישְׁלָטוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשִׁילָךְ שָׁם לְעַבְדּוֹ, וְהֵלֵא אֲפִילוֹ אִם הָיָה הוֹלֵךְ שָׁם בְּעֶצְמוֹ כְּלִי שָׁם עַבְדּוֹ וְהָיָה נֹעֲשֶׂה מֶלֶךְ שָׁם עַל הַמְצָרִיִּים הָיוּ הַמְצָרִיִּים קְנוּיִים לוֹ לְעַבְדִּים וְהָיוּ הַמְצָרִיִּים עַבְדִּים לְכָל בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף. וַיֵּשׁ לֹאמַר שָׂאזְ הָיוּ כָּל בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב כְּפוּפִים לַיּוֹסֵף שֶׁהוּא לְבַדּוֹ יֵשׁ לוֹ טַעֲנָה וְדִין לְהוֹצִיאָם לְחִירוֹת, וְלָכֵן מִתְחַלְלָה שְׁלֵטוֹ אַחֲרָיו עָלָיו וְאַחַר כֶּף שֶׁלֵּט הוּא עַל הַמְצָרִיִּים, וּבְנֵה "בְּנֵי־יַעֲקֹב וַיּוֹסֶף סְלָה".

**This was because of “the children of Jacob and Joseph,” as if to say, because of the hatred that was between them, and because of this, they sold him to be a slave. You may say, what need was there for his brothers to rule over him, and for him to go there as a slave? Understand that if he had gone there by himself without being named a slave, and had been made king there over the Egyptians, then the Egyptians would have been acquired by him as servants. Then, the Egyptians would have been servants to the entire house of Joseph, but they would have had no subservience to his brothers.**

**It can be said that then, if that had happened, all of the children of Jacob would have been bowing down to Joseph, for he alone would have had the claim by law to take them out to freedom.** That is, the descendants of Joseph would still have had a claim to go free from Egypt, as all Egyptians had been subservient to Joseph. But the bulk of Israel, the descendants of the other brothers, would not have had a claim to go free, and thus, as said above, Israel would have been stuck in Egypt forever. **Therefore, from the beginning, his brothers ruled over him, and afterward he ruled over the Egyptians, and by this we can understand the end of the verse, “the children of Jacob and Joseph, selah.”**

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