

Zera Shimshon

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Published Mantua 1778*

Chapter LV: Shir haShirim (Song of Songs)

Essay 13: Entirely beautiful: No blemish at all

"כָּלָהּ יָפָה רַעֲיָתִי וּמוֹם אֵין בָּהּ". קִשָּׁה אִם הִיא כּוֹלָהּ יָפָה פְּשִׁיטָא שְׁמוּם אֵין בָּהּ. וְיֵשׁ לֹמַר דְּאֶמְרִינָן בְּסוּף פֶּרֶק ט' דְּנִדְרִים הֵהוּא דְאָמַר לָהּ לְרַבִּיתָהּ קוֹנָם וְשָׂאִי אֶת נְהֻגִית לִי עַד שֶׁתֵּרְאִי מוֹם יָפָה שְׁבִיבָה לְר' יִשְׁמַעְאֵל בְּרַבִּי יוֹסִי. אָמַר לָהֶם שְׁמָא רַאשָׁה נְאֻהָ? אָמְרוּ לוֹ סְגִלְגַל. שְׁמָא שְׁעָרָה נְאֻהָ? דּוּמָה לְאֲנִיצֵי פִשְׁתָּן. שְׁמָא עֵינֶיהָ נְאֻהָ? תְּרוּטוֹת הֵן. שְׁמָא אֲזִנֶיהָ נְאֻהָ? כְּפוּלוֹת הֵן. שְׁמָא חוֹטְמָה נְאֻהָ? בָּלוּם הוּא. שְׁמָא שְׁפֹתֶיהָ נְאֻהָ? עֲבוֹת הֵן. שְׁמָא צְנָאָרָה נְאֻהָ? תְּקוּט הוּא. שְׁמָא כְּרִיסָה נְאֻהָ? צָבָה הוּא. שְׁמָא רִגְלֶיהָ נְאֻהָ? רְחִיבוֹת כְּשֶׁל אֲנָזוּ. שְׁמָא שְׁמָה נְאֻהָ? לְכַלּוּכִית שְׁמָה. אָמַר לָהֶם יָפָה קוֹרִין אוֹתָהּ לְכַלּוּכִית שְׁמָה[י] אַ מְלוּכְלָכַת וְשִׁנְיָהּ. וּפְרַשׁ רַש"י זָה הַשֵּׁם יָפָה לָהּ וְהִינּוּ נִדְאִי מוֹם יָפָה שְׁבָה נְכוּ' עכ"ל.

“You are entirely beautiful, my beloved, and there is no blemish in you.”¹ There is a difficulty: If she is entirely beautiful, it is obvious that there is no blemish in her. It may be said that we say at the end of chapter 9 of tractate Nedarim:

[There was] a certain [man] who said to his wife: **“Benefiting from me is *konam* [i.e., forbidden by a vow] for you until you show some beautiful blemish in you to Rabbi Yishmael, son of Rabbi Yosei.”** [I.e., she had many blemishes, and Rabbi Yishmael had to find something positive to say about one of them.] [Rabbi Yishmael] said to [his students]: **Perhaps her head is beautiful? They said to him: It is round. Perhaps her hair is beautiful? It resembles stalks of flax. Perhaps her eyes are beautiful? They are narrow. Perhaps her ears are beautiful? They are folded. Perhaps her nose is beautiful? It is blocked. Perhaps her lips are beautiful? They are thick. Perhaps her neck is beautiful? It is sunken. Perhaps her stomach is beautiful? It is swollen. Perhaps her feet are beautiful? They are as wide as a goose’s. Perhaps her name is beautiful? Her name is Likhluhit [“dirty”]. He said to them: It is beautiful that she is called Likhluhit, as she is dirty [with blemishes], and he permitted her [to benefit from her husband].**

- Nedarim 66b

Rashi explained: this name is beautiful for her, and this is certainly a “beautiful blemish” that is in her, etc.

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¹ Song of Songs 4:7.

ולכן אמר הכתוב "כלך יפה רעיתי", וזה היופי הוא יופי ממזל, ולא שיש לך מומים פנים, שאדרבא "ומום אין בך".

Therefore, the verse says: “you are entirely beautiful, my beloved,” and this beauty is actual beauty. It is not that you have beautiful blemishes; for on the contrary, “there is no blemish in you.”

אי נמי "כלך יפה רעיתי" ואף השם שלך הוא מורה על היופי, וזהו "ומום אין בך" שיש לך שם יפה.

Alternatively: “you are entirely beautiful, my beloved,” and even your name indicates beauty, and this is “and there is no blemish in you,” that you have a beautiful name.

אי נמי בדרך אחר ידוע שמי שעושה תשובה מיראה זדונות נעשות לו כשגגות, ומי ששב מאהבה נעשות לו פזכויות כמסקנת הש"ס בפרק ח' דיומא ומדאיצטריך קרא לומר שהיא יפה שמע מינה שהיה סלקא דעתך שאינה יפה, לפי שהיו לה עבירות מתחלה אלא ששב בהתשובה, ולכן "כלך יפה רעיתי" שאין לך עוד זדונות, ולא די שאין לך זדונות אלא "ומום אין בך" שאפילו שגגות אין לך, לפי שתשובתך היתה מאהבה.

Alternatively, in another manner: it is known that for one who repents out of fear, deliberate sins are made for him like inadvertent ones; and for one who repents out of love, they are made for him like merits. This is the conclusion of the Talmud in chapter 8 of tractate Yoma (86b).

Therefore, from the fact that the verse initially needed to state that she is beautiful, we learn from this that one might have thought she is not beautiful spiritually, since she had sins initially; but the verse teaches that she has repented.

Therefore: “you are entirely beautiful, my beloved,” that you no longer have deliberate sins; and not only do you not have deliberate sins, but “there is no blemish in you,” that you do not even have inadvertent sins, because your repentance was out of love.

כמו שסיים הכתוב "אתי מלבנון כלה אתי מלבנון תבואי", ומהו הכפל, אלא שלבנון הוא רמז לליבון העבירות כמו שפירשו ז"ל. ומעיקרא "אתי מלבנון כלה" דהיינו ליבון העבירות מיראה, ואחר כך "אתי מלבנון תבואי" מאהבה.

As the verse concludes: “From Lebanon come with me; from Lebanon, my bride, with me!² What is the intent of the doubling of the language? Rather, “Lebanon” [לבנון] is an allusion to the whitening [ליבון] [libun] of sins, as [the rabbis] of blessed memory explained (Yoma 39b). Thus, initially “from Lebanon come with me, bride”—that is, referring to the whitening of sins out of fear; and afterward “from Lebanon, my bride, with me”—this is, repentance out of love.

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² Song of Songs 4:8.