

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter LVII: Kinnot (Lamentations)

Essay 10: Without peace, there is nothing.

**פְּסוּק** ותזנח משלום נפשי נשיתי טובה, ואמר אבד נצחי ותחלתי מה'. קשה איך אפשר שיאבד התקנה מהקב"ה. אלא לפי שאם אין שלום אין כלום כמו שפרש רש"י ריש פרשת בְּחֻקֵי וּבְמִדְרָשׁ אֲמַרְיִןוּ עַל פְּסוּק אֵין לְשִׁפְחָתְךָ כֹּל בְּבִיטָה, שְׂאֵין הַבְּרָכָה שׁוֹרָה אֵלָּא אִם כֵּן יֵשׁ לוֹ אֵינָה דְבָר, אֲבָל אִם אֵין לוֹ כְּלוּם אֵינוֹ נַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ שׁוּם נֶס, לְכֵן כְּשֶׁאֲבֵד הַשְּׁלוֹם אָמַר הַמְּקוֹנֵן נְשִׁיתִי טוֹבָה, שְׂאִם אֵין שְׁלוֹם אֵין כְּלוּם. וְעַל זֶה נֹאמַר אֲבֵד נְצָחִי וְכוּ', אֲמַנָּם כְּשִׁיְהִיָּה לוֹ הַשְּׁלוֹם אִזְ יִהְיֶה בּוֹ כֹּל הַבְּרָכוֹת.

There are **verse[s]**: “My soul is removed far from peace; I forgot what goodness is. I said, ‘My strength has perished, as well as my hope from the L-rd.’ ” (Lam. 3:17–18). A **difficulty is: How is it possible that the hope from the Holy One, Blessed be He, would be lost? Rather, it’s in accordance with the fact that if there is no peace, there is nothing, as Rashi explained at the beginning of parshat Bechukotai** (Lev. 26:3–27:34).

Bechukotai begins: “If you follow My laws and faithfully observe My commandments, I will grant your rains in their season, so that the earth shall yield its produce and the trees of the field their fruit. Your threshing shall overtake the vintage, and your vintage shall overtake the sowing; you shall eat your fill of bread and dwell securely in your land. I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down untroubled by anyone; I will give the land respite from vicious beasts, and no sword shall cross your land.” (Lev. 26:3–6). On the words “I will grant peace,” Rashi comments: “Perhaps you will say, ‘Well, there is food and there is drink, but if there is no peace, then this means nothing!’ Scripture therefore states after all the promises [of food and drink], ‘I will give peace in the land.’ Thus, we may learn that peace counterbalances everything.”

In II Kings, chapter 4, the prophet Elisha goes to help the poor widow of a prophet. He asks what possessions she has in her house, and she answers that she has only a jug of olive oil. He instructs her to bring all of her empty vessels, and to borrow empty vessels from her neighbor, and to pour the oil from her jug into the empty vessels. A miracle occurs, and the single jug of oil is able to fill all of the other empty vessels, thus providing the widow with a valuable commodity that she can sell or trade. It’s brought **in the Midrash, which says on the verse, “Your maidservant has nothing at all in the house, except a jug of oil”** (II Kings 4:2), **that the blessing will rest on a person only if he has some object; but if he has nothing, then no miracle will occur for him.**<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Zohar I:88a: “The blessings from above won’t rest on an empty table and not in an empty place.” Zohar III:34a: “The blessings won’t rest on an empty table, or on an empty word.”

Therefore, when peace is lost, the lamenter says, “I forgot what goodness is,” because if there’s no peace, there is nothing. If he has nothing, then no miracle will occur for him. For this reason, he says, “My strength has perished” etc. Indeed, when he has peace, then he has all the blessings, for then even if he only has one object, he can still receive more through a miracle.

**עוד** בדרך אחר דאיתא בשלחן ערוך אורח חיים (סימן רס"ג) שמי שאין לו שמן להדליק נר של שבת, ישאל על הפתחים כדי להדליקה. וכתב מגן אברהם ואין זה בכלל עשה שבתה חול וכו' עכ"ל. ובפרק במה מדליקין גרסינן ותנח משלום נפשי וכו', זה נר של שבת קודש. וזהו קשר הפסוקים ותנח משלום נפשי וכו' שאין מעות לקנות שמן לנר שבת אז אני מצטרף לחזור על הפתחים. ולא אוכל לומר אבטח בה' ואעשה שבתתי חול, דהשתא מיהא אין לי שמן, ולכן נאמר חס ושלום אבד נצחי וכו'.

Also, viewed in a different way, it's brought in the Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim (siman 263, se'if 2), that someone who does not have oil to light a Sabbath lamp should beg at doorways for oil or funds in order to light it. The Magen Avraham<sup>2</sup> is surprised about this, and writes a comment on that law, asking, “Isn't this in the category of ‘make your Sabbath like a weekday rather than be beholden to other people’<sup>3</sup>?” That is, in the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of tractate Shabbat (118a), there is a discussion of when a person should and should not request charity funds. People are accustomed to eat two meals on weekdays (dinner and lunch), but on the Sabbath, in addition to the Friday evening dinner and the Saturday lunch, they are supposed to add a third meal between the afternoon prayers and the end of the Sabbath. Rabbi Akiva's opinion is that if someone can't afford three meals on a Sabbath, it is better for him to forgo the third meal, rather than to request charity funds.

In the chapter, “With what do we light,” i.e., the second chapter of tractate Shabbat, the reading is: “What is [the meaning of], ‘My soul is removed far from peace?’ This is [the lack of an opportunity to kindle] the lamp of the holy Sabbath” (Shabbat 25b). This is the connection of the verse, “My soul is removed far from peace” with the next verse, “My strength has perished.” The lamenter is saying that, “I am unable to kindle the Sabbath lamp, because there is no money to buy oil for the Sabbath lamp, thus I am compelled to beg at doorways. I won't be able to say, ‘I will trust in G-d and I will make my Sabbath like a weekday,’ for right now, however, I have no oil. That is, it's not simply a question of foregoing the third meal, rather, I don't even have the resources to kindle the Sabbath lights. [Or perhaps the meaning ties with the first paragraph of this essay: that one has to have at least some minimal quantity of a valuable good in order for a miracle to occur.] Thus, begging for funds is appropriate. Therefore, ‘I said [G-d forbid] my strength has perished as well as my hope from the L-rd.’ ”

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<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Abraham Abele Gombiner (c. 1635–82), Polish rabbi and Talmudist; known for his Magen Avraham commentary on the Orach Chaim section of the Shulchan Aruch.

<sup>3</sup> Shabbat 118a: “Rabbi Akiva said: Make your Sabbath like a weekday and do not be beholden to [other] people.” I.e., if one can't afford a third Sabbath meal, it would be better to eat only two meals on the Sabbath, as he does on the other days of the week, and thereby avoid taking charity.