

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter LIX: Kohelet (Ecclesiastes)

Essay 19. Everything at its time

"את־הכל עֲשֶׂה יְפָה בְּעִתּוֹ". פֶּרֶשׁ רַשִׁי"ז ל"ל בְּעֵת הַטּוֹבָה יְפָה הוּא לְבֹא תְשֻׁלוֹם שְׂכָר מַעֲשֵׂה הַטּוֹב, וּבְעֵת הַרָעָה רָאוּיָה הִיא לְתִשְׁלוֹם מַעֲשֵׂה הַרָעָה עַכ"ל. וְלְכַאוּרָה גְרָאָה שְׂפִנוּנָתוֹ כִּי, שְׂבַעַת הַטּוֹבָה יִתְּנוּ לוֹ יוֹתֵר לְתִשְׁלוֹם מַעֲשֵׂים טוֹבִים שְׁלוֹ, וְזֶה תִּימָא, וְכִי נוֹס לוֹ לְאֲדָם לְאֶכּוֹל עוֹלָמוֹ בְּחַיָּיו חַס וְשְׁלוֹם. וְאַף מֵה שְׂפִירֵשׁ בְּעֵת הַרָעָה רָאוּיָה הִיא לְתִשְׁלוֹם מַעֲשֵׂה הַרָעָה, גַּם זֶה אֵינּוּ כֹל כִּי יְפָה, שְׂהַרִי אֹהֲבֵי גְפָרַע מְמַנּוּ מַעַט מַעַט וְלֹא הִרְבֵּה בְּבֵת אַחַת.

“He brings everything to pass precisely at its time.”¹ Rashi of blessed memory explained: “In a good time, it is nice that reward be given for good deeds, but at a time of evil, it is appropriate to mete out punishment for bad deeds.”

At first glance, it seems that [Rashi’s] intention is thus: that in a good time, [a man] will be given more as payment for his good deeds, which is to say, that it is convenient for a man to receive his reward in his life, G-d forbid. This is problematic, for the righteous prefer to only receive their reward in the World-to-Come.²

Even what [Rashi] explained regarding the time of evil, that it is appropriate to mete out punishment for bad deeds, even this is not so nice, for this is counter to the parable of Rabbi Abbahu regarding a person who lends money to two people, one being his beloved, and one being his enemy. With his beloved, he collects the debt from him little-by-little, and not a lot all at once, as he would with his enemy.³ With regard to the Jewish people, we expect G-d to punish us for each transgression as it occurs, so that we should not receive one severe punishment on a single occasion.

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¹ Eccl. 3:11.

² E.g., see Yalkut Shimoni on Proverbs 947:21.

³ Avodah Zarah 4a.

וימה שנגראה בכוננת הרב שהדבר ידוע שאף מי שאומר אין מזל לישראל מודה הוא שאם אדם טוב נולד במזל טוב בנדאי שתהיה לו טובה. אלא שקפי שאין מזל לפעמים אם אדם צדיק נולד תחת מזל רע עם כל זה מתהפך לטוב, ואם פן מי שנולד תחת מזל טוב והוא צדיק נותנים לו טובה וברכה לפי מזלו. אבל על זה קשה ודילמא ברבות הטובה יחטא, כי יתגבר עליו היצר שלו, כמו שאמרו ז"ל על "ודי זהב" מרוב כסף וזהב וכו' גרם שיעשו את העגל, וכן הוא אומר "פן תאכל ושבעת" וכו' "והם לבבך" וכו'.

What seems to be the rabbi's intention is that it is well known that even one who says there is no constellation influencing Israel⁴ admits that if a good person is born with a good constellation, he will certainly be favored.

Rather, according to the fact that there's no constellation influencing Israel, sometimes if a righteous person is born under a bad constellation, nevertheless, it reverses to be good. If so, if one is born under a good constellation and he is righteous, they give him goodness and blessing according to his constellation, and that won't subtract from the goodness that he will receive in the World-to-Come because he is righteous. But on this point, there is a difficulty, for perhaps because of the additional goodness he will sin, because his evil inclination will overcome him, as [the rabbis] of blessed memory said about the term "Di-zahav" mentioned in Deut. 1:1:

What is [the meaning of] "and Di-zahav"? The school of Rabbi Yannai said that Moses said the following before the Holy One, Blessed be He [to atone for Israel after the sin of the Golden Calf]: Master of the Universe, it was **because of the abundance of silver and gold** that you lavished upon Israel [during the exodus from Egypt] until they said "Enough!" [*dai*]. [It was this wealth] **that caused them to make the [Golden] Calf.**

- Berachot 32a

Thus, He says:

Beware! When you have eaten your fill, and have built fine houses to live in, and your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold have increased, and everything you own has prospered, **your heart may grow haughty** and you forget the L-rd your G-d, Who freed you from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage, Who led you through the great and terrible wilderness with its fiery serpents and scorpions, a parched land with no water in it, Who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock; Who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your ancestors had never known, in order to test you by hardships only to benefit you in the end—and you say to yourselves, "My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me."

- Deut. 8:12–17

⁴ Shabbat 156a.

אָלָא נְדָא צְרִיד לֹמַר כְּדִאמְרִינֵן בְּמִדְרָשׁ יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' בְּמִמּוֹן וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ מִן הַמְזִיקִין וּמִן הָעֵינִן הָרַע, דְּהִינּוּ שְׂנוּתֵן לֹא הִקְבִּי ה' בְּרַכָּה וְטוֹבָה מֵעֵין הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא שְׂלָא יוֹכְלוּ לְשַׁלִּיט עָלֶיהָ זָרִים כְּמוֹ הָאוֹר שְׁל עוֹלָם הַבָּא, וְאַף כָּאן "הַכֹּל עֲשֵׂה יָפֵה בְּעֵתוֹ", שְׂאֵם לְפִי מִזְלוּ רָאוּי הוּא לְקַבֵּל תּוֹסֶפֶת טוֹבָה, אִזְ אֹתָהּ הַטוֹבָה אִם הוּא צְדִיק, יָפֵה הוּא לְבֵא תְשֻׁלוּם שְׂכָר מֵעֲשֵׂה הַטוֹב, כְּלוּמַר שְׂתַבֵּא עָלָיו הָאֲרָה הָעֲלִיּוֹנָה כְּדִי שְׂלָא יִשְׁלֹטוּ זָרִים בְּטוֹבָה, אֲבָל לֹא יִפְסִיד שׁוּם חֵלֶק שְׁל עוֹלָם הַבָּא מִחֲמַת זֶה, שְׂהָרִי אִינּוּ אֲלָא הָאֲרָה בְּעֻלְמָא כְּדִי שְׂלָא יִהְיֶה גִיזוּק.

Rather, surely it's necessary to say, as it is said in the Midrash, "May G-d bless you with wealth,"⁵ "and protect you from harm,"⁶ and from the evil eye. That is, the Holy One, Blessed be He, gives him a blessing and goodness from the World-to-Come: that strangers will not be able to rule over him, like the light of the World-to-Come.

Even here, "He brings everything to pass precisely at its time." If, according to his constellation, he deserves to receive additional goodness—then the same goodness that he would receive if he were righteous—it is nice that reward be given for good deeds. That is to say, that the supernal enlightenment will come upon him, so that strangers will not rule in favor. He will not lose any part of the World-to-Come because of this, since it is only enlightenment in the world in order that he will not be damaged.

וְאִם הוּא רָשָׁע וְנוֹלַד תַּחַת מִזְלֵ רַע יְבוֹאוּ לוֹ מְאֹרְעוֹת רַעוֹת לְפִי הַמִּזְל, וְעַם כֹּל זֶה יִנְכּוּ לוֹ מִן הָעוֹנְשִׁים שְׁל עוֹלָם הַבָּא, וְזֶהוּ שְׂאֵמַר וּבְעֵת הָרַעָה, רָאוּיָהּ הִיא לְתִשְׁלוּם מֵעֲשֵׂה הָרַע, שְׂאֵלוּ הַיִּיסוּרִין שְׂסוּבֵל אֵף עַל פִּי שְׂהֵם לְפִי הַמִּזְל עִם כֹּל זֶה מְנַכְּסִים לוֹ עֲנָשׁוּ, וְהַכִּי דִיִּיק רַשׁ", שְׂבְּעַת הַטוֹבָה כְּתִב יָפֵה לְבֵא תְשֻׁלוּם שְׂכָר וְכוּ', וּבְעֵת הָרַעָה לֹא אָמַר אֲלָא רָאוּיָהּ הִיא לְתִשְׁלוּם מֵעֲשֵׂה הָרַע וְלֹא אָמַר לְבֵא תְשֻׁלוּם מֵעֲשֵׂה הָרַע.

If he is evil, and is born under a bad constellation, bad events will come to him according to the constellation. Nevertheless, the punishments of the World-to-Come will be reduced for him. This is what [Rashi] said: But at the time of evil, it is appropriate for meting out punishment for bad deeds. These are the torments that he suffers, despite the constellation, with all this, they punish him. Rashi is most accurate, that he writes that at a time of goodness, it is nice that a reward be given for good deeds, and in a time of evil, he only says that it's fitting to mete out punishment, and he didn't say that punishment will be given for bad deeds.

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⁵ Num. Rabbah 11:5.

⁶ Num. Rabbah 12:3.