

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XXXI: Emor (Lev. 21:1–24:23)

Essay 13. Sukkot and the water libation

בְּמִטְרָה "ולשמחה" תלת: "וסרני פלשתים נאספו" וכו' "לדגון אלהיהם ולשמחה", "ויהי דבריד [דבריד] לי לששון ולשמחת לבבי", "ולשמחה מה־זה עשה".

In the Masoretic text, the word **ולשמחה** ["and for joy"] is found **three** times. First: **“Now the Philistine rulers gathered to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon and to rejoice.”**¹ Second: **“Your words were for me delight and joy of my heart.”**² Third: **“I said of laughter: ‘It is mad’; and of joy: ‘What does it accomplish?’”**³

ונש לפרשה על חג שמחתנו, כי שבעים פרי החג הם כנגד שבעים אומות וכמו שאמרו ז"ל, אוי להם לאומות שאבדו ואינם יודעים מה אבדו.

This connection between the verses can be explained according to the holiday of our joy, i.e., Sukkot, for the 70 bulls offered as a sacrifice for the holiday correspond to the 70 nations. I.e., even though the sacrifices were offered by Israel, they were for the benefit of the other nations. **About them, [the rabbis] of blessed memory said, “Woah to them, to the nations, that they have lost [the benefit provided by those sacrifices because of the destruction of the Temple,] and they don’t know what they have lost.”**⁴

ומשום הכי "וסרני פלשתים" דהיינו האומות נאספו יחד בימי החג להלל ולשמחה לומר שהם כמו ישראל ואנו מקריבים עליהם קרבנות ואין הפרש בינינו וביניהם. אמנם "ויהי דבריד [דבריד] לי לששון ולשמחת לבבי", כי יום שמיני עצרת שרצה לומר עצרתי אתכם לפני וכו', אותו יום "אגילה ואשמחה בסודך" יהיה דבריד לי—לעצמי—לששון וכו'. ובכל זאת השמחה עתה שאין בית המקדש קיים מה תועלת לי "ולשמחה מה־זה עשה".

Because of this, the first verse tells us, **“the Philistine rulers gathered,” which means that the nations gathered together in the days of the Sukkot holiday to praise and to rejoice**

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¹ Judges 16:23.

² Jer. 15:16.

³ Eccl. 2:2.

⁴ Num. Rabbah 1:3.

and to say that they are like Israel. We bring sacrifices on their behalf, so they think there is no distinction between them and us.

However, the second verse tells us, “Your words were for me delight and joy of my heart.” This is because of Shemini Atzeret, which means, “I hold you back before [leaving] Me.”⁵ The nations of the world may have also benefited on Sukkot, but the day after, Shemini Atzeret, is for the Jewish people alone. On that day, “Let me exult and rejoice in Your faithfulness,”⁶ Your words were for me”—for myself, i.e., for the Jewish people and not for the nations, “delight and joy of my heart.”

Despite all this, the third verse tells us, [regarding] the joy now that the Temple is not standing, what difference does it make to me, “and of joy: ‘What does it accomplish?’ ” Without the Temple, we cannot experience the joys that we once enjoyed on Sukkot and on Shemini Atzeret.

ובזוה יצא לנו טעם למה מנסכין מים בַּחג, שהוא איל שֶׁאֵנוּ מְקַרְיָבִים עַל אֹמֵרוֹת הָעוֹלָם שְׁבָעִים פְּרִים לְכֹן אֵנוּ מְנַסְכִּים הַמַּיִם לומר כִּי־מֵוֹת גְּמוּתוֹ "וְנִכְמְנִים הַגְּגָרִים אֲרָצָה". וּמִשּׁוּם הַכִּי הַתּוֹרָה רְמְזָה לָנוּ נִסּוּד הַמַּיִם בְּסִימָן בּו"ז מִפְּנֵי שֶׁאֵז הָאוֹמֵרוֹת מִתְגָּאִים בְּשְׁבָעִים פְּרִים, וְאֵנוּ רוֹמְזִים לָהֶם שֶׁכִּמוֹ שֶׁהַתְּהוֹם מִתְגָּאָה "בְּהֵמוֹן גְּלִיו" בְּעַת נִסּוּד הַמַּיִם אֲבָל הוּא נֶעְצָר וְנִחְבָּשׁ שְׁלֵא יַעְבוֹר גְּבוּל הַחוּל, אִף אֵנוּ כֹּן אִף שֶׁיַּעֲבְרוּ עָלֵינוּ "הַמַּיִם הַזֵּידוּנִים" עִם פֶּל זֶה "אִם־יִתֵּן אִישׁ אֶת־כָּל־הוֹן בֵּיתוֹ בְּאֶהְבָּה" וְכו', לִפִּי שֶׁיָּדוּעַ שֶׁכַּח קְלַפַּת הָאוֹמֵרוֹת נִתְגַּבֵּר עַל יְדֵי שְׁלוֹשָׁה עֲנִינִים הַגְּרָמִים בְּאוֹתִיוֹת בּו"ז.

In this way we get a sense of why we draw water on the holiday of Sukkot, referring to the water libation.⁷ Since we sacrifice 70 bulls for the nations of the world, therefore we pour the water to say that they will surely die and be “like the waters which flow to the earth and cannot be gathered up.”⁸ Because of this, the Torah hints to us of the pouring of the water with the sign **בו"ז** [boz] [contempt],⁹ because the nations are haughty because of the 70 bulls that the Jews sacrificed on their behalf. We hint to them that just as the abyss is proud of “its multitude of waves”¹⁰ at the time of the water libation, they are stopped and restrained so that they do not cross the border of the sand of the seashore. As it is written, “Should you not tremble before Me, Who set the sand as a boundary to the sea, as a limit for all time, not to be transgressed? Though its waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass it.”¹¹

So too for us, when “the seething waters,”¹² i.e., the nations of the world, pass over us, nevertheless, we will prevail. “Great waters cannot extinguish love, nor rivers sink it. If a man offered all his wealth for love, they would scorn him repeatedly.”¹³

⁵ Rashi on Lev. 23:36: “The word [atzeret] is derived from the root עצר ‘to hold back’ and suggests: I keep you back with Me one day more.” At the end of Sukkot, we spend an extra day with G-d, i.e., Shemini Atzeret.

⁶ Ps. 31:8.

⁷ Sukkah 48b.

⁸ II Sam. 14:14: “We must all die; we are like water that is poured out on the ground and cannot be gathered up.”

⁹ Zohar, Pinchas 259a. See also Ps. 107:40: “He pours contempt on great men . . .”

¹⁰ Jer. 51:42: “The sea has risen over Babylon, she is covered by its multitude of waves.”

¹¹ Jer. 5:22.

¹² Ps. 124:5.

¹³ Song of Songs 8:7.

It is known to Kabbalists that thus the *klipah* of the nations grows stronger because of three factors that are hinted at by the letters of *boz* [contempt], namely, the *bet*, *vav*, and *zayin*.

הַעֲנֵן הַרְאִשׁוֹן עַל יְדֵי חֲרָבֹן בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בְּסוּד "וְשִׁפְחָה כִּי־תִירֵשׁ גְּבֵרְתָּהּ", וְהָיוּ שְׁנֵי חֲרָבָנִין וְזוֹ הִיא הֵב' שֶׁל בּוֹז. וְהַשְּׁנֵי עַל יְדֵי הַנְּאֻת שֶׁל הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה שִׁשְׁרָאֵל גַּמְשִׁכִּין אַחֲרֵיהֶן וְחוֹטְאִין, וְהֵן שִׁיתָא יוֹמִין דְּחֹל דְּשִׁיתָא אֶלְפֵי שְׁנֵין הָרִי עֲלָמָא וְהָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה הוּא שֶׁל הָאוֹמוֹת וְהֵינּוּ הֵנָּה "וְ שֶׁל בּוֹז. וְהַשְּׁלִישִׁי עַל יְדֵי הַשְּׁבַע שְׁמוֹת שֶׁנִּשְׁ לִיצָר הָרַע, שֶׁהוּא הַנְּחָשׁ שֶׁל ז' רִישׁוֹן, וְהֵם מַחֲטִיאִים אֶת הָאָדָם וְהֵינּוּ הוּא' שֶׁל בּוֹז. וְאַף עַל פִּי כֵן אֲנִי בּוֹטְחִים בָּהּ' שֶׁיִּצְלֵנוּ מִקְּדָם וְיִתְקַנְיִם הַפְּתוּב "בּוֹז בְּרוֹז לִו".

The first matter that strengthens the *klipah* of the nations was the destruction of the Temple. This is the esoteric secret of “a slave-girl who supplants her mistress,”¹⁴ that the slaves, i.e., the nations, will have power over the mistress, i.e., the Jews, because of the destruction of the Temple. There were two destructions, i.e., the First Temple and the Second Temple, and that is represented by the *bet* of the word *boz*, as *bet* has a numeric value of two.

The second matter is the pleasures of this world, that Israel is pulled after them and sins. This [occurs during] the six secular days of the week, and during the six thousand years that is the duration of this world.¹⁵ This world is for the nations to enjoy, while the World-to-Come is for the Jews. This attraction to the pleasures of this world during Sunday through Friday is represented by the *vav* of the word *boz*, as *vav* has a numeric value of six.

The third matter is the seven names of the evil inclination,¹⁶ which is a serpent with seven heads,¹⁷ and they will lead the man to sin. This is represented by the *zayin* of the word *boz*, as *zayin* has a numeric value of seven.

Nevertheless, we trust in G-d, that He will save us from their hand, and will fulfill the verse, “they would scorn him repeatedly.”

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¹⁴ Prov. 30:23.

¹⁵ Sanhedrin 97a.

¹⁶ Sukkah 52a: Evil, uncircumcised, impure, enemy, stumbling block, stone, and hidden one.

¹⁷ Kiddushin 29b.