

Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmani zy"u, author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avo's, who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.



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358 חז"ל

אמרות שמעון

*The 'Travails of Mashiah' In
Comparison to The Anguish caused
by a Rebellious Son*

כִּי יִהְיֶה לְאִישׁ בֶּן סוֹדֵר וּמוֹדָה אֵינָנו שֹׁמֵעַ בְּקוֹל אָבִיו וּבְקוֹל אִמּוֹ וְיִסְרּוּ אֹתוֹ וְלֹא יִשְׁמַע אֲלֵיהֶם:
(דברים כ"א, י"ח)

If a man will have a wayward and rebellious son, who does not listen to the voice of his father and to the voice of his mother, and they discipline him but he does not listen to them.

King David had a rebellious son, Avshalom, who not only rebelled against him personally, but also revolted against his kingship, and actually gained a popular following; ultimately seizing his throne. Nevertheless, despite the grave danger that David faced from Avshalom and his confederates, David sang praise to Hashem and expressed his confidence that Hashem will yet save him from his adversaries, and said the following. מִזְמוֹר לְדוֹד בְּרִירוֹ מִכָּיִם עָלָיו וְכוּ'. וְהָיָה ה' אֲבִשְׁלֹם בְּנֹו. ה' מִן רַבּוֹ צָרִי רַבִּים קִמְּםֵי עָלָי וְכוּ'. (תהלים ג' א'-ד') - *A song of praise by David as he fled from Avshalom his son. Hashem, how numerous are my tormentors! Many rise up against me... But You, Hashem, are a shield for me and are my honor, and He who raises my head.*

It is from these words of David, that the Gemara in Brachos (ברכות טז) gathers how much pain a rebellious child brings upon his parents, and says as follows. *A degenerate child in a person's home is an affliction more severe than the future war of Gog and Magog.* [i.e. The suffering which a degenerate child brings upon his parents is more severe than the suffering which will be brought upon the Jewish People by the war of Gog and Magog, which will be fought before the advent of

Mashiach, and will be the cause of much suffering]. *We know this because the Passuk states, 'A song of praise by David as he fled from Avshalom his son'; and it is written immediately afterwards that David said with regard to his degenerate son Avshalom, 'Hashem, how numerous are my tormentors! Many rise up against me'. However, concerning the wars of Gog and Magog it is written, 'Why do people gather, and the nations talk in vain'; whereas 'how numerous are my tormentors' is not written there.*

Rashi explains that the proof through which the Gemara proves that the war of Gog and Magog will bring about less

suffering than that of a degenerate child, is from that which David says, *'Why do people gather, and the nations talk in vain'*, wherein David dismisses and makes light of the war of Gog and Magog, as if to say, 'Of what consequence is it to them?' It is from this assertion that we see that David deemed their military campaigns to be quite inconsequential.

Rashi's explanation is quite difficult to understand. For the Gemara clearly says, '*A degenerate child is an affliction more severe than the future war of Gog and Magog, for with regard to his degenerate son David said, 'Hashem, how numerous are my tormentors! While regarding the wars of Gog and Magog all David said was, 'Why do people gather, and*

the nations talk in vain'; whereas 'how numerous are my tormentors' he did not say'. This seems to clearly indicate that the Gemara proves this point, not from that which David said, 'why do people gather, and the nations talk in vain', but rather from the fact that David said 'how numerous are my tormentors' only in regard to his degenerate son but not in regard to the war of Gog and Magog.

Additionally, as the Maharsha asks, we need to understand the repetitive words of Dovid, *'How numerous are my tormentors! Many rise up against me'*.

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The Gemara in Kesubos (ק"י ע"ב) discusses the travails of the era preceding the coming of Mashiach. *R' Zeira said in the name of R' Yirmiyah bar Abba: The generation in which the son of David [i.e. Mashiach] will come, will experience the denigration of Torah Scholars. When I said this before Shmuel, he said: There will be harsh decrees that will decimate the Jews followed by other decrees that will eliminate even more.*

The Gemara in Sanhedrin (צ"ח ע"ב) makes reference to these 'travails of Mashiach', and says as follows. *Ulla said, "May the Mashiach come, but may I not see him". And so said Rabbah, "May the Mashiach come, but may I not see him".* Although these sages yearned and prayed for the coming of Mashiach, nevertheless, at the same time they preferred not to be there to witness the event, so as not to need to endure the suffering that will accompany it.

These travails and miseries will, consequently, cause many of our brethren to forsake their Torah life. In fact, this is precisely what Gog and Magog will have in mind, as David quotes them to say, *נתקה את מוסרותינו ונשליכה ממנו עבתינו - Let us unfasten their straps, and cast off from ourselves their cords*, which is alluding to the Jewish people who will, as Gog and Magog anticipate, unfasten and cast off the yolk of Torah observance.

In a similar vein, the Gemara in Sanhedrin (ק"ד ע"א) tells us that the travails and miseries of the saga of Avshalom almost brought David to transgress a most serious sin. *When Avshalom rebelled, David sought to engage in idolatry... Chushai said to David, "If you commit this act, people will say, 'How can a king as great as you engage in idolatry?' You will thus have also committed a great desecration of Hashem's name". David said to Chushai, "If I do not do this, people will say that it is unjust that a king as pious as I should be killed by his own son! Thus, Hashem's name will be desecrated publicly. It is preferable that a king such as I should engage in idolatry and desecrate the Name of Heaven as an individual, so that the Name of Heaven should not be desecrated publicly". Chushai reassured David and told him as follows: The Torah juxtaposes the Passuk which states, 'If a man will have a wayward and rebellious son...' to the Passuk which permits one to marry a beautiful captive, to teach us that anyone who marries a beautiful captive will have a wayward and rebellious son from her. Accordingly, because Avshalom's mother*

was a beautiful captive, it is not surprising that he turned out rebellious. Therefore, even if Avshalom succeeds in killing you, people will not question Hashem's justice.



We can explain that when David repetitiously said, *'Hashem, how numerous are my tormentors! Many rise up against me'*, he was referring to the double misery that his son brought upon him; the spiritual agony of almost transgressing the terrible sin of idolatry, and the physical pain and anguish of a son rebelling against his father. The question thus arises; why didn't David say *'how numerous are my tormentors'* concerning the wars of Gog and Magog, since that too will cause the Jews to sin?

The answer is that, because the 'travails of Mashiach' will be so trying and arduous upon the Jews and will leave them with no peace of mind, it will be considered as if they were coerced to sin and they will not be fully responsible for their sinful behavior. Hence, their sins aren't considered as their 'torments'. On the other hand, David's travails will not give him that leeway, for although Avshalom's rebellion indeed left him with no peace of mind, nevertheless, because David himself was behind his son's discipline, it was as if he himself was to blame for his son's wayward and rebellious behavior; thus he cannot use his son's rebellion as justification for his sins.

Accordingly, we can explain that when David indicated that the war of Gog and Magog will be less painful than a degenerate child, he was referring to the spiritual pain. David was suggesting that the spiritual pain which Gog and Magog will bring upon the Jewish people, by causing them to *'cast off from themselves their cords and yolk of Torah'*, won't be so painful because the Jews will not be fully responsible for those sinful behaviors. On the other hand, the spiritual pain brought about by a degenerate child is so much more painful, for the father is fully responsible for any sinful behavior which is brought about by his rebellious son.

Thus, Rashi explains as follows. The reason why David did not say *'Hashem, how numerous are my tormentors!'* in regard to the wars of Gog and Magog, and thus indicated that in the spiritual sense it will be less painful than that of a rebellious son, is because of that which David said, *'Why do people gather, and the nations talk in vain?'*, where he alluded that the Jewish People won't be fully responsible for their misdeeds which Gog and Magog will bring upon them.

זרע שמשון פרשתנו אות ג

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