
אם יתן איש את כל הון ביתו באהבה בזה יבזו לו שיר השירים ח, ז

In the love dialogue that is Shir HaShirim, HaShem here addresses his beloved Klal Yisroel. His message, however, is not entirely clear.

There are two main approaches to understanding the phrase בזה יבזו, resulting in two different translations of this possuk.

Translation # 1 – Rashi

Rashi understands the root of these words is בזו – meaning to scorn.

According to Rashi, the meaning of the possuk is as follows:

“If a man were to offer all the treasure of his home to entice you away from your love, they would surely scorn him.”

HaShem declares that anyone who would offer some monetary gain in an attempt to alienate the Jewish nation from HaShem, would become a laughing stock. As described in the earlier pessukim, the mutual love between HaShem and His people is so strong, that no amount of money could ever drive a wedge between them. In short, you cannot put a price on the love that Klal Yisroel has for HaShem, and that He has for us.

The Yalkut Me’Am Loez cites Homon as an example of one person who tried just this. Homon offered Achashverosh 10,000 talents of silver in exchange for the right to kill the Jews, and as part of his petition to Achashverosh, Homon claimed that Bnei Yisroel were no longer a nation that was Torah-observant (Megillah 13b). Homon subsequently suffered the ultimate fall from grace, and became an object of contempt.

Translation # 2 – Targum

The Targum understands the root of these words is בזו – meaning to despoil or to plunder.

According to the Targum, the meaning of the possuk is as follows:

“If a man were to offer all the treasure of his home in order to acquire Torah wisdom (referred to here as ‘love’), he will surely be the recipient of much spoil.”

The Targum elaborates that a person who gives away his worldly possessions in order to acquire Torah wisdom, will be amply rewarded in Olam HaBa. Moreover, he will be compensated by receiving the spoils of the Messianic war of Gog.

Following the theme of the Targum, the Midrash Rabba names Rabbi Yochanan as an example of someone who made financial sacrifices to facilitate his learning of Torah. The Midrash relates that in order to fund his studies, Rabbi Yochanan sold a field, a vineyard and an olive press. Upon Rabbi Yochanan’s passing, people quoted this possuk, as a reference to his willingness to relinquish his material property, in order to amass Torah knowledge.

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