



To Commemorate Lag BaOmer

The Magnificent Connection between the Seventy Mitzvos in Parshas Kedoshim and Rashbi's Seventy Tikunim to Perpetuate Torah in Yisrael

In honor of the auspiciously approaching day of Lag BaOmer, the celebration of the divine Tanna Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, it is fitting that we explore a statement in the Zohar hakadosh (Kedoshim 81a) related to one of the parshiyos we will read this week, parshas Kedoshim. We learn that when Rashbi's holy entourage would reach parshas Kedoshim, they would rejoice: **תנא רבי אבא, פרשה זו היא כללות כל התורה וחזותם האמת. בפרשה זו נתחדשו סודות עליונים, בעשרה מאמרות וגזירות ועונשים ומצוות עליונות, Rabbi Abba taught: This parsha encompasses the general principles of the entire Torah and the seal of truth—"emes." Exalted secrets are revealed in this parsha related to the ten utterances, decrees and punishments, and heavenly mitzvos. When the colleagues reached this parsha, they were elated.**

G-d Forbid Torah Should Be Forgotten from Yisrael

In this essay, we will present to our esteemed readership a novel idea regarding the joy of Rashbi's entourage associated with parshas Kedoshim. We will begin by referring to the Gemara (Shabbas 138b):

תנו רבנן כשנכנסו רבותינו לכרם ביבנה אמרו, עתידה תורה שתשתכח מישראל, שנאמר (עמוס ח-יא) הגה ימים באים נאום ה' אלקים והשלחתי רעב בארץ, לא רעב ללחם ולא צמא למים כי אם לשמוע את דברי ה'... תניא רבי שמעון בן יוחאי אומר, חס ושלום שתשתכח תורה מישראל, שנאמר כי לא תשכח מפי זרעו."

The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: When our Rabbis entered the vineyard in Yavneh, they said, "The Torah will

eventually be forgotten from Yisrael" . . . It was taught in a Baraisa: Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai says, "Chas v'shalom that the Torah should be forgotten from Yisrael; for it is stated (Devarim 31, 21): 'For it shall not be forgotten from the mouth of its offspring.'"

This Gemara deserves further scrutiny. After all, among the sages studying in the vineyard in Yavneh were many holy Tannaim, who illuminated the world with their Torah. They included Rabban Gamliel (the Nasi), Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah, Rabbi Eliezer ben Hurkenos, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananyah, Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Yehudah the son of Rabbi Ilai, among others. They all lamented the eventuality that **"in the future, the Torah will be forgotten by Yisrael."** Yet, the divine Tanna, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, stated explicitly that that would never happen, citing the passuk: **"For it shall not be forgotten from the mouth of its offspring."** We will endeavor to explain what Rashbi knew that none of the other Tannaim knew.

It appears that we can explain the matter based on the fact that this dispute between the sages and Rashbi took place **"when they entered the vineyard in Yavneh."** Now, we have learned elsewhere in the Gemara (Gittin 56b) that Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai requested of Vespasian Caesar: **"תן לי יבנה—give me Yavneh and her sages.** Thus, it is apparent that he requested that the Roman leader not destroy Yavneh, which was the residence of all the great Torah sages of the time. He sought to preserve the Torah in Yisrael by sparing the Torah sages in Yavneh.

This is the significance of the Gemara's statement: **When our Rabbis entered the vineyard in Yavneh, they said, "The Torah will eventually be forgotten from Yisrael."** They foresaw via their "ruach hakodesh" that ultimately, they would be exiled along with the rest of Yisrael. They realized that the Torah scholars would be dispersed throughout the various countries of exile; and due to the spiritual decline of the Jewish people and the darkness of galus prior to the arrival of the Mashiach, it would be inevitable for the Torah not to be forgotten. Their fears seemed to be substantiated by the prophetic words of the navi (Amos 8, 11): **"הנה ימים באים נאום ה' אלקים והשלחתי רעב בארץ, לא רעב ללחם ולא צמא למים כי אם לשמוע."** Behold, days are coming—the word of the Hashem, Elokim—when I will send hunger into the land; not a hunger for bread nor a thirst for water, but to hear the words of Hashem.

Undaunted by their fears, the divine Rashbi proclaimed: **"Chas v'shalom that the Torah should be forgotten from Yisrael."** For, he believed beyond a shadow of a doubt that in the merit of his acumen in the Torah of mysticism, he possessed the ability to prevent that from happening. For, a tzaddik possesses the ability to order a decree which HKB"H is obliged to fulfill, in keeping with the passuk (Iyov 22, 28): **"ותגזר אומר ויקם לך ועל דרכיך נגה אור"**—you would utter a decree and it would be done, and light would shine upon your ways. Thus, he was confident that his Torah and kedushah would prevent the Torah from being forgotten in Yisrael. So, whenever the Torah is in danger, chas v'shalom, of being forgotten due to the pressures and difficulties of galus, Rashbi's voice resonates throughout the world: **"Chas v'shalom that the Torah should be forgotten from Yisrael."**

A Fascinating Allusion in Rashbi's Proclamation

This coincides magnificently with a teaching in the Likutei Moharan, which also appears in the Tiferes Shlomo (Lag BaOmer), which has become widespread throughout the Jewish world. They point out a fascinating allusion inherent in Rashbi's proclamation: **"חס ושלום שתשכח תורה מישראל שנאמר: כי לא תשכח מפי זרעו."** The last letters of the passuk he cites: **כי לא תשכח מפי זרעו** are an anagram for **יוחאי**. Thus, the passuk alludes to the fact that in the merit of Yochai's offspring, namely Rabbi Shimon, the Torah will not be forgotten from Yisrael.

Now, it gives me great pleasure to present an allusion we presented in the sefer K'dai Hu Rabbi Shimon (9, 2). The opening words of the holy Torah (Bereishis 1, 1): **בראשית** (1,202) possess the exact same numerical value (gematria) as the words of the passuk in Devarim: **כי לא תשכח** (1,202). In his gloss on the Zohar hakadosh, Nitzotzei Oros (Acharei 61b, 1), the Gaon Chida, ztz"l, writes that the word **א'זר ת'ורת ר'בי ש'מעון ב'ן י'וחאי**—**the illumination of the Torah of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai**. This explains very nicely why the fact that Rashbi is the one who will prevent the Torah from being forgotten in Yisrael is alluded to specifically in the first passuk of Bereishis.

Rashbi's Greatness Stems from the Fact that He Berated the Roman Regime

To better comprehend how Rashbi acquired this tremendous capacity, let us refer to the words of Chazal. They describe how he achieved his incredible Torah acumen during the thirteen years that he and his son, Rabbi Eleazar, hid in a cave from the Roman authorities. They had sentenced him to death for his zealous remarks berating the Roman empire. Here is what we are taught in the Gemara (Shabbas 33b):

"כשנכנסו רבותינו לכרם ביבנה, היה שם רבי יהודה ורבי אלעזר ברבי יוסי ורבי שמעון... נענה רבי יהודה ברבי אלעאי ראש המדברים בכל מקום... ואמאי קרו ליה ראש המדברים בכל מקום, דיתבי רבי יהודה ורבי יוסי ורבי שמעון, ויתבי יהודה בן גרים גבייהו. פתח רבי יהודה ואמר, כמה נאים מעשיהן של אומה זו, תיקנו שווקים, תיקנו גשרים, תיקנו מרחצאות. רבי יוסי שתק."

נענה רשב"י ואמר, כל מה שתיקנו לא תיקנו אלא לצורך עצמן, תיקנו שווקין להושיב בהן זונות, מרחצאות לעדן בהן עצמן, גשרים ליטול מהן מכס. הלך יהודה בן גרים וסיפר דבריהם ונשמעו למלכות. אמרו, יהודה שעילה יתעלה, יוסי ששתק יגלה לצפורי, שמעון שגינה יהרג."

Rabbi Yehudah, Rabbi Yossi and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai were sitting together in Kerem b'Yavneh; Yehudah ben Gerim was sitting nearby. Rabbi Yehudah, known as "the first of the speakers," opened the discussion by praising the accomplishments of the Romans in Eretz Yisrael — such as establishing marketplaces, bridges and bathhouses. After hearing Rabbi Yehudah express his admiration for the Roman occupation, Rabbi Yossi remained silent. Rashbi, however, responded by pointing out that everything they established was to serve their own purposes and agenda. For instance, the

marketplaces were established to accommodate prostitutes; the bridges were built to collect tolls and taxes.

Yehudah ben Gerim recounted this discussion to some of his associates, and it ultimately came to the attention of the government. According to Rashi, he recounted the discussion to either students or to his parents, but not directly to the Roman authorities — who became aware of it, nonetheless. The Romans promptly elevated Rabbi Yehudah's status — as a reward for his praise; they exiled Rabbi Yossi to Tzipori for remaining silent; and they sentenced Rabbi Shimon to be executed for his derogatory remarks. Rabbi Shimon and his son went into hiding in a cave; they dwelled in seclusion in the cave for twelve years.

As a result of the Roman decree, Rashbi and Rabbi Elazar studied Torah in that cave day and night until they were informed by Eliyahu HaNavi that the Roman Caesar had died, and the decree had been rescinded. At that point, they exited the cave. Due to their extreme kedushah, however, they could not bear seeing people engaging in daily, mundane chores rather than engaging in Torah-study. Their reaction was so extreme and sensational that according to the Gemara's account (ibid.): **בכל מקום שנותנין עיניהן מיד נשרף**—whatever they gazed upon immediately burst into flames. This prompted a heavenly voice to call out: **"לההריב עולמי יצאתם, חזרו למערתכם"**—**did you exit (the cave) to destroy My world? Return to your cave.** Subsequently, they returned to the cave for one full year; then they left it for good.

The Zohar Chadash (Ki Savo) teaches us that Eliyahu HaNavi came to the cave twice a day to teach them Torah. Attesting to this fact, the divine kabbalist, Rabbi Shimon Lavi, zy" a, writes in the popular, holy song **"בר יוחאי, מושב טוב ישבת, יום נסת, : "בר יוחאי"**—**Bar Yochai, you had a good sojourn, one day you ran, one day you fled. In a rocky cave, you stayed, there you acquired your glory and your strength.** Thus, we learn that Rashbi's greatness was achieved as a result of his zealous defense of Hashem, which prompted him to disparage the Roman empire. His remarks forced him to flee and hide in the cave for thirteen years.

It Is a Known Fact that Eisav Hates Yaakov

Let us consider what prompted Rashbi to endanger his life by speaking disparagingly of the Romans. Clearly, he did not

presume that his remarks would remain secret. After all, we have a fundamental principle that anything said in the presence of three people will no longer remain a secret. As we have learned in the Gemara (Arachin 16a): **"כל מילתא דמיתאמרא באפי תלתא, לית בה משום לישנא בישא, מאי טעמא, חברך חבא אית ליה, וחברא דחברך חבא אית ליה"**—**anything said in front of three people is not categorized as "lashon hara."** Why? **Because your friend has a friend; and your friend's friend has a friend.**

So, let us explain Rashbi's profound rationale. As Rashi comments in parshas Vayishlach (Bereishis 33, 4), based on the Sifri (Beha'aloscha 11): **Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai says: It is an established fact that Eisav hates Yaakov.** Now, our holy sefarim teach us that Yisrael's enemies employ two distinct strategies to combas us. They either confront us and battle us openly as the wicked Haman did in his ploy to exterminate the Jews. Or, conversely, they adopt a policy of peace in an attempt to draw us near and cause us to intermingle and assimilate with them. This second tactic is attested to in the following passuk (Tehillim 106, 35): **"ויתערבו בגוים וילמדו מעשיהם"**—**they mingled with the goyim and learned their ways.**

This then is the basis for Rashbi's pronouncement: **"It is an established fact that Eisav hates Yaakov."** In other words, HKB"H instilled in the goyim a hatred of Yisrael, so that Yisrael would not assimilate with them and adopt their ways. It appears that this innate hatred between Eisav and Yaakov was already set in motion by HKB"H when they were twins in Rivka's womb. For, they began quarreling even then, as it is written (Bereishis 25, 22): **"ויתרוצצו הבנים בקרבה"**—**the children clashed within her.** In fact, the Sefer Chassidim writes (1137): **"ולכך נשלחה איבה בין יעקב ועשו בקטנותם, פן ילמד יעקב"**—**therefore, animosity was instilled between Yaakov and Eisav when they were young; so that Yaakov would not learn from Eisav.**

This phenomenon is also described in the Midrash Temurah, attributed to Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Akiva: **"Yisrael wish to express a tremendous debt of gratitude to HKB"H for instilling hatred and rivalry (antagonism) between them and the nations of the world. Otherwise, they would mingle with the goyim and adopt their ways. . . Therefore, praise the G-d of the heavens, for His chesed is never-ending."**

We find the following amazing words in Rabeinu Bachayei's commentary on the passuk (Vayikra 20, 26): **"And I have separated you from among the nations to be Mine."** The wisdom of the Torah required us to be separate in our food, our studies and our dress. And because we have been chosen to observe the mitzvos of the Torah, they are jealous of us. Due to their jealousy, they are prone to hate us. This is consistent with Chazal's elucidation (Shabbas 89a): **"Its name is Chorev. So, why is it called Sinai? Because the idolaters' hatred emanated from there."** (Translator's note: The name Sinai is related to the Hebrew word for hatred—"sin'ah.")

With this in mind, we can now suggest the following. When Rashbi heard Rabbi Yehudah ben Ilai praising the Romans for establishing marketplaces and building bridges and bathhouses, which were used and frequented by Yisrael, as well; he grasped their malintent. They did not forbid the Jews from using their facilities, because they intended to corrupt Yisrael by having them assimilate with them.

Therefore, he placed his life in danger by speaking out and disparaging the Romans: **"כל מה שתיקנו לא תקנו אלא לצורך"**—they did all of these things to satisfy their hearts' desires pertaining to all of the meaningless pursuits of Olam HaZeh. This is why they did not prevent Yisrael from using their facilities and joining them; the Romans wanted to encourage them to also delight in the pleasures of Olam HaZeh and assimilate with them. Thus, his disparaging remarks were aimed at distancing Yisrael from the Romans, in keeping with the notion of (Tehillim 97, 10): **"אוהבי ה' שנאו רע שומר נפשות: O lovers of Hashem, despise evil; He protects the lives of His devout ones; He rescues them from the hand of the wicked.** The abhorrence of evil is a magnificent way to safeguard ourselves against falling into the traps and pitfalls of evil. It was in this merit that Rashbi was able to prevent Yisrael from forgetting the Torah; he inculcated in them the power to remain separate from the goyim.

Seventy Tikunim in the Passuk "Bereishis" to Prevent Forgetting the Torah while in the Midst of the Seventy Nations

With this introduction, we will now focus on the joy and elation experienced by the holy disciples of Rashbi associated

with parshas Kedoshim. The parsha opens with the following passuk (Vayikra 19, 1): **וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם, קדושים תהיו כי קדוש אני ה' אלקיכם—Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: Speak to the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael and say to them: You shall be kadosh (holy), for I, Hashem, your G-d, am holy.** Based on the Toras Kohanim, Rashi comments: **This teaches us that this portion of the Torah was said at a gathering of the entire assembly of Yisrael, because the majority of the essentials of the Torah depend upon it.** According to the Sifsei Chachamim, Rashi deduces this fact from the unusual wording employed by the passuk: **"דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל"—speak to the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael—rather than the usual wording employed throughout the Torah: דבר אל בני ישראל—speak to Bnei Yisrael.**

Let us embellish this thought based on a passuk at the end of the parsha (ibid. 20, 23): **ולא תלכו בחוקת הגוי אשר אני משלח מפניכם כי את כל אלה עשו ואיקץ בם... אני ה' אלקיכם אשר הבדלתי אתכם מן העמים. Do not follow the traditions of the nation that I expel from before you; for, they did all of these and I was disgusted with them . . . I am Hashem, your G-d, Who has separated you from the nations.** The Ba'al HaTurim comments: **"Who has separated you"—seventy mitzvos in parshas Kedoshim corresponding to the seventy nations that I separated you from.** For this reason, parshas Kedoshim was said aloud at a gathering of the entire assembly of Yisrael. Since it contains seventy mitzvos that are designed to keep us separate from the seventy nations, it possesses a special status and significance.

It is with great pleasure that we can apply this fact to explain why the divine Tanna Rashbi expounded seventy tikunim in the Tikunei Zohar on the passuk: **בראשית ברא**—As explained in the Tikunei Zohar (Introduction 1a): **תיקוני הזוהר דאיגון שבעין אנפין לאורייתא, דפריש—Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai expounded on the word Bereishis concerning the esoterica of the Torah.** Concerning this matter, Rabbi Avraham, the son of the Gra, writes in Beir Mahara: **ידוע שרעיא מהימנא הוא שלמד עם רשב"י, ועליהם נאמר (תהלים ח-1) ותחסרהו מעט מאלקים. משה רבינו ע"ה זכה למ"ט פנים שבתורה שבכתב, ורשב"י זכה לע' אנפין רזי דאורייתא.** **It is known that the "raiya mehemna"**

(“loyal shepherd”) refers to the one who learned with Rashbi. Of them, it says (Tehillim 8, 6): “Yet You have made him only a little less than the divine.” Moshe Rabeinu, a”h, was privileged to perceive 49 faces of Torah she’b’chsav, while Rashbi was privileged to perceive seventy faces of the esoterica of the Torah.

We learn from his sacred remarks that seventy faces of the Torah of mysticism were revealed to Rashbi. This is substantiated from the following excerpt from the Tikunei Zohar (Introduction 17b): **Rabbi Shimon began with the following remark: “In the beginning (“Bereishis”), G-d created.”** (Tehillim 25, 14) **“The secret (סוד) of Hashem is to those who fear Him, and His covenant to inform them.” These secrets (סוד) refer to the seventy ways the word “Bereishis” is expounded in this parsha.** (Translator’s note: The gematria of סוד is seventy.) Thus, we learn that there are seventy faces of the Torah of mysticism—the Torah of סוד—that were revealed to Rashbi in association with the word “בראשית”. This is alluded to by the passuk: **“סוד ה’ ליראיו ובריתו עשה שבעים:”** and is the basis for the formulation of the great author of the Ben Ish Chai in the piyut **“זאמרתם כה לחי:”** **עשה שבעים:—he made seventy tikunim, more precious than pearls, with which he remedied the upper spheres, our master, Bar Yochai.**

With this understanding, we can explain why Rashbi revealed seventy aspects of the word “Bereishis.” Let us refer to Rashi’s commentary: **“Bereishis.” This passuk cries out: “Expound me!” As the Rabbis of blessed memory expounded it: For the Torah which is called “the beginning of His way,” and for Yisrael who are called “the first of His crop.”** Now, as we have learned, Rashbi was concerned that when Yisrael would be dispersed among the seventy nations in galus, they would forget the Torah, chas v’shalom. To prevent this eventuality, he made seventy tikunim, revealing the secrets of the Torah based on the word “בראשית”. They were designed to separate the neshamos of Yisrael from the seventy nations of the world and prevent Yisrael from forgetting and abandoning the Torah. Thus, the significance of the word **“Bereishis”** would be realized: The Almighty created the world for the Torah and for Yisrael; and if the Torah were to be forgotten from Yisrael, chas v’shalom, there would be no purpose in creating the world.

This coincides magnificently with the allusions mentioned above: The word **אור תורת רבי ש’מעון בראשית** is an acronym for **אור תורת רבי ש’מעון בן יוחאי**—the illumination of the Torah of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai—and the gematria of the words **בראשית בראשית** equals **כ”י ל”א תשכ”ח מפי זרעו** equals **אלהים**—it will not be forgotten from the mouths of his offspring. For, due to the seventy faces of the Torah expounded by Rashbi in association with the word **“Bereishis,”** he ensured that the Torah would not be forgotten by Yisrael while in galus among the seventy nations of the world.

We can now appreciate and participate in the joy experienced by Rashbi’s disciples when they reached parshas Kedoshim. As explained, parshas Kedoshim was read aloud in the presence of the entire assembly, because it contains seventy mitzvos that separate us from the seventy nations of the world. Similarly, Rashbi expounded seventy faces on the word **“Bereishis”** to separate Yisrael from the seventy nations and to prevent Yisrael from forgetting the Torah. Hence, they rejoiced specifically on parshas Kedoshim.

Rashbi a Nitzotz of Moshe Eliminated the Forgetting of the Torah Precipitated by the Breaking of the Luchos

Let us now explore the wonders of HKB”H, the grand Orchestrator, and His rationale for specifically choosing Rashbi to eliminate the forgetting of the Torah from Yisrael. In Likutei HaShas (Shabbas 33b), our teacher, the Arizal, teaches us: **Rashbi, a”h, was a nitzotz** (a spark from the neshamah) **of Moshe Rabeinu, a”h.** Additionally, we have learned in the Gemara (Eiruvin 54a): **“אלמלי לא נשתברו לוחות הראשונות, לא נשתכחה—תורה מישראל”**—**had the first luchos not been shattered, the Torah would never have been forgotten by Yisrael.** Thus, we learn that the breaking of the first luchos precipitated the forgetting of the Torah by Yisrael.

Thus, it should be apparent to us that if Moshe Rabeinu caused the eventuality of the Torah being forgotten by Yisrael, it must have been for Yisrael’s benefit—so that they would be judged for the “cheit ha’eigel” as single and unattached rather than as a married woman. Therefore, it fell upon Rashbi, a nitzotz of Moshe Rabeinu, to make amends—to eliminate the

possibility of Yisrael forgetting the Torah by providing the illumination of the Torah of mysticism.

This explains very nicely the juxtaposition of the conclusion of the Torah and its beginning. The Torah concludes with the passuk (Devarim 34, 12): "ולכל היד החזקה ולכל המורא הגדול אשר עשה משה לעיני כל ישראל"—and for all the strong hand and for all the great awesomeness that Moshe performed before the eyes of all Yisrael. Rashi comments: **That his heart inspired him to shatter the luchos before their eyes, as it says (ibid. 9, 17): "And I shattered them before your eyes." And the mind of HKB"H concurred with the mind of Moshe, as it says (Shemos 34, 1): "Which you shattered"—implying "yishar kochacha" for having shattered them.** The difficulty, however, is the fear and concern raised by our sages in Kerem b'Yavneh that the Torah would eventually be forgotten by Yisrael.

Therefore, to allay this concern, HKB"H connected the end of the Torah with its beginning with the words: **בראשית ברא** "בראשית ברא" אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ". As we have learned, the word "בראשית" is an acronym for **א'זר ת'זרת ר'בי ש'מעון ב'ן י'זחאי—the illumination of the Torah of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai.** Thus, the Torah begins with an allusion to Rashbi who was a nitzotz of Moshe Rabeinu. Hence, it was specifically Rashbi who expounded on the term "**Bereishis**" seventy faces of perception and understanding to prevent Yisrael from forgetting the Torah when in galus among the seventy nations of the world. With this power, he proclaimed confidently: **"G-d forbid that the Torah should be forgotten by Yisrael!"** As we have learned, this is also alluded to by the first passuk of the Torah as follows: The gematria of the words **כ"י ל"א תשכ"ח** equals **בר"א אלהי"ם**—**it will not be forgotten from the mouths of his offspring**—because Rashbi, the nitzotz of Moshe eliminated the forgetting of the Torah by Yisrael.



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