



## The 210 Years of Galus Mitzrayim Were Aimed at Retrieving the 21 Letters that Fell into the Klipah of Mitzrayim

In this week's parsha, parshas Shemos, we read about the first time HKB" H revealed Himself to Moshe Rabeinu. This otherworldly revelation occurred on Har Sinai, the divine mountain on which Yisrael were destined to receive the Torah (Shemos 3, 1):

וְמֹשֶׁה הָיָה רֹועֶה אֶת צָאן יִתְרֹו חֹתְנוּ כָּהֵן מִדְיָן, וַיַּהַג אֶת הַצָּאן  
אַחֲרַ הַמְּדֻבֵּר וַיַּכְּבֹא אֶל הַר הַאֱלֹקִים חֹורְבָה, וַיַּרְא מֶלֶךְ הָאֱלֹהִים אָוֹכָל, וַיֹּאמֶר  
אָשָׁמוֹתָךְ הַסָּנָה, וַיַּרְא וַיַּהַג הַסָּנָה בַּעַר בְּאָשׁ וְהַסָּנָה אַיִלָּנוּ אָוֹכָל, וַיֹּאמֶר  
מְשַׁה אָסּוּרָה נָא וְאָרְדָה אֶת הַמְּרֹאָה הַגָּדוֹל הַזָּה, מְדוֹעַ לֹא יַבַּעַר הַסָּנָה.  
וַיַּרְא הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי סָר לְרֹאֹת, וַיַּקְרָא אֶלְיוֹן אֱלֹקִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסָּנָה וַיֹּאמֶר מְשַׁה  
מְשַׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הַנָּנִי, וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל תִּקְרַב הַלּוּם שֶׁל נְעַלֵּךְ מַעַל רְגָלֵיךְ, כִּי  
הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עַומֵּד עַלְיוֹ אֶדְמֹתָ קֹדֶשׁ הַוָּא.

**Moshe shepherded the flocks of his father-in-law Yisro, the priest of Midyan; he guided the sheep far into the wilderness, and he arrived at the Mountain of G-d, toward Chorev. An angel of Hashem appeared to him in a flame of fire from within the thorn bush. He saw and behold!—the bush was burning in the fire, but the bush was not consumed. Moshe thought, “Let me turn aside now and see this great sight—why will the bush not be burned?” Hashem saw that he turned aside to see; and G-d called out to him from amid the bush and said, “Moshe, Moshe,” and he replied, “Here I am!” He said, “Do not come closer to this spot, take your shoes off of your feet, for the place upon which you stand is holy ground.”**

### The Revelation of Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropoli

We will begin to shed some light on the matter by presenting a fascinating teaching brought down in the sefer Marganita D'Rav (Vayechi), authored by the brilliant Rabbi Baruch Te'omim, in the name of the great Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropoli, ztz"l. He addresses the teaching of Chazal in the Gemara (Pesachim 56b):

בַּיקַשׁ יַעֲקֹב לְגַלְוֹת לְבָנָיו קַץ הַיּוֹם וְנִסְתַּלְקָה מִמְּנוּ שְׁכִינָה, אָמַר  
שְׁמָא חָס וְשַׁלּוּם יִשׁ בְּמִתְתִּי פְּסָול כְּאַבְרָהָם שִׁיצָא מִמְּנוּ יִשְׁמָעוּאָל וְאַבִּי,  
יִצְחָק שִׁיצָא מִמְּנוּ עֲשֹׂו. אָמְרוּ לוּ בְנֵי שְׁמֹעַ יִשְׁרָאֵל הָאֱלֹקִינוּ הָאֶחָד,  
אָמְרוּ כַּשְׁ שָׁאַן בְּלֶבֶךְ אֶלָּא אֶחָד כִּי אַין בְּלֶבֶנָו אֶלָּא אֶחָד, בָּאוֹתָה שְׁעָה  
פָּתַח יַעֲקֹב אָבִינוּ וְאָמַר בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכֹותָו לְעוֹלָם וְעַד.”

Yaakov wanted to reveal to his sons the end of days (when the final geulah would be), but the Shechinah abandoned him (he lost his power of nevuah). He said, “Perhaps this has happened because, chas v'shalom, one of my offspring is unfit, as was the case with Avraham, from whom Yishmael emerged, and like my father Yitzchak, from whom Eisav emerged.” They responded to him, “Hear, O Yisrael, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One.” They declared, “Just as there is only One in your heart, so too, there is only One in our hearts.” At that moment, Yaakov Avinu said, “Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever.”

To explain the matter, the great Rabbi Shimshon focuses on the reason that Yisrael were exiled to

Mitzrayim for 210 years. He notes that ten were involved in the sale of Yosef—nine shevatim plus the Shechinah. They needed a quorum of ten to impose a “cheirem”—banishing anyone who informed their father Yaakov of what they had done. The act of “mechiras Yosef” created a blemish in the name **אהיה**, whose numerical value is twenty-one. Since ten were involved in the act, the galus in Mitzrayim had to provide atonement for ten times **אהיה**—accounting for the 210 years Bnei Yisrael were in exile there.

With this in mind, Rabbi Shimshon interprets the underlying, cryptic implication of the narrative related to the phenomenon of the “burning bush” (ibid. 4): **וירא ה' כי סר לראות**—**Hashem saw that he turned aside to see.** Moshe Rabeinu turned aside—**ס"ר**—because he was of the opinion that the brothers had blemished the blessed name **Havaya** when they sold Yosef; its numerical value is 26. If so, the galus in Mitzrayim would need to be ten times 26 years to accomplish the necessary atonement—the gematria of the word **ס"ר** (260).

This then is the interpretation of the passuk: **וירא ה' כי סר לראות**—HKB”H saw that Moshe was of the opinion that Yisrael needed to be in galus in Mitzrayim **ס"ר** (260) years. That being the case, they had not yet completed their required galus, since it had only been 210 years. This elicited the remark from HKB”H (ibid. 5): **אל תקרב הלוּם**—**do not come closer to this spot.** In other words, do not think that they blemished the name **Havaya**; that is impossible. They only blemished the name **אהיה**. Hence, they only need to be in exile in Mitzrayim 210 years.

### Yaakov Avinu Attempted to Reveal to His Sons the End of Galus Mitzrayim

Now, Yaakov Avinu was aware that they only blemished the name **אהיה**; he was not aware, however, that they had the Shechinah join them. Thus, he thought

that there were only nine participants involved in the sale of Yosef. As we know, Binyamin and Reuven were not there with the other shevatim at the time of the sale. So, he thought that they only had to atone for nine times **אהיה**, which would amount to 189 years of galus in Mitzrayim. In other words, they would be set free in the year **ק' צ'** (190). This is what the Gemara meant by the statement: **ביקש יעקב לגלוות לבניו ק' הימין**—Yaakov tried to inform his sons that they would exit Mitzrayim in the 190<sup>th</sup> year—the year equal to **צ'**. Then, the Gemara explains that he was unable to do so, because: **וונסתלקה ממנו שכינה**—Yaakov was unaware that the Shechinah was involved, because the shevatim needed a quorum of ten for the “cheirem.”

Hence, when Yaakov perceived that they would not exit the galus of Mitzrayim in the 190<sup>th</sup> year, he suspected that they had sinned with something else, as well. So, in a state of anguish, he inquired: **Perhaps this has happened because, chas v'shalom, one of my offspring is unfit, as was the case with Avraham, from whom Yishmael emerged, and like my father Yitzchak, from whom Eisav emerged.** In other words, perhaps you are guilty of an additional sin besides “mechiras Yosef,” and that is why the galus in Mitzrayim will extend beyond 189 years.

To which they reassured their father: **“Hear, O Yisrael, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One.”** They declared, **“Just as there is only One in your heart, so too, there is only One in our hearts.”** With this declaration, the shevatim informed Yaakov that due to their sincere, unquestioning emunah in the oneness of Hashem, they had the Shechinah join them, so to speak, since nothing can be accomplished without Him. Thus, they kept the matter hidden from Yaakov but required an additional 21 years of galus to achieve the necessary tikun—i.e., ten times **אהיה**. This is the gist of the insight of the holy Rabbi Shimshon, ztz”l.

## The Generation of the Mabul Caused the Galus of the Torah

Since it is the nature of Torah to be elucidated from seventy different perspectives, I would like to present to our royal audience a novel interpretation and remez in the passuk: "זַיְרָא ה' כִּי סַר לְדָאֹת". We will introduce two precious teachings from the impeccable writings of the esteemed Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl, zy"a, which are essential to understanding the matter of galus Mitzrayim. We will begin by paraphrasing what he wrote in Ma'or Einayim (Shemos):

**The deeper significance of galus Mitzrayim is that the "da'as" was in galus—awareness of the Creator, blessed is He, and knowledge of His Torah were nonexistent. In the generation of the mabul, they said (Iyov 21, 15): "Who is Shakai that we should serve Him?" Although the Torah had not yet been given prior to the mabul; nevertheless, its influence was present in the world, since the Almighty created the world with the Torah. In the generation of the mabul, the people were very bad and corrupt; they detached themselves from the Torah of the Creator. Since they were detached from their source, the world was destroyed by the mabul.**

**So, where did the Torah end up? It fell into the klipah of Mitzrayim. Hence, "da'as" was in exile; for, as we know, the Torah is associated with "da'as." Thus, Yisrael were compelled to go down to Mitzrayim to retrieve the Torah that had fallen there. See the Zohar hakadosh (Bereishis 27a); it associates the types of difficult labor that Bnei Yisrael were subjected to in Mitzrayim with elements of Torah-study and exegesis.**

**They ultimately succeeded in elevating the letters of the Torah from the depths of the klipah of Mitzrayim. Then, three months after the exodus, they were able to receive the Torah. This**

**is alluded to when HKB" H said (Shemos 10, 1): "בָּא פַּרְעָה כִּי אַנְּיִ הַכְּבָדָתִי אֶת לְבָבוֹ וְאֶת לְבַבְּ עֲבָדָיו לְמַעַן שִׁתְּיִ אַוְתּוֹתִי אֱלֹהָ בְּקָרְבָּו".** (Translation of this passuk: "Come to Pharaoh, because I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, so that I can put these signs of Mine in his midst.") **HKB" H instructed Moshe to go to Pharaoh on account of the letters of the Torah (אַוְתּוֹתִי) that He had placed within him; the time to retrieve them had arrived.**

This concurs with the assertion of the Arizal in Sha'ar HaPesukim (Shemos) that the holy neshamos that transgressed in the generations of the mabul and the dispersion reincarnated into the neshamos in Mitzrayim and suffered the torture and backbreaking labor to cleanse them of their adherent tumah. This explains very nicely the contention of the Ma'or Einayim. Since the letters of the Torah fell into galus in Mitzrayim on account of the sins of the generation of the mabul, it was their responsibility to reincarnate there and retrieve those letters from that galus.

## Only the Letter "Aleph" Was Not in Galus in Mitzrayim

Here is the second teaching of the Ma'or Einayim (Bo), I wish to introduce. All the letters of the aleph-Beis were in galus in Mitzrayim with the exception of the letter "aleph." Since it represents HKB" H—referred to as **Alupho shel Olam** (Master or Chief of the World)—its illumination cannot be contained by earthly, mundane matters. He writes: **It is for this reason that the Torah begins with the letter "beis"—the second letter of the aleph-Beis—and not with its first letter, the letter "aleph."** Otherwise, due to the brilliance and intensity of the letter "aleph," the world would not have been able to endure for even an hour. Nevertheless, the letter "aleph" appears in the Torah immediately afterwards in a so-called diminished capacity. **This is the implication of the words "בָּא אֶל פַּרְעָה".** By

beginning the Torah with the letter “beit,” it was possible for the “aleph” to be in the Torah.

In other words, the letter “aleph” can only be perceived by means of the letter “beit,” as indicated by the statement: “**בָּא אֶל פְּרֻעָה**”. And since all the other letters were in galus in Mitzrayim, the letter “aleph” could not be perceived—i.e., the Alupho shel Olam—even though it was not in galus in Mitzrayim.

Based on what we have learned, we can now propose a novel explanation for why Yisrael were exiled in Mitzrayim for specifically **נִנְצָה** (210) years. In the sacred sefer Bris Kehunas Olam, the author asserts that each of the twenty-two letters of the Torah is comprised of ten, because all matters of kedushah require a minimum of ten. As such, ten times twenty-two (letters) totals 220. As explained, however, the letter “aleph” alluding to the Alupho shel Olam was not in galus in Mitzrayim. Thus, only ten times twenty-one (210) letters had to be retrieved from the klipah of Mitzrayim. Accordingly, the length of the galus in Mitzrayim was precisely **נִנְצָה** (210) years—no more, no less.

Let’s add one more point that we are taught in our sacred sefarim. The shape and constituents of the letter ‘א’ allude to the holy name **Havaya**. How so? The letter ‘א’ is composed of the three letters ‘י’, ‘ו’, ‘ו’; there is a “yud” at its upper right side, a “yud” at its lower left side, and a “vav” running diagonally between them. The gematria of those three letters is 26—the gematria of the holy name **Havaya**. The source for this teaching is found in the Tikunei Zohar (Introduction 15b). Thus, the letter “aleph” symbolizes the Alupho shel Olam.

### The Geulah of the Other 21 Letters Was Accomplished by the “Aleph” of “**אָנוּכִי**”

Based on what we have discussed, we can better comprehend a passage in the Midrash (B.R. 1, 10). After teaching that HKB”H created the world with the letter “beis” of **בְּרָאשִׁית**, it continues:

For 26 generations, the “aleph” complained before the throne of HKB”H. She said to Him: “Master of the Universe, I am the first of the letters, and You did not create the world with me!” HKB”H said to her: “The world and everything in it were only created in the merit of Torah, as it states (Mishlei 3, 19): ‘Hashem established the earth with wisdom etc.’ Tomorrow, I will come to give Torah at Sinai, and I will not open except with you, as it states (Shemos 20, 2): (I am) **אָנוּכִי** Hashem your G-d.”

This poses an obvious difficulty. On the one hand, if HKB”H wanted to begin the Aseres HaDibros at Matan Torah with the letter “aleph” of “**אָנוּכִי**”, why didn’t He create the world with the letter “aleph”? After all, it is the first and foremost letter of the aleph-Beis! On the other hand, if HKB”H did not want to create the world with the letter “aleph,” why did He choose to begin the Aseres HaDibros with it?

Based on what we have discussed, we can reconcile our sages’ profound words very nicely. HKB”H created the world with the “beis” of “**בְּרָאשִׁית**” rather than with the letter “aleph,” because the “aleph” symbolized the Alupho shel Olam, and as such its light is too brilliant and intense for matters of this world. So, it had to be attenuated first by the letter “beis”; after that, it could appear in the Torah. Therefore, when a person sins, chas v’chalilah, he only damages the branches that stem from the letter “aleph”—namely, the twenty-one letters that follow the letter “aleph.” Thus, a person can make amends and rectify that damage by evoking the brilliant, intense light of the letter “aleph”—the root of all the letters.

Accordingly, since the galus in Mitzrayim was precipitated by the fact that the letters of the Torah were forced into galus on account of the transgressions of the generation of the mabul; to facilitate the exodus from Mitzrayim, the Alupho shel Olam, HKB”H, invoked the power of the letter “aleph”—the root of

all the letters. Since it remained unblemished and did not descend into the galus of Mitzrayim, it was able to retrieve all of its branches from that galus.

Now, we are taught that the Aseres HaDibros encompass all of the Torah. They contain **כ"ה ר' (620)** letters corresponding to the **taryag (613)** biblically ordained mitzvos plus the seven rabbinically ordained mitzvos. Therefore, HKB" H began the Aseres HaDibros, which mentions "yetzias Mitzrayim," with the letter "**aleph**": **אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר הוציאתיך מארץ מצרים**. Thus, He alluded to the fact that the geulah of all the letters of the Torah and the geulah of Yisrael from Mitzrayim were accomplished by means of the untainted, preeminent letter "**aleph**."

This explains beautifully the response of HKB" H to the letter "**aleph**," when she complained that the world was not created with her. HKB" H consoled her by informing her that she would receive her due recognition and status when He would begin the Aseres HaDibros with the words: "**אנכי ה' אלקיך**". In other words, it was specifically because HKB" H did not create the world with the letter "**aleph**"—on account of its illumination and exceptional brilliance—that its light was available to retrieve them from galus. It did not accompany them on their descent into galus; hence, HKB" H began the Aseres HaDibros with the letter "**aleph**" revealing its brilliant, exceptional light to facilitate their geulah.

### **The Aleph Is Associated with the Name Havaya whereas the Other 21 Letters Are Associated with the Name אה"ה**

We will now proceed to reveal a remez inherent in the passuk: **"זירא ה' כי סר לראות"**. It is apparent from what we have discussed that the twenty-two letters of the Torah are divided into two categories. Alone in the first category is the letter "**aleph**," whose name alludes to HKB" H as **Alupho shel Olam**. Furthermore, we have pointed out that this letter is formed by three

constituent letters—two "**yud**"s and a "**vav**"—whose sum equals the gematria of the holy name **Havaya**. As we have learned, due to its exceedingly brilliant light, it cannot be tarnished—in keeping with the passuk (Iyov 35, 6): **"אם חטאת מה תפעל בו ורבו פשעים מה תעשה לו"**—**if you commit a sin, how do you affect Him? And if your sins are many, what are you doing to Him?** The second category contains the other twenty-one letters, which are vulnerable and can be tarnished by the iniquities of a generation, **chas v'shalom**.

Accordingly, we can propose that these two categories are alluded to by the two names **Havaya** and **אה"ה**. We have already explained the association of the letter "**aleph**" with the name **Havaya** and its numerical value of twenty-six. Correspondingly, the numerical value of the name **אה"ה** is twenty-one; thus, it represents the twenty-one letters of the Torah that are vulnerable. We have noted that the galus of Mitzrayim lasted 210 years on account of the iniquities of the generation of the mabul that damaged those twenty-one letters and their respective ten components ( $21 \times 10 = 210$ ).

This illuminates for us the remez inherent in the passuk: **"זירא ה' כי סר לראות"**. As we learned from the great Rabbi Shimshon, ztz"l, Moshe Rabeinu thought that Yisrael had to atone for tarnishing ten times the name **Havaya**. If so, they needed to remain in galus Mitzrayim for a period of 260 years—the gematria of the word **ס"ר**. In other words, Moshe Rabeinu mistakenly thought that the generation of the mabul had corrupted all twenty-two letters including the letter "**aleph**" (whose three constituent letters have a sum of twenty-six, the gematria of the name Havaya). Therefore, he believed that they needed to remain in galus for longer than 210 years—for an additional fifty years.

To set him straight, HKB" H responded: **"אל תקרב"**—"do not think that they damaged the letter "**aleph**," the root of all the letters of the Torah. Due to

its exceedingly brilliant light, it cannot be tarnished. Hence, only the branches of the “aleph,” the other 21 letters alluded to by the name אֲהַיָּה (21) were tarnished. Since they each contain ten components, their product equals 210; thus, they have already been in exile for 210 years and have completed the necessary tikun.

We will conclude with a marvelous interpretation of the following passuk from this week's parsha (Shemos 3, 13) זֶה אָמָר מֹשֶׁה אֱלֹהִים הָנָה אָנֹכִי בָּא אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֹמֶרֶתִי: לְהַמְּלָקִי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלֹחַנִּי אֲלֵיכֶם, וְאֹמְרוּ לֵי מָה שָׁמַוְתִּי מֵה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים. Moshe said to G-d, “Behold, when I come to Bnei Yisrael and say to them, ‘The G-d of your forefathers

has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’—what shall I say to them?” Moshe argued that if he were to inform the people that G-d's name is Havaya, which is symbolized by the letter “aleph,” they will respond that they have not yet fulfilled its concomitant tikun of 260 years. To which HKB”H replied: —כִּי תֹאמֶר לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲהַיָּה שְׁלֹחַנִּי אֲלֵיכֶם—so shall you say to Bnei Yisrael, “אֲהַיָּה has sent me to you.” HKB”H informed Moshe that the blemish requiring tikun did not affect the letter “aleph”; it only affected the other 21 letters—the gematria of the name אֲהַיָּה. To rectify them with their respective ten components only required a galus of 210 years, which Bnei Yisrael had already completed.



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