

The Holy Baal Shem Tov's Amazing Revelation From the Day of One's Birth to the Day of One's Passing Every Person Makes All Forty-Two Journeys Made by Yisrael in the Midbar

On the upcoming Shabbas kodesh, we will read from the Torah the double portion of Matos-Masei. This week, we would like to focus, b'ezras Hashem, on parshas Masei. Every year, without exception, we read parshas Masei on the middle Shabbas of the three weeks of "bein hametzarim."

The Gemara (Megillah 31b) teaches us that Ezra HaSofer methodically arranged the Torah readings for the entire year. It stands to reason, therefore, that the institution to read parshas Masei on the second Shabbas of "bein hametzarim" serves a distinct purpose. In this parsha, the Torah enumerates the forty-two journeys that Yisrael travelled in the midbar. This teaches us that there is an intimate connection between the journeys travelled by Yisrael in the midbar and the difficult journeys we travel during all of the various exiles.

Twenty-one Days and Twenty-one Nights Corresponding to Forty-two Journeys

Amazingly, the Maggid of Kozhnitz, zy" a, in Avodas Yisrael, states that the twenty-one days and twenty-one nights of the three weeks of "bein hametzarim" correspond to the forty-two journeys. Here is what he writes:

"והנה פרשה הזאת נקראת תמיד בין המצרים, שהם נחשבים כ"א יום כמו שפירש רש"י, וכ"א יום וכ"א לילות הם מ"ב, כנגד מ"ב מסעות שצריך לעבור בין המצרים בכמה מסעות לתקן הכל ולעבוד את ה', הגם שהזמן גרמא להיות עצב ונאנח על חורבן בית ה', עם כל זאת יש לחזק את עצמו ולטהר לבבו ולעבוד ה' בתורה ותפלה בשמחה, כפרט בשעת אמירת שירות ותשבחות."

This parsha is always read "bein hametzarim"—which are considered to be twenty-one days, as Rashi explains. Twenty-one days and twenty-one nights adds up to forty-two—corresponding to the forty-two journeys that one must make "bein hametzarim," to rectify everything and serve Hashem. Although it is a time of sadness, during which we bemoan the churban of Hashem's house, nevertheless one must encourage oneself and purify one's heart to

serve Hashem through Torah and tefilah with happiness—especially while reciting songs and praises.

The Rashi he refers to concerns the words of the prophet Yirmiyahu (1, 11): **ויהי דבר ה' אלי לאמר, מה אתה רואה ירמיהו, ואומר מקל: "שקד אני רואה"—the word of Hashem then came to me, saying, "What do you see Yirmiyahu?" And I said, "I see a staff made of almond wood."** Rashi comments in the name of a Midrash Aggadah that an almond grows and completes its development during a twenty-one day period—corresponding to the number of days between the seventeenth of Tamuz, on which the city was breached and divided, and the ninth of Av, on which the House was burnt down. In Sha'ar HaKavanos, the Arizal also states that the period of "bein hametzarim" consists of twenty-one days.

It seems that Tishah B'Av is not included in this count of twenty-one days, because it is referred to as a "moed"—a festival. It states in the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 552, 12) that tachanun is not recited on erev Tishah B'Av, because it is called a "moed." Additionally, it states (ibid. 559, 4) that tachanun is not recited on Tishah B'Av itself, because it is referred to as a "moed." We find this to be so in the following passuk (Eichah 1, 15): **קרא עלי: מועד**—related to Tishah B'Av.

In Imrei Pinchas (Tishah B'Av 388), the great Rabbi Pinchas of Koritz, zy" a, explains why Tishah B'Av is referred to as a "moed" based on the statement in the Yerushalmi (Berachos 2, 4) that Tishah B'Av is the birthday of Mashiach ben David. Additionally, our holy sources explain, based on the Midrash (Eichah 4, 14), that in the process of the churban of the Beis HaMikdash, HKB"H took out His wrath on the wood and stones of the physical structure, sparing Yisrael from extermination.

Therefore, the period of "bein hametzarim" is considered to be only twenty-one days, since the "moed" of Tishah B'Av is not included in the calculation. So, now, it is incumbent upon us to explore the association between the forty-two journeys Yisrael travelled in the Midbar and the twenty-one days and twenty-one nights of "bein hametzarim"—which also constitute an entity of

forty-two. As we learned above from the Avodas Yisrael: **“כנגד”** --מ”ב מסעות שצריך לעבור בין המצרים בכמה מסעות לתקן הכל ולעבוד את ה’ --**corresponding to the forty-two journeys that one must make “bein hametzarim,”** to rectify everything and serve Hashem.

Forty-two Journeys Corresponding to the Name of Forty-two in “אנא בכח”

Let us begin our path to enlightenment by examining the passuk at the beginning of the parsha (Bamidbar 33, 1): **“אלה”** מסעי בני ישראל אשר יצאו מארץ מצרים לצבאותם ביד משה ואהרן, ויכתוב משה --**these are the journeys of Bnei Yisrael, who departed the land of Mitzrayim according to their legions, under the hand of Moshe and Aharon. Moshe wrote their goings forth according to their journeys at the bidding of Hashem, and these were their journeys according to their goings forth.** The Ohr HaChaim hakadosh notes that at first the passuk states: **“מוצאייהם למסעיהם”** --**their goings forth according to their journeys**—whereas it concludes: **“מסעיהם למוצאייהם”** --**their journeys according to their goings forth**—reversing the order.

At this point, it is worthwhile introducing the following from the Magen Avraham (O.C. 428, 8): The Tzror HaMor writes that we should not stop in the middle of the reading of the forty-two journeys listed in parshas Masei; for they correspond to the “name of forty-two”—“shem mem-beis.” The source for this association is found in the Arizal’s Likutei Torah: **“הנה נזכר בכאן מ”ב מסעות, והוא שישאל יצאו ממצרים”** --**forty-two journeys are mentioned here, indicating that Yisrael left Mitzrayim by means of the “shem mem-beis.”**

They are referring to the holy name of forty-two letters, which we mention on a daily basis in the Shacharit service, during the korbanot, in the tefilah of **“אנא בכח”**. This entire prayer is founded on forty-two letters, divided into seven separate names—each containing six letters. These names are: **אבגיתץ, קרע-שטן, נגד-יכש, בט-ר-צת, ג, חק-ב, טנע, יג-ל-פז, ק, שק-ו-צית** The Tanna Rabbi Nechuniah ben HaKanh formulated a tefilah based on these names. Each word in the tefilah corresponds to one letter of one of these names, as follows:

- אנא בכח גדולת ימינך תתיר צרורה: [אבג-יתץ]
 - קבל רינת עמך שגבנו טהרנו נורא: [קרע-שטן]
 - נא גבור דורשי יהודך כבבת שמרם: [נגד-יכש]
 - ברכם, טהרם, רחמם, צדקתך תמיד גמלם: [בט-ר-צתג]
 - חסין קדוש ברוב טובך נהל עדתך: [חק-ב-טנע]
 - יחיד גאה לעמך פנה זוכרי קדשתך: [יג-ל-פזק]
 - שועתנו קבל ושמע צעקתנו יודע תעלומות: [שק-ו-צית]
- ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד:

אנא רעמסס	בכח סוכות	גדולת איתם	ימינך פי החירות	תתיר מרה	צרורה אילם
קבל ים סוף	רנת מדבר סין	עמך דפקה	שגבנו אלוש	טהרנו רפידים	נורא מדבר סיני
נא קברות התאוה	גבור חצרות	דורשי רתמה	יהודך רמון פרץ	כבבת לבנה	שמרם רסה
ברכם קהלתה	טהרם הר שפר	רחמי חרדה	צדקתך מקהלות	תמיד תחת	גמלם תרח
חסין מתקה	קדוש חשמונה	ברוב מוסרות	טובך בני יעקן	נהל הר הגדגד	עדתך יטבתה
יחיד עברונה	גאה עציון גבר	לעמך קדש	פנה הר ההר	זוכרי צלמונה	קדשתך פונן
שועתנו אובות	קבל עיי העברים	ושמע דיבון גד	צעקתנו עלמון דבלתימה	יודע הרי העברים	תעלומות ערבות מואב

We can now understand the rationale for the Magen Avraham’s statement in the name of the Tzror HaMor—that it is improper to stop in the middle of the reading of the forty-two journeys. For, we do not want to disrupt the “shem mem-beis” corresponding to these journeys. Hence, we should ask: What is the connection between the “shem mem-beis” and the forty-two journeys travelled in the midbar? Furthermore, what is the significance of these names that we recite every day in **“אנא בכח”**?

Every Jew in the Course of His Life Completes These Forty-two Journeys

Let us proceed by introducing an illuminating principle presented by the Degel Machaneh Efraim in the name of his elder, the esteemed Baal Shem Tov, zy”a. He teaches us that every Jew in the course of his lifetime, from the day of his birth until the day of his death, passes through the desolate wilderness of “olam hazeh”—this world. He completes the very same forty-two journeys that Yisrael travelled in the midbar. Ultimately, he merits entering the land of the living in the world of the neshamos.

He writes that the day a person is born and exits his mother’s womb is analogous to the exodus from Mitzrayim. Then a person travels one journey after another until he reaches the upper

“eretz hachaim.” Certainly, these journeys were recorded in the Torah to guide a Jew along the proper path—so that he will know which path to choose as he moves from journey to journey throughout his life.

Each and every journey is sacred and exalted; nevertheless, the nature of a journey and location can change due to people’s actions. Unfortunately, a place of kedushah can be transformed into the exact opposite. Yet, if people journey and arrive at these destinations without altering them with their actions, each destination will surely illuminate their lives with its concealed light.

This is the significance of the opening pesukim of our parsha. Moshe recorded these journeys in the Torah as they were intended from above. They are designed to guide a person along the path that Hashem would have him choose.

Now, let us combine these two essential principles. Firstly, we learned from the Baal Shem Tov hakadosh that every person experiences all forty-two journeys during his lifetime. Secondly, we learned from the Arizal and other kabbalists that the forty-two journeys correspond to the name containing forty-two letters. Combining these two ideas, we can conclude that every one of us—from the day of our birth until the day of our passing, when a person returns his neshamah to the Creator—lives and breathes the forty-two letters of “אנא בכח”—which represent the forty-two journeys comprising a person’s entire life.

The Forces of Kedushah Refined the Nitzotzos in the Midbar

It appears that we can expand on this notion based on the commentary of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh. He focuses on the words: “אלה מסעי בני ישראל”—these are the journeys of Bnei Yisrael. Why does the passuk emphasize their journeys--“מסעי”—without mentioning their encampments? He answers that the purpose of the journeys in the Midbar was to elevate the “nitzotzei kedushah.” This purpose was fulfilled primarily as they journeyed from place to place together with the nitzotzei kedushah in hand that they clarified in each location.

He emphasizes that Yisrael journeyed through the midbar, because that is the domain of the “samech-mem.” It established its residence in the desolate wilderness inhabited by (Devarim 8, 15): נחש שרף ועקרב—snake, fiery serpent and scorpion. Hashem’s holy people traversed that wilderness to extract the nitzotzei kedushah the forces of tumah had captured and to refine them. As a consequence, Yisrael camped in one location

for an entire year, while they only remained in another location for a mere twelve hours. Their sojourn in each location was determined by the time required to clarify the Nitzotzos present in that location.

The Ohr HaChaim adds an essential detail to this explanation. This refinement process required the participation of the total complement of kedushah—the holy Shechinah, the congregation of Yisrael and the Torah, coordinated by Moshe Rabeinu. Such an incredible coalition of the elements of kedushah never existed before—since the time of creation until Yisrael left Mitzrayim and received the Torah. By means of this joining together of the forces of kedushah, they successfully extracted the nitzotzei kedushah from the forces of tumah in the desolate wilderness.

The Generation of the Midbar Prepared the Way for Future Generations

Now, let us add an important principle from the Sefas Emes (Bamidbar 5655). He states that it was the generation of the midbar’s task to prepare the way for all future generations. Here is what he writes:

“והנה דור המדבר הוציאו מכח אל הפועל, והיו הכנה לכל דורות בני ישראל, ויצאו ללמד על הכלל כולו, וזהו שכתוב שאו את ראש כל עדת בני ישראל, שהם היו ראש לכל עדת בני ישראל וכל הדורות נמשכו אחריהם, ועל זה נאמר (קהלת ז-ח) טוב אחרית דבר מראשיתו.” וכן כתב עוד (פרשת פנחס שנת תרנ”ב): “והנה דור המדבר היו הכנה לתקן כל הקומה לכל הדורות, וניתן להם ברית הלשון בקבלת התורה בהר סיני במדבר.”

The generation of the midbar represented the epitome of Bnei Yisrael throughout the generations. It was their job to pave the way for all future generations and provide the means for tikun. At Har Sinai, in the midbar, they received the Torah and were given “brit halashon.”

This sheds some light for us on the teaching of the holy Baal Shem Tov, zy”a. The generation of the midbar experienced forty-two journeys in the midbar in order to subjugate all the forces of tumah and clarify all the nitzotzei kedushah by means of the “shem mem-beis.” This name elevates all of the nitzotzei kedushah back to their heavenly origins. In similar fashion, every Jew must make these forty-two journeys during his lifetime—in order to subdue all of the forces opposing his service of Hashem. In the process, he effectively refines the nitzotzei kedushah by means of the “shem mem-beis.” The generation of the midbar, however, established the precedent; their actions paved the way for all future generations to follow.

This illuminates for us the meaning of the passuk: **“אלה” מסעי בני ישראל אשר יצאו מארץ מצרים לצבאותם ביד משה ואהרן, ויכתוב משה את מוצאייהם למסעיהם על פי ה’—these are the journeys of Bnei Yisrael, who departed the land of Mitzrayim according to their legions, under the hand of Moshe and Aharon. Moshe wrote their goings forth according to their journeys at the bidding of Hashem.** In other words, they departed Mitzrayim in order to complete the forty-two journeys, which were: **“their goings forth according to their journeys”**—they were guided by Hashem, according to the name of forty-two letters, to clarify the nitzotzei kedushah lost in the terrible wilderness.

Then the passuk concludes with a reference to the generations to come: **“ואלה מסעיהם למוצאייהם”-- and these were their journeys according to their goings forth.** This conveys the message that these same forty-two journeys travelled by Yisrael in the midbar, must be travelled by all of their future generations. Thus, the passuk emphasizes: **“ואלה מסעיהם”**—in other words, these forty-two journeys travelled by the generation of the midbar, were, in effect, a preparation: **“למוצאייהם”**—for all of the future generations that would come forth from them. This preparation would enable every future Jew to successfully pass through the midbar that is **“olam hazeh”**—with all of its hardships and obstacles. The generation of the midbar already paved the way for all of us. [Note that the numerical value of the word **ואלה** equals forty-two.]

Accordingly, we can appreciate the sacred words of the Avodas Yisrael. The twenty-one days and twenty-one nights of the period of **“bein hametzarim”** correspond to the forty-two journeys travelled by Yisrael in the midbar. Their main purpose was to encourage us and strengthen our resolve. For, we now know that every journey we take during this bitter galut is in some form a repetition of one of the forty-two journeys travelled by Yisrael in the midbar. The knowledge that they already paved the way for us allows us to endure and successfully withstand all of the trials and tribulations of galut. Upon completing all forty-two journeys in galut, we will achieve the complete tikun and will thus merit the complete geulah shortly.

The Name of “Mem-beis” of “אנא בכח” Elevates All of the Mitzvos

So, we now know that HKB”H sent each and every one of us down from the world of the neshamos to the desolate wilderness of this world to endure all forty-two journeys corresponding to the **“shem mem-beis.”** Surely, every one of us desires, according to the best of our limited abilities, to comprehend the significance of this name of forty-two letters, upon which the tefilah of **אנא**

is founded--a tefilah our blessed sages instituted to be recited daily in the morning service.

Hence, with the help of Hashem, Who teaches His people Yisrael Torah, we will endeavor to explain the matter in a manner that is beneficial to all. We will examine the immaculate teachings of our holy Rabbis, with the Arizal first and foremost. The Midrash explains that HKB”H is named according to His actions. For example, here is how HKB”H responds to Moshe in the beginning of sefer Shemot (3, 13): **“ויאמר משה אל האלקים הנה אנכי בא אל בני ישראל ואמרתם להם אלקי אבותיכם שלחני אליכם ואמרו לי מה שמו מה אומר אליהם, ויאמר אלקים אל משה אהיה אשר אהיה”**—**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?” Hashem answered Moshe, “I Shall Be What I Shall Be.”** The Midrash addresses HKB”H’s response:

“ויאמר אלקים אל משה. אמר רבי אבא בר ממל, אמר ליה הקב”ה למשה, שמי אתה מבקש לידע, לפי מעשי אני נקרא, פעמים שאני נקרא באל שדי, בצבאות, באלקים, בה’. כשאני דן את הבריות אני נקרא אלקים, וכשאני עושה מלחמה ברשעים אני נקרא צבאות, וכשאני תולה על חטאיו של אדם אני נקרא אל שדי, וכשאני מרחם על עולמי אני נקרא ה’, שאין ה’ אלא מדת רחמים שנאמר (שמות לד-ו) ה’ אל רחום וחנון, הוי אהיה אשר אהיה, אני נקרא לפי מעשי.”

HKB”H tells Moshe that each particular name of G-d relates to a specific function. When He judges creation, He is referred to as **“Elokim”**; when He battles the wicked, He is referred to as **“Tzevakot”**; when He suspends judgment regarding a person’s transgressions, He is referred to as **“Kel Shakai”**; and when He shows His world mercy, He is known as Hashem. So, the answer **“I Shall Be What I Shall Be”** indicates that the name He is called depends on the particular divine action being displayed.

Based on this notion, the kabbalists teach us that the name containing forty-two letters is designed to elevate all matters of kedushah a person performs in this world to its heavenly source—until it reaches HKB”H. This applies to a person’s Torah study, tefilot, fulfillment of mitzvos, and a Jew’s clarification of nitzotzei kedushah. This name is even at play when a person’s neshamah goes up to heaven every night when he goes to sleep. All of them ascend to present themselves before HKB”H by means of the **“shem mem-beis”**; its forty-two letters act like wings carrying our mitzvos and good deeds up to HKB”H.

As we saw, this name divides into seven shorter names—each containing six letters. It is important to realize that these shorter names correspond to the seven days of the week. **אב-ג-ית-ץ** corresponds to Sunday; **קר-ע-שט-ן** corresponds to Monday; **נג-ד-**

ש"כ corresponds to Tuesday; בט"ר-צת"ג corresponds to Wednesday; חק"ב-טנ"ע corresponds to Thursday; יג"ל-בז"ק corresponds to Friday; שק"ו-צי"ת corresponds to Shabbas kodesh.

In essence, each name is designed to elevate the Torah and mitzvos of its corresponding day. For example, the name אב"ג-י"ת elevates the Torah learned and the mitzvos performed on the first day of the week, Sunday—while the other six names assist in the process. Each name performs this same function on its corresponding day of the week. Finally, when Shabbas arrives, one should focus on the name שק"ו-צי"ת; for this is the main name acting to elevate our tefilot and mitzvos, with the assistance of the other names.

Six Letters Corresponding to the Six Wings of a Malach

Continuing on along this exalted path, let us proceed to explain why each of these seven names is composed of precisely six letters. We shall refer to the words of the prophet (Yeshayah 6, 1):

“בשנת מות המלך עוזייהו ואראה את אדני יושב על כסא רם ונשא ושוליו מלאים את ההיכל, שרפים עומדים ממעל לו שש כנפים שש כנפים לאחד, בשתים יכסה פניו, in the year of King Uzziyahu’s death, I saw the Lord sitting upon a high and lofty throne, and its legs filled the Heichal. Seraphim were standing above, at His service. Each one had six wings: with two it would cover its face, with two it would cover its legs, and with two it would fly.” Rashi comments: the Seraph uses two wings to cover its face so as not to gaze upon the Shechinah; it covers its legs with two wings for the sake of “tzniut”—modesty—so as not to expose its body in the presence of its Creator; with its remaining two wings it carries out Hashem’s will.

With this scheme and structure in mind, the divine Tanna Rashb”y discusses the “shem mem-beis” in the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 69 103b). He explains that the six letters which compose each of the seven names are divided up functionally just like the six wings of the Seraphim. For instance, let us examine the first

name, אב"ג-י"ת: the first two letters, א"ב, act to cover up the face of a person’s neshamah, which ascends nightly along with all of the mitzvos performed on that corresponding day; the function of the middle two letters, ג"י, is to cover up its feet—protecting them from the harmful effects and influence of the angels of destruction; finally, the last two letters, ת"ץ, serve as the wings—transporting the neshamah up to HKB”H.

Here is what Rabbi Chaim Vital writes in Sha’ar HaKavonos according to the Arizal concerning this subject:

“אנא בכח גדולת ימינך כו’, ויאמר כל שני תיבות ביחד, אנא בכח ויפסיק, גדולת ימינך ויפסיק, תתיר צרורה ויפסיק. ונראה לפי עניות דעתי שהטעם הוא לכוין אל מה שנתבאר אצלנו, כי כל שם מאלו הז’ שמות של מ”ב יש בו ששה אותיות, ומתחלקים לג’ בחינות, בשתים אותיות יכסה פניו, ובשתים יכסה רגליו, ובשתים יעופף, ולכן Each two words should be uttered together as separate units. One should say “אנא בכח” and pause; then “גדולת ימינך” and pause; then “תתיר צרורה” and pause. In my humble opinion, this is done so that we have in mind that each of these seven names comprising the “shem mem-beis” is composed of six letters; they are divided up into three functional units; two cover its face; two cover its legs; with two it flies. Therefore, each set of two should be uttered together.

In summary, every Jew should find strength as he completes the journeys that comprise his life. He should realize and believe wholeheartedly that every step he takes is guided by Hashem—aimed at accomplishing a particular tikun. As the passuk states (Tehillim 37, 23): **“מה’ מצעדי גבר כוננו ודרכו יחפץ” —Guided by Hashem, the footsteps of a righteous man are firm; his way shall He approve.** Let us always remember the valuable lesson learned from the holy Baal Shem Tov, zy”a. Each and every one of us—from the day of one’s birth to the day of one’s passing—experiences the forty-two journeys corresponding to the forty-two letters of **“אנא בכח”**. This will insure that we utter this magnificent tefilah with greater focus and intent—allowing us to complete our sacred task with ease and understanding. Amen.



Donated by Dr. Ralph and Limor Madeb
For the Refua shelema of Refael Gavriel Simcha Chaim Ben shulamit

To receive the mamarim by email: mamarim@shvileipinchas.com