

## The Chasam Sofer's Amazing Revelation

# Mitigating the Effect of the Letters מ"י of אלקי"ם -- Believing that Nature Is the Work of Hashem

In this week's parsha, parshas Bo, we read (Shemos 12, 40): "ומושב בני ישראל אשר ישבו במצרים שלשים שנה וארבע מאות שנה, ויהי מקץ שלשים שנה וארבע מאות שנה ויהי בעצם היום הזה יצאו כל צבאות ה' מארץ מצרים—the habitation of Bnei Yisrael during which they dwelled in Mitzrayim was four hundred and thirty years. It was at the end of four hundred and thirty years, and it was on this very day that all the legions of Hashem left the land of Mitzrayim. Rashi clarifies the statement regarding the four hundred and thirty year duration of their stay in Mitzrayim. In reality, they only dwelled in Mitzrayim for two hundred and ten years—starting from when Yaakov and his sons descended to Mitzrayim. Hence, the total of four hundred and thirty years includes periods when they were foreigners in other lands, as well:

"אשר ישבו במצרים, אחר שאר הישיבות שישבו גרים בארץ לא להם. שלשים שנה וארבע מאות שנה - בין הכל. משנולד יצחק עד עכשיו היו ארבע מאות שנה, משהיה לו זרע לאברהם נתקיים (בראשית טו-יג) כי גר יהיה זרעך, ושלשים שנה היו משנגזרה גזירת בין הבתרים עד שנולד יצחק... וכשתמנה ארבע מאות שנה משנולד יצחק, תמצא מביאתן למצרים עד יציאתן ר"י שנה, וזה אחד מן הדברים ששינו לתלמי המלך."

The decree that they would be foreigners for four hundred and thirty years was issued at the "Covenant between the Parts"—"Bris bein HaBesarim"; that was thirty years before Yitzchak was born. Four hundred years elapsed from the birth of Yitzchak until the events of the present passuk. Even the years the Avot dwelled in Chevron and Eretz Canaan are considered as foreign sojourns. This fact is reflected in the modification of the text the seventy sages made in their translations for King Ptolemy.

Rashi is referring to a teaching in the Gemara (Megillah 9a). When these sages were ordered to translate the Torah for King Ptolemy, they all consistently modified our passuk to read:

"The habitation of Bnei Yisrael during which they dwelled in Mitzrayim and in other lands was four hundred and thirty years." Notwithstanding, if in fact Yisrael sojourned in Mitzrayim only two hundred and ten years, why does the text state that they dwelled in Mitzrayim for four hundred and thirty years? This discrepancy is surprising and must be reconciled.

### "So that I shall place these signs of Mine in his midst"

Let us begin to shed some light on the matter by examining the first passuk in our parsha (Shemos 10, 1): "ויאמר ה' אל משה, בא אל פרעה כי אני הכבדתי את לבו ואת לב עבדיו למען שיתי אותותי אלה בקרבו, ולמען תספר באזני בנך ובן בנך את אשר התעללתי במצרים ואת אותותי אשר שמתי בהם וידעתם כי אני ה'—Hashem said to Moshe, "Come to Pharaoh, for I have made his heart and the heart of his servants stubborn so that I shall place these signs of Mine in his midst; and so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I have amused Myself with Mitzrayim and My signs that I placed among them—that you may know that I am Hashem." The Panim Yafos in parshas Vayechi (Bereishis 48, 8) provides us with an incredible insight gleaned from the teachings of the Arizal. He writes that the name אלקי"ם is composed of two parts. The first three letters emanate from the aspect of "chesed"; while the last two letters, מ"י, emanate from the aspect of "din."

Now, when Moshe and Aharon approached Pharaoh as HKB"H's agents, it states (Shemos 5, 2): "ויאמר פרעה מי ה' אשר אשמע בקולו לשלח את ישראל?"—Pharaoh said, "Who (מי) is Hashem that I should obey His word to send out Yisrael?" Note that he intentionally prefaces his objection with the two letters מ"י from the name אלקי"ם; he meant to intensify the force of "din" against Yisrael. HKB"H, however, mitigated the force of "din" by employing the three letters אל"ה from אלקי"ם, emanating from

"chesed." We see this in Hashem's statement to Moshe: **למען** "so that I shall place these signs of Mine in his midst"; the term **אל"ה** is employed with the specific intent of mitigating the force of "din" aimed at Yisrael.

Based on this concept, the Panim Yafos interprets the significance of the heavenly dialogue that takes place between Yaakov Avinu and Yosef HaTzaddik in parshas Vayechi (Bereishis 48, 8):

**וירא ישראל את בני יוסף ויאמר מי אלה, ויאמר יוסף אל אביו בני הם אשר נתן** Upon seeing Yosef's sons, Yisrael says: **"מי אלה"**—who are these children? Rashi explains that Yisrael wished to bless his grandchildren but was startled to find that the Shechinah had departed from him, because Yeravam and Achav were destined to descend from Ephraim and Yehu and his sons were destined to descend from Menashe. So, he remarks **"מי אלה"**—from where did these people who are unfit for blessings emerge?

Let us explain. When the name **אלה"ם** appears in its proper order, the aspect of "chesed" from the letters **אל"ה** prevail over the aspect of "din" from the letters **י"ם**; however, when these letters are reconfigured to form **מ"י אל"ה**, the opposite occurs; the "din" emanating from **מ"י** prevails over the "chesed" emanating from **אל"ה**. This, then, is Yaakov's query: **"מי אלה"**—why is the aspect of "din" hovering over these two children, indicating that they are unworthy of receiving my blessings? In response, Yosef answers: **"בני הם אשר נתן לי אלקים בזה"**—**they are my sons whom Elokim has given me with this**. Note that Yosef specifically employs the name **אלקי"ם**, where the letters **אל"ה** precede the letters **י"ם**. He is conveying to his father that with respect to Ephraim and Menashe, these letters are in their proper configuration; however, the transposition of these letters—indicating the aspect of "din"—applies solely to their descendants Yeravam, Achav, Yehu and his sons, who were all wicked. Hence, Yosef sought mercy for them; as a consequence, the Shechinah returned to Yaakov, enabling him to bless his grandchildren.

In this manner, the Panim Yafos interprets the encounter between Eisav and Yaakov in parshas Vayishlach (Bereishis 33, 5): **וישא את עיניו וירא את הנשים ואת הילדים ויאמר הילדים** "Eisav gazes upon Yaakov and his children, intending to awaken the force of "din" against them; he asks: **"מי אלה לך"**—what relation are these to you? He intentionally employs the name **אלקי"ם** in its reconfigured form **מ"י אל"ה**; his

intention was to invoke the force of "din" from the letters **מ"י** over the "chesed" from the letters **אל"ה**. This prompts Yaakov to respond: **"הילדים אשר חנן אלקי"ם את עבדך"**—**the children whom Elokim has graciously given your servant**. Yaakov wisely mentions the name **אלקי"ם** in its proper order—where the letters representing "chesed" precede and prevail over the letters representing "din."

### Explaining the Panim Yafos Based on the Writings of His Student the Chasam Sofer

Our great Rabbis teach us an important principle. It is essential to analyze every allusion in order to uncover the lofty lesson it conveys regarding the service of Hashem. The "remez" in this passuk definitely deserves further investigation: **למען** "ולמען תספר באזני בנך ובן בנך את" **so that I shall place these signs of Mine in his midst**. HKB"H requests: **ואשר התעללתי במצרים ואת אותותי אשר שמתי בם**—**and so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I have amused Myself with Mitzrayim and My signs that I placed among them**—alluding to the letters **אל"ה** that He placed in Mitzrayim. So, let us examine: (a) What does it mean that the letters **מ"י** from the name **אלקי"ם** represent "din," while the letters **אל"ה** represent "chesed"? (b) In practical terms, how do we utilize the letters **אל"ה** to mitigate the "din" caused by **מ"י**?

I came up with a wonderful way to clarify the explanation provided by the great author of the Panim Yafos in the name of the Arizal, based on the writings of his brilliant student, the Chasam Sofer, zy"a. To understand what he writes, let us introduce an idea presented by the Ramak in Pardes Rimmonim. He teaches us that the management of the universe by miracles and supernatural feats stems from the name **הוי"ה**; whereas the management based on the laws of nature stems from the name **אלקי"ם**. This is reflected by the fact that the numerical value of the word **הטבע**—the realm of nature—equals 86) **אלקי"ם**.

At the beginning of this week's parsha, the Chasam Sofer writes amazing things concerning this matter. He explains the significance of the fact that the name **אלקי"ם** is composed of two parts--**מ"י** and **אל"ה**. As mentioned, the universe governed by the laws of nature, **הטבע**, is related to the name **אלקי"ם**. Therefore, this name contains the element of **מ"י**—alluding to the fact that nature conceals the presence of G-d; so much so that the goyim and non-believers openly ask **מ"י**? **Who** is responsible for all of this? On the other hand, we, "maaminim bnei maaminim"—believers, the offspring of believers—respond with the letters

אל"ה. As the Chasam Sofer expresses it so nicely, we point with our fingers and proclaim: "אל"ה הם דרכי ה' ועלילותיו יתברך שמו"—these represent the work of Hashem, blessed is His name.

In this manner, the Chasam Sofer goes on to interpret the inherent heresy in Pharaoh's declaration (Shemos 5, 2): "מי" "Who (מי) is Hashem that I should obey His word to send out Yisrael?" You claim that I should heed the words of Havaya (Hashem), Who sustains all that exists in the universe. I say that your claims are false. In truth, He is best described by the term "מי"; His presence is concealed, and He does not govern us at all. Consequently, I do not recognize the authority of Havaya, for He is distant and removed from human existence. Precisely for this reason, HKB"H tells Moshe to go to Pharaoh and inundate him with plagues: "למען שיתי אותותי אל"ה בקרבך"—let it be known throughout the world that HKB"H is responsible for all of this--אל"ה. Thus, the klipah of Pharaoh, the heretic denying the works of Hashem will be subdued. This is the gist of the Chasam Sofer's explanation.

### Raise Your Eyes to the Heavens and See "אל"ה Created "מי"

We can now rejoice at having achieved a better understanding of his teacher's words. The Panim Yafos taught us based on his understanding of the teachings of the Arizal that the last two letters of the name "מי"—אלקי"ם—constitute "din"; whereas they are mitigated by the first three letters--אל"ה. For, we have pesukim which state explicitly (Tehillim 32, 10): "רבים מכאובים—many are the agonies of the wicked, while one who trusts in Hashem is surrounded by "chesed." Similarly, it states (ibid. 34, 11): "כפירים רשו ורעבו—young lions may want and hunger, but those who seek Hashem will not lack any good. In other words, those who deny the works of Hashem invoke the wrath of "din" upon themselves; whereas those who trust in Hashem lack for nothing.

Now, we have learned from the Chasam Sofer the significance of the two components of the name אלקי"ם. The letters "מי" allude to the great concealment contained within the natural order—causing people to investigate and ask the question "מי": Who is doing all of this? Therefore, those who choose to deny Hashem's involvement in the day-to-day management of the universe, such as the wicked Pharaoh, ask questions such as: "מי ה' אשר אשמע בקולו"—Who is Havaya that I should heed

his words? As a consequence, they incur upon themselves the "din" emanating from the two letters "מי", which is in fact what happened to Pharaoh and the Egyptians; HKB"H struck them with mighty plagues.

Nevertheless, it is Bnei Yisrael's sacred duty to publicize throughout the world, in no uncertain terms, the answer to the question "מי". We must make it known to all that אל"ה—everything we see and experience—is the doing of Havaya; He is responsible for all that exists and happens. Thus, we mitigate the "din" emanating from "מי". We see, therefore, that the three letters אל"ה serve as a conduit to mitigate the "din" associated with the name אלקי"ם, stemming from the letters "מי". They do so by uniting with the name Havaya that sustains all of existence.

This then is the meaning of the prophet's declaration (Yeshayah 40, 26): "שאו מרום עיניכם וראו מי ברא אלה, המוציא במספר צבאם—raise your eyes on high and see Who created these things! He brings forth their legions by number; He calls to each of them by name. It is the obligation of every Jew to provide the world with the clear and definitive answer to the question: "Who created these (אל"ה)?" By publicizing the fact that Hashem created everything, we mitigate the "din" emanating from the letters "מי" by means of the letters אל"ה.

"מי חכם וישמר אלה ויתבוננו חסדי ה'"

Applying this concept, we can interpret the words of David HaMelech, Yisrael's sweet psalmist (Tehillim 107, 43): "מי חכם—(מי) is wise let him note these things (אל"ה), and they will comprehend the kindness of Hashem. We see that he mentions the two components of the name "מי"—אל"ה and אלקי"ם. Thus, he states: "מי חכם"—whoever is wise and wishes to mitigate the "din" emanating from the letters "מי" of the name אלקי"ם, is advised: "וישמר אלה"—to always keep in mind the definitive answer that אל"ה—these are the doings of Havaya. In the merit of this emunah: "ויתבוננו"—the effects of "din" will be mitigated and the kindness of Havaya will be revealed.

HKB"H conveys this fact to Moshe Rabeinu in preparation for Matan Torah (Shemos 19, 6): "אלה הדברים אשר תדבר אל—these are the words that you shall speak to Bnei Yisrael. The passuk specifically employs the term אל"ה indicating that the purpose of receiving the Torah is to teach everyone that אל"ה—everything we witness and experience—



is the work of Hashem. This fact is expressed by the passuk (Yeshayah 66, 2): **“ואת כל אל”ה ידי עשתה ויהיו כל אל”ה נאום ה”**—**My hand created all these things and thus all these things came into being—the word of Hashem.** It is also written (Hoshea 14, 10): **“מ”י חכם ויבן אל”ה נבון וידעם, כי ישרים דרכי ה’ וצדיקים ילכו בם”**—**who is wise and will understand these things; who is understanding and will know them? For the ways of Hashem are straight; the tzaddikim walk in them and sinners will stumble over them.**

Utilizing this concept, I would like to propose an explanation for Iyov’s remark to his friends. Iyov, who feared Hashem and endured much suffering, says (Iyov 2, 19): **“מ”י לא ידע בכל אלה כי”**—**who cannot know from all these things that the hand of G-d made this? That in His hand is the soul of every living thing and the spirit of all mankind?** We learn from the Gemara (Sotah 11a) that Iyov was one of Pharaoh’s three main advisors—Bilam, Iyov and Yitro. Because he was silent and did not flee, as Yitro did, he was sentenced to endure much suffering.

We can suggest that after experiencing painful afflictions and much torment, he took stock of his life. He came to the realization that he was punished for keeping quiet and not protesting against Pharaoh’s heretical declaration: **“Who is Hashem that I should heed His words?”** To make amends for this failure, he gathered together his friends and colleagues. In their presence, he pronounced the question **“מ”י** and revealed the clear-cut answer **אל”ה** with his declaration: **“מ”י לא ידע בכל”** **אל”ה כי יד ה’ עשתה זאת, אשר בידו נפש כל חי ורוח כל בשר איש”**.

### The Proclamation **“שמע ישראל”** Fulfills the Obligation to Recognize **“מי ברא אלה”**

Based on what we have learned, we can shed some light on the passage in parshas Vayigash. When Yaakov went down to Mitzrayim and met Yosef after not having seen him for twenty-two years, it states (Bereishis 46, 29): **“ויאסור יוסף מרכבתו ויעל”**—**לקראת ישראל אביו גושנה, וירא אליו ויפול על צואריו ויבך על צואריו עוד”**—**Yosef harnessed his chariot and went up to meet Yisrael his father, to Goshen; and he appeared to him, fell on his neck, and he wept on his neck excessively.** Rashi comments: **“But Yaakov did not fall on Yosef’s neck, nor did he kiss him. Our Rabbis explain that he was reciting Shema.** Let us endeavor to explain why Yaakov Avinu felt compelled to recite Shema immediately upon arriving in Mitzrayim.

Let us refer to a tremendous chiddush in the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 49, 85b). We are commanded to recite Shema twice daily—Shacharis and Arvis—in order to fulfill the directive: **“שא מרום עיניכם וראו מי ברא אלה”**—**raise your eyes on high and see Who created these things!** The word **שמ”ע** is an acronym for the words **שא מרום עיניכם**. The declaration of Hashem’s oneness—**שמע ישראל**—contains twenty-five letters. Thus, if we recite this passuk twice a day, we obtain a total of fifty letters—the numerical equivalent of the word **מ”י**. This alludes to the conclusion of the directive: **“וראו מי ברא אלה”**.

By reciting the passuk of **שמע ישראל**, in the morning and at night, we attest to HKB”H’s oneness; He is the unique One and only One; He alone is responsible for everything that transpires—past, present and future. In essence, therefore, this declaration is tantamount to the directive: **“Raise your eyes on high and see Who created these things!”** With this declaration, we annul the heresy of Pharaoh, the leader of Mitzrayim, who brazenly remains with the question: **“מי”**—**Who is Hashem that I should heed His words?**

Now, we can suggest that when Yaakov went down to Mitzrayim and met up with Yosef HaTzaddik, he foresaw by means of “ruach hakodesh” that his offspring were destined to remain in Galus in Mitzrayim. He understood that the ominous klipah of Mitzrayim, as subsequently expressed by Pharaoh, was reflected by the statement of denial: **“מי ה”**—**אשר אשמע בקולו”**. Therefore, upon his arrival in Mitzrayim, he immediately recited **שמע ישראל**. For, with this declaration, we profess our sincere emunah in Hashem; we declare that HKB”H is the One and Only and is responsible for all that transpires under the sun.

### The Four Hundred Thirty Years of Galus Mitzrayim Correspond to Five Times **אלקים**

Continuing along this exalted path, we shall now address the issue raised at the beginning of this essay. According to the passuk: **“ומושב בני ישראל אשר ישבו במצרים שלשים שנה וארבע מאות”**—**Bnei Yisrael sojourned in Mitzrayim four hundred and thirty years; while in fact the duration of their sojourn was only two hundred and ten years.** We can suggest an answer based on the writings of the Megaleh Amukos (Shemos). He writes that **מצרי”ם** can be interpreted as a contraction of the two words **מצר י”ם**—an allusion to the fact that they possessed

a hold on the letters מ"י in the name אלהי"ם. As explained above, they attempted to use this power to arouse the force of "din" against Yisrael.

Additionally, let us introduce a revelation from the Arizal in Sha'ar HaPesukim (Bo). He states that the reason Bnei Yisrael were supposed to remain in Galus Mitzrayim for a total of four hundred and thirty years was in order to mitigate the force of "din" associated with five times the name אלהי"ם—which equals four hundred and thirty (5x86=430). Yet, HKB"H redeemed Yisrael before actually achieving that goal in the merit of their tefilot and outcries to Elokim, prompted by the bitter labor. As a result, they successfully mitigated the "din" associated with five times Elokim prematurely; nevertheless, it was considered as if they had actually been in Mitzrayim for the duration of four hundred and thirty years. [Translator's note: Five times the name Elokim is related to the kabbalistic concept of the "five gevurot." This relates back to the sin of Adam HaRishon. The "five gevurot" are also associated with the five final letters in the Hebrew alphabet—מנצפך.]

The Arizal adds a wonderful "remez." It is for precisely this reason that the three pesukim which depict Bnei Yisrael's outcry to Hashem mention the name Elokim five times (Shemos 2, 23-25): ויזעקו ותעל שועתם אל האלקים מן העבודה, וישמע אלקים את נאקתם ויזכור אלקים את בריתו את אברהם את יצחק ואת יעקב, וירא אלקים את ישראל וידע אלקים—**they cried out; their outcry because of the work went up to Elokim. Elokim heard their moaning, and Elokim remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchak, and with Yaakov. Elokim saw the Bnei Yisrael; and Elokim knew.** This textual "remez" comes to teach us that in the merit of their outcry to Hashem, they successfully mitigated the "din" associated with five times Elokim. Therefore, immediately afterwards, HKB"H appeared to Moshe in the form of the burning bush, so that he would accept the mission of taking Yisrael out of Mitzrayim.

We can also explain why it was necessary to mitigate the five names of Elokim specifically in Mitzrayim. For, the Arizal teaches us that the neshamot of the "dor hamabul," "dor hapelagah" and Sedom all reincarnated into Mitzrayim. There they endured intense labor and suffering in order to cleanse and purify themselves. So, it is for this reason that they needed to remain in Galus Mitzrayim four hundred and thirty years; they needed to mitigate the "din" associated with five times Elokim, which were aroused by their sinful ways.

## Deducting Shabbasos They Labored for One Hundred and Eighty Years

Notwithstanding, it is still necessary to explain why they remained in Galus in Mitzrayim specifically two hundred and ten years. Furthermore, how can the passuk state that they actually dwelled in Mitzrayim four hundred and thirty years? It appears that we can resolve these issues by combining what we have learned from the teacher and from his pupil—the Panim Yafos and the Chasam Sofer, zy"a. We learned that the "din" associated with the name אלקי"ם emanates from the two letters מ"י; whereas said "din" is mitigated by means of the three letters אל"ה.

Now, I would like to present a tremendous chiddush! In truth, they were supposed to endure four hundred and thirty years of extreme labor—so as to mitigate the "din" of five times אלקי"ם. However, in the merit of their prayers and outcries, the decree was modified. They showed that despite the tremendous "hester"—concealment of the Divine Presence—that prevailed during the Galus in Mitzrayim, they still maintained the emunah that His hand created and was responsible for all that transpired--אל"ה. Consequently, they still felt that it was worthwhile directing their prayers and cries to Hashem, in the hope that He would annul the decree. As a result, they succeeded in mitigating the "din" emanating from the letters מ"י associated with five times אלקי"ם by means of five times אל"ה. Therefore, their actual Galus in Mitzrayim only totaled one hundred and eighty years--five times אל"ה.

Still, according to this calculation, why did they sojourn in Mitzrayim two hundred and ten years rather than one hundred and eighty years? If we analyze the calculation carefully, however, we find that it works out beautifully. Let us refer to the commentary of the Baal HaTurim on the following passuk (Shemos 1, 1): ואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה את יעקב איש וביתו באו" - ישראל הבאים ראשי תיבות וסופי תיבות מילה. א"ת יעקב איש סופי תיבות שבת, לומר לך בשביל שבת ומילה ששמרו במצרים נגאלו". He points out that the first and last letters of the two words ישראל הבאים can be rearranged to spell the word מילה; additionally, the last letters of the three words א"ת יעקב איש spell שבת. This teaches us that because they observed Shabbat and Milah in Mitzrayim, they were redeemed.

Additionally, we find in the Midrash (S.R. 5, 18): שהיו בידם מגילות שהיו משתעשעין בהם משבת לשבת לומר שהקב"ה גואלן, לפי שהיו נוחין בהם—**they had in their possession "megillot" which told of**

