



## The Wonderful Connection between Parshas Ki Seitzei and the Month of Elul

### The Thirteen Midos HaRachamim Are Active in Chodesh Elul because Moshe Went Up to Receive Torah She'b'al Peh which Is Expounded by Thirteen Midos

In honor of the upcoming Shabbas Kodesh, parshas Ki Seitzei, it is fitting for us to establish a connection between the weekly parsha and the month of Elul, the month of teshuvah. As we know, Moshe Rabeinu ascended the mountain three times—each for a period of forty days. The second time, he pleaded with HKB”H to forgive Yisrael for the “cheit ha’eigel.” On Rosh Chodesh Elul, he ascended for the third time to receive the second set of luchos.

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by focusing on the fact that the “thirteen midos harachamim” are in effect during the auspicious month of Elul. The source for this is found in the Arizal’s Sha’ar HaYichudim (7). There, he explains that the “thirteen midos harachamim” were in effect for the entire forty days that Moshe was on the mountain—from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Yom HaKippurim.

#### We Recite “לדוד ה' אורי וישעי” to Invoke the Thirteen Midos HaRachamim

These words of the Arizal are the basis for the sacred minhag to recite the psalm (Tehillim 27): “לדוד ה' אורי וישעי” daily from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Shemini Atzeres. This minhag is brought down in the siddur of the Arizal arranged by the divine kabbalist Rabbi Shabbasai of Rashkov, a disciple of the Ba’al Shem Tov, zy”a. The name **Havaya** is mentioned thirteen times in this psalm corresponding to the “thirteen midos harachamim.” He adds that this is a wonderful way to mitigate and ameliorate the forces of “din.” Here is what he writes:

”כל האומר מזמור כ”ז לדוד ה' אורי וישעי וכו', מראש חודש אלול עד אחר שמחת תורה, ערב ובוקר דבר יום ביומו, אזי הוא מובטח שמוציא שנותיו בטוב ויערב לו, ואפילו גזירה רעה כתובה על האדם מן השמים יכול לבטל, ומעביר מעליו כל המקטרגים... ומבטל מעליו כל גזירות קשות ורעות... כי מראש חודש נפתחו י”ג מקורות מי”ג מבילין דרחמי... ולכך יש בו י”ג שמות הוי”ה.”

Reciting this mizmor (psalm) twice daily, morning and night, from Rosh Chodesh Elul until after Simchas Torah, has the capacity to nullify all of the harsh, negative heavenly decrees, ensures that one will live out his years in a pleasing fashion and rids a person of all prosecutorial forces. This is because the thirteen origins of the “thirteen midos harachamim” are opened on Rosh Chodesh Elul. Hence, this psalm mentions the name **Havaya** thirteen times.

#### The Letters Flew Off of the Luchos Making Them Too Heavy for Moshe to Carry

We will begin by explaining why HKB”H reveals the “thirteen midos harachamim” in Elul. Let us refer to the following passuk (Shemos 32, 19): “ויהי כאשר קרב אל המחנה וירא את העגל ומחולות ויחר: **it happened as he drew near the camp, and he saw the “eigel” and the dances, that Moshe’s anger burned; he threw down the luchos from his hands and shattered them at the bottom of the mountain.** In the Midrash (S.R. 46, 1), our blessed sages reveal the reason that Moshe Rabeinu shattered the luchos: “שפרחו הכתובים מן הלוחות לכך שברן”—**what was written on the luchos flew off, causing him to shatter them.** A similar

explanation appears in another Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Ki Sisa 393): **”נסתכל משה בלוחות וראה הכתב שבהן שפרחו, וכבדו על ידי משה—upon seeing that the script on the luchos had flown away, the luchos became too cumbersome for Moshe; hence they fell from his hands and shattered.** We must endeavor to explain why the luchos became too heavy for Moshe to carry.

Concerning this issue, we find a fantastic chiddush in the Responsa (Shu”t) of the Beis HaLevi (Drush 18). The Yerushalmi (Shekalim 25a) teaches us what was so special about the first luchos: **”חנניה בן אחי רבי יהושע אומר, בין כל דיבור ודיבור דקדוקיה ואותיותיה של תורה דכתיב (שיר השירים ה-ד) ממולאים בתרשיש, כימא רבא—**a wealth of Torah knowledge and information was contained between each and every letter and each and every commandment, including all the halachic details spelled out in Torah she’b’al peh.

Based on this Yerushalmi, the Beis HaLevi proposes a novel idea. All of this additional information was only present on the first luchos—prior to the “cheit ha’eigel.” At that point in time, it was not necessary for Yisrael to labor to access and comprehend Torah she’b’al peh. Everything was written clearly on the luchos for Yisrael in an orderly, accessible, comprehensible fashion. On the second luchos, however, HKB”H did not inscribe all of Torah she’b’al peh. Therefore, from then on, it became necessary for Yisrael to labor and exert themselves to unlock and attain the knowledge of Torah she’b’al peh. Thus, we learn that the entire concept of **Torah she’b’al peh**, that it needs to be taught and learned orally, came about only after the shattering of the first luchos, with the giving of the second luchos. Conversely, they did not have to learn those halachos orally initially, because they were all inscribed on the first luchos just like Torah she’b’chsav.

To substantiate the notion that HKB”H only conferred Torah she’b’al peh upon Yisrael with the second luchos, he refers to the Gemara (Gittin 60b): **”לא כרת הקב”ה ברית עם ישראל אלא בשביל—דברים שבעל פה, שנאמר כי על פי הדברים האלה כרתי אתך ברית ואת ישראל—HKB”H only entered into a covenant with Yisrael on account of the Oral Law, as it states (Shemos 34, 27): “For on account of these words have I entered a covenant with you and with Yisrael.”** Now, this passuk appears in association with the second luchos—after HKB”H acquiesced to Moshe’s tefilah and instructed him (ibid. 1): **”פסל לך שני לוחות אבנים כראשונים—chisel**

**for yourself two stone luchos like the first ones.** Thus, it is apparent that the concept of Torah she’b’al peh only originated with the second luchos. This is because the first luchos were all-inclusive; everything was included in Torah she’b’chsav.

With this understanding, the Beis HaLevi interprets the Midrash: **”נסתכל משה בלוחות וראה הכתב שבהן שפרחו, וכבדו על ידי משה—upon seeing that the script on the luchos had flown away, the luchos became too heavy; hence they fell from Moshe’s hands and shattered.** This is referring to the letters of Torah she’b’al peh that were written on the first luchos and flew off the luchos due to the “cheit ha’eigel.” This explains why they became too cumbersome for Moshe; only Torah she’b’chsav remained on the luchos, which is unfathomable without clarification of Torah she’b’al peh. Therefore, Moshe shattered the first luchos. Ultimately, HKB”H accepted his tefilah, forgave Yisrael and gave them the second luchos. Only Torah she’b’chsav was inscribed on the second luchos; however, HKB”H transmitted all of Torah she’b’al peh to Moshe separately.

### The Thirteen Midos HaRachamim Never Return Empty-handed

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to embellish this thought. We will endeavor to explain, why after the “cheit ha’eigel,” HKB”H arranged for Yisrael to have to labor and exert themselves to acquire the knowledge of Torah she’b’al peh. Let us refer to the Gemara (R.H. 17b): **”אמר רב יהודה; ברית כרותה לשלש עשרה מדות שאינן חוזרות ריקם—Rav Yehudah said: A covenant was established regarding the Thirteen Midos that they never return empty-handed.**

Now, after the “cheit ha’eigel,” HKB”H revealed the “thirteen midos harachamim” to Moshe Rabeinu (ibid. 34, 6): **”ויעבור ה’—Hashem passed before him and proclaimed: “Hashem, Hashem, G-d, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in kindness and truth. He preserves of kindness for thousands of generations, forgiving iniquity and willful transgression and sin; He absolves, etc.”** Afterwards, it says (ibid. 10): **”ויאמר—הנה אנכי כורת ברית נגד כל עמך אעשה נפלאות אשר לא נבראו בכל הארץ ובכל הגוים—He said, “Behold! I enter a covenant: Before your entire people I shall make distinctions such as have never been created in the entire world among all the nations.”** This led Rabbi Yehudah to conclude: **“A covenant was established**

**regarding the Thirteen Midos that they never return empty-handed.”** Rashi comments: **If Yisrael mention them in the tefilah of their fast, they never return empty-handed.**

Notwithstanding, it is the nature of Torah to be expounded in seventy different ways. So, it appears that we can suggest an explanation for the covenant associated with the “thirteen midos harachamim” based on a difficulty that arises concerning this covenant. Shortly afterwards in that same passage, we find the following passuk (ibid. 27): **וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵל מֹשֶׁה כְּתֹב לְךָ אֵת הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה כִּי עַל פִּי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה כָּרַתִּי אִתְּךָ בְּרִית וְאֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל—Hashem said to Moshe, “Write for yourself these words, for according to these words have I entered a covenant with you and with Yisrael.”**

They expound on this passuk in the Gemara (Gittin 60b): **אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן לֹא כָרַת הַקֶּב"ה בְּרִית עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶלָּא בְּשִׁבְלֵי דְבָרִים שֶׁבִּעַל פִּה, שְׁנֵי אֲמָרִים—Rabbi Yochanan said: HKB”H only entered into a covenant with Yisrael on account of the Oral Law, as it states: “For on account of these words have I entered a covenant with you and with Yisrael.”** Now, earlier in the passage, HKB”H states that He entered the covenant with Yisrael on account of the “thirteen midos harachamim.” Yet here, immediately afterwards, HKB”H announces that the covenant with Yisrael is on account of Torah she’b’al peh.

Without a doubt, we could have settled the matter simply by positing that HKB”H entered two covenants with Yisrael—one in relation to the “thirteen midos harachamim” and one in relation to Torah she’b’al peh. However, Rabbi Yochanan employs the term **“אלא”** which implies that the covenant **“only”** applied to Torah she’b’al peh. Hence, the difficulty remains, because the earlier passuk states explicitly that HKB”H entered into a covenant with Yisrael on account of the “thirteen midos harachamim.”

### **The Thirteen Midos HaRachamim Correspond to the Thirteen Hermeneutic Principles**

To reconcile this difficulty, we will refer to a fundamental principle presented by the Bnei Yissaschar (Elul 2, 7) in the name of the holy Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritsch, zy”a, regarding the teaching in Torah Kohanim that we recite daily in Shacharis: **רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵל אָמַר בְּשִׁלְשׁ עָשָׂר מִדּוֹת הַתּוֹרָה נִדְרָשׁתָּ בְּהַ”ן—Rabbi Yishmael says: The Torah is elucidated through thirteen rules**

(interpretive principles). These thirteen interpretive principles by which we expound the Torah align with the “thirteen midos harachamim” mentioned in parshas Ki Sisa. So, when Yisrael labor in the study of Torah she’b’al peh, which is expounded by these thirteen principles, they activate the corresponding midos harachamim.

We can now reconcile the apparent contradiction regarding the two covenants mentioned in the passage. Rabbi Yochanan stated: **“HKB”H only entered into a covenant with Yisrael on account of the Oral Law.”** Seeing as there is no perfect tzaddik who has never sinned, HKB”H could not enter into a covenant with Yisrael. Perforce they would sin and have to be punished, chas v’shalom.

Yet, we find the following exposition related to the passuk (ibid. 33, 19) in the Gemara (Berachos 7a): **וְחִנּוּתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֶחָוֶן—“I will favor whom I choose to favor,” even though he is not worthy; “and I will have mercy on whom I choose to have mercy,” even if he is not deserving.** Thus, even if they are not perfect and deserving, nevertheless, HKB”H treats them with divine mercy. This then is the message conveyed by Rabbi Yochanan: **“HKB”H only entered into a covenant with Yisrael on account of the Oral Law”**—because the two covenants go hand in hand magnificently as one. In the merit of the study of Torah she’b’al peh, which is expounded with the thirteen midos, we elicit the “thirteen midos harachamim.”

### **טו"ב ל"ו בר"ת Equals The Gematria of**

It gives me great pleasure to now introduce a fascinating tidbit. We find a precious gem in the Responsa (Shu”t) of the Mahari Asad (O.C. 1) apropos Rabbi Yochanan’s statement: **“HKB”H only entered into a covenant with Yisrael on account of the Oral Law.”** It is commonly accepted that there are 36 masechtos in Torah she’b’al peh associated with the Talmud Bavli.

In the Derashos Chasam Sofer (Part 2, page 411, column 2), he explains why the Talmud Bavli concludes with the passage: **“תָּנָא דְּבִי אֱלִיָּהוּ כָּל הַשָּׁנָה הַלְכוֹת בְּכָל יוֹם מוּבְטָח לּוֹ שֶׁהוּא בֵּן עוֹלָם הַבָּא, שְׁנֵי אֲמָרִים—The Academy of Eliyahu taught: He who studies Torah laws (“halachos”) every day is assured that he will be in Olam HaBa, as it states: “The ways of the world are His”—do not read “ways” (“הַלְכוֹת”) but “laws” (“הַלְכוֹת”).**



one. This passuk implies that the Torah was betrothed to Yisrael like a woman to her husband.

Now, if a person besmirches the Torah, which is equivalent to his wife—by claiming that he studies Torah but he is unable to make a decent living and lacks adequate food and money to live off of—the tikun is: **“They shall fine him one hundred silver shekels.”** In other words, he must recite one hundred Berachos daily. As we learn in the Gemara (Menachos 43b): **“חייב אדם לברך מאה ברכות בכל יום, שנאמר ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך. A person is obligated to recite one hundred Berachos daily, as it states (ibid. 10, 12): “And now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you.”** Rashi provides the following clarification: **In the phrase “מה ה' אלקיך”, read the word as “מאה” (one hundred) instead of “מה” (what).** In other words, instead of reading: **“What does Hashem want,”** we are to read it as **“Hashem wants one hundred.”** Citing Rashi, Tosafos explain that this implies that we are obligated to recite one hundred Berachos.

To clarify the comment of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh—that reciting 100 Berachos daily constitutes a tikun for besmirching the Torah—let us refer to the Yismach Moshe (Eikev). Regarding the subject of reciting 100 Berachos daily, he attempts to reconcile the fact that the passuk specifically says **“מה ה'--מה”** **“אלקיך שואל מעמך”**. If so, how can we justify reading it as **“מאה”**?

To explain the matter, he refers to what the Shela hakadosh writes in parshas Chayei Sarah. The name of the yetzer, **סמא"ל**, has two letters associated with tumah--**ס"ם**—and two letters associated with kedushah--**א"ל**. This is the implication of the Gemara's statement (Succah 52a): **“לעתיד לבא מביאו הקב"ה ליצר הרע: le'asid la'vo, HKB" H will bring the yetzer hara and slaughter it.** Currently, the existence of the yetzer relies on the ability of the two letters **ס"ם** to be sustained by the letters **א"ל**. In the future, HKB" H will terminate that sustenance. Consequently, its unholy component—the letters **“samech-mem”**—will be eliminated. Since, only the letters **א"ל** will remain in its name, it will be transformed into a holy malach.

### One Hundred Forces of Tumah Separate Man from His Maker

Based on this understanding, the Yismach Moshe explains that the yetzer hara possesses one hundred forces of tumah

stemming from the two letters **ס"ם**, since the gematria of this unholy component equals one hundred. The function of these negative forces is to create a barrier between a Jew and HKB" H. This barrier and separation make it difficult for a Jew to imagine that he is actually standing in the presence of HKB" H, which is necessary to instill in him a sense of awe and reverence.

To overcome this difficulty, our blessed sages proposed a wonderful solution—we should recite one hundred Berachos daily with proper intent and focus. These one hundred Berachos are aimed at counteracting and eliminating the corresponding one hundred forces of tumah. With them out of the way, the barrier separating us from our Maker will no longer exist. It will then be easy to perceive that we are in the presence of HKB" H, the King of Kings, and we will be overcome with fear and reverence of Hashem.

Now, Chazal's interpretation of the passuk makes perfect sense: **“What (מה) does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you but to fear Hashem, your G-d.** From the language of the passuk, it sounds like fear of Hashem is a simple matter consistent with the term **“מה”**. Yet, we see, in reality, this is not so; in fact, it is very difficult. This prompts Chazal to inquire (Berachos 33b): **“אטו יראת שמים מילתא זוטרתא היא”**—is **“yiras Shamayim”** such a **simple (small) matter?**

Therefore, to resolve this quandary, they expound: **Do not read “מה” but instead “מאה”**. Because if we read the word as **“מה”**, the passuk implies that fear and reverence of Hashem is an easy, simple matter. Yet, if we read the word as **“מאה”**, the passuk is imploring us to recite one hundred Berachos daily to subdue the powers of tumah of the **“samech-mem”** that create a barrier between us and Hashem. By reciting one hundred Berachos, it will become much easier to fear Hashem, because we will be able to envision ourselves as standing in the presence of Hashem. That is the message of the passuk: **מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה**. This is the gist of his sacred words.

This explains very nicely how reciting one hundred Berachos is a tikun for besmirching the Torah by claiming that it did not provide him with an adequate livelihood. In the words of the Mishnah (Avos 3, 9): **“כל שיראת חטאו קודמת לחכמתו חכמתו מותקיימת, וכל שאין יראת חטאו קודמת לחכמתו אין חכמתו מותקיימת”**—**if one's fear of sin takes precedence over his wisdom, his wisdom will endure; but if his wisdom takes precedence over his fear of**

**sin, his wisdom will not endure.** So, when a person blames the Torah for not providing him with an adequate livelihood, it is a sign that his fear did not take precedence over his wisdom. Therefore, his wisdom did not endure, and he was not provided with an adequate livelihood.

Therefore, his tikun is: "וענשו אותו מאה כסף". He is required to recite one hundred Berachos daily to subdue the one hundred forces of tumah of the yetzer hara that prevent him from placing his fear of sinning ahead of his wisdom. By reciting one hundred Berachos, his fear of sinning will take precedence

over his wisdom, and his wisdom will endure. As a result, he will be granted an abundance of berachah and success in all his endeavors.

In summary, we have learned that the tikun during the month of Elul to elicit the "thirteen midos harachamim" is to set fixed times to engage in the study of Torah she'b'al peh, which is expounded by "thirteen hermeneutic principles." In this merit, we will arouse the "thirteen midos harachamim" prompting HKB"H to grant us, in His infinite mercy and favor, a good and blessed new year!



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