



## Og the King of Bashan Placed an Uprooted Mountain on His Head to Oppose the Kedushah of the Tefillin shel Rosh

This week's parsha is parshas Chukas. We learn about the dangerous battle Og the King of Bashan waged against Yisrael. He went out to meet them after uprooting a mountain and placing it on his head, with the intent of crushing them with it. A miracle transpired; two of his teeth grew and extended deep into the mountain, preventing him from removing it from his head. Ultimately, Moshe Rabeinu came and killed him. Here is a pertinent passage from the Gemara (Berachos 54b):

”אבן שביקש עוג מלך הבשן לזרוק על ישראל, גמרא גמירי לה”, אמר מחנה ישראל כמה הוי תלתא פרסי איזיל ואיעקר טורא בר תלתא פרסי ואישדי עלייהו ואיקטלינהו”. אזל עקר טורא בר תלתא פרסי ואייתי על רישיה ואייתי קודשא בריך הוא עליה קמצי ונקבוה ונחית בצואריה.

**The stone that Og the King of Bashan intended to throw on Yisrael. These are the facts of the incident as they were passed down to our blessed sages: He (Og) thought to himself, “How large is the encampment of Yisrael? Three parsas by three parsas. I will go and uproot a mountain measuring three parsas; I will toss it on top of them; and thus I will kill them.” He went, uprooted a mountain measuring three parsas and carried it on his head. HKB”H brought ants onto it (the mountain); they bored holes in it; and it dropped down to his neck.**

הוה בעי למשלפה משכי שיניה להאי גיסא ולהאי גיסא ולא מצי למשלפה והיינו דכתיב שיני רשעים שברת... אל תקרי שברת אלא שרבבת.

**He attempted to remove it from his neck, but his teeth extended downward (into the mountain) to this side and the other side, and he was**

**unable to remove it. This is the implication of that which is written (Tehillim 3, 8): “You have broken the teeth of the wicked” . . . Do not read this as it is written—“shibarta,” meaning You have broken—but rather (read it as if it is written) “shirbavta”—You have extended.**

Then, the Gemara goes on to describe how Moshe killed the giant Og: **”משה כמה הוה עשר אמות, שקיל נרגא בר עשר אמין שוור עשר אמין ומחייה בקרסוליה וקטליה.” How tall was Moshe? Ten amot. He took an axe that was ten amot long, jumped up ten amot, struck him in his ankle, and killed him.**

The Rashba and the Maharsha both explain this enigmatic passage in their own, respective, sacred ways. I also wish to propose an explanation to please our heavenly Father, since it is the nature of Torah to be elucidated in seventy various ways. What is the significance of the mountain being three parsas by three parsas? What is the significance of the teeth that extended into the mountain? As usual, we will rely on the illuminating words of our sacred Rabbis from earlier and later generations. May Hashem guide us on the path of emes.

### **Sichon and Og Represent Two Klipos Corresponding to Tefillin shel Rosh and shel Yad**

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing a fascinating idea regarding the klipos of Sichon and Og found in the impeccable teachings of the Chiddushei HaRim, zy”a, as presented in his name by his grandson, the Sefas Emes (Devarim 5646). He comments on the following pesukim (Devarim 1, 3):

"ויהי בארבעים שנה בעשתי עשר חדש באחד לחדש דבר משה אל בני ישראל ככל אשר צוה ה' אותו אליהם, אחרי הכותו את סיחון מלך האמורי אשר יושב בחשבון ואת עוג מלך הכנען אשר יושב בעשתרות באדרעי, בעבר הירדן בארץ מואב הואיל משה באר את התורה הזאת לאמר."

**It was in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first of the month, when Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisrael, according to everything that Hashem commanded him to them, after he had smitten Sichon, King of the Emori, who dwelt in Cheshbon, and Og, King of the Bashan, who dwelt in Ashtarot, in Edrei. On the other side of the Yarden in the land of Moav, Moshe began clarifying this Torah, saying.**

The Chiddushei HaRim explains why Moshe refrained from rebuking Yisrael until after he had smitten these two giants—Sichon and Og. He explains that Sichon and Og represented two powerful klipos on the side of tumah. The klipah of **Sichon, King of the Emori, who dwelt in Cheshbon**, opposed the tefillin shel rosh donned over the brain to sanctify the thoughts in one's head. Hence, he dwelled in **Cheshbon**, corresponding to the location of "machshavah"—thought arising in the brain. His goal was to prevent a Jew from self-examination (scrutiny) and soul-searching. The klipah of Og, on the other hand, who dwelled in **Edrei**, opposed the tefillin shel yad. For, we learn in the Gemara concerning the tefillin of HKB"H (Berachos 6b): **"וכולהו כתיבי באדרעי"—and all (these pesukim) are written on the arm.** In other words, all the pesukim in the tefillin shel rosh are also written in the tefillin shel yad. Therefore, only after he had eliminated the klipos of Sichon and Og did Moshe Rabeinu begin to rebuke the nation—to motivate them to take stock of their lives, assess their behavior and actions, and make amends.

This fascinating insight of the Chiddushei HaRim goes hand in hand magnificently with the sacred words of the great Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin, zy"a, in Pri Tzaddik (Devarim 3). He teaches us that the klipah of Sichon opposes the kedushah of the brain, whereas the klipah of Og opposes the kedushah of the heart. It was for this reason that Moshe refrained from admonishing Yisrael until after he had subdued the klipos of Sichon and Og.

Indeed, Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen, does not mention that these two forces of tumah opposed the functions of the tefillin shel rosh and shel yad. Notwithstanding, the instructions of the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 25, 5) are well known. When donning the tefillin, we are to focus on the fact that HKB"H commanded us to don the tefillin shel yad opposite the heart to subjugate the desires of our hearts and to don the tefillin shel rosh to subjugate the thoughts in our brains to the service of Hashem, blessed is He. We express this fact in the formula of the "l'shem yichud" recited prior to donning the tefillin:

"וצונו להניח על היד לזכרון זרוע הנטויה, ושהיא נגד הלב, לשעבד בזה תאוות ומחשבות לבנו לעבודתו יתברך שמו, ועל הראשי נגד המוח, שהנשמה שבמוחי עם שאר חושי וכוחותי כולם יהיו משועבדים לעבודתו יתברך שמו."

**And He commanded us to put the tefillin upon the arm as a reminder of the outstretched arm of the exodus, and because it is opposite the heart, thereby subjugating the passions and deliberations of our heart to His service—blessed is His Name; and upon the head, opposite the brain, so that the soul that is in my brain, together with the rest of my senses and faculties, may all be subjugated to His service—blessed is His Name.**

Clearly, this coincides magnificently with the teaching of the Chiddushei HaRim: Sichon's force of tumah opposes the holy purpose of the tefillin shel rosh placed over the brain, whereas Og's force of tumah opposes the holy purpose of the tefillin shel yad placed opposite the heart.

Further on, Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen provides a wonderful explanation for the passuk in this week's parsha that appears immediately after the Torah chronicles the demise of Sichon and the conquest of his land by Yisrael (Bamidbar 21, 27): **"על כן יאמרו המושלים: "בואו חשבון תבנה ותכונן עיר סיחון"—about this the "moshlim" would say: "Come to Cheshbon; let it be built and established, the city of Sichon."** They expounded in the Gemara (B.B. 78b): **"יאמרו המושלים, אלו המושלים ביצרם, בואו חשבון, בואו ונחשב חשבוננו של עולם, הפסד מצוה כנגד שכרה ושכר עבירה כנגד הפסדה, תבנה ותכונן, אם אתה עושה כן תבנה בעולם אלו המושלים ביצרם, בואו חשבון אלו המושלים הזה ותכונן לעולם הבא."**

ביצרים, בואו חשבון **“Hamoshlim,”** these are the people who rule over their evil inclination. They will say: **“Come to Cheshbon,”** meaning: **Come and let us assess the account of (“cheshbono”) the world,** i.e., the financial **loss** incurred by the fulfillment of a **mitzva in contrast to its reward, and the reward** for committing a **transgression,** i.e., the pleasure and gain received, **in contrast to the loss it** entails. **“Let it be built and established”** means that **if you make this assessment, you will be built in Olam HaZeh and you will be established in the Olam HaBa.** [Translator’s note: The word “moshlim” can be interpreted as rulers or those who draw parables.]

Let us explain this in keeping with our current discussion. As explained, the klipah of Sichon opposes the self-appraisal and soul-searching performed by the brain. Hence, he **“dwelled in Cheshbon,”** corresponding to the seat of thought—“machshavah.” Hence, so long as Sichon was still alive, it was difficult for Yisrael to take stock of their lives—to comprehend the true value of mitzvos and the deleterious consequences of aveiros. However, after he and his klipah were eliminated and Yisrael conquered **Cheshbon,** their brains were unfettered and free to properly assess their thoughts and deeds.

### Og Intended to Complement the Klipah of Sichon

Following this line of reasoning, we will now explain Og’s rationale for uprooting the mountain with the intent of throwing on top of Yisrael. After witnessing that Yisrael killed his brother Sichon, representing the klipah opposed to the tefillin shel rosh, he figured that it would be even easier for them to subjugate his klipah opposed solely to the tefillin shel yad. After all, as the Gemara explains, the kedushah of the shel rosh is superior to that of the shel yad (Menachos 34b): **“תפלה של יד עושיין אותה של ראש, ושל ראש אין עושיין אותה של יד, לפי שאין מורידין מקדושה חמורה לקדושה קלה—**we may make a tefillin shel yad into a shel rosh, but we may not make a shel rosh into a shel yad; because we do not lower a higher level of kedushah to a lower level of kedushah. Rashi explains that the shel rosh has a higher level of kedushah, since most of the letters of the name **שדי** are associated with it—i.e., the **“shin”**

is embossed on the housing, and the letter **“dalet”** is formed by its knot. In contrast, the shel yad only has the letter **“yud,”** which is formed by its knot.

Let us explain the practical significance of this based on what the author of the Tanya explains at length in Likutei Amarim (Chapter 3). HKB”H incorporated in man ten midos. The first three are contained in man’s head: **chochmah, binah, and da’as.** The lower seven midos are contained in man’s heart: **chesed, gevurah, Tiferes, netzach, hod, yesod, and malchus.** It is incumbent on man to place the brain in charge of the heart. In other words, the first three midos of the brain are meant to control and guide the seven lower midos of the heart, using them exclusively to love and revere HKB”H and His Torah by observing all the mitzvos.

With this understanding, we can begin to comprehend the teaching of the Arizal. The kedushah of the tefillin shel rosh is superior to that of the shel yad, because it is related to the brain which contains the three highest midos—**chochmah, binah, and da’as.** The tefillin shel yad, on the other hand, which is worn opposite the heart, is related to the lower seven midos. That is the rationale for winding its strap around the forearm seven times.

Seeing that Yisrael possessed the power to subjugate the klipah of Sichon that opposed the tefillin shel rosh which is holier than the shel yad, Og reasoned that they definitely had the power to subjugate his klipah that only opposed the tefillin shel yad. The wicked Og concluded that Yisrael’s success was due to the fact that they possessed the kedushah of both the shel yad and the shel rosh. Hence, they were able to defeat the klipah of Sichon that opposed only the influence of the tefillin shel rosh.

Therefore, they would also easily defeat the klipah opposing only the tefillin shel yad. So, he decided that if he could harness the klipah of his brother, he would possess both klipos—the one opposing the shel rosh and the one opposing the shel yad. With both klipos in hand, his force of tumah would match up against Yisrael’s force of kedushah. Thus, he would be able to combas Yisrael’s entire structure of

kedushah—including the higher three midos and the lower seven.

This explains fantastically the statement HKB”H made to Moshe (ibid. 34): **אל תירא אותו כי בידך נתתי אותו ואת כל עמו ואת ארצו, ועשית לו כאשר עשית לסיחון מלך האמורי אשר יושב בחשבון—do not fear him, for into your hand have I given him, his entire people, and his land; you shall do to him as you did to Sichon, King of the Emori, who dwells in Cheshbon.** Why did HKB”H compare what Moshe would do to Og with what he had done to Sichon in Cheshbon? It is because, HKB”H was implying to Moshe Rabeinu that just as he defeated the klipah of Sichon in **Cheshbon**—situated to oppose the brain of a Jew where he evaluates himself—similarly, he would defeat the klipah of Og who had harnessed the klipah of his brother Sichon.

### A Three Parsa Square Mountain to Combas the Three Highest Midos

This illuminates for us the enigmatic words of Chazal that most definitely contain exalted, sublime lessons and significance: **The stone that Og the King of Bashan intended to throw on Yisrael. These are the facts of the incident as they were passed down to our blessed sages: He (Og) thought to himself, “How large is the encampment of Yisrael? Three parsas by three parsas.”** In other words, he pondered the source of Yisrael’s awesome power. What enabled them to eliminate the klipah of Sichon that opposed the influence of the tefillin shel rosh? He concluded that it was due to the size of their encampment, measuring **three square parsas** corresponding to the three midos of **chochmah, binah, and da’as**, related to the tefillin shel rosh worn over the brain. Therefore, Og devised the following scheme: **I will go and uproot a mountain measuring three parsas; I will toss it on top of them; and thus I will kill them.** In other words, he sought to arm himself with the three midos of **chochmah, binah, and da’as**, from the side of the klipah—the powerful klipah of his brother Sichon that opposed the influence of the tefillin shel rosh. In this manner, he would succeed in defeating and killing Yisrael. So, he proceeded as follows: **He went, uprooted a mountain measuring three parsas and**

**carried it on his head.** Note the profound inference of Chazal’s eloquent language: **“He carried it on his head.”** They inferred that he carried on **his head** the klipah to oppose the tefillin shel rosh.

However, **HKB”H brought ants onto it** (the mountain); **they bored holes in it; and it dropped down to his neck.** HKB”H intervened causing the mountain atop his head to fall down to his neck. To better understand this, let us refer to a passuk related to the meraglim (ibid. 13, 33): **“וּשְׁמַרְאִינוּ אֶת הַנְּפִילִים בְּנֵי עֲנָק מִן הַנְּפִילִים וְנָהִי בְעֵינֵינוּ כַּחֲגָבִים וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְעֵינֵיהֶם—there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of a giant from among the Nephilim; we were like grasshoppers in our eyes, and so we were in their eyes!”** Rashi comments: **We heard them saying to each other, “There are ants in the vineyards that look like men.”**

Thus, we learn that to the children of the giant, the meraglim resembled ants. Similarly, Yisrael looked like ants to Og, who was one of the sons of the giant. As such, he figured he could merely trample them and squash them. This is what our blessed sages alluded to. In the merit of Yisrael, who they compared to ants, HKB”H brought ants to foil Og’s malicious scheme. They diminished the integrity of the mountain to the degree that it fell down around Og’s neck. Thus, his intensified klipah was diminished, because it was too heavy for him to bear.

### The Two Shins of the Tefillin shel Rosh Subdued the Klipah of Og

Following this line of reasoning, we will now focus on the continuation of Gemara: **He attempted to remove it from his neck, but his teeth extended downward (into the mountain) to this side and the other side, and he was unable to remove it.** Because his teeth miraculously extended and embedded themselves into the mountain, he was unable to release it from around his neck. **This is the implication of that which is written: “You have broken the teeth of the wicked” . . . Do not read this as it is written—“shibarta,”** meaning You have broken—but rather (read it as if it is written) **“shirbavta”**—You have extended. We will endeavor

to explain the significance of the two teeth penetrating and embedding themselves in the mountain.

Let us refer to a passuk related to the tefillin shel rosh (Devarim 28, 10): **“וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו: מומך—then all the people of the earth will see that the name of Hashem is proclaimed over you, and they will be in awe of you.** They expounded on this passuk in the Gemara (Menachos 35b): **“רבי אליעזר הגדול: אומר, אלו תפילין שבראש—Rabbi Eliezer the Great says: These awe-inspiring objects are the tefillin worn on the head.** How did Rabbi Eliezer deduce that this passuk is speaking about the mitzvah of “tefillin shel rosh”? We find a plausible explanation in the commentary of the Ba'al HaTurim: **The first letters of אר"ע spell ש"י, referring to the “shin” of the tefillin (shel rosh).**

This still deserves further explanation. Why, indeed, are the nations of the world fearful specifically of the **“shin”** embossed on the housing of the tefillin shel rosh? We can suggest an answer based on what the Bnei Yissaschar writes (Nissan 5, 14) in relation to two statements of David HaMelech (Tehillim 3, 8): **“שיני: רשעים שברת—You broke the teeth of the wicked—** and (ibid. 124, 6): **“ברוך ה' שלא נתנני טרף לשיניהם”—blessed is Hashem, Who did not present us as prey for their teeth.** Why is the wickedness of the reshaim associated specifically with their teeth?

To explain the matter, we will refer to a teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Intro. 2b): The letters שק"ר are the root of the klipah. The letter **“shin”** comes from the realm of kedushah, because its three lines (extensions) allude to the three holy Avos. Now, even the klipah requires sustenance from the realm of kedushah; otherwise, it would cease to exist. Therefore, it is the letter **“shin”** that sustains the klipah associated with שק"ר, until the time for the final, complete tikun arrives; then HKB"ח will take away its **“shin.”** The same holds true for the word רש"ע. Its root is the two letters ר"ע; however, as explained, it cannot exist without some sustenance from the realm of kedushah, which is supplied by the letter **“shin.”** The result, therefore, is the arrangement רש"ע.

Yet, if the wickedness of the rasha intensifies and he commits increasing numbers of serious iniquities, the **“shin”** of רש"ע will be confiscated. Then, only ר"ע will remain, without any connection to kedushah. As a consequence, he will receive his due punishment and will cease to exist. This is the message conveyed by Yisrael's sweet psalmist (ibid. 7, 10): **“יגמר נא רע רשעים—let the evil of the wicked destroy them.** In other words, from the combination of letters רש"ע, the **“shin”** will vanish, leaving only the letters ר"ע, without any sustaining spark of kedushah. This reality is also alluded to by the passuk (Yeshayah 3, 11): **“אוי לרשע רע כי גמול ידיו יעשה לו”—but woe to the rasha who does evil, because the recompense of his hands will be dealt to him.** In other words, woe to the רש"ע when his **“shin”** vanishes, and only the letters ר"ע remain. Why? **Because the recompense of his hands will be dealt to him—**he will be duly punished immediately on account of the absence of sustenance from the realm of kedushah.

This explains why David HaMelech refers specifically to the teeth of (**“shinei”**) the reshaim. As we have explained, the main power and sustenance of the reshaim comes from the letter **“shin”**—the spark of kedushah within them. Therefore, David HaMelech says: **“You broke ‘shinei’ reshaim”**—implying that their **“shins”** were taken away, so that they could no longer do us harm. Also: **“Blessed is Hashem, Who did not present us as prey for their ‘shins.’”** In other words, without their **“shins”**—the spark of kedushah that sustains them—we were no longer prey to them. This completes his holy remarks.

### There Are Two **“Shins”** on the Tefillin to Subdue רש"ע and שק"ר

I would now like to present an idea of my own concerning that which is taught by the Rishonim and is the halachic ruling in the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 32, 42): **“שי"ן של תפילין הלכה למשה מסיני”—the letter “shin” of the tefillin (shel-rosh) is mandated by a halachah given to Moshe at Sinai.** It explains there that it is required to emboss in the leather housing of the tefillin shel rosh two **“shins”**—one on the right and one on the left. I would like to suggest with the utmost

reverence and love that these two “shins” are aimed at subduing and extracting these letters from the klipos—one “shin” from שק”ר and one “shin” from רש”ע. As a result, they will cease to exist, in keeping with the passuk: “אוי לרשע רע כי גמול ידיו יעשה לו”.

This explains beautifully the exposition of Rabbi Eliezer the Great: “Then all the people of the earth will see that the name of Hashem is proclaimed over you, and they will be in awe of you.” Rabbi Eliezer the Great says: These awe-inspiring objects are the tefillin worn on the head. By means of the two “shins” of the tefillin shel rosh, Yisrael are capable of extracting the two “shins” from שק”ר and רש”ע, thus, depriving them of their source of sustenance. This strikes fear into the hearts of the goyim, because it signals the end of their existence. This is the allusion pointed out by the Ba’al HaTurim: ש”ם י”י נ”קרא ראשי תיבות—ש”ם ש”ן—the source of their fear is the letter “shin” that appears on both sides of the tefillin shel rosh.

This explains beautifully the allusion in the passuk (Bereishis 6, 5): “וירא ה’ כי רבה רעת האדם בארץ וכל יצר מחשבת לבו—רק רע כל היום—Hashem saw that man’s wickedness on earth was great, and that every inclination of his heart was only for evil (”רק רע”) all day long. If we remove the “shin” from שק”ר and the “shin” from רש”ע, we are left with the two words ר”ק ר”ע. Thus, the passuk infers that “only evil” remained without any hint of kedushah.

In the context of our supposition, this then is the interpretation of the passuk: “וירא ה’ כי רבה רעת האדם בארץ”

”וכל יצר מחשבות לבו ר”ק ר”ע כל היום” HKB”H saw that the two “shins” of שק”ר and רש”ע had vanished and only the letters ר”ק ר”ע remained, devoid of any kedushah. This prompted Hashem to proclaim (ibid. 7): “אמחה את האדם—I will obliterate mankind that I created from upon the face of the earth. For, if any sparks of kedushah remained within the resham, it would have still been possible to hope that they might entertain thoughts of teshuvah. Since, however, all that remained was ר”ק ר”ע, there was no chance that they would perform teshuvah.

We can now begin to comprehend the profound teaching of Chazal. They hinted to us in the Gemara: “His teeth extended downward to this side and the other side, and he was unable to remove it.” Og had harnessed the klipah of Sichon, so that he could oppose the influence of the tefillin shel rosh. He accomplished this by uprooting a mountain that measured three parsas by three parsas corresponding to the three supreme midos of chochmah, binah, and da’as and placed it on top of his head. This prompted HKB”H, in His infinite mercy and kindness, to activate and illuminate the two “shins” of the tefillin shel rosh, on the right and on the left. They extracted from Og’s mouth all the life-force emanating from the two “shins” of שק”ר and רש”ע, and they penetrated the mountain to subjugate the klipah of Og. This caused the mountain to fall and crush his head. Thus, will all the enemies of Hashem be eliminated! In the merit of the mitzvah of tefillin shel yad and shel rosh, may we succeed in vanquishing the two klipos of Sichon and Og, who opposed their kedushah!

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