



Pray for Your Mother to Give Birth to a Child Like Rabbi Shimon In the Merit of Rabbi Shimon the Supreme Mother Should Birth the Geulah with Rachamim and Not with Din

In honor of Lag BaOmer, the celebration of the passing of the divine Tanna Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, it is with immense pleasure that we will focus on an intriguing passage in the Gemara (Makkos 17b). Five “Derashos” of Rabbi Shimon are presented. Rava was so impressed by Rabbi Shimon’s brilliance that he declares: **“דילידא אימיה כרבי שמעון תיליד, ואי לא לא תיליד—one whose mother is giving birth, she should pray that she give birth to one like Rabbi Shimon; and if not, she should not give birth to him.”** Rashi explains this to mean: **“Anyone whose mother is giving birth, she should request “rachamim” (pray for divine compassion) as follows: “May it be Your will that this one should be like Rabbi Shimon.”** The commentaries explain that this statement refers to Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai. For, as Rashi points out (Shevuos 2b): **“Whenever plain “Rabbi Shimon” is mentioned (without identifying his father), it is referring to Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai.**

In this essay, we will attempt to decipher Rava’s enigmatic declaration. Firstly, why was he so impressed? Secondly, why did he specify **“דילידא אימיה”**—employing the term **“his mother”**—rather than stating generically **“דילידא אשה”**—suggesting that **“any woman”** giving birth should request “rachamim” to give birth to a son like Rabbi Shimon? After all, the Mishnayos and Talmud are replete with brilliant Tannaim and Amoraim who illuminated the world with their kedushah and Torah erudition. A woman could pray to be blessed with a child like any one of those prominent Torah scholars.

Yet, what is most surprising is the conclusion of Rava’s remark: **“ואי לא לא תיליד”**—that if she is not privileged to give birth to a child like Rabbi Shimon, it is preferable that she not give birth at all. After all, within the six-hundred thousand Jewish neshamos, there are many different levels of tzaddikim. Indeed, Rashbi was unique! He even said of himself (Succah 45b): **“ראיתי בני עלייה והן מועטין”**—**I have seen members of the spiritually elite, and they are few.** It is therefore unfathomable that Rava would deem everyone unlike (lesser than) Rashbi as unworthy of being born.

In fact, it appears that due to this question, the Ritva (in the name of Rabeinu Meir) chose to delete from his folio this concluding remark: **“ואי לא לא תיליד”**. He also questions why Rava’s remark refers to one who prays about **“his mother”** rather than simply about any **“woman,”** such as one’s wife. We will endeavor to explain these two matters.

“I have the power to absolve the entire world from the ‘din’ that is due them”

I would now like to present to my royal audience a wonderful chiddush that the Almighty favored me with in honor of Lag BaOmer. Let us begin by introducing the text of the Gemara (ibid.), **“ואמר חזקיה אמר רבי ירמיה משום רשב”י, יכול אני לפטור את כל העולם כולו מן הדין מיום שנבראתי עד עתה.”** **And Chizkiyah said in the name of Rabbi Yirmiyah who said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: “I am able to exempt the entire world from the judgment (for the sins that were committed) from the day that I was born until**

now. Rashi explains this as follows: **On my account, I will bear the burden of all their iniquities and absolve them from the judgment.** In Chiddushei Aggados (ibid.), the Maharsha explains: **This means that he would bear the burden of their iniquities through the pain and suffering he and his son experienced in the cave.**

Undoubtedly, this bold assurance is the basis for the widespread Jewish minhag to travel to Meiron, especially in times of trouble, to visit the gravesite of the holy Rashbi, and pour out their hearts in prayer to Hashem seeking physical or spiritual salvation. There, we remind him to fulfill his promise: **“I have the power to absolve the entire world from the “din” that is due them.”** We mention this in the “zemer” sung on Motza’ei Shabbas **“Ish Chassid Hayah”:** **“יזכר לך עתה אתמול אשר דברת”**—**may you remember now that which you said yesterday.** Indeed, many stories are told of the wonderful omens and feats experienced by countless Jews whose prayers were answered at that holy site.

The Zohar HaKadosh Will Inspire Jews to Perform Teshuvah without Oppression

I would like to propose a very nice explanation of Rashbi’s bold declaration: **“יכול אני לפטור את כל העולם כולו מן הדין”**. We find a passage in the Zohar hakadosh (Nasso 124b) where the Raiya Mehemna (literally “the loyal shepherd”) embodying the neshamah of Moshe Rabeinu revealed itself to Rashbi and his disciples. He praised him for composing the Zohar hakadosh in whose merit Yisrael will be privileged to get out of galus with mercy and compassion. He then expounded on the passuk (Daniel 12, 10):

“והמשכילים יבינו”—**but the wise shall understand—by means of the “binah” which is the Eitz HaChaim. Of them it is said (ibid. 3): “והמשכילים יזהירו כזוהר הרקיע”**—**and the wise will shine like the radiance of the firmament—on account of your composition, the book of the Zohar, from the radiance of the Supernal Mother teshuvah; these do not require trial. And since Yisrael are destined to taste from the Eitz HaChaim, which is the very same sefer HaZohar, they will emerge from galus with “rachamim,”**

and the following will be fulfilled for them (Devarim 32, 12): “ה’ בדרך ינחנו ואין עמו אל נכר”—**Hashem alone guided him, and there was no foreign god with him.**

The Raiya Mehemna claims that in the merit of the Zohar hakadosh emanating from the radiance of the Higher Mother (“binah”) **“they will emerge from galus with “rachamim,”** and he adds that the following will become a reality for them: **“Hashem alone guided him, and there was no foreign god with him.”** The simplest way to explain this is by referring to the following teaching in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 97b): **“רבי אליעזר אומר אם ישראל עושין תשובה נגאלין ואם לאו אין נגאלין, אמר ליה רבי יהושע אם אין עושין תשובה אין נגאלין, אלא הקב”ה מעמיד להן מלך שגזירותיו קשות כהמן, וישראל עושין תשובה ומחזירין למוטב.”** **Rabbi Eliezer says: If Yisrael perform teshuvah, they will be redeemed; if not, they will not be redeemed. Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: If they do not perform teshuvah, they will not be redeemed?! Rather, HKB”H will subject them to a king whose decrees are as harsh as those of Haman; thus, Yisrael will perform teshuvah, and He will return them to the right path.**

Teshuvah Emanates from the Realm of Binah

Now, we find that our sacred sefarim refer to “binah” (the sefirah of understanding and intuition) as the Higher Mother; it is the source of teshuvah. This is based on a teaching in the Zohar (Lech Lecha 79b): **The neshamah is aroused to perform teshuvah which is called “binah.”** A similar teaching is found in the Raiya Mehemna (Nasso 122a): **This mitzvah is the mitzvah of teshuvah, which is “binah.”** This is the message conveyed by the navi (Yeshayah 6, 10): **“ולבבו י”**—**and his heart will understand, and he will repent and be healed.”** In other words, we see that teshuvah hinges on the insight—“binah”—provided by the heart.

We can explain the simple meaning of this concept by referring to the statement (Sotah 3a): **“אין אדם עובר עבירה”**—**a person does not commit an aveirah unless he is possessed by a whim of foolishness (insanity).** In other words, sin arises from the absence of

“binah,” which has been replaced by a whim of foolishness. For, had this person relied on his “binah,” he would have discerned the folly of rebelling against the King of Kings, HKB”H, and forfeiting an enduring existence for a transient one. Hence, the basis of teshuvah is the illumination afforded by “binah.” Guided by this insight, one is able to dispel the foolish, insane whims within him, so that **“his heart will understand, and he will repent and be healed.”**

Furthermore, “binah” which is associated with the world of teshuvah is called the **Higher Mother—Ima I’la’ah**. This is based on an elucidation in the Zohar hakadosh (Kedoshim 85a) related to the passuk (Mishlei 1, 8): **“ואל תטוש תורת אמוך, וזו היא בינה”**—**“and do not forsake the teaching of your mother;” this refers to “binah.”** An allusion to this is found in the passuk (ibid. 2, 3): **“כי אם לבינה תקרא”**—**if you call “binah” your mother . . .** We can make sense of this based on Rashi’s commentary in the name of Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan (Bamidbar 19, 22): **it is comparable to the son of a maidservant, who soiled a king’s palace. They said, “Let his mother come and wipe away the excrement.” Similarly, let the cow (“parah”) come and atone for the calf (“eigel”).** Seen in this light, the midah of **“binah,”** from which the light of teshuvah emanates to Yisrael, is called **Ima I’la’ah**, since HKB”H in His infinite mercy and favor fulfills the role there, so to speak, of **“the mother coming and cleaning up the mess.”**

Obviating the Need to Be Coerced by a Wicked Oppressor

We can now begin to comprehend the remark of the neshamah of Moshe Rabeinu to Rashbi regarding the kedushah of the sefer HaZohar: **“באותו חיבור שלך שהוא ספר הזוהר מן הזוהר של אם העליונה תשובה באלה לא צריך נסיון.”** The Raiya Mehemna was informing Rashbi that in the merit of the Zohar hakadosh—in which Rashbi revealed novel Torah-insights from the realm of “binah,” which is the **Higher Mother** associated with the world of teshuvah—the trials and tribulations of galus will not be necessary to motivate Yisrael to perform teshuvah. Instead of being motivated by

the oppression of a wicked monarch such as Haman, they will be motivated by the study of the Zohar emanating from the “binah” of the Ima I’la’ah.

In this vein, he goes on to say: **“ובגלל שעתידים ישראל לטעום”** **“מעץ החיים שהוא אותו ספר הזוהר, יצאו בו מן הגלות ברחמים.”** As a result of tasting from the Tree of Life of the Zohar, they will perform teshuvah stemming from “rachamim.” The Raiya Mehemna concludes his remarks: **“ויתקיים בהם ה’ בדרך ינחנו ואין עמו אל נכר”**. This passuk alludes to the fact that Yisrael will be motivated to perform teshuvah on their own without HKB”H having to subject them to the tyranny of an evil leader like Haman, who presented himself as an **“אל נכר”**—a deity that everybody should bow down to.

Apropos this discussion, I would like to refer to the passuk (Shemos 14, 8): **“ובני ישראל יוצאים ביד רמה”**—**and Bnei Yisrael went out with a raised hand.** Targum Onkelos renders this as: **And Bnei Yisrael went out “בריש גלי”**. The Degel Machaneh Ephraim asserts that with the words **“בריש גלי,”** the Targum is alluding to the fact that Bnei Yisrael will emerge from galus when **“בריש גלי”**—an acronym for **רבי ש’מעון ב’ן יוחאי**—reveals—**“גלי”**—his holy sefer, the Zohar.

Where, however, is this alluded to in the passuk? Let us suggest the following interpretation: In the merit of the Zohar hakadosh, the Torah revealed by **Rashbi**—alluded to by Targum Onkelos as **“בריש גלי”**—Bnei Yisrael will exit galus by performing teshuvah of their own volition—i.e., **“ביד רמה”**—and not, chas v’shalom, by being intimidated to do so by being subjected by HKB”H to a tyrant like Haman.

Studying the Zohar Emanating from the “Higher Mother” Provides a Tikun Even without a Person’s Understanding

Let us now explain the incredible tikun associated with the study of the Zohar hakadosh. In Netiv Mitzvosecha (Netiv HaTorah 1, 31), the divine kabbalist, the Mahari of Komarna, zy”a, writes:

It is worthwhile to establish a routine to study five pages of the Zohar every day. It provides an important

benefit and marvelous tikun for the soul—to illuminate it, to refine it, and to rectify it. It eliminates the thorns of bad midos and negative desires (urges) . . . This was suggested by our master, the Ari, as a tikun for ba’alei teshuvah . . . This was also the practice of my mentor and Rav (Zvi Hirsch of Zidichov, zy”a).

The Gaon Chida also mentions that the Arizal recommended the study of five pages of the Zohar daily as a tikun for a ba’al teshuvah. He adds that according to the Arizal, this tikun works even if the person does not comprehend what the Zohar is teaching, since the mere reading is enough to illuminate the soul and to rectify it.

Additionally, the Chida writes in Avodas HaKodesh: **The study of the Zohar transcends all other studies—even if one does not understand what it says, and even if one reads it incorrectly. Nevertheless, it is a fantastic tikun for the neshamah. Now, even though the entire Torah is permutations of names of HKB”H; nevertheless, it takes the form of many stories, which a person reads and interprets in simplistic terms. In contrast, the sefer HaZohar are the secrets (deeper, hidden meanings) themselves being revealed. The one who reads it is aware that they are secret, mystical teachings of the Torah, which are not grasped due to the limited perception of the person and the profound nature of the concept.**

Let us explain. Since the mystical teachings of the Torah in the Zohar hakadosh emanate from “binah”—the realm of teshuvah—they illuminate the light of teshuvah from the Ima I’la’ah to purify and cleanse the soul of all impurities and blemishes. This holds true even if a person does not fully comprehend the depth of the teaching of the Zohar hakadosh.

Eliyahu HaNavi Tells Rashbi that the Future Geulah Will Be in the Merit of the Zohar HaKadosh

Similar to the message delivered to Rashbi by the Raiya Mehemna, we find a similar message delivered to him by Eliyahu HaNavi—that the future geulah will come in the

merit of the Zohar hakadosh. Here is the pertinent passage in the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 6):

Rebbe, Rebbe, you are the tree that is tall and strong in the Torah. In your branches, which are the holy limbs, how many birds rest there belonging to the holy neshamos like in the heavens? . . . And how many human beings down below will be sustained by this composition of yours—as it will be revealed below in the last generation at the end of days? And because of it: “And you shall proclaim freedom throughout the land.”

It gives me immense pleasure to connect the message of the Raiya Mehemna—that in the merit of the Zohar hakadosh, Yisrael will emerge from galus with “rachamim”—and the message of Eliyahu HaNavi—that in the merit of the Zohar hakadosh, the following will become a reality: **“You shall proclaim freedom throughout the land.”** Let us refer to an elucidation in the Zohar hakadosh related to the passuk (Michah 7, 15): **“כימי צאתך מארץ מצרים אראנו נפלאות”**—**as in the days when you left the land of Mitzrayim, I will show it wonders.** Yetzias Mitzrayim is mentioned fifty times in the Torah corresponding to the fifty gates of “binah” with which HKB”H took Yisrael out of Mitzrayim.

According to the Zohar hakadosh, just as HKB”H took Yisrael out of Mitzrayim with the revelation of the fifty gates of “binah,” He will redeem Yisrael le’asid la’vo with the revelation of the fifty gates of “binah.” This then is the implication of the passuk: **“As in the days when you left the land of Mitzrayim”**—by means of the revelation of the fifty gates of “binah”; so, too, at the time of the future geulah: **“I will show it wonders”**—**“נ-נפלאות”**—the revelation of the **“nun” (fifty) wonders** of the gates of “binah.”

The Jubilee Year and the Fifty Gates of Binah

Now, the passuk (Vayikra 25, 10): **“וקראתם דרור לכל הארץ”**—**and you shall proclaim freedom throughout the land**—is related to the mitzvah of **“yoveil”—the jubilee year.** It is the fiftieth year—the year in which all slaves are set free. We are taught in our sacred sefarim that the “yoveil” year,

the fiftieth year, alludes to “binah,” which is comprised of fifty gates. Thus, at the time of the future geulah when the fifty gates of “binah” will be revealed, all of Yisrael will be released from the servitude of galus and their freedom will be everlasting.

Thus, the messages conveyed by the Raiya Mehemna and Eliyahu HaNavi go hand in hand magnificently. In the merit of the Zohar hakadosh emanating from the radiance of the Supernal Mother, Yisrael will emerge from the galus with “rachamim.” Also, in the merit of the Zohar hakadosh, the mitzvah of “yoveil” will come to fruition; in the fiftieth year, associated with the fifty gates of “binah”: **“You shall proclaim freedom throughout the land.”**

In this manner, we can interpret the statement in the Gemara (Yoma 86b): **“גדולה תשובה שמקרבת את הגאולה—the power of teshuvah is so great that it hastens the arrival of the geulah.** This is because teshuvah emanates from “binah”—Ima I’la’ah. Thus, it triggers the revelation of the fifty gates of “binah” with which HKB”H will redeem Yisrael from galus for good, in keeping with the passuk: **“כימי צאתך מארץ מצרים אראנו נפלאות.”** **“As in the days when you left the land of Mitzrayim”—**by means of the fifty gates of “binah”—**“I will show it wonders”—**the future geulah will also involve the **“nun pla’ot”—**fifty wonders.

We can now propose that this was the message conveyed by Rashbi with his declaration: **“I am able to exempt the entire world from the judgment.”** For, as we have learned, in the merit of his revelation of the sefer HaZohar, HKB”H will bring the future geulah with “rachamim.” Instead of being subjected to a despot like Haman, Yisrael will be motivated to perform teshuvah by the study of the Zohar hakadosh emanating from the radiance of the Ima I’la’ah—the source of teshuvah.

In the Merit of Rashbi the Higher Mother Will Give Birth to the Future Geulah with Rachamim

Based on what we have learned, we can proceed to explain the underlying meaning of Rava’s statement: **“One**

whose mother is giving birth, she should pray that she give birth to one like Rabbi Shimon; and if not, she should not give birth to him.” The future geulah is referred to as a type of birth; in fact, the preparation for the geulah is termed **“חבלי משיח”—**labor pains preceding the advent of the Mashiach. For example, it is written (Yeshayah 26, 17): **“כמו הרה תקריב ללדת תחיל תזעק בחבליה כן היינו מפניך ה”**—**like a pregnant woman about to give birth, she is in travail, she screams in her pangs; so were we before You, Hashem.** Rashi comments that we, Yisrael, see this pain and suffering as signs of the upcoming salvation and geulah. In this vein, we utter in the well-known lament on Tishah B’Av: **“אלי ציון ועריה, כמו אשה בציריה”—Mourn, O Zion and her cities, like a woman in her birth pains.**

Furthermore, we find that the geulah is specifically analogous to the birth of a male child, as it is written (ibid. 66, 7): **“בטרם תחיל ילדה בטרם יבוא חבל לה והמליטה זכר”—before she even feels her labor pains, she will give birth; before any travail comes to her, she will deliver a son.** Here Rashi comments that the ingathering of the exiles will be like a new rebirth of Yerushalayim; it will happen effortlessly, without the travails of labor. Along these lines, we plead in one of the “sheva Berachos”: **“שוש תשיש ותגל העקרה בקיבוץ בניה לתוכה”—bring great happiness and joy to one who was barren (Tziyon), as her children return to her in joy.**

With regards to the future geulah, the Gemara (Sanhedrin 98b) teaches us: **“ואמר עולא ייתי ולא איחמיניה”**; **“ואמר רבה ייתי ולא איחמיניה.”** We learn that many sages—like Ula and Rabbah—prayed for Mashiach to come but did not want to actually witness his coming due to the pain and suffering referred to as **“chevlei Mashiach.”**

We now have cause to rejoice! We have shed some light on Rava’s profound statement: **“דילידא אימיה כרבי שמעון תיליד, ואי לא לא תיליד”**. He intended to teach us that when we pray for the Ima I’la’ah to give birth to the geulah by means of teshuvah, we should pray that it be with the assistance of **Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai**, who composed the Zohar hakadosh. Thus, our teshuvah will be of our own accord—resulting in a geulah of “rachamim” and divine “chesed”—

rather than teshuvah that was coerced by HKB”H subjecting us to a despot like Haman.

This explains why he concluded his statement with the proviso: "ואי לא לא תיליד". In other words, if Yisrael have not performed teshuvah worthy of being redeemed with "rachamim" but only with "din," then it is preferable that He wait until we arouse to perform the former variety of teshuvah. This is what Rashi was conveying with his comment: **Anyone whose mother is giving birth, she should request "rachamim" as follows: "May it be Your will that this one should be like Rabbi Shimon."**

Thus, in honor of the upcoming, auspicious Lag BaOmer, we have learned a valuable lesson regarding the incredible power of the divine Tanna Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who attested to the fact that he possessed the power to spare the entire world the consequences of divine judgment. Additionally, we should acknowledge the declaration of Rava, who sought "rachamim" for Yisrael: "דילקא אימיה" "כרבי שמעון תיליד"—that HKB”H should bring forth a geulah characterized by "rachamim" and "chasadim" thanks to the revelation of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai of the Zohar hakadosh. This was the message the Raiya Mehemna, the neshamah of Moshe Rabeinu, conveyed to Rashbi. May this happen swiftly, in our times! Amen.

"תורתו מגן לנו, היא מאירת עינינו, הוא ימליץ טוב בעדנו, אדוננו בר יוחאי"

**"His Torah protects us, she enlightens us;
he advocates on our behalf, our master, Bar Yochai"**



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